Governing without Indicators? Asian Options

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Abstract

Given the inevitability of using indicators for governance in the modern state, but considering also their considerable drawbacks, this paper looks at alternative options within contemporary government systems. It finds these potentially in three Asian places with a powerful monarchy with a spiritual happiness mandate and popular legitimacy which also have developed a heterodox development approach: Thailand, Bhutan and Yogyakarta. The analysis shows however that, while heterodox additions to standard indicators are feasible, completely reneging on them does not seem to be desired or possible.

1. Indicators

Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance generally are completely indicator-driven today, both in practice and in theory – no further references for this claim are necessary than to look at the articles published in this journal. This seems so normal that even to note the fact seems like violating a taboo (Strauss 1988). After all, "Progress cannot be coherently discussed without definitions and supporting evidence. Indeed, enlightened government is impossible without the collection of data" (Deaton 2013, 15). "There is no agreed meaning of 'indicator'", but to use the working definition of Davis, Kingsbury and Merry,

> An indicator is a named collection of rank-ordered data that purports to represent the past or projected performance of different units. The data are generated through a process that

> simplifies raw data about a complex social phenomenon. The data, in this simplified and processed form, are capable of being used to compare particular units of analysis (such as countries or institutions or corporations), synchronically or over time, and to evaluate their performance by reference to one or more standards (2015, 6).

In fact, not only improvement, but even maintenance or the mere existence of the modern state seems to be premised on indicators, or at least statistics.[1] "It is generally accepted that capitalist economies, democratic politics and modern societies are inconceivable without numeric representation in the running of affairs" (Rottenburg and Merry 2015, 6). Management guru Peter Drucker is – if falsely – alleged to have said, "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it" (Zak 2013). The near future will bring only more of this: Big Data – such as in the context of the Smart City – will exponentially increase options to govern with indicators (Townsend 2013).

And yet, while many arguments in favor of governance indicators – beyond the fact that 'that's how it is' – are good and weighty (Pollitt 2006), the measured state has serious, even profound, drawbacks, because "indicators are not neutral representations of the world" (Rottenburg and Merry 2015, 5). At least from the Enlightenment on, the question has been whether they – or measuring generally – might not actually prevent genuine progress, because we measure what can be measured and not what really matters (see Drechsler 2011). The general issue is even at the basis of classic Western thought (Plat. polit. 284e; Aristotle, *Politikos*, fragm. 79 Rose[1870]).

This creates a problem for government, which may have to consider a multitude of aspects beyond the perspective of the private sector. As Mintzberg has classically put it,

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[1] For the current essay, all government quantification – reality mirroring through numbers – for policy purposes is sufficiently similar to be used interchangeably. Likewise, I do not differentiate between indicators for government information (internally) and those for government legitimization (externally), which is a crucial if often porous difference. Needless to say, there is copious general literature on this topic, which has not been woven into the present essay unless it was directly germane to the topic.

> What is its effect in government? Things have to be measured, to be sure, especially costs. But how many of the real benefits of government activities lend themselves to such measurement? … Many activities are in the public sector precisely because of measurement problems: If everything was so crystal clear and every benefit so easily attributable, those activities would have been in the private sector long ago (1996, 79).

The fundamental problem of indicators is that if they necessarily show only partial aspects, and always less (or other) ones than are needed to judge the entire phenomenon (Gadamer 1960; see Drechsler 2016b; Erkkilä and Piironen 2009), then this means that one can always construct a set of indicators that proves any answer to the question posed one wants – unless meeting given indicators, rather than solving an actual problem, has already been defined as the task to be done. Indicators, thus, are not less open to partisan manipulation than a holistic approach, which – needless to say – has its own problems, as well. Deaton's point that "without data, anyone who does anything is free to claim success" (2013, 16) is at least as true, if not more true, for doing so *with* data.

So, while "the promise of evidence-based policy-making is that it is … more objective and less prone to misuse" (Rottenburg and Merry 2015, 1), in fact, "Displaying reality via calculable indicators proves to be, at closer look, to be a highly problematic construct which, as also history shows, opens the door to manipulation and symbolic politics" (Voßkuhle 2008, 24).

There is, in other words, much that speaks against the use of governance indicators, but the fact remains that the modern state seems inconceivable without it: "Quantitative evidence is seen as essential for developing reasonable policy at local, national and international level" (Rottenburg and Merry 2015, 1). Voßkuhle has argued,

> The modern state claims to act *rationally*. … only a sufficient amount of knowledge creates capacity for action and authority. The rational state is therefore a 'knowledge state.' Acceptance of its decisions is therefore not only based on democratic legitimization… If the citizen loses his trust in the state's knowledge and thus in the rationality of its decisions, the readiness to follow sovereign commands evaporates as well (Voßkuhle 2008, 16, 18).

He continues by saying that because genuine knowledge is so difficult to attain, "politically responsible actors like to draw on … formally objectivized knowledge", normally gained via "standardized and quantifying processes" (2008, 23), i.e., indicators.

There are now two possible remedies: The first is to add to the orthodox indicators, for instance of Standard Textbook Economics (STE), most famously the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in a heterodox way, measuring not (only) material growth but (also), say, happiness; perhaps also to consciously model less and rely more on plain statistics. A second and much more radical approach would be to renounce indicators altogether, seeing the fundamental problems with measuring and modeling as mentioned, and to govern without them.

But are such states conceivable, and if they are, do they exist today? Is this a relevant or just a completely unreal, "purely theoretical" point to make? Voßkuhle's observation has an obverse as well: Even a state that is *not* a "modern" state as described could probably not do without knowledge of some sort, but it could perhaps do without the "formally objectivized knowledge" that indicators promise to deliver. If citizens trusted state actors regarding knowledge and decisions implicitly, this might change the picture entirely. Where, if at all, could one find cases that might potentially fit the bill, so as to look whether they managed to get by without indicators?

2. Kings

If one assumes that a republic is the state form in which political actors have to continually legitimize themselves vis-à-vis the citizenry in an institutionalized, periodical way, then the classical form of government where the opposite is the case, as legitimacy is assumed, would be a monarchy. Can we find such cases today?

a) In our context, this should ideally be a truly governing and not only a ruling monarchy, because we want to look at state activity rather than at only-symbolic leadership.
b) In order to facilitate comparison with a republic, for the 21st century the monarchy should be democratically legitimized to the extent and in the sense that most citizens actually endorse it, even if they do not formally vote.

c) And finally, given the intimate connection of indicators and specifically economic performance, ideally these monarchies should promulgate heterodox approaches to development (see Reinert et al. 2016), so that there would be some chance that they could 'govern without numbers'.

Arguably, three Asian cases fulfill all three requirements at least to some extent, and these are the Himalasian and Southeast Asian monarchies of Bhutan, Thailand, and Yogyakarta in Indonesia. In the world of indicator research and policy, Bhutan is by far the most famous case, which with its "Gross National Happiness" (GNH) inspired much of the current trend to create happiness indicators (e.g. Helliwell et al. 2017). Thailand is better known for the economic policy itself, called "Sufficiency Economy" (SE).

The case of the Yogyakarta Special Regency (YSR), a province of Indonesia, at first seems different in various ways, but there are similarities as well. While Indonesia is a Muslim-majority, if constitutionally neutral democracy, the Yogyakarta Sultans adheres at least to some extent to a Islamic-Javanese tradition that includes Hindu-Buddhist conceptions of Kingship (Geertz 1960, esp. 126-130, 40-41, 11). The current sultan, as an apparently unique case within a democracy, is also the governor of the province, so that he has direct executive power as well. His governance and development theory, "Unification of King and People" (*Manunggaling Kawulo-Gusti*, MKG), relates very well to GNH and SE.

Half a century ago already, Huntington argued (1968, 148-191) that monarchy has become obsolete during the 20th Century, mainly because it is scandalous for the middle class (1968, 163-164), and that where monarchies survive, they must "prove themselves by good works" (154), i.e. become, in Voßkuhle's term, rational, which means that they must somehow rely on indicators as well. Only "traditionalizing monarchies" (Huntington 1968, 153) might be exempt from this. Huntington surmises, "the existing monarchies will lose some or all of whatever capabilities they have developed for policy innovation under traditional auspices before they gain any substantial new capability to cope with problems of political participation produced by their own reforms" (1968, 191).

But even if this is true and the trend towards democracy is irreversible (but see Foa and Mounk 2016), it displays progress only in a temporal-technical sense, not in the sense that people actually do, *and are*, better (Inge 1920); nor does it take anything away from the possibility to take legitimate Monarchies *today* (or recently) as potential examples for governing without numbers, or at least with different numbers than the usual. This might be

especially possible if there is a religious element, and mandate, to the monarchy. As Kershaw has argued, "Such a 'religious quality' or 'divine status' in an office or institution, if we can plausibly identify it, may lead us to predict its resilience (or the persistence of the once associated values, at least), and help us towards a partial explanation of continuity or revival where these occur. This applies to kingship more than anything else that one can imagine" (2001, 19).

For our investigation, therefore, the Buddhist-kingship feature is not coincidental, because a classic role of the Buddhist king is that of the *dhammaraja*, of which one aspect of great relevance here (this is a highly complex subject both historically and theoretically) is that of facilitator for his subjects to attain happiness, with the optimal goal of enlightenment. The *dhammaraja* is, then, not (only) the one who rules according to the *dhamma*, but he who guides or enables his subjects to realize the(ir) *dhamma* – likely a requirement for any sort of Buddhist happiness – anywhere between nudging them thither or creating a space within which this is possible (see Tambiah 1976, 431; 9-261). This is different from, yet often in conjunction with, the role of the king as *chakravartin*, the righteous universal Buddhist ruler (see Mehta 1939, 79-84; Heine-Geldern 1942). In addition, Buddhist Economics (BE), which since the 1970s become its own field of scholarship, is to a large extent a classically heterodox paradigm (see Drechsler 2017), so that a Buddhist king might indeed be expected to have the potential to do without, with less, or with other numbers.

We will thus look at these three cases in some detail to see how they dealt and deal with indicator issues in governance.[2] The three Kings are or were legitimized, powerful, they have or had their specific ideas of how state and economy should function – and all three of them are or were often credited by their citizens with knowing what really matters, often even with having a special access to genuine, rather than apparent, reality. If anyone should be able to do without indicators, it is, or was, them.

[2] In line with context and content of this paper as regards methodology, interviews with key protagonists, stakeholders, and local academics involved in the respective discourse (see the list at the end of the bibliography *infra*), as well as academic and advisory participant observation, have been used in all three cases as basis or augmentation of classical text-based research.

3. Thailand

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy; however, King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) and the monarchy generally had gained a large amount of executive power over the second half of the 20th century, so that functionally, governance had strongly depended on him, sometimes more, sometimes less (Handley 2006). The king passed away in late 2016; he has been succeeded by his son (*Nation* 2016). While Thailand is, again, constitutionally secular, the monarchy is (Theravada) Buddhist, and the late king had decidedly embraced the role of the *dhammaraja* in our sense; that this corresponded to the people's expectations seems not in doubt (Handley 2006, 5-7, 17-25, 178.

SE, an alternative socio-economic, specifically Thai heterodox development concept developed by the late king, is sometimes also called "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy" (SEP). It was first outlined in 1974, not as a complete replacement, but as a partial reorientation of the economy (Puntasen 2008, 6; Puntasen 2004). SE means "in Thai … 'not-too-little, not-too-much' and refers to the idea of the middle path, the classic label for the spiritual approach which Buddha taught" (Noy 2011, 597). It is well summed up by Noy:

> In its fullest form, SE has been presented as an all-round philosophy by which to live and make economic decisions, as well as to arrange the local and macro economy. It is a moral theory about how economic agents, as well as political and bureaucratic actors, ought to act to align themselves with spiritual realities. Drawing on Buddhist teachings, its core principles are moderation, full awareness of the consequences of actions, and protecting oneself from risk. These three core principles (which have been translated from Thai to English as 'moderation,' 'reasonableness,' and 'self-immunity') are supported by two human qualities that must be cultivated as part of economic life: wisdom and virtue (Noy 2011, 597; see Drechsler 2016a, 2017).

SE clearly reflects an opposition to the "Washington Consensus" and to the International Finance Institutions, against which the king had positioned himself in real politics, and it emphasizes happiness as the goal (Puntasen 2008, 19, 6). In addition, SE placed the emphasis on ecological sustainability and on small-scale, traditional farming (Puntasen 2004; *Towards* 2013; Naipinit et al. 2014) typical for BE (Drechsler 2017). Thailand as such, however, has a rather market- and business-oriented economic culture (Puntasen 2008, 5), and there is a dominant elite drawing profit from this position (Unger 2009, 141).

Since SE was not theoretically elaborated in detail, interpretations have been both possible and necessary, both on the practical and on the theoretical level, and so SE – which had originally not included anything regarding indicators – was almost immediately "hijacked" by the mainstream (Puntasen i2016). In politics, the compatibility or complementarity of SE – in this case often called SEP – with globalization and international trade has been stressed (*Nation* 2015), and even precursordom for Big Data analytics, the creation of algorithms etc. are being posthumously attributed to Rama IX by interested parties (Leesa-Nguansuk 2016) . And as SE is not a very attractive position for mainstream economists, a compilation of the discussions among a group of them in 1999 (Puntasen 2004) showed that only one group saw SE as fundamentally opposed to STE. This also entails the need and desirability for SE indicators: "If happiness is a goal for every individual and for a society as a whole, then happiness should naturally be a goal in a nation's development plan. To measure a progress towards the goal, measures of happiness are needed" (Kittiprapas et al. 2008, 14).

Beyond this, operationalized SE in Thailand today focuses more on the management level than the economic one, and then in a softly-moderated mainstream way similar to usual corporate social responsibility or ethics-in-management principles and sustainability.[3] There are still the classic organic-farm projects as well, some doubtlessly very successful (Karnjanatawe 2017). SE never had any impact on Thai PA (Drechsler 2016a).

Methodologically, SE in Thailand today is probably somewhere between orthodox neo-liberal economics and the addition of some more heterodox elements, but closer to the former and in a fully orthodoxy-compatible way (Puntasen i2016). Taking sum of SE in policy and practice after the passing-away of the king in October 2016, Ekachai wrote, in an article entitled "Paying lip service to HM the King's efforts",

> All governments during the past seven decades similarly vowed to follow the King's royal examples. Yet this is what they all did: they praised royal advice and spent tons of money to eulogize royal initiatives – but only for show. Then they returned to business as usual by allowing businesses to exploit natural resources for short-term economic gains (2016).

[3] See, e.g., the activities of the Thailand Sustainable Development Foundation, http://www.tsdf.or.th/en/; or Avery and Bergsteiner 2016. A list of SE projects, in Thai, is at http://www.sedb.org/index.php.

As regards indicators, there are some heterodox additions to an orthodox basis. As for the King's original approach and for his engagement in rural areas, the fact that measuring was never topicalized might perhaps point to the possibility that this was kept in the spiritual realm, but even then, one cannot speak about 'governing without numbers'.

4. Bhutan

Bhutan's GNH is so interesting in the indicator context because it is a conscious alternative to the GDP and the kind of wealth, growth and development which GDP *measures* (which has even come under serious mainstream critique by now; see *Economist* 2016). GNH is the country's official and policy-relevant development program, focused on happiness rather than material growth (see Givel 2015, Ura 2015); it has had constitutional rank since 2008 (Art. 9.2 *Const.*). Today, as a policy that is often seen as reality, GNH is extremely popular internationally; it has even been pronounced a model for the European "Left" (Whitlock 2015).

"Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product", in the famous words of GNH's creator, the *Druk Gyalpo* Jigme Singye Wangchuck (the "4th King"; see G.K. Dorji 2015b). This happiness, when conceived, had strong and perhaps even primarily Buddhist connotations (Sachs 2010); nonetheless, the genesis of GNH as juxtaposed to GDP means that the H in GNH actually started as an English term and had to be translated back to Dzongkha (Phuntsho 2013, 596). The 4th King ascended the throne as a teenager in 1972 and stepped back in 2006 in favor of his son. During the years before, the King had turned the country from a semi-absolute to a constitutional monarchy, arguably against the explicit will of the people and most of the leadership (K. Dorji 2015; Corbett et al. 2016, 3, 8-10).

The 4th King's Buddhist spirituality and *dhammaraja* (or *Dharma* King) nature is not debated – it is even said, "Only a true *Bodhisattva* King can spread the teachings of the dharma like His Majesty has" (Wangchuk 2015, 92). It is quite certain that it was he who conceived of the non-material and also the spiritual element in GNH (Zangpo 2015, 138). The King did work on GNH implementation by himself in detail (Gurung i2016; Tobgye i2016; Penjor i2016).

Since the 4th King formally retired and was succeeded by his son, Bhutan has something that visually appears as a dual monarchy with two kings; yet, some shift in emphasis is noticeable. Under King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (the "5th King"), GNH has been adapted to mainstream development thinking, such as via the argument that (perhaps more radical) modernization and economic growth – if done well – will bring about GNH, rather than hinder it. The 5th King has acknowledged the *dhammaraja* function for himself as well, to be sure (Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck 2008), and according to the *Lancet*, he "is committed to GNH" (Beaglehole and Bonita 2015), but he seems to conceive of it a bit differently. "The new king says each generation has to interpret GNH in its own way and is subtly turning the idea on its head – a vibrant economy, he says, is the very foundation on which national happiness can be built" (Denyer 2008).

However, since 2008, the role of the king has been really constitutional (Tobgye 2015, 73), and GNH has since then been promoted by others. The internationalization and indeed quantification and operationalization of the concept is usually credited to the first Prime Minister under the 5th King, Jigme Thinley, who served during the first five years of the new constitution (Phuntsho i2016; 2013, 596; Thinley 2012). In doing so, he de-emphasized, at least occasionally, both the contribution of the 4th King and of Buddhism (Thinley 2012). Still, the PM was locally "widely criticized for taking GNH too far", to the point that this may have contributed to his election loss (S.A. Reinert 2015, 2).

The current Prime Minister, Tshering Tobgay, likely owes his election partially to his opposition to the "old" GNH (S.A. Reinert et al. 2015, 2-3). The *New York Times* even wrote that Tobgay "has largely abandoned the country's signature" GNH (Harris 2013), but that is not true, at least not anymore (Hayden 2015, 177). In fact, he has apparently realized by now the immense international PR value of the concept, and a recent TED talk in which he has promoted Bhutan as the only carbon-neutral country on earth (a pure indicator) has been extremely successful, even earning him – with other similar achievements, including some GNH continuation – a place among *Fortune*'s current list of the 50 world's greatest leaders.[4] Still, to talk about current mainstreaming, internationalization, and secularization of the GNH concept over the years – and of Bhutanese policy generally – seems overall justified.

[4] If last place; http://fortune.com/worlds-greatest-leaders/tshering-tobgay-50/; the TED talk is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Lc_dlVrg5M.

The third, current, phase of the GNH is dominated a levels down in hierarchy again, by Karma Ura, head of the Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies, which has operationalized and quantified GNH even more than under PM Thinley, since the late 2000s (see Ura 2015 for the most recent comprehensive document; Tshering 2015, 45; Phuntsho 2013, 597). The center under his direction "was put in charge of developing GNH index and indicators to make it accountable and assessable and internationally applicable"; the idea is "to make GNH philosophically and econometrically tenable" (Phuntsho 2013, 597). According to Ura, the H in GNH refers now to a quantifiable blend of, or third way in between, subjective well-being and Buddhist happiness (Ura 2015, §§17-33). One could say that with the globalization and internationalization of GNH also came the dominance, indeed almost complete takeover, of the concept by indicators.

Indicators or even one indicator, are therefore today the main focus of GNH – in a country where, it has been said, almost no indicators were available at all as late as in the 1970s (Rose 1977, 10-11); it was "as 'data-free' as it is possible for a polity over three hundred years old to be" (1977, 11) "It took 34 actual years to come out with a mathematical formula for Bhutan since His Majesty … ascended the throne" (Tshering 2015, 45), and today, as a recent *Wall Street Journal* picture caption read, we have "Bhutan, where happiness is a quantifiable goal" (Zhong 2015; see Ura 2015, §§34-46 and pp. 23-25 for the most recent authoritative description).[5]

The last GNH survey, in fact, indexed and measured tangible modernization gains, such as

The Bhutanese alternative to GDP today is, in short, not to renege on indicators, but to change them in a classically heterodox way – not regarding method at all, but just regarding objects. For international *Anschlußfähigkeit*, Bhutan even still releases GDP numbers: "'Personally, I would not want GDP data from Bhutan,' said Norbu Wangchuk, the [now former] economy minister… But 'we need to seem to be belonging to the world community,' he said, laughing. 'We cannot isolate ourselves from the world'" (Zhong 2015).

According to Meghraj Gurung (i2016), the pressure to quantify GNH was originally brought upon Bhutan by the UNDP, who needed 'evidence' to support their minor but still not

[5] According to Helliwell et al. 2017, however, Bhutan only ranks 97/155 globally, 20-22, and is not mentioned otherwise.

insignificant funding for development, and friendly academics (also Tobgye i2016). Former Prime Minister Jigme Thinley has stated that

> Bhutan originally did not wish to develop quantitative indicators of GNH … However, due to popular demand and the belief from the outside world that anything that is not measurable is not worth pursuing, Bhutan commenced development of quantifiable indicators that would guide GNH policy. An additional reason … was a belief that GNH has relevance not only for Bhutan, but for the outside world (cited in Givel 2015, 110; see Thinley 2012).

It has been argued that the advent of consumerism during modernization made a reorientation of GNH necessary, since autarky was not possible anymore (Mancall 2004, 9-10; Hayden 2015, 175-176). In addition, it is less easy to nudge people towards happiness than to comply with their immediate wishes, even if those are short-term oriented (G.K. Dorji 2015a; Hayden 2015, 176-177). Finally, Bhutan seems a clear case study for Huntington's "king's dilemma" where modernization (in the sense of global mainstreaming) prepared the way for the obsoleteness of a governing monarchy (1968, 177-191; but see Corbett et al. 2016, 2, 11-13). In PA, GNH never left any structural mark, and Bhutanese PA has been completely westernized by now; all traditional institutions were abolished, at the latest, with the 2008 constitution (iTobgye, iTshiteem, iPenjor; see Ugyel 2016). Although denied by Prime Minister Tobgay, the recent civil service reform implementing an old-fashioned NPM-style Government Performance Management System (GMPS) is, if anything, the opposite of GNH-linked PA (Lamsang 2017).

In sum, one could say that the original GNH somehow became a victim of its own success, and with the change of the guard from the original protagonists to those who had less ownership of the concept, the fundamental challenge to the global mainstream that GNH was, was dropped in favor of adding to it in ways that are popular within and without Bhutan. In this, however, it is a pragmatic success, because the GNH and even its indicator seem to many a great heterodox improvement on the concept of GDP.

5. Yogyakarta

Yogyakarta Special Regency (YSR) is one of three autonomous regions in Indonesia. Located at the central South coast of Java and encompassing more than 3.5 million citizens, YSR is by many indicators (!), as well as in the general perception, one of the most successful provinces in the country, perhaps the most successful one (Hamengku Bowono 2015b, 17-18; 25-26). This includes technological progress, unusually low corruption, high life-satisfaction of the citizenry and so on.

YSR is mostly congruent with the old Sultanate of Yogyakarta, a successor state of the Mataram Kingdoms that survived the changes of the last 250 years, including Dutch colonialism and Japanese occupation. After the country became a republic in 1948, YSR remained a monarchy. The reason for this was that the then-Sultan, Hamengku Bowono IX ("HBIX"), was an anti-colonial leader who aided the new government during times of crisis. The Sultan served as governor of YSR, as well, without elections, which he would doubtless have won (cf. Kershaw 2001, 77-78).

Sri Sultan Hamengku Bowono X, the current sultan (or king), succeeded his father on the throne in 1989 but only became governor in 1998. His personal charisma was decidedly increased that year by his role in the *reformasi* uprisings (Woodward 2011, 220-262; van Klinken 2012, 151, 162-163). When student-led protestors against the "New Order" military-oligarchic regime took to the streets and there were mass casualties elsewhere in Indonesia, in Jogja – the colloquial name of the city – the Sultan took the lead of the demonstrations and was able to both avoid any violence and further the revolution (Woodward 2011, 231; Ufen 2002, 485-486, 491, 500). This give-and-take of moral capital has continued: In 2015, when an outbreak of neo-islamicist anti-LGBT sentiment swept Indonesian politics (Widianto 2016), the Sultan once again demonstrated this kind of ethical leadership by publicly stating that in the YSR, tolerance would prevail (*Tribun Jogja* 2016).

The genuinely friendly and down-to-earth manner of the Sultan (Fox 1995, 225) stands in parallel with the belief of many people in YSR in his not only spiritual and mystical, but indeed magical powers, including being able to be ubiquitous, even in a non-corporeal way (Fox 1995, 187-232). This can be interpreted symbolically as that the Sultan might see and know all that is going on. Such an attitude improves, e.g., civil-service performance and lowers corruption and thus is one reason of better governance in Yogyakarta (Rayanto i2015). The institutional structure of the governor's PA seems more or less western, however; that of the *kraton* and the Sultanate is of course another matter (Rayanto i2015).

Until recently, it was debated as to how the relationship between sultan office and government office should be codified, but since 2012, whoever is sultan will automatically become – inherit the position of – governor (Banyan 2012; Ziegenhain 2016, 10). When Yogyakarta was asked by a national government opposed to HBX whether they would prefer elections, the regional parliament overwhelmingly voted against it (Woodward 2011, 259; Banyan 2010). The empirical data we have not only show that the people support the Sultan, but that well above two-thirds of them (if adjusted to the survey method) "want the Sultan to automatically become the governor of Yogyakarta" (Kurniadi 2009, 12-13).

When suggested that he might command so much loyalty from the people *because* he didn't ask for it, the sultan replied, characteristically, that the question was not whether the people were loyal to him, but whether he was loyal to the people, and that of course is the answer as well (Hamengku Buwono X i2015. But as the Sultan also mentioned, he does see himself as someone guiding his subjects, as Sultan, along a spiritually beneficial path until their death (Hamengku Buwono X i2015).

Sri Sultan HBX has promulgated a development and governance theory similar to SE and GNH in several respects, if more focused on politics and administration. Named, after a traditional Javanese concept, "Unification of King and People" (*Manunggaling Kawulo-Gusti*, MKG), he has detailed it in a speech on occasion of receiving an Australian honorary doctorate (2015), so the delivery was (also) in English.

It is explicitly that of a deliberative democracy (2015, 5, 7; i2015; see Fishkin 2009) "The status of Yogyakarta as Special Region is the result of a deliberative democracy process, in which the process reflects the inner voice of the people having an organic point of view and that this has become part of society's culture" (2015, 7). As a fashionable Western political-theory concept, deliberative democracy cannot so easily be dismissed by the Huntingtonian mid-brow class,[6] especially as mainstream democratic election-based modes have been challenged by coming from e-participation and other forms of both participatory governance and e-Democracy (Jonsson 2015), even if in a very different format than MKG.

HBX has said that he is only a valid Sultan as long as he is fully and unquestioningly endorsed by the people (i2015); however, differently from an elective democracy, he also takes

[6] MKG has been formalized rather recently and is not much studied in Western social science, so there is also less of the kind of generic critique to the system one would otherwise expect.

seriously the minority that is left behind (2015, 5). The April 2017 gubernatorial elections in Jakarta that put into place a candidate combining the old military-industrial elite, fundamentalized Islamicism, and the marginalization of ethnic and religious minorities (Allard 2017) very clearly show what might otherwise be. If one does not mix up the concepts of democracy (rule of the people) and republic (government based on elections), the Sultan's approach potentially entails considerable mainstream legitimacy as well.

Key elements of MKG are social justice, multiculturalism in a framework of tolerance, and a science- or knowledge-based economy (Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X 2015, 8-12). The latter includes switching from technological imitation to innovation, with a bow to young programmers and hackers, and the creation of a "Jogja Valley" (11). For this, the King has detailed plans, including cooperation support, an SME (small and medium enterprises) focus and the creation of digital villages (11).

Importantly, the Sultan – in the context of Good Governance – presents the achievements of YSR and MKG by classical indicators (2015b, 17-18; see 25-26) and formulates a very detailed, indicator-driven reform program including human resource management, asset optimization, Cost Unit Rationalization, advanced auditing practices and even performance-based budgeting (18-21). Altogether, theoretically and practically, the Sultan continues to deliver what public-policy specialists want to hear (van Klinken 2012, 161) in a very contemporary, mainstream-compatible way, *in addition* to his cultural, traditional, identity-creating, representational and indeed spiritual offerings as Sultan. We have an orthodox economic policy in many ways, but in a very *au courant*, innovation- and knowledge-based shape – "mainstream heterodoxy", and – less within the economy but in the framework – spiritual ones as well. Both empirical results and feedback from the citizens as mentioned indicate that this approach is practically very successful.

What becomes clear is that the Sultan, who is famously adept at conversing on many levels of meaning and reference at the same time, and whose political-traditional, material-spiritual functions and offices are simultaneously segregated and intertwined, in effect goes for *both* happiness *and* economic growth, traditionalism and modernization, depending on context and audience. Happiness does not need to be measured in itself and can therefore stay in a "vaguer" realm; development is measured in orthodox ways, but tempered with heterodox insights both regarding economic policy (innovation, new technologies) and methodology (human focus), and with impressive results.

In that sense, the Sultan belongs indeed to the Huntingtonian "modernizing monarchs" who "prove themselves by good works" (1968, 153, 154) to such an extent that for most rational observers, he simply offers the much better option. As even the usually anti-monarchist *Economist* wrote, "Yogyakartans cannot be faulted for revering their grand, incorruptible king in preference to some wheeler-dealer provincial governor" (Banyan 2010). But he escapes the dilemma by offering the reality of a spiritual dimension as well – the size of YSR might explain part of this to some extent (see Corbett et al. 2016, although their concept of smallness is smaller). At least by the perspective of many of his subjects, the sultan does not need a vote. But within a democracy, which Indonesia is, and given the global context that, so far, Huntington describes more or less correctly (1968, 1991), he can and does demonstrate success by those standards as well. Surely he retains an orientation towards happiness on all levels, but altogether, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X clearly governs *with* numbers.

6. Conclusions

To use indicators, in fact to quantify, is not natural, but a choice – on the governance level as anywhere else. Oxymoronically, however, it is a choice that has to be made today in favor of the indicators; at least realistically, even those who could most easily do without them and/or who realize their catastrophic flaws are either not able or not interested to opt out. What does seem possible is to add heterodoxically to the canon of orthodox indicators, often focused on material growth.

Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, who by now probably could govern without indicators on all levels, decidedly and unambiguously goes for orthodox indicators, while the development plan itself combines mainstream and a few heterodox elements – spiritual happiness is the focus of another dimension. He can keep both in balance; that, one could argue, is part of his specific kingship unified with the people.

Under King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, GNH was established as the main socio-economic plan for the country, and it remains that. Non-indicator-driven and heterodox in the beginning, the changing of the guard, elective democratization, and the pressures of techno-economic globalization led to a revisiting of GNH, and the current government goes for mainstream

indicators, to which some heterodoxy is added in a significant way. The result, for the typical Western observer, seems even more attractive than the original, more radical concept.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, with SE, launched a heterodox development program for Thailand, focused on sufficiency both personally and from the state perspective, which arguably has had quite some effect in Thai rural areas. Its importance for the general economy was apparently never fundamental, and in the fields where it was significant, this seems to have lessened. Measuring seems to never have been a central topic; the spiritual dimension of his Kingship is therefore more apparent in other areas.

In neither of the three cases is there, as far as one can see, any impact on PA, at least not to any significant extent.

Today, "The production and use of indicators in global governance is increasing rapidly" (Davis et al. 2015, 3; Rottenburg and Merry 2015, 1). Looking at possibilities for alternative and still effective and legitimate governance is interesting in many respects, but there seems to be no way to stop indicators today, even if one wanted to – there is no alternative, and if one is attempted, it soon vanishes and gives way to the quantification that permeates the world. But if legitimate states without indicators seem only theoretically possible right now, it means that theoretically possible they are.

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