

**Taiwan in Their Hands:
cultural soft power and translocal identity
making in the New York Taiwan Academy**

By

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Abstract

In 2011, Kuomintang (KMT) President Ma Ying-jeou created the Taiwan Academies as a cultural exchange initiative to enhance Taiwan's soft power and introduce Taiwan's culture to the world, while also competing against China for space in the realm of competing notions of Chineseness internationally. Three Taiwan Academy resource centres were established that year in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. This thesis presents a historical case study analysis of the Taiwan Academy resource centre in New York between 2012-2014, in order to examine the context of production of soft power discourse and the empirical consequences within a specific program, among a target audience. To this end, it examines soft power from the perspective of translocality, in order to uncover the often-overlooked socio-cultural, relational, and spatial aspects of cultural strategies aimed at generating soft power.

This study responds to two central research questions. First: *what kind(s) of cultural messages were being produced and exported to New York by Ma's administration in Taipei?* Second: *how were these messages translated, interpreted and received in practice, in their implementation at the New York Taiwan Academy?*

To address these, this research first re-conceptualises a de-Westernised, localised framework for interpreting cultural soft power discourse under Ma's KMT administration. It then considers Taipei's strategy of generating cultural soft power through Taiwan Academy from two perspectives: from "above", in Taipei, and "below", in New York. From "above", it evaluates Taiwan Academy as a political strategy, in relation to relevant domestic, cross-Strait, and international contexts. From "below", this study conducts a grounded analysis of two Taiwan Academy cultural programs and the translocal processes and practices that re-/defined the role of Taiwan Academy in New York. The conclusion integrates these two perspectives in order to address the dynamics and limits of Ma's use of cultural soft power within the Taiwan Academy. In doing so, this thesis aims to explicate the contingent, relational, and inherently *translocal* nature of soft power practice.

Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been submitted or published for publication.

I certify that throughout this thesis, to the best of my knowledge, any and all ideas, techniques, quotations, or material derived from the work of others, published or otherwise, is fully acknowledged in accordance with standard referencing practices.

I hereby certify that this thesis is in accordance with the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of abstract, acknowledgements, lists, maps, bibliographies, and footnotes, as approved by the Research Higher Degrees Committee.

Hannah Bourke

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List of Abbreviations

CCA	Council of Cultural Affairs
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CI, CIs	Confucius Institute(s)
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
GDNV	Golden Decade National Vision
GIO	Government Information Office
KMT	Kuomintang <i>or</i> the Nationalist party
MOC	Ministry of Culture (Taiwan)
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taiwan)
OCAC	Overseas Community Affairs Council (Taiwan)
OCAO	Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (PRC)
PRC	People's Republic of China, China
ROC	Republic of China, Taiwan
TCC	Taipei Cultural Center
TECO/TPECC	Taipei Economic and Cultural Office
TRO	Taipei Representative Office

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Figure 1: Port Authority downtown Manhattan airport map is a publicly available image that is available for free download from Orange Smile Tours. The version that appears in this thesis has been edited by the author to include the location of Taiwan Academy.

1. Figure 1: Port Authority downtown Manhattan airport map
2. Figure 2: Classical Taiwanese stars to perform in New York
3. Figure 3: Lo-An Lin, Daniel Hsu, Nana Ou-Yang
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Chapter One: Introduction

Traditional Chinese characters and Chinese culture are like stars in a vast universe. They are beautiful, bright, mysterious, timeless, and brimming with possibilities and infinite power. Yet, unlike stars, they are not out of reach (Council of Cultural Affairs, 2011).

This grandiose invitation, narrated over constellations moving through an indigo galaxy, is how Taiwan Academy was introduced to the world in its official promotional video. Released by the Council of Cultural Affairs (CCA), the video accompanied the 2011 launch of three Taiwan Academies in the United States. News headlines announced Taipei's intention to pursue a wide-ranging strategy aimed at increasing Taiwan's "soft power" (Ching, 2010; Kuo, 2011), and compared the Taiwan Academies to Confucius Institutes (CI, CIs), the national cultural institute of the People's Republic of China (PRC, China) (Chen, 2011; Poon, 2011; Rawnsley, 2011b; Taipei Times, 2012). By all accounts, Taiwan's newly minted cultural institute was poised to expand worldwide.

1.1 Project overview

The purpose of this thesis is to make deductions and critically examine questions surrounding government intentions to improve Taiwan's soft power status. State soft power programs are context-specific strategies for generating international influence that reflect arguments for how a given state perceives what is necessary and possible through soft power. To this end, this research conducts a historical (2012-2014) case study analysis of Taipei's efforts to generate cultural soft power through the Taiwan Academies. The Taiwan Academy was implemented within the context of the political and cultural goals of the Ma Ying-jeou Kuomintang (KMT) government that held power in Taiwan (Republic of China, ROC) from 2008-2016. This thesis focuses on the events that took place at the New York Taiwan Academy from 2012, soon after its launch, through to the beginning of 2014. Through detailed case studies of specific cultural programs that took place in 2013, this research explores the nuanced and inherently *translocal* nature of implementing a specific cultural strategy aimed at generating soft power.

Moreover, soft power strategies are enacted within specific domestic and international contexts, as well as associated temporal, geographic, and socio-cultural flows, activities, and networks. The specific cultural programs that emerge thus are inherently translocal, as they are integrally connected to the concrete movements of people, goods, ideas, and symbols across geographic, cultural, and political borders.

This research project, at the lead of Taipei, began as a soft power analysis. However, soft power quickly became difficult to evaluate in practice, due in part to the inadequacies of soft power as an analytical tool, and in part to the competing interests, practical constraints, and logistical factors that surrounded the implementation of Taiwan Academy. The fieldwork for this thesis found that the focus of the Taiwan Academy project in New York had shifted away from generating soft power by transferring knowledge to foreign audiences and instead toward the service of the cultural needs and interests of the Taiwanese diaspora. This discovery of translocal diasporic culture rendered the question of soft power much less central to this research than originally envisaged.

The focus of research therefore shifted to translocality and cultural studies in order to explore the specific local domestic and international contexts of program implementation, as well as associated temporal, geographic, and socio-cultural flows, activities, and networks. The cultural programs that emerge from soft power strategies are, after all, inherently translocal, as they are integrally connected to the concrete movements of people, goods, ideas, and symbols across geographic, cultural, and political borders. Accordingly, this thesis re-conceptualises cultural soft power analysis from the perspectives of translocality and cultural studies in order to examine the socio-cultural, relational, and spatial aspects of implementing a specific soft power program within a particular local context.

The discovery that Taiwan Academy had pivoted to focusing on diaspora was significant given that Taipei, being diplomatically isolated, is uniquely reliant on the engagement of the Taiwanese diaspora overseas, and particularly within the US. For this reason, the research focuses on exploring this interrelationship between the Taiwanese diaspora and the Taiwan Academy. In the process of maintaining and negotiating relationship(s) with the New York Taiwanese diaspora, this thesis found

that Taiwan Academy was serving an alternate translocal role in exporting and supporting various formations of Taiwanese-ness outside of Taiwan. This thesis argues that the Taiwan Academy in New York became situated as a “relational node” (Amin, 2002) that was inhabited, produced, and continuously re-/defined by both the Ma administration in Taipei and the (trans)local Taiwanese community in New York.

Under Ma’s administration, Taipei re-focussed its public diplomacy agenda, giving cultural themes particular priority in Taiwan’s external communications (Rawnsley, 2017). Cross-Strait links and cultural exchanges were emphasised to repair the precariously unstable relationship with Beijing that Ma had inherited. Abandoning Taiwan’s former anti-China counter identity, Ma promoted Chinese-cultural soft power as a key component of Taipei’s foreign policy efforts. The KMT vision was to build Taiwan into an international leader of Chinese culture, position Taiwan’s cultural and creative industries at the forefront of Chinese language markets, and establish a national brand image (Ministry Of Culture, 2013b). Ma relied heavily on cultural promotion to increase Taiwan’s international profile as it allowed him to bypass politically sensitive topics and thereby maintain peace with Beijing.

To this end, the KMT conducted an extensive departmental reorganisation. The Government Information Office (GIO) was formally dissolved, and the CCA was upgraded to a Ministry of Culture (MOC) (Ministry of Culture, 2012). The MOC consolidated the organisation and implementation of all cultural initiatives previously split across various governmental departments (ibid). In particular, the MOC was tasked with cultivating culture as an instrument of national power (The China Times, 2011; Executive Yuan, 2012b).

Taiwan Academy was created in 2011 a part of this effort to strengthen Taiwan’s status as a centre of Chinese culture (Chiang, 2011). Taiwan Academies were envisioned as international centres or “salons” of Chinese language learning and cultural promotion (Ministry of Culture, 2013c). A main objective of the Taiwan Academies project was to promote the study of traditional Chinese characters and distinguish ‘pluralistic Taiwanese culture’ from mainland Chinese culture (Shih, 2011). The Taiwan Academy project was part of a NT\$310 million (USD\$10.6

million) expansion project to launch cultural centres in major cities across Asia, Europe, and North and South America (Executive Yuan, 2012a). Although the long-term plan was to open institutes worldwide, the MOC first focussed on establishing Taiwan Academies within the US.

1.2 Thesis statement

Fundamentally, this work seeks to situate an oft-criticised international relations concept (soft power) within an interdisciplinary site of inquiry to examine its lived, human ramifications. It is grounded in a cultural studies framework, with references to international relations theories as well as a critical reading and localised adaptation of soft power theory. This research, therefore, is situated at the rich theoretical juncture between culture, society, and political economy, where cultural programs and their embedded "soft power" messages intersect with a plethora of (trans)local practices, relationships, and identities. By embedding the analysis of cultural soft power within specific audiences and communities, this research seeks to understand how cultural soft power is located in real-life contexts, beyond the jargon of policy frameworks and journalistic (ab)/(mis)use. To this end, as mentioned above, this thesis poses two central, site-specific research questions. First: *what kind(s) of cultural identities were being produced and exported by Ma's administration in Taipei?* Second: *how were these identities translated, interpreted, received and/or negotiated by the New York Taiwan Academy audience?*

To address these questions, I examine cultural soft power using a dual approach that first situates Taiwan Academy within Taiwan's geopolitical and policy framework from "above", and second, situates Taiwan Academy within its specific local socio-cultural and spatial contexts in New York, from "below". The former relates to the historical, political, and diplomatic cross-Strait and external cultural relations¹ contexts of Taiwan's geopolitical status, which include, in particular, the ongoing battle for the hearts and minds of the overseas Chinese and Taiwanese. Ma's administration explicitly framed Taiwan Academy as an exercise in cultural "soft power" (Sui, 2010; Taiwan Academy, 2011). Accordingly, this research critically

¹ Taiwan uses the term "external cultural promotion" rather than the more commonly used "international cultural promotion" to avoid conflict with China.

considers Taiwan Academy from a cultural soft power perspective, making use of Joseph Nye's (2004) conception but adapting it to a framework that draws from Jerry Liu's (2012b; 2012a) work on the *ReOrienting* (Frank, 1998) of cultural governance.

My analytical perspective from "below" takes a translocal approach. This approach, drawn from cultural geography, supports insight into socio-spatial configurations and emphasises diasporic linkages to multiple geographic contexts (Freitag and von Oppen, 2010; Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). It acknowledges how diasporic embeddedness within these contexts--simultaneously and sequentially in time--both shapes their mobilisations and is shaped by them (Koinova, 2018). This study also draws on Benedict Anderson's (1983) conceptualisation of the imagined community. However, it does not conceive of diasporic identity formation as being predominantly or even primarily connected to the nation-state as a territorial entity. Instead, it centres the experiences and contexts of the diasporic Taiwanese as being constituted by multiple overlapping and intermeshing processes of 'entanglement and connectedness' (Freitag and von Oppen, 2010 p1).

Using a case study approach, I examine the implementation of Taiwan Academy in its specific New York context through a grounded analysis of two cultural programs: the *Rising Stars* concert series, and the *Taiwan in Your Hand* puppet decoration and manipulation workshop. My research proposes that cultural soft power found its expression in the shifting terrain between Taiwan Academy "soft power" messages and the ways in which the Taiwanese diaspora in New York re-/interpreted and re-/defined those messages according to their own socio-spatial concerns. These processes fundamentally re-/defined the role and meaning of Taiwan Academy as a soft power program in the service of a *translocal* re-/imagining of Taiwanese-ness and self-representation.

Fieldwork for this thesis was conducted between 2012 and 2014. At this time Taiwan Academy was of unique significance from a cultural policy perspective because, along with the (unrealised) Cultural Diplomacy Endowment, it was one of only two legitimately new cultural policy proposals in the 2008 White Paper (as compared with 1998 and 2004). Ultimately, Taiwan Academy was the only new

policy proposal that eventuated from that White Paper; thus, as small as it was, it remained the most significant cultural policy development for Taiwan to be implemented by Ma's administration. At the time of fieldwork there were three Taiwan Academies, located in New York, Los Angeles, and Houston. Although Los Angeles is home to the largest population of Taiwanese outside of Taiwan, New York is the "cultural heart" of the US and Taipei had a more established cultural presence and program in New York (Zheng, 2010; Yu, 2013).

English language Taiwan-focussed studies² are dominated by political science and its sub-disciplines (Sullivan, 2011). Within other disciplines, Taiwan studies as a research perspective remains relatively under-represented (ibid). Notably, there are no English language studies of Taiwan Academy from a cultural studies perspective. By studying Taiwan Academy within the context of the Taiwanese diaspora in New York, this thesis represents an original research contribution that seeks to expand the limited body of Taiwanese diaspora related research.

1.3 Conceptual frameworks

The following sub-sections outline the two key conceptual frameworks that guide this study: soft power and translocality. I then provide an overview of the body of work examining Taiwan's cultural diplomacy, soft power, and the Taiwanese diaspora³ and demonstrate the need for further research. Other theoretical backgrounds for this study, including cultural institution research and the historical and contemporary contexts of the Taiwanese diaspora, are explored in chapters two, three, and four.

² What exactly constitutes Taiwan studies is itself a complex question. For example, the question of whether Taiwan studies is a field in its own right or a sub-field within broader Chinese studies has implications that extend well beyond the academy. Further, the notion of Taiwan studies is largely a Western construction; Taiwan social scientists engage in social science research about Taiwan, but this does not necessarily constitute "Taiwan studies". See: Cheng, T. & Marble, A. 2004. Taiwan studies and the social sciences. *Issues & Studies*, 40, 9-57.

³ I use the term "Taiwanese diaspora" to refer to those who identify Taiwan as their birthplace or ancestral home, but are located in territories other than Taiwan. It therefore encompasses both native Taiwanese and mainlanders who self-identify as being from Taiwan.

1.3.1 Soft power

The term “soft power” was coined in 1990 by American political scientist Joseph Nye (2004). A genealogy of Nye’s soft power theory shows that it evolved in correlation with the global geopolitical context and in reaction to its critiques (Angey-Stenuc and Molho, 2015). As David Leheny (2006) notes, the concept of soft power was born out of debates in the late 1980s and early 1990s about American decline. Nye’s claim that the US maintained a soft power advantage worked to offset anxieties about US material decline vis-à-vis a then-rising Japan⁴ (Nye, 1990; Leheny, 2006). Nye argued that due to its plethora of soft power resources, the US would retain its position as the world’s leading superpower.

In his seminal work on the topic, Nye claimed that ‘the mix of resources that produce international power’ was changing, and that ‘soft ideological and institutional resources’ were increasingly pivotal to retaining global influence (Nye, 1990 p260). Nye (1990 p32) claimed that if a state can make its power legitimate in the eye of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. Describing it as ‘the second face of power’ (Nye, 2004 p5), Nye suggested that soft power could convince others to want the outcomes you want without resorting to the ‘harder’ tactics of coercion or side-payment. As opposed to hard power—economic and military capabilities reliant on inducements and threats—Nye conceptualised soft power as indirect and co-optive, reliant on ‘the ability to shape the preferences of others’ (Nye, 2004 p5). Because soft power utilises intangible resources, it is also called the power of appeal or attraction (Nye, 1990 p31-35).

Nye insisted that soft power is critical for gaining legitimacy for international actions, enhancing a state’s capacity to form international coalitions, avoiding being subject to the influence of others, and preventing military confrontations⁵ (Nye,

⁴ The collapse of the Soviet Union had left the US trying to find its place in the world without a defining Soviet threat (Nye, 1990). The US share of world product was diminishing, there was a prevailing belief that the US was overextended and should reduce its external commitments, and the emerging potential for a multipolar world posed a threat to US hegemony, with some analysts warning of a future dominated by a European bloc and a Japanese-led Pacific bloc (Nye 2004). To defend the US position, Nye claimed that the end of the Cold War had changed the nature of power, by reducing (but not eliminating) the role of military force in setting the international agenda, and increasing the importance of a state’s perceived legitimacy and attractiveness to others (Nye 1990).

⁵ According to Nye, the Cold War was won by virtue of the attraction of US soft power assets, such as its culture and political values (Nye, 1990).

1990). In his subsequent works, Nye's theory became more elaborate. In 2004, he expanded his concept to incorporate an in-depth analysis of the three main sources of soft power: culture⁶ (in places where it is attractive to others), political values⁷ (when a state lives up to them at home and abroad), and foreign policies⁸ (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority) (Nye, 2004). Finally, Nye introduced the term "smart power" to describe the complementarity that exists between hard and soft power (Nye, 2008a; Nye, 2011). Nye also claimed that "universal values" are crucial in producing soft power via relationship and attraction (Nye, 2004 p11). This attraction, correctly used, may 'induce others to behave in ways that serve one's own aims and interests' (deLisle, 2010 p494). As a political tool, soft power thus easily describes persuading states 'to embrace, or at least acquiesce in, an affirmative policy agenda of a soft power-strong state' (ibid). For this reason, most soft power analyses occur within the field of international relations.

As Nye's initial theory spread around the world and grew in popularity, it correspondingly evolved and was adapted to a wide variety of foreign policy contexts. Thus, from an American-centred foreign policy prescription to the analysis of the rise of emerging powers, and from a state-centred theory to the emphasis on the role of non-state actors, the various uses of the notion of soft power have demonstrated its malleability (Angey-Stenuc and Molho, 2015). As a result, soft power is often discussed in relation to other concepts guiding practice, such as public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and nation branding. In many scholars' works, these terms are used interchangeably.

The concept of 'soft power' plays an important role in the discourses of politicians and analysts worldwide. It has garnered popularity and notoriety in the fields of international relations and public and cultural diplomacy, even as it has become something of a buzzword across academic and political circles. Despite the evolution of the concept, Craig Hayden (2012) argues that the rhetoric of soft power remains

⁶ Nye broadly distinguished between high culture, such as literature, art, education, and popular culture, although it should be noted that this might be only partially representative of a society's values and practice.

⁷ Political values may include foreign and domestic policies, as well as public diplomacy and nation branding. However, Nye argues that foreign and domestic policies can also undermine soft power if they appear to be hypocritical, arrogant or indifferent to the opinions of others (Nye, 2004).

⁸ Foreign policy, here, can be explained as 'direct communication with foreign peoples, with the aim of affecting their thinking, and ultimately, that of their governments' (Nisbet, 2004 p15).

based on a simple set of assumptions about the conditions of a country's power of persuasion, that has been circulated in a wide variety of countries, at a time when global communication became a key component of foreign policy. Broadly, the theory continues to propose that ideational and cultural attractiveness can favourably boost a state's national image abroad, thereby generating respect, admiration, and influence in world polity. "Cultural soft power", in particular, has become an influential foreign policy tool within East Asia (deLisle, 2010; Ding, 2010; Nakagawa, 2011; Ben-Ari and Otmazgin, 2012).

In this research, I am interested in how the concept of soft power was adapted by the KMT's political practitioners, policy makers, and government officials during Ma's administration. Within Taiwan's political context of severely limited international diplomatic recognition, state use of soft power to cultivate attraction is uniquely interesting. It is essential to go beyond abstract theoretical frameworks in order to identify what cultural soft power actually meant to the Taiwan government and how New York-based officials conceived its role within their specific locale, especially in relation to Taiwan Academy. To this end, I draw from both government documents and interviews with government officials in Taipei and New York. This re-conceptualisation of soft power is conducted in chapter two.

Nye's theorisation focussed predominantly on the US and superpowers such as China (Nye, 2012). However, a growing body of work provides regional (Jhee and Lee, 2011; Lee and Melissen, 2011; Ben-Ari and Otmazgin, 2012; To, 2014) or bilateral (Wang and Lu, 2008; Chi, 2009; deLisle, 2010; Rawnsley, 2012) perspectives on soft power in East Asia. Regional soft power discussions tend to focus on the idea that cultural exports could be used to enhance soft power and cultivate lucrative export enterprises. An expansive body of literature offers empirical grounds for the idea that East Asian pop culture products can act as an effective channel for the soft power of exporting nations (Siriyuvasak and Shin, 2007; Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008; Lum et al., 2008; Watanabe and McConnell, 2008; Lee, 2009; Holyk, 2011; Kim and Kim, 2011; Ben-Ari and Otmazgin, 2012; Chua, 2012; Jang and Paik, 2012).

Detailed analyses of China's soft power (or lack thereof) also provide a background to interpreting regional soft power practice (Keane, 2008; Glaser and Murphy, 2009; McGiffert, 2009; Keane, 2010; Zhang, 2010b; Breslin, 2011; Keane, 2012; Huang, 2013; Keane, 2013; Wang and Li, 2017). Authors such as Keane (2013) assert that, for China, one of the most important purposes of investing in and developing the cultural and creative industries is to improve its "cultural soft power". However, in their study of the Dafen oil painting village, Wang and Li (2017) have argued that at issue is also how the production and negotiation of state space through the dynamic processes of territorialisation serves to remake subjects, landscapes, and their relations. This perspective, which avoids studying such investments through a lens of gentrification or commercialisation for the purposes of state-to-society cultural soft power, is pertinent to how this thesis conceptualises efforts to implement cultural strategies aimed at generating soft power, as a continuously re-/negotiated process with contingent outcomes, shaped by various socio-cultural, spatial, and individual contexts.

Overall, academic conceptualisations of Taiwanese soft power remain limited (Lu, 2007). Taiwanese scholar Yun-Han Chu (2011) provided a domestic analysis of the cross-Strait relationship with China. This work, along with Shane Lee's perspective on soft power under Taiwan's first DPP administration (2005b), Gary Rawnsley's analysis of Taiwan's informal diplomacy and propaganda (2000), Rawnsley's later studies on Taiwan's public diplomacy and soft power (2011a; 2011c; 2014), and Chun-Ying Wei's (2017) cultural policy analysis of Taiwan's cultural soft power practice are useful for understanding Taiwan's soft power and international communication. Notably, Wei's (2017) research was the first in-depth examination of Taiwanese soft power practice and as such provided important insight into the role of soft power within cultural exchange and the work of the MOC. Although Wei's research addressed the Taiwan Academy, it did so from "above", utilising a policy framework that centred state-level perspectives. Consequently, it did not consider the role of political transnationalism in, or the various modes of diasporic engagement with, the implementation of cultural soft power. I believe that a close analysis of specific sites of implementation is necessary in order to examine the empirical consequences of deploying a cultural program intended to generate soft power.

This work engages with the intersection between state soft power policies and specific diasporic contexts. It examines how the interaction between cultural products, ideas, and messages from the “homeland” were (trans)localised along the lines of specific socio-cultural and spatial concerns in the “host land”. This approach offers valuable new insight into the under-researched Taiwanese diaspora and provides an innovative perspective on how soft power practice is adapted and re-/appropriated to indirectly respond to or engage with unstated national goals. In this sense it is important to identify the roles of soft power for Taiwan in both domestic and international contexts. In particular, this thesis focuses on soft power as an apparatus of cultural governance directed primarily toward, and re-/appropriated by, the overseas Taiwanese diaspora.

1.3.2 Translocality and diaspora

In this research, I examine the implementation of Taiwan Academy, a cultural diplomacy program, from the perspective of translocality. Taiwan’s cultural diplomacy has been discussed in the extant literature predominantly from an international relations perspective and occasionally a cultural policy perspective (Tsang, 2008a; Wang and Lu, 2008; Chi, 2009; Rawnsley, 2011a; Rawnsley, 2014; Wei, 2017), but rarely from a localised, implementation-based perspective. Soft power analyses tend toward more abstracted conversations regarding policy and power relations, or at the very least are somewhat disconnected from the *audience* of soft power.

This research addresses the complexities of deploying programs aimed at generating soft power by conducting an audience-centred analysis in order to interrogate how locality, spatiality, and socio-cultural context can influence how a given audience can actively re-/appropriate and re-/constitute the meanings and identities embedded within an enacted cultural soft power program. This study further demonstrates how the socio-spatial, embodied dimensions of soft power practice take precedence over the nation-state in the formation of *translocal* connections and identities. In doing so it places a heavy emphasis on the importance

of locality (place) and mobility for meaningfully analysing the complex cultural, social, spatial, and political forces that are (re)shaping specific manifestations of and (re)constructing meanings through Taiwan's soft power practice.

There is a dearth of work exploring how the Taiwanese diaspora navigates the complex dynamics of competing ROC and PRC *qiaowu* management strategies (the management of affairs dealing with nationals abroad). Most existing studies discuss this relationship in reference to diasporic political activism and transnational politics (Wang, 1999; Wang, 2013a; Chen, 2016; Cheng, 2017; Kuo, 2017) or the economic potential of transnational diasporic business networks (Wong, 2004; Kerby, 2018). James To's (2014) work comparing PRC and ROC policies relating to diaspora management in the US is perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of this relationship to date; however, due to its specific focus on diaspora management, diasporic identity is discussed primarily in relation to a territorially bound nation state. Scholars note a rising trend toward identification with being Taiwanese (-only) American in recent decades (Kuo, 2017). Overall, this trend is yet to be substantively reflected in the extant scholarship on Chinese/Asian American studies (Lien and Harvie, 2018).

This thesis takes the position that these identities and relationships cannot be taken for granted as they are not ontologically pre-given or fixed. Rather, identity is socially and relationally constructed on the basis of common socio-political experience in both space and time. To this end, this research focuses on a specific Taiwanese community within a specific temporal, social, and cultural space to explore how it, as a translocal community, re-/negotiates its own sense of *translocally* bound Taiwaneseness through participation in and engagement with the Taiwan Academy in New York. These interactions are complex and dynamic, and have re-/constituted and re-/defined the physical, political, social, and cultural space of the Taiwan Academy itself. My research follows studies such as Ien Ang's (Ang, 2013) research on Chinatown in Sydney, Australia, Sylvia Van Ziegert's (2006) analysis of Chinese programs within communities in both Germany and the US, Eng Kiong Tan's (2007) dissertation on re-narrativising "Chineseness" among the Chinese diaspora, and Hsiang-Shui Chen's (1992) study of New York's Chinatown. These studies all utilise spatial and temporal analyses to contextualise and interpret

specific cultural events and products, and demonstrate the interconnectedness of geography with economic, social, and/or cultural factors.

In recent years, translocality as a research perspective has gained momentum, attracting scholars across different disciplines concerned with the dynamics of mobility, migration, and socio-spatial interconnectedness. The term “translocal” appears in work by cultural theorists (Clifford, 1997; Ma, 2002; Bennett and Peterson, 2004), geographers (Castree, 2004; Conradson and McKay, 2007; Brickell and Datta, 2011b; Verne, 2012), migration scholars (Gielis, 2009; Brickell and Datta, 2011b; Lahiri, 2011; Andersson, 2014; Winters, 2014) and anthropologists (Appadurai, 1996; Dirlik, 1999; Escobar, 2001; Peleikis, 2003; Gottowik, 2010; Slama, 2011), to name a few. This research employs the working definition of “translocal” as the connections between two or more specific localities as created and experienced by migrants.

Although translocality has been influenced by transnationalism, there is a clear distinction between the two. Theories of transnationalism are primarily concerned with de-territorialisation and notions of spatially unbounded communities (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1996). Conversely, research on translocality refers to ‘how social relationships across locales shape transnational migrant networks, economic exchanges and diasporic space’ (Brickell and Datta, 2011a). Translocality re-conceptualises nationality and ethnicity in research on international migration based on the complexity and fluidity of migrants’ lives. It addresses the processes and practices producing local-to-local relations, thereby enunciating the simultaneity of mobility and situatedness in specific spaces (Porst and Sakdapolrak, 2017). For this reason, translocality has been described as ‘groundedness’ during movement (Brickell and Datta, 2011a p3). Translocality thus builds on insights from transnationalism, while at the same time attempting to overcome some of its limitations by taking a more “grounded” approach (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013).

Translocal approaches are characterised by four main features. First, they explore the dynamics of locality and place, providing various conceptual frameworks regarding globalisation, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and identity (Appadurai, 1996; Appadurai, 2003; Conradson and McKay, 2007; Daskalaki, 2012).

In so doing, the translocal approach facilitates a ‘non-Eurocentric understanding of global history as constituted by processes of “entanglement and interconnectedness”’ (Greiner, 2010:6). Second, translocality addresses complexities in the circulation of ideas, symbols, and knowledge, offering various perspectives on global mobilities, migration and networks of populations (Brickell and Datta, 2011a). Third, translocal approaches provide the tools to study the processes and practices through which territories become dispersed, contested and blurred (ibid).

Translocal studies find that socio-spatial scales are socially constructed, simultaneously fluid and fixed, as well as relational (Purcell and Brown, 2005). As Tim Oakes and Louisa Schein (2006 p20) argue, translocality ‘deliberately confuses the boundaries of the local in an effort to capture the increasingly complicated nature of spatial processes and identities, yet it insists on viewing such processes and identities as place-based rather than exclusively mobile, uprooted or “travelling”’. Finally, the translocal approach redresses the here/there and global/local dichotomies, by stressing the socio-political and cultural implications of movements, the histories and geographies of moving populations, and by challenging rigid categorisations of the ‘migrant’, the ‘refugee’, the ‘cosmopolitan’, or more generally, the ‘other’ (Greiner, 2010; Hedberg and do Carmo, 2012).

This research deploys translocality in order to bring a much-needed local context back into conceptions of cultural soft power movement and flow that are often informed either by a de-territorialised framework, or that are embedded in more traditional notions of nationalism. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge the state’s interest in controlling, producing, and maintaining what Brickell and Datta (2011a p18) refer to as “translocal imaginations”—the visualisation and imagining of linkages between places. In their area studies work on the multiple forms of mobility in contemporary China, Oakes and Schein (2006 p2) argue that significant histories of state practice can play a key role in laying the framework within which translocal practices emerge. Within this context, it is important to consider how the state itself maintains an interest in approaches to territorial administration and nation building that might be called prototypes of translocality. This involves histories of state practice and linkages between the state and a

translocal imaginary, as well as the delinking of translocality from any necessary spatial politics of resistance to power.

Taiwan and Taiwanese people are generally under-represented within this 'translocal turn' (Conradson and McKay, 2007; Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). Some recent academic work on Taiwan includes the 2016 Volume 10, Issue 2 of *Translocal Chinese: East Asian Perspectives*. This special issue was dedicated to unpacking the dynamics and complexities of translocality in relation to migration movements between Taiwan, Quemoy, the Ryukyus, and continental China. A number of articles in this issue explore various dynamics and complexities of migration loops, national boundaries, cultural identities, economic networks, and social constructions between continental China and Taiwan (Ho and Chiang, 2016; Lin, 2016a; Lin, 2016b). Other studies address Taiwanese translocality in relation to media (Wang, 2012; Huan, 2018), various manifestations of expatriation in mainland China (Lin et al., 2015; Tseng and Wang, 2015; Tseng, 2015), in economic networks and entrepreneurship (Chang and Cheng, 2015; Sonoda, 2015; Tseng and Wang, 2015), as well as in locality and the production of identity within Taiwan (Hsu, 2009).

As a collectivity shaped by geopolitics and legacies of imperialism and colonialism, diasporic Taiwanese in the United States have been generally overlooked in Asian American studies (Cheng, 2017). English language material on the transnational and social history of Taiwan remains limited; scholarly literature in English focussing centrally on Taiwanese Americans includes about a dozen published monographs (Cheng, 2017). Franklin Ng (1998) provides an introductory overview of Taiwanese American history, culture, and communities. Hsiang-Shui Chen (1992) focuses on mapping the alternative community enclaves and transpacific organisation of post-1965 Taiwanese immigrants in New York. Taiwanese people also make appearances in broader academic work exploring US immigration history with relation to ethnic Chinese people (Ling and Austin, 2010; Hsu, 2017).

Other scholarly work focuses on the role of religion among Taiwanese Americans (Chen, 2008), the political participation of Taiwanese in homeland and/or hostland politics (Chang, 2004; Lien, 2007; Lien, 2010; Lien and Harvie, 2012), the role of

navigational and aspirational capital in educational mobility (Lu, 2013; Lu, 2014), and transnational home, family, and place making (Lee, 2005a; Chang, 2006; Lan, 2018). The bulk of scholarship characterises Taiwanese student migration between the 1960s-1990s as part of the pursuit of individual and family betterment and as a desire to participate in the “American Dream”, and political factors tend to be presented as ancillary rather than central (Cheng, 2017). The best known work on Taiwanese immigrants highlights their transpacific “astronaut” lifestyles (Saxenian and Motoyama, 2002; Chang, 2006), their “parachute kids” (Chiang-Hom, 2004; Tsong and Liu, 2009), and their “flexible citizenship” (Ong, 1999), as they move strategically between nations and situate family members in elite houses, schools, and workplaces across the Pacific Rim (Lan, 2018).

1.3.3 Moving toward an interdisciplinary approach to soft power

International soft power policies fall within the field of external cultural policy. These policies and the associated range of issues involved in how states organise and design their cultural projection abroad have traditionally been assigned to the discipline of international relations, usually under the label of foreign cultural policy, or, more recently, of cultural and public diplomacy (Paschalidis, 2009). Yet the multidimensionality of this particular policy domain renders it a crucial domain of contemporary cultural policy and interdisciplinary research. External cultural policies are enacted amidst an intricate interplay of domestic and international cultural policies, the dense interweaving of cultural politics and cultural economics, and the complex dialectic between the concepts of culture, definitions of national identity, and the regulation of national culture that characterise it (Dominguez and Wu, 1998; Paschalidis, 2009).

For East Asian nations, cultural distinctiveness and competitiveness is perceived as urgent for the sake of national unity, and thereby regional influence and international strength (Dominguez and Wu, 1998; Lee and Melissen, 2011; Sohn, 2011). At the heart of this cultural agenda is the crucial modality of nationalism. As Virginia Dominguez and David Wu (1998 p3) point out, 'at stake are the grounds for asserting boundedness, and through boundedness, claims to recognition, equality,

privilege, or sovereignty.' To achieve a common identity, narratives tend to portray national identity and ethnic identity as fixed, with clear borders, by drawing heavily on selected historic socio-political events to reify a particular ancestry and/or culture (Brown, 2004). These narratives are challenged in diasporic contexts, where diasporic subjects must constantly negotiate their identities across cultures, and are shaped by and confront very different forces on the ground in their nations of settlement in relation to wider global shifts. As Allen Chun (1996 p130) suggests, the very nature of identity is a selective process in the mind of individual subject-actors grounded in local contexts of power and meaning. Thus, a diasporic ethnic identity is not something that is fixed or stable, defined by either the point of origin or the nodes in the transnational network across which migrants move (Kuehn et al., 2013 p16).

Soft power campaigns are often criticised due to their lack of consideration for the receiving audience's active engagement, opinions, or perspectives (McClory, 2011). A related issue is the tendency toward a reductionist state focus in soft power analysis. Yet, as noted above, the grounded experience of actual soft power programs is a topic rarely investigated. This is curious, as soft power programs do not merely represent an exercise in power politics or comprise a one-way flow of knowledge and information. Rather, the implementation of soft power strategies takes place within the context of complex and multi-directional flows of people, resources, practices, and ideas. States and their representative bodies often engage migrant communities and translocal networks as part of the process of connecting and communicating with populations and institutions at a local-to-local level. State "soft power" programs thus become entangled in the diverse and contradictory effects of various forms of interconnectedness between places, institutions, and the various agents involved in the process of implementing specific soft power strategies.

Considering the specific local and socio-cultural context of an audience, and whether and how they engage with specific soft power cultural images and values, can offer valuable and original insight into the actual role(s) these soft power programs are playing within communities. By examining specific contextual instances of soft power practice within an interdisciplinary framework, it may be possible to uncover the complexity of these programs, embedded within specific

locales, histories, and diasporic communities. A translocal perspective of soft power practice, therefore, avoids reducing soft power to a megaphone of nationalism by allowing analytical focus to shift beyond the limits of the nation state to instead explore other socio-spatial configurations and border transgressions that may be taking place (Martin, 2017).

1.3.4 Research niche

This research represents a modest attempt to begin probing the interdisciplinary space between political strategies aimed at generating cultural soft power and the fundamentally social and relational nature of implementing these strategies through a grounded analysis of a specific program. So far as I am aware, this is an original undertaking. Although there is a proliferation of research being published on the various aspects of China's Confucius Institutes (Zhang, 2010a; Whittaker, 2013; Switzer, 2017), there are fewer studies exploring Taiwan's cultural diplomacy (Alexander, 2014; Zheng, 2020). Alexander's (2014) multi-site analysis of Taiwan's public diplomacy in Central America considers the role of the Chinese and Taiwanese diaspora in the effectiveness of Taipei's public diplomacy efforts. However, the geopolitical battle and motives that bind underdeveloped countries to one disputing party or another differ greatly from the asymmetrical issues of essential survival and international security that tie Taiwan to the US. Indeed, for nearly half a century careful management of US-Taiwan relations has been the lynchpin of stable Sino-US relations (Steinberg, 2020). Likewise, the political engagement and mobilisation of the US-based Taiwanese diaspora is of unique importance to Taipei. Meanwhile, since the initial excitement about Taiwan Academy being established wore off, there has been little reference to it within academic literature (with the notable exception of Wei's PhD thesis (2017) on Taiwanese cultural diplomacy and policy).

As I have noted, there is little English language research analysing Taiwan Academy, Taiwan's contemporary external cultural relations from a cultural studies perspective. One value of this approach is that it underscores the importance of de-Westernising approaches to soft power and re-conceptualising it along localised lines. This approach is needed in order to meaningfully address the actual ways that soft power is being utilised, exported and embedded within various political, cultural,

social, and spatial contexts. Although the rhetoric of soft power is found predominantly in *political* discourse and policymaking, this thesis proposes that soft power was re-appropriated by Ma's KMT administration in Taiwan to embed specific *cultural* governance strategies, particularly within the implementation of Taiwan Academy. These strategies were directed primarily toward domestic and overseas Taiwanese audiences.

As mentioned in section 1.3.2, the narratives and experiences of the Taiwanese diaspora are generally under-theorised within academia. This could relate to the fact that literature on migrants and diasporas generally privileges narratives of resistance. Because the Taiwanese as an immigrant demographic tend to perform well above average on markers of economic and educational achievement, socio-economic status, social integration, and political participation, they do not fit so easily into this narrative. This research therefore also presents an original contribution to and a meaningful expansion of the existing body of work exploring the experiences and narratives of the Taiwanese diaspora, particularly in the US. In this research I seek to avoid conceptualising the diaspora on nationalist or political lines, whether in continuity with or resistance to ROC ideology. Rather, I draw from insights in the theorisation of translocality that emphasise the emergence of multidirectional and overlapping networks that facilitate the circulation of people, resources, practices, and ideas (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013 p7). I found that the Taiwan Academy in New York existed in relation to translocal networks that were both structured by the actions of the people involved and at the same time provided a structure for these very actions (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). Linking the diverse and sometimes contradictory effects of interconnectedness between places, institutions, and actors to cultural soft power flows presents a complex theoretical challenge; nonetheless, I hope to show in this thesis that it is a worthwhile endeavour.

1.4 Historical backgrounds

It is necessary to ground any discussion about Taiwan within the island's unique political contexts. Accordingly, this section provides a short historical account of Taiwan's political evolution, which is irrevocably bound to the cross-Strait

sovereignty dispute. It then briefly outlines the specific domestic and international contexts that led to the creation of Taiwan Academies. Finally, to situate the Taiwan Academy implementation within its overarching socio-geographic context, I provide an abridged history of Taiwanese immigration to the US.

1.4.1 The Taiwan Strait: Key historical and political contexts

The contemporary era of Taiwanese politics is commonly dated from 1945, when Taiwan was put under the administrative control of the Republic of China (ROC), ruled by the KMT, following Japan's defeat at the end of World War II (Lien and Chen, 2012). However, following its defeat to the CCP, the KMT retreated from the mainland to Taiwan in 1949 and enforced martial law on the island from 1949 to 1987. The KMT utilised culture in the post-1949 era as a central proponent of its claim to legitimacy as the governing regime of China (Dominguez and Wu, 1998); in this sense, the ROC struggle for nationhood has for many decades rallied around the construction of a set of conscious ideological or mythological beliefs to cultivate collective identity, a sense of self-esteem, and societal resistance (Chun, 1998).

Taiwan's post-war export-oriented economic development was supported by the US on the basis of Cold War bipolarity that favoured the KMT as a bulwark against communist China's expansion. The US turned a blind eye to the KMT reign of terror.⁹ US assistance prevented military invasion from Communist China, strengthening the ROC's defence capabilities and steadying its hitherto chaotic economy. However, as post Cold War geopolitics shifted and the PRC became increasingly powerful, the ROC began losing allies to the PRC and became increasingly politically isolated. Most significant for Taiwan was de-recognition by the US, its supposed benefactor and protector, in 1979, and the end of the Sino-American Mutual Defence Treaty in 1980, as Taiwan lost strategic value to the US global security strategy following the end of the Cold War (Cheng, 2017). Taiwanese embassies were no longer permitted in the US following de-recognition, so cultural

⁹ The several decades following the establishment of martial law in 1949 are known in Taiwan as the White Terror. During the White Terror era the population of Taiwan was subjected to high levels of social control, surveillance, censorship, and intimidation. Many who emigrated during this time were put on a KMT blacklist, effectively forbidden to return. More than 90,000 people were arrested under charges of sedition, and thousands were executed or imprisoned.

exchange became a political lifeline for accessing audiences and engaging in unofficial diplomacy to generate wider support and recognition.

Restrictions on Taiwan's politics were gradually eased in response to the external and internal pressure produced by these changes. In need of new bases of legitimacy and national consensus, the government was opened up to native Taiwanese and non-KMT perspectives. Internationally, the KMT was forced to re-examine its agenda for a global or pan-Chinese nationalism (Lien and Chen, 2012). Domestically, the liberalisation of Taiwan paved the way for successive policies of Taiwanisation that fostered, respectively: the legalisation of Taiwan's first genuine opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986, the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, and the transition to democratisation in 1996. State power was peacefully transferred to DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian in 2000, and then won back by the KMT, led by Ma Ying-jeou, in 2008. Ma completed two terms in office and has since been succeeded by Taiwan's first female President, Tsai Ing-wen, from the DPP.

However, Taiwan's domestic achievements have been overshadowed by constant territorial and legitimacy disputes with the PRC. Taiwan is regarded as a 'non-state by the traditional rules of international law, lacking formal diplomatic relations with most states and membership in the United Nations and most other intergovernmental organisation' (Clough, 1993b p73). Despite this, the ROC continues to function as a *de facto* independent state, which 'fulfils all criteria for statehood but has not been recognised by the international community as a state' (Kaczorowska-Ireland, 2015 p187). The Taiwanese government has long utilised alternative measures in order to participate in global affairs, such as public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and foreign aid.

Beijing uses a comprehensive campaign incorporating diplomatic, economic, and military coercion to discourage any perceived move by Taipei toward independence. Competition between Taiwan and China over official recognition from international organisations and small states that have maintained their diplomatic ties with Taiwan is especially fierce. In countries that maintain official diplomatic relations with China, Taipei sets up representative offices as an alternative embassy or consulate. Several names are used, such as the Taipei Economic and Cultural

Representative Office (TECRO), Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO), or Taipei Representative Office (TRO). The name ‘Taipei’ is used in order to bypass sovereignty disputes. These offices work to enhance unofficial efforts relating to trade, investment, education, and cultural exchange. In this way, the Taiwanese government tries to seek alternative solutions to maintain a political and cultural presence in the international community.

1.4.2 Taiwan Academy in political discourse

Between 2000-2008, cross-Strait relations deteriorated substantially. Chen spent his tenure mobilising a distinctively Taiwanese identity within Taiwan, which both heightened tensions with China and worsened relations with the US (Matsuda, 2015). His 2004 re-election promise to rewrite Taiwan’s constitution provoked Beijing’s retaliatory enactment of the 2005 Anti-Secession Law, formalising their long-standing policy to use “non-peaceful means and other necessary measures” to unify Taiwan with the mainland (Zhao, 2006). Viewed by many as a war authorisation, it raised international alarm bells and dramatically heightened cross-Strait tensions during a time when China was rising economically and militarily (Zhao, 2006).

In the context of this political turmoil, Ma won by a landslide on a platform of reconciliation and stability. Ma recommitted to the 1992 Consensus and endorsed the status quo with the slogan “no unification, no independence, and no use of force” (Matsuda, 2015). The Ma administration emphasised cultural diplomacy as a policy instrument capable of redefining Taiwan’s international role (Taiwan Academy, 2011) and extending the island's diplomatic space (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). From the beginning of Ma’s first administration, he actively pursued soft power through cultural policy, first, as a way to restore peace in cross-Strait relations, and second, as a means to engage with the international community without aggressively distinguishing the island from China.

The Taiwan Academy originated as a core electoral campaign promise within this overarching cultural agenda. Taiwan Academy was a specific internationalisation strategy intended ‘to contribute to the nation’s soft power by promoting Taiwan’s

unique blend of modern and traditional cultures on the international stage' (Taiwan Academy, 2011). However, it is notable that Taiwan Academy was officially launched in 2011, prior to both the GDNV's final approval and the MOC's creation. This was thus more of a "program evolution", retrospectively incorporated into relevant parent policies from the MOC as they took effect. In this sense, the role and function of Taiwan Academy is more clearly visible by examining its rhetorical and political contexts than by engaging in specific policy analysis.

In many ways, Taiwan Academy was inextricable from Ma's vision to capitalise on Taiwan's Chinese cultural heritage. Significantly, Taiwan Academy rhetoric explicitly downplayed the process of Taiwanisation that Beijing associated with incremental steps toward independence. This cultural vision conceptualised from "above" attempted to ground Taiwan's international presence in traditional Chinese culture. However, my research found that these cultural messages were not being translated and communicated through Taiwan Academy cultural programs in a straightforward process of state-to-society implementation. Instead, in New York, a dynamic negotiation was taking place between officials in Taipei, officials in New York, cultural practitioners, and the New York Taiwanese diaspora. This negotiation re-/defined the local role, function, and audience of Taiwan Academy, based on specific socio-cultural and temporal diasporic contexts. In order to understand this local diasporic function, however, it is necessary to situate this analysis within the broader historical and socio-cultural contexts of Taiwanese immigration to the US.

1.4.3 A brief history of Taiwanese immigration to the United States

Due to the circumstances surrounding Taiwanese migration, Taiwanese/Americans¹⁰ (Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Wang, 2013a) have always tended to be better educated, of higher socio-economic status, and have a higher naturalisation

¹⁰ The solidus, as used by scholars such as David Palumbo Liu (1999) is an important, if awkward, shorthand that represents the instability, interconnectedness, and crossovers inherent in a marginalised transnational identity, and splits the term open for (re)examination and re-signification. The slash acknowledges the important differences between being both "Taiwanese" and "American" as well as the unsettled and dynamic movement between the two, particularly as read against the immutable ideal of "becoming American" (Wang, 2013). I use the slash to highlight the persistent re-negotiation of the communal Taiwanese identity in America, which is characterised by contrapuntal positions, multiple desires, and translocal flows of knowledge, capital, identity and politics.

rate than many other population groups (Lien and Harvie, 2012). The routes that permitted Taiwanese entry to the US have rendered Taiwanese migrants relatively class privileged, with one of the lowest poverty rates in the nation, and serviceable for model minority discourses (Cheng, 2017 p164). Economists label Taiwanese immigrants human capital, because they are notable for starting new ventures and revitalising US communities (Ng, 1998 p22). Taiwanese Americans evidence an unusual capacity for political incorporation, participation, and influence relative to their limited immigration history and population size, although this activity is overshadowed by a “perpetual foreigner image” and other dynamics related to immigrant political incorporation¹¹ (Chang, 2004; Lien, 2010; Lien and Harvie, 2012).

Scholars divide Taiwanese immigration to the US into three main periods: World War II to 1965, 1965 to 1979, and 1979 to present day¹² (Ng, 1998; Min, 2006; Cheng, 2017). Very few Taiwanese people emigrated during the first period due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.¹³ The second period, conversely, ushered in a flood of Taiwanese migration following the Immigration Act of 1965.¹⁴ Many families migrated under the Act’s system of preferences, which favoured those with vital and exceptional skills and was weighted toward family reunification (Ng, 1998). Early on, KMT oppression was a critical push factor; later migration flows were tied to fears of a PRC military attack (Arrigo, 2006). A “brain drain” saw tens of thousands of Taiwanese youth migrate to the US for graduate school, usually financed by scholarships (Chang, 1992). Less than ten per cent of these students returned to

¹¹ In his book on the Asian Donorgate Scandal of 2004, Michael Chang (2004) charts how public discourse on ethnic Chinese Americans, and by proxy all Asian Americans, depicted them as foreigners subversively attempting to buy influence with US politicians and sway electoral outcomes. In this sense, getting citizenship is hardly sufficient or secure, and the political incorporation of Taiwanese Americans may be temporary, contingent, and reversible.

¹² These periods reflect Cold War geopolitics, significant domestic political and economic transitions, as well as specific global histories of migration and militarism that have had defining effects on Taiwan's political status and Taiwanese immigration.

¹³ Taiwanese immigrants during the first immigration period were mostly poor students or military wives of US soldiers who had been stationed in Taiwan, many returning after the Korean War. They tended to settle along the East and West Coasts.

¹⁴ The Immigration Act of 1965 increased the annual quote of Chinese immigrants allowed into the United States to 20,000. It also put in place a system that emphasised family reunification, granting 74 percent of all permanent visas to family reunification categories. This enabled Taiwanese immigrants to obtain visas for their spouses and families.

Taiwan¹⁵ (O'Neil, 2003). Those who couldn't find work turned to practical business opportunities, such as real estate and restaurant businesses (Arrigo, 2006).

There were significant differences between early “native Taiwanese” migrants (Hokkien-speaking ethnic Chinese who lived in Taiwan for generations prior to the arrival of Chang Kai-shek) and “mainlander” migrants, who had immigrated to Taiwan after 1945 with the ROC government. Many native Taiwanese migrants spoke only Hokkien to their children and refused to put them in the community-organised, ROC OCAC supported Mandarin language schools set up in the 1970s (Arrigo, 2006). The native Taiwanese migrants tended to be more approving of their children's Americanisation than mainlander migrants (ibid). Relations with the homeland government also differed between the two groups. Many mainlanders were more politically passive and represented KMT perspectives (Arrigo, 2006). Conversely, many native Taiwanese became politically active against the KMT while studying in the US (Hioe, 2015).

After 1970, the formation of a distinct Taiwan identity accelerated rapidly among Taiwanese in America, catapulted by geopolitical shifts such as the PRC's accession to the China seat in the United Nations, which sealed the delegitimisation of the ROC¹⁶ (Arrigo, 2006; Hsiau, 2013). The overseas Taiwan independence movement¹⁷ relocated from Japan to the US in 1971, and a nationwide proliferation of Hokkien-speaking Taiwanese American associations caused the US to become a reservoir of support for the opposition movement in Taiwan (Arrigo, 2006; Cheng, 2017). Hokkien-speaking Taiwanese Christian church congregations also played a militant role in promoting Taiwanese identity and independence in America (Arrigo, 2006). The ROC retaliated with competing associations, events, and spy networks (ibid). The FBI cooperated with KMT efforts to spy on and intimidate Taiwanese

¹⁵ Taiwanese graduates often became professors (mostly mainlanders) or technical specialists working within military-industrial structures, although job opportunities gradually expanded. Native Taiwanese had a small advantage over mainlanders in obtaining employment within technical specialist roles, able to obtain security clearances more easily as they had no ties to Communist China.

¹⁶ The Taiwanese community was split between mainlanders, who claimed Taiwan was part of China, and native Taiwanese, who demurred. Events such as The Diaoyutai Movement reinforced this split.

¹⁷ The movement reorganised as the World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI).

people and political activists on US soil, with sometimes violent consequences¹⁸ (Huang, 2010; Cheng, 2017).

The Taiwanese democratic movement of 1978-79, which culminated in the Formosa Magazine organisation, the Kaohsiung Incident, and the subsequent trials, galvanised Taiwanese Americans (Arrigo, 2006). They called local American media, petitioned Congressmen and Senators, made presentations to American churches and civic groups, and attended public demonstrations in main US cities, protesting KMT human rights atrocities and calling for Taiwan's democratisation. Overall, these mobilisation efforts brought the Taiwanese people more into the realm of American society, at least the middle-upper class sectors of it (Arrigo, 2006).

The most recent period of Taiwanese immigration was marked by deep political trauma. US de-recognition effectively rendered existing and new Taiwanese immigrants "nonpersons", holding passports from a country that no longer existed (Ng, 1998). One third of all Taiwanese migrants in the US entered during the 1980s, seeking an escape route from an uncertain political future. Migrants were increasingly affluent, tied to international business and finance flows (Arrigo, 2006).

The geopolitical transition profoundly altered the balance of power between Taiwanese Americans and their homeland government. Several Taiwanese American associations were established in the early 1980s to lobby Washington for the democratisation of Taiwan. Within a few years, they could make more impact on Congress than MOFA, forcing MOFA into reluctant acceptance of this new foreign relations status quo (Arrigo, 2006 p19). Taiwanese Americans were a critical component in the overseas faction that supported the peaceful transition of Taiwan to a democracy¹⁹ (Lin, 1991; Tien, 1993; Roy, 2003; Fan, 2004; Lien, 2010). The political liberalisation of Taiwan in the late 1980s and a simultaneous increase in PRC migration to the US decreased the differences between native Taiwanese and

¹⁸ Those identified as "opposition" faced the loss of ROC passport, blacklisting for re-entry to Taiwan and jobs in government institutions, harassment of relatives in Taiwan, and even arrest on return to Taiwan.

¹⁹ For example, Linda Arrigo (2006) notes that a Taiwan Democratic Party was announced in May, 1986 in California; the associated awareness campaign across the US supported Taipei-based political mobilisation efforts and raised US\$500,000. The announcement of a formal opposition party, in Taipei, took place in September.

mainlanders in America, gradually shifting the lines of identification for Taiwanese Americans.

Without diplomatic recognition, Taipei is much more dependent on the political engagement of the Taiwanese diaspora. Taiwanese Americans continue to lead the charge for a distinctive “Taiwanese” political identity in the US, exemplified by the ongoing civilian-led campaign for distinctive numeration in the US census (Kuo, 2017). However, the number of those registered as Taiwan-born is more than three times the number of Taiwanese identifiers in the census, a gap so large that it may not be a simple issue of census under-enumeration (Lien and Harvie, 2012 p142). It may be an issue of political preference, as the label “Taiwanese” is still associated with the pro-independence movement and DPP sympathisers. Conversely, it could reflect the fact that drawing distinctions between Taiwanese and Chinese is increasingly an abstraction for new generations of American-born Taiwanese (Lien and Harvie, 2012). The census campaign thus underscores how identifying as “Taiwanese” is itself a political act.

Homeland identity politics hold less relevance for American-born Taiwanese, who are to some extent subsumed among other descendants of the Chinese diaspora into the general melting pot of American society (Arrigo, 2006). Many Taiwanese American associations communicate primarily in English. Some share a general sense of identification with a “cultural China”, even if they do not see Taiwan as a part of China and are otherwise involved in pro-Taiwan politics (Hioe, 2016). Paradoxically, nationality has ‘increasingly blurred even as Taiwanese nationalism coalesces’ (Arrigo, 2006 p24).

1.5 Methodology

The following section outlines the research methods employed in this thesis. It details the concrete methods used in data collection processes as well as the practical constraints of this research. Finally, I provide a chapter overview of the thesis structure.

1.5.1 Research methods

This investigation follows a case study design, and utilises qualitative research methods. The case study is an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ over time through ‘detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context’ (Creswell, 1998 p61). Obviously, the choice of method should always depend on the problem under study and its circumstances. Soft power is generally discussed in two senses: first, as a set of theoretical arguments about power, and second, as the state-specific arguments for how various public diplomacy measures are justified. This thesis is concerned primarily with the latter. This case study examines the context of production of soft power discourse and the related empirical consequences of cultural strategies implemented with the aim of generating soft power. This discussion is a context-dependent task, and as such necessitates in-depth qualitative data collection methods (Lee and Melissen, 2011).

A case study design, therefore, aligns most closely with the task of conceptualising soft power within Taiwan’s cultural context. It also offers a structured and realistic framework for conducting a grounded analysis of the empirical consequences of implementing a specific cultural program (Taiwan Academy) with the goal of generating soft power. The interpretive and qualitative framework of this research design also complements the cultural studies approach to social reality as interactional; that is, a construction of shared meanings and interpretations (McNeill and Chapman, 2005; Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Further, because the overarching conceptual framework for this study prioritises context-dependent knowledge, cultural description, and the complexities and interrelationships associated with embodied experiences, a case study approach is best suited to this research because it provides a flexible structure for examining contextual conditions (Yin, 2003); that is, the deployment of specific cultural programs within specific locales and among specific audiences.

Predictive theories and universals cannot capture the complexity and nuance of these embodied, human affairs and interactions (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Moreover, the study of issues—whether they are sites of contestation, research questions, study foci—is never simple and clean, but intricately connected to politics, social, historical,

and especially personal contexts (Stake, 1995). All of these meanings are important, as they draw the research toward observing underlying problems, complex backgrounds of human concern, and the absolute centrality of context. Indeed, in social research, concrete, context-dependent knowledge and experience ‘are at the very heart of expert activity’ (Flyvbjerg, 2006 p223).

A critical misunderstanding about case study research is that the method inherently maintains a bias toward verification. However, bias toward verification is both a fundamental human characteristic and a charge that can be levelled at all research methods, not just case study research or other qualitative methods (although such a criticism is useful in sensitising researchers to an important issue) (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The distinct advantage of the case study methodology is that it can ‘close in’ on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice (ibid). This narrative-like nature of the case study approach lends itself to uncovering particularly rich problematics.

Finally, the specificity of this kind of detailed research facilitates greater depth of inquiry and a more holistic strategy for addressing localities and mobilities. In my experience conducting this case study analysis, the qualitative data collected for this thesis falsified my previous expectations and theories. This has facilitated a new and deeper insight into Taiwan Academy and the dynamics of its implementation. In this way, case studies enable research in a more open and less linear way, allowing the development of a more complete understanding of the intermeshing dimensions of human reality.

1.5.2 Data collection processes

This research utilised multiple qualitative approaches to capture the various dimensions of localised, context-dependent program implementation. To commence the research, I conducted extensive document analysis of published government strategies, proceedings, and speeches. This provided a framework for understanding the general orientation of parliament, MOC, MOE, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). As I cannot read Chinese characters, I drew upon both primary and

secondary sources to access this information, much of which is published in Chinese. I am also grateful for the assistance of personal connections who translated many pieces of information as well as government documents. While these translated documents greatly informed how fieldwork was conducted and the kinds of questions I asked during interviews, my arguments do not reference these informal translations as they are not essential to the content of this thesis and I cannot personally vouch for their accuracy. I also consulted news reports and extensively researched the online engagement of community networks in the US to further understand the localised nature of Taiwanese/American situations and concerns.

The primary data for my research was collected through fieldwork in New York during November 2013, and in Taipei through December 2013 and January 2014. I selected the Taiwan Academy in New York as the site of my grounded investigation because the cultural centre there is large, accessible, and well established. The still inchoate Taiwan Academy had a broader range of cultural programs on offer in New York than elsewhere, thus providing more opportunities for analysis. In addition, I was able to take advantage of the opportunity to attend the frequent schedule of community events and TCC cultural events that coincided with my three-week visit.

It was important for the research methodology to visit the Taiwan Academy personally rather than simply interview by phone or collect information over email. Being on site enabled me to contextualise the cultural program and thereby conduct more detailed, targeted interviews. It also allowed me to more fully appreciate the social, cultural, spatial, and temporal dimensions of program implementation. Further, by actively participating in the cultural program I could observe and record relevant events and interactions. I took advantage of the opportunity to participate in community cultural activities and additional TCC cultural events that coincided with my visit. I also visited The Museum of Chinese History in New York, and accessed specialised archives of local Chinese history in a privately organised appointment. I found these extra activities and the opportunities for observational research they afforded to be invaluable for being able to gain a sense of localised diaspora dynamics.

Through the generous support of the New York TCC and MOE directors, I was also able to connect with local Taiwanese community members and attend social events. In these observational and relational capacities I was able to glean a rich and complex picture of the dynamic and evolving local Taiwanese community. Many informal conversations with members of the local Taiwanese community informed this research. My conversational Mandarin speaking and listening ability further facilitated these efforts. I took copious observational notes and made ethnographic summaries of events I attended in order to ensure I could capture the fullest picture possible of the local Taiwanese community in all of its cultural, social, spatial, and political contexts.

The formal interviews, meanwhile, were conducted in person, semi-structured, in English, and with full Ethics approval from the University of Melbourne (ID number 1340447.1). I had no prior relationship with any of the people that I interviewed. I conducted four formal interviews with government officials in New York and four formal interviews with government officials in Taipei. The interviewees included Director Susan Yu of the New York Cultural Center, Director Ching-Jen Liu of the Education Division, MOC Taiwan Academy Senior Executive Officer Derek Hsu, Executive Officer Ashley Sun, and Chief Section Officer Ami Tai. The remaining officials I spoke with requested anonymity in this thesis.

My interview schedule was designed using a combination of mapping questions and theme-related probe prompts to support the exploration of various topics in greater depth (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003 p 193). It is the power of semi-structured interviews to provide rich, original voices that can be used to construct research narratives that gives the method its invaluable quality (Newton, 2010). Throughout the interview process, trust is fundamental and must be cultivated and maintained through professionalism, respect, building rapport, and providing confidentiality, and sometimes anonymity, when necessary and possible (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Ultimately, however, the success and validity of an interview rests on the extent to which the interviewee's opinions, perspectives, and "voice" are truly reflected (Punch, 2001). The main threats to this process include risks of interviewer effects (Denscombe, 2014), demand characteristics (Allen, 2017), and social desirability

bias²⁰ (Fisher, 1993). The inappropriate use of leading questions (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) or the researcher's preconceived ideas influencing what is and is not worth discussing are also important concerns. As face-to-face interviews are "live" and decisions have to be made in the moment it is difficult to avoid these challenges. The complexity of language use also further compounds these effects. Consequently, there is a risk that these could have impacted on interview responses. For example, interviewees' perceptions regarding the kind of information I was looking for may have influenced the type of interview responses I received. In relation to sensitive topics, it is possible that impression management issues or job security concerns may have influenced the accuracy of interviewees' responses. Additionally, officials may have been unwilling or unable to divulge the whole truth about aspects of Taiwan Academy's creation, operation and/or evaluation.

However, semi-structured interviews also offer the advantages of adaptability, in that they provide immediate opportunities for the interviewer to follow up answers, which can result in a valuable depth of data, and validity, in that data can be immediately checked for relevancy and accuracy (Walker and Solvason, 2014). Information provided in an interview can also be cross-compared with other statements from within the interview to ascertain reliability, while content analysis can also provide comparable data from across a range of interviews. The wide and sometimes-conflicting range of responses I received from government officials on a range of similar questions suggested that the opinions expressed during interviews were indeed genuine; there was neither an identifiable "official line" nor a consistent pattern of dissent.

After transcribing interviews, I used Dedoose software to identify key themes, develop a thematic coding system for analysing interviews, and crosscheck thematic codes across all interviews. I further refined these codes based on the key qualitative

²⁰ Demand characteristics are related to issues of performance, and occur when an interviewee's responses are influenced by what they think the situation or the interviewer requires. Social desirability bias occurs when research subjects choose responses that they believe are more socially acceptable over responses that reflect their true thoughts and feelings. This is particularly pertinent when the scope of the study involves socially sensitive issues such as politics; respondents may be unwilling or unable to report accurately on sensitive topics. For a methodological discussion of these issues and strategies to overcome them in interview settings, see: Brinkmann, S. & Kvale, S. 2014. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE, Denscombe, M. 2014. *The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Social Research Projects*, England, Open University Press.

concepts that emerged. I repeated this process on unmarked transcripts in order to test coding consistency. Due to the time lapse between my initial data analysis and the completion of this research, I reanalysed unmarked copies of interview transcripts a third time in 2018 to further ensure intra-coder reliability (Given, 2008).

1.5.2 Practical constraints of data collection

Data collection for this thesis was affected by several practical constraints. First, government re-organisation commenced in 2012, providing a unique opportunity to watch the Taiwan Academy, as a “program evolution”, unfold. By the time the fieldwork for this research concluded in 2014, Taiwan Academy was still being established, with many aspects yet to be implemented or completed. This has resulted in complications for online documents. Some documents have been removed from government databases altogether and are no longer available to the public. Additionally, the Taiwan Academy website is no longer active. Most of the information from the old Taiwan Academy website was not transferred to the MOC website, which now incorporates the Taiwan Academy program. The inter-departmental nature of Taiwan Academy implementation added to the general confusion; it is sometimes unclear whether certain information can be provided, or who has the authority to release it.

Significant political developments have also taken place since the fieldwork research for this thesis concluded. Data collection for this thesis was guided by the guidelines proposed by Taiwan’s first Minister of Culture, Lung Ying-tai. However, after the KMT was overwhelmingly defeated in Taiwan’s biggest-ever local elections, the cabinet resigned en masse in December 2014. These resignations included Lung. With a change in MOC administration came a corresponding shift in cultural direction. These developments are not included in the scope of this thesis. In addition, a presidential election in early 2016 returned the DPP to power. This has, naturally, resulted in a significant reorientation in cultural focus that altered the visibility and relative significance of Taiwan Academy within the government’s overarching cultural exchange agenda. An entirely new investigation would be required to assess the development of cultural exchange and the evolution of the Taiwan Academy since the time of fieldwork; consequently, my research serves as a

kind of time capsule analysis of a cultural exchange program in specific political, spatial, and historical contexts.

I selected New York Taiwan Academy as the focus of this investigation partly due to personal practical considerations of time, budget, and accessibility. The broad range of cultural programs available in New York afforded ample opportunity for analysis. Despite this, I was unable to personally attend a Rising Stars event due to the irregularity of concerts. Director Yu directed me to a number of early Rising Stars concert performance videos that were published in the TPECC website archives; selected performances have also been uploaded to the TCC YouTube channel. Data for my analysis of Rising Stars draws primarily from interviews with New York officials and research notes based on my conversations and interactions with the local Taiwanese community. Many of the people I met had attended a Rising Stars event or knew one of the musicians featured in the program. I gained additional information about the classical music scene in New York from online sources, in particular from classical music event schedules, concert reviews, news articles, and Rising Stars musicians' biographies, websites, and social media. I also reviewed the Taiwanese-owned World Journal New York news reports and archives for information about the local Taiwanese and Chinese communities, including classical music events and reviews, community achievements, and other reports.

Through my interviews with government officials and policy enforcers, I gained insight into overarching strategies, the role of departmental cross-collaborations, and the considered opinions and experiences of those actually implementing the Taiwan Academy program. For all connections, I had to establish initial links. I tried to call offices directly to establish a personal link, however, officials unilaterally redirected me to email. I also encountered rejection of my interview requests. Of particular note for this thesis is that I was unable to speak with any OCAC representative in New York, despite repeated attempts over a six-month period and the generous assistance of other officials in New York. Once fieldwork concluded I received a short refusal letter from an assistant, citing the person's belief that it was unnecessary to accommodate my request. I was advised to refer to the website to access any information I required.

Several government officials requested to remain anonymous as they felt that some of the information they provided could be considered sensitive and might jeopardise their position. The requests were mutually agreed before the interview. Confidentiality issues are taken into account throughout my references to information I received via interview. In addition, despite agreeing to anonymity, one official later requested that certain opinions and criticisms they shared not be included in my thesis due to their sensitivity. I have respected this request and that information is not incorporated into this thesis. Nonetheless, it proved helpful in the analysis of data.

After transcribing interviews, I used Dedoose software to identify key themes, develop a thematic coding system for analysing interviews, and crosscheck these codes across all interviews. I then refined these codes based on the key qualitative concepts that emerged. I manually repeated this process on unmarked transcripts in order to ensure coding consistency (Given, 2008). Due to the time lapse between my initial data analysis and the completion of this research, I reanalysed unmarked interview transcripts a third time in 2018.

1.6 Chapter overview

Chapter two of this thesis, which follows this Introduction, establishes a theoretical framework for moving beyond top-down, power-based analytical approaches to soft power, to examining specific contextual instances of soft power practice from a localised, de-Westernised perspective. It re-conceptualises Ma's soft power discourse within a *ReOriented* framework of Chinese cultural governance. It situates Taipei's use of soft power in its historical, regional, and political contexts, and in the comparative context of the PRC's soft power efforts. Finally, it identifies how soft power practice in Taiwan relates to the island's long-standing and ongoing negotiation of cultural identity politics.

Chapter three focuses on the role and organisational structure of Taiwan Academy from "above", in Taipei, relative to other national cultural institutes and in

particular Confucius Institute. It explicates the interrelated and entangled political and cultural roles of Taiwan Academy within domestic Taiwan, cross-Strait, and international contexts. Domestically, I argue that Taiwan Academy functioned as a tool to assuage local desire for the representation of Taiwanese cultural specificity, while also reifying particular nation-building goals. Its principal cross-Strait function was to stabilise bilateral relations by offering a conciliatory vision of Taiwan's Chineseness. Through a comparative analysis of CI and Taiwan Academy, this chapter reveals how Taiwan Academy's role related to countering the CI's cultural narrative of pan-Chineseness, and preserving space within the international community for uniquely Taiwanese narratives and identities. This analysis also highlights how both institutes actively engaged the overseas Taiwanese and Chinese in service of their respective cultural promotion agendas.

The fourth chapter analyses the implementation of Taiwan Academy from "below", in New York. Through a grounded analysis of two specific cultural events, the *Rising Stars Classical Music Concert Series* (hereafter *Rising Stars*), and the *Taiwan in Your Hand* glove puppet workshop, this chapter explores how specific local socio-cultural and spatial contexts led to the Taiwanese community in New York re-/appropriating Taiwan Academy as a space to re-/imagine and re-/create various versions of a shared *translocal* Taiwanese identity. In *Rising Stars*, the local sense of Taiwanese-ness is re-/constructed around a translocal Taiwanese identity that is ideological rather than concrete, tied to cultural notions of shared Taiwanese-ness that can cross time and space. The *Taiwan in Your Hand* workshop revealed social dimensions of how Taiwan Academy had been re-/imagined as a community space and thereby served a variety of educative, professional, social, and community functions.

Chapter five ties together the analytical threads of translocality and soft power to evaluate the uneven manifestation of cultural governance in New York through the interdependent relationship between the MOC and the Taiwanese diaspora. Through a variety of translocal processes and practices, the Taiwanese diaspora indirectly supported the original goal of sustaining the overseas visibility of Taiwanese cultural narratives and identities. This chapter then moves to the present era to overview how Taiwan Academy program implementation has progressed since 2014, and the

challenges of sustaining a Taiwanese identity in translocal space. Finally, I summarise the key findings and contributions of this research in relation to soft power, the interrelationship between states and their diasporas, and the complex process of translocal identity making in a mobile world.

Chapter Two: *ReOrienting* soft power discourse

This chapter builds the theoretical framework for an interdisciplinary analysis of the Taiwan Academy and its so-called soft power practice. Soft power has been discussed from a variety of disciplinary perspectives but is most commonly associated with the field of international relations. To address soft power from the perspective of cultural studies, it is necessary to situate soft power discourse and practice within cultural, regional, and historical context. To this end, this chapter is organised into five sections.

In the first, I review the concept of soft power in international relations. In the second, I construct a de-Westernised interpretation of soft power by addressing its historical resonance across East Asian political practice and within the *ReOriented* (Frank, 1998) context of Chinese cultural governance under the KMT (Liu, 2014). These historical and cultural foundations provide a framework from which to interpret Taipei's current use of the rhetoric of soft power. The third section situates this rhetoric within the necessary contexts of cross-Strait relations and the soft power discourse of the PRC, which have both irrevocably impacted on how Taipei has conceived of its own soft power discourse. The fourth section addresses the evolution of soft power implementation via cultural diplomacy on both sides of the Strait, illustrating the centrality of the overseas Chinese diaspora to these efforts. The final section ties together these analytical strands to interpret Taipei's soft power practice under Ma Ying-jeou.

A conceptual note:

For the scope of this research it is necessary to define several key concepts. First, Taiwan Academy comprises a part of Taipei's official cultural diplomacy. In this thesis I use the term 'cultural diplomacy' to refer to government-supported policy initiatives; that is, activities carried out by government and government-supported institutions through policy plans. In ROC government documents, 'cultural diplomacy' and 'cultural exchange' are often used interchangeably. However, 'cultural exchange' is used when referring to cultural policies relating to China-

Taiwan relations, perhaps to minimise the politics implied in the term “diplomacy” due to sensitivity in bilateral relations (Wei, 2017).

Second, in commencing an analysis of a cultural strategy, it is paramount to define how the term ‘culture’ will be utilised within the research. There is no single, unproblematic definition of culture. The concept has a multiplicity of meanings and is a complex site of divergent interests (Hall, 1980; Liu, 2014). Moreover, how we understand cultural policy depends on how we define culture (Lewis and Miller, 2003 p2). Due to its interdisciplinary nature, this study employs two definitions of culture that draw from cultural policy studies, on the one hand, and a cultural studies framework, on the other.

First, to adapt soft power to the Taiwanese context, this chapter follows a policy-focussed perspective that emphasises how culture represents ‘the intrinsic values and meanings underlying a cultural institution, or a *particular way* of management and decision-making of culture in a state’ (Liu, 2014 p120). At the state level, culture is something that is chosen, defined, and interpreted by designated authorities, and managed via an array of rational policy foci that emphasise pragmatic competencies such as efficiency, professional expertise, and management skills, as well as administrative concerns surrounding the ways that organisations train, distribute, finance, describe, and reject selected repertoires of art and artwork (Lewis and Miller, 2003; Liu, 2014). Increasingly, culture has also been viewed as an indispensable foreign policy tool, deployed to achieve or extend specific “soft power” agendas that are underpinned by varying national objectives and socio-political contexts (Wang and Lu, 2008; Watanabe and McConnell, 2008; Lee and Melissen, 2011). Taiwan Academy, as a national cultural institute with a soft power mandate and specific administrative and bureaucratic functionality, is clearly situated within this framework.

In the context of cultural programs and the related socio-cultural experiences of audience(s) and population(s), it is also necessary to address the more democratic, “ordinary” aspects of culture. Here, the study references Raymond Williams’ (1961) dual definition of culture as incorporating both ‘a whole way of life’ (culture in the anthropological sense, synonymous with everyday life) and the forms of signification

(novels, films, but also advertising and television) that circulate within a society and accord ‘experience’ an authenticating position within cultural analysis (Williams, 1958). For Williams, a sense of culture as a common resource of meaning also inevitably impacts at the level of “nation” (Williams, 1989). As John Holden (2009 p455) observes, understanding the full value of culture is a complicated business, one made no less complex by the complex and overlapping relationships between the public, government, and cultural organisations. However, while different from each other in important ways, these aspects of culture are nevertheless deeply intertwined and interrelated (Holden, 2009 p449).

Holden proposes a triangle of value to illustrate three interrelated types of value that culture can have for different groups in society: intrinsic value (subjective, individual, audience-level value), instrumental value (objective, measurable effects, which is the main focus of politicians), and institutional value (the value people collectively place on culture based on how a cultural organisation creates value). For Holden, these three equally essential aspects of culture are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, and offer a way to move beyond a binary model of the arts and popular culture toward one that accommodates and considers the perspectives of others (ibid). It is within this latter framework that Taiwan Academy implementation can be most clearly elucidated, as the “soft power” program is, after all, intrinsically connected to the political entity as well as the *translocal* cultural imaginary of the nation, and comprises both classical and popular cultural products, experiences, and icons.

Third, the necessity of de-Westernised knowledge production—that is, an epistemic shift away from Eurocentrism—has been widely advocated (Wang, 2011). In this thesis, I discuss de-Westernisation specifically in relation to Taiwanese soft power discourse during Ma’s administration. As this chapter will discuss, soft power is a Western-defined narrative, embedded in US foreign policy frameworks and related to Anglocentric historical state-culture arguments and power discourses. Consequently, soft power analyses, even of non-Western soft power practices, tend to centre Western—especially North American—values and perspectives, with any deviation from this standard regarded as inferior (Liu, 2005). De-Westernisation of soft power discourse, therefore, is an important and ongoing endeavour.

2.1 Power of attraction or confusion?

Soft power is a central concept in this study because it plays a significant role in ROC government policymaking, and was the Ma administration's preferred political framework for implementing a swathe of regional and international cultural projects, including the Taiwan Academy. Accordingly, section 1.3.1 traced the evolution of soft power in theoretical discourse. This section will critically consider the limitations of soft power theory

If the value of a concept were measured by frequency of use and breadth of influence, soft power would be considered a resounding success. Yet notwithstanding its prolific use in political discourse, soft power remains deeply contentious, occupying an unclear position between the academic and the political fields. Nye (2010) argued that soft power is an analytical concept which fits realist, liberalist, and constructivist perspectives. However, applying it as an analytical concept is problematic because the concept is analytically "fuzzy" (Womack, 2005; Rawnsley, 2013); that is, it tends toward an oversimplification of power relationships (Lock, 2010) to the point of becoming all-encompassing (Layne, 2010).

Despite the assertion that power is the currency of world politics, its definition remains contested in academic circles (Schmidt, 2007); there is no single conception of power that would be shared by all approaches²¹ (Wei, 2017). Although soft power coincides in many respects with constructivist theoretical frameworks (Guzzini, 2005; Layne, 2010), from a constructivist perspective the definition of soft power is *itself* an exercise of power (Wei, 2017 p22). Moreover, Nye's conception bears resemblance to many Western historical state-culture arguments²² (Foucault, 1980; Foucault, 1982; Paolini, 1993; Foucault, 2009) as well as more recent IR approaches that reify the value of consent over coercion (Yukaruc, 2017). In particular, soft

²¹ Many versions of realism (classical, structural, neoclassical) agree that states continuously compete for power. However, they disagree on the factors that account for this perpetual struggle as well as the appropriate criteria for measuring power (Schmidt, 2007).

²² Related Anglocentric discourse around state-culture arguments can be traced all the way back to Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Louis Althusser's ideological state apparatus, and Foucault's (1977, 1980, 1982, 2008, 2009) observations, which challenged the realist discourse and enabled issues such as culture, discourse, and identity to take centre stage. For Foucault, power is exercised, but never possessed, and not concrete, but everywhere, and spread throughout the social system.

power aligns with prominent classical realist E. H. Carr's (1939) approach to power as well as with Steven Lukes' (2005) third dimension of power. Soft power could also be conceived of in terms of cultural hegemony: the process of transforming interests and values into universally accepted "common sense" for all members of a society (Gramsci, 1971; Antoniadou, 2008).

Notwithstanding these theoretical challenges, soft power rhetoric has been incorporated into the recommendations of foreign policy strategists worldwide. This has blurred the lines between soft power as a category of analysis and a category of practice (Brubaker and Cooper, 2006). Yet, even when treated as an instrument of expertise for policymakers and transnational brokers, soft power is an unwieldy tool. Measuring soft power presents a significant challenge. It is extremely difficult to methodically convert intangibles into tangibles for evaluation purposes²³ (Rawnsley, 2013). Moreover, the context in which soft power resources are converted can be complicated depending on the relationship, which is never static (Bially Mattern, 2005; Machida, 2010; Blanchard and Lu, 2012). There is no way to definitively determine whether shared values or multilateralism affects hearts and minds, whether outcomes are the consequence of democracy or institutions, or which specific soft power resources were effectively operationalised and how (Layne, 2010). Attractiveness, after all, lies partly in the eye of the beholder (Blanchard and Lu, 2012) and is also subject to persuasion and threats (Bially Mattern, 2005; Fan, 2008). Further, attempts to 'stockpile' or 'wield' soft power without consideration for how this may impact other states suggest that it is, in fact, a tangible weapon that can be possessed, enhanced, produced, and deployed, much like hard power (Bilgin and Elis, 2008; Rawnsley, 2012; Patalakh, 2016). Thus, for many scholars, soft power is too unstable for rigorous academic analysis.

Finally, because Nye's conception was specifically tailored to the US context, it blurs the lines between political discourse and objective observation (Hall, 2010). As a prescription for US foreign policy, soft power theory is in many ways inextricable

²³ This has parallels with efforts to define, inventory, and manage intangible cultural heritage. Good examples include UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Victoria's amendments to the Aboriginal Heritage Act to protect intangible heritage. For a discussion about the challenges these processes entail, see: Alivizatou, M. 2014. The Paradoxes of Intangible Heritage. In: Stefano, M., Davis, P. & Corsane, G. (eds.) *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Group, Limited.

from knowledge production efforts to ensure the continued dominance of the US and can thus be viewed as an instrument of American hegemony (Dezalay, 2004). Moreover, Nye's vision of what constitutes "universal" values essentialises countries' values and culture by inferring a hierarchy, where some countries are implicitly viewed as being endowed with "more" universal values than others (Angey-Stenuc and Molho, 2015 p10). These issues raise serious questions about the concept's ability to meaningfully interpret or capture the objectives and uses of soft power within small and medium sized nations (Lee and Melissen, 2011). By conceiving of social structures as possessions of the powerful, Nye draws an overly simplistic distinction between agent and subject (Lock, 2010) and ignores critical operational issues such as subjectivity and context (Bially Mattern, 2005; Machida, 2010; Blanchard and Lu, 2012). Nye claims that corporations, popular culture idols, and civil society groups wield soft power alongside states, and states do not have control over them, but he does not explain the complex and contested linkages between states and civil society sources of power (Zahran and Ramos, 2010).

Despite these misgivings, there is an international trend toward quantifying and evaluating national soft power, evidenced by The Portland Soft Power 30 (McClory, 2018) and the Global Power City Index reports.²⁴ Academic efforts also exist. Nye (2004) used Pew 2002 Global Attitude Surveys to measure American soft power, while Byong-Kuen Jhee and Nae-Young Lee (2011) used the Global View 2008 surveys to examine affective and normative dimensions of state soft power resources in the US and East Asian countries. More recently, Natalia Grincheva (Grincheva, 2018) created The Museum Soft Power Map, a pilot project that geo-visually maps the soft power of a museum.

Although creative in their efforts to break down the complexity of culture into its 'component parts' (Bennett, 2013), these initiatives do not resolve the problems listed above. It is virtually impossible to prove that either a country or a person changed their actions solely due to another country's image or culture. It is equally difficult to demonstrate whether and how the "appeal" power of a museum translates into specific soft power influence. Moreover, soft power "effects", by nature, are processual and long-term. Consequently, a business model cannot assess the efficacy

²⁴ See: <http://mori-m-foundation.or.jp/english/ius2/gpci2/index.shtml>

of a soft power strategy (Rawnsley, 2013), rendering these relatively short-term efforts to quantify a swift “return on investment” problematic. Attempts to measure soft power, therefore, do nothing to resolve the concept’s overall ambiguity.

2.2 *ReOrienting* cultural governance in political discourse

The previous section demonstrated that Nye’s soft power conception lacks a coherent theoretical framework or analytical depth. Yet ironically, the conceptual vagueness of the rhetoric of soft power may also be one of its main sources of attraction to governments of all kinds, as it offers flexibility for practitioners to ‘get what they want’ by adapting the terminology to suit their various capabilities, resources, and cultural contexts. It is therefore important to distinguish between the theoretical utility of soft power and its rhetorical employment within political, popular, and intellectual discourses as the catalyst of specific cultural products and processes.

While soft power may not have much efficacy as a normative ‘umbrella theory’ it may, as a descriptive concept, offer a useful perspective for evaluating the complex and evolving relationships between state and society (Watanabe and McConnell, 2008). If attributing power to something is a political act, then the term “soft power” is a powerful discursive resource with which politicians can advance specific agendas. Insofar as soft power discourse has descended from the ivory tower and become pivotal to political economic discourses that fuel interest in cultural production and consumption, soft power has become a legitimate object of, rather than concept for, analysis (Otmazgin and Ben-Ari, 2012).

In the light of this, I find it more useful to examine the *context* of production of soft power discourse and the related empirical consequences of cultural strategies implemented with the aim of generating soft power, rather than to focus on redefining soft power as an analytical construct. Where the latter tends to reflect a culturalist position and may lead back to similar criticisms about short-term policymaking, measurement, and the efficacy of soft versus hard power, the former lends itself to innovative ways of understanding the circulation of cultural products,

how certain forms of cultural expression are privileged, and to what effect. It is therefore essential to analyse soft power as it is interpreted and deployed by a specific state within a specific context. This can be achieved by developing a site-specific conceptual framework based on asking localised, subject-centring questions, such as: how does a given state define its own soft power practice and goals? Can the state's soft power practice be understood via another framework; that is, are there historical precedents for this practice in local forms of governance? What are the state's specific socio-cultural and political contexts? How could this subjectivity and context reveal localised unstated needs and goals? This section will begin to unpack these questions by de-centring Western approaches and outlining a *ReOriented* framework to contextualise soft power practice in Taiwan.

Variants of “soft power” have been implemented across Asia for decades (Melissen, 2005). Cultural “soft power”, in particular, has emerged as a dominant theme within East Asian political discourse, prized because of its potential for fostering “cultural influence” and “cultural diplomacy” (Otmazgin and Ben-Ari, 2012). It is utilised as the justifying logic for a range of state interventions and policy measures, such as the creation of national cultural institutes like the PRC's Confucius Institutes, which remain closely tied to the state, allowing governments to communicate cultural messages without relying on an intermediary. The rhetoric of soft power swiftly gained traction in East Asia due to its cultural and historical resonance: notions akin to soft power are enduring tropes in Chinese political literature, ancient proverbial wisdom, Confucian belief, and the philosophies of historical figures (deLisle, 2010; Ding, 2010). These philosophies are not specific to China: they have withstood the challenges of western modernity and their influence is evident within various regional interpretations of power and public diplomacy practice (Fan, 2008; Watanabe and McConnell, 2008).

However, soft power is not being employed in East Asia along the lines of Anglo-American traditions of cultural policy that emphasise the logics of “interest” and “power” within discourses of the state, market, and communication (McGuigan, 2004; Liu, 2014). Analysts argue that despite lip service to Nye, soft power is implemented within the context of various local conceptions of governance and statecraft, which have for centuries informed regional political practice. Thus, there

is an urgent need to engage in the “de-Westernisation” of soft power and public diplomacy in order to expand the discussion beyond Anglocentric paradigms (Rawnsley, 2014) and avoid assessing local values and discourses based on their corroboration of Western theoretical frameworks. To this end, I will employ Taiwanese scholar Jerry Liu’s (2014) adaptation of Andre Gunder Frank’s (1998) concept of a *ReOrient*, to structure a localised discourse of cultural governance for Taiwan under Ma.

2.2.1 An alternative historical framework: Chinese cultural statecraft

An expansive body of scholarship exploring Taiwanese democratisation and policymaking highlights the multitude of influences and factors that have shaped the complex, vibrant nature of Taiwanese politics (Clough, 1996; Weiming, 1996; Hsieh, 2014; Wei, 2017). It is imperative to remember that identity, culture, and democratisation are all dynamic processes that are in constant flux (Liu and Chen, 2014; Wong, 2014; Cabestan, 2017). Consequently, this thesis does not and cannot draw conclusions regarding Taiwanese policymaking and politics in general. Rather, the ensuing analysis focuses on how the Ma-led KMT conceived of and utilised culture, and in particular Chinese culture, as a soft power foreign policy tool. To this end, Liu’s framework is useful for contextualising this specific period of cultural policymaking, which leaned heavily on Confucian tradition and Chinese culture (Office of the President, 2011a; Sullivan and Sapir, 2012).

The analysis of soft power in section 2.1 touched on the long-standing centrality of power, interest, and institution to Western state-culture arguments (Bennett, 2003). Conversely, scholarship of cultural policy and governance studies in Taiwan (and China) tends to neglect the historiography of Chinese cultural governance before 1895²⁵ (Liu, 2014 p122). To remedy this, Liu (2014) explicates the Confucian style of cultural governance *before* China’s encounter with the West, to trace the origins of traditional Chinese cultural rationality in China and Taiwan. Liu’s *ReOrientation* of cultural governance utilises three interrelated analytical levels: first, cultural governance as ‘regulating the public through culture’; second, cultural governance as

²⁵ That is, prior to the Japanese occupation of Taiwan.

‘the self regulation and self reflection of both the governed and governors’; third, cultural governance as ‘governing by culture’—that is, placing culture at the centre of all policy processes (Liu, 2014 p121-122).

Liu outlines two historically embedded levels of cultural governance: cultural governance as civilising process, and cultural governance as self-regulating process. The former relates to how culture in the form of embedded ideals and values was (is) very much at the centre of traditional Chinese statecraft (ibid). Governance thus incorporated classical learning (ibid). In particular, the Confucian Qing dynasty rulers’ direct efforts to reach the minds of commoners and peasants contrast strongly with those of the Europeans, who left such matters to religious authorities (Wong, 1997). The latter—cultural governance as self-regulating process—refers to the Confucian characteristic of self-restraint that is peculiar to traditional discourses of Chinese government.²⁶ Roy Bin Wong (1997 p97) posits that the late imperial Chinese state’s efforts at dictating moral and intellectual orthodoxy have no early modern European equivalent; nor were such efforts particularly important to Europe’s state making agenda, as they were in China. By contrast, moral-ethical frameworks of governance have a long history in China and more recently, under the KMT, in Taiwan.

2.2.2 Cultural governance under Ma

The tradition of Chinese cultural rationality was brought to Taiwan in 1949 by the Nationalist government, and until the 1960s, ROC cultural policy closely adhered to Confucian moral-ethical didacticism as a foundation of legitimacy (Chiang, 1985 pp. 307-402; Yang, 2000 p53; Liu, 2014 p124). Scholars have traced Confucianism within the history of cultural administration and policy in Taiwan since that time, which has both influenced Taiwanese society and been profoundly challenged by the Taiwanisation movement and democratisation (Clough, 1996; Fetzer and Sopher, 2013; Hughes, 2014; Liu, 2014; Ho, 2016). It is important to note that in Taiwan, Confucianism is frequently identified with the political authoritarianism and cultural imperialism of the KMT (Fetzer and Sopher, 2013). Consequently, Taiwanese political activists almost uniformly reject the notion that Confucian values were

²⁶ Confucius termed this idealistic governing principle *weizheng yide*, which is ‘rule by virtue or benevolence’ (Liu, 2014). Shaping society’s moral sensibilities was thus also fundamentally tied to the logic of rule.

historically important in the democracy movement (ibid). Nonetheless, the cultural legacies of Chinese Confucianism have remained ingrained within KMT ideology and therefore, despite domestic resistance, carry over into KMT governance during the contemporary political era (Hughes, 2014).

Ma's cultural soft power discourse must be situated within this context. After Ma's election, the KMT embarked on a domestic and international project to restore a more traditional Chinese and ROC political and cultural identity that included a renewed emphasis on Confucian values and teachings (Taiwan Today, 2013; Hughes, 2014; Cabestan, 2017). Ma called for a return to values-based 'moral leadership' (Muyard, 2008; The China Post, 2008), and advocated for social harmony as the foundation of governance (Ma, 2008; Office of the President, 2011b).

In 2011 the MOE introduced a compulsory subject to senior high school curricula focussed on The Four Books, or four Confucian classics,²⁷ in response to 'social problems such as school bullying, gangs, and drugs', implying that these societal issues stemmed from a poor understanding of Confucian values or Chinese culture (Chang, 2011). School music curricula similarly emphasised Confucian education to promote social harmony between individuals, families, and society (Ho, 2016). Meanwhile, the Taiwanese civil examinations²⁸ of 2009 and 2012 evaluated examinees' abilities to articulate the role of modern public civil servants in the light of specific Confucian values (Liu, 2014).

Ma specifically privileged culture, particularly "traditional Chinese culture", in Taiwan's international relations strategy, thus (controversially)²⁹ downplaying the process of Taiwanisation as well as the more politically oriented narratives of the Chen presidency (The China Times, 2011; Hughes, 2014; Fell, 2017; Rawnsley, 2017). Ma's international speeches emphasised Chinese culture and explicitly advocated core Confucian ethics and values (The China Post, 2008; Turton, 2009; Amae and

²⁷ The Four Books have been used as textbooks for Chinese officials since the Southern Song Dynasty (960 to 1279). They are considered classics in Chinese culture; consequently, the promotion of Chinese culture inevitably involves reading the Four Books.

²⁸ This rigorous examination system is used to recruit all civil officers and cultural bureaucrats in Taiwan. It is a longstanding Chinese tradition dating back to the third century in China. Confucian canons have been the main texts of these exams since the Song-Ming periods (Liu, 2014).

²⁹ The KMT's policy positions were in many respects at odds with most domestic social movements (Fell, 2017).

Damm, 2011; Sullivan and Sapir, 2012). In particular, Ma styled Taiwan as a moral and cultural authority on Chineseness, describing Taiwan as the ‘standard bearer of Chinese culture’ for Chinese communities around the world (Mainland Affairs Council, 2011; The China Times, 2011; Office of the President, 2013; Department of Policy Planning, 2014). The MOC also framed Taiwanese culture, and Taiwan Academy, along these lines, stating that ‘Taiwan is *the* major Chinese cultural centre where Confucianism, Buddhism, Zen, literature, architecture, arts and crafts, and traditional customs are promoted and *preserved more completely as compared to the many regions influenced by Chinese culture*’ (emphasis added) (Taiwan Academy, 2011). This rhetoric positioned Taiwan’s Chinese culture, and thereby Taiwan Academy, in direct international competition with the PRC’s Chinese culture.

2.3 Theoretical conceptions of soft power in Taiwan and China

The *ReOrienting* of cultural governance under Ma signified a re-articulation of traditional value and meaning alongside modern bureaucratic calculation and efficiency in cultural administration. It is from this vantage point that this research addresses ROC soft power during the Ma era, as embedded in traditional Confucian approaches rather than Western power discourses. It is, nonetheless, necessary to acknowledge the inherent challenge of using any “soft” framework of analysis in light of the very “hard” reality of bilateral relations (deLisle, 2010 p494). Despite the unprecedented increase in cross-Strait private sector economic and cultural exchanges during Ma’s tenure, the military and diplomatic stand off between the two sides has continued to intensify (Su, 2009). Recent research on cross-Strait cultural, educational, and tourism exchanges also calls into question whether increased communication necessarily leads to increased attraction (Wang and Cheng, 2017).

Nevertheless, cultural exchanges and soft power efforts continue. Whereas the mainland conception of soft power has evolved over time into a discourse that reifies Chinese historical conceptions of power and governance, Taipei’s efforts to cultivate soft power have been reactively tied to the PRC, introduced defensively after talk of China’s “comprehensive national power” caught Taipei’s attention in the mid 1990s (Wang and Lu, 2008). During Ma’s presidency, soft power discourse on both sides of

the Strait embraced competing approaches to reifying traditional Chinese culture and values. Accordingly, this section will first examine Mainland conceptions of soft power, and then address the Taiwan context, as the two are inextricably linked.

2.3.1 PRC soft power discourse

In keeping with the historical nature of this thesis, this review of Chinese soft power focuses on Mainland discourse up until 2014. It is worth noting that the 2012-2014 timeframe of this thesis falls within the transition years when Xi Jinping succeeded Hu Jintao as President of the PRC. Since that time, Xi has implemented far-reaching policy changes that signify a re-orientation in Chinese cultural soft power discourse; they are not included in this thesis (Pecheritsa and Boyarkina, 2017; Xi, 2017; Yadav, 2018).

Mainland soft power theorisation has been radically localised through academic discourse, rendering western conceptions inadequate for capturing the complexity and breadth of the Chinese soft power vision³⁰ (Wang and Lu, 2008; Aukia, 2014; Xu, 2016). Soft power thinking was first introduced to China in the 1990s within the historical contexts of the threat of Western hegemony (geopolitical, military, and cultural), crises in leadership, as well as the domestic challenges of modernisation and maintaining social stability (Wang, 1997; Bakken, 2000; Bakken, 2002; Aukia, 2014). Chinese scholars saw it as a useful perspective for reinforcing institutionalised social norms and values among the Chinese citizenry in order to guide individual behaviour, regain hearts and minds, and thereby uphold social order (Wang, 1993; Aukia, 2014). The trajectory of academic interest in soft power, propelled by Hu Jintao's launch of a national soft power strategy in 2007, transformed soft power from a foreign, "external" concept to a localised "internal" concept, integrated into the Chinese modernisation process (Hu, 2007; Aukia, 2014; Xu, 2016).

Chinese soft power discourse sought to address the dual governing dilemma of the PRC: legitimisation in domestic politics, on the one hand, and managing the international reputation of China, on the other (Li, 2009; Li, 2011b; Aukia, 2014; Xu,

³⁰ In Chinese literature there are many extensions of soft power such as "political soft power" (*zheng-zhi ruan shi-li*), "military soft power" (*jun-shi ruan shi-li*), "soft power of thinking" (*si-wei ruan shi-li*), and "meal soft power" (*zhong-can ye shi ruan shi-li*) (Aukia, 2014).

2016). Thus, unlike foreign policy focussed western soft power campaigns, Chinese soft power campaigns target both international *and* domestic audiences (Li, 2008; Wuthnow, 2008; Hunter, 2009; Li, 2009). There are two main schools of soft power thought. The mainstream view is that ‘the core of soft power is culture’, while the minority view holds political power to be the core of soft power (Glaser and Murphy, 2009 p13). The culture school has had the greatest impact on policymaking (Wang and Lu, 2008 p428; Li, 2011a; Xu, 2016). Internationally, soft power is a tactical defence strategy to first, legitimise the Chinese developmental model, and second, allay international concern regarding China’s rapid rise by cultivating the image of a responsible great power (Li, 2011b; Ding, 2014). Hu’s exhortation to build China’s “comprehensive national power” emphasised “cultural soft power” and its growing importance (deLisle, 2014). Xi similarly called for strengthening national cultural soft power, linking it to Chinese cultural values and Confucianism (ibid).

The evolution of Mainland soft power discourse, however, is embedded within *domestic* social management, inseparable from the extensive CCP propaganda system of “thought management” (Brady, 2012; Aukia, 2014). CCP leaders consider domestic soft power indispensable to gaining international status and influence (Wang and Lu, 2008). In Chinese discourse, political legitimacy rests on several domestic criteria: first, government officials should live up to high ethical standards and avoid corruption; second, the populace, through education and ‘correct guidance’, should exhibit correct political attitudes, national identity, and national spirit; third, the government must be willing and able to satisfy the needs and demands of its people in terms of social justice, equality, and opportunities for political participation (Wang and Lu, 2008 p430). Rhetorically, therefore, Chinese analysts emphasise self-regulation through culture at all levels of society and governance.

Chinese scholars conceptualise soft power as an intangible, non-quantifiable, non-material or spiritual power, drawing parallels between soft power, classical Chinese thinking, and successful historical examples of Chinese non-material, spiritual dimensions of power³¹ (Wang and Lu, 2008; Chen, 2009; Wu, 2018). Analysts define

³¹ For example, soft power is equated with the philosophies of legendary Chinese military strategist Sun Zi, the philosophical tradition of Golden Mean, that values equilibrium in managing interstate

soft power as the ability to persuade others with reason or convince them with moral principles, thereby aligning the concept with historical Chinese culture and tradition (Wang and Lu, 2008). According to official propaganda, it is ‘spiritual civilisation’ that makes the Chinese system different from and superior to the capitalist West (Bakken, 2002). In this way, traditional culture and governance is promoted domestically and abroad as cultural soft power in and of itself.

DeLisle (2010 p496) notes that historically, ‘soft power as transnational Sinification’ persisted through times of Chinese weakness as well as strength.³² Even during revolutionary periods when Confucianism and Chinese tradition suffered, soft power-like elements were far from absent (ibid). Chinese Marxist analysts, meanwhile, apply the theory of general contradictions³³ to argue that soft power is not limited to being a component of state power in international politics (Wang and Lu, 2008). Rather, it exists among all kinds of competing entities and therefore has broad theoretical significance for generating compliance by moral example and persuasion among regions, organisations, and even individuals.

Chinese leaders have sought to enhance national cohesion by (re)centring traditional culture values via Confucianism and Confucian norms (Bakken, 2000; Bakken, 2002; Bell, 2007; Li, 2011a; Brady, 2012). Increased government investment in education as well as the domestic and international cultural and creative industries has also been essential to upholding the ‘national character of culture’ (Ding and Saunders, 2006; Aukia, 2014 p82; Ding, 2015). Within the context of culture as a specific set of designated meanings and values, this discourse imbues cultural soft power with a kind of moral-ethical didacticism. In their overt emphasis on culture and values at all levels of government and society, Chinese scholars reinforce the principle of ruling by culture by placing culture at the centre of their theoretical frameworks and policy making processes.

relations, and what ancient Chinese philosopher Mencius described as the kingly way (*wang dao*) rather than the bully’s way (*ba dao*), that is, rule by morality rather than rule by law.

³² ‘Chinese strength’ refers to times when states along China’s periphery acknowledged China’s political power and moral-cultural leadership. ‘Chinese weakness’ includes times such as when China absorbed and largely converted its Mongol and Manchu conquerors in the Yuan and Qing dynasties (DeLisle, 2010).

³³ In Marxism, contradictions are viewed as inherent in all ideas, events, and movements. Because competition exists among all entities, power, including soft power, exists everywhere (Bakken, 2000; Wang and Lu, 2008 p427).

However, this narrative is incomplete without acknowledging the iron fist of public security organs that lie beneath the velvet glove of soft power. For the PRC, culture is also integral to national security (Shen et al., 2011; Xu, 2016). The loss of national culture is equated with the loss of cultural soft power in competition with other countries (Aukia, 2014). Thus, domestic cultural soft power is about upholding the social order, and is backed by very real “harder” tactics and strategies. After all, if cultural identity is threatened, so is national sovereignty. In this sense, Chinese soft power can be viewed as a security issue (Aukia, 2014 p88).

2.3.2 Soft power discourse in Taiwan

Due to the state’s political illegitimacy, Taipei’s post-war investment in international cultural exchange long predates its explicit interest in cultural soft power (Tsang, 2008b). The withdrawal of US recognition in 1979, combined with the end of the Mutual Defence Treaty in 1980, necessitated the search for wider international support and recognition. In many respects, the logic of soft power coincided with Taipei’s unique diplomatic needs by providing an accessible means of state-like participation that legitimised its cultural exchange as something more than the limited efforts of a rogue province. Analysts argue that soft power is an ideal strategy for Taipei to gain influence and shape the international agenda in ways that go beyond its limitations in government-level diplomacy and hard power resources³⁴ (Lin, 2004; Batora, 2006; Tsang, 2008a; Wang and Lu, 2008). Taipei’s use of soft power is cross-Strait and foreign policy focussed: a strategic calculation of bilateral relations intended to sustain US backing, deter pressure from Beijing, and compete with the PRC for support from other democracies against Chinese domination in the Asia-Pacific region (Wang and Lu, 2008; Tsang, 2017). The overarching soft power priority is to increase familiarity with Taiwan among foreign publics (Rawnsley, 2017). In this sense, peace is Taipei’s most useful weapon (deLisle, 2010).

³⁴ Various proposals have been put forward: first, focussing less on formal bilateral diplomacy and instead prioritising multilateral diplomacy and public diplomacy via international aid and regional cooperation; second, utilising initiatives in human security to help shape the international agenda; third, framing the professionalism of Taiwan’s diplomats as a form of soft power that creates a positive image of Taiwan around the world (Lin, 2004; Wang, 2008).

Whereas Mainland soft power discourse matured through academic discourse, its counterpart in Taiwan evolved among practitioners (Lu, 2007). This is partly due to the reactive nature of implementation that did not give Taiwanese analysts time to theorise and shape a national soft power discourse³⁵ (Clough, 1993a; Lee, 2005b). Consequently, academic conceptualisations are overshadowed by policy documents, the rhetoric of current and former government officials, and op-ed articles debating soft power in Taiwanese media (Lin, 2004; Chi, 2006; Lu, 2007; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). Many of these authors and journalists once served in government.

Most commentators loosely employ Nye's definition and regard soft power as 'co-optive' power, although this often means anything other than military strength and punitive sanctions³⁶ (Lin, 2004). Many emphasise the concept's policy implications (Lu, 2007) and its inextricable connection to the private sector, undergirded by state support and promotion through financial assistance and legislative and policy measures (Hsu, 2008). Taiwanese analysts largely agree that culture, diplomacy, and political institutions are the major sources of soft power, although they also reference non-material sources such as good governance, a burgeoning civil society, continuing economic development, social stability, and high levels of education attainment (Lin, 2004; Wang and Lu, 2008; Rawnsley, 2017). Cultural soft power, in particular, is preferred because its more benign language enables Taipei to promote its own narratives and engage with the international community in a non-confrontational way, avoiding sensitive terminology that could anger Beijing (Wang and Lu, 2008; Rawnsley, 2014).

However, soft power is a complicated conversation in Taiwan because of political schisms regarding national and cultural identity (deLisle, 2014). There is no consensus on what constitutes Taiwanese cultural soft power; as a result, the evolution of soft power discourse has been uneven, tending to ideologically reorient with every administrative handover between parties (Wang and Lu, 2008). The DPP

³⁵ The rhetoric of soft power was first incorporated into public diplomacy practice under DPP Vice President Annette Lu in 2002. She identified five elements of Taiwan's soft power: human rights, democracy, peace, love, and high technology.

³⁶ According to Lin Bi-jaw (2004), one of the most prominent Taiwanese advocates of soft power, Taiwanese soft power is comprised of culture, political system, openness of the information society, education, ideology, economic models, economic competitiveness, IT innovation, foreign investment and international aid.

heavily emphasises processes of de-Sinification and Taiwanisation,³⁷ while the KMT focuses on Taiwan's preservation of traditional Chinese characters and culture³⁸ (Wang and Lu, 2008). Notably, no commentator suggests Taiwan could or should be represented solely by traditional Chinese culture.

Scholars suggest that a “value-oriented” engagement with international affairs—such as NGO cooperation on transnational issues like labour rights, environmental protection, and social justice—could help Taipei build a positive international image and cultivate future political support (Wang and Lu, 2008). Democracy is Taipei's preferred “value-oriented” selling point, providing common ground with central components of US foreign policy and facilitating the establishment of international networks³⁹. Both the KMT and DPP promote democracy as Taiwan's most salient soft power asset because of how it reflects values of peace, prosperity, and stability within civil society (Wang and Lu, 2008; deLisle, 2014). This line of reasoning situates cultural values, via democracy, at the heart of Taiwan's soft power. In this way, the ROC government places great emphasis on values and culture, like China, but unlike China, practitioners seek to locate Taiwan's attractiveness in the specific political values that it shares with the USA (Wang and Lu, 2008).

Overall, this discourse reiterates the centrality of culture and values to a framework of “good governance” and policymaking. During his tenure, Ma spoke broadly of “building up culture” as a source of “national strength”, explicitly linking culture to internationally appealing political and social ideals by arguing that democracy, a civic spirit, social harmony, and honesty were among Taiwan's cultural strengths (deLisle, 2014 p284). To some observers, Taiwan's culture agenda under Ma was a conscious “soft power” gambit to counter China (ibid). For others, it reflected a re-Sinicisation of Taiwan via Confucian values (Hughes, 2014).

³⁷ For the DPP and its supporters, a unique Taiwanese identity helps to legitimise Taiwan's claim to a distinct political and cultural identity from China, and could thereby undermine China's attempts at reunification.

³⁸ Advocates of the KMT strategy believe that the traditional form of Chinese characters used in Taiwan, which was abandoned by mainland China, is better connected to Chinese history and culture and therefore constitutes Taiwan's strategic niche given the growing global interest in Chinese culture.

³⁹ For example, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) was established by MOFA in 2003 to serve as a bridge between mature and aspiring democracies. It convened the first World Forum for Democratisation in Asia Biennial Conference in 2005 in Taipei, with more than 100 attendees. The TFD also publishes the Taiwan Journal of Democracy to attract attention worldwide. The Democratic Pacific Assembly (re-organised as the Democratic Pacific Union (DPU) in 2005) was established by the Presidential Office to build up an international network to strengthen the value of democracy.

2.4 International cultural soft power practice: Taiwan and China

This section outlines Taipei and Beijing's respective international soft power efforts. Both sides of the Strait want to practice and demonstrate soft power, not only in relation to one another but also the rest of the world. Despite differences in discourse, political positions, and agendas, Beijing and Taipei have a history of developing and deploying international soft power strategies in broadly similar ways (Rawnsley, 2012). In many respects, Taipei's soft power resources and tactics mirror Beijing's strategy-making (Wei, 2017), and the soft power efforts of both governments are interpreted almost universally as cross-Strait competition.

This section first addresses the international development of ROC cultural diplomacy and soft power, before considering the PRC context. Although many aspects of the cross-Strait soft power competition could be referenced here, from humanitarian efforts and financial investments, to convening forums, or the regional pop cultural economy, this analysis focuses on one of, if not the most fundamental international cultural soft power goals common to both sides of the Strait: attracting the hearts and minds of the expansive overseas Chinese communities.

2.4.1 Soft power in ROC public diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy and exchange, particularly to attract the 'hearts and minds' of the overseas Chinese, have long been bulwarks of the ROC effort to retain or gain international recognition (Shambaugh, 2013). There is a well documented comparative history of ROC government policy-making that demonstrates the centrality of the ethnic Chinese overseas to the cultural diplomacy agenda and nation-building efforts, first on the mainland and later in Taiwan (Lien and Chen, 2012; To, 2014; Han, 2018). Sun Yat Sen's revolution was heavily supported by fervent contributions from overseas Chinese, forming a unique early interdependency between the ROC government and the Chinese overseas. ROC policies relating to overseas Chinese and cultural diplomacy can be traced back to the late 1920s, before the civil war, when the Nationalist government's newly established Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (OCAC), set up at the urge of the returned

overseas Chinese, was being used to mobilise, manage, regulate, and communicate with the overseas Chinese around the world (Ding, 2014; Wong, 2016). In 1932, again in response to suggestions from the Chinese overseas, the OCAC was reinstated under Taiwan's Executive Yuan (Lien and Chen, 2012). This organisational structure is still in place today.

After retreating to Taiwan, the KMT continued its anti-Communist struggle by maintaining historical associations and ties with the overseas Chinese, conducting numerous initiatives to solicit support from and dictate the management of overseas Chinese communities and organisations (To, 2014). The ROC needed an enlarged ethnic Chinese (*qiaowu*) program to solicit support to counter Beijing's growing influence in overseas Chinese communities. The ROC had launched performing arts tours and overseas arts exhibitions while located in mainland China pre-1949; from Taipei, it continued to finance extensive international Peking Opera tours (Wei, 2017 p85-90). These cultural diplomacy efforts were highly orchestrated and functional, focussed on performing 'authenticity' to establish the ROC as the cultural motherland for all ethnic Chinese. For this reason, the overseas Chinese community was the target audience, although tours were also important for domestic politics as their success supported the nation building effort.

The ROC had also long encouraged overseas Chinese students to return to China for education; now, it endeavoured to attract ethnically Chinese students to Taiwan with scholarships (Wong, 2016). This educational program is one of the most long-lived sources of Taiwanese soft power (Kurlantzick, 2007). However, poor administration, limited resources, and political pressure hampered efforts, until the US government sponsored the program in 1954. Believing that the scholarship program could help check the spread of Communism, Washington provided over NT\$200 million between 1954-1965, and the plan consequently thrived (Wong, 2016). This US-facilitated transnational student mobility was an important element of Taipei's cultural diplomacy program, enabling Taipei to strengthen its educational and cultural linkages with overseas Chinese communities and groom a large number of Taiwan-educated professionals for worldwide employment.

From the 1970s, Taipei's increasing diplomatic isolation made the need for overseas promotion greater, but far more difficult to accomplish. Cultural programs became the foundation of political strategising to compensate for the disadvantages of diplomatic isolation. As a result of political sensitivities, many Taiwanese tours abroad became restricted to local community centres, university halls, or local gatherings, lowering the prestige of events and bringing into question the impact these programs could have (Wei, 2017). Political priorities emphasised maintaining international visibility and gaining recognition from the Chinese overseas.

Until the 1990s Taipei prioritised funding for thousands of ethnically Chinese students to attend Taiwanese universities, and dominated overseas Chinese communities, dictating the management of overseas Chinese education and its organisation. However, efforts increasingly focussed on pro-ROC/KMT organisations that made explicit affiliation with Taipei and Taiwan affairs. After democratisation, cultural and political direction became increasingly unclear and contradictory due to ideological differences between the governing powers (To, 2014). Both the KMT and the DPP acknowledged the vital ongoing importance of overseas Chinese support, but efforts to maintain support from the whole spectrum of overseas Chinese waned, due to the ongoing Taiwanisation of politics and society, the search for a new basis of national legitimacy, and the reality of economic constraints.

In the early 2000s, citing budget constraints and other economic challenges, Taipei began cutting study subsidies for foreign and overseas Chinese students (Kurlantzick, 2007). These changes, along with the controversial "three classifications" of overseas Chinese introduced by Chen Shui-bian's administration (a priority system that only maintained ties with those who shared an interest, supported, or paid tax to the ROC), drew strong criticism from overseas Chinese communities (particularly in the US), setting the tone for a fraught relationship between Taipei and the Chinese diaspora for the next eight years (To, 2014 p95-97).

In this context, the PRC's rival *qiaowu* effort took to the fore, and has become the leading form of extra-territorial engagement with the Chinese diaspora (To, 2014 p17). Taipei's limited budget capacities are no match for the PRC's economic might. The ROC is no longer a dominant or even a comparable provider of service, although

Taiwan-friendly overseas Chinese communities continue to be courted. The OCAC is trying to raise admissions numbers of foreign students from 40,000 in 2012 to 150,000 by 2020 (Sharma, 2012), and Taiwan is still advertised as an educational destination for Mandarin and Taiwan studies, with a number of government scholarships offered, along with funding.⁴⁰ Overseas Chinese remain a special target of recruitment, although they are now defined as students with ROC nationality who have lived abroad since birth or obtained permanent residency in another country where they have lived for over six consecutive years. From a political perspective, this change in definition was imperative in order to avoid a direct and possibly futile confrontation with the PRC. However, it alienated many overseas Chinese communities, which have been increasingly attracted to the PRC with its improved economic prospects (Kurlantzick, 2007).

The current OCAC mandate is to service overseas Taiwanese communities (*taiqiao*), educate the diaspora, promote Chinese language and Chinese culture, and preserve the cultural heritage of overseas born Taiwanese. The overseas Taiwanese play an active role in this process, establishing and operating Chinese language centres, volunteering to provide language support, and organising cultural events. The OCAC assists via training, financial subsidies, and curriculum support. Taiwan's uncertain political status has further solidified the ROC's interdependence with overseas communities of Taiwanese and Taiwan-friendly Chinese to promote Taiwanese narratives and interests. Thus, the OCAC, purpose built as a provider of service to overseas Chinese communities, is in many ways a collaborative initiative between government and diaspora (To, 2014).

2.4.2 PRC cultural diplomacy and the Chinese diaspora

During the Mao era (1949-1976), China's overseas Chinese policymaking focussed on attracting donations and remittances, and frequently targeted the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia (Bolt, 2000; Zerba, 2008). Chinese Americans were largely ignored, because hostilities between Washington and Beijing had resulted in a dramatic decline in their remittances to China (ibid). Under the leadership of Deng

⁴⁰ Government scholarship funding now comes from Taiwan's International Cooperation and Development Fund or the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange.

Xiaoping, following the Cultural Revolution, Beijing re-established its overseas Chinese policy mechanisms as the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO), primarily for the purpose of state economic (re)construction (Barabantseva, 2010 p110; Ding, 2014). Throughout the 1980s, the CCP increasingly directed academic focus toward how overseas Chinese could support China's socialist modernisation and foreign relations (Bolt, 2000; Zerba, 2008; Barabantseva, 2010; To, 2014). Between 1978 and 1990, the central government passed more than fifty laws and regulations relating to a sixteen-point directive to pursue overseas Chinese affairs (Barabantseva, 2010 p114). The targets of overseas Chinese work and the scale and scope of the work gradually shifted during this time toward the application of what Prasenjit Duara (2003 p14) has called a 'de-territorialised ideology of nationalism'; that is, a broad strategy to unite and serve the needs of all overseas Chinese on the grounds of their ethnic origins.

Taiwan's domestic and international geopolitical situation has been a major factor in China's overseas policies. Early on, authoritarian Taiwan was both a frontline target and a standing rebuke of the CCP (deLisle, 2010). Pro-KMT forces dominated Chinese American communities until the late 1970s (Zerba, 2008). Once PRC relations with Washington were normalised, this situation began to change as a growing number of mainland students began studying in and immigrating to North America (ibid). Overseas and particularly US-educated Chinese became viewed as essential to China's modernisation effort: invaluable sources of economic capital, management know-how, and channels for scientific exchange (Thunø, 2001; Zerba, 2008). Having watched the ROC government, with its comprehensive system of policies, successfully integrate Taiwanese students abroad into the development of Taiwan's economy and the technological boom of the 1970s-1990s, Beijing began implementing many of the same tactics as the KMT (Thunø, 2001; Barabantseva, 2010). The strategy was twofold: to promote and strengthen close friendships between overseas mainland students and the PRC, and to directly compete with the KMT in courting the Chinese diaspora (ibid). Between 1989-1996, Beijing significantly re-conceptualised its "overseas Chinese affairs" work toward a specific

new state objective: to focus on the ethnic Chinese and “new migrants”⁴¹ (Thunø, 2001 p921).

Ethnic Chinese were re-defined as intimately connected to China by race, place of birth, and culture (Thunø, 2001 p921). Beijing’s definition included nationals from the PRC, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan living overseas, as well as sojourners intending to return to China, Chinese naturalised abroad, and those born overseas of Chinese descent (Xinhua, 2007; To, 2014). Winning over ethnic Chinese loyal to the KMT, in particular, could not only potentially bring more investments to the PRC, but could also “promote the development of virtual contact across the Strait” and hence the dual goal of unification with Taiwan (Thunø, 2001 p922). Meanwhile, new Chinese migrants were a special target of focus due to their potential to become an international ‘backbone force’ friendly to China (Thunø, 2001 p922). With direct lines of nationality as well as family, educational, and cultural identity links to the PRC, fewer resources were required to maintain their loyalty and cultural attachment (ibid). De-territorialised participation in the modernisation project was thus given priority over physical presence within the territory of sovereignty (Barabantseva, 2010 p123). This denoted a transition in PRC policymaking toward flexible participation (Barabantseva, 2010) and cultural citizenship (Ong, 1996). The effects of these policies as well as the various forms of transnational Chineseness that have proliferated are widely documented (Lok, 2001; Chi, 2002; Chiang-Hom, 2004; Lien, 2007; Barabantseva, 2010; Gottowik, 2010; To, 2014).

Xiaoling Zhang (2010c) divides China’s overseas publicity activities into two distinct phases. The first began in the early 1990s, born out of necessity to address negative foreign perceptions following the Tiananmen Square massacre, international criticism regarding China’s lack of human rights and democracy, and the growing “China threat” theory, which was further fuelled by geopolitical incidents such as the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Missile Crisis⁴² (Chi, 2002; Zerba, 2008).

⁴¹ The 1989 State Council policy document re-defined the state’s conceptualisation of the ethnic Chinese diaspora and re-focussed efforts to target them. The 1996 State Council policy document identified “new migrants” to key western nations, and particularly to North America, as a special target of focus (Thunø, 2001).

⁴² Scholars note that the failure of the missile tests to advance Beijing’s foreign policy goals caused the PRC to begin exploring more sophisticated tools of international influence from the 1990s on, such as hiring international lobbying firms, expanding its diplomacy corps, increasing involvement in multinational institutions, and cultivating soft power (Chi, 2002; Zerba, 2008).

Throughout the 1990s Beijing focussed on improving its capacities for building a favourable image overseas, funding Chinese language schools, disseminating educational resources, and launching international satellite TV channels⁴³ (Liu, 1998; Zhang, 2010c). The 1990s campaign “going out and inviting in” involved more than 136 official visits abroad, leading to formal contact with more than 800 ethnic Chinese associations, and visits to Fujian by hundreds of thousands of leaders of ethnic Chinese associations (Chang, 2000; Thunø, 2001). These associations, in turn, organised professional conferences, facilitated cultural exchanges, held celebrations for Chinese festivals, sponsored trade fairs and transnational philanthropy in China, and arranged tours to China (Yin, 2007).

The second phase of China’s enhanced public diplomacy was launched in response to international scepticism regarding China’s rise (Zhang, 2010c). The concept of “peaceful rise” was proposed in 2002 to soften China’s global image as an aggressive rising power (Wang, 2009; Zhang, 2010c). Kurlantzick (2006) pinpoints Beijing’s refusal to devalue its currency during the 1997 Asian financial crisis as the launch of China’s soft power.⁴⁴ Although Hu did not formally announce China’s quest for cultural soft power until 2007 (Xinhua, 2007), “soft power” strategies can be identified within Chinese foreign policymaking from 1997 on (Kurlantzick, 2006).

In the early 2000s Beijing launched a comprehensive hearts and minds campaign to recruit overseas Chinese while increasing its soft power globally (Jia, 2007; Kurlantzick, 2007; Zerba, 2008; To, 2014). Government-controlled news websites as well as multilingual sites specifically designed for overseas publicity were developed and launched on a massive scale between 1997-2001, quickly becoming key public diplomacy outlets to project China’s voice in mainstream Western society (Zhang, 2010c p44-45). Confucius Institutes were established in 2004 to globally disseminate Chinese language and culture; by 2009 there were over 200 CIs globally (Zhang, 2010c). From 2005, China began building a centrally managed and coordinated framework for influencing worldwide public opinion (Zhang, 2010c p44). Hu Jintao

⁴³ Beijing’s strategy was based on the “three pillars” of overseas Chinese societies: Chinese schools, newspapers, and voluntary associations (Liu, 1998). Although many of the propaganda, cultural, and educational activities launched to amplify the bonds between the Chinese diaspora and the PRC had commenced during the 1980s, efforts were decisively expanded during the 1990s (Thunø, 2001).

⁴⁴ Kurlantzick (2006) argues that the Asian financial crisis was China’s pivotal soft power moment. This show of solidarity produced significant regional goodwill and influence for Beijing, which the CCP realised could be wielded in other policy matters.

unveiled a US\$7 billion budget in 2009 to further expand the global presence of state media (Olsson, 2017). In 2010, a comprehensive multi-million dollar education plan was launched that included an emphasis on fostering relationship building among talented overseas Chinese students by offering thousands of prestigious university scholarships⁴⁵ (Communist Party of China, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2018).

Most Chinese soft power activities can be categorised under two main umbrellas: economic incentives, and language and cultural exchange programs (Su, 2009). The former relates to Beijing's capacity to woo states with attractive trade deals and financial incentives⁴⁶ (Custer et al., 2018). The latter, including CIs as well as a slew of exchange programs and official visits, incorporates the PRC's overseas Chinese cultural agenda. The PRC discourse of ethnic nationalism and belonging has been based upon instilling and exporting a sense of "shared Chineseness", in order to reclaim the expansive Chinese diaspora and prevent alternative ideologies and loyalties from taking root (To, 2014 p130). This common ethnic consciousness incorporates biological attributes, cultural and religious values/icons, traditions, rituals, myths, historical humiliation, and anti-Chinese racism (Live, 2012), while simultaneously exploiting sentimentality for home and village, economic opportunity, and cultural needs (To, 2014 p130). Even CIs serve a strategic role: often situated in close proximity to Chinatowns, CIs frequently coordinate with and support their local Chinese communities to organise cultural events and outreach beyond their host university (Nguyen, 2014).

These efforts to create a shared global sense of "cultural China" comprise part of what is colloquially and academically referred to as China's international 'charm offensive' (Kurlantzick, 2006; To, 2014; Ding, 2015; Custer et al., 2018). The overseas Chinese have thus become integral to presenting China as a responsible great power and creating an international environment conducive to its modernisation efforts. In this sense, Beijing's development and projection of soft power can be equated, in part, with its efforts to strengthen its attractiveness to, and relationship and communication with, the overseas Chinese community.

⁴⁵ The stated MOE goal was to attract 500,000 overseas students by 2020, with an allocated budget of more than USD\$469 million. According to MOE data, this milestone had almost been reached by 2017, with 440,000 overseas students studying in China.

⁴⁶ For example, between 2000-2016 China spent US\$48 billion to win friends via infrastructure, humanitarian aid, debt relief, and grants and loans given as "gifts" with no specific purpose.

Within this context, Taiwan's position in relation to the PRC's foreign relations agenda has become more complex. China's impressive economic rise has eroded the soft power accrued to Taiwan by virtue of the four "tigers" or "dragons" accomplishments, which, combined with democratisation, led to claims that Taiwan was a model of freedom and prosperity (deLisle, 2010). Beijing also actively wields its wealth and power to restrict the international space available to Taipei. Meanwhile, the growing chasm between the Taiwan identity after Taiwanisation and the ethnic Chinese overseas identity has given the PRC fresh opportunity to capitalise on Taipei's weaknesses and endear itself to a diverse and growing ethnic Chinese audience (To, 2014 p90). Despite the insistence of detractors that China's contradictory messaging, human rights missteps, and intimidation tactics will hamper or sabotage its soft power efforts, the strategy has proven increasingly successful among the overseas Chinese (Kurlantzick, 2007). This contrasts with Taipei's decreasing ability to retain overseas Chinese support, and is all the more notable given that many overseas Chinese do not agree with CCP ideals and values for both material and pragmatic reasons.

2.5 Soft power as (cultural) identity politics

As Chun (1998 p72) has argued, the revival of tradition as an object of gazing, discourse, codification and institutionalisation is essentially a local response to ongoing and changing global situations. Ma attempted to restore what he called a more traditional "ROC Chinese" identity (Cabestan, 2017 p47). The KMT's compelling need to redefine national identity in terms of race, language, and history by rallying around the defence of "traditional Chinese culture" has to be understood in reference to domestic as well as cross-Strait political contexts. Taiwan's national cultural narrative, which forms the basis of the national definition of cultural soft power, is inextricably tied to local politics, which in turn is itself a reflection of the cross-Strait conflict.

The politicisation of national identity in Taiwan is so ingrained that many Taiwanese relate national identity to a political party, either the DPP (Taiwan-focussed) or the KMT (China-focussed) (Ho, 2006). Thus, soft power discourse is

embedded in bipartisan politics. Within this context, Ma's emphasis on traditional Chinese culture is frequently interpreted as an inherent characteristic of KMT politics rather than necessarily being an ingrained feature of society and culture (Chun, 1998). Taiwan Academy's stated traditional Chinese cultural role, and Ma's claim that traditional Chinese characters represent Taiwan's distinctive identity, both undeniably reflect classic KMT rhetoric. Nevertheless, Ma's position must also be situated in relation to China's aggressive pursuit of the Chinese diaspora. I will conclude this chapter by considering Ma's cultural soft power strategy in the light of key cross-Strait contexts.

Ma won the 2008 election on a platform of reviving the economy, stabilising cross-Strait relations, and returning to "real Taiwanese values" that had been betrayed, he said, by the DPP (Muyard, 2008). Ma's political discourse, always value-oriented, increasingly emphasised moral leadership and Confucian values once he came to office. From 2008, Taiwan as "the preserver of traditional Chinese culture" and the "standard bearer" of Chinese culture became the main promotional aims of public diplomacy work (Mainland Affairs Council, 2011; Rawnsley, 2014). This framing explicitly placed culture and cultural values at the centre of foreign policymaking, positioning Taiwan as a moral and cultural authority on Chineseness.

Although the defines of traditional Chinese culture have long been routinely employed by the KMT to defend Taiwan's legitimacy, Ma's soft power definition of "Chinese culture with Taiwan characteristics" must also be interpreted within its historical context. Ma had been elected, in large part, to re-stabilise Taiwan following Chen's tumultuous pursuit of independence (Muyard, 2008). Culture was a less politically sensitive topic than the story of Taiwan's democratisation, so Ma's administration stressed the common heritage and culture shared across the Strait, and Taiwan's preservation of that culture (and, in part, to promote the relevance of Taiwan's political and social model) (deLisle, 2014 p284).

From the early 2000s, global interest in studying Mandarin had boomed in tandem with China's rise; by 2010, Mandarin was the fastest growing language being studied in the US (Rockower, 2011; Wang, 2013b; Fulco, 2017). This had prompted even former President Chen to rethink the DPP's cultural de-Sinification policy in

relation to Mandarin (Wang, 2013b). A number of new Mandarin training centres were set up in Taiwan, and the Office for the Promotion and Globalisation of Chinese Language and Traditional Characters was established in 2004 to licence qualified Mandarin teachers for work abroad (Wang, 2013b). Thus, Ma's approach, although easily characterisable as an ideological KMT position, was not without broader context. In this sense, the global interest in Chinese culture, which CIs were taking advantage of, did indeed constitute a strategic opportunity. Ma insisted that his strategy capitalised on this interest in Chinese culture and language (Wang, 2013b).

Similarly, the choice to base physical Taiwan Academies in North America was no coincidence. The US has the strongest base of Chinese diasporic communities in the world, and is home to a very strategic Taiwanese diasporic population (To, 2014). A 2005 Gallup poll had found that many overseas populations still knew relatively little about Taiwan; in fact, only 29 per cent of Americans were even aware that Taiwan had a democratic system (Crabtree, 2005). Meanwhile, Beijing's investment in overseas Chinese education as well as its US-based CIs had eclipsed Taiwan's status as the lead provider of Chinese education in the US and amongst Chinese diasporic communities (To, 2014). On top of this, the pervasive PRC message of a shared "cultural China" was further undermining Taipei's influence and visibility (ibid).

In this context, Ma's attempt to re-assert Taiwan's authority as a leading provider of Chinese education and culture could be perceived as a deliberate challenge to Beijing's cultural narrative and an attempt to recover some of the ROC's lost political and cultural ground with Chinese diasporic communities following the DPP years (To, 2014). Shared cultural ground is, after all, a first step to reaching those who resonate with the message of Chinese tradition. The invoking of tradition, therefore, was not merely an ideologically KMT response; it was also a tactical political manoeuvre. These overlapping historical, political, and cultural contexts are the essential frameworks within which the implementation of Taiwan Academy, and this study, is situated.

This chapter has developed a cultural governance perspective on soft power discourse during the Ma years. It has traced the historical and contemporary competition for cultural soft power between the PRC and ROC regimes, illustrating

that the ROC government has long been actively engaged with the writing of culture in various forms (Chun, 1998). The interactions of overseas Taiwanese/Chinese communities with various arms of government(s), however, do not represent straightforward territorialised notions of belonging. As this analysis has shown, these connections cannot be adequately explained by a “diaspora management” model that focuses on transnational and logistical ties between the Taiwanese/Chinese diasporas and their “homeland(s)”. Rather, these diasporic communities exist within a complicated network of connectedness, locality, mobility, and circulatory knowledge, set in a terrain of international competition, where Taipei and Beijing compete for their attention and loyalty.

Chapter Three: Creating Taiwan Academy

As a cultural soft power program, Taiwan Academy was conceived of at two levels: first, from “above”, in Taipei, and second, from “below”, in New York. From the perspective of translocality, it is analytically necessary to distinguish between the rhetorical frameworks of Ma’s administration in Taipei and the actual implementation of the cultural centre in New York, in order to avoid reducing soft power and/or related cultural programs to a megaphone of nationalism or nationalist historiographies (Freitag and von Oppen, 2010 p1). This separation enables analytical focus to shift beyond the limits of the nation state to instead explore other socio-spatial configurations and border transgressions that are taking place (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). This chapter will therefore address Taiwan Academy as it was conceptualised from “above”, while the following chapter will consider its re-/conceptualisation and implementation “from below”, in New York.

This chapter outlines the organisational structure of Taiwan Academy and then situates it, relative to other national cultural institutes and in particular Confucius Institute. In doing so, I identify two distinct roles of the Taiwan Academy. First, under Ma, Taiwan Academy rhetoric served a dual *domestic* function within Taiwan. On the one hand, it was intended to assuage local desire for the representation of Taiwanese cultural specificity. On the other, Taiwan Academy served a strategic cross-Strait function by offering a conciliatory vision of Taiwan’s Chineseness. The second role related to Taiwan Academy’s international function. Through its organisational structure, Taiwan Academy was conceived of as an international network, whereby Taipei attempted to secure space in the international community to counter the dominant narrative of pan-Chineseness that was being promoted and exported by the PRC, and especially through Confucius Institute.

3.1 A structural overview of Taiwan Academy

This section overviews the organisational structure and key cultural promotion and exchange functions of Taiwan Academy at the time of fieldwork. Data for this

section derives from document analysis of published Taiwan Academy guidelines as well as specific details obtained through interviews with Taiwan Academy officials.

Taiwan Academy was first created as part of a broad cultural plan to reinvigorate the nation and enhance cultural exchange (Taiwan Academy, 2011). According to officials in Taipei, Taiwan Academy was purpose-built to introduce Taiwan, via culture, to foreign audiences (Hsu and Sun, 2013). “If the audience is all Chinese, that’s not our main purpose,” Derek Hsu (*ibid*) explained. “We want our audience to be foreigners.” Taiwan Academy’s stated goals were to promote traditional Chinese characters and Mandarin language learning, support and disseminate research related to Taiwan and Sinology studies, and showcase Taiwan's preservation of traditional Chinese culture via cultural exchanges, which included a wide range of activities and programs (Taiwan Academy, 2011). Taiwan Academy comprised three interrelated initiatives: Digital Taiwan Academy, Taiwan Academy "contact points", and physical “resource centres” (*ibid*).

Digital Taiwan Academy was a nascent information integration project to consolidate existing e-learning educational materials, Taiwan and Sinology studies research data, and multimedia resources within a single online platform (Ministry of Culture, 2013a). It formed part of a broader Culture Cloud initiative to centralise the nation's cultural and educational resources as well as its management systems, and was also intended to support Chinese language learning. At the time of fieldwork, the National Science Council (NSC) was responsible for Digital Taiwan Academy.

Taiwan Academy resource centres and contact points were the program's international "face". Contact points were a network of collaborating educational institutions that facilitated bilateral educational exchanges (Liu, 2013). The specific scope of activities engaged in through these agreements varied across the board (*ibid*). Through contact points, the Academy promoted its programs and scholarships, disseminated information, and raised Taiwan's visibility (*ibid*). Contact points served the key Taiwan Academy goal of supporting Taipei’s education reform agenda by promoting Taiwan as a competitive destination for Chinese language

learning programs⁴⁷. Contact points could also propose their own Taiwan-related activities (Hsu and Sun, 2013).

Contact point partnerships were formalised by the signing of a letter of intent or a memorandum of understanding. By 2013, a total of 64 contact points had been established worldwide through Taiwan Academy (Department of Policy Planning, 2013). However, MOFA officials also utilised their separate contacts to establish a “Friends of Taiwan Academy” network; including these, the number of worldwide contact points was pushed up to 264 (Hsu and Sun, 2013). Some contact points utilised the Taiwan Academy name.⁴⁸ For this reason, Ma described the Taiwan Academy plan as ‘a global network for cooperation and partnership’ (Department of Policy Planning, 2013).

Physical resource centres were conceived of along the lines of a national cultural institute. Following Ma’s guidelines, resource centres were distinct from both contact point Taiwan Academies and MOC “cultural centres” (MOC representative offices that also ran cultural programs) (Ma, 2011; Ministry of Culture, 2013c). Part of the confusion relates to the fact that Taiwan Academy resource centres and MOC cultural centres are both considered overseas representative offices of the MOC (Taiwan Today, 2012; Ministry of Culture, 2016). However, as a cross-ministerial initiative implemented directly by government officials, resource centres promoted Taiwan’s cultural and education offerings on a much broader scale (Ma, 2011). They were specifically tasked with disseminating information and organising seminars, workshops, and other activities that promoted traditional Chinese characters, Taiwan-related research, and the features of Taiwan’s culture. In addition, they were also involved in networking with higher education institutions to create new contact points and promote educational exchange, scholarship opportunities, and Taiwan and Sinology studies.

⁴⁷ The GDNV goal was to raise the number of students coming to Taiwan to learn Chinese from 14,480 in 2011, to 29,000 in 2016, and above 40,000 by 2021.

⁴⁸ For example, the University of Edinburgh contact point is called a Taiwan Academy despite functionally running a Spotlight Taiwan program and hosting only occasional Taiwan Academy programs sent by the MOC. Contact points fall under the Taiwan Academy umbrella but they are not the same as the Taiwan Academy resource centres.

Taiwan Academy resource centres engaged in three main categories of cultural exchange. First, a variety of art and culture based events were offered through overseas contact centres, such as lectures with visiting academics, film screenings, classical music events, and activity workshops for print making, calligraphy, or puppetry. Taiwan Academy also sponsored Taiwanese artists whose work was showcased in art galleries such as MoMA or other public forums such as street art installations. Second, the Taiwan Academy housed a physical resource library that was open to the public (although not publicly advertised). As part of this, The National Central Library (NCL) released the Catalogue of Selected Sinological Books Published in Taiwan for exclusive physical inclusion within Taiwan Academy libraries.

Third, the Academy promoted education related activities. These events tended to be more infrequent and less conspicuous, occurring in collaboration with local higher education institutes (Liu, 2013). Due to financial and political limitations, Taiwan Academy's role in this respect was described as that of a lobbyist, occurring in conjunction with the MOE (Yu, 2013). Activities related primarily to promoting Taiwan and Sinology studies, fostering relationships with regional universities, and encouraging them to hire Taiwanese Mandarin language teachers (Liu, 2013; Yu, 2013). In addition, Taiwan Academy was responsible for the distribution of a range of language learning scholarships, and the promotion of Taiwan's Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language (TOCFL) (Liu, 2013) .

3.2 Theorising national cultural institutes

National cultural institutes are an external policy instrument specifically designed to assert cultural sovereignty and distinctiveness (Paschalidis, 2009 p 275). They are uniquely versatile, as they can be adapted to a variety of contexts and functions (Dominguez and Wu, 1998). Taiwan Academy was 'patterned after similar institutions set up by other culture-rich countries, such as the United Kingdom's British Council, Germany's Goethe Institute and France's Alliance Française' (Monash University, 2014). However, to understand Taiwan Academy relative to other cultural institutes, it is first necessary to address the role and function of national cultural institutes as a specific tool of cultural diplomacy. This is particularly

pertinent within the context of increasing globalisation, characterised by the unprecedented speed and unparalleled volume of border crossings by consumer goods, information images, and myriad travellers. Cultural diplomacy, in turn, has also been increasingly characterised by a worldwide proliferation of agencies and polices, as well as the multiplication of actors intervening on diverse scales and levels (Paschalidis, 2009). Cultural institutes exist amidst an intricate interplay of domestic and international cultural policies, the dense interweaving of cultural politics and cultural economics, and the complex dialectic between the concepts of culture, definitions of national identity, and the regulation of national culture that characterise it (Dominguez and Wu, 1998; Paschalidis, 2009).

In literature, cultural institutions are understood as a place for the construction of meanings and their integration into the knowledge and experience one has; at its best, a cultural institution itself is a construction of meanings, because nothing is there by accident, not even its users (Carr, 2003 p1). Within the context of a national cultural institute, however, this literacy ideal is not so straightforward. “Culture” is cross-pollinated with economic and political goals and remains fundamentally rooted in cultural nationalism, representing and defending the imagined community of the nation against the deterritorialisation of culture brought about by unregulated communication and migration flows (Paschalidis, 2009).

As a nation gains economic strength, it is common for programs to be developed to introduce international audiences to its language and culture (Yang, 2010 p238). This focus on language and education is central to the role of a cultural institute; after all, language is a culture carrier and a basis for creating community (Urban, 1997; Van Ziegert, 2006). Cultural institutes, therefore, are deployed for two main reasons: first, as tools for cultural diplomacy, whereby a nation can engage a foreign audience by facilitating the export of artistic, linguistic, or other cultural forms, and second, as mechanisms to foster long-term relationships that assist in creating an enabling environment for government policies (Nye, 2008b; Henze and Wolfram, 2014).

Although different countries develop cultural institutes for different purposes, the expression or defence of national power lies at the heart of the cultural institute

(Paschalidis, 2009). Embedded within this function is the value of narrative power. As Edward Said (1994 p. xiii) has observed: 'The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.' Since their inherent purpose is to communicate a state-sanctioned narrative of “the nation”, all cultural institutes serve an explicit narrative function, filtered through the political goals of the country, government, or incumbent political party (Paschalidis, 2009; Melissen and Cross, 2013). In this way, cultural institutes offer a unique insight into specific state-constructed “narratives of unfolding” (Bhabha, 1990; Harrell, 1996 p5-6); that is, how a state translates its particular culture within a legitimising framework of constructed ideology founded in the purported unfolding of a primordial and continually unfolding destiny (Brown, 2004 p6).

Previously a distinguishing feature of "great powers"- Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the USA and the Soviet Union- this century old instrument of external cultural policy has become a standardised form of national projection and an almost basic ingredient of international and intercultural relations since 1989⁴⁹ (Paschalidis, 2009; Melissen and Cross, 2013). The logic of expansion for each reflects significantly different linguistic geostrategies (Paschalidis, 2009); however, contemporary cultural institutes tend to be characterised by projects of intercultural understanding and cooperation and aggressive linguistic antagonism (Paschalidis, 2009). While the former manifests in a variety of academic and cultural exchanges, the latter has seen the highest rate of growth with the recent arrival of Spain's Instituto Cervantes (1991), Portugal's Instituto Camoes (1992), and China's Confucius Institutes (2004).

3.3 Taiwan Academy as political strategy

Exchange programs, language promotion, and cultural exchange have become standard cultural currency in East Asia over the past two decades, demonstrating the

⁴⁹ Post-Cold War modernisation and development discourse fostered a re-conceptualisation of culture in relation to society that expanded the concept of culture beyond an elitist idea of high culture, paving the way for smaller countries to employ this external policy instrument (Melissen, 2013, Ociepka, 2013). Simultaneously, external cultural policies moved away from aggressive propagandist practices and toward the more benign concepts of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations (Paschalidis, 2009).

pressing need states are feeling to internationally establish themselves in cultural terms. Meanwhile, concern about national cultural projection also extends to the world market-shares of national cultural industries, manifesting in a general trend toward engaging with the export of national culture for economically driven ‘nation branding’ purposes⁵⁰ (Anholt, 2007; Barr, 2011; Huang, 2011; Ociepka, 2013 p50). This trend has spilled over into the function of cultural institutes. In an era of cultural capitalism where all kinds of cultural resources, productions and experiences are commercialised (Rifkin, 2000), cultural institutes working furiously to export national culture begin to look increasingly like cultural trading posts.

As chapter two noted, cultural policy has particular significance for East Asian governments as they invoke cultural frameworks to forge new national identities out of recent post-colonial situations or to assert their newly found economic strength (Hall and Smith, 2013). However, the urgency of these public and cultural diplomacy efforts has been increasing in the face of China’s mounting economic and cultural clout, which is frequently perceived to be a threat that requires “soft balancing” (Hall and Smith, 2013). As the PRC exports its ethnic narrative of pan-Chineseness on an increasingly global scale while simultaneously limiting Taiwan’s visibility on the world stage, Taipei has been forced to seek new and creative ways to culturally distinguish Taiwan. Alongside Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and India have responded to the rapid proliferation of Confucius Institutes by upgrading, expanding, and re-financing their respective cultural institutes (Hall and Smith, 2013).

Scholars note that it is characteristic of smaller nations to place great emphasis on cultural diplomacy as one of their main means of rebranding and public diplomacy efforts (Ociepka, 2013 p50). For Taipei, the invocation and policing of cultural politics, along with the inherent potential for narrative power that a cultural institute entails, play an important role in defending the boundaries of the nation state. However, given Taiwan’s quasi-diplomatic status, the stakes of legitimacy, survival, and independence are much higher than competing for market shares in the international tourism and heritage industry, the promotion of the national media and cultural industries, or the recruitment of international students for home

⁵⁰ Although the commercialisation of cultural production is far from new, scholars have identified a new era of “cultural capitalism” since 1989, wherein the norms of external cultural policy have been refashioned by a marketisation or managerialisation drive (McGuigan, 2004).

universities. Accordingly, the following sections consider Taiwan Academy as both a domestic political strategy and as an international response to Confucius Institutes.

3.3.1 Taiwan Academy as a domestic and cross-Strait strategy

Taiwan Academy originated as a core electoral campaign promise within Ma's overarching cultural agenda, to attract and support votes. The Taiwan Academy plan represented a significant evolution in Taipei's cultural policy. For the domestic audience, Ma outlined his vision for Taiwan Academy in this way:

Fourteen government agencies will work with the private sector on the establishment of "Taiwan Academies". The difference between the two [pre-existing cultural centres and Taiwan Academies] is that a Taiwan Academy will be a cross-ministerial initiative that covers not only arts and culture, but also highlights the Taiwan experience, technology, economic affairs, the Hakka people, and indigenous tribes (Ma, 2011).

Domestically, Taiwan Academy was thus explicitly formulated along the lines of a distinct and inclusive Taiwanese identity. By the time Taiwan Academy was officially launched, however, its mission was to promote "Chinese culture with Taiwan characteristics" (Council of Cultural Affairs, 2011; Taiwan Academy, 2011). Ultimately, Taiwan Academy bore no trace of Ma's original Taiwanisation rhetoric. "Actually, in the 1960s, [China] had the so-called Cultural Revolution; it destroyed everything," Hsu (2013) said. "Fortunately, we maintained the true Chinese culture, so right now they can learn something from us—and actually, most Taiwanese came from Mainland China."

This is not necessarily surprising. Taiwan's unique-cum-traditional Chinese culture is the oldest KMT narrative in post-war Nationalist Taiwan (Dominguez and Wu, 1998; Cabestan, 2017). Analyses of Ma's presidential rhetoric indicate that Ma used Taiwanisation as a rhetorical device early on in his presidency to win the confidence of the domestic audience during his electoral campaign (Muyard, 2008; Sullivan and Sapir, 2012). Scholars argued that his rhetoric shifted over time toward a re-Sinicisation of Taiwan and Taiwanese culture (Muyard, 2010; Sullivan and Sapir, 2012; Cabestan and deLisle, 2014; Hughes, 2014; Cabestan, 2017). Taiwan Academy was not immune.

The cultural institute was officially launched prior to the creation of the MOC. Taiwan Academy did not have its own policy framework. Consequently, two overarching frameworks retrospectively governed its implementation: the Golden Decade National Vision (GDNV), and the core MOC policy visions and objectives. The GDNV was the KMT's policy blueprint for national development, comprising eight key policy visions and 31 policy implementation "themes" designed to build Taiwan into one of the world's most prominent arenas of cultural excellence and a stronghold of higher education in East Asia. In several places, the GDNV emphasised the goal of building Taiwan into a leader of Chinese culture (Executive Yuan, 2012b p39). Significantly, Taiwan Academy was the only cultural program explicitly named within the GDNV. It fell under vision four: *prime culture and education*, policy implementation theme one: *cultural and creative activity: building Taiwan into a leader of Chinese culture* (Executive Yuan, 2012a). Thus, by the time Taiwan Academy was written into policy objectives, its role had been re-written to focus on Chinese culture.

Taiwan Academy was thus inextricably tied to Ma's national cultural narrative, which, as noted in section 2.5, framed Taiwan's cultural appeal based on the island's preservation of traditional *Chinese* culture, together with its modernisation, diversity, and technological advancement. Officials in Taipei explained that this cultural vision attempted a complicated domestic balancing act: reconciling the reality of Taiwan's Chinese cultural heritage with Taipei's present political context in a way that would not trigger radical domestic disagreement with the DPP, or cross-strait conflict with a watchful Beijing. Hsu explained the diplomatic advantages Taiwan Academy offered:

For the time being, we just want to maintain peace with China and we want to seek more diplomatic open space for us to do business with other countries. I think we can do that. Actually, [Taiwan Academy] can help to bypass that [diplomatic issue]... The main purpose of Taiwan Academy is to do the cultural business, not political. But for all sides, because we do the cultural exchanges, we can arrange for our Minister to visit foreign ministers (Hsu and Sun, 2013).

As chapter two argued, Taipei has consistently constructed its soft power identity in relation to the PRC, regardless of whether the focus is on Taiwan's economic model, democracy, freedom, transparency, or cultural preservation. Scholars note that this comparative promotion of Taiwan's soft power serves a reassuring domestic

function, in that it provides the domestic Taiwan audience with a separate identity to confront China (Wang and Lu, 2008; Wei, 2017). Defining specific aspects of Taiwan's culture as "soft power" thus strategically supports designated kinds of cultural identity formation among the public in Taiwan, while also helping to differentiate a "Taiwanese identity" from the Mainland Chinese identity.

Ma attempted to unite the domestic audience behind his grand cultural vision by calling for collaboration between the MOC and Taiwan's business networks. When he introduced the GDNV cultural and creative vision, Ma publicly stated that private sector capital must get involved if Taipei's cultural goals were to be achieved (The China Times, 2011). In this way, the success of Taiwan Academy was conceived of from "above" as dependent on broader public support, and especially collaboration with the private sector. Officials noted that the announcement of Taiwan Academy had attracted financial support. "This [Taiwan Academy] name, you know," Director Liu (2013) said, "[the] announcement brings more funding and people to work on it."

Although budget was never addressed in any Taiwan Academy guidelines or overarching policy, officials stated that the continuation and expansion of Taiwan Academy programs beyond its limited financial support from the MOC would depend upon private sector donations. "The Central Government's budget is limited," Hsu (2013) said. "But since everyone thinks that culture is very important, and the Minister also has very good friends from the business side, Taiwanese entrepreneurs, so we receive some kind of donations." Thus, even from "above", Taiwan Academy was conceived of as taking place across multiple levels and in cooperation with multiple actors. The Spotlight Taiwan project, a cooperation program between international universities and Taiwan Academy, was financed by a sizeable donation given directly to the MOC by businessman Doctor Samuel Yin. Yin's patronage was widely lauded by the MOC.

Overall, however, little private sector financial support actually flowed into the MOC's cultural diplomacy program from domestic Taiwan (Wei, 2017). In this respect, the KMT was not successful at soliciting private sector support from "above", although this could have been due to a variety of reasons. Entrepreneurs may have harboured concerns about the effect of overt financial support of Taipei's agenda on

private sector cross-Strait trade opportunities. Another factor is that Ma's revival of Chinese nationalism was out of synch with Taiwanese society. Rather than attracting support, Ma's discourse and policies intensified domestic frustrations, prompting backlash and paradoxically strengthening the predominance of the Taiwanese identity in Taiwan, especially among Taiwan's youth (Cabestan, 2017 p49-50).

Although the domestic audience did not unite behind the national cultural vision for Taiwan Academy, my research found that in New York the program *did* successfully solicit substantial community support from the Taiwanese diaspora. This grassroots support actually sustained Taiwan Academy operations from "below". Thus, local-to-local linkages beyond the territorial boundaries of the state were integral to sustaining the *implementation* of Taiwan Academy. In light of this, it is necessary to consider Taiwan Academy's implementations strategy.

3.3.2 Taiwan Academies in comparative context with Confucius Institutes

Given the similarities in rhetorical strategy, focus, and organisational structure, it is undeniable that Ma's main comparative device in formulating Taiwan Academies was Confucius Institute. Officials privately confirmed this during interviews. "Because China has a Confucius Institute," Director Liu (2013) said, "That's probably why Taiwan has a Taiwan Academy". It was initially reported during Ma's first electoral campaign that the Taiwan Academies would be set up to contend with Beijing's Confucius Institutes. Taipei subsequently withdrew this claim. "The Culture Ministry is not the Propaganda Ministry," Lung said (O'Neill, 2013). "The Taiwan Academy need not compete with the Confucius Institute and has no political motive."

Nevertheless, as chapter two explicated, both sides of the Strait launched their respective cultural institutes within the contexts of cross-Strait rivalry, cultural strategies aimed at generating soft power, and international positioning to attract overseas Chinese support and project ideal versions of overseas Chinese identity. Moreover, both institutes implemented similar cultural diplomacy strategies. I will therefore compare the international operation of Taiwan Academy with that of Confucius Institute in relation to the following four categories: organisational

structure and scope, cultural promotion, the political role and value of language, and diaspora engagement. The conclusion of this chapter will consider the implications of these findings for the soft power potential of the Taiwan Academy program.

Organisational structure and scope

Founded in 2004, the Confucius Institute is China's government-funded non-profit international culture and language institution. According to Hanban, (Beijing's Office for Chinese Language Council International that directly oversees CIs), there are 525 CIs operating on six continents (Hanban, 2014a). The US alone has 110 CIs, which represents 21 per cent of the worldwide total. The official mission of Confucius Institute is to 'enhance understanding of Chinese language and culture among foreigners, develop friendly relations between China and other countries, foster the development of multiculturalism and contribute to the building of a harmonious world' (Hanban, 2014b).

Hanban claims CIs are styled on European culture and language institutes such as the Alliance Française, Goethe Institut, and the British Council (Hanban, 2014a). However, they remain distinct from these institutes in the degree to which they are financed and managed by a foreign government: unlike Alliance Française, CIs are not independent from their government; unlike the Goethe-Institut, they do not occupy their own premises. Institutes are housed on collegiate campuses in financial and administrative partnership with international universities, and designed to complement Chinese language and cultural studies by providing teachers, curriculums, textbooks, and other educational materials. CIs also award scholarships to non-Chinese citizens⁵¹ and administer the *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (HSK), China's official standardised language examination which tests Standard Chinese language proficiency for non-native speakers abroad (Hanban, 2019).

Host institutions are generally required to match the annual funding provided by Hanban for CI operations (Hanban, 2014b), although Hanban directly provides and pays for Chinese language teachers, educational materials, and other resources. Each

⁵¹ The CIS program ranges from four-week programs to full doctoral scholarships. It supports outstanding students, scholars, and currently employed Chinese language teachers recommended by Confucius Institutes/Classrooms or some HSK test centres.

CI designs its own budget and program, which is subject to Hanban approval (Hanban, 2014b). Institutes function independently within the guidelines established by Hanban and the Confucius Institute Headquarters, under the supervision of their own board of directors, which generally includes members of the host institution as well as CI representatives. The related Confucius Classroom program partners with international secondary schools or districts. It provides teachers, linguistic and culture instructional materials, and teacher training programs.

Taiwan Academy had just three resource centres; all were based in US cities with significant Taiwanese populations. Although there was no comparison in terms of size or budget, Taiwan Academy closely resembled CI in both organisational structure and scope. Physical resource centres promoted Taiwan's cultural and educational offerings, often in partnership with the local community. Digital Taiwan Academy was similar to the CI Digital Library. The contact point initiative most closely resembled CI's expansion strategy. The goal of boosting scholarship programs and national language learning platforms through Taiwan Academy mirrored the wide-ranging CI educational program. Contact points could also propose their own programs to the MOC; approved initiatives received assistance. Unlike CIs, however, these cooperative partnerships did not automatically entail financial support.

Cultural Program

CI and Taiwan Academy differ most in the role of physical resource centres. Whereas CI "centres" are affiliated with higher education institutions, offer paid language courses, and sponsor community cultural events, Taiwan Academy's resource centres have little direct connection to language learning. Wholly operated and funded by Taipei, resource centres effectively function as overseas ministerial representative offices of the MOC. Consequently, they are subject to embassy-style restrictions imposed by the US government and forbidden to operate language classes, provide tuition services, or sell tickets for any events. With no other option, Taiwan Academy resource centres operate a dedicated cultural program free of charge. In this respect, Taiwan Academy differs significantly from Goethe Institute, Alliance Française, and even Confucius Institutes.

A local team of MOC officials develop each resource centre program. Many officials implement Taiwan Academy alongside unrelated diplomatic workloads. Programs must be pre-approved by Taipei, and each resource centre submits a trimonthly program report to the MOC. With no additional funding available from ticket sales, Taiwanese officials must find cost-effective and creative ways to operate their cultural program and indirectly support Chinese language learning. Consequently, officials relied heavily on “making friends” and local networks, especially those established through local Taiwanese diasporic communities.

Although both institutes lay claim to traditional Chinese culture, this claim was largely ideological on both sides, relating more to ownership of the national language than a cultural vision integrated within day-to-day institute operation. In New York, my research found that Taiwan Academy programs were designed based on opportunity and access rather than a specific ideological vision of Taiwan’s branch of Traditional Chinese culture. CIs, meanwhile, focus on language teaching. Additional events are predominantly lecture or symposium based. Although a growing number of CIs hold cultural events in the form of festival programs or intermittent performances and exhibitions, these are not the main function of CIs.⁵²

Political contexts: owning a national language

The rapid expansion of CIs within international, and particularly US universities represents an accelerated erosion of Taipei’s ability to participate in the international conversation about Chineseness or its own status. Language learning and educational programs have long been pivotal to Taiwanese cultural diplomacy, particularly within the US. Even through the 1980s, most funding for US-based university Mandarin courses came either from pro-Taiwan Chinese Americans or from the Pentagon (Dodwell, 2018). This transition in linguistic dominance reflected both the increasing economic and political strength of Beijing relative to Taipei’s economic and political limitations, as well as Taipei’s loss of strategic value to US interests. Beijing has decisively overtaken Taipei in reclaiming ownership of the Chinese language, particularly in the US (Starr, 2009).

⁵² In many cases, CI cultural programs are actually sponsored external cultural events that have submitted funding requests, rather than a specific schedule of in-house activities.

CIs are also an effective mechanism for curtailing Taipei's access to the university networks where much of Taipei's people-to-people diplomacy used to take place. No university can simultaneously be a contact point for Taiwan Academy and host a Confucius Institute, nor could a university accept sponsorship of any event or program from both institutes (Yu, 2013). Director Yu explained:

I remember one time we sponsored a handcraft exhibition at Kentucky University and they asked money from Confucius Institute for our event, and they had our logo and the Confucius Institute logo, so we said no, you need to delete the Confucius Institute logo. Because here, you know, we cannot work together with Confucius Institute. We cannot talk or have any [overlap] with the Mainland Chinese consulate (Yu, 2013).

CI officials actively use their influence to advance the state agenda, reinforcing the perspective that the Taiwan Strait conflict is “an internal issue” and forbidding discussions about Taiwan as well as other politically sensitive topics. This has led to instances of forced or self-censorship as well as international concern about freedom of information and academic independence (Redden, 2014; The "Braga Incident", 2014; Allen-Ebrahimian, 2018). For Taipei, expanding CI influence implicitly subsumes Taiwan into the PRC narrative of pan-Chineseness. In being able to simply censor Taiwan out of the picture, the proliferation of CIs correlates with the decreasing visibility of Taiwanese voices, narratives, and interests.

Taiwan Academy is not dogged by controversy like CIs. However, Taipei's resources are much more limited and Traditional Chinese characters have become more niche in an international context where Standard Chinese is the global norm. Officials argued that it ultimately came down to the lucrative appeal of CIs. “The universities, they like money, you know,” Director Yu said (2013).

I think budget is very important. Like George Washington University, [one director] even studied Chinese in Taiwan, so he has a lot of passion for Taiwan, but even he cannot refuse China—they still have CI, because the university board, you know, they want to have money (Yu, 2013).

In Taipei, Hsu echoed this sentiment. “We do not compete with CI because their budget is huge,” Hsu (2013) said. “Each year, one university operational budget is around one million USD. And we have only...” he laughed. “So we cannot compete

with them with money.” For lower profile universities with fewer resources, Hanban funding represents a more lucrative and vital opportunity for members and students, while simultaneously meaning that the university may be less able to push back against institute censorship. I asked Director Yu how Taiwan Academy handles competition from CIs. “I think we cannot handle that,” Director Yu replied (2013):

Our job is difficult. Because Mainland China are very rich so they sponsor a lot of cultural programs to the USA and they support all the budget... Now, for example, the universities have a lot of CIs, and Mainland China sponsors a lot of money, but the Taiwan government is not so rich as before, so we only give some scholarships, we cannot donate as much money as Mainland China (Yu, 2013).

For this reason, adapting the CI strategy of partnering with higher education institutions may amount to a defence mechanism intended to preserve Taipei’s remaining relationships and prevent Taiwan-related studies and perspectives from disappearing entirely.

Engaging the Overseas Chinese

Although neither institute has an explicit overseas Chinese/Taiwanese function, both actively incorporate the local overseas Chinese and Taiwanese communities into their operations. Due to a shortage of language teachers, CIs began trialling an overseas volunteer Chinese teacher program in 2006 that recruits foreign citizens, overseas Chinese, and students abroad for volunteer teaching positions (Hanban, 2014c). Hanban also provides expert training overseas for overseas Chinese teachers as well as a subsidised China-based teacher education and training program for non-Chinese citizens.⁵³ Some CIs are also situated in close proximity to Chinatowns and emphasise engaging with the cultural and community events of the local Chinese diaspora, partnering with and providing support to local overseas Chinese community events and organisations whose political views align with Beijing⁵⁴ (Nguyen, 2014).

Like CIs, Taiwan Academy sponsors local community events, and as section 3.1 noted, officials actively try to recruit artists from within the local Taiwanese

⁵³ Training programs include free tuition, accommodation, and teaching materials; in some cases funding also includes round trip tickets.

⁵⁴ For example, the UC Davis CI has collaborated with the Sacramento Chinese Culture Foundation and the US-China Railway Friendship Association.

community for cultural events. However, my research found that Taiwan Academy connected with the local Taiwanese community networks in a much broader range of unofficial capacities. For example, in New York, the local overseas Taiwanese community assisted in publicising Academy events within their spheres of influence, and Taiwanese New Yorkers regularly volunteered at cultural events, taking on a range of responsibilities. This is not dissimilar to the voluntary role of the Chinese diaspora within CI, although those roles were much more official, specialised, and regulated. I also found that the New York Taiwanese diaspora was the local Taiwan Academy's primary audience. This was an interesting divergence from CI as well as from the Taiwan Academy's explicit state-sanctioned function, and one that is worth exploring further.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how the creation of Taiwan Academies was a political strategy to simultaneously assuage domestic desire for Taiwanese cultural specificity and mediate cross-Strait relations. However, its international message of cultural re-Sinification alienated domestic Taiwan audiences. Abroad, Taiwan Academy provided Taipei with a new strategy for confronting Beijing's aggressive internationalisation agenda of pan-Chineseness and securing (not necessarily extending) international space for promoting Taiwanese perspectives. At stake was not legitimacy founded in Chinese cultural heritage (this out-dated KMT position reinforced Beijing's position of "shared Chineseness") or even ownership of a national language (Standard Chinese is already the global norm), but rather the visibility of Taiwan as a distinct entity within *non* political circles, and the ability to access audiences.

From a soft power standpoint, Taiwan Academy had a dual function. As an electoral campaign promise to attract voters, the Taiwan Academy strategy emerged as cultural soft power directed toward the domestic Taiwan audience. The goal was to unify the public around the prestigious and legitimising symbol of a national cultural institute, and (motivated at least in part by necessity) to mobilise the private sector to financially support Taiwan Academy operation and expansion. However, mired in bipartisan conflict and cultural identity politics, these domestic efforts

faltered early on. Despite a publicity push and excepting one widely promoted private donor contribution, the Taiwan Academy strategy overall was unable to attract or mobilise the domestic private sector to support Taiwanese cultural promotion overseas. Moreover, among the younger domestic audience, Ma's classic KMT cultural vision of Taiwan was rejected forthwith. On the domestic front, therefore, it is difficult to even conceive of the Taiwan Academy program as a soft power program.

As this chapter has discussed, this domestic role of Taiwan Academy was inextricable from Ma's efforts to placate Beijing and mediate cross-Strait relations. However, the role of Taiwan Academy in this respect was largely indirect and rhetorical rather than targeted and practical. Although the vision of Taiwan Academy certainly fed into the shared cultural narrative that undergirded conciliatory political overtures, the cultural program itself was not directly targeting the PRC. Consequently, from a cross-Strait perspective Taiwan Academy is better understood as a rhetorical effort to diffuse international tension and avoid further conflict than as a soft power strategy. Preventing a storm, after all, is hardly the same thing as cultivating influence via attraction. For this reason, it is impossible to discuss Taiwan Academy in terms of any potential cross-Strait soft power effects.

The second function of Taiwan Academy was related to its stated international role: to generate soft power by introducing new audiences to Taiwan's culture, heritage, and traditional Chinese characters. Although the creation of a cultural institute is a stock-standard public diplomacy strategy of nation states, for Taipei, lacking diplomatic recognition, exercising the stereotypical components of a country can be an important way of obtaining visibility and asserting Taiwan's presence and legitimacy in the international community. From the outset, however, the program faced challenges. Due to pre-existing ties with Confucius Institutes, Taiwan Academy had limited access to international universities and organisations. Thus, while Taiwan Academy partnerships were able to preserve existing relationships, they did not significantly extend Taipei's international space or access to potential audiences.

For political reasons, Taiwan Academy was barred in the US from charging for programs, which meant that Taiwan Academy was unable to sustain its own

operation through cover charges for events or even by offering formal language classes, the bread and butter of traditional cultural institutes. These restrictions created further financial and logistical hurdles, as Taiwan Academy was being implemented on a very limited central government budget. Thus, from an operational perspective, and partly due to necessity, Taiwan Academy was forced into reliance on the private sector, both domestically and overseas. This situation created competing incentives that rendered Taiwan Academy more clearly tied to the goal of attracting overseas Chinese (in order to function) than to the soft power goal of introducing new audiences to Taiwan's culture.

By incorporating the overseas Chinese and Taiwanese communities, both Confucius Institute and Taiwan Academy were indirectly related to the goal of attracting overseas Chinese to a particular sense of ethnic nationalism via cultural heritage and language. Even from "above", the implementation of Taiwan Academy in the US was tied to various flows of capital, knowledge, and people. Due to operational limitations, Taiwan Academy relied heavily on transnational and local-level linkages between individuals, educational organisations, and international and local Taiwanese cultural and migrant community networks. Situating Taiwan Academy's implementation within a specific temporal and socio-cultural space will enable this study to more clearly explicate the inherently dynamic and interrelated nature of these translocal interactions, processes, and flows.

Chapter Four: From policy to practice—a case study analysis of the Taiwan Academy

My red-eye American Airlines flight landed in New York at the break of dawn. I took an empty subway from JFK to Brooklyn as tendrils of dull grey light crept across the skyline, illuminating an industrial landscape punctuated by graffiti covered roller doors. I lugged my suitcase down the silent streets and around scattered garbage until I found an open cafe. I gratefully collapsed onto an uncomfortable bar stool with the only thing available—steaming black slow brew—and waited for 8am, when I could drop off my bags and get something to eat.

“So, what are you doing in New York?” my Airbnb host asked, three coffees, one serve of avocado toast, and one apartment tour later. I began my spiel, but he cut me short. “Taiwan?” he exclaimed. “No way! I’m Taiwanese!” He’d grown up in the US, and was thrilled about what he called our “Taiwan connection”. For three minutes I thought I’d inadvertently landed on a research goldmine, but he dashed my hopes. He had no clue about the local Taiwanese community, no local Taiwanese friends, and no interest in seeking out Taiwanese food or culture, although he had a favourite gentrified Chinese restaurant in Manhattan he promised to take me to. He’d never heard of the OCAC, the TPCC, or Taiwan Academy, and had only visited Taiwan once, a year earlier. “Taiwan doesn’t have anything to do with me”, he declared. “I love New York. This is my business, this is my life. I’m in the centre of the world. My parents don’t get it. But I’m successful; I’m making money, doing my own thing, travelling the world. I can stay in expensive hotels whenever I want, and when my parents come to visit I put them up in fancy places.... I love Kung Fu movies. Do you know any?”

“*What* are you researching in New York?” my new friend repeated. We’d just met, on a party cruise sponsored by the MOE for Taiwanese university students, and were sailing past the statue of Lady Liberty, lit up in the dark. A tourist’s dream. It was difficult to hold a conversation over the thumping music coming from the dance floor. So far, I knew that he’d had been in New York for a few years, first as a student, now as an employed graduate. He liked it, although he missed his mother in Taipei. Like many others present, he was no longer a student, but he liked being connected to the Taiwanese overseas student organisations and so continued to attend their events. I was trying my best to achieve the holy grail of fieldwork: have fun, make friends, and appear normal, while still gleaning information relevant to my research. “Taiwan Academy,” I yelled in his ear. “Have you heard of it?” He looked at me blankly. He occasionally attended TECO events, like an art exhibition hosted in the TECO lobby a while back, but he’d never heard of Taiwan Academy. I gave him a brief overview. It didn’t ring any bells. Suddenly, we were spotted by the event MC who was hunting for unsuspecting victims, and the conversation ended as dancers flocked around us and dragged us onto the stage.

It was, admittedly, an inauspicious start to my investigation of what was supposed to be the shining new beacon of Taipei’s cultural prowess. These conversations filled me with trepidation—if the Taiwanese themselves didn’t know about Taiwan Academy, then who would? Fortunately, the community comprised more than two twenty-something urbanites. In fact, from 2000 to 2010 the Taiwanese population in New York State had soared by 172 per cent, from 4,288 to 11,680, with New York City

home to 73 per cent of them⁵⁵ (Asian American Federation, 2013). Most of this population was foreign born, and over a quarter had settled in New York sometime since 2000. It was speculated, however, that what appeared to be a sudden and unprecedented population increase was actually the result of individuals reclassifying themselves from Chinese to Taiwanese following a widespread “Write in Taiwanese” multimedia outreach campaign during the 2010 Census.

Regardless of whether the official numbers revealed a dramatically increasing Taiwanese presence or not, they pointed to a growing sense of distinct Taiwaneseness, an identity whose claiming, particularly when performed in international spaces such as New York, is an overtly political act. The conversations with my two new Taiwanese friends underscored the complexity of this “Taiwanese” identity, at once grounded in multiple localities as well as mobilities, and tied to different notions of belonging and networks of “Taiwaneseness”. This shared cultural identity was not rooted in political indoctrination, long-distance nationalism, or even a locally produced community construct (Martin, 2017). Rather, these conversations pointed to a broader socio-cultural and spatial community transition that was taking place, resulting in the re-conceptualisation of the local Taiwanese identity along increasingly *translocal* lines.

To examine the role of these local-level networks and practices within the operation of Taiwan Academy in New York, this chapter follows Ash Amin’s (2002 p391) prompt to think of places ‘as nodes in relational settings, and as a site of situated practices’. This also relates to Erik Swyngedouw’s (2010 p31) networked ordering of the economy, which he describes as ‘complex combinations and layers of nodes and linkages, which are interconnected in proliferating networks and flows of money, information, commodities, and people. The flows that shape and define these networks are of course local at every moment.’ This chapter explicates these processes in the following way. First, I situate the New York Taiwan Academy within its socio-cultural context, its specific physical location, and its day-to-day operations. Second, I examine the (trans)local function of Taiwan Academy through two in-

⁵⁵ Since 2000 the US Census Bureau has collected data in which respondents are allowed to mark more than one race. The statistic referenced is the “Taiwanese alone” category, which corresponds to the respondents who reported only Taiwanese and no other race category. “Alone” is considered the minimal population size in any analysis that uses Census Bureau Data.

depth case studies of specific cultural programs: The *Rising Stars* concert series, and the *Taiwan in Your Hand* glove puppet workshop. I conceptualise the role of Taiwan Academy in diasporic identity production in three interrelated ways: participation as community building and self-representation, participation as a re-centring of the Taiwanese community within its geographical locale, and participation as upholding and developing Taiwanese community and professional networks. These forms of participation integrated the local Taiwanese imaginary into a broader conceptualisation of translocal Taiwaneseeness.

4.1 New York: historical and socio-spatial contexts

New York is an important trade partner of Taiwan as well as a major site of Taiwanese diasporic settlement. In 2013 Taiwan was New York's seventh largest export market in Asia. Over three hundred Taiwanese companies have invested in New York, and almost all Taiwanese commercial banks have New York branch offices (Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the U.S., 2014). The Tri-State area, meanwhile, is home to almost a quarter of all Taiwanese people residing in the US (Lin, 2010). As one of the world's great cultural centres and with the single largest concentration of America's Chinese population, New York has long been considered the most important international locale for Taiwan's governments to implement their cultural propaganda strategies (Zheng, 2010 p282). These governments have engaged in large-scale cultural exchange and promotion in New York since 1991. Despite budget reductions, the New York cultural program, which encompasses Taiwan Academy, remains Taipei's largest in the US (Yu, 2013).

This section situates Taiwan Academy in two ways: socio-culturally, and spatially. First, it positions Taiwan Academy in relation to the history of Taiwan's political and diasporic cultural presence in New York, which has been shaped by the geopolitical contexts of Taiwanese migration to the US, in general, and corresponding settlement patterns and social construction in New York, in particular. As Ien Ang (2013 p3) has observed, carving out "home" for oneself in today's globalised world is a dynamic and uncertain experience, a process always dependent on shifting spatial and political parameters and negotiated within the complex convergence of geography with history, culture, and politics. How people make sense of their society, interpret their

place in it, and construct various interpretations of “national identity” emerges from the ways that individuals connect to their wider social and cultural contexts (Behr, 2006 p475).

Second, this section addresses the specific historical-spatial context of Taiwan Academy in New York, and examines how its operational space is constructed and experienced in relation to local centres of Chineseness. In doing so, I draw from a cultural geography approach that emphasises the confluence of culture and context. As a positioning, identity is place bound, both conceptually and geographically (Wodak et al., 2009 p23), and subject to the continuous interplay of history, culture, and power (Hall, 1994 p394-395). As such, identity and experience are constituted by, and emerge within, specific localised contexts of domination and resistance (Shurmer-Smith and Hannam, 1994 p125).

4.1.1 Mapping Taiwanese New York

Home to the second-largest US population of Taiwanese-born, New York is a significant site for the history of the Taiwanese/American community, especially as a locus for Taiwanese revolutionary movements and community organisations⁵⁶ (Arrigo, 2006). Flushing, Queens, became home to the largest New York-based Taiwanese community during the first waves of migration in the 1960s (Chen, 1992; Huang, 2010). The older Cantonese-speaking Manhattan Chinatown has never held much cultural or linguistic relevance for Taiwanese migrants. Immigrating largely under legal provisions for the highly educated and skilled, Taiwanese migrants tended to be wealthier and better educated than those from Mainland China⁵⁷ (Ng, 1998). Consequently, they had no need of Chinatown’s old voluntary associations and closed ethnic community, and instead entered the professions, universities, and neighbourhoods of white North America (Yang, 1966; Waxman, 1994).

⁵⁶ The Taiwanese Association for Human Rights was first founded in New York in 1984, the World Unity Formosans for Independence (WUFI) was first headquartered in New York and New Jersey, and the Taiwan Revolutionary Party had their safe house in Queens (Arigo, 2006). The first and only successful Taiwan Center in the US was launched in Flushing in 1986 by the Taiwanese Association of Greater New York and is operational to this day (Lai, 1996).

⁵⁷ The Manhattan Chinatown was mostly settled by migrants from Mainland China and Hong Kong. However, by the 1980s, many new immigrants from Hong Kong were wealthier than those from the Mainland and chose not to settle in Chinatown (Ng, 1998; Lu, 2014).

Flushing became an important local base for preserving and promoting Taiwanese culture and unifying a sense of diasporic Taiwanese identity (Chen, 1992; Lai, 1996; Ng, 1998; Arrigo, 2006). To this day, the local OCAC outpost is in Flushing. The precinct's economic success can be traced back to entrepreneurial Taiwanese investors in the 1980s who saved Flushing from economic depression, transforming it into the fourth largest central business district in New York (Chen, 1992 p262; Huang, 2010). Today, Flushing has the second largest Chinese community in New York and is one of the largest and fastest growing settlements of ethnic Chinese outside of Asia. However, economic success also triggered gentrification, which has attracted increasing numbers of wealthy Mainland migrants and inhabitants of Old Chinatown to Flushing since the 1990s. Many Taiwanese began taking advantage of the opportunity to sell their established and successful businesses to incoming Mainland investors for large profits, and moved further afield in search of a quieter, more suburban lifestyle. This exodus of Taiwanese families and businesses gradually displaced Taiwanese dominance of the precinct, destabilising the local Taiwanese community.

4.1.2 Situating Taiwan Academy in socio and geopolitical space

In 2005, Taipei relocated all local ministerial outposts to one five-storey building in the heart of midtown Manhattan. This TECO building has been the New York Taiwan Academy's base since its local launch in 2011. The original goal to procure a dedicated venue for the fledgling institute proved complicated due to budget constraints and bureaucratic red tape. However, this location had several advantages. First, it simplified logistics. Taiwan Academy cultural and educational operations were overseen by TCC Director of Culture Yu, and Education Division Director Liu, respectively; both of their offices were in the TECO building. Second, the proximity afforded by this industry cluster enabled Taiwan Academy to draw on the existing resources of other departments and maximise manpower, while the availability of a free downstairs lobby made the building a convenient venue for hosting cultural programs. Although officially TECO only "administratively" housed Taiwan Academy, in actuality the bulk of its events were physically held there also.

Third, the TECO building is well known and accessible to the Taiwanese community, positioned between the two largest regional Taiwanese diaspora settlements in Queens and New Jersey. By subway, the office is forty minutes from Flushing on line 7 and thirty minutes from the nearest Jersey City stops. Although it seems like a reasonable distance, this location is actually a median point. Most TECO officials live in Queens or New Jersey and commute daily. Fourth, the internally renowned locale lends Taiwan Academy a globalised prestige. East 42nd is a major crosstown street, so Taiwan Academy is close to some of Manhattan's most famous cultural offerings: across the street from the New York Public Library and Bryant Park, and less than a minute's walk from the East 42nd Street intersection with Fifth Avenue, an iconic thoroughfare and fashion Mecca. Two blocks away, the Theatre District begins near the intersection with Broadway at Times Square. The Museum of Modern Art is eleven blocks up 5th Avenue, and the Empire State building is a short walk in the opposite direction.

Rey Chow's (2013) framing of globalist geo-temporal politics in the context of Chinatowns offers a useful explanation for why this choice of space is so integral to constructing a transnational cosmopolitan imaginary. Chow's argument borrows from Sanjay Krishnan's (2007) deconstruction of normative globalisation theory. The notion of the global, Krishnan suggests, is a perspective instituted by the British in the eighteenth century to render various parts of the world legible in relation to the totality of Britain's burgeoning territorial empire. Following this argument, the notion of the global was instrumental in *producing* the heterogeneous regions it sought to name and describe; that is, it actually produced cultural and geopolitical "regions" or "areas" in the name of the global (Krishnan, 2007). This is exemplified by the Oriental in Edward Said's (1978) critique, illustrating 'the effect of a systemic gaze at non-Western cultures', resulting from the history of the western imperialism (Chow, 2013 p101). Such a gaze renders ethnic enclaves like Chinatowns ethnographic museums, seemingly frozen in time, where relics—both people and objects deemed to be from the “past”—are put on display. North American Chinatowns, in particular, epitomise how immigrant, non-white culture tends to be conceptualised in the form of a ghetto, segregated from mainstream society (Chow, 2013 p101).

Knowingly or otherwise, Taipei's Manhattan offices have always reflected the spatialisation of nationalist politics. To this day, an invisible political line can be traced through Chinatown using Canal Street as a boundary; Eastborough way supports the PRC, while mid and upper Manhattan supports Taiwan. The Chinese Information and Cultural Center (CICC), which included a Taipei Gallery and Taipei Theatre that operated from 1991-2002 during the "golden years" of Taiwanese cultural diplomacy, was located at 1221 Avenue of the Americas on Manhattan Island, surrounded by landmarks such as Rockefeller Center, Times Square, Broadway, and a host of small theatres. The gallery and theatre were closed in 2002 for financial reasons. The Cultural Center, rebranded as the TCC, was relocated to 99 Park Avenue, while the main TECO office was in Midtown East, between a number of Consulate General offices and twelve permanent missions to the United Nations. The 2005 centralisation to 1 East 42nd Street is three blocks from the old TCC office and less than a block from the closest entrance to Grand Central Station.

Chow's geo-temporal political framing of Chinatowns is valuable for understanding the efforts of early Taiwanese migrants to avoid racial stereotyping by spatially distancing themselves from Chinatown. From this perspective, TECO and Taiwan Academy's geographic situation can also be interpreted as a conscious projection of globalised cultural modernity. This particular urban site situates Taiwan Academy in reach of but physically separate from the main Taiwanese settlements, where it might otherwise be confused with a local community centre or associated with one specific Taiwanese community. Its internationally recognisable cosmopolitan location distances Taiwan Academy from any association with being hidden, outdated, or irrelevant that can come with being situated within identifiable ethnic enclaves of Chinese culture. Simultaneously, the Academy is still squarely within "Taiwanese territory". In this way, the local transnational Taiwanese imaginary (Wilson and Dissanayake, 1996) is re-presented in *space*, in part tying cultural image to physical location. Taiwan Academy's positioning thus attempts to negotiate the local articulation of Taiwanese identity by creating a new, visible Taiwanese cultural cosmopolitan.

Figure 1: Port Authority downtown Manhattan airport map



Source: City Maps: Manhattan. Orange Smile. Available: <http://www.orangesmile.com/travelguide/port-auth-downtn-manhattan-airport/high-resolution-maps.htm>

4.2 The New York cultural centre: a program overview

To furnish the reader with a clear picture of Taiwan Academy from “below”, this section outlines the scope of the New York cultural centre’s regular programming at the time of fieldwork in 2013 and thus serves as a historical insight into Taiwan Academy. The New York Taiwan Academy education program was considered relatively insignificant compared to the cultural program,⁵⁸ while the resource library was rarely used.⁵⁹ This chapter, therefore, focuses on the New York cultural centre’s art/culture program.

⁵⁸ This is because the education program was comprised of pre-existing MOE activities that, although technically under Taiwan Academy jurisdiction, the MOE continued to action as before.

⁵⁹ The New York resource library consisted of five shelves of books and periodicals on the outside wall of a small, pre-existing TCC library located on the fifth floor of the TECO building. The predominantly Chinese-language collection was technically open to the public daily by supervised appointment, However, unadvertised and hidden behind security and a concierge, it was virtually invisible and inaccessible, and served no practical cultural exchange function.

The Cultural Division employed twelve staff; five were involved in Taiwan Academy implementation. Despite having the largest budget of all Academies, resources were limited; the cultural centre could not afford to independently host international artists, and permission had to be requested for any event over USD\$300. In addition, Taiwan Academy didn't have an advertising budget and two years into operation, the handover of contacts from the TECC to Taiwan Academy still hadn't officially taken place. Consequently, the Taiwan Academy mailing list was very small. To compensate, officials utilised existing TCC and OCAC email networks—comprised predominantly of overseas Taiwanese—to advertise events, alongside accessing their own local contacts, which included Taiwanese language teachers, professional networks, tri-state area student networks, and Taiwanese-owned language schools. The program therefore relied heavily on volunteer support and was primarily composed of inexpensive activities that could take advantage of the free TECO lobby.

So many events had been held in the New York lobby that, locally, the name “Taiwan Academy” had become synonymous with the lobby it utilised. Accordingly, events that were not necessarily Taiwan Academy activities were sometimes said to be hosted *at* Taiwan Academy. Director Yu (Yu, 2013) also referenced this spatialisation: “The Taiwan Academy is like a small space, it's a location, like a spot, you know, where we can have different programs and we can tell the people we are here”. This repositioned the Taiwan Academy name as both a specific geographical location and a kind of brand that consolidated a contemporary Taiwanese cultural identity. These elements imbued the lobby with a spatially and symbolically constructed significance that helped to construct a new urban site of Taiwanese cultural identity.

The New York cultural program incorporated purpose-built events as well as pre-existing TCC programs that had been brought under the Taiwan Academy umbrella. The program had evolved in response to audience feedback to focus on film, visual art, and performance rather than literary events or lectures. Aside from irregular sponsorship of local art/cultural events,⁶⁰ the cultural calendar could be divided into

⁶⁰ In 2013 Taiwan Academy sponsored two events: a special screening of Taiwanese documentary *Returning Souls* at Columbia University, and *A Director's Feast*, an anthology program presented by

two categories: one-off cultural activities and core recurring programs. One-off cultural events were either infrequent or mandated and thus not typical of regular programming,⁶¹ such as hosting MOC-sponsored international cinematic or performance tours, or holding lectures⁶² or artist talks.⁶³

Recurring events were the meat of the program. Taiwan Academy had four core recurring programs: Film Thursday, gallery exhibitions, cultural workshops, and the *Rising Stars* concert series. Film Thursday, a staple of all cultural centres, was a Press Division program that pre-dated Taiwan Academy, but was transferred and rebranded during the ministerial reshuffle.⁶⁴ Gallery style exhibitions, held in the TECO lobby, showcased prominent Taiwanese artists, designers, and award winning works across a variety of visual forms.⁶⁵ Cultural “workshops” were either performance-based or interactive, and provided a more informal, family-friendly environment for engaging with culture and cultural practitioners.⁶⁶ Finally, *Rising Stars* was New York’s signature Taiwan Academy program, created to highlight

World Wide Lab (WWL), an international collective of film directors that features two Taiwanese members.

⁶¹ Two mandated events took place in 2012. First, the *Documentary Film Screening Tour*, sponsored by the TCC and National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, spanned five venues over sixteen days in April. Second, the MOC-sponsored *Taiwanese Literature Film Screening Tour*, which visited eleven venues across five states, was hosted at Taiwan Academy in September.

⁶² Literary lectures included a 2011 lecture featuring a local Taiwanese Professor, Lillian Tseng, discussing Chinese calligraphy and modern art, and a 2013 lecture showcasing Dr. Ming-Yi Wu and Canadian Dr. Darryl Sterk, author and translator, respectively, of the internationally popular novel *Man With the Compound Eyes*. The latter was an event of financial and logistical convenience; both men were already en route to a literature festival in Toronto, so Taiwan Academy invited them to make a detour. However, lectures were not popular with audiences, so they were kept to a minimum.

⁶³ Two artist talks featured in Taiwan Academy’s program in 2013. These events maximised TCC resources by inviting TCC-sponsored Taiwanese dance troupes such as Cloudgate to give an “artist talk” under the Taiwan Academy banner during their visit to New York. Artist talks proved very popular among the local Taiwanese community, as they connected audiences with otherwise inaccessible cultural practitioners. However, they occurred infrequently because they were dependent on the TCC’s cultural schedule and the willingness of artists.

⁶⁴ In New York, themed movie series were presented in TECO’s B1 Screening room on every fourth Thursday for the duration of a series (usually three to four movies).

⁶⁵ Exhibitions were important, if irregular, features of the cultural calendar. Four had been held at Taiwan Academy, biannually in 2012 and annually thereafter. First, *Introspectives- Photographs of Taiwan 1960-2005* by artist Chang, Chaotang (May 16-May 18 2012). Second, *Chinese New Year Prints from Taiwan* (September 5-October 12 2012) showcased twenty-four winning works from the past three years of the Chinese New Year Prints Contest of Taiwan. Third, the *Design-In Exhibition of Moon Shape Fan* (May 31-June 28 2013) featured the work of prominent Taiwanese designers. On loan from the Taiwan Graphic Design Association, it showcased modern aesthetic interpretations of Taiwanese cultural elements designed for the traditional image of the moon shape fan. Fourth, *The place where we belong* (March 27-May 30 2014), funded by the MOC, comprised the works of three contemporary Taiwanese artists interpreting the concept of place.

⁶⁶ Topics included a silk and bamboo music concert (2012), a glove puppet decoration and manipulation workshop (2013), an introduction to the philosophy and aesthetics of the oriental tea culture coupled with a tea brewing workshop (2013), a master class on the legend of Taiwanese campus folk song (2014), and a traditional Taiwanese glove puppet show (2015).

exceptional local Taiwanese and Taiwanese American musicians. This event was designed to both represent the local Taiwanese community and enable Taiwan Academy to save on travel expenses and other overheads.

4.3 Taiwanese “Rising Stars” in translocal space

The signature New York cultural program *Rising Stars* features professional solo and chamber music concerts performed by exceptional up-and-coming Taiwanese musicians. Registration is required as seats are limited. One of the earliest cultural programs launched, *Rising Stars* immediately proved very popular with the Taiwanese community. A number of concerts have been fully booked. As a local initiative, *Rising Stars* represented both the broader context of New York as well as the specific socio-cultural contexts of the local Taiwanese diaspora. Through an analysis of the exceptionally popular *Concert Music Series IV* event, I argue that *Rising Stars* helped the local Taiwanese community to navigate their loss of socio-cultural space in New York by re-/constructing a shared identity around a translocal Taiwanese-ness that was no longer tied to a specific geographic location.

4.3.1 Gentrification and relocation: Flushing and the Taiwanese community’s loss of place

“If you have the opportunity to visit Flushing,” Director Yu told me sadly, “almost all are Chinese now.” She shook her head. “The Taiwanese—they’ve gone far away. Before, almost all the restaurants... And the supermarkets, were all Taiwanese—now almost all are Chinese. The Taiwanese owners just sell to the Chinese” (Yu, 2013).

I arrived in New York expecting to discuss the challenges of launching a new cultural program, of CI competition, or of attracting international audiences. However, the conversation taking place at Taiwan Academy was not related to cross-strait relations or how to introduce new audiences to Taiwanese culture. Rather, officials were concerned about how to respond to the confluence of socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that they felt were gradually erasing the visibility of New York’s existing Taiwanese historical and cultural presence. Taiwan Academy had been established during a period of destabilisation for the local Taiwanese community, effectuated by a decade-long combination of decreasing Taiwanese immigration, significantly increasing Mainland Chinese immigration, and the

gentrification of Flushing. This transition had left the local Taiwanese diaspora increasingly outnumbered by Mainland migrants, with wide-reaching effects.

These changes also impacted the mostly Taiwanese-owned extracurricular western classical music schools that had been established in New York by Taiwanese immigrants in the 1970s and 80s. Higher-educated middle-class families from Taiwan and Hong Kong were the primary market for education until the 1990s, when the flood of incoming Chinese migrants superseded Taiwanese migration (Lu, 2014). The Taiwanese music school scene was gradually subsumed into the service of a broader pan-Chinese cultural identity⁶⁷ (Lu, 2014 p41). The influx of Mainland Chinese also displaced Taiwanese visibility in elite student networks: in 2003, Taiwanese made up the third largest group of international students and non-citizen US residents students attending Juilliard School, behind South Korea, and Canada (Yoshihara, 2007). By 2018, Mainland Chinese students outnumbered Taiwanese students at Juilliard three to one (College Factual, 2018).

Meanwhile, the gentrification of Flushing discussed in section 4.1.1 had brought about further economic, social and cultural restructuring that was dispersing the precinct's Taiwanese community (Huang, 2010). Inhabitants of Old Chinatown were drawn to the better quality of life and more affordable housing, while wealthy Mainland Chinese investors accounted for as many as half of the buyers at certain downtown Flushing buildings (Hughes, 2013). Although Flushing was viewed as the "historical home" of local Taiwanese, I didn't meet anyone during my fieldwork that actually lived there; they were all based either on Manhattan Island or in the New Jersey suburbs.

4.3.2 Networked, not enclaved: Re-positioning the local Taiwanese identity in space

⁶⁷ In New York, middle and upper class Taiwanese migrants and their classical cultural capital were central to establishing classical music as community cultural capital for the ethnic Chinese community. Liu's (2014) doctoral dissertation documents how Western classical music schools re-positioned themselves as service providers to help the children of new Chinese immigrants climb educational ladders. Music lessons became the most common supplemental program invested in by new Chinese immigrant families, and between 1996 and 2006, the number of schools grew dramatically in response to demand.

For New York officials, grappling with how to respond to the loss of Taiwanese visibility in Flushing and preserve a local Taiwanese cultural presence, Taiwan Academy offered a timely opportunity to support the local Taiwanese cultural imaginary by re-/positioning it in space. Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 discussed the spatial imagining of Taiwan Academy and the significance of geo-temporal political framing, respectively. Situating Taiwan Academy's cultural program in cosmopolitan space, therefore, re-/positioned cultural Taiwaneseness within the world-class high culture networks of New York, disconnected from designated ethnic cultural sites and meanings. Taiwan Academy's location asserted the spatial transition of local Taiwaneseness from a separate ethnic enclave to what TECO Director General Andrew Kao described as a 'refined and distinguished' cultural offering (Chiu, 2011).

4.3.3 Classical musicians as translocal markers

The November 10, 2013 Rising Stars matinee was fully booked, but fans unable to reserve seats had turned up anyway, happy to stand at the back in order to listen to the three visiting musicians: cellist Nana Ouyang, and pianists Daniel Hsu and Lo-An Lin. A black grand piano sat next to the lobby staircase, with one chair placed in front of it. Ouyang walked out first, with a collected demeanour that belied her thirteen years. The room immediately broke into applause. Hsu, three years her senior, followed her out. They bowed and took their places. At Ouyang's nod Hsu began playing and the pair launched into the dramatic movements of *Allegro Appassionato Op.43* by Saint-Saens. Their set featured five pieces; the additional four were Vivaldi's *Cello Sonata in E Minor RV40*, *Okuribito (Memory)* by Joe Hisaishi, *Theme from Schindler's List* by John Williams, and Chopin's *Polonaise Brillante Op.3*. After warm applause, the intermission was announced in Chinese. Ouyang was clearly the star of the show, the only musician to be applauded by watchful audience members when they noticed she had returned to the room to pose for the event photographer. Hsu later joined her, however, only Ouyang was photographed solo (Taiwan Academy, 2013b).

This concert received an extraordinary level of attention relative to other Rising Stars events. The Rising Stars concert recordings published on the TCC YouTube channel average 1,500 views; the video of this half of the concert received over 43,000 views. Moreover, it was one of only two Rising Stars concerts to attract an English language review⁶⁸ from the *Asian in NY* blog.⁶⁹ This widespread interest was

⁶⁸ Receiving English language reviews is a key MOC success criterion for events.

due to the star power of the concert's youngest musician, Ouyang. Daughter of wealthy veteran Taiwan actors Ouyang Long and Fu Juan, Ouyang was also famous for being the youngest cellist ever to make a solo recital debut in Taiwan's National Concert Hall. She moved to the US in 2013 to study at Curtis Institute and, with her mother, had just written a Chinese-language book, *Only & Nana Ouyang*, documenting parenting principles for musical education and how to help children discover their gifts.⁷⁰ Both the Taiwan Academy event profile and the *Asian in NY* concert review described Ouyang as a recognised 'learning model' (Lo, 2013). Ouyang was thus styled as a community role model, her prodigious international success marketed as the product of specific Taiwanese cultural values and parenting styles, celebrity and socio-economic status notwithstanding.

However, neither Ouyang nor her fellow Rising Stars musicians had ever been part of the local community. At the time of concert, Taipei-born Lin was attending the Yale School of Music in Connecticut. With two degrees, three universities, international awards, multiple scholarships, and many years in the US under her belt, Lin embodied the aspirational capital of an immigrant who had successfully navigated systemic barriers of access to become academically and professionally mobile, networked, and competitive. California-born Daniel Hsu, meanwhile, belonged to the American-born culturally hybrid generation that did not share Ouyang and Lin's personal ties to Taiwan as "home", and were statistically more likely to neglect the forms of cultural capital provided by their ethnic community (Chai-Kim, 2004; Kasinitz et al., 2008; Lu, 2014). Hsu had been accepted into Curtis Institute at age ten, achieved international success by age sixteen, and was pursuing a Bachelor of Music at Curtis Institute. Ouyang and Hsu were in town to perform as special guests at the IMPACT young artists' competition winner recital.

The three musicians, therefore, were relatively dissimilar. They did not represent a local identity situated in New York Taiwanese space, i.e. Flushing, or the cosmopolitan New York classical music scene. They did not portray an essentialist notion of a cultural "homeland", nor did they share a concrete geographic sense of home, either in the US or in Taiwan. Instead, what these three musicians had in

⁶⁹ *Asian in NY* describes itself as New York's leading Asian social and entertainment website. Its blog reviews community events. See: <http://blog.asianinny.com>

⁷⁰ This book, originally published in Taiwan, was later re-published for international release in 2014 under the English language title: *Be the Best—Nana Ouyang's Musical Adventure*.

common was a shared identity characterised by mobility rather than geographic location. Their careers necessitated national and international re-location as well as regular contact with similar local scenes in distant places. They shared a demonstrated ability to thrive and distinguish themselves as Taiwanese musicians within elite translocal networks. On stage together, Ouyang and Hsu represented two poles of the Taiwanese identity, both dis-located in space from their places of origin, but able to connect in this specific locale and re-/locate a shared sense of Taiwanese-ness around and through the translocal experience of classical music. In this way, Rising Stars translated the translocality of classical music into a cultural identity of translocal Taiwanese-ness that transcended birthplace, language, or physical location. Classical musicians thus became signifiers of a translocal Taiwanese identity that was dis-located from national boundaries and traditional cultural spaces, and instead re-/located in the shared translocal cultural heritage of classical music that is border-crossing and networked, able to connect musicians as well as audiences across time and space.

4.3.4 “Music, everyone can understand”: uniting generations of Taiwanese across cultural and linguistic barriers

Audience applause was slightly subdued as Lin walked out on stage to open the second set. The chair in front of the grand piano had been removed. Lin took her seat. The silent room was filled with the toccata surges of Bach’s Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BMV 903. After a quick bow, Lin played two pieces from renowned Taiwanese composer Ma Shui-long: sections I, *Rain*, and IV, *At the Temple Gate*, of the four piece piano suite *A Sketch of the Rainy Harbor*. The short, nostalgic *Rain* was a strikingly visual composition, its dotted rhythms alluding to the dancing of raindrops. *At the Temple Gate* was similarly picturesque, its fast running sequences evoking a bustling marketplace. Lin’s final piece was one of the greatest sonatas of literature: Chopin’s *Piano Sonata No.2, Op.35 in B flat minor*, movements I-IV. The sustained applause at the end of this twenty-one minute piece was effusive. Lin bowed twice before leaving the room. A chair was brought back to the stage as applause continued. Lin returned, bowed, and left. Several cries of “Encore!” could be heard over the applause, although the chair clearly indicated that an encore was already planned. The audience cheered as Ouyang returned to stage, with Lin close behind, to perform a brief encore piece. The audience clapped warmly when the encore concluded (Taiwan Academy, 2013a).

All Rising Stars programs predominantly feature well-known western classical works. Director Yu gave two reasons for this. First, the musicians were more familiar with western classical music due to their training in a western classical instrument. Second, American audiences were more familiar with western classical music, so this

made it easier for them to connect with the program. The latter observation was particularly revealing, because by the Director's own admission, the Rising Stars audience was overwhelmingly Taiwanese/Chinese. My research corroborated this; photos, reviews, and conversations all painted a picture of a program that was patronised by the local Taiwanese diaspora and its elites. Yet, even for this audience, Director Yu felt that Taiwanese culture must be introduced slowly. "I think—you know—the culture," she mused, "you need to do that step by step" (Yu, 2013).

In the light of this, the program intentionally catered to a broad spectrum of cultural knowledge. Revered western classical works would be well known to those familiar with the study of western classical music, while two modern compositions from internationally renowned film scores further broadened the program's appeal. Notably, *Okuribito* (Memory) came from the 2003 film *Departures*, the first Japanese film to win a Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award. It was played alongside *The Theme* from *Schindler's List*, one of the most recognised film score pieces in history.

The concert also showcased two pieces by Taiwanese composer Ma. "Every concert they will play some Taiwanese folk song", Director Yu explained. "Not the whole program is western classical... I insist, they need to play two or three Taiwanese folk song or Chinese folk song" (Yu, 2013). Ma, whose work is considered to be truly representative of Taiwanese composition, famously advocated supporting one's own musical culture by blending modern western techniques with eastern musical dialects and aesthetics (Chung, 2014). *A Sketch of a Rainy Harbor*, strongly influenced by Debussy, incorporates Taiwanese techniques and traditions for decorative purposes (Ni, 2006). It is one of the most important and popular solo piano works in Taiwan (ibid). The second piece, *At the Temple Gate*, includes a melodic fragment from *beiguan*, Taiwan's most popular folk music, commonly heard at traditional festivals and in puppet shows. In this way, Ma's work uniquely functioned as a cultural bridge. Its western classical influence was relatable for "local" audiences, while Ma's cultural significance and aesthetic use of *beiguan* would have a deeper level of cultural meaning for the older Taiwanese community.

Translocality is primarily used to speak to the movement of people, however, this is just one aspect of it (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). The concept also refers to material flows, such as goods, and symbolic flows, such as movements of styles, ideas, images, and symbols. Rather than promoting an essentialised version of Taiwanese-ness based on specific cultural markers such as linguistic proficiency or cultural knowledge, the program showcased a Taiwanese-ness that was modern, hybridised, translocally networked, and situated within broader flows of international culture. Director Yu noted that non-language dependent programs such as concerts and subtitled films were more popular with her audience, while language-based (Chinese literature) programs were less successful and more difficult to host because translation was necessary. *Rising Stars*, however, had the unique ability to transcend cultural, linguistic, and generational barriers. “Music, everyone can understand,” Director Yu nodded (2013). “So that’s good.”

4.3.5 Re-/constructing the local Taiwanese identity around a “translocal scene”

New York is one of the most sought after destinations in the world for classical musicians, thanks to its world-class institutions, top-level classical music activities, and major concert venues (Mayor of London, 2014). Taiwanese students and musicians have long been part of New York’s mainstream classical circles; in fact, Ma was the first Chinese composer to have his work performed at New York’s Lincoln Centre (Ni, 2006). Taiwanese musicians have been attending New York’s musical institutes since the 1970s (Lu, 2014). Meanwhile, western classical music as an important component of the hybrid Chinese American ethnic identity is a well documented phenomenon (Zheng, 2010). Scholars have illustrated how classical music education in ethnic Chinese communities is itself a culturally hybridised cultural capital (Dimaggio and Mohr, 1996; Lu, 2013; Lu, 2014). In the case of New York, Taiwanese-owned classical schools incorporated Japanese and Taiwanese pedagogies, upper-middle-class parenting styles, and a learning style driven by credentialisation (Lu, 2014 p167). Consequently, western classical music carried distinctive cultural meaning and value for the New York Taiwanese diaspora⁷¹ (ibid).

⁷¹ Mapping the subtle evolution of components of ethnic culture over time, Lu (2014) illustrates how classical music education in New York was first localised in Taiwan, and then brought to New York

Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson's (2004) work on music scenes provides a useful framework for understanding the role of Rising Stars within this space. Music scenes have been defined as 'a focussed social activity that takes place in a delimited space and specific span of time in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans realise their common musical taste and collectively distinguish themselves from others' (Bennett and Peterson, 2004). This "delimited space" can be local (e.g. found in specific cities), translocal (e.g. spans multiple locations) or virtual (e.g. online). Of course, a scene may also encompass all three.

In recent years, a growing network of mainstream organisations, artists, and music societies have emerged that explicitly give Asian and Asian American classical music, musicians and composers an equal platform with Western classical music. This network can be differentiated from other long-standing efforts to promote traditional Chinese music and instruments in that it comprises groups such as the Kyoto Symphony Orchestra, the Asian Cultural Symphony Orchestra, the Formosa Quartet, and the New Asia Chamber Music Society, that specifically seek to create space for East Asian classical musicians and music *within* the mainstream western-dominated classical genre. It is therefore possible to conceive of a loose East Asian classical "translocal scene", characterised by a shared emphasis on championing East Asian classical music as equal in value to western classical music, whether via incorporating various music styles and folk songs, showcasing the work of Asian and Asian American composers, or including Chinese instruments within their repertoire.⁷²

A translocal scene is one where widely spread local scenes that 'focus on a particular kind of music are in regular contact with similar local scenes in distant places' (Bennett and Peterson, 2004 p8). As a venue dedicated to showcasing Taiwanese musicians and the performance of Taiwanese music, Rising Stars

and re-localised among the Taiwanese and Chinese diaspora. Lu found that families living in Flushing utilised musical achievements as a way to, first, distance themselves from negative Asian stereotypes that could disadvantage their education mobility, and second, embrace positive characteristics such as well-roundedness, creativity, and determination that could facilitate their aspirations for access to prestigious colleges.

⁷² The delineation of a translocal East Asian classical scene does not include orchestras that are called "Asian" but perform only western music. Nor does it imply that the ethnicity of musicians is a primary measure of scene translocality.

functioned as an element of this East Asia translocal scene infrastructure, creating a specific space for promoting Taiwanese musicians and classical works, and facilitating connections between Taiwanese classical musicians and their audiences⁷³ (Dowd, 2014). “Because [in New York] we have a lot of Taiwanese students,” Director Yu (2013) explained, “young students, they study in Curtis or Juilliard—they are excellent, very talented—so sometimes we host chamber music for them.” The Rising Stars series thus deliberately supported and celebrated the unique relationship Taiwanese New Yorkers had with western classical music. Taiwan Academy also sponsored performances by Taiwanese musicians outside of the Rising Stars banner, further facilitating the promotion of contemporary Taiwanese and East Asian music.⁷⁴

This case study has shown how Rising Stars responded to specific socio-cultural contexts and geographic transition among and within the Taiwanese community in New York. In particular, I propose that Rising Stars helped symbolically to negotiate the Taiwanese community’s loss of cultural *place* by facilitating the re-/construction of a shared local sense of cultural Taiwanese-ness around a “translocal scene” that was networked rather than enclaved, ideological rather than concrete, and tied to notions of shared cultural heritage that could cross time and space. This re-/located identity was embodied by the “rising stars” themselves, who were united by a shared musical cultural heritage that did not require a common birthplace, language, or sense of home. Translocal spaces are constantly co-produced by mobile and immobile populations (Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). These exceptional Taiwanese “rising stars” demonstrated their ability to navigate the criss-crossed networks of East Asian cultural flows without sacrificing their distinct sense of Taiwanese identity. In this way, they portrayed a Taiwanese-ness that was no longer dependent on local cultural *place*, but was instead networked to multiple localities and characterised by mobility and cultural hybridity. That is to say, through Rising

⁷³ A music scene is comprised of two main elements: first, focussed social interaction, where individuals come together to discuss their common musical tastes, and second, the infrastructure (publications, venues, websites, etc) that enables and supports such interaction (Dowd, 2014).

⁷⁴ For example, in 2017, Taiwan Academy hosted the New Asia Chamber Music Society (NACMS) performing an event called *Impression Formosa: A Sketchbook of Contemporary Music from Taiwan* that featured the work of three Taiwanese composers. In 2018, Taiwan Academy, along with TCC New York, the NACMS, and the Ryuji Ueno Foundation, co-sponsored *Japan + Taiwan: Friends of Music Concert*, a chamber music collaboration between Taiwanese and Japanese musicians that took place in New York and Washington DC, and featured works by late Taiwanese musician Tyzen Hsiao and Japanese composer and pianist Mamiko Hirai.

Stars the local Taiwanese cultural imaginary was re-/imagined around a translocal sense of Taiwaneseess.

Figure 2: Classical Taiwanese stars to perform for New York



Source: Taipei Cultural Center, 2013. Available: https://english.moc.gov.tw/information_196_75963.html

Figure 3: Lo-An Lin, Daniel Hsu, Nana Ou-Yang



Source: Niko, "Lo-An Lin, Daniel Hsu, Nana Ou-Yang." Asian in NY Blog. 29 November 2013. Available: <http://blog.asianinny.com/performing-arts/taiwan-rising-stars-classical-music-concerts-in-ny/>

Figure 4: Daniel Hsu, Nana Ou-Yang



Source: Niko, "Daniel Hsu, Nana Ou-Yang." Asian in NY Blog. 29 November 2013.
Available: <http://blog.asianinny.com/performing-arts/taiwan-rising-stars-classical-music-concerts-in-ny/>

Figure 5: Nana Ou-Yang



Source: Niko, "Nana Ou-Yang." Asian in NY Blog. 29 November 2013. Available:
<http://blog.asianinny.com/performing-arts/taiwan-rising-stars-classical-music-concerts-in-ny/>

Figure 6: Susan Yu (Director Susan Yu of the Taipei Cultural Center), Alex Fan (Deputy General of TECO), Fu Juan (Nana Ou-Yang's mother)



Source: Niko, "Susan Yu (Director Susan Yu of the Taipei Cultural Center), Alex Fan (Deputy General of TECO), Fu Juan (Nana Ou-Yang's mother)." Asian in NY Blog. 29 November 2013. Available: <http://blog.asianinny.com/performing-arts/taiwan-rising-stars-classical-music-concerts-in-ny/>

Figure 7: Untitled (author's note: Rising Stars concert audience)



Source: Niko, Asian in NY Blog. 29 November 2013. Available: <http://blog.asianinny.com/performing-arts/taiwan-rising-stars-classical-music-concerts-in-ny/>

4.4 *Taiwan in Your Hand*: How an educational workshop became a community anchor

Taiwan in Your Hand was a glove puppet decoration and manipulation workshop I attended during my New York fieldwork trip. The Taiwan Academy event took place in the TECO lobby on Saturday, 19 October 2013 and was hosted by Dr. Robin Erik Ruizendaal, Director of Lin Liu-sin Puppet Theatre Museum and Managing/Artistic Director of the Taiyuan Puppet Theatre Company (TPTC). Unlike *Rising Stars*, the puppet workshop was not an exclusive New York program, but a cost-effective MOC initiative to capitalise on Dr. Ruizendaal's three-site US tour, which included New York.⁷⁵ This case study is structured using an ethnographic account of my interactions, conversations, and observations from the workshop to explore the implementation of Taiwan Academy from an audience perspective. Whereas *Rising Stars* showed how local officials were utilising Taiwan Academy to navigate meso-level socio-cultural and geographical transition, the puppetry workshop revealed how the Taiwanese community utilised Taiwan Academy at a micro level to navigate their own social, political, economic, and cultural contexts.

4.4.1 Why puppetry? The cultural and (inter)national roles of *budaixi*

I still hadn't mastered the subway system, so I was running late, dodging tourists as I made my way to the TECO building from Grand Central Station. I arrived fifteen minutes late to find the front door closed and the lights dimmed; the workshop was already underway. I tentatively opened the door. The event filled the entire lobby. A traditional Chinese puppet show was playing on a makeshift projector screen at the far end of the room. There were no subtitles. The audience was mostly seated around the white tables filling the room, each laden with craft supplies- origami paper, glue, and coloured markers. There were no puppets in sight. I quickly realised that with the exception of Dr. Ruizendaal, I was the only non-ethnically Chinese/Taiwanese person present. Nothing was signed and no one was clearly in charge, so I walked toward what looked like a registration table. A woman immediately came over. "Do you want to participate?" I explained that I wasn't registered because the online system said that the event was full. She brushed this aside as though registration was inconsequential. "That doesn't matter; you can register now. Would you like to join?" She was poised with a pen. A few people glanced back at me, looking surprised. I got the impression that I wasn't the target audience.

⁷⁵ His trip included two lectures in the Tri-State area: a 16 October 7:30pm lecture on *Asian Puppet Theatre and the Puppet Theatre Museum* at the Ballard Institute and Museums of Puppetry in the University of Connecticut, and a 3pm, 23 October lecture at Hunter College on *Puppets, Identity and Politics in Taiwan*.

I took a seat near the back, on one of the chairs lining the wall. The screening continued for another ten minutes, reminding me of the traditional puppet shows performed outside temples in Tainan. The audience was about half children, half adults. At the far end of the room, near the projector screen, tables were filled with families. Even the children seem engrossed in the puppet show. Child-free adults were seated more sparsely at tables toward the back or on chairs lined against the wall, like me. When the puppet show concluded Dr. Ruizendaal walked to the front of the room. In flawless Mandarin, he spoke about the historical value of Chinese puppet theatre and the significance of puppetry as an art form in Taiwan. The audience was visibly impressed. A man came over and generously offered to translate the parts of the speech I couldn't understand.

Budaixi (literally “cloth bag theatre”) or puppet theatre is a registered cultural heritage item in Taiwan, considered to be uniquely representative of Taiwanese grassroots culture and traditional performing arts (Chuang, 2012; Ruizendaal, 2013). Han Chinese settlers brought *budaixi* to Taiwan in the early 1600s (Jaw and Chen, 2007; Ruizendaal, 2013). Its distinctive fusion of local dialects and multicultural aesthetics reflects the island's complex colonial history (Bilbao-Osorio et al., 2014). Taiwanese *budaixi* is closely connected to religion and functions as a tool for social and political commentary. Without a strict iconography, it can—and does—incorporate any new, fun, or popular cultural elements that puppeteers think will entertain audiences (Ruizendaal, 2013). *Budaixi*, therefore, actively situates Taiwanese expression at the heart of Chinese culture, by constructing a fantasy world of alternative globalisation where Chinese culture is the driving force and Taiwanese expression its dominant manifestation.

For this reason, *budaixi* plays a significant role in how Taiwan defines its unique cultural heritage on an international stage. Heritage has always been both a resource in, and a process of, negotiation in the cultural politics of identity (Smith, 2007 p159). As a political tool, heritage allows states to construct a collective identity through claims of a distinct national history (Graham et al., 2000; Tsai, 2014). Consequently, *budaixi* has political value not only locally as a unifying ritual, but internationally as a vehicle for cultural nationalism, to promote a distinctively Taiwanese identity (Turner, 1980). To this end, the MOC financially supports the efforts of Taiwanese puppet troupes to promote *budaixi* on the global stage. The TPTC,⁷⁶ a young, contemporary puppet theatre that focuses on international

⁷⁶ The TPTC encompasses three initiatives: a museum and two theatre troupes. The Dadaocheng Puppet Museum, established in 2001, is Taiwan's most popular puppet theatre museum, dedicated to preserving and promoting traditional puppetry. The two theatre troupes were founded in 2004 to promote both traditional and modern puppet theatre, separate from the museum. The traditionally oriented TPTC synthesises traditional northern Taiwanese lyrics and modern stage techniques in

collaboration, has played a particularly visible role. Renowned for its creative and culturally hybrid puppetry, the TPTC has performed in over forty countries using video screenings and live performances (2013). The New York Taiwan Academy has hosted the TPTC twice. This recurring presence indicates that puppetry events are well received by local audiences.

4.4.2 Budaixi as cultural education: Defending the territory of “Taiwanese/America”

As Dr. Ruizendaal finished speaking, a small army of people jumped up from their seats to distribute undecorated hand puppets. A puppet was pushed into my hand and I was ushered to the nearest table, where two men and a woman were already seated. I introduced myself, and one man, wearing a suit, replied. He was Nelson, a friendly, middle-aged Taiwanese businessman. When he found out what I was doing in New York, he looked pleased and handed me his business card. Nelson was the Chairperson of the Association of New Jersey Chinese Schools (ANJCS), and an enthusiastic supporter of Taiwan Academy. He coloured a full head of purple hair onto his puppet as he spoke. He oversaw all the Chinese language schools under the ANJCS umbrella and was responsible for employing Taiwanese language teachers. He said that the cultural program being run by the TCECC was “just wonderful”, and that Taiwan Academy was a great opportunity for the local Taiwanese children to learn about Taiwanese culture. Nelson hadn’t brought his wife or family; instead, he was attending with colleagues and several teachers employed in language schools he directed. The woman next to him was one of his teachers.

Noticing my blank puppet, Nelson suggested I inspect the Chinese puppet display to get some inspiration. Apart from the event photographer, the only other people paying attention to the puppets were a curious throng of children. I joined them. They chatted, mostly in English, giggling as they pointed out the puppets’ more egregious features. Parents occasionally called to their children in Mandarin, but the children mostly replied in English. I returned to my table to begin decorating.

TCECC Director Yu was circulating the room, obviously well acquainted with most of the people present. When she reached our table she looked amazed. “How did you find out about this event?” She asked, in genuine surprise. “You must be serious about your research!” She said that she was glad I had come, as this was a wonderful opportunity to learn about Chinese culture and see how successful Taiwan Academy was for myself.

Director Yu knew Nelson, and stayed to talk for quite a while. A small group gathered around our table, watching our decoration efforts. The Director mocked my puppet for being too pretty. Everyone agreed that the point of Chinese puppets is that they are quite ugly. But they also mocked Nelson’s puppet for being *too* ugly. “His puppet is eastern, and your puppet is western!” The Director laughed. The group gathered around our table cackled delightedly.

Once Director Yu left, Nelson called over the event photographer, a good friend of his, to introduce us. She’d been busy working throughout the event and hadn’t sat down to participate at any point. She volunteered for Taiwan Academy as a

order to preserve the more traditional aspects of puppetry. The new and creative Nadou Theater Company emphasises storytelling in a more modern context, combining imaginative visual effects with modern stage acts such as stylish drama and music performances.

photographer, but her day job was at the University of New Jersey, where she was the lecturer in charge of traditional Chinese language learning. She was thrilled to hear that I was researching Taiwan Academy, and lamented a general lack of academic interest in Taiwanese experiences and stories.

Talking with officials and community members, it quickly became apparent that in New York, Taiwan Academy supported the OCAC's broader role in preserving and passing on Chinese culture to the Taiwanese diaspora. During interviews, officials stressed the centrality of the OCAC's activities to their overall operation. One official explained that this crossover took place because locally, everything directly related to culture tended to become the responsibility of the TCC or, more recently, Taiwan Academy. Consequently, Taiwan Academy carried an unwritten mandate for preserving and promoting expressions of diasporic Taiwanese/Taiwanese Chineseness.

In the light of local socio-cultural and geographic transitions discussed in sections 4.1.1 and 4.3, the cultural education of the diaspora had taken on critical importance for Taiwanese officials. However, their job of promoting Taiwan's traditional Chinese characters and cultural exchange programs had become more challenging as local levels of PRC influence had risen. Of specific concern was the displacement of Taiwan's traditional position as the dominant Chinese language provider for local Chinese speaking communities. Local Chinese language schools, once staffed almost exclusively by Taiwanese teachers, had begun employing Mainland Chinese teachers instead. Although Flushing still had the highest number of Taiwanese-run Chinese language schools in New York, an influx of Mainland Chinese language teachers was displacing Taiwan's traditional position as the main Mandarin language provider.

Now, new generations of Taiwanese/Americans were beginning the process of actively negotiating their own cultural and ethnic identities in increasingly PRC-led cultural contexts. Officials noted that it was increasingly difficult to keep some Taiwanese/American children and families connected to or interested in their Taiwanese cultural heritage. One official put it this way:

There is a big Taiwanese community in the Tri-State area, and they always have Chinese school during the weekends. Parents will take their kids to school to learn how to write and read Chinese. But my classmates said they would rather send their kids to learn simplified Chinese because they say that China's economic

power, even if it's going down now, is still the strongest in the world, and they think it's easier to learn (Lin, 2013).

For officials, this situation represented a grave territorial breach and a psychological threat. Needless to say, raising children in a diasporic setting already placed serious limitations on efforts to continue their ethnic and cultural lineage (Van Ziegert, 2006 p106). Where schooling decisions were influenced by China's economic attractiveness and global influence, officials admitted there was little they could do. However, in the local battle for hearts and minds, introducing Taiwan's culture to a new foreign audience had become less urgent than the task of upholding and solidifying a distinct sense of Taiwanese-ness among the local Taiwanese diaspora. Education of the diaspora thus became essential to preserving local Taiwanese constructions of Chineseness.

If local Taiwanese families risked being absorbed into a PRC message of a pan-Chinese cultural heritage, then the *Taiwan in Your Hand* workshop offered a counter-narrative that re-emphasised the distinctive cultural value of a local Taiwanese identity. Director Yu (2013) acknowledged during our interview that Taiwan Academy puppetry workshops were specifically tailored to cater to local Taiwanese elementary students. This workshop had been advertised through the ANJCS language school network (as well as others). It was, then, part of a diaspora-focussed effort to support Taiwanese language schools and re-centre Taiwanese forms of Chinese cultural expression. The unique significance of *budaixi*, in this context, lay in its ability to cater to the need for a distinct Taiwanese historical identity (Jaw et al., 2012 p263), thereby invoking the “myth of consanguinity” (Chow, 1993) to impose an imaginary coherence based on shared cultural heritage. For the “foreign audience” of new generation Taiwanese/American children in New York, the TPTC offered an ideal introduction point, with its transnational cultural influences, modern aesthetic approach, and easy-to-understand stories.

In addition, the event itself—including the screening, lecture, and all Dr. Ruizendaal's table demonstrations—was conducted entirely in Mandarin, a sign that it consciously and exclusively catered to a Taiwanese/Chinese audience. Language has a core symbolic value; conducting the workshop in Mandarin clearly identified a target audience and contributed to creating a sense of community based on cultural

knowledge. Notably, the professional Taiwanese network of Chinese language schools and teachers were out in full force to support the event, not just students and their families. In this way, the workshop functioned as a vehicle for reinforcing a local Taiwanese identity by both educating new generations of overseas Taiwanese and creating a space for local language networks to uphold a cultural sense of Taiwanese community and connection.

4.4.3 How diaspora involvement re-/defined the educative cultural role of Taiwan Academy

Partway through the workshop, Director Liu arrived. He was using the event as a meeting point with friends because of its central location and community focus. I had been invited to afternoon tea with them. He introduced me to his friends: the wife of a wealthy Taiwanese businessmen, visiting New York to see her daughter who was studying at New York University, the Taiwanese Vice President of Sotheby's International Realty in New York, and the acting Director General of Foreign Affairs. Director Liu then circulated the room, greeting friends and colleagues, before returning to his friends. He didn't bother with a puppet. His friends were half-heartedly decorating puppets, wholeheartedly socialising. All the government officials were seated with friends or liaising, while community volunteers—many of them local Chinese teachers—logistically coordinated the event.

“Come take photos!” Nelson exclaimed. He disappeared into the chaos behind me, where Director Yu was coordinating a crowd of people posing for what looked like official photos. I didn't follow him, as there seemed to be a tacit understanding about who was supposed to be in the photographs. The crowd was made up of government officials, visiting dignitaries, program coordinators, businessmen, and their guests—the families completely ignored the photo session. I continued decorating, but after a minute Nelson returned to call me again, and I realised the group was waiting for me. I dutifully trotted over and posed with my puppet. Director Yu warmly welcomed me. “See?” She exclaimed, gesturing to my puppet and grinning from ear to ear. “You are learning about Taiwanese culture!” Director Yu introduced me to everyone in the photography group.

Once the photography session finished, I returned to my table for a last ditch effort to finish my puppet. Nelson commented on how wonderful it was that Taiwan Academy brought the Taiwanese community together, although he was clearly referring to the professional side of the event and his influential connections. The Chinese teacher next to him noticed my desperate efforts, and sympathetically donated an origami fan to my naked puppet. “A gift for you,” she smiled. I accepted gratefully, as paper planes were about the extent of my origami skill set. Workshop formalities had concluded, and the event had turned into a social gathering for the Taiwanese community. Director Liu and his friends were waiting for me. I told them I'd finished. We said our goodbyes to virtually everyone in the room and then left for afternoon tea at a Taiwanese/French fusion cafe. My new friends knew the Taiwanese owner, naturally.

The audience was fairly evenly split between families with young children at one end of the room, and a community of teachers, businessmen, officials, and their invited guests at the other. The workshop, from this perspective, actually had two

separate audiences: one that attended primarily to consume the cultural program, and was clearly identified as the educative focus of the event, and one for whom the specific cultural content of the program was sometimes peripheral to their actual program participation. This indicated that the event served a variety of community functions; consuming traditional culture was not necessarily the primary purpose of attendance.

The most striking aspect of this workshop was the proliferation of roles being played by the Taiwanese community. From advertising to implementation, the workshop had been coordinated almost entirely by Taiwanese volunteers, who were involved as event promoters, photographers, event coordinators, and assistants, as well as participants. In some ways this was engendered by necessity, as outlined in section 4.2; due to limited manpower, more logistically involved events relied to a greater extent on local community support. However, my research found that this community involvement re-/defined the local meaning and role of the workshop. Through micro-level engagement, the Taiwanese community adapted the function of the workshop to meet a complex combination of localised political, social, and community interests. This took place through two interrelated processes I will discuss below: first, participation as self-representation and community building; second, participation as mutually beneficial professional networking. Finally, I will discuss the implications of these findings for the soft power potential of Taiwan Academy.

Integration of new immigrants into Taiwanese New York

The older generation (represented mostly by businessmen) and more recent Taiwanese immigrant arrivals (predominantly language teachers) played the most active roles at the workshop. Through their networks of connections and hierarchies of authority, members of the older generation, such as Nelson, mobilised more recent arrivals, such as their Taiwanese employees, to attend Academy events. This is consistent with the findings of other researchers regarding which Taiwanese population groups are most likely to actively demonstrate a distinctive identity other than Chinese (Yu and Chiang, 2009; Kuo, 2017).

For new immigrants, participating in Taiwan Academy played a role in integrating them both into the local community and into the project of sustaining and re-/constituting a translocal sense of Taiwanese-ness. Participation was culturally educative, as new immigrants were learning what it meant to be Taiwanese within the context of local social, cultural, and spatial flows and becoming gradually incorporated into a specific translocal sense of what it meant to be Taiwanese within these specific New York contexts. New language teachers embedded within these networks utilised these flows to navigate their own transition into the local community, while also acting as cultural translators of Taiwanese culture for the local Taiwanese community through their dual roles of volunteer and educator.

Meanwhile, their mobility, as well as their profession (Chinese language teacher) performed an alternative function: they could be imagined as a linkage between Taiwan Academy and the cultural homeland. Thus, as teachers and new immigrants attended Academy events they became part of the translocal networks of Taiwanese surrounding Taiwan Academy, with the shared localised contexts and practices that participation entailed. Further, by taking on a volunteer role, event participation also became a form of self-representation. On the one hand, taking on responsibility involved taking partial ownership of the event and thus contributing to the process of re-/defining what it means to be Taiwanese in America. On the other, supporting Taiwan Academy in a volunteer capacity enabled language teachers to act as cultural translators of Taiwanese culture for the local Taiwanese community.

Upholding community and preserving culture by prioritising community and professional networks

For the networks of business people who were professionally, financially, and socially embedded within local Taiwanese networks, Taiwan Academy played an interrelated set of roles. First, the workshop acted as a “meeting point” for groups of friends. Aside from Director Liu and his friends, at least one other group had clearly used Taiwan Academy as a meeting point. These groups weren’t at the workshop for the event itself; rather, they were using it as a departure point for their main cultural activity: an alternative social engagement. Director Liu explained the appeal of the event as a meeting point based on its centrality, accessibility, and because within that specific spatial context it offered an identifiable site of community. In this way, the

workshop became spatially re-/constituted not as shared cultural heritage but as shared community. Utilising Taiwan Academy as a community landmark and meeting point effectively re-centred the local narrative of Taiwanese-ness in space.

For businessmen like Nelson, who regularly frequented Taiwan Academy events, participation supported their professional interests. Nelson enthusiastically endorsed the capacity of the program for bringing the “community” together. Yet this “community” Nelson celebrated was not a broad group of people claiming a shared Taiwanese identity, but rather the specific networking opportunities Taiwan Academy facilitated by gathering together local business people and government officials. Other than the families, most of the locals I met seemed to have a professional incentive for attending, such as the Taiwanese real estate agent who specialised in helping international Taiwanese students overcome language barriers and find accommodation. Many of the businessmen also served in influential positions within community organisations. All of them took time to liaise with the government officials in attendance. Participating in Taiwan Academy, therefore, may have been related to other underlying incentives and motivations. In the case of Nelson, the value of the puppet workshop was both professional and potentially financial. The event was specifically intended to culturally educate his primary market, local elementary school students—an audience whose translocal cultural identity had real implications for his business. By re-/centring a sense of Taiwanese-ness among his clientele and target market, the workshop helped to protect Nelson’s business interests.

This professional liaison function also served the strategic interests of officials. During interviews, officials repeatedly cited budget constraints, and Director Yu expressed the hope that local Taiwanese businessmen might be willing to help the TCC solve some of its financial issues; for example, by buying a separate building for the Culture Division to rent. There, was, therefore, a financial motivation for inviting professionals. In this sense, however, the relationship between Taiwan Academy and the diaspora became more subtly interdependent. Whereas the OCAC was a provider of service, the MOC envisioned itself as how the receivers of this service could and should give back to the overarching political apparatus supporting them. I heard this idea reinforced in many formal and informal conversations, from Taipei to New

York. From this perspective, the networking function of Taiwan Academy became even more vital than the cultural promotion function. If Taiwan Academy could serve the professional and personal interests of local business networks, there was more chance they might see value in financially investing in the MOC cultural vision for New York.

Implications for the soft power potential of Taiwan Academy

This chapter uncovered and discussed a variety of ways that the Taiwanese diasporic community engaged with and supported the implementation of Taiwan Academy in New York. However, the relationship between this dynamic diasporic *space* created within Taiwan Academy programs and the soft power objectives of Taipei, is unclear. In fact, the fieldwork findings for this research in many ways directly undermine the soft power claims made by Taipei. In New York, there were little to no outreach efforts to bring in new audiences taking place either through the Taiwanese diasporic community or from advertising and public promotion efforts through the Taiwan Academy. The Taiwan Academy email list was utilising officials' existing networks; emails were sometimes written entirely in Mandarin, and programs were often created in collaboration with or specifically for the local Taiwanese community. Although vibrant Taiwanese social, business, and education networks were evident, there was no clear indication that this hub of connectivity was generating any kind of soft power potential per se. Engagement with Taiwan Academy, moreover, appeared to be motivated primarily by the desire to participate in and network with the local Taiwanese diasporic community.

Ultimately, although Taiwan Academy facilitated a range of diasporic community connections, whether Taiwan Academy itself and the interactions between programs and the diaspora represented spaces of soft power growth for Taipei is a question that cannot be answered by this research. If the program was having any impact on the visibility of Taiwan's culture and on room for Taiwanese perspectives and opinions, these effects were taking place beyond the space created by Taiwan Academy and its programs. Undoubtedly, diaspora can also represent a potential vehicle for soft power. It is certainly true that the Taiwanese/Americans themselves had the potential to become the embodied representation of Taipei's cultural outreach through their wider social interactions, whether through language teaching,

activism, involvement in Taiwanese community organisations, or simply being able to meaningfully identify as Taiwanese within their broader social circles. These interactions, however, fall beyond the scope of this research. Moreover, connecting broader diasporic activity back in any concrete way to specific influence cultivated through Taiwan Academy programs would be challenging, as my fieldwork found no direct relationship between the soft power objectives of Taipei and the program that was being implemented in New York. It is therefore unlikely that Taiwan Academy in New York was cultivating any potential soft power growth for Taipei, the intended soft power benefactor. These findings will be discussed further in chapter five.

4.4.4 Connecting the local Taiwanese imaginary with translocal Taiwaneseness

Through the workshop, Taiwan Academy became a node in a relational setting characterised by translocal flows of people, cultural goods, and symbolic images, symbols, and styles that uphold conceptions of a distinct Taiwanese heritage. The symbolic role of puppetry—regardless of whether it actually represented an authentic form of traditional culture—had the capacity to become an anchor of identity. This was not because it represented cultural authenticity—in fact, the TPTC was famed for creating culturally hybrid performances. Rather, the symbolic role of *budaixi* enabled the visualisation and imagination of linkages between places. That is to say, the workshop imbued puppetry with ‘translocal imagination’ (Brickell and Datta, 2011a p18).

Meanwhile, the cultural messaging and identities being exported were not necessarily attempting to connect audiences to the hegemony of a territorially cohesive nation state. The translocal Taiwanese community interacted with the program from within a complex network of mobility, connectedness, place, locality, travel, and circulatory knowledge. Through their collective participation in a variety of ways, both mobile and immobile Taiwanese networks were re-appropriating the cultural and spatial boundaries of Taiwan Academy to navigate various forms of translocal, community-based self-/representation. Government officials were complicit in this process, adapting and accepting further re-shaping of the cultural program in exchange for the participation of the local Taiwanese diaspora.

Figure 8: *Taiwan in Your Hand*: Workshop audience, 19 October 2013



Source: author's own. 2013.

Figure 9: *Taiwan in Your Hand*: Dr. Ruizendaal presentation, 19 October 2013



Source: author's own. 2013.

Figure 10: *Taiwan in Your Hand*: Table demonstration, 19 October 2013



Source: author's own. 2013.

4.5 Conclusion

There was a fundamental difference between how officials *conceptualised* and *implemented* Taiwan Academy. Whereas officials insisted that Taiwan Academy was focussed on foreign audience outreach, their actual implementation deliberately centred the cultural and social needs of the Taiwanese diaspora. With the established Taiwanese community in flux, Taiwan Academy was being utilised to re-centre a shared Taiwanese imaginary within the local community in order to construct a stable space for the expression of Taiwanese-ness in New York. Through *Rising Stars*, officials designed a program intended to ground the destabilised Taiwanese diaspora in *space*, by celebrating the international achievements of the local Taiwanese community. Rather than re-building the dis-located Taiwanese identity around a new physical location, *Rising Stars* re-/presented an alternative *translocal* Taiwanese identity. By supporting a translocal music scene, creating culturally hybrid musical programs, and showcasing a diverse group of musicians, *Rising Stars* re-/imagined a Taiwanese-ness characterised by a dis-location from space, where common ground

was instead found in mobility and the capacity to be (re)situated in multiple geographic locales and cultural contexts without losing a shared sense of Taiwanese identity.

While the Rising Stars case study explored a “top down” approach to re-/imagining local Taiwanese-ness, in that the way officials structured the event, from space to musicians to program, itself delineated a translocal Taiwanese-ness, I found that the *Taiwan in Your Hand* workshop, by contrast, was firmly rooted in grassroots meaning-making. Although the event was structured around a traditional Taiwanese folk art, it did not uniformly unite the Taiwanese community around a particular cultural heritage; nor was this the central goal. Rather, community engagement underscored the diaspora’s linkages to different contexts, and how their embeddedness in these contexts shaped their mobilisations.

The Taiwanese community explicitly described the cultural program as *by* local Taiwanese, *for* local Taiwanese. By “local”, they were referring to their own colleagues, friends, and community networks in New York, not necessarily the officials in charge of implementation. Moreover, even government officials voluntarily attended Academy events and invited guests for a myriad of professional and personal reasons unrelated to cultural heritage. Ironically, participating in the cultural component of the event itself was not what was primarily producing a shared sense of Taiwanese identity. Rather, the active agency of the Taiwanese diaspora in engaging with the event in a variety of ways for differing reasons was itself re-/constituting the meaning and role of Taiwan Academy. The various fluid and interchangeable forms of participation and interaction available to the local community reflected the multi-layered role of Taiwan Academy in creating a space for different groups to navigate what a Taiwanese identity in New York means within the shifting social, cultural, and physical spaces. These social, cultural, and spatial processes collectively situated Taiwan Academy at the centre of a translocal re-/imagining of Taiwanese community.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This case study of Taiwan Academy has explored how program implementation was re-/appropriated by the Taiwanese community as part of a broader process of place-making that responded to specific local socio-cultural and spatial factors. This chapter will try to bridge the apparent gap between the conceptualisation of Taiwan Academy in Taipei and its actual implementation in New York into a single, complex theme, by integrating the *translocal processes and practices* that re-/defined the actual role of Taiwan Academy back into the theoretical framework of *soft power as cultural governance* and how this manifested in New York. It will then fast forward to the present to provide a snapshot of how Taiwan Academy implementation from “above” has progressed since the time of fieldwork. Within this context, I discuss the challenges of sustaining a Taiwanese identity in translocal space. Finally, this chapter summarises the key findings and contributions of this thesis in relation to soft power, the interrelationship between states and diasporas, and the complex process of translocal identity making in a mobile world.

5.1 Taiwan Academy as cultural governance

I arrived early to the bustling LAX airport for my flight to Taoyuan, Taiwan, that afternoon. It was late October, 2013, the end of the US leg of my fieldwork trip. Unfortunately, everyone else had arrived early, too. An hour-long queue was already snaking its way toward the Eva Airways check in counters. I was exhausted, carting three suitcases and a heavy backpack full of precious PhD paperwork I was terrified of losing. After a while, the man in front of me in the queue struck up a conversation. His English was fluent. He was an older Taiwanese expat who lived in LA, en route to Taiwan for a routine business trip. He made this trip three or four times each year. He was so glad for the direct flight between Taipei and LA—although, of course there should be; after all, Taiwanese America is very populous, and there is great demand for the route, so it is very good business. His wife and children all lived in the US. After a while, the man asked what I’d been doing. When I told him about my New York research on Taiwan Academy, his eyes lit up. “Taiwan Academy!” he exclaimed. “We have a local Taiwan Academy here in LA. I volunteer whenever I have the chance!” I asked about his volunteer work. “Oh, anything I can do to help out,” was his enthusiastic reply. He’d recently helped with an art event, working at the door and talking to people about Taiwanese culture, history, and art. “It’s a wonderful opportunity to connect with the local community,” he smiled, “and to give back to Taiwan and the Taiwanese community.”

At the end of my fieldwork trip, having observed firsthand how the New York Taiwan Academy had taken on a life of its own in the Taiwanese diaspora, I took this

expression of community cohesion around Taiwan Academy in LA as a further sign that the program as a whole was disconnected from the scope of Taipei's original goal. Rhetorically, the creation of Taiwan Academy had enabled Taipei to claim equal footing with other nation states and reify a shared sense of Taiwanese identity constructed around high cultural and heritage cultural offerings. Yet in practice, the cultural program in New York was focussed on local socio-cultural concerns rather than a specific cultural introduction agenda. Events were tailored to Taiwanese community interests, and community participation upheld the networks that were helping to maintain social, cultural and economic cohesion within the Taiwanese community. Meanwhile, from Taipei, Taiwan Academy was being used to mobilise overseas Taiwanese and businessmen on the basis of cultural identity and moral values in a variety of ways.

Officials in Taipei were adamant that the role of Taiwan Academy was cultural outreach to foreign audiences, that Taiwan Academy's function had no direct or partial connection to the Taiwanese diaspora, and that both the program and the promotion of it should therefore be in English, not Chinese. However, when I brought up the extent of local community involvement in Taiwan Academy, they emphasised the multiplicity of roles performed by the Taiwanese diaspora. 'Well, you know, in LA alone, I think they are more than 400,000,' Hsu (2013) remarked:

A lot of them, you know, when they were young they graduated from the college here, they just pursued their studies in the US and after they graduated they just reside in the US and they work there and after thirty years they retire. So they became the volunteers of the Taiwan Academy because they want to do something for their country, they want to promote Taiwan. So we have a lot of volunteers working in LA, but what they do is when we have some kind of exhibition over there, they just become the tour guide to show the Taiwanese art to the foreigners and they sometimes will invite the foreign students to visit the Taiwan Academy (Hsu and Sun, 2013).

In this way, volunteer participation was not only unsurprising in Taipei, but actually expected. For Hsu, volunteering related to a cultural governance function: the Taiwanese community was expected to advertise and volunteer at events out of a sense of patriotic obligation. This language established a clear moral-ethical framework for diasporic participation: "giving back" to Taiwan via specific forms of volunteer involvement for Taiwan Academy. The diaspora's role was to act as cultural brokers of Taiwanese-ness for new foreign audiences, by inviting them to events and

participating as educators. ‘Of course you have your contacts inside NYC, you just send your information out and they will distribute this information for you,’ Hsu (2013) said. Framing this support role as “giving back” to Taiwan positioned it as an approved form of cultural self-regulation.

It is, of course, common for the transnational initiatives of home governments to mobilise migrant groups, and in this sense unsurprising that the Taiwanese diaspora readily supported Taiwan Academy by promoting events and providing volunteer support (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx, 2016). However, the extent of this interdependence, even from “above”, in Taipei, was unexpected. During interviews, Director Yu had highlighted the Academy’s interdependence on the diaspora for program feedback (see sections 4.1.4 and 4.2). I asked in both Taipei and New York about the concrete ways that programs were evaluated. A few measures were mentioned: the amount of clapping, audience numbers, website engagement, feedback of cultural performers, and reports.

However, officials in both locations emphasised the integral role of direct feedback from audience members. In Taipei, officials specifically noted MOC reliance on direct feedback from the diaspora. ‘Our overseas Taiwanese, they will send us some kind of information source,’ Hsu explained (2013), ‘So we will actually know if this kind of program is successful or not.’ Within this context, Taiwanese professional networks were not just attending Taiwan Academy programs out of a sense of community or for professional motivations; they also served an explicitly acknowledged cultural oversight role. In both Taipei and New York, this was a normalised dynamic; officials routinely used direct feedback as a guide for evaluating past events and developing subsequent programs. This suggested that, despite their claims to the contrary, officials were in fact tacitly seeking the overt approval of the Taiwanese diaspora and were prepared to adapt the program in order to retain diasporic engagement and approval.

In Taipei, officials explained that Taiwan Academy had originally been conceived of as an independent space, removed from the TECO offices. Overseas offices had, in fact, initially been tasked with finding local spaces to rent. However, due to bureaucratic red tape, the process had become untenable and New York was forced

to adapt. ‘So maybe,’ Hsu said (2013), ‘next year we change the strategy. We just want, say, big Taiwanese business outside the country, in foreign country, to buy a building for us, and then we rent the building from the business. It’s more easy for us to do this.’ This echoed Director Yu’s (2013) observations about the importance of Taiwanese professional networks seeing the success of the program, particularly in relation to the potential that they may further fund MOC operations. However, while Hsu perceived this as just another role that the Taiwanese diaspora could and should perform in the service of the nation, Director Yu was utilising Taiwan Academy to cater to the needs and interests of the professional networks in order to further cultivate local connections and thereby possible financial support.

Dependence on the diaspora was further necessitated by administrative challenges. Officials only held their overseas posts for three to four years, and were expected to hand over all their local contacts to their replacements. However, Taipei officials admitted that in New York, the handover of local contacts to new officials hadn’t taken place, and this was hampering implementation. New York operations consequently relied to an unusual extent on the local overseas Taiwanese networks taking on the job of promoting cultural events and advertising to audiences. The Taiwanese community was thereby positioned to effectively select Taiwan Academy’s audience and thereby re-/appropriate its cultural role in service of the Taiwanese community.

Within this context, the conceptualisation of Taiwanese “soft power” manifested in New York’s Taiwan Academy in a variety of ways. From “above”, Taiwan Academy had been conceived in relation to cultural governance of the diaspora: officials expected the Taiwanese communities in the various Taiwan Academy locales to make up for the program’s financial and logistical constraints by advertising Academy events and volunteering their time, money, and effort to support Academy implementation. It is notable that this message was, to a certain extent, effective in mobilising specific population groups: principally the older Taiwanese businessmen and new immigrants. Both of these groups had closer physical and economic ties to Taiwan, suggesting that the effectiveness of this message relied on a certain level of cultural knowledge or transnational business interests.

However, what emerged in New York was not a straightforward model of state-to-society cultural soft power, either within cultural program implementation by local officials or the engagement of the Taiwanese diaspora. Although the MOC conceived of the Taiwanese diasporic networks as an access point to foreign audiences, New York officials were forced to deploy a counter-narrative of Taiwan Academy in creative ways in order to overcome financial and logistical limitations. Rather than focussing on attracting foreign audiences, officials accessed the local Taiwanese community in a variety of capacities to fill out the Taiwan Academy cultural program, from audience members, to performers, to advertisers, to event volunteers. This, in turn, enabled the Taiwanese diaspora to re-/imagine Taiwan Academy as a community initiative to address and meet the needs of the local Taiwanese diasporic networks themselves. The extended roles of the Taiwanese diaspora, in some cases, responded directly to the self-regulation expectations of the MOC. However, for the most part, diasporic participation in Taiwan Academy was for personal reasons, with relatively little consideration for the official function of the event and how they “should” be contributing to it.

Behind the scenes in Taipei, the MOC was also prepared to culturally cater to the interests of the overseas Taiwanese in exchange for their ongoing engagement and direct feedback. Through cultural oversight, the Taiwanese community was thus positioned to further re-/constitute and re-/shape the Taiwan Academy, along with its specific cultural manifestations and meanings, as they saw fit. The spatial boundaries of Taiwan Academy provided a safe space for this re-/negotiating and re-/locating of identity and community in contextually specific ways. As Taiwan Academy upheld Taiwanese-ness within specific spaces where the diasporic community perceived a distinct sense of Taiwanese-ness to be locally under threat, the community in turn rallied around Academy events. Everyone, in this equation, had something to gain from this inter-dependent program implementation.

Moreover, these forms of participation actively challenged the hegemony of the territorially cohesive nation-state. These were people and processes that did more than operate across or between the borders of nations. Rather, as I argued in chapter four, the translocal community actively questioned the nature and limit of these boundaries by practicing forms of localised cultural and political identity which,

while located in geographical space, did not depend on the limits of territory to define their politics.

5.2 Current state of Taiwan Academy

In January 2016, DPP President Tsai was elected to power by a landslide in Taiwan's sixth presidential elections. Facing intense opposition from the PRC, the Tsai administration sought to strengthen relations with the US by establishing closer diplomatic and military associations. Tsai continued to employ the rhetoric of soft power that had been promoted by her predecessor, claiming that culture was the nation's soul and bestowed power when it had 'vitality' (Yang, 2017). She asserted that Taiwanese soft power did not lag behind or pale in comparison to that of other countries. However, 'we live in changing times,' she said, 'and cultural policy needs new ideas and experimentation. We have to upgrade our cultural policy as the nation transitions' (Yang, 2017).

Domestically, this manifested as a "participatory revolution" of Taiwanese cultural policy. This lengthy collaborative project relied heavily on civil society, researchers, associations, young people, and cultural practitioners, and was coordinated by the National Taiwan University of Arts (NTUA) and the Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Studies (TACPS) rather than the MOC. Internationally, the DPP shifted Taipei's cultural diplomacy focus to enhancing the island's cultural exchange efforts in Southeast Asia. A Southeast Asia Advisory Committee was established and a slew of initiatives were launched to provide grants and subsidies for collaborative projects and various people-to-people exchanges.

In December 2016 a fourth Taiwan Academy was quietly established in Washington D.C., with a mandate to promote Taiwanese culture in eleven US states⁷⁷ (Taiwan Academy, 2016). At the same time, however, the dedicated Taiwan Academy website was taken down, erasing any digital means of accessing Academy-specific information and effectively ending the Taiwan Academy mailing list. All completed Taiwan Academy digital resources had their Taiwan Academy branding removed,

⁷⁷ The Washington D.C. Taiwan Academy services Maryland (D.C.), Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Alabama, and Tennessee.

and were instead absorbed into the MOC website or returned their original parent organisation (e.g. The Taiwan Resource Center for Chinese Studies). All references to Taiwan Academy as an independent program disappeared from the MOC website; Academy events were absorbed into regional activity listings and references to Taiwan Academy are predominantly within the Ministry of Culture newsletter, where the institute is mentioned as a location rather than as a program. The digitised Taiwan Culture Toolkit, which had been comprised of smaller curated toolkits focussed on cinema, literature, traditional performing arts, and fine arts, was re-designated as a standalone MOC initiative to extend Taiwan's culture internationally. The Cinema and Traditional Performing Arts Toolkit DVDs are physically distributed to key Taiwan diplomatic missions and the Taiwan Academy contact centres.

There are no current plans to establish new Taiwan Academy resource centres, although the existing four Academies continue to operate. Their events are listed on the MOC and TECO websites, relatively indistinguishable from the overall program schedule of external cultural exchange. The Taiwan Academy in Los Angeles, with its own independent gallery location on Westwood Boulevard near the University of California, rapidly became more digitally active and visible than the New York Taiwan Academy; notably, it was the only Taiwan Academy to establish its own direct line of communication by establishing a Taiwan Academy Los Angeles Facebook page to engage with its audience and promote its events. This Facebook page has been consistently maintained ever since, variously in Chinese and English. However, in May 2019, Taiwan Academy LA announced that it was re-locating from its long-time gallery location to a new venue in Koreatown. Following Chow's argument laid out in section 4.1.2 about the politicisation of space, this move from a major thoroughfare near a renowned university to an ethnic enclave—and not even a Taiwanese one, at that—represents a significant physical loss of visibility for the Taiwan Academy.

The New York Taiwan Academy, meanwhile, never got its own space. Events are still hosted in the TECO lobby and listed on Taipei Cultural Center's own website. The New York TCC is the only US-based cultural centre to have its own fully-fledged website. It does not delineate its "Taiwan Academy" schedule of events from the broader cultural program. Significantly, Taiwan Academy events have also been

incorporated into the listings of community events published on the Chinese language OCAC New York website—a sign that what I observed in New York was not merely the dynamics of a program evolution in transition, but rather a community function that has since been fully embraced by the local political apparatus.

As a KMT branded initiative, it was perhaps inevitable that the Taiwan Academy project would be sidelined by the DPP. Beyond the obvious political motivation of establishing a distinct cultural legacy, this is also intrinsically related to the ongoing and complex process of defining Taiwanese cultural identity that was discussed in section 2.5. While it attracted a flurry of international attention and interest because of comparisons to Confucius Institute, Taiwan Academy also attracted political and public controversy on the domestic front because of its emphasis on preserving traditional Chinese culture; this KMT cultural stance is unpopular in contemporary Taiwan. Moreover, whereas KMT initiatives have historically tended to centre the Taiwanese (and Chinese) diaspora, DPP initiatives tend to centre the domestically oriented Taiwanisation process. Under Tsai, the DPP sought to distance itself from Ma’s cultural legacy; Tsai re-conceptualised Taiwan’s soft power as “warm power” (Hsu, 2019) and re-defined the national cultural agenda around popular domestic consensus, as opposed to Ma’s “Chinese culture with Taiwan characteristics”. Consequently, although Taiwan Academy was not completely abandoned, the program has been substantially downgraded. Taiwan Academy resource centres are now considered to be MOC outposts.

5.3 The challenge of holding a Taiwanese identity in translocal space

In light of the broad challenges facing Taipei’s cultural diplomacy efforts (see sections 1.4.2 and 2.4), as well as the specific challenges faced by officials in New York (see sections 4.4 and 4.5), this downgrading also points to the challenge of claiming a distinctly Taiwanese identity in international space when what constitutes a Taiwanese identity is being perpetually re-defined by incumbent administrations. Taiwan Academy, although intended to function as a cultural introduction point for foreign audiences, had evolved in New York into a relational node within broader overlapping networks of interests and concerns where this identity could be safely re-

/defined within specific translocal contexts. Identities are never static; they are constantly being re-/created and re-/negotiated, as the domestic situation in Taiwan clearly illustrates.

This also holds true within a diasporic context. As Ang (2001 p40) has argued, the diasporic paradigm is necessarily unstable, motivated by notions of dispersal, mobility, and disappearance. Deterritorialisation, far from creating free and uprooted citizens of the world, can lead instead to an even greater attachment to one's roots (Van Ziegert, 2006). When geographical affiliation or residence is taken away as a mode of identification, people may resort to the essentialist traits they have in common in order to form an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). Thus, being uprooted may have the paradoxical effect of strengthening one's attachment to one's roots. For Director Yu, the success of Taiwan Academy was intrinsically tied to the sense of connectedness to a cultural "home" that Taiwan Academy gave the diaspora:

Because of the Taiwan Academy, some overseas Taiwanese or Chinese come to this office very often and they are happy because even though they have stayed here for a long time they still want to know what happens in Taiwan—the artists, or the films—they love to come and talk with artists or directors and see art and movies... So we give them the opportunity (Yu, 2013).

However, within a diasporic context, this construction of identity is always taking place in translocal space. For Taiwanese/Americans, navigating these spatial barriers carries considerable challenges, especially in light of the perpetual generational weakening of ties to an ideological and geographically removed "home", and within the context of the PRC's aggressive and increasingly attractive message of a shared 'cultural China'. The downgrading of Taiwan Academy thus speaks to the political and socio-cultural challenges of holding and maintaining a Taiwanese identity in translocal space. As section 4.1 noted, claiming a Taiwanese identity in international space is itself a political act.

The evolution of Ouyang's career following her appearance at Rising Stars in 2013 offers a sobering insight into the challenge of maintaining a distinctly Taiwanese identity in translocal space. Over the following years, she performed in Japan with the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa, gave sold-out concerts across Taiwan, and

became the first Asian in history to perform at the 2018 Breakthrough Prize (also dubbed the “Oscars of Science”) where she played alongside American rapper Wiz Khalifa. After leaving Curtis Institute in 2015, Ouyang released three CDs and performed in a string of Hong Kong, Mainland Chinese, and Taiwan based film and TV roles.

However, in 2019, Ouyang was suddenly denounced and blacklisted by Beijing, prompting her and her agency to issue multiple statements clarifying that she identified as Chinese and supported the One China Policy⁷⁸ (Deaeth, 2019; Feng, 2019). Ouyang’s father, now a KMT politician, publicly stated that he was not a pro-independence candidate. After these statements were dismissed as insufficient, Ouyang appeared in an interview on PRC state broadcaster CCTV where she reiterated her opposition of Taiwanese independence, reified her family’s Mainland roots, and claimed that she has always introduced herself overseas as a student from China.⁷⁹ The CCP was satisfied with this response and publicly praised Ouyang’s courage.⁸⁰ In Taiwan, Ouyang was denounced as a traitor. Ouyang’s situation highlights the challenge of maintaining a Taiwanese identity within translocal space, where to self-identify as distinctly Taiwanese is interpreted as an overtly anti-China political statement. As her international profile increased, she found herself forced to choose between her largely Mainland-financed career and her Taiwanese identity.

Ouyang’s situation was not unique; it is common for Taiwanese artists to clarify their political stances when questions arise about their position on Taiwanese independence. However, in recent years, the international space for Taiwanese cultural practitioners to simultaneously build a regional or international career while

⁷⁸ Ouyang became the target of Mainland Chinese harassment after the PRC’s State Council dug up and released a photo of Ouyang, her mother, and her sisters attending a 2010 dance performance in New York City by the Shenyun Dance troupe, which is affiliated with the Falun Gong. The Chinese Public Security Bureau publicly denounced Ouyang for associating with cult activity. It became clear she had been blacklisted when her image was censored out of a Beijing Television story profiling a magazine cover that featured Ouyang and three other young Chinese actresses.

⁷⁹ Ouyang appeared in an interview for a PRC TV program called Chinese Movie Report as part of an ongoing series where popular millennial celebrities are invited to talk on the show about how proud they are to be Chinese artists and how they intend to leverage their influence to spread patriotism. Ouyang was the first Taiwanese artist to be featured in this series.

⁸⁰ The CCP responded to Ouyang’s interview via their official Weibo account, sharing the interview video with an accompanying statement that praised Ouyang’s courage in clarifying her political position.

maintaining a distinctly Taiwanese identity has been aggressively curtailed⁸¹ (Chow and Frater, 2016; Huang, 2017; Cole, 2018). Within this context, the New York Taiwan Academy held a small but significant position within the Taiwanese community as both a physical and a translocal space where it was safe for the community and its artists to own, re-/imagine, and/or re-/kindle various forms of a shared Taiwanese cultural identity. In this sense it was important that this space was separate from the functional spaces for defining political Taiwaneseeness, such as the OCAC.

Due to the MOC's dependence on diasporic engagement and because the diaspora took community ownership of Taiwan Academy, the program had been transformed into a space where the community could safely navigate and re-/define their own identities in a multitude of translocally contextual ways. The downgrading of Taiwan Academy therefore represented a further loss of international space, not necessarily for introducing Taiwanese culture to foreign audiences, but for re-/creating and re-/imagining a shared cultural sense of translocal Taiwaneseeness and thereby sustaining the visibility of a distinctly Taiwanese identity—whether affiliated with the KMT, the DPP, or neither—in *translocal* space. In New York, this loss was also reinforced in digital space, where, after losing its independent website, Taiwan Academy events were incorporated into the OCAC schedule of community events.

5.4 Conclusion

Unlike previous research on soft power, this thesis has taken a cultural studies-based approach to understanding how so-called soft power initiatives and messages are communicated from “above”, and then translated and received from “below” by a specific audience. To this end, my research focussed on a time capsule snapshot of

⁸¹ It is widely understood that recognising the One China Policy is now a necessary prerequisite to starting a public career on the mainland or participating in any Chinese-funded project, both in China and abroad. Musicians and artists suspected of associating with or harbouring support for Taiwanese independence and its sympathisers face intense backlash, boycotts, and direct bans. In 2016 it was reported that Mainland authorities had created an entertainment industry contract for anyone wanting to work or perform in China or take part in a film project with funding from China (Cole, 2018). The contract included a clause whereby the signatory agreed to “never support separatist activities”, referring to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang, rendering artists liable to prosecution under Chinese laws pertaining to national security (ibid). In early 2017 it was reported that China's Ministry of Culture had issued a blacklist to dissuade Chinese entertainment companies from working with fifty-five celebrities from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and other places, many of whom had ties to pro-democracy or independence movements (Huang, 2017).

the New York Taiwan Academy. One valuable contribution of this research is that it highlights the importance of unravelling and exploring localised assumptions and perceptions about the requirements of persuasion as well as what counts as a soft power resource. The findings of this research align with the work of other scholars who have argued that soft power is a hybrid concept that is always inevitably refracted through the prism of local concerns and history (Hayden, 2012). Behind the scenes, Taipei's soft power discourse was imbued with locally and contextually specific meanings that carried important implications for understanding the specific ways that Taipei was conceiving of and deploying programs aimed at generating soft power.

However, fieldwork for this thesis found such a dramatic disconnect between Taiwan Academy in policy and in practice that this case study was ultimately unable to answer the question of whether and how Taipei was able to cultivate soft power through Taiwan Academy. In this sense, my research also exposes the theoretical and empirical challenges of analysing state-initiated soft power programs. These challenges are discussed below. Due to the limitations of the soft power framework for explaining the diaspora-centred program I found in New York, this research turned to a translocal perspective. This made it possible to explore the role and impact of the Taiwan Academy in New York within its specific local contexts. Through a translocal emphasis on history, mobility, locality, and place, this thesis situates Taiwan Academy in New York as a "relational node" (Amin, 2002) that was inhabited, produced, and continuously re-/defined by both the Ma administration in Taipei and the (trans)local Taiwanese community in New York.

Cultural soft power in the New York Taiwan Academy

This research uncovered several overlapping and sometimes-competing interpretations of "cultural soft power" at play within the creation and implementation of Taiwan Academy. From "above", in Taipei, the Ma administration attempted to re-define Taiwanese soft power as the preservation of traditional Chinese culture and values. Ma tried to mobilise financial support for the MOC on the basis of a moral obligation to support the creation of an 'affluent, safe, and aesthetically pleasing society' (Ma, 2011). This cultural vision, however, was

disconnected from the perspectives and opinions of the domestic audience, so it did not attract domestic support. Privately, even some New York officials felt that Taiwan Academy was a KMT political stunt.

Taiwan Academy was also conceptualised along the lines of diaspora management. In Taipei, officials framed the Taiwanese diaspora as a resource. Taipei expected the diaspora to volunteer their time, money, and networks of influence to support MOC cultural objectives on the basis of patriotic pride, gratitude, and moral obligation. The implementation of Taiwan Academy was, after all, integrally dependent upon the involvement of the diaspora—both of artists and musicians to fill out the program schedule, and of the local community—to promote events and attract audiences. In New York, officials successfully mobilised the local Taiwanese diaspora by engaging in an inter-dependent implementation process that communicated with and responded to the interests and concerns of the local Taiwanese diaspora. This approach effectively disconnected Taiwan Academy implementation from homeland politics and instead embedded it within local-level diaspora concerns. Notably, the New York Taiwanese diaspora did not conceive of Taiwan Academy, its cultural program, or their own participation along political lines, whether as a tool of KMT cultural propaganda or as a form of resistance to homeland political messages. Rather, they unilaterally expressed a sense of ownership over the cultural program and its cultural messages, and participated for a variety of personal reasons.

Certain population groups—in particular, the older Taiwanese generation, Taiwanese language teaching networks, and new immigrants—stepped in to support the Taiwan Academy in a variety of volunteer capacities. However, instead of supporting the MOC's program objectives, they redeployed Taiwan Academy to support the local re-/construction of a translocal Taiwanese diasporic identity. They promoted Taiwan Academy, but within their own networks. They supported the introduction of Taiwanese culture, but re-directed the focus of this cultural introduction toward the needs of the diaspora. They booked out cultural events, but re-defined their function by utilising the events to serve a variety of social and professional needs. They actively helped to ensure the program's local success, but re-defined the definition of success on their own terms via direct feedback about cultural events to officials in both New York and Taipei.

As a result, Taiwan Academy served a variety of social and community functions. Events were re-/imagined as a shared community space within the cosmopolitan heart of Manhattan for local, mobile, and visiting Taiwanese to socialise and connect. As such, Taiwan Academy was re-appropriated as both a social meeting point, and as a professional networking opportunity. Volunteer participation supported the integration of new immigrants into the broader social and cultural contexts of being Taiwanese in New York, while language school networks welcomed the cultural program as valuable opportunity to service as well as attract new students, thereby protecting their business interests. In this way, Taiwan Academy's unique value lay in its ability to preserve a sense of connectedness within and among the Taiwanese community in New York by providing a safe space for them to navigate and re-/create their own Taiwanese identities in a variety of ways within *translocal* space.

Functioning as a space for performing Taiwanese identity, Taiwan Academy became an alternative sphere that pushed other forms of cultural representation to the periphery and positioned Taiwanese culture and cultural contributions front and centre both on a global stage (via *Rising Stars*) and at the heart of Chinese history (via *Taiwan in Your Hand*). Taiwan Academy was re-/conceptualised as an opportunity to introduce Taiwanese culture to new generations of American-born/Taiwanese children, and thereby support the cultural education of the diaspora. In *Rising Stars*, young Taiwanese/American musicians were held up as beacons of success for the local community; Ouyang, in particular, was explicitly advertised as a community "learning model". Puppetry events such as the *Taiwan in Your Hand* workshop were specifically promoted as educative opportunities for Taiwanese families, to connect elementary children back to the uniquely Taiwanese cultural roots of their Chinese heritage. Within the local contexts of socio-cultural and spatial transition, Taiwan Academy became a specific point of re-/connection to Taiwanese cultural roots.

Finally, the feedback provided by the local Taiwanese community was utilised at both levels of government to evaluate and adapt the program in ways that would ensure the ongoing support and involvement of the Taiwanese diaspora. The program was, in practice, no longer directly tied to a territorially cohesive form of

nationalism, nor did it represent a locally specific Taiwanese identity. Rather, it re-/presented a spatially and socially translocal Taiwaneseeness, embedded in material flows of people and cultural goods as well as symbolic flows of cultural knowledge and ideas.

The problem of soft power in Taiwan Academy

In practice, I found that the so-called “cultural soft power” efforts of Taiwan Academy actually targeted Taiwanese people, both in Taiwan and abroad. Moreover, fieldwork highlighted discrepancies in the implementation of Taiwan Academy that raise serious questions about the efficacy and contingency of Taiwan Academy as a so-called soft power program. These findings underscore the challenges of evaluating initiatives that are implemented with the goal of creating or extending a state’s soft power.

As a state-initiated soft power strategy, the ability of Taiwan Academy to generate soft power depended primarily on the state’s ability to mobilise a diverse range of tools in order to expand its international influence (Angey-Stenuc and Molho, 2015). However, crucially, because the soft power framework treats the state as a homogenous and coherent body, it does not take into consideration contradictory opinions and interests, or divergent contexts. This assumption of coherence, of course, breaks down in practice. The bureaucrats who create policies do not necessarily share the same objectives with the officials responsible for implementing the policies. In some cases, they may even be addressing different and sometimes competing concerns and contexts. Moreover, bureaucratic disorganisation can result in a multitude of conflicting interpretations and challenges.

Many examples of this breakdown between Taiwan Academy in policy and in practice were highlighted in this research. For instance, Taipei’s goal of reaching new English-speaking audiences was at odds with the lack of resources provided to reach out to these audiences. Meanwhile, in New York, many of the programs implemented by Taiwan Academy were explicitly conceived of as for the local Taiwanese diasporic community. Taiwan Academy emails were sometimes written entirely in Mandarin. In addition, the value that Taipei placed on the role of diasporic feedback

undermined its stated focus on new audiences, by creating a positive feedback loop that blurred the lines between the interests of Taipei, and the interests of the Taiwanese diasporic community.

From both above and below, Taiwan Academy was always reliant to some degree on the involvement of the private sector. This resulted in a complex interrelationship between government officials and the Chinese language school education sector, diasporic business networks, and social elites, who financed, attended, supported, and/or promoted Taiwan Academy and its programs. With community participation connected to various business motivations, financial incentives, and/or underlying political interests, it is difficult to argue that the interactions between the Taiwan Academy programs and the diaspora came to represent spaces for soft power growth for Taipei. Moreover, it begs the question: to what extent might the stakes of private actors have led Taiwanese officials to act in ways that contradicted the soft power interests of Taipei? This is not a question that can be answered by the present study, but it highlights the complexity of any attempt to evaluate the potential of Taiwan Academy for soft power accrument, particularly in relation to the diaspora.

Second, it is notable that, at least in the case of Taiwan Academy, political conception and program implementation were almost entirely unrelated. On the one hand, it is possible that the intentions and objectives of Taipei were not clearly or consistently communicated to the officials responsible for implementing them. Officials overseeing each resource centre had a certain level of autonomy in their localised implementation of Taiwan Academy, as they were responsible for designing their own cultural programs and were able to utilise their own networks of influence. The interests and agendas of officials in New York may therefore not necessarily have aligned with officials in Taipei.

On the other hand, the dissonance between conception and practice may have simply been the path of least resistance. Officials in New York repeatedly cited logistical, practical, and bureaucratic constraints to justify the physical location, program schedule, audience demographics, and even email list of the New York Taiwan Academy. This highlights the precarious nature of state-dependent “soft power” strategies, contingent as they are on a clearly communicated coherent

strategy, funding, personpower, and—at least in a democratic two party context—bipartisan support. It seems, therefore, that soft power served as a useful rhetorical device for bureaucrats to build consensus around Taiwan Academy, but the resulting program was not backed up with the necessary resources to meaningfully implement it.

Finally, the disconnect between policy and practice could have been the result of intentional misdirection. If Taiwan Academy was serving an alternate political role, then cultural soft power may have been the public face of the project rather than the underlying motivation. During our interview, Hsu (Hsu and Sun, 2013) acknowledged that behind the scenes, Taiwan Academy served an important unofficial diplomatic function in the US, because cultural exchanges enabled Taipei to bypass diplomatic restrictions and facilitate ministerial visits. It was in this respect that Hsu felt culture was soft power: its capacity for opening up back door diplomacy opportunities.

This is not unusual, given Taipei's longstanding practice of utilising cultural exchange to facilitate diplomacy. However, this function is solely pragmatic, unrelated to the actual Taiwan Academy program, the introduction of new audiences to Taiwanese culture, or the ability to cultivate influence. By this metric, the potential soft power of Taiwan Academy lies in the program's capacity for opening up a public diplomacy back door in the US rather than its potential for introducing and attracting new audiences to Taiwanese culture and traditional Chinese characters. If this is the case, then describing Taiwan Academy itself as an avenue of soft power is reductive, because it renders soft power little more than a synonym of "diplomacy" as opposed to "military power". This reduces soft power to a mere rhetorical label, analytically poor, and stretched thin to accommodate the immediate diplomatic needs of Taipei.

Collectively, these issues underscore the empirical limits of conducting a material analysis of state-based soft power programs. In policymaking, it seems that soft power is prone to becoming a rhetorical argument or a political tool that is not necessarily related to the programs that are implemented as a result. The malleable and multi-functional nature of soft power rhetoric, meanwhile, makes it vulnerable

to appropriation by political parties and permeable to partisan issues. One reason the Taiwan Academy strategy was sidelined was that its “Chinese culture with Taiwanese characteristics” reflected a subjective KMT worldview and therefore lacked bipartisan support. Furthermore, as soft power strategies require long-term investment, any program with the administrative shelf life of a presidential term is inevitably doomed to failure. In the case of Taiwan Academy, the labelisation of soft power became a political stake that blurred the lines between the concept of soft power and ideology. Consequently, causes and effects, scales and contexts, and theoretical and empirical dimensions of soft power all lost clarity. Ultimately, it is impossible to determine whether Taiwan Academy was ever intended to function primarily as a potential site of soft power, let alone whether its implementation is able to contribute in any real way to potential soft power accrument for Taiwan.

Taken together, these challenges point to the uncertain reality of deploying soft power resources. These findings did not provide any clear support for the idea that audience engagement with soft power resources signifies attraction to specific soft power cultural messages and resources per se. Even if we were to accept that attraction did exist, the concrete benefits of Taiwan Academy for Taipei are still unclear. The diasporic support for Taiwan Academy that helped to sustain its operation seemed to ultimately create constraints on the program’s ability to expand beyond diasporic interests or attract non-Taiwanese audiences. Further, it is doubtful whether this attraction could or would actually produce favourable policy outcomes for Taipei, let alone how one would trace policy outcomes back to the cultural programs of Taiwan Academy. As an analytical tool, soft power is thus unable to meaningfully interpret the empirical consequences of what soft power discourse actually produces.

Despite these immense challenges, the idea of soft power has remained influential among practitioners of foreign policy worldwide, resulting in a plethora of “soft power” policies and initiatives. The reasons for this fall into two broad themes. First, the mouldable nature of soft power has been opportunely suited to various political debates over the past two decades. At its core, soft power offers a simple set of readily adaptable assumptions concerning the conditions of a country’s power of persuasion. The use of soft power rhetoric tends to act as a signpost, pointing to a

certain set of values and a specific national identity that are being advocated for and justified by policymakers. In this way, soft power is a tool for policymakers to promote policies and public diplomacy initiatives that conform to these approved values, build consensus, and promote a more positive image abroad.

Second, the concept of soft power has political utility in serving to reaffirm the policies and values that practitioners and policymakers advance. As Todd Hall (2010) points out, it always seems to be the exact values or policies—not to mention narratives of national selfhood—that particular policymakers are trying to promote and preserve that they claim as important soft power resources. It is likely that state-based soft power approaches are attractive to policymakers because they feed into the pre-existing disposition of a state to view its own values and political goals in a favourable light. Rather than challenging Nye's US-centric framework, policymakers in various national contexts can—and do—simply substitute their own culture, value systems, and policy alternatives as those most attractive, whether regionally or nationally (Hall, 2010). Thus, whereas the idea of soft power was used by Nye to reaffirm the place of the US in the world and to validate certain US liberal values, the PRC has used soft power to reify the attraction of Confucian values and the 'Beijing model' of development. Meanwhile, Taipei utilises the rhetoric of soft power to align itself with US-sanctioned liberal democratic norms as part of a strategic bid to garner support. Taipei also employs soft power to distinguish the island from the PRC in terms of values, via democratic achievements and human rights values, and culture, via the preservation of traditional Chinese culture and characters.

For Taipei, however, the use of soft power rhetoric goes a step further. Beyond constructing policy initiatives around a particular national identity, soft power rhetoric provides Taipei with the *language* to participate in world politics in a state-like capacity. Thus, the use of soft power rhetoric itself carries unique significance as this language serves a legitimising national function. Furthermore, soft power rhetoric legitimises the island's meagre diplomatic resources and thus serves as a rallying point on both domestic and international fronts. In this way, describing something as a soft power resource can thus serve as an endogenous validation of the policies and national discourses that political practitioners advocate.

Soft power and translocality

This research underscores how soft power is fundamentally a complex negotiation that takes place between the cultural and political messages being communicated by a state and the socio-cultural, spatial, and political contexts of the audience receiving these messages. In the New York Taiwan Academy, efforts to generate cultural soft power found their expression in negotiating the shifting terrain between cultural heritage and self-representation. Responding to local socio-cultural and spatial transition within the Taiwanese community, New York officials translated Taipei's message of introducing Taiwan's cultural heritage and promoting Taiwan's cultural products into a material space where the dominant Mainland-defined narrative of Chineseness could be challenged and local Taiwanese cultural contributions and networks could be highlighted.

Instead of functioning as a cultural introduction for non-Taiwanese audiences, Taiwan Academy was actively reconstituted as a space, away from the traditional political mechanism of the OCAC, where the New York-based Taiwanese diaspora could perform, consume, and reflexively re-/negotiate what it meant to be Taiwanese *and* Taiwanese/American within the shifting socio-cultural context(s) of New York. Although this implementation of Taiwan Academy was unrelated to Taipei's objective of creating a national cultural institute for foreign audiences, the cultural role being performed by Taiwan Academy nevertheless supported the preservation of a distinctly Taiwanese identity in international space. By supporting the local diaspora to solidify a *translocal* sense of cultural Taiwanese-ness and reify a distinctive Taiwanese community, it is possible that Taiwan Academy played a role in furthering the visibility of Taiwanese as a distinct demographic within the larger New York community. However, this obvious claim cannot be asserted as a generality without proper ethnographic study.

In this respect, it is worth noting that the alternative community space constructed by the Taiwan Academy programs were relatively insular. Moreover, the interactions between Taiwan Academy and the Taiwanese diaspora indicated that, far from being passive consumers of cultural programs and messages, the diasporic audience was actively involved in meaning making. This transformation of the local

role of Taiwan Academy as a result of audience participation is in line with Stuart Hall's (Hall, 1980) encoding/decoding model of communication, which cautions that emitting a message does not mean it is going to be taken for granted by those who receive it. Through the collective involvement of the diaspora, the messages that were being communicated were decoded and altered in line with local social, cultural, and spatial contexts.

In fact, this research found more evidence of diasporic involvement changing the nature and meaning of the program than of Taiwan Academy tailoring specific messages for its audience. Thus, any visibility, even *if* it eventuated, would not necessarily be related to Taipei's specific cultural vision of Taiwan Academy or Taiwan. This highlights the importance of an interactive approach to investigating soft power initiatives that, first, considers the targeted individuals as well as the producers of the initiative, and second, employs alternative conceptual frameworks in order to deconstruct the assumptions that accompany soft power theory and examine what soft power actually produces via the circulation of culture, flows of information and people in time and space, and their unexpected consequences.

Analysing a soft power program without considering these multilayered historical, socio-cultural and spatial contexts risks a substantial oversimplification and even misunderstanding of how these dynamics unfold. A translocal perspective highlights how soft power practice is never a straightforward matter of cause and effect, but instead a dynamic and relational process that is being constantly re-negotiated. In many ways, any state-initiated effort to cultivate soft power is inherently translocal. Taiwan Academies, for example, were conceived of in Taipei and exported to various locations, where they were simultaneously situated in socio-cultural and geographic space and connected to other Taiwan Academy locales as well as other Taiwanese diasporic communities.

Inevitably, these border-crossing networks and local-to-local linkages between mobile and immobile people re-/shape soft power programs and messages during program implementation. The translocal framework is particularly valuable in this sense as it effectively "grounds" soft power in a place-based analysis of socio-cultural and spatial processes and identities. It offers an important reminder that

interpreting soft power “effects” within a given audience is challenging without first having a framework for understanding the impact of translocal dynamics on both the programs and their audiences.

This study offers a glimpse behind the scenes of state-based soft power strategising and implementation, exposing the inherent complexity entailed in communicating, translating, and receiving so-called soft power messages. In particular, it highlights the contextual, contingent nature of soft power practice, and consequently the value of using an interdisciplinary, de-Westernised framework of analysis. To this end, the framework of translocality does not intrinsically contradict soft power research but rather can be complementary to it, revealing how a wide spectrum of practices and relationships in the articulation of distinctive national and trans(local) identities are re-/constructed, adapted, and re-/imagined in a mobile world.

I believe that these state-initiated efforts to cultivate soft power offer a rich analytical opportunity for examining how communities translate and negotiate their own cultural identities on increasingly translocal scales. This research has made a preliminary enquiry into these processes, focussing on the Taiwanese diaspora and their narratives. While the process of cultural identity creation is closely tied to ongoing political processes within Taiwan, those who identify as Taiwanese outside of the island’s territorial boundaries are also constantly re-/negotiating and re-/imagining their own Taiwanese identities within the context of translocal practices, relationships and processes. This study affirms the dynamism and fluidity of identity-making processes within translocal diasporic spaces and communities. Soft power messages were, first, culturally and socially localised in Taipei, and then re-localised in New York within the context of various local institutional, socio-cultural, and spatial factors. Reception of these messages was further mediated by the Taiwanese diaspora, who engaged with the new space of Taiwan Academy as a translocal opportunity for place-making, in the sense that they adopted and re-/appropriated it as a place of meaning, identity, and community re-/imagining through translocal processes that involved the intervention of other locations, networks, and activities.

Future Research

Most existing research on the relationship between the ROC and the Taiwanese/Chinese diaspora is either relatively old or focuses specifically on the processes of diaspora management that are overseen by the OCAC. By contrast, this study offers a unique perspective on the dynamics of this interrelationship by exploring how a diasporic community chose to engage with a state-sponsored program, outside of the jurisdiction of the OCAC, and on its own terms. Nevertheless, as a case study analysis of a single Taiwan Academy location within a specific time period, the results of this research are inevitably limited. The translocal analysis of Taiwan Academy illuminated the complex interrelations that existed between state actors and private organisations, institutions, and individuals. In the case of Taiwan Academy, intermingled interactions between diasporic business networks, the Chinese language school education sector, social elites, and the state have been pointed out. A study of the coalitions of actors with different agendas and fields of possibilities would be an interesting follow up study to shed light on how various actors instrumentalise themselves to negotiate their role(s) in internal and/or transnational politics through Taiwan Academy. Further local-level research of other Taiwanese diasporic communities and how they negotiate their relationships with state-sponsored programs or other Taiwan Academy cultural centres would provide a more complete picture of the nuanced ways in which local level concerns and translocal flows of people, ideas, and products intersect, redefining political messaging and program implementation in ways that are inextricably intertwined with—and carry implications for—the past, present, and future, of the Taiwanese diaspora.

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