

7 Searching for self, searching for nation

New Bloom and belonging in Taiwan

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Introduction

Summer 2022. Joyful laughter and discussions over drinks fill the sweltering Taipei air. As journalists, academics, activists, and students – many of whom had only met before on Twitter – mingle in the crowded community space, posters advocating for the liberation and independence of Taiwan, Tibet, and Hong Kong hang on the walls above them. Scrawled in green on one banner are the famous words of Taiwanese independence activist Cheng Nan-Jung, who immolated himself in 1989 in protest against the Kuomintang (KMT): “We may be a small country with few people, but we are a good country with good people” (our translation). Downstairs hangs a large bilingual “Black Lives Matter 黑命關天” banner, framing a hybrid online panel discussion between environmental activists from Nigeria and Taiwan.

This is Daybreak Café, operated by New Bloom – a transnational, diasporic organization that seeks to provide English language coverage of Taiwan and the region from a self-described leftist and pro-Taiwanese self-determination perspective.

In the context of an apparent new Cold War in Asia, transnational leftist organizations caught between contesting regional powers face shared difficulties in advocating for their positions. In the concluding paragraphs of *Transnational Civil Society in Asia: The Potential of Grassroots Regionalization* (Avenell and Ogawa 2021), Ian Rowen suggests that “‘transnationally Asian’ media activists operating on the scholarly periphery – New Bloom, Lausan.hk, and New Naratif” hold innovative potential for civil society practice and scholarship in Asia. “These multi-lingual, transnational, and diasporic networks,” writes Rowen:

...grew from social justice demonstrations and movements into highly networked and mediated experiments in the production of journalism and virtual gathering places...By dwelling within and between shifting hegemonic formations, they champion a transnationalism that challenges the conjuncture of authoritarian state repression and the economization of society apparent in Asia and accelerated through global discourses and institutions of ‘national security.’

(Rowen 2021:223)

While the most publicly visible activities of the aforementioned outlets include participating in international discourse about their respective regions, only New Bloom built an in-person gathering space.

This chapter explores why New Bloom, whose most externally visible activities utilize traditional media and new digital technologies to shape international discussion about Taiwan, has engaged in internal community building with transnational and diasporic members who could be said to belong to a generation of youth dedicated to “global justice movements” (Porta and Diani 2006:2). The mobile and transnational experiences of its members makes New Bloom a vital case study for considering the role of diaspora in homeland politics, as well as ways that civil society organizations (CSOs) can transcend their national context and engage in the global sphere. As the organization operates both offline and online, and positions itself between different contexts (between movement spaces and formal institutions; between local and international audiences and membership), New Bloom also provides insight into the convergence of both “multi-mediality” and “in-between-ness” – or “intermediality” (Glückler et al. 2021:6). As Glückler et al. underscore, closer attention toward the “ephemeral, fragile, and intermedial nature of civil society processes” – and viewing them not as “defects,” but rather “essential” underpinnings of civil society – is necessary to understand “the full range of civil society activities” (ibid.).

While New Bloom community members do seek to propagate a multicultural, multifaceted image of Taiwan in international discourse, its members are deeply engaged in building a collective community where the identities and personal histories of each community member are explored and made legible. To its readers, New Bloom appears to operate as a group of diasporic and international communicators who seek to influence international discourse on Taiwan through platforming Taiwanese voices, mediating solidarity, and cultivating relationships with international journalists and academics. At the same time, New Bloom community members view the organization as a dynamic community space within which marginalized identities can be accepted, and where members can engage in searching for their family or national roots. According to New Bloom members, crafting a community space is not only a direct political strategy to ameliorate alienation – but it also echoes the organization’s vision of Taiwan as a common space where people of different identities and histories can thrive.

In representing Taiwan to the world, New Bloom members situate themselves in relation to broader geopolitical currents. At the same time, New Bloom members look inwards, searching for cultural roots within Taiwanese history and their own personal stories. Our observational and interview-based research finds that New Bloom members are motivated to explore and develop their own selves in relation to the nation, and in so doing, build a community that can embrace their identities and propel their politics. These activities may not be as visible as their media work, but are a fundamental condition of possibility for this particular organization, and perhaps, civil society more generally. This chapter will make such a case by first presenting New Bloom as a journalistic community engaged in the (re)interpretation of Taiwanese national identity, and then draw from fieldwork to illustrate how

New Bloom's activities ameliorate alienation and produce a sense of communities for its members.

Background

New Bloom has formed as a space to both consider and communicate the contemporary redetermination of Taiwanese national identity. A history of successive colonizations and ongoing geopolitical conflicts has produced Taiwan as a contested state. Internationally, Taiwan continues to be known as the Republic of China (ROC), a legacy of the 1945 takeover of the archipelago by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). The KMT inherited and restructured the colonial administration of Japan, which for 50 years had governed the Han Chinese settlers and Austronesian language-speaking indigenous peoples of Taiwan (Fell 2018:17). Although the KMT's anticommunist alignment with the United States (US) maintained international support for the ROC during the early years of the Cold War (ibid.:18), formal diplomatic recognition for the ROC as a state has dwindled since (ibid.:171).

Domestically, whether one considers oneself to be Taiwanese, Chinese, or both also remains a point of contention. For Taiwanese youth today, as sociologist Michael Hsiao underscores, "a separate national and political identity from that of China's is just the natural order of things" (ibid.:152). The origins of this sense of national identity can also be found in KMT President Lee Teng-hui's 1998 call for a "New Taiwanese" identity – one wherein "all inhabitants of the island are Taiwanese so long as they identify and work hard for Taiwan" (ibid.). But as Taiwanese queer studies scholar and early New Bloom member Wen Liu notes, the "increased presence of Southeast Asian and mainland Chinese immigrants...decades of Indigenous Movement, the LGBTQ Movement, and social struggles around the issues of class inequalities and gentrification" have all shaped and complicated Taiwanese youth's understanding of the island's identity and future (Liu 2014).

In the aftermath of the 2014 Sunflower Movement in Taiwan (Rowen 2015), three students – one Taiwanese, one Iranian American, and one Taiwanese American – founded New Bloom in collaboration with Taiwanese activists who had participated in the Sunflower Movement in Taipei and Taiwanese Americans in New York City who had organized overseas events in solidarity (Kim 2020; corroborated in an interview with New Bloom co-founder Brian Hioe). According to early New Bloom members, they felt that international media outlets had failed to provide the Sunflower Movement the coverage it deserved, particularly when contrasted with the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong later that year (Laskai 2014; corroborated in an interview with Wen Liu). New Bloom was thereby founded to provide more English language coverage of Taiwan.

New Bloom seeks to situate local Taiwanese issues in "their broader, international context," bringing an international left perspective to Taiwan. As civil society serves as a space where interests are articulated and represented, CSOs such as New Bloom play a key role in both receiving and producing discourse (Glückler et al. 2021:10). According to the organization's About Page, the purpose of New Bloom is to "provide a space that fosters political and intellectual transnational

dialogues in the Left,” as “issues currently facing Taiwan and the Asia Pacific cannot be resolved except at the international level.” They assign particular importance to three areas: economic (“development of neoliberal and free trade zones”), political (“international affairs, war/militarism, and electoral politics”), and social inequities (“workers’ rights, LGBTQ rights, gentrification and environmental issues”). In this fashion, from the beginning, New Bloom members sought both to communicate Taiwan to the world, as well as to also to analyze domestic Taiwanese issues and social movements from an international perspective. New Bloom’s first article, published on July 29th, 2014, underscores the necessity to “discuss the Taiwanese international situation and consider its relation to social movements” (Wu 2014).

In the context of (re)interpreting Taiwanese national identity, New Bloom seeks to contest what New Bloom member Yo-ling Chen calls the illegibility of “peripheral spaces in the international stage,” where “places like Taiwan, Puerto Rico, or Okinawa [are] only legible through some bigger, non-periphery power.” New Bloom members instead interpret Taiwan “for its own sake,” as a multifaceted, at times contradictory nation: one that should not be oriented to Beijing or Washington, as the Chinese Nationalist Party framing of Taiwan as inheritors of Chinese culture or a liberal Democratic Progressive Party framing of Taiwan as a beacon of democracy (Laskai 2014) but instead in alignment with grassroots movements for self-determination and social justice worldwide. New Bloom’s members, tactics, and positions can thus be situated in relation to “global justice movements,” characterized by their position in combining class and social issues and by their skepticism of formal political institutions in favor of non-hierarchical grassroots organizing (Porta and Diani 2006:2).

In striving to influence international discourse on Taiwan, New Bloom members offer an online and offline platform for Taiwanese voices, mediate solidarity between Taiwan and other contexts, and draw on a network of international journalists and academics, with relationships cultivated both offline and online. In other words, New Bloom is a community of internationally connected individuals who interpret current events relating to Taiwan and make claims about Taiwan to the world. Since its founding as an online media outlet, New Bloom’s ability to network and connect across geographical contexts has relied greatly on the rise of the internet, which has further expanded the means through which discourse generated by otherwise locally situated CSOs can spread internationally, thereby reshaping a CSO’s international alliances and collective identity (Fenton 2008:53–54). Noting the necessity for solidarity in the functioning of any political community, Natalie Fenton underscores that the internet allows previously localized political groups to “mediate solidarity” by drawing on the internet’s “network of networks” to “organize solidarity locally and globally”:

[The internet] partakes in the process of meaning construction. The nature and scope of the technology affect not only the way a movement communicates its aims and objectives but also its geographical scale, organizing structure, and collective identity. The decentralized, non-hierarchical modes

of organizing allow for diverse political agendas and identities to exist. The challenge is how to embrace difference and particularity while also engendering universality and solidarity.

(ibid.)

New Bloom members mediate solidarity by writing articles on their website, hosting or participating in panels with non-Taiwanese activists, and submitting and participating in media content on non-New Bloom platforms. In so doing, they strive to establish commonality with decolonial and anti-capitalist struggles worldwide – whether between Taiwan and Palestine, Okinawa, the PRC, Hong Kong, or elsewhere – rather than with traditional political institutions or states. As New Bloom illustrates, mediating solidarity between different contexts serves as a powerful means through which CSOs today can situate their local and national position in relation to international solidarity.

Despite starting out as an online magazine, New Bloom now conducts activities both online and offline. Their initial activities as an online magazine included reporting on current events, interviewing social movement leaders, and publishing political commentary. However, they have since expanded their online activities to include a podcast (Radio New Bloom), an oral history project of the Sunflower Movement (Daybreak Project), and a culture-focused magazine, *No Man Is An Island*. Since acquiring an in-person event space in Taipei (first Tacheles in 2021, later moved to Daybreak Café in 2022), New Bloom has also hosted offline events, such as panels with academics, journalists, and social movement leaders, reading groups on Taiwanese history and literature, and a language course for Taiwanese Hokkien.

By operating both offline at Daybreak Café and online via their website, New Bloom offers insight into mobilization forged through “multi-mediality” – mobilizing both offline and online – and how the two relate with and influence the other. New Bloom also occupies an in-between space at multiple registers: navigating between the 2014 student activism of the Sunflower Movement from which it originates and the enmeshment of community members with established academic, journalistic, and government institutions today; between Mandarin and English-speaking audiences and membership; and between communicating at the local and international registers. In doing so, it presents a sense of “in-between-ness” – between market and government, and between formal organization and movements. Taken together, New Bloom exemplifies this convergence of multi-mediality and in-between-ness – or “intermediality” – which is “rapidly becoming a lasting characteristic of civil society” (Glückler et al. 2021:6).

While New Bloom community members have always consisted of “students and activists based in Taiwan and America who share a range of leftist politics ranging from Marxism, anarchism, and other radical perspectives” (as listed on New Bloom’s About page), the organization’s membership has gone through significant shifts since its founding. Despite starting out with predominantly Taiwanese membership, beginning in 2016, and particularly since COVID-19, New Bloom’s community became increasingly international, spanning the Taiwanese diaspora

(such as Taiwanese Americans) to non-Taiwanese expats and journalists. As a result of shifts in both their membership and target audience, New Bloom's events and articles have shifted from Mandarin to English, which has further expanded non-Taiwanese membership.

Our interlocutors ranged in age from 23 through 40; some had only recently begun attending or volunteering at New Bloom events, while others helped found the organization in 2014. Languages spoken among interlocutors span Mandarin, English, Taiwanese Hokkien, Paiwan (indigenous language), Japanese, and French. They also come from a variety of social movements, non-governmental organizations, and media backgrounds. New Bloom members are also affiliated with Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese academic institutions and academic publications, media organizations, international solidarity advocacy networks, single-issue organizations, as well as some political parties or partisan organizations.

In search of self, in search of nation

Many New Bloom community members value the organization as a space within which to explore their own history – whether their family history or national Taiwanese history. Here, the distinction between the personal and national is blurred, as many see their family history as analogous to that of Taiwan's – containing discontinuities and gaps in need of repair. This section will explore how New Bloom community members relate their personal and family experiences of marginalization with those of Taiwan's international condition, and how such parallels between the personal and the national compel New Bloom members to engage in community building.

Bridging time and space

Taiwanese New Bloom members conveyed the importance of New Bloom as a community space that empowers members to collectively explore, process, and interpret personal stories and national history.

The “institutional memories” of successive Taiwanese social movements are marked by a profound discontinuity between the Japanese colonial and postwar KMT periods (Hsiao 2022:217). According to our Taiwanese interlocutors, this fragmentation of memory in Taiwanese civil society is reflected in the family and individual levels as well. New Bloom's artist workshop curator Sonny Shieh noted that her documentary filmmaking work sought to use American air raids on Taiwan in World War II to “explore the fragmentation of collective wartime memory among Taiwanese before and after the war”:

When I talked with pan-blue [KMT-leaning] elders, they don't talk about the bombing or misremember that the Japanese were the ones who bombed us. For others, they find it hard to remember that history. After the regime changed, their identity became fragmented: they had to identify with five thousand years of Chinese history, and suddenly can't speak; they lost their voice (失語) (our translation).

For Sonny, a break in Taiwanese collective memory and history occurred at two levels: the misremembrance by elders who were pro-KMT, and those who “can’t speak” and “find it hard to remember that history.” Sonny saw her role as a documentary filmmaker as someone who repairs that break in history to provide a fuller account of Taiwanese collective memory. As the artists in the artist workshops she hosted at New Bloom would underscore, creating an “archive” of Taiwanese collective memory serves to strengthen Taiwanese identity as well.

Other Taiwanese interlocutors articulated the importance of New Bloom as a community space where personal and collective memories can be further explored. Rosa (alias), a Taiwanese graduate student of Taiwanese literature at National Taiwan University and 2014 Sunflower Movement participant noted that uncovering personal histories and hidden histories that occurred within Taiwan was crucial to building Taiwanese cultural consciousness:

I wish I knew more about nature in Taiwan – the oceans, the woods. So much about this land that we could not learn about or be in contact with during the KMT period because we were mobilized against China....I wish that everyone would go home and ask their grandparents about their histories, what kind of lives they lived – because this history is a means to go against “history with a big H.” That is, history is often written by the victor, but there are actually many histories – living, moving histories – that are hidden in your parents’ words. I feel like many people say they want to leave Taiwan because they don’t understand this place....It was only after the [2014] Sunflower Movement that I went home and asked my parents what happened in our family’s past (our translation).

For Rosa, connecting personal histories to histories of the island is therefore key for cultivating Taiwanese consciousness and building Taiwanese identity.

For Sonny and Rosa, and other Taiwanese community members at New Bloom, underscore that New Bloom serves as a vital space to begin and continue the work of rebuilding a personal and national history, discontinued and broken in time.

Asian American New Bloom members conveyed to me that they sought a community space to not only make sense of their own personal family histories, but to understand Asia at present – beyond what they could piece together from their family histories, memories which had become geographically distanced from Asia today. Bryan Chen, a Taiwanese American chef and community activist, noted that they sought to go to Taiwan to understand it today, in contrast to how they would have seen it through their “rose-tinted Taiwanese American glasses”:

There’s an over-romanticization of Asia among Asian Americans who don’t interact with modern Asia. They only know about Asia as a tourist destination or visiting their grandma’s during the summer, or only through their parents, so they only know about Taiwan through 1960s, 1970s nostalgia. A lot of people can’t read Chinese – but very little English language news media

on Taiwan interrogates Taiwan...You only hear about Taiwan as a destination, and not as a living breathing human.

In this way, New Bloom as a community space in Taipei was important for Bryan as a space to not only interpret and “interrogate” news on Taiwan, but to also understand present-day Taiwan better, beyond what they could gather through their experience visiting family or listening to their family’s stories. New Bloom’s in-person community space is therefore valuable for Asian American community members to see and interact with the island as “a living breathing human” – rather than a mere “destination.”

New Bloom community members also expressed the impact of participating in the organization offline in dispelling their own preconceived, romanticized narratives regarding Taiwan. Anna, a Filipino Ukrainian American filmmaker, expressed to me how New Bloom allowed her to deromanticize her own narratives about Taiwan. She described how, at the end of Wong Kar Wai’s 1997 film *Happy Together*:

...it alluded to this transcendent, metaphysical bond between Hong Kong and Taiwan...But at New Bloom, I learned that that’s not exactly the case. And that was because I was able to hear directly from the Hong Kong protesters who are asylum seekers, not getting asylum. And it showed me the ways in which Taiwan still has its own contradictions going on....It got me away from more romanticized narratives.

For Anna, participating in events at New Bloom’s community space allowed her to physically experience and see the “contradictions going on” within Taiwan today, rather than through preconceived “romanticized narratives.” New Bloom’s community space is therefore important for Asian American diaspora community members to process, learn, and understand Taiwan at present collectively.

By situating itself physically in Taipei, New Bloom serves as a community space that closes the geographical gap which allowed for the creation of an imagined Asia, upon which diaspora projected what they knew – whether from family histories or media narratives – onto. For diasporic New Bloom members, their experience in the organization has made real and present family stories – making them feel closer to the physical space that is Taiwan. In the process of exploring the personal and national, time and space, New Bloom serves as grounds for a co-production between the two – producing a new sense of what it means to be Taiwanese, what Taiwanese identity can be. It makes real the idea of an inclusive Taiwan; one that is not of one single idea or entity, but a space within which one can freely explore contradicting narratives, both personal and national.

Belonging

By relating the personal with the national, New Bloom creates a space for members to explore perceived gaps in their personal and national story, thereby ameliorating

alienation – alienation from one’s family heritage, alienation from the international community given Taiwan’s isolation from formal institutions. New Bloom also serves to ameliorate alienation from the marginal position of “leftist Taiwanese independence” in and of itself, by making space – both offline and online; physically and in the marketplace of ideas – for its members’ identities and political positions.

In describing the pro-Taiwanese independence, leftist perspective that New Bloom seeks to promote, Taiwanese New Bloom member Kang related the lack of Taiwanese “leftist elders” to “not having gay elders”:

We leftist youth are just finding ways on our own here in Taiwan. A bit rootless. If you want to be a proper KMT youth, there are so many resources for that, a lot of older people you can talk to. But in Taiwan, we rarely see a leftist elder who we can talk to about their experience, about their observations, about their perspectives, about their Taiwanese independence – basically none. And there isn’t a leftist environment, like a café, to build youth leftist consciousness (our translation).

Not only does cultivating an online community at New Bloom give the opportunity for youth new to New Bloom’s political positions the ability to connect with more experienced writers and activists, New Bloom’s physical community space – Daybreak Café – also serves to build “youth leftist consciousness.” As a completely volunteer-run organization, New Bloom’s projects and events are entirely driven by the interests of organization members, with others pitching in to help realize each other’s projects.

During the course of fieldwork, we saw firsthand how volunteers empowered new recruits and cultivated “youth leftist consciousness.” Two Taiwanese diaspora interns, both of whom were college students, had joined New Bloom during the course of fieldwork. Not only did more experienced New Bloom members hold a Taiwanese history reading group for them, but they also directed them to local museums, film screenings, and events that relate to the pro-Taiwanese independence, “leftist consciousness” that New Bloom sought to cultivate. Interns were also encouraged to hold their own events and write articles for New Bloom, with experienced New Bloom members meeting with them regularly to guide them through the process, provide feedback, and acquaint them with the rest of the organization. In this fashion, Daybreak Café became a means for experienced New Bloom members to mentor newer members and build political consciousness.

Ultimately, it is these kinds of activities that New Bloom community members find value in: hanging out, drinking, going to museums, learning about history – experiencing Taiwan and learning about themselves and their histories together. New Bloom is involved in influencing international discourse online, in reaction to current events – but this discourse is not produced purely ideologically in a vacuum. On the ground, they’re involved in a figure-it-out, collective effort to remediate perceived gaps within their community—gaps widened by time, space, and lack of community. Discourse is produced in the process of remediating these gaps, which is thereby circulated online and into media, and is picked up internationally.

As Taiwanese American anthropologist and New Bloom member Yo-ling Chen conveyed:

We're primarily a discursive space for certain kinds of politicization to happen... We occupy a particular space that other platforms aren't occupying. It's because there is a community space here – a sort of discursive context is established through New Bloom that allows people to form different kinds of political subjectivities.

At its core, New Bloom creates space for discussion, exploration, and a sense of belonging – a notion that parallels New Bloom's exploration of Taiwanese identity.

Building a shared space with others, a space where the marginalized identities of everyone are accepted as is and can be explored, further reflects New Bloom's conceptualization of Taiwan as a multifaceted, multicultural society. As Taiwanese-American Wen Liu notes:

What we understand as a nation is never an ethnically monopolized, class static, gender- and sexuality-binary society. Where we may differ ideologically from some of the Taiwan Independence fighters before us, is our rejection against an ethnic-based, male-dominated imagination of a nation, and our ambivalence toward the DPP for another right-wing party leader to control the future of the nation.

Other New Bloom community members affirmed the importance of sharing space, re-envisioning Taiwan, and, in turn, using these visions to enable new possibilities for togetherness. As Taiwanese-American New Bloom member SueAnn Shiah says:

Taiwan as analytic...[is] the idea that these are real people who are complicated, and they don't fall into your binaries. And people are willing to trade their lives as pawns in a chess game. We're gonna say that their lives matter....they don't need to be pressed and conformed into some framework of identity to make everything palatable for somebody else. They have the right to exist, just as they are. That's something I feel deeply, both as a Taiwanese person and as an LGBT Christian -- is that the world is interested in simplifying a complicated thing....I'm invested not only in their survival, but in their thriving and making space for them to have sanctuary and Haven and in a hostile world that desires to obliterate them.

SueAnn relates her marginalization on the individual identity level (her identity as Taiwanese, LGBT, and Christian) with that of Taiwan's international status: that both her individual identity and the identity of Taiwan as a whole "don't need to be pressed and conformed" or made "palatable." Instead, space – a "sanctuary and Haven" – should be made where both her individual, marginalized identity, and the internationally marginalized identity of Taiwan, are able to thrive. For SueAnn, the value of New Bloom is in its ability to serve as such a space, a space where

individuals stuck in between identities and geopolitical powers can thrive – without needing to choose one side or another in a binary.

Taiwanese and Asian American New Bloom community members, therefore, find the organization to be a valuable community space wherein members can “bridge” perceived breaks in their personal, familial, and national histories. In striving to strengthen their identity as Asian Americans, Asian American New Bloom members engage in root searching at New Bloom to understand Asia as it exists today, rather than the Asia that exists through their familial memory. Taiwanese New Bloom members engage in root searching in New Bloom to cultivate both a fuller sense of Taiwanese collective memory and to strengthen the concept of national Taiwanese identity. The experience of New Bloom community members in striving to repair a perceived “break” in personal, familial, and national histories underscores the interconnected relations between cultural memory, civil society, and identity – as New Bloom community members seek to strengthen their sense of cultural and collective memories to strengthen and build their identity.

Conclusion

Our research on New Bloom originated from an exploration of the organization’s most publicly visible activities, including the production of discourse about Taiwan for an international audience. Even though New Bloom engages in influencing global conversations, our research demonstrates that New Bloom members see the organization not only as a space for external political communications, but also as a site within which to practice root-searching, build community, and, to use the words of its members, to “find a space to heal.” In this chapter, we turn toward New Bloom’s internal community-building activities, illustrating how the individual experiences of New Bloom members relate to their search for healing and community in New Bloom, while also surveying how New Bloom members understand community building as a means of achieving political aims.

Taken together, our findings indicate that New Bloom members view the organization as a community space within which marginalized identities can be accepted, and where members can engage in constructing both personal and national narratives. The story New Bloom members tell about themselves as an organization and their work matches Barbie Zelizer’s notion of an “interpretive community” – which points to how journalistic groups engaged in “collective interpretations of key public events” understand themselves and their work (Zelizer 1993). New Bloom as a case study illustrates how a journalistic community not only analyzes and produces public discourse for public consumption, but also how its internal discourse and interpretations of the individual identities, narratives, and histories of its members influence the kinds of discourse New Bloom produces for the public and circulates online.

Returning to Rowen’s provocation in the introduction, a comparison of New Bloom and other transnational CSOs in Asia, such as *Lausan* and *New Naratif*, is a potential area for future research. Situated in more challenging civil society spaces of Hong Kong and southeast Asia respectively, *Lausan* and *New Naratif* have not established in-person community spaces comparable to New Bloom’s Daybreak Café.

Given the centrality of having a physical community space for New Bloom's internal community-building activities, a consideration of how a lack of offline community space impacts the ways in which members of groups like *Lausan* and *New Naratif* engage in questions of identity and cultural memory remains an area for future research.

Finally, this chapter also illustrates the potential for the application of anthropological methods, such as ethnography, in the study of global politics, civil society, and international relations. Jean Michel Montsion underscores the decolonial potential of ethnography, as "ethnographies are meant to convey how specific populations see the world and how their reality is uniquely integrated into the world," particularly as many "have been excluded from the study of international relations" (Montsion 2018). Given the continued relevance of questions of identity for activist organizations such as New Bloom, future scholars of international politics and civil society should center identities and perspectives otherwise relegated to the "periphery" in their research. It is perhaps through ethnographic research that the political project of New Bloom can be realized: where scholars and the world will no longer operate in a world that acts in accordance with realist notions of Great Power binaries, but instead, a world where multifaceted identities – spanning gender, sexuality, or national identity as Taiwanese – can be legible and valued, in and of itself.

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