

CONCLUSION



This book has explored the intersection and interaction between personal lives and dramatic political changes in Kinmen – a geopolitically salient archipelago located between Taiwan and China – over the past century, a period of rapid modernization in Asia. Marriage has been highlighted in mainstream theories of modernity, mainly grounded on Euro-American experiences, as an index of wider social changes enabling individual men and women to become independent of familial bonds and assert their personal freedom and autonomy. This has been challenged by a significant body of literature in Asian studies showing how ‘traditional’ familial or patriarchal norms remain effective in shaping individual life. While this scholarship compellingly argues that Asian governments have created or reinforced familial or patriarchal prescriptions of gendered roles through their policies, very often kin ties and the patrilineal family are treated as zones of conservatism demanding the individual’s compliance with unequal gendered expectations. Building on new kinship studies in anthropology, I have moved beyond the oft-posed dichotomy between individual autonomy and familial bonds, and a hypothetical practice which circumscribes kinship as a ‘private domain’ in theses of modernity. Exploring the future-making and relational aspects of marriage in the life stories of multiple generations in Kinmen, I argue that, rather than zones of conservatism, kinship and marriage engender new futures and changes in society at large.

Mid-twentieth-century anthropological studies of kinship, including those of Chinese kinship, have pointed out the constitutive power of kinship and marriage in forming political structures and processes. In theses of the lineage paradigm or the corporate model of Chinese kinship, patrilineal descent was the politico-jural principle of social organization (Cohen 1976; Freedman 1958 1966; Watson

Endnotes for this chapter begin on page 158.

1982). In this earlier scholarship, kinship's constitutive power was associated primarily with preserving the patriline ideologically and materially. But this conservative reproduction of the patrilineage required a group's capacities to make, or adapt to, changes over time, for example, by investing in male offspring's upward mobility and expanding alliances through marriage. It is in this regard that we can first identify the transformative capacities of kinship.

However, the formalist approach to Chinese kinship of earlier scholarship tended to sidestep the day-to-day interactions between kin living under the same roof, and their emotions, desires and clash of interests. Building on a number of pioneering studies of Chinese kinship (e.g. Stafford 1995; Wolf 1972; Yan 2003) and new kinship studies (Carsten 2000, 2004), I have explored another dimension of kinship's transformative capacities by focusing on processual and performative aspects of kinship. This not only illuminates how kin ties are established and nurtured over time but also directs attention to how transgressions or changes may arise from everyday unremarkable acts of kinship (Carsten 2013, 2019; Das 2007; Lambek 2011). The positive and negative effects generated by day-to-day interactions in the intimate sphere of kinship may lead to kin ties being thickened or thinned out over time, and they may also encourage transgressions or changes which challenge the given norms, such as the patriarchal order of the Chinese case. Examining marital change in Kinmen, I have unpacked two dimensions of kinship's transformative capacities by considering the future-making and relational aspects of marriage.

Highlighting the future-making aspect of marriage, I have traced how new visions of personal and collective futures held by an individual, the family and the state emerged under different conditions of modernity in Kinmen which were shaped by constantly shifting politics at domestic and international levels. Equal attention to the relational aspects of marriage facilitated my investigation of the relations between spouses, between generations, between groups and between ordinary people and the state that were contested and negotiated both in the intimate and political realms. I have singled out gender, generation and temporality as three main themes to explore the links between personal biographies, family histories, and shifting national and transnational politics. The themes of gender and generation have brought to the fore how kinship practices have conservative or transformative effects, reconfiguring the gender and generational hierarchies of Chinese patriarchy amidst the transition into contemporary modernity with democratization and expansive marketization. The conservative and transformative qualities of kinship were not only experienced and contested in the intimate sphere of the family but also animated or appropriated in the political sphere through making or lobbying for relevant laws and policies. My discussion has highlighted the temporalities inherent to the imaginative work that marriage involves, showing how the challenges and changes to gender and generational

hierarchies arose from actors' reflections on familial experiences and imaginings of new futures. Considering marital stories across multiple generations in Kinmen through these three themes, this book shows a shift of emphasis in kinship practices from the goal of preserving the patriline in earlier times to the goal of attaining emotional and material well-being for kin across different generations in the face of increasing uncertainties.

The ethnography of this book began with the 1920s, a time when Kinmen's economy relied heavily on men's labour migration abroad and when a new regime, the Republic of China, had just been established. The conditions of modernity that Kinmen islanders confronted for the first time mixed the material modernization brought about by the remittance economy and new visions of marriage closely tied to new visions of a modern Chinese nation-state advocated by young, Western-educated intellectual migrants. Parents of young migrants, who remained in the communities built around patrilineal ties and values, were anxious about their sons' long-term absences and sought to tie their sons to the home through arranging their marriages to local women. Kinship and marriage worked to preserve the patriline, which involved remarkable gender inequality and pressure on left-behind wives to stay loyal to their marital families physically and sexually – despite their husbands' absence and infidelity abroad. However, I have argued that the patrilineal family was reproduced not just through replicating what the ancestors had done but through finding new ways to ensure the family's growth, such as by sending sons to receive a Western education using money earned abroad. These transformative capacities of kinship were also evident in the case of a patrilineage in Kinmen that collected funds from wider kin networks to support the modern enterprises of a village school and a publishing house.

Relations between the Chinese mainland and the islands of Taiwan and Kinmen were further complicated after the outbreak of the Chinese Civil War and amidst Cold War geopolitics. Kinmen's status as an anti-communist frontline in the Cold War era meant the island being always readied for war, and military and geopolitical concerns being prioritized in every facet of modernization. This constant state of war mobilization with the aim of retaking the Chinese mainland led to unequal access to marriage and family lives among soldiers retreating from China, and between them and the Taiwanese population. On Kinmen, however, the enlarged presence of soldiers from China and Taiwan was a threat to local men's marital prospects but stimulated local women's alternative imaginings of marriage and futures outside of Kinmen. The prosperity of micro-businesses catering to the necessities of soldiers, largely dependent on women's labour, created new dynamics of gender and economy within local households. The local patriarchal order of sex-gender and generational hierarchy was undermined by women's newfound economic and intimate agency. Many women pursued their desires for new futures by marrying a soldier from outside or establishing lives in

Taiwan, whereas many others accepted parental arrangements to marry local men. Whatever route they took, these women's economic contribution to their natal and marital families supported their younger male and female siblings' and children's advanced education and upward mobility outside of Kinmen, earning them an authority that was recognized by their husbands and children.

Changing diplomatic relations between Taiwan, the US and China in the 1970s contributed significantly to the vibrant social movements for democratization in Taiwan and the eventual transition of Taiwan from one-party rule to multi-party democracy in the late 1980s. Nevertheless, Kinmen remained under martial law and military rule due to lingering military tensions with China, until 1992. Despite these political constraints, the average living standards of local families had improved remarkably, with increasing numbers of male and female teenagers pursuing higher education in Taiwan. As several of my ethnographic examples have shown, mothers played an important role in shaping their children's life paths through their economic power to initiate changes to the male-focused transmission of family wealth. While many mothers still privileged sons in their allocation of available resources, including housing, the growing investment in daughters' education and material security has diversified their options, and they can be confident about creating their desired futures, with or without marriage. Changes to intergenerational transmission since the 1970s were not only materially important but also occurred in an emotional register. As shown in several instances, mother-daughter and father-daughter ties are close and increasingly expressive in contrast to formal father-son filiation as emphasized in the patrilineal system.

While kinship's resources remained associated with preserving the patriline (embodied in the persistence of rituals and male-focused transmission of family property), its transformative capacities could be identified in processes of parenting. My ethnographic examples have shown how mothers with the authority to decide family matters and fathers with less patriarchal attitudes instantiated alternative images of gender, distinct from the images of traditional patriarchy, to their children in long-term parent-child interaction. With Kinmen's transition in the context of political and economic liberalization since the 1990s, young islanders with long-term experiences in Taiwan tend to pursue a lifestyle similar to what can be found in urban Taiwan. This often included an emphasis on personal (and conjugal) privacy and desires, and a middle-class style of consumption, such as a larger budget for leisure activities and the objectification of affective ties, for example, in commoditized celebrations of marriage, birthday and other events. Local elderly people have responded to enlarging generational differences in ways of life flexibly and creatively by simplifying traditional marital rituals and tolerating, or joining in, their children's enthusiasm for creating memorable moments of marrying through new commodities. The mixture of old and new elements in

marital celebrations today embodies the creative conservatism supported by both generations' emotional ties with each other and care of wider social bonds in the face of increasingly uncertain and precarious conditions of life.

Growing parental investment in the higher education of children of both sexes has had implications for class differences in marital choice: many well-educated women and men postponed their marriages while their male coevals with working-class jobs were squeezed out of the local marriage market. I have argued that this emerging phenomenon of deferring marriage is not simply a reflection of young people's assertion of personal freedom and autonomy but a trial or a testing process in which they are creating their desired lives and futures while maintaining close ties with their families. Moreover, this testing process is also a transforming process in which young people move between different temporalities, reflecting on their past experiences and envisioning alternative life options. This imaginative work opens up their horizon for diverse expressions of sexuality and intimacy as well as diverse family forms beyond conservative visions based on marriage of a heterosexual couple with children. Imaginings of childbearing out of wedlock or marrying a divorced man while excluding childbirth have become possible for young women.

While my young single informants were able to dismiss questions of their marriage from their parents, they still experienced the pressure to marry in gatherings of kin and in the workplace. However, it was not easy to find a marital partner in their day-to-day lives within the limited space of Kinmen. Some local working-class men, pressured by these trials of marrying, eventually found a spouse from abroad, particularly from southeast China. Though these cross-border marriages are similar to those in several Asian countries where working-class men found their spouses from the economically weaker countries nearby, I have shown that the pattern in Kinmen was unique because most marriages were established through kinship ties rather than the commercialized matchmaking often seen in other places. More importantly, the rise of cross-border marriages between Kinmen and China since the 1990s not only reflected the mitigation of military tensions between Taiwan and China but also signalled Kinmen's autonomy in defining its relations with China, being not fully subject to the control of the Taiwanese government.

Scholarship on cross-border marriages in Asia usually focuses on how the governments of bride-receiving countries have asserted their control of state borders through strict laws and policies regulating marriage migrants' entrance and citizenship, and how these measures have involved inequality and discrimination among migrants from different places. Instead of this state-individual nexus, my discussion has foregrounded the significance of kinship in the cross-border matchmaking between Kinmen and China and how in-married Chinese women interacted with their marital families. I have demonstrated how

the spontaneous restoration of contacts and kinship ties between ordinary people in Kinmen and in coastal China, initially through informal maritime trade and then through marriage, has challenged Taiwanese control of its borders. Stories showing in-married Chinese women's varying relations with their marital families point to the negative effects of everyday interactions between kin in patrilocal joint household, which led to Chinese women's resistance to their in-laws' unjust treatment. With or without their husbands' support, my Chinese informants sought to create a better life for themselves and their children by making themselves economically independent. Their strategies of negotiation included not applying for Taiwanese citizenship and using Kinmen's borderland status to sustain their ties with China and establish businesses targeting Chinese tourists in Kinmen, which posed new challenges to the Taiwanese government's control of its border.

Stories of in-married Chinese women showed their individual struggles with their marital families that were patriarchal and oppressive, and how these struggles had relational effects for their husbands and children. In other words, they were redefining their relations with their husbands, children and in-laws. The marital story of a woman that I focused on in the last chapter of this book also exemplified how this woman created her family by making changes to herself and her relations with her family members over time. Her story illustrated how patriarchal structures and values remain effective in present-day Kinmen, where women in patrilocal joint households often experience intense pressure to comply with traditional gendered roles, under the surveillance of their mothers-in-law and wider kin networks. But her story also showed how an initially disobedient daughter-in-law (as described by her mother-in-law), made significant changes to herself by engaging more in household chores after the birth of her third daughter. These changes, as I showed, were encouraged by her affective ties with her husband, and their mutual support, over the initial several years of their marriage. The later changes she made to herself were also changes made to her relations with her two elder daughters and her mother-in-law as she spent more time, energy and attention on these persons in the joint household. While her relationship with her mother-in-law appeared not to improve, her efforts, together with her husband's contribution, have strengthened her nuclear family. The couple are co-creating their desired family lives through, for example, mutual support of each other's career decisions and various activities that enhance bonds with their children and wider circles of friends. They are also seeking to provide secure and promising futures for their three daughters through various business ventures. Their stories illustrate how, despite negative effects that were difficult to avoid, kinship and marriage could encompass positive changes to intimate relations, and gradual enhancement of equality and equity between the sexes through new futures for children.

*Alternative Imaginings of
Intimate and Social Futures in Kinmen and Taiwan*

In line with my argument about the transformative capacities of kinship, I conclude this book with a discussion of recent developments in LGBT rights in Taiwan and Kinmen. My fieldwork began soon after Taiwan's constitutional court's ruling in May 2017 that the legalization of same-sex marriage should be completed within two years. This temporal coincidence allowed me to reflect on the roles of kinship and the agency of individual actors in pursuing new visions of personal and social futures. Though I did not recruit any LGBT people as research participants in Kinmen, I asked my local friends who are cisgender and open to LGBT issues whether they knew people who did not conform to local heterosexual norms. They usually did not refer to any queer friends but, interestingly, they all mentioned the story of Hsu Chih-Yun (a gay man in his thirties), a Kinmen native and psychiatrist practising in Kinmen and Taipei, to suggest the extreme difficulties of 'coming out' in their homeland. Whether my informants knew Hsu personally or not, they maintained that Hsu was only able to come out 'publicly' after his father passed away and that he does not stay in Kinmen all the time. Hsu himself said in a press interview, however, that he had revealed his sexual identity to his parents at the age of twenty-seven, two years before his father died.¹ This suggests that Hsu felt able to become more publicly engaged in pro-LGBT rights activities, such as serving as the general-director of Taiwan Tongzhi (LGBTQ+) Hotline Association, after the death of his father who would not be harmed by gossip about or criticism of his son.²

In Kinmen's patriarchal and tight-knit communities, LGBT people's concerns about gossip that could harm themselves and their families are all too imaginable. The uncertainties and fear of exposing one's sexual nonconformity have become one main driving force for queer people to stay away from Kinmen, as shown in the life stories of four gay men discussed in a recent Master's thesis (Lee 2018). These four men, between the ages of twenty and forty, all went to Taiwan for further studies after senior high school and prefer living there. In this way, they not only achieved greater freedom but also became positively and openly identified with their sexual orientation in Taiwan. Despite the support of the constitutional court's ruling in favour of gay marriage, they doubted that Kinmen as a whole would become LGBT-friendly within a few years, as one of them put it, before 'our generation fully take over our parental generation' (see Lee 2018: 47). What was implied in this pessimistic outlook is Kinmen's relatively delayed process of democratization closely linked to its previous status as a militarized frontline and its relatively closed social system revolving around kinship ties and patrilineal values.

The above examples echo Amy Brainer's (2019) findings on the Taiwanese mainland, where 'coming out' has become a predominant concern for young gay

people today, who desire to settle their sexual and self-identity by revealing ‘the truth’ to their families but are afraid of the deep harm this might engender. But, as Brainer emphasizes, her data, which includes stories of LGBT people ranging in age from their twenties to their seventies, shows that ‘coming out’ is not a crucial issue for older gay people. Her older queer informants, unlike younger people, are not anxious about whether and how to disclose their sexual identity to their families. Instead, they sidestep this issue in their everyday lives and strive to manage their various family roles and relationships. This does not mean that their families of origin are unaware of their sexual nonconformity; their families’ ‘silence’ actually signals tacit acceptance or even support (Brainer 2018). Women’s painful experiences of being pressured to enter marriage, including lesbian women’s marriages to heterosexual men because of housing insecurity resulting from the male-focused transmission of family property, and being exploited in patriarchal households, has helped to forge their support for their children’s non-conformist behaviour and sexuality. Queer mothers and divorced mothers of gay children are critical of the sex-gender inequality intrinsic to patriarchal structures, and endeavour to become the anchor providing financial and emotional support for their children (Brainer 2017b).

Brainer’s findings resonate with my discussion of kinship’s transformative capacities in this book, especially the important role of mothers – with resilient power and flexibility despite their vulnerable position in the patriarchal structure – to tolerate or accept the transgressions of their children and seek to protect them. Rather than being passive, such parental tolerance or acceptance is crucially supportive of LGBT children’s creative pursuit of their desired personal and social futures. The aforementioned psychiatrist Hsu recalled that it took him ten years to make up his mind to reveal his sexual identity to his parents, and he struggled to find the right moment for disclosure. Though he was surprised by his parents’ rather calm response, his professional experience suggested that they might be too shocked to respond. He later checked with his parents again and found that his father viewed his sexual nonconformity as an illness that could be cured, whereas his mother accepted it quietly and said that she would find excuses for him to dismiss his grandfather’s questions about his marriage. Hsu recognized that his mother’s calm reaction had much to do with the hardship and difficulties that she had been through; she had her own way of facing her son’s deviation from the norms of masculinity. This encouraged Hsu to further his efforts to improve the public understandings of LGBT people.

While Hsu and his parents got along with each other after his disclosure, he witnessed how many young queer people were in great tension with their parents. Brainer (2017c) also notes that the social expectations and women’s own recognition of their primary responsibility for childrearing, in tandem with new parenting discourses that emphasize constant attentiveness to children’s physical, intellec-

tual and emotional development, have created emotional burdens for heterosexual mothers in relation to their queer children. In spite of the difficulties, many parents have adopted various approaches to deal with their relationships with their queer children and their needs. Some mothers went further and created new narratives to counter mainstream discourses of gender, sexuality and parenthood. This suggests that intergenerational ties are protected and thickened not through parents' hierarchical control of children but through a reciprocal exchange of thoughts and feelings between generations. These processes of exchange potentially engender changes to parents' own visions of social world and futures, which may move closer to those of their children.

Moreover, transformations in relations between heterosexual parents and their queer children have also been supported by democratization and the surge of civil movements advocating LGBT rights since the late 1990s (Brainer 2019; Chu 2003; Liou 2005; Pai 2017). Within only two decades, the LGBT rights movement has gained several path-breaking achievements, including building an alliance with parents of LGBT children. Taiwan is the first among East Asian countries to pass laws banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in education (since 2004) and at work (since 2007), and where a large-scale LGBT Pride parade has been held annually since 2003. The establishment of Asia's first organization for parents of LGBT children, Loving Parents of LGBT Taiwan, in 2011 by the mother of a transgender child marked the cross-generational support of new intimate and social futures. In Kinmen, which had been a place that many queer people were afraid to return to, fresh voices and innovative actions supporting LGBT rights emerged in the midst of the 2018 referendum on marriage equality.

I did not touch on LGBT issues much during fieldwork, but there were significant new developments after I left Kinmen in August 2018. The 2017 constitutional court's ruling to legalize same-sex marriage incited a series of protests from conservative groups and eventually led to a set of referenda related to LGBT issues in November 2018.³ Conservative groups proposed to protect the rights of same-sex couples through enacting special legislation,⁴ rather than by amending the Civil Code, while the pro-LGBT groups demanded the institution of gay marriage through the Civil Code.⁵ Though the referenda concerned the preferred route to legalize gay marriage, it was not easy to clarify this point at the level of mobilizing votes among the general public. Conservative activists used rhetoric in their campaigns and print materials that suggested that their proposal, seemingly to protect same-sex marriage by a special law, was in fact a call to deny the possibility of marriage to same-sex couples.⁶ It was also reported that conservative groups were accused of spreading misinformation about LGBT rights and demonizing LGBT people as a bad influence on children.⁷ Around one month before the referendum, I began to see these conservatives' campaign messages disseminated among my Kinmen informants on LINE (an app for instant communications on

smartphones). I am a member of a chat group on LINE which is composed of people from a Kinmen village, mostly aged fifty and above, and I saw an increasing number of messages against gay marriage forwarded by some villagers. Although these messages usually did not elicit any response within the chat group (partly because most elderly female users have limited literacy), they signalled the presence of conservative audiences in Kinmen. My local young friends told me that they saw even more virulent messages against LGBT people circulating in chat groups on LINE composed mainly of middle-aged and elderly users.

On the other hand, through some local friends, I saw a new Facebook page called *Caihong Piao Piao Gua Kinmen* (lit. hanging up a rainbow flag in Kinmen), with the English name ‘Queermoy’ (a combination of Queer and Quemoy, the Hokkien spelling of Kinmen), that promotes LGBT rights in Kinmen.⁸ The page displayed photos of two or three people unfurling a large rainbow flag, shot on the site of various tourist attractions in Kinmen, to show their support for marriage equality. I learned later from Andy, a local activist, who had coined the word Queermoy earlier in 2017, that this Facebook page had initially been established by two cisgender men and one gay person who came from Taiwan to work in Kinmen. Andy joined them when they became more active in promoting marriage equality around one month before the referendum. They continued to photograph people with the rainbow flag at various sites, and gained permission from a couple of local shops to display the rainbow flag outside their businesses, such as *Houpu Paochajian* (lit. teahouse in Houpu – the downtown area in west Kinmen).⁹ The managers of this teahouse had been supportive of the campaigns for marriage equality from the very beginning, for example, by being a site for collecting petitions to set up pro-LGBT referendum proposals against those proposed by the conservative groups. The Queermoy activists also distributed LGBT-friendly leaflets acquired from Taiwan and tried to talk to people on the street and in shops. They got permission from some shopkeepers to display leaflets in their shops, whereas some others asked them not to talk about LGBT issues inside their shops. In general, their gentle, small-scale campaigns usually went peacefully and without serious conflict or attacks from people on the streets, which they had originally anticipated.¹⁰

In the end, conservatives succeeded in their three referendum proposals related to LGBT issues. However, the central government and the legislature then followed both the court ruling and the referendum results by passing the Enforcement Act of Judicial Yuan Interpretation No. 748, which legalized same-sex marriage on 17 May 2019. This Act was celebrated as a great success in defending LGBT rights. On 24 May 2019, the first day the Act came into effect, around 500 same-sex couples registered their marriages throughout Taiwan, including two couples registered in Kinmen. While pleased with these major achievements, Jennifer Lu (2020), the chief executive director of the Taiwan Equality Campaign (TEC),

notes that the Act fails to address several issues concerning same-sex couples' marital rights, including joint adoption rights and access to artificial reproduction. Moreover, conservative groups continued their strong protests against this Act before and after it passed into law. Three days after the Act came into force, a privately published local newspaper (*Kinmen Shibao*) ran a discriminatory headline suggesting the impossibility of same-sex couples procreating biologically. In the face of these conservative attitudes, the TEC sought to develop effective messaging strategies and platforms to encourage public understanding of LGBT people and marriage equality. They also attempted to strengthen their political alliances, for example, by publicly expressing their support for LGBT-friendly political candidates in the 2020 elections. They continue to highlight the legalization of gay marriage as a significant index of democracy, freedom and the universal values of human rights in Taiwan, as well as being diplomatically beneficial to Taiwan's reputation in the international community.

Though the TEC's various measures may not change conservative minds in the near future, its persistent advocacy of respect for, and protection of, diverse sexual identities and family forms may have a profound influence on Taiwanese society at large. Just as the legalization of same-sex marriage was the result of thirty years of continuous democratic development and the dedication of previous LGBT activists, the emergence of innovative advocacy of LGBT rights in Kinmen in late 2018 was built on the cornerstone laid by previous work in Taiwan. My local interlocutor Andy told me that though Queermoy activists had forwarded campaign messages from pro-LGBT groups in Taiwan on their Facebook page, their activities were spontaneous, without any formal alliance with or advice from these groups. Andy has continued to promote LGBT rights since then through several spontaneous activities. For example, he paid for the design and production of flags printed with a map of Kinmen in rainbow colours in 2019, and got support from some owners of local shops to display the flag in their shops.¹¹ Together with some friends in Kinmen and Matsu (another group of islands that served as an anti-communist frontline in the Cold War era), Andy took their new rainbow flags printed with maps of Kinmen and Matsu to the annual LGBTQ Pride parade in Taipei in 2020. Based on his experience of studying in Taiwan and his acute observation of political differences between Kinmen and Taiwan, Andy has been anxious about the growing hostility of *Tai-pai* (people in favour of Taiwan's independence) towards Kinmen – this has also been a worry for several of my younger local interlocutors. His efforts to link his pro-LGBT rights movement in Kinmen to those in Taiwan were partly driven by this political anxiety.¹² He wanted to show publicly that there are also those in Kinmen who support cultural diversity and believe in the values of democracy and civic communication.

Overall, rapidly growing public acceptance of new conceptualizations of sex-gender, marriage and family since Taiwan's democratization in the late 1980s

has been mainly driven by civil society forces. While Kinmen was behind in this progress of democratization, there have recently been new forms of expression of these diverse values and desires. The outburst and rapid growth of this civic power has been inseparable from the changing intergenerational transmission and interactions described in this book, where parental investment in children's long-term well-being may, instead of reproducing the patrilineal family, encourage different articulations of a good life and possible futures. Parents may also be moved by their children's new imaginaries to shift their positions closer to those of their children. This generative power of the family and civil society has reconfigured the state's vision of the social order and of the future through directly participating in policy- and law-making and accumulating political alliances. The current democratic government seeks to gain support from citizens with divergent views and social imaginaries by proposing policies responding to different demands, rather than imposing a singular vision as the imperial governments and the KMT did in the past.

While LGBT-friendly laws and policies have been proposed, other policies pertaining to the idea of heterosexual, monogamous marriage and the conjugal family are also promoted to deal with the worrying trends of later and less marriage and the sharp decrease in fertility rates in Taiwan. In this way, the democratic polity enables the participation of civil forces with diverse interests in drafting laws and policies related to marriage and family. Although sometimes contentious and even chaotic, democratic debates over marriage and the family are also debates over different visions of the social order and possible futures of society and of the state. These debates illuminate underlying inequalities and injustices, and stimulate joint efforts to seek creative change. In these transforming processes of mutual constitution of family and state, kinship and marriage, rather than zones of conservatism, have been important sources of change for alternative visions of the future.

Notes

1. See the article about the interview, *Up Media*, 23 October 2018, retrieved 15 March 2023: https://www.upmedia.mg/news_info.php?SerialNo=50251.
2. Hsu had been a volunteer in the Tongzhi Hotline Association during his medical studies in Taipei. In 2015, he set up an outpatient service providing psychological counselling to LGBT people in a Taipei hospital, and in 2018 he published a book which includes fourteen stories from his patients to improve public understanding of LGBT people and their families.
3. There were ten referenda held in Taiwan in 2018; among these three questions related to LGBT issues were proposed by conservatives and two questions were proposed by pro-LGBT rights groups. See an English translation of these referendum questions online, retrieved 15 March 2023: <https://rfrd-tw.github.io/en/#page-top>.

4. See Ho (2019, 2020) for further discussion of the rationale and organization of campaigns of the conservative groups.
5. Feminist legal scholar Chao-ju Chen (2019) critically points out that the pro-LGBT activists' emphasis on formal equality (i.e. legalizing gay marriage via the Civil Code) had been intensified during their navigation of a legislative lobbying strategy in the face of rising pressure from the conservative counter-movement. But this strategy endorsed marital supremacy and left aside a feminist critique of marriage as an institution of male dominance.
6. Legal scholar Hsiao-Wei Kuan published a newspaper article discussing the problems and confusion caused by conservative referendum proposals and campaign strategies that might mislead voters. See the article on *Apple Online*, 9 November 2018, retrieved 10 October 2022: <https://tw.appledaily.com/forum/20181109/PQP36KHVN3OHXIRPEVUQDFMXYU/>.
7. See the news report on the website of *The Washington Post*, 23 November 2018, retrieved 15 March 2023: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/11/23/taiwan-was-supposed-be-first-asian-country-legalize-gay-marriage-then-things-got-complicated/>.
8. Facebook page of Queermoy, retrieved 15 March 2023: <https://www.facebook.com/lgbt.quemoy/>.
9. This local teahouse was established by my two young local friends in a space constructed by the military in the Cold War era and owned by the management committee of a neighbouring Daoist temple in 2018. The teahouse opened to display creative ways of revitalizing old spaces of historical value, and served as a civic space welcoming discussion and advocacy on various public issues. The teahouse was closed in 2020 because the temple's committee had other plans for the space.
10. On the Taiwanese mainland, the coalition campaigning for marriage equality faced attacks on their campaign workers, including hate speech and even physical attacks, by certain religious opponents (Lu 2020).
11. This idea of making a rainbow flag specific to Kinmen generated from disputes during the referendum campaign in 2018, when some people questioned why they should hang up a rainbow flag with only the image of the Taiwanese mainland, with Kinmen and Matsu excluded, outside the *Houpu Paochajian*. See the Facebook page of Queermoy for the rainbow flags with the maps of Kinmen and Matsu respectively, retrieved 15 March 2023: <https://www.facebook.com/lgbt.quemoy/photos/pb.100063969783673..2207520000..2389370318038238/?type=3>.
12. Andy revealed that he was quite nervous about taking his rainbow flags, highlighting Kinmen and Matsu, to the Pride parade in Taiwan because the political image of Kinmen as a whole in recent years has been quite negative in LGBTQ circles in Taiwan. This negative image largely relates to an impression of Kinmen's closeness to the KMT, which has been associated with the conservative groups in anti-LGBT campaigns. Andy was afraid of being called *lan-jia* (an abbreviation of gay people who politically support the KMT), which he is definitely not, when attending the Pride parade.