

# T08P09 / Critical Policy Perspectives in Asia

**Topic :** T08 / Policy Discourse and Critical Policy Research

**Chair :** Piyapong Boossabong (Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The technocratic policy approach is not the only one that influences the development of policy studies in Asia. Critical policy perspectives are also shed light on as a consequence of the limitations of the aforementioned approach in the real-world policy. Such perspectives are not simply categorized, but their commons are on making a critique of top-down policy making. They raise a question on the legitimacy of the conventional policy experts and their nuts and bolts. According to Fischer (2016), critical policy perspectives can be perceived as the 'postpositivist' movement in public policy founded on an interpretive understanding of social science. They depart from Marxism and Habermas's critical theory, which attempts to critique scientism and technocracy. Their role is "to monitor or be on the alert for social shifts and to discursively explore and interpret their meanings through processes of critical deliberation and argumentation" (Ibid, p.98). He gives an example of the argumentative perspective as one of critical perspectives, which is now focused by some Asian scholars (e.g. Fischer & Boossabong, forthcoming; Li & He 2016). Without too specific conceptualization, this panel welcomes a wide-range of critical lens on policy studies in Asia (e.g. the perspectives that critique mainstream policy approaches and pay attention to the bottom-up policy making, the governance turn in public policy both in national and local scales, the role of local knowledge in policy analysis etc.). The paper should address; how and why critical policy perspectives are emerged in different Asian contexts? Are they useful?, and if so, in which way? It is also worth learning their success and failure in either making a critique or proposing the alternatives.

### References

- Fischer, F. 2016. What is critical? Connecting the policy analysis to political critique. *Critical Policy Studies*, 10(1), pp.95-98.
- Fischer, F. and Boossabong, P. forthcoming. Deliberative Policy Analysis. *Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, ed. J. Dryzek. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Li, Y. and He, J. 2016. Exploring deliberative policy analysis in an authoritarian country. *Critical Policy Studies*, 10(2), pp.235-246.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

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# T08P09 / Critical Policy Perspectives in Asia

Chair : Piyapong Boossabong (Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy)

## Session 1

Wednesday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (Block B 1 - 1)

### Discussants

Ya Li (School of Public Administration, Beihang University)

### **Beyond technocratic policy analysis: considering how and why norms and local knowledge influence public policy in Asia**

Piyapong Boossabong (Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy)

This paper attempts to bring us back to policy epistemological debates regarding the modes of rationality behind the policy world. It argues that value-free ontology and expert knowledge do not always determine policy rationality particular in the Global South, where modern and pre-modern conditions are co-existed. This entry point is worth considering for making a better understanding of policy inquiry in the real-world beyond the technocratic approach. By exploring public policies in Asia in overview, this paper examines that Asian values are really existed and make an impact to policy making in different Asian contexts. Social norms and local knowledge embedded in such Asian values are diverse and shape the particular policy in specific context. The outstanding example is the role of the family care and religion beliefs in shaping public policies. In most of Asian countries, family is expected by the state both in the central and local scales to take care of its members. Human capital development policy of those countries, thus, is based on the family role. Aside from that, norms related to Theravada Buddhism still influence ethical and moral control policies in South East Asian countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos etc. In particular, Buddhist norms also influence the policy promoting World Bank's good governance in Thailand as the state translates this notion by using Buddhist words and interprets it by focusing the morality aspect. Besides, Confucian thoughts still make some impacts on policy worlds in China, Taiwan, and Singapore etc. As regards the role of local (some cases would be call 'sacred') knowledge, the policy review found widely that many Asian countries developed their policies based upon their local knowledge particularly in the areas of the environmental conservation policy, cultural policy, sustainable development promotion policy, alternative healthcare policy, organic farming policy, food security policy, and tourist policy. It was also found that to promote the local economy in Japan and Thailand was made through the promotion of local products that were made by local knowledge and skill. By using critical lens in analysing these policy phenomena, the reason explaining why norms and local knowledge are still matter in Asian policy worlds is that: the acceptable policy is not only the one that achieves in justifying its rationality through empirical evidences of its benefits, but also the one that fits into the particular contexts and existing social systems. Such policy phenomena also occur as a result of the fact that the social norms and local knowledge usually support the nationalist ideology, keep the commons, resolve disputes and proclaim the identity of either the state or the local community.

### **Deliberative and Interpretive Policy Analysis in Taiwan: A Critical Review**

Liang-Yu Chen (Leiden University Institute for Area Studies)

Following the “argumentative turn” in public policy analysis in the West in the 1990s, and later the development of deliberative policy analysis (DPA) and interpretive policy analysis (IPA), a few Taiwanese scholars, mainly in the field of public administration and public policy, have “imported” such analytic frameworks and new focuses for studying politics and policies in Taiwan. During this period, Taiwanese scholars began to introduce social constructionism and post-positivist policy analysis (PPPA) as an alternative apart from the positivist policy analysis. Since the International Conference in Interpretive Policy Analysis has been established as a platform for DPA/IPA scholars, Taiwanese scholars have also contributed to the enrichment of DPA/IPA with case studies in the Asian context.

In order to assess the development of DPA/IPA in Taiwan, this paper scrutinizes the academic work on DPA/IPA that carried out by Taiwanese scholars (mainly written in Mandarin Chinese) since the 21st century. Based on the

critical review, the paper argues that (1) whereas some scholars' work can directly or indirectly relate to DPA/IPA, few of the scholars identify their work as DPA/IPA. In this regard, the "IPA school" in Taiwan has yet to be formed. (2) Since the concept of deliberative democracy and participatory governance have been introduced widely in Taiwan, many scholars interpret the term deliberative policy analysis as "deliberative democracy plus policy analysis." (3) While the role of DPA/IPA analysts is still under discussion, the Taiwanese scholars who work on DPA/IPA are meanwhile playing a role as social activists, and are highly involved in policy issues that are in huge controversies. (4) Speaking of teaching and curriculum of DPA/IPA, Taiwanese scholars are facing the same challenges as western scholars. For instance, it is often difficult to demonstrate how to put the abstract framework and interpretive methodology into practice. In conclusion, this paper further discusses the political environment as an opportunity for the development of DPA/IPA in Taiwan.

## **Narrative exploration of the transitions to sustainable consumption**

Sunayana Ganguly (Azim Premji University, India)

Sustainable consumption is a key idea in transitioning to low carbon societies. It is essential to unpack consumption, in order to govern the everyday choices of consumers as they have environmental impacts, which include land and energy requirements. The sustainable consumption narrative has its roots in the global north. Its particular narratives of sustainability have often been transplanted to a country like India, whose particular trajectory of food practice is shaped by tensions between tradition and globalisation. This paper complicates the idea of a blanket narrative of 'sustainable consumption', fleshing out interactions that are subject to local differentiation. This provides a more systematic account of the complexities of transitioning to sustainable consumption. The role of practices in governing resources has important implications for environmental governance: moving from interventions targeted at individuals to interventions aimed at more collective, embedded understanding of consumption, that can inform environmental policy.

Practices involve a set of established understandings, procedures and objectives. They are not isolated individual acts, but are embedded in a social and structural framework of relationships. In order to unpack them, one must be aware that both formal and informal codifications govern practices that even the people involved often do not reflect on them and are not self-aware of their own conduct. In addition, practices in themselves have a constant potential for change as people are exposed to different contexts and situations and constantly improvise, adapt or innovate. In the narrative context of sustainable consumption, new rationales, such as 'sustainability' or 'health', are expected to transform practices. This paper evaluates the role that these rationales play in informing practices within which habits, routines and perceptions are nested. It also isolates bottlenecks like knowledge asymmetries and lack of trust that creates consumer apathy and analyses narrative rationales that could play a key role in framing public policy for sustainable consumption.

The paper uses data from the study, "Towards Sustainable Consumption in South/Southeast Asia: Dynamics of Consumption Patterns, Practices and Policies Among "New Consumer" Households in India and the Philippines." Exploring narratives derived from 127 interviews with respondents working in the information technology industry in Bangalore, emblematic of the new consumer, this article clarifies the possibilities and pitfalls of intervening in consumption policies. We conducted 100 short semi-structured interviews set in the workplace as well as 27 in-depth household interviews. Our respondents were early to mid-career professionals in various locations from large companies and medium-sized companies, but no small start-ups. Interviews were coded using Nvivo software.

The link between sustainability and food is often framed from the perspective of environmental impacts of food production, distribution and within the global rhetoric of sustainable consumption. What are often overlooked is the impetus to more sustainable forms of consumption that lie in the practices and routines of individuals that are tied to cultural conventions and social rhythms. Doing so, it complicates the dominant framing in environment policy, that poor choices made by individuals are at the root of the problem of unsustainable consumption.

## **Social Return on Investment (SROI) in Pro-poor Local Economic Development Policy: An Alternative Evaluation Method**

Elivas Simatupang (Local Development Planning Board of Cimahi city)

Tutik Rachmawati (Parahyangan Catholic University - Indonesia )

David Julye Steven

Program evaluation plays a significant role in providing feedback in public policy process. There are various methods to evaluate a program, however Social Return on Investment (SROI) provides both forecasting and evaluation tools. Many private organizations have already utilised SROI to plan and evaluate their projects or programmes. Nevertheless, never have any public organization and governmental sector in Indonesia used SROI

to plan and evaluate their projects, programs or policies. SROI can be very useful to evaluate a social investment funded by public spending.

Using SROI analysis with emphasis on the social aspects of an investment, this paper will provide a more robust and valid measurement tool for a program evaluation. This kind of evaluation tool is imperative for pro-poor local economic development initiatives such as dairy industry cluster development. The analysis follows five stages and seven principles of SROI. The stages are identifying stakeholder, mapping of outcomes, identifying and valuing outcomes, defining outcomes and measuring the SROI. In addition, the principles of SROI are involving stakeholder, understanding the changes, valuing what matters, including what is material, avoiding over-claiming, transparency, and verifying the results. The result of the SROI analysis for the dairy industry cluster development is a net present value of 1 : 6.17. This result confirms and supports the plan to further expand the dairy industry cluster development.

This paper will be a significant contribution for the panel of Critical Perspective Policy in Asia as it depicts policy i.e. program evaluation as part of a policy process with emphasis on a bottom up approach.

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## Session 2

Wednesday, June 28th 16:15 to 18:15 (Block B 1 - 1)

### Discussants

Shunsaku Komatsuzaki (The University of Tokyo)

### Elaborating a Critical Study of Governance in Thailand: On Applying Metagovernance and Critical Realism

Theerapat Ungsuchaval (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University)

Arguably, the study of governance has become ubiquitous within public policy discussion and research (Fawcett, 2016). Changes in governance do not simply imply that government has lost its power in governing; yet, they indicate that the state is exercising the power in different manners. Oft-cited version of governance given by Rhodes (1997) as underlying changes in governing characterized as 'governance without government' seemingly deemphasizes the important of the state. Such 'governance' equates simply to network. However, this paper challenges a network-oriented approach as the veneer of governance, and argues that even in a seemingly highly network-oriented situation, hierarchy is still functioning well and alive and persists in such context. Governance must do with much more than networks, institutions, or narratives.

In specific, this paper looks at the operation of a certain quasi-nongovernmental agency (quango)—Thai Health Promotion Foundation (THPF)—and its interaction with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Thailand. With the widely claimed innovative working approach of THPF to funding and operation, THPF has mostly received well collaborations from its partners and seen as working with a networked approach correspond with the new governance perspective. Nevertheless, THPF, in fact, utilizes other modes of governance, not just networks. Networks are operated with hierarchies and markets in a strategic way. This implies that the state and hierarchies are well and alive, being not totally replaced by the new governance, and governance by network, indeed, appears in the 'shadow of hierarchy' alongside the state and governmental agencies (Jessop, 2003, 2016). This yields to the concept of metagovernance as a superior framework to critically capture the state-society relations and the interactions of multiple actors in public policy. This paper also aims to show how the metagovernance concept can be better used to study governance in Thailand.

Among the influence of interpretive turn in the study of public policy and governance (Bevir, 2010; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003), this paper instead suggests an alternative approach in which bringing interpretive back in the analysis is not enough; it should bring hierarchy and criticality back in the analysis as well. Critical realism, as a post-positivist paradigm, is also utilized and applied to establish and explain the phenomenon of interest, which is governance. It strengthens the metagovernance concept with 'critical' understanding of governance per se and related meta-theoretical issues (Ungsuchaval, 2016). As reasoned by Fischer (2016), being "'critical', in relation to policy analysis, was more flexible than 'interpretive'" and to be "'interpretive' does not have to be 'critical'" (p.96).

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- Bevir, M., & Rhodes, R. A. W. (2003). **Interpreting British Governance**. London: Routledge.
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Jessop, B. (2016). *The State: Past, Present, and Future*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rhodes, R. A. W. (1997). *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Bristol: Open University Press.

Ungsuchaval, T. (2016). Transcending the Institutional-Interpretivist Binary: Realizing Critical Realist Theory of Governance as Metagovernance. *Journal of Government and Politics*, 7(4), 662-696.

## **The Influence of Hierarchical Social System on Inter-local Collaboration Policy in Thailand: A Critical Perspective**

Pobsook Chamchong (College of Politics and Governance, Mahasarakham University)

Inter-local collaboration policy enables local governments to achieve service efficiencies. Therefore it has been widely implemented particularly in the Western countries in the context of austerity. This results in a large number of literatures on such policy in the Western world whereas existing knowledge on Asian countries is scarce. This paper argues that the insights into collaboration policy cannot be gained by focusing only on legal-institutional approach. Rather the everyday practices, actors, and norms relevant to the practices of collaboration policy need to be given a critical consideration. The paper draws on the initial findings of an on-going study on the practices of collaborative local governance in the North-East Thailand. 30 in-depth case studies were employed to investigate the way in which local governments formulate and practice inter-local collaboration policy. The empirical evidences from Thai cases allow the researcher to argue that cultural norms play a central role in cross-council collaboration policy at local level. Essentially, the hierarchical social system of Thai culture has a high impact on the practice of inter-local collaboration. Larger local governments, either upper-tier or with larger resources, were willing to form vertical, unequal relationships with lower-tier, local governments with smaller resources, i.e. Tambon Administrative Organisations (TAOs). This asymmetric relationship – the hierarchical share of resources - among collaborating councils is facilitated by a strong hierarchical social system in Thai local government system and Thai society. In the practices of collaboration, larger councils usually acted as a host and usually gave assistance to councils with smaller resources, i.e. TAOs. In some cases, they also became locked-in to disadvantageous collaborative working relationships controlled by neighboring small councils. The circumstance is suitably explained as the converse of power/resource dependency theory. This phenomenon occurred because larger, usually upper-tier councils saw themselves as big brothers who have a duty to help those new-born small councils lacking the capacity and expertise in providing service efficiencies. On the other hand, TAOs established in the late 1990s expected those larger councils to assist them as they perceived themselves as organisations with limited capacity because of being a new-born. This cross-council collaborative working reflects the strong hierarchical culture of Thai society in which senior persons are expected to give assistance to younger persons without asking anything in return.

## **Examining the Limitations of Disability Policies in Bangladesh in the Income-generating Programs for 'Disabled' Bangladeshi People**

Mst Shahina Parvin (University of Lethbridge, Canada and Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh)

Disability policies in Bangladesh, a country of the Global South, are mostly informed by the United Nations' conventions on the rights of people with disabilities. One of the main aims of disability policies of Bangladesh is inclusion of people with disabilities in income-generating programs. The argument behind the programs is that the inclusion of people with disabilities, in particular impoverished 'disabled' Bangladeshi people in income-generating programs, not only establishes 'disabled' people's human rights and agency, but also alleviates their poverty, which in turn contributes to the broader economic development of the country. Following the critical disability approach, this paper firstly uncovers the knowledge construction process of Bangladeshi people with disabilities and the political and economic aspects connected with this construction; secondly, it discusses how the disability policies' main focus on 'disabled' people's rights and autonomy through income generating activities is connected with the expansion of the neo-liberal economy in Bangladesh - which fuels the drive to maximize the human potentiality. Further, based on the qualitative research findings, this paper frames the discussions of the necessities of integrating 'disabled' Bangladeshi people's voices in making disability policies in Bangladesh. It also argues that it is necessary to address the geo-political context of Bangladesh and its economic and structural dependency to the Global North when making disability policies. Further, the research paper addresses that disability is not a homogenous category, and 'disabled' Bangladeshi people do not undergo the similar experiences and discriminations in the society as well as income generating activities, but rather their discriminations are generated by the intersection of class and gender.

This paper is relevant to the panel: *Critical Policy Perspective in Asia* because it follows the critical disability approach in examining the disability policies of a South Asian country, Bangladesh. It seeks to analyze the underlying political and economic reasons of income generating programs for Bangladeshi people with disabilities as well as the knowledge construction process of people with disabilities. The paper also focuses on the

necessities of counting subjective experiences of 'disabled' Bangladeshi people when making disability policies for 'disabled' Bangladeshi people.

## **Neoliberalism, play and childhood: The politics over public spaces in urban India**

Harsh Mittal (Birla Institute of Technology and Science)

Navdeep Mathur (Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad)

Through this paper, I plan to understand and analyze the impact of neoliberal transformation of urban spaces on childhood, and more specifically, the child's right to play. Following Ong (2007), the concept of neoliberalism is not understood as "a hegemonic order or unified set of policies" (p. 7), but in a poststructuralist sense of acting as a discursive mobile technology which shapes the political subjectivities. The term 'neoliberal transformation of urban space' refers to the political process through which the everyday use of public spaces in urban areas is increasingly getting commodified, and hence amenable to private consumption for exchange of a fee.

There are diverse and contesting interpretations among scholars about the social and political change in urban India which also guides their use to concepts in researching urban policy issues. Within this large body of literature using different research methods and theoretical orientations, there are few examples of discursive analysis to explain the space transformations in India - Doshi (2013) highlights the deeply political process of displacement and resettlement where there is no uniform subaltern subjectivity and rather the process of accumulation is only helped by discursive practices of social mobilization.

However, the critical urban theory scholarship does not appear to have attended to the issue of childhood or play getting affected by neoliberal restructuring of urban space. The motivation to research the impact on childhood comes from my own reflections over the years observing the loss of urban spaces for children to play. I find that most of the neighbourhood streets and open spaces no longer have children playing due to the domination by motorized vehicle. The open grounds have also been converted into gated green parks with restriction on playing ball games. Driven by these concerns, I want to understand how the logic of neoliberal transformation reconfigures the possibilities of children's claim to urban space. Using the poststructuralist discourse theory (Howarth & Griggs, 2015), I plan to study the social practices on the sites where children organise and participate in play, and how their use of space, specifically the unstructured play, can act as a disruption to neoliberal rationality. This activity, 'unstructured play' or 'free play', allows children to make sense of problems around them and intuitively respond to them (Gray, 2013). In the process, they both learn about themselves and others without an dominant overlay of authoritative structures.

The Ministry of Urban Development has established a centre for child friendly smart cities inside National Institute of Urban Affairs. In partnership with Bernard van leer foundation, it has organised a conference and published reports addressing the question where do we stand on meeting children's needs in cities and how can urban planning respond to this. They have been talking about including the views of children themselves in problem solving activities. In this context it would be crucial to capture the discursive technologies applied by the state and other actors which shape the meaning of play and other uses of urban public space by children.

## **References**

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