

T02P03 / Comparative Public Administration: Eastern vs Western Perspectives

Topic : T02 / Comparative Public Policy sponsored by Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis

Chair : Zeger Van der Wal (LKYSPP, NUS)

Second Chair : Caspar VAN DEN BERG (Leiden University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Normative assumptions and traditional stereotypes characterize most debates on administrative cultures in the East and the West. Two contrasting views dominate. The *dichotomous* view suggests civil servants in both spheres hold different values and attitudes engrained in antithetical traditions with regard to the role of the state, stages of democracy, individual versus collective freedoms, and power distance (e.g., Berman 2011; Hofstede 1980; Schwartz 1999).

The second view emphasizes increasing *convergence* or even universalism of practices and values as a result of the “global public management revolution” (Kettl 2005, 1), often referred to as New Public Management (NPM) since the 1980s. Recently, Mahbubani (2013) has written on the “great convergence” between Asia and the West due to increasing exchanges of management ideas and best practices, and almost universal acceptance of Western good governance values.

More specifically, Xue and Zhong (2012, 284) suggest NPM-like reforms have affected administrative culture in China while Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011, 291-293) make a similar case for Western European and Anglo-Saxon countries. According to Xue and Zhong (2012, 284-285), “China has learned a great deal from international experiences in public administration reform” and is transitioning from “a public administration system based on personal will and charisma to one that is increasingly based on rule of law”.

Some even claim such a system is preferable to achieve better governance (e.g., Zheng 2009; Guo 2008; Wei 2010); implying Western-inspired transition should be embraced rather than rejected on particularistic grounds. Conversely, in Western Europe NPM-based approaches are often seen as detrimental to “classical” Weberian principles and values such as expertise, lawfulness, and loyalty (Kernaghan 2000; Van der Wal 2011).

At the same time, there are vast differences within the Eastern and Western hemispheres as research shows (Lynn 2006; Painter and Peters 2010; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). More so, even countries that are generally classified as belonging to a ‘Confucian tradition’ – such as China, Singapore, Japan, and South-Korea – differ tremendously in terms of how their systems have evolved, how their governments function and perform, and how individual civil servants behave (Berman 2011; Chen and Hsieh 2015; Drechsler 2014, 2015; Walker 2011). The same goes for countries with a ‘Weberian’ or *rechtsstaat* tradition (Drechsler 2005; Van den Berg, Van der Meer and Dijkstra 2016; Van der Meer, Steen, and Wille 2015).

In short, in the majority of debates on how public administration compares between the East and the West statements and assumptions are intertwined on how systems, values, and practices actually look like and how they should look like. Empirical comparative data is almost non-existent, with some recent exceptions (e.g., Berman 2011; Berman et al. 2013; Haque 2013, 2015; Van der Wal 2015). However, increasing interconnectedness, collaboration and both converging and competing interests between Asia and the West in what some call the ‘Asian century’ (Bice and Sullivan 2014; Mahbubani 2008; Vielmetter and Sell 2014), necessitates deeper understanding of *how* public sectors in both regions work, *how and why* they differ, and *what that means* for collaborative potential and performance.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Many intriguing – theoretical, empirical, conceptual, and methodological – questions lay bare. For this panel,

we invite exciting and novel empirical as well as theoretical work on administrative systems, values, and practices in Eastern and Western countries, with a particular focus on how (countries in) both regions compare.

Topics and questions our panel seeks to address include (but are not limited to):

1. To what extent do administrative traditions (still) characterize cultures, values, and practices in public sector organizations in the East and the West?
2. How do public sectors in both parts of the world compare in terms of practices, values, accountability and performance regimes, HRM systems, etc.?
3. What are real-life experiences, challenges, opportunities in terms of collaboration within and between public sector organizations in both parts of the world?
4. How do we design meaningful comparative research efforts between public sectors in countries with different traditions, cultures, and languages? Should we reconsider or completely re-design existing instruments and approaches?
5. What is the potential of an “Asian public administration” approach to teaching and research in a field dominated by Western scholars, concepts, and assumptions?

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Session 1

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

Discussants

Zeger Van der Wal (LKYSPP, NUS)

Caspar VAN DEN BERG (Leiden University)

The decline of appraisal (including loyal contradiction) as a civil service function and the rise of the “can do” civil servant : a comparative analysis on causes and future developments.

Frits van der Meer (Leiden University, institute Public Administration)

The use and usefulness of the ‘traditions approach’ for the study of politicization

Caspar VAN DEN BERG (Leiden University)

People do not buy it? An investigation on corruption perception in China

Lijing Yang (Sun Yat-sen University)

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Session 2

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

Discussants

Caspar VAN DEN BERG (Leiden University)

Zeger Van der Wal (LKYSPP, NUS)

The Grass is Greener, but Why? Evidence of Employees' Perceived Sector Mismatch from the US, New Zealand, and Taiwan

Chung-An Chen (Nanyang Technological University)

East-West Dualism in Administrative Ethics in Southeast Asia: Major Patterns and Consequences

Shamsul Haque (Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore)

Zeger Van der Wal (LKYSPP, NUS)

The Fourth Dimension? – A Cultural Approach to the Study of Public Administration

Zhibin Zhang (Flinders University)

Deterring Prosocial People from Entering the Public Sector? Adverse Selection in the East Asian Public Service Exam

Chung-An Chen (Nanyang Technological University)

Zhou-Peng Liao (National Open University)

Don-yun Chen (National Chengchi University)

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Session 3

Thursday, June 29th 08:15 to 10:15 (CJK 1 - 1)

Discussants

Zeger Van der Wal (LKYSPP, NUS)

Caspar VAN DEN BERG (Leiden University)

Governing without Indicators? Asian Options

Wolfgang Drechsler (Tallinn University of Technology)

Structural Barriers to an Asian Century of Public Administration

Kim Moloney (Australia New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG))

Where the Western Style Decentralization Reform meets the East (and West): Institutionalization of Local Government Bureaucracy and the Performance of Local Government in the Philippines (tentative title)

Masao Kikuchi (Meiji University)

Nishimura Kenichi (Center for International Education and Exchange)

FURTHERING RESULTS-BASED PLANNING THROUGH LEADERSHIP: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM VIETNAMESE PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

Ha Pham (School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington)

Evan Berman (Victoria University of Wellington)

Patronage System in the Pacific: Role of Big Man in PNG

Lhawang Ugyel (Australian National University)