Manifesto for the further development and entrenchment of Taiwan Studies within global academia (outside Taiwan)

Preamble

The study of Taiwan outside Taiwan has developed remarkably over the last 15 years, with an increase in Taiwan-related courses at universities, the establishment of new Taiwan Studies centers and three vital regional associations of Taiwan Studies (NATSA, EATS, JAFTS), and the newly-launched International Journal of Taiwan Studies (IJTS). This has been an encouraging development for the entrenchment of Taiwan Studies within global academia. However, the further development of the field outside Taiwan is now at a crucial juncture. Major challenges exist for those who seek to make Taiwan Studies institutionally sustainable, such as a lack of faculty positions and long-term funding schemes for Taiwan scholars and Taiwan-related research and teaching. This manifesto puts forward potential solutions for overcoming the identified obstacle facing Taiwan Studies outside Taiwan and aims to trigger a debate among concerned Taiwan scholars and policy-makers in Taiwan on possible pathways towards the healthy development of Taiwan Studies worldwide.

I.

Genuine faculty positions for Taiwan scholars outside Taiwan are almost non-existent. The study of Taiwan at international universities is shouldered by academics who have not been hired as experts on Taiwan but as China or Asian scholars in area studies or disciplinary departments. Young scholars, who currently ride the wave of Taiwan Studies, probably will not find a tenured university position to teach and do research on Taiwan. However, these are the people who would recruit more students of Taiwan and help to entrench Taiwan Studies further within university systems. Regular faculty positions for Taiwan scholars are thus urgently needed.

II.

Creating positions for Taiwan scholars outside Taiwan requires new funding schemes which should not be restricted to third party funding but include money coming from university budgets. Only then do universities become stakeholders in those positions. However, international universities are reluctant to create such positions or to make Taiwan Studies figure more prominently in their disciplinary or area studies departments. Therefore, the Taiwan government would be well advised to come up with a coherent strategy to promote Taiwan Studies worldwide, including schemes to initiate the establishment of faculty positions for Taiwan specialists outside Taiwan.
III.
We further suggest to the Taiwan government to reform its current funding structure in order to support the global development of Taiwan Studies more effectively. This does not only relate to the establishment of new positions for Taiwan scholars. We also believe that the current funding of proposals for teaching courses, visiting scholar programs, lecture series and workshops submitted to the Ministries of Science & Technology, Education, Culture, Foreign Affairs throughout the year should be more effectively brought to bear. We recommend that the allocation of project funding by the Taiwan government focuses on institutions and projects that have a proven track record of successful implementation and promise sustainability, instead of following a logic of ‘even allocation across the board’. Spending ‘deep’ may be better than spending ‘broad’.

IV.
These objectives may require a greater concentration and coordination of all existing funding schemes so far administered by different bureaucracies within the Taiwan government. We believe that the best way to promote Taiwan Studies globally and attract international universities to become stakeholders in the institutionalization of Taiwan Studies is to create an integrated public funding structure in Taiwan. For this purpose, we encourage the Taiwan government to consider the establishment of a new public diplomacy institution, which may be called the TAIWAN FOUNDATION.

V.
A new TAIWAN FOUNDATION would support international universities willing to promote Taiwan Studies to establish professorships, employ contracted faculty members, and appoint visiting professors to advance teaching and research on Taiwan (first funding branch). It would initiate fellowship programs for graduate and postdoctoral studies, as well as fellowships for field research (second funding branch). Finally, it would support special projects to promote Taiwan Studies, such as lecture series, workshops and conferences, and cultural events (third funding branch).

VI.
A new TAIWAN FOUNDATION would not replace, but complement the important work of other funding institutions in Taiwan which operate independently from the Taiwan government. These could focus on smaller-sized research projects and spread their money more evenly across the board.
VII.

The establishment of professorships would best be based on schemes that attract universities to become stakeholders in their ongoing existence. Endowed professorships or tenure-track positions fully financed by the Taiwan government for a certain period before being taken over by university budgets, or co-financed from the very beginning, are viable options which may be pursued by a TAIWAN FOUNDATION. Without such initiatives, the future of faculty positions for Taiwan scholars outside Taiwan looks bleak.

VIII.

We encourage all regional studies associations to work together to help the further institutionalization of Taiwan Studies and promote the objectives spelled out in this manifesto. The secretariat of the World Congress of Taiwan Studies at Academia Sinica could fulfil a useful coordination function in this regard.

We appeal to the Taiwan government to seriously consider this ‘manifesto’ and make good use of the window of opportunity that the recent development of Taiwan Studies outside Taiwan offers.

André Beckershoff, University of Tübingen
Stefan C. Braig, University of Tübingen
Dr. Isabelle Cheng, University of Portsmouth
Prof. Chien Shiu-shen, National Taiwan University
Prof. Stéphane Corcuff, University of Lyon
Dr. Táňa Dluhošová, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
Dr. Dafydd Fell, School of Oriental and African Studies, London
Prof. Thomas B. Gold, UC Berkeley
Prof. Ann Heylen, National Taiwan Normal University
Prof. Hsin-huang Michael Hsiao, Academia Sinica
Prof. Christopher R. Hughes, London School of Economics and Political Science
Prof. Henning Klöter, Humboldt University
Dr. Lee Chun-yi, University of Nottingham
Prof. Emerson Niou, Duke University
Dr. Ming-Yeh Rawnsley, Editor-in-Chief, International Journal of Taiwan Studies
Prof. Shelley Rigger, Davidson College
Prof. Gunter Schubert, University of Tübingen
Dr. Jon Sullivan, University of Nottingham
Ass.-Prof. Tseng Yu-chin, University of Tübingen
Beatrice Zani, University of Lyon II
Sascha Zhivkov, University of Tübingen