

The Institutionalization of Taiwan Studies in Europe

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Taiwan Studies in Europe is a relatively recent phenomenon. Prior to the late 1990s, there were only few publications, conferences, research centers and taught courses with a focus on Taiwan. Since 2000, however, the situation has changed dramatically. Europe has become one of the most vibrant sites of Taiwan Studies. New Taiwan Studies institutions have been set up in various countries, Taiwan has become the subject of specialized university courses, a range of book series and journals provide special venues for publications on Taiwan, and the annual European Association of Taiwan Studies Conference has become one of the largest Taiwan Studies conferences in the world.

Taiwan's symbolic capital as a democracy and the government's support for Taiwan Studies in the context of flexible diplomacy has encouraged the conscious institutionalization of Taiwan Studies in Europe. The diversity contained within the entity of Europe has been reflected in the variety of Taiwan Studies institutions. Most of them have been set up quite recently and depend on the personal commitment by scholars involved in the institutionalization process. The institutionalization of Taiwan Studies in Europe has benefited from a time lap compared to the emergence of the field in the United States. On the one hand, the historical circumstances of Taiwan's successful democratization and pragmatic diplomacy have given symbolic and economic capital to the evolving field. On the other hand, the later point of institutionalization has allowed European Taiwan scholars to build on their experiences in gained in the United States. The field has been actively promoted and coordinated by individual scholars who could build on experiences gained in Taiwan Studies institutions in the United States.

A key element to the successful institutionalization of Taiwan Studies has been the creation of a Europe wide network as it has allowed Taiwan Studies scholars to allocate resources and facilitate exchange. The style of institutionalization is also important because the element of transnationalism, which has started to influence themes in Taiwan Studies, has thus been directly incorporated into the process of institution-building itself.