



Jack Lee
Senior Lecturer



University
of Glasgow

International Student Mobility and Geopolitics: The Case of Taiwan

Confucius Temple, Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Photo by J. Lee

CGHE
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Agenda

International Student Mobility (ISM)

- Normative framing

Taiwan's Geopolitics

- China + Global
- Southeast Asia + Global South

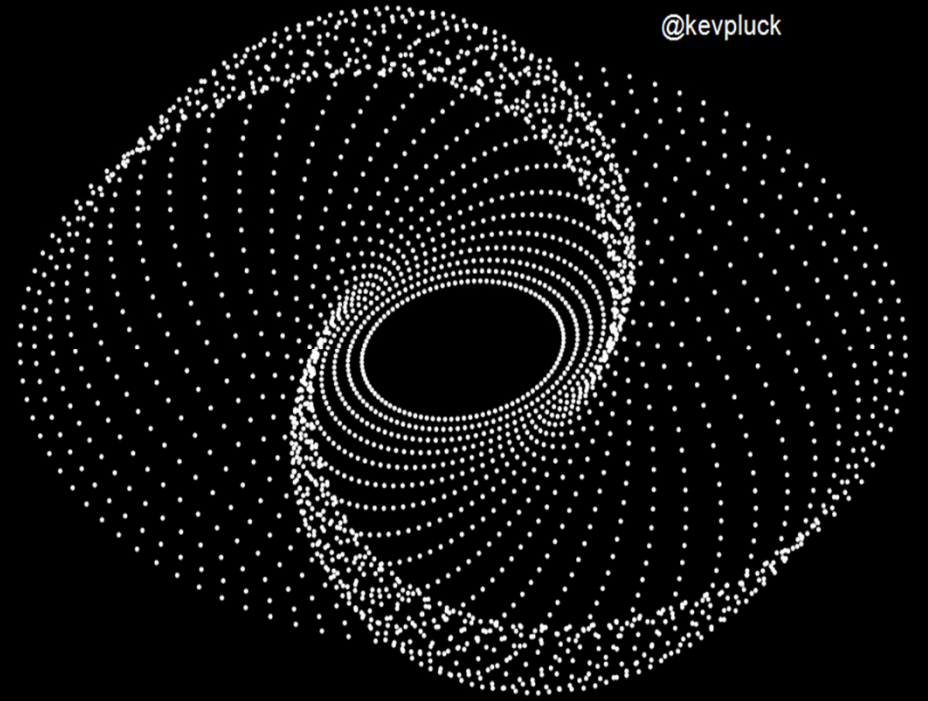
Implications

- Soft power
- Asia as Method

International Student Mobility

You're probably thinking...

- studying in Western HEIs
- English as the lingua franca
- Competitive HEI rankings
- ISM as a neoliberal enterprise



International Student Mobility

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Policies
Practices
Research

The Anglophone experience

International Student Mobility

You're probably thinking...

- ~~studying in Western HEIs~~
- **English as the lingua franca**
- ~~Competitive HEI rankings~~
- ~~ISM as a neoliberal enterprise~~



Taiwan / Global South

What motivates international students to choose Taiwan?

What are their experiences in this geopolitical context?

Taiwan's Geopolitics

- Historical conflict with China; allied with USA
- Operationally independent, globally “China” or persona non grata
- Courted Chinese diaspora
- New Southbound Policy 2016



László Moholy-Nagy, Yellow Circle 1921

New Southbound Policy fast-tracks exchanges, regional integration

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Barbara Hepworth, Image II 1960

Taiwan as an ISM Destination

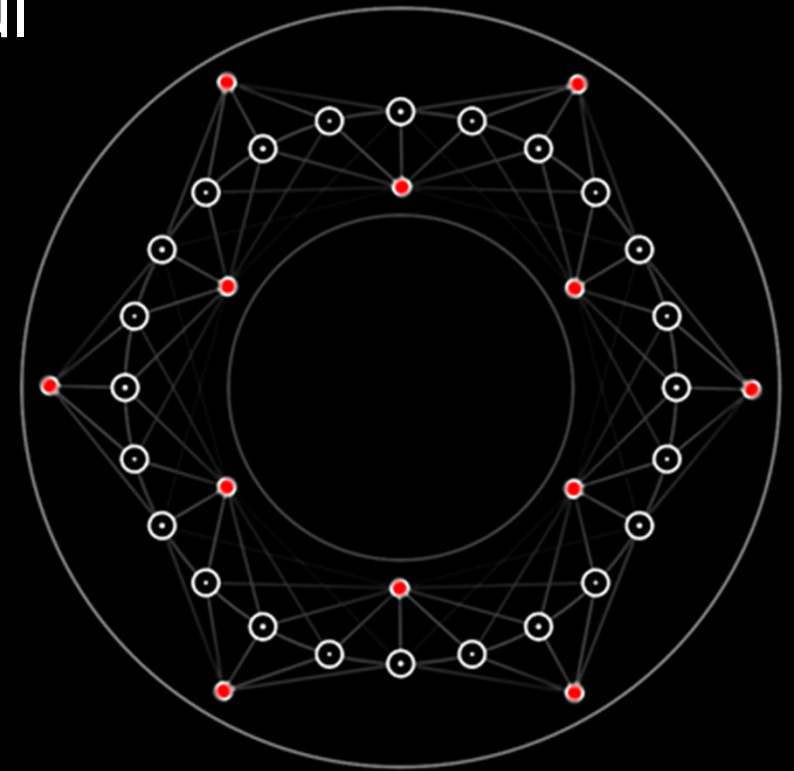
- Scholarships
- Discipline expertise
- Springboard / Portal
- **Cultural** (foil: China)

Space-making

Imagined, dynamic, relational, powerful
(Appadurai, 1999; Massey 2005)

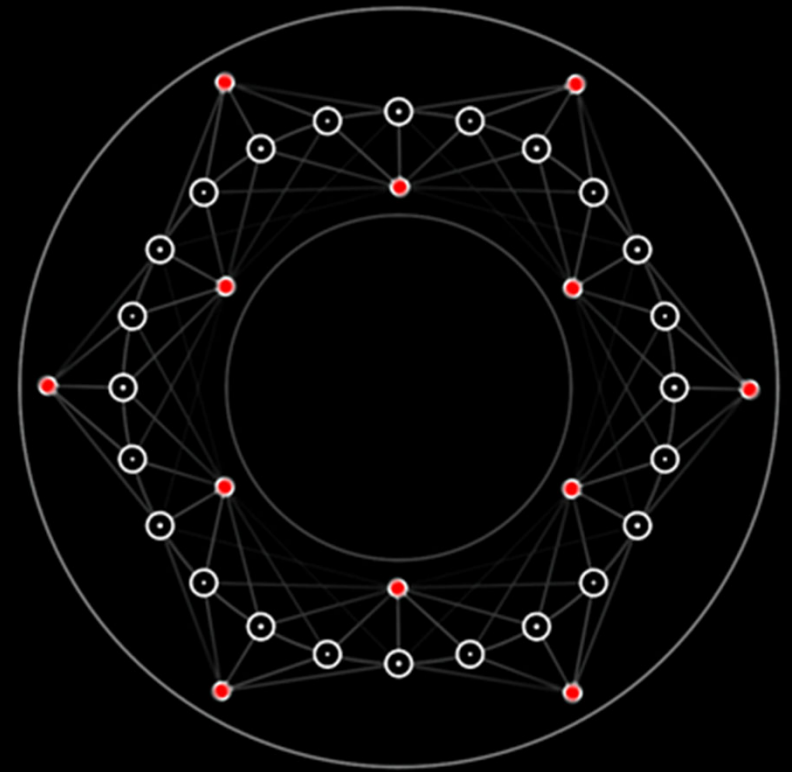
HE Geopolitics (Marginson, 2024):

- mobile spatiality affected
- assumptions of scale & agency
(global, regional, national, local)

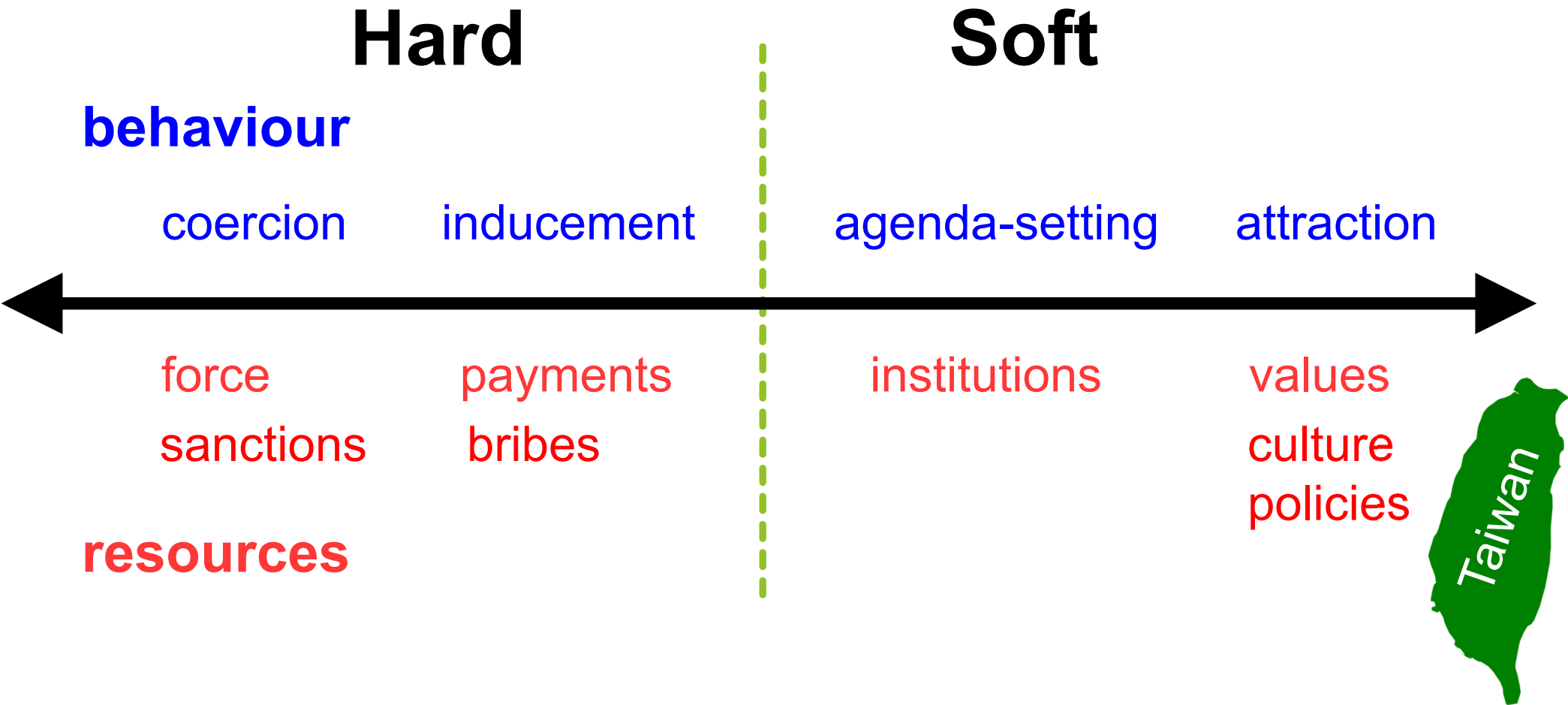


Space-making (Taiwan)

- Imagined beacon of democracy
- Educational diplomacy
- Fluctuating # of Mainland Chinese students (powerful national politics)
- Targeting SE Asia region (agency)

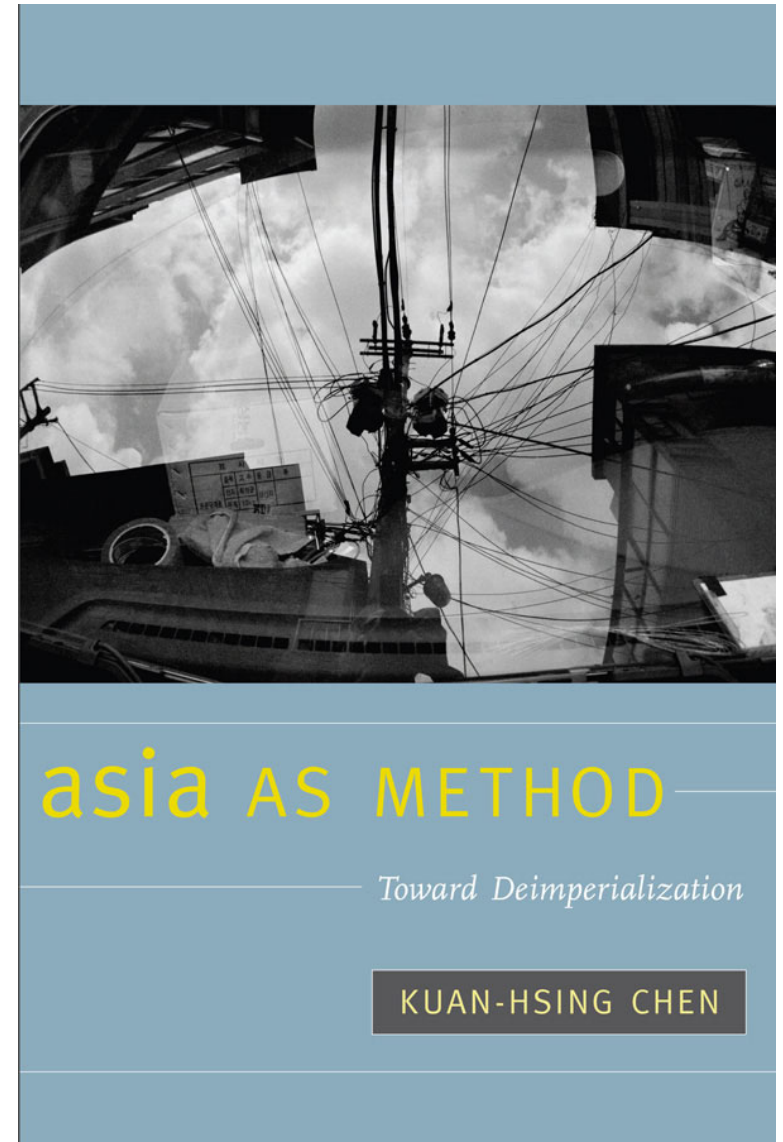


Power in International Relations (Nye, 2004)



Broader questions...

- Mimicry of Western HE?
- Subjugation of international students in a “pluralistic society”?
- Neo-colonisation by an Asian power?



Lee, J. T. (2023). **Asian higher education as soft power?** In D. Kapur, L. Kong, & D. M. Malone (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Higher Education in the Asia Pacific Region* (p. 500-513). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lee, J. T. (2023). **Romanticizing decolonization and Asian epistemology:** Reflections on identity and space. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 24(2), 187–197. Special issue “Asia as Method: Toward ontologies and epistemologies of difference” edited by K. Kester & V. Masemann.

Thank You

Jack.Lee@glasgow.ac.uk

Alishan, Taiwan
by J. Lee

