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Taiwan and the Pacific Islands: Exploring the Green/Blue Possibilities

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"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." (Richard Buckminster Fuller qtd. in Ward)

The Pacific Island nations face unique developmental challenges and vulnerability issues that, in some cases, threaten their very existence. The Islands' political and civil society leaders have recently embraced a vision of inclusive and sustainable development for remodeling their countries' 'brown economies' into people-centered green/blue economies fostering poverty eradication. However, moving to a new socio-economic paradigm is a goal that the Pacific Island countries cannot achieve alone. They need reliable partners with green-tech capability and innovative aid policies. Taiwan is potentially the ideal partner for building a new framework for Pacific islanders and enabling them to reach for green/blue resilience. The benefits would be multifarious and mutual. In particular, Taiwan would maximize its soft power as a 'Pacific Family' member, which may be the only strategy available to protect its long-term interests in the region. Pacific Islanders, on their side, would be empowered in their transformational effort to resolve the dichotomy between vulnerability and resilience in their socio-ecological system.

1. Introduction

“This idea is a key point of sustainability thinking. Being less unsustainable won’t make us sustainable – we need to change our whole approach.” [Steven Glynn, 2012]

The Pacific Islands Region (PIR) comprises twenty-two countries and territories dispersed over an area of 48 million square kilometers and with a total population of about 10 million people. All fourteen of the independent states of the region are either developing or least developed countries (European Commission). In a region spread over a huge marine area the sea has always been an intrinsic part of Pacific Islanders’ life. “The Pacific Ocean provides food, transport, and is a source of pride and identity for its 10 million inhabitants” (Takesy) that are joined, rather than divided, by the world’s largest aqueous expanse (Hau’ofa). Yet, such common insularity and oceanicity means also that the Pacific Island nations share similar challenges as small and remote island economies (United Nations Population Fund). Long distances from main international port hubs and export markets, diseconomies of scale, liability to exogenous shocks and insufficient intra- and extra- regional connectivity negatively synergize to make the Islands’ economies unsteady and critically vulnerable (World Bank). Even though they are becoming increasingly integrated into the global markets, most Pacific Island countries (PICs) and territories still face the limitations imposed by their scarcity of infrastructure, scant absorptive capacities, technological inadequacies, economic mismanagement and poor governance (Camilleri, 107; Hassall, 4). Moreover, these are also some of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the effects of climate change and natural disasters. According to a 2013 World Bank report, of the twenty countries in the world with the highest average annual disaster losses scaled by gross domestic product, eight are in the PIR (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

Also, in some of the PICs the combination of remarkably high population rise and stifling economic growth strands the capacity of governments to provide jobs and services and causes the best and ablest to migrate in large numbers to Pacific Rim metropolises (Opeskin and MacDermott). The aggregate result of this equation is that Island societies remain heavily or significantly reliant on external resources, “typically including at least one of aid, migrant remittances, and foreign direct investment” (McGillivray, Naudé and Santos-Paulino, 97). Most of the PICs severely depend on official development assistance (ODA), and the region receives some of the largest ODA per capita amounts in the world with economic growth rates that are low on average yet highly volatile (Hezel; Pryke). Clearly, transcending the law of the minimum (Gorban *et al.*), escaping the dependency trap, recovering from natural disasters and walking the path to sustainable development are all daunting challenges that Pacific Islanders cannot win by relying on the business-as-usual ‘brown’ development model characterized by heavy-reliance on restricted resources (*in primis*, fossil fuels) and little concern for the negative side effects that economic production and consumption have on the environment (Feeny, Iamsiraroj and McGillivray; UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service). Such a model was the universal recipe traditionally prescribed by the islands nations’ development partners without taking into account their vulnerabilities, location, size, remoteness and capacities (Sims).

However, this is a period of consequences for the peoples of the Pacific. Procrastination and ossified thinking are not viable options any more. A new solution is needed for putting in place the conditions necessary for broad-based, sustained and sustainable economic growth: a solution seeing the islanders becoming “the agents of their own change” (Gusmao in Tarte, 4). This solution can be found in a new developmental paradigm based around “a distinctive Pacific

model of green growth in blue economies that is aligned to sustainable development principles recognising that the current economic growth model is flawed” (Pacific Islands News Association). This model has been identified by the Islands’ political and civil society leaders in the Green/Blue Economy: a ‘green economy’ seen as a ‘blue economy’ that prominently features oceans (Pacific Island Development Forum 18-20 June 2014). At the core of this concept is the de-coupling of socioeconomic development from environmental degradation (UN Economic Commission for Africa).

In order to achieve this goal, the Green/Blue Economy approach is founded upon the assessment and incorporation of the real value of the natural capital into all aspects of economic activity in pursuit of poverty eradication and new holistic ways of living and thriving in synergy with the oceanic environment (UN Division for Sustainable Development, 3). This approach, of which the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) is the most purposeful institutional manifestation in the PIR (Dornan), posits that oceans represent in many respects the final frontier in humanity’s quest for sustainable development (Duarte). The Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) are at the forefront in advocating this path, maintaining it is best suited to their circumstances and constraints (Pareti). However, shifting to the new economic paradigm requires long-term cooperation with development partners that share the same vision. In the words of Tuiloma Neroni Slade, (the-then) Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum, “for Pacific Islands, committed and effective partnership in development is simply critical” (Slade in Pacific Island Forum Secretariat 25-26 June 2013).

Thus, the PICs need reliable partners with green-tech capability and innovative ocean-oriented ‘blue’ policies. Taiwan—a highly developed and increasingly ecologically aware ‘island of technology’ which has a goal of “creating a blue revolution and seeking prosperity from the

ocean” (Ma Ying-jeou qtd. in Hwang)—would be a fitting partner for igniting green/blue processes with a small-island, developing-state pertinence. Taipei is already an important source of development aid for the six Pacific Island countries with which has formal relations, and is active also in some island states that recognize Beijing (Bozzato 2013). Taiwan is also ranked sixth (second in Asia) in terms of green tech capability by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) World Competitiveness Center (IMD World Competitiveness Center) and its development aid strategy is gradually shifting towards emphasizing results over allocation of resources (Tao). In the light of its record of successes as aid provider to the Pacific Islands, Taiwan is now given the opportunity to test new cooperation models and develop new synergies for securing the Pacific’s future as green and blue (Lee). This would create virtuous feedbacks and mutually beneficial outcomes. On the one hand, Taiwan would enhance its development partner role and affirm its custodian of the ocean status. As a result, Taipei would generate substantial soft power furthering its long-term interests in the region (Houa; Chien, Yang and Wu). At the same time, the PICs would be strengthened in steering a course to a blue/green horizon of “transition from a product-based economy to a system-based economy” (Bastioli in Claudio) affording sustainable, clean, equitable blue growth within an ecopoetic discourse of oceanicity (Wilson).

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2. Green and Blue: The Colors of the Ocean

“Our Earth, its people and its bloodstream, the oceans, should be managed in a sustainable way for the generations to come.”

[Indroyono Soesilo, 2014]

“Color-coding in the environment field can be quite confusing, partly because it is applied on ecosystems, infrastructure, services, economies, and other subjects” (Claudio). It would be easy to infer that for ecosystems ‘green’ refers to the terrestrial ecosystem and ‘blue’ refers to the marine ecosystem. However, the Green Economy is not necessarily limited to the land ecosystem as just as the Blue Economy is not confined into the marine environs. In fact, these two flexible umbrella concepts are inclusive and predicated upon the realization that humans possess kinship with the natural world and the resilience of both marine and terrestrial environments should be integrated into a comprehensive economic paradigm holding the key to sustainable development. The Green Economy has become a prominent global concept for debating desirable futures. The debate features diverse agendas for co-constructing ‘green’ with ‘economy’, especially for assigning economic value to natural resources or environmental burdens. “Like sustainable development, green economy agendas claim to redress the socially unequal access to natural resources” (Levidow, 1). Hence, “the ‘Green Economy’ is fast becoming the new alpha and omega for many policy makers, corporations and NGOs who want to tackle both the environmental and economic crises at once” (Kenis and Lievens, 1).

Tellingly, the Rio +20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, focused on two key themes: the further development and refinement of the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development and the advancement of the Green Economy concept. This reflects the increasing global consensus on Green Economy policies as the transitional path to eradicating poverty as well as delivering sustained economic growth, enhancing social inclusion, improving human welfare and creating opportunities for fair employment, while maintaining the healthy functioning of the Earth’s ecosystems. Peter Okuneye describes the Green Economy as follows:

“The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) sees it as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. It is a system that possesses low carbon, resource efficient and that is socially inclusive with its developmental path being able to maintain, enhance and where necessary rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and source of public benefits especially for poor people whose livelihoods and security depend strongly on nature”
(Okuneye qtd. in Nwachukwu).

The traditional approach to sustainable development remains the basis of the Green Economy which many have begun to see as a “landlocked vision that looked from land to the ocean space as if it were an endless horizon” (Behnam, 1) unheeding that land and ocean are recursively interconnected. Thus, a new vision - called ‘blue economy’ - postulating that the economy of this planet must be seen as an integrated whole has been elaborated. “Blue Economy means a further development of the Green Economy. Instead of calling it Green 2.0 the term refers to the color of sky, the ocean and the Gaia seen from the universe” (Pauli in Salvador). As an economic philosophy and design theory bringing natural ecosystems and economy into harmony, the blue economy was first introduced in 1994 by Gunter Pauli when asked by the United Nations to reflect on the business models of the future. Pauli theorized:

a competitive business model that allows producers to offer the best at the lowest prices by introducing innovations that generate multiple benefits not just increased profits. [...] The Blue economy applies to any business sector and in addition to the reinjection of cash into the local economy, and the use of locally

available resources it is dedicated to eliminate whatever is not needed. [...] This represents massive savings in material and costs, while reducing the ecological footprint on the environment and the health risks to the citizens of this world.

(Pauli 2010, 2)

In essence, the Blue Economy promotes the same desired outcome as the Rio +20 Green Economy initiative and upholds the same principles of low carbon, resource efficiency and social inclusion, “but it is grounded in a developing world context and fashioned to reflect the circumstances and needs of countries whose future resource base is marine” (UN Division for Sustainable Development, 3). Fundamental to this approach is the principle of equity ensuring that developing countries 1) optimize the benefits received from the development of their marine environments e.g. fishery agreements, bioprospecting, oil and mineral extraction; 2) promote national equity, including gender equality, and in particular the generation of inclusive growth and decent jobs for all; 3) and have their concerns and interests properly reflected in the development of seas beyond national jurisdiction, including the refinement of international governance mechanisms and their concerns as States proximate to seabed development (UN Economic and Social Council’s Economic Commission for Africa, 3).

Consistently with its chromatic nuance, however, the blue economy is being increasingly associated with the marine ‘bluesphere’. In the blue economy paradigm a sustainable ocean economy integrates and is inclusive of the green economy. Elisabeth Mann Borgese - founder of the International Ocean Institute - epitomized this reversion of perspective by stating: “If before you saw the sea and the sea floor as a continuation of the land, you now see the land as a continuation of the sea” (Borgese in Simire). The rationale is that three-quarters of the Earth’s surface is covered by oceans and seas: an immense repository of life and resources which are both

an engine for global economic growth and a key source of food security. Yet, for all their importance, the degradation of the oceans has continued unabatedly over the last three decades. “This in turn, is threatening the livelihoods of millions of people around the world who depend on these critical ecosystems for their primary source of protein and for job security both directly and indirectly” (UN Environment Programme, 1). The ocean is a key component of the Earth System. “Despite the various names and territories we assign to the seas and oceans around our planet, they act as one single entity or global Ocean” (International Program on the State of the Ocean). Fifty to seventy per cent of our oxygen comes from it. The ocean regulates our climate, absorbs carbon dioxide, holds ninety-seven per cent of Earth’s water, and supports the greatest abundance of life on our planet. More than sixty per cent of the world’s population lives on or near the coast (MacGillivray Freeman Films).

For all that, the ocean is more than just a life-giving ‘waterworld’ - it is also part of humanity’s cultural and spiritual dimensions. Humans have ‘blue minds’ (Nichols). This realization holds the world-changing potential of the blue economy - to inspire, educate and unite millions of people worldwide in a common purpose: protect and restore the health of the ocean. Not just to survive, but to thrive materially and spiritually. The blue economy connects the dots and bridges the environmental discourse with the social justice and human development imperatives. “The concept reinforces conservation and sustainable management of oceans and accompanies the Green economy” (UN Economic and Social Council’s Economic Commission for Africa, 4). In essence, the Blue Economy approach expands the ‘blue’ aspect of the Green Economy and stresses the role of oceanic nations in global sustainability approach by emphasizing the productivity of healthy ocean ecosystems as the pathway for ocean-based

economies, as well as ensuring that island and coastal states manage their marine resources for their own and the whole human family's benefit.

The international community is embracing the Blue economy concept, which has gained centrality in international fora, such as the RIO+20 in 2012 and the Asia Conference on Oceans, Food Security and Blue Growth in Bali in 2013, and spurred high-level talks like the January 2014 Blue Economy Summit in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates), the April 2014 Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth in The Hague (The Netherlands), the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States held in Apia (Samoa) in September 2014 and the World Ocean Summit 2015 - which was held under the theme 'Blue Economy; Blue Growth' - in Lisbon (Portugal) in June 2015. Signally, in 2012 United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon launched the comprehensive Oceans Compact, which aims at setting out a strategic vision for the UN system to deliver on its ocean related mandates, consistent with the Rio+20 outcome, in a more coherent manner and to provide a platform for all stakeholders to collaborate and accelerate progress in the achievement of the common goal of "Healthy Oceans for Prosperity" (UN Secretary General). 'Going blue' has become a priority also in the development strategies of international organizations, like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the European Union, as well in those of many individual nations, developed and developing, including the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) which advocated the adoption of Blue Economy principles in the post-2015 UN Development Agenda for the sake of charting the sustainable ocean of 2015 to 2030 and beyond (Commonwealth).

3. Blueing the Green: The Pacific Islands' Green/Blue Economy Choice

"Through the Blue Economy we are Large Ocean Nations." [James Michel, 2014]

The notional declension of blue economy as a development framework elaborated to apply the Green Economy to the ocean and related resources can be syncretically renamed Green/Blue Economy. By acknowledging that "terrestrial approaches are necessary but not sufficient for understanding oceans as peopled seascapes" (Sackerhoff, Hazen and Crowder, 45) and conceptualizing the oceans as 'development spaces' the Green/Blue Economy appears perfectly tailored for the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). In fact, "it offers the potential for them to alleviate one of their defining obstacles to sustainable development; namely that of a narrow terrestrial resource base" (UN Economic and Social Council's Economic Commission for Africa, 3-4). The remarkable per capita marine resource area enjoyed by many PSIDS means that this approach "offers the prospect of sustained, environmentally-sound, socially inclusive economic growth" (Ibid., 4). This concept of recognizing the interdependence of all elements in the interaction between ocean, land and humans reflects the traditional wisdom of 'small islanders' since it turns their ancestral oceanicity into *poiesis* and *praxis* for the future. Notably, far from being a utopian environmentalist doctrine preaching economic stasis or starvationism, the Green/Blue model is not based on a demand for sacrifice, but on the idea of qualitative growth in which marine resources, civil societies and environmentally friendly technologies, as well as international cooperation, play a synergistic role (The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Academic Foundation). Also, the holistic vocation of this model has the potential to activate, mobilize and empower all the forces with the island societies. "The responsibility as well as sharing in the costs and benefits does not rest with one entity such as the State but it should

be spread among all stakeholders. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders [...] at the level of the individual, the locality, the community, the society, the region, the national level and the international, public and particularly private sectors” (Simire). This integrated and multiscale approach wedded Epeli Hau’ofa’s ‘we are the ocean’ philosophy with Ernst Friedrich Schumacher’s ‘small is beautiful’ vision (Hau’ofa; Schumacher).

However, the Green/Blue Economy is largely still a blank canvas (Callick, 4). Thus, the PSIDS and their fellow small island nations in other regions have the unique opportunity before them to define the Green/Blue Economy concept “to charter a completely new sustainable development pathway that is to their best interest” (Adam in Amla). Not defining and operationalizing it would either allow non-SIDS and other forces to signify the meme for them or leave it ambiguous. The caveat is that “the blue economy is already in danger of being co-opted by the very forces of exploitation that pose the gravest to the long term health of the marine environment [...] due to an emerging train of thought which promotes blue economy as a way of deriving greater revenue from the ocean” (Thomas and Pet Soede, 5). Such eventuality would create a perverse combination of heterogenesis of ends and heteronomy of project fostering a model of unsustainable wealth generation and ecocidal industrialization of the marine environment implemented at the expense of the SIDS (Trupia).

The Island nations are cognizant of the fact that “the outsiders are still stronger and richer” and they “must battle to be heard” (Dobell, 75). For this reason they have decided to band together to give the ocean a voice and make a stand (the last stand, for some island states) “to promote need not greed” (Faipule Sia Perez) and defining wealth in terms of knowledge, as the “technological ability to protect, nurture, support, and accommodate all growth needs of life” (Buckminster Fuller in Ward). To this end, new regional platforms and vectors of action to bring

the eco-social dimension into the epistemological core of the Green/Blue Economy are being set out. For example, in 2013, The PSIDS have established the Pacific Islands Development Forum as “a united and distinctive PSIDS voice [...] and a space for catalysing, mobilizing and mainstreaming action in support of sustainable development through a green economy” (Pacific Islands Development Forum Secretariat, 3).

The PSIDS are acutely aware that without the ocean, their peoples have little alternatives for sustenance and development. For them, economic salvation and social resilience can come only from the very ocean that is exploited and polluted by many extra-regional users and threatens the Islands’ existence with climate change-induced inundation and submersion. This realization has sparked their green/blue revolutionary élan. If, from a land-centric perspective, the PSIDS’ exiguity in terms of land and population denies them redemption - as contemptuously remarked a decade ago by a dismissive eurocrat telling his Pacific Island interlocutors that “small is not beautiful, small is ridiculous” (Nielson in Dobell, 83) - from a moana-centric point of view the ocean is a cornucopia of abundance and mother of possibilities (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). The Green/Blue Economy is a game changer for the small-nesians because “through the Blue Economy we are Large Ocean Nations” (Michel in State House).

But, in order to change the game and reap the benefits, the PSIDS have to be proactive and become the advocates and harbingers of the green/blue revolution. For this reason they are 1) at the forefront in pushing the Green/Blue Economy concept onto the agenda of the international community in recognition of the priorities of small island developing states; 2) seeking to mobilize SIDS of all regions to share country-specific based practices; 3) and

underscoring the importance of partnerships to explore the full potential of the Green/Blue Economy and shape their developmental trajectories accordingly (Earth Negotiations Bulletin). Tellingly, the theme for the Third International Conference on SIDS held in Samoa in September 2014 was “The Sustainable Development of SIDS through Genuine and Global Partnerships.” (United Nations, 3) The Pacific Island nations are not merely sending out an SOS, but also offering prospective partners opportunities to create synergies and develop strategies for ‘glocal’ solutions that are both sustainable and climate smart. For example, the PSIDS would be “the perfect test laboratories in which to implement renewable energy and other emerging technologies. When something works on a small scale, as is the case with SIDS, it can be scaled up and become a solution for larger countries” (Earth Negotiations Bulletin, 11).

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4. Enter Taiwan, the Green/Blue Island

“What is the meaning of a world map – an island after an island in the wide Ocean. They have the communal aspiration to drift on the sea, on the sea surface of one’s own island, on the sea surface of other islands, to pursue and indescribable affection toward the sea.” [Syaman Rapongans, Black Wings, 1999]

In Taiwan, green and blue are usually identified as colors of political affiliation. However, over the last decade they have been increasingly acquiring an economic connotation reflecting the island’s orientation toward sustainability. Even though it belongs to an economic development pattern based on high resource consumption (Chen, Chen and Hsie), Taiwan is becoming a ‘green island’ because its government and sectors of the industry and civil society are adopting ‘Green New Deal’ policies, practices and foresight in order to stimulate the economy by being environmentally smart (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 1). For example “Taiwan is attempting to implement the concept of a green economy through a Low

Carbon Growth Plan (LCGP)” (Chao, Ma and Heijungs, 835) fostering innovation in cleaner technologies and products and services that reduce environmental risk and minimize pollution and resource use, and promoting green awareness and lifestyle (Taipei Times). Taipei’s hosting the Eco-Products International Fair (EPIF) for the first time in March 2014 (Reyes) and the anti-nuclear movement in Taiwan, once a fringe movement, going mainstream can both be seen as green epiphanies (Ho). Also, “Taiwan’s green technology competitiveness is ranked second to Japan in Asia and sixth in the world” (Wen and Lin, 1) and, according to the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), Taiwan’s green trade exports accounted for 13.5 per cent of total exports in 2012, which is equivalent to US\$40.5 billion (Reyes). Thus, Taiwan is not only an ‘island of green in Asia’ implementing an array of eco-friendly initiatives (Graham), but also a ‘green technology island’ (Taiwan Excellence; ROC Ministry of Economic Affairs).

Taiwan is also becoming a seaward looking society tapping into the possibilities that the ocean and the Green/Blue Economy can offer. “Being an island, Taiwan is surrounded by sea and has six times as much maritime territory as land, and plentiful marine resources” (Lee). A blue thread links (the-then) Taiwanese Vice-President Annette Lu’s 2005 call for “more oceanic thinking” and “building a ‘blue civilization’” among the twenty-six democratic countries adjacent to the Pacific Ocean” (Holmes, 8) to (the-then) President Ma Ying-jeou’s 2008 ocean policy entitled “Blue Revolution, Invigorating the Country through Oceans” (Kao 2013, 8) and the November 2014 “Climate Change: Impacts and Prospects for Blue Economy” symposium held at the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in New York (TECO New York). Together with other eighteen APEC member economies, at the end of the August 2014 Blue Economy Forum in Xiamen (China), Taiwan has co-issued the Xiamen Ocean Declaration

stressing that all economies should establish a new international marine partnership through Asia Pacific regional cooperation and the recognizing potential linkages between Blue Economy, sustainable development and economic growth (ROC Council of Agriculture of the Executive Yuan). The Blue Economy is also becoming instrumental to cross Taiwan Strait relations and confidence building. In 2012 the Chinese province of Fujian and Taiwan inaugurated a Blue Economy cooperation strategy which includes the construction of the Fujian-Taiwan Blue Economic Industrial Park (Lin, Zhang and Thai).

Given Taiwan's industrial potency, it is natural that the island's Blue Economy approach is informed by Gunter Pauli's vision of mode-of-production innovation: fostering entrepreneurship to create sustainability and developing new business models and economic development that "emulate natural systems in order to dramatically increase humanity's capacity to respond to the basic needs of all" (Pauli 2011, 15). However, it is in Taiwan's interest to develop the second aspect of the Blue Economy: a blue-conscious oceanicity. This would promote "an insular-centred" identity "disimperializing' and 'decontinentalizing'" (Corcuff, 47). Taiwan's self and external perceptions and, at the same time, usher the island in a new economic paradigm. As argued by Professor Lee Wu-chung, the Blue Economy is a "way to a new Formosa" (Lee).

In order to become a beacon of blue civilization and "prove to the world the inherent value of its nation society and culture" (Istenič, 2), Taiwan must start from 'its own' ocean: the Pacific, and its PSIDS partners. Taipei has multiple interests in the PIR and "a long history of contributing to the Pacific region's development and providing humanitarian assistance on a bilateral basis" (Lin, 171) to its Pacific Island diplomatic allies and fellow oceanic democracies. The International Cooperation and Development Fund of Taiwan - Taipei's dedicated

international development and cooperation organization - is very active in the region where Taipei entertains official relations with six states: Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu (Yeh). “Taiwan uses its aid policy as a means to raise its international profile through promoting itself as a humanitarian power and aims to further its access to the natural resources of the area” (Bozzato 2013, 319), and Taiwanese officials say that Taipei’s assistance to the Pacific now “is about sharing economic prosperity and providing practical help to countries in renewable energy, vocational training, medical assistance and protecting the region’s tuna stocks” (ABC News). In fact, The South Pacific is one of Taiwan’s major fishing grounds and being a main fishery stakeholder has provided Taipei with an opportunity to be involved in regional fishing management frameworks and project a responsible fishing entity image (Kao 2012).

Undoubtedly, this Green Economy agenda formulation and implementation enhances Taiwan visibility in the international community (which is crucial to its own national survival). However, in order to be perceived and recognized as an ocean nation (Chen) and “a large Pacific Island State capable and willing to assist the SIDS when it comes to build an economy that is ocean based in climate change times” (Jawetz) Taiwan should widen the chromatic spectrum of its own possibilities and ‘go blue’ as well by creating synergies with the PSIDS for the sake of ‘blue/green sustainability’, as recommended by the September 2014 *Penghu Declaration*, issued at the 13th Islands of the World Conference of the International Small Islands Studies Association (ISISA) held in Taiwan’s Penghu archipelago. Ideally, the Taiwan-PSIDS Green/Blue Economy would represent “a breakthrough of the traditional ocean economy” (Zhang in Hao

and Wang), focusing on the integration of sea and land and coordination of the ocean's economic, social and ecological aspects and developing innovation capabilities.

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5. Conclusion: The Green/Blue Archipelago

"Thinking with the archipelago foregrounds how island movements are generative and interconnective spaces of metamorphosis, of material practices, culture and politics." [Jonathan Pugh, 2013]

Eighty per cent of all life on the planet is found in oceans. The ocean provides a global life support system that helps regulate climate and supplies half of the planet's oxygen needed for one in every two breaths we take. Fish contribute seventeen per cent of the animal protein consumed by the world's population and thus is a critical source of food security, with demand expected to double in the next twenty years (Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth 3). The ocean is thus rapidly becoming "a new focal point in the discourse on growth and sustainable development" (Economist Intelligence Unit 8) in the Twenty-first Century, both at domestic and international levels. It may be argued that:

The world is in many ways at a turning point in setting its economic priorities in the ocean. How this is done in the next years and decades, in a period when human activities in the ocean are expected to accelerate significantly, will be a key determinant of the ocean's health and of the long-term benefits derived by all from healthy ocean ecosystems. (Ibid.)

Building a sustainable Green/Blue Economy - achieving a 'smart' balance between the twin objectives of growth and conservation of ocean ecosystems - requires an innovative and integrated ocean management paradigm that brings together national and local governments, international organizations, regional frameworks and alliances, private sector, public sector and

civil society. The PSIDS, being nations rich in marine resources and where the ocean, its plants and creatures are essential part of culture and heritage (Solomon Islands Prime Minister's Press Office) - and enjoying a robust regionalism - are moving as a group to play the role of shapers of the Asia-Pacific and global green/blue narrative. Whilst acknowledging that some challenges, like large-scale mitigation of the effects of global warming, are beyond their control, they are nonetheless collectively identifying and taking actions to inspire and lead by example in a highly globalized international society. Both the Green/Blue Economy-driven initiatives of the Pacific Islands Development Forum and the Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Management in Pacific Island Countries (MACBIO) project (International Union for Conservation of Nature) are examples of the Islands' green/blue commitment and effort.

“The Pacific is vital, valued and connected to our region and our world. Pacific Island developing countries are all too often seen as separated by the ocean from each other and from mainland Asia. We can see the Pacific islands in an ocean of isolation, or we can choose to see them situated in an ocean of opportunity” (UN ESCAP, iii). The global environmental and financial crises are strong reminders for the Pacific Islanders that they, indeed, do not live in an ocean of isolation. They have thus chosen to seize the green/blue opportunities offered by the ocean in order to take up the gauntlet thrown down by globalization. In fact, “in its applications, sustainable development is truly multi-dimensional (society and nature), multi-temporal (spans short and long time horizons), multi-geographic (covers all regions of the world), multi-scale (micro and macro levels) and invokes intra- and inter-generational equity” (UNESCO, 8). In other words, the green/blue perspective draws lines and connects places all over the Pacific Ocean which, just like in Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci's late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-

century world maps, is at the center (Lam). Asia-Pacific is therefore represented and understood as an archipelago of big and small islands sharing the same sea. Taiwan and the PICs do all belong in this archipelago.

It is in the interest of Taiwan, as an oceanic reality and actor, to start “thinking with the archipelago,” and building green/blue connections within it especially because “the concept of the archipelago deeply challenges how we think about the world and our relation to it” (Pugh, 10-11). Archipelagic thinking effects “a double-destabilization that dislocates and de-territorializes static island tropes of particularity, so that they are instead conceived as fluid island-island inter-relations rather than the binaries of mainland/island or sea/island” (Ibid., 11). In this ‘world of islands,’ Taiwan is no more an island at the periphery of a mainland, but in a synergistic relationship with it as part of a wide Pacific-centric archipelagic network in constant flux. Therefore, the key to healing Taiwan’s identity schizophrenia lies in the Pacific where Taipei can mobilize green/blue partnerships and participate in international projects for the benefit of the archipelagic family. With time, it would be perceived as an ‘outstanding (extraordinary) member’ of the international community (Bozzato 12 March 2013) identifying and creating solutions delivering healthy oceans for every country. Yet, the main benefit from joining the PICs in exploring the green/blue possibilities would be neither in soft-power gain nor economic growth, but of a spiritual nature. Given that the green/blue model “prioritizes the valuation of critical ecological, social, spiritual/cultural assets that are not being recognized under the ‘brown economy’” (Pacific Islands Development Forum 2014), Taiwan would then sail the ocean in pursuit of self-actualization.

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