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An emerging Asian model of governance and transnational knowledge transfer: an introduction

Ting-Yan Wang & Hong Liu

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An emerging Asian model of governance and transnational knowledge transfer: an introduction

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ABSTRACT

Although Asia has a long history of governance practice, its modern governance has been disproportionately influenced by the Western models. Given the shifting global political economic landscape and a re-emerging Asia in recent decades, there is an urgent need to explore the potential of Asian models of governance. Could there be an Asian model of governance that is distinct from the Western ones? If so, what are the key characteristics? In conjunction with the special issue, this introduction article attempts to partially answer these questions. Based upon the existing literature and critical reflections, the authors propose a preliminary analytical framework for an emerging Asian model of governance by incorporating two inter-linked phenomena: shared cultural, historical norms and trajectories, and intra-regional transnational knowledge transfer. Six articles constituting the special issue are also briefly introduced within this framework, with the aim of contributing to a better understanding of Asian governance experiences and theoretical debates on the evolving modes of public governance.

KEYWORDS

Asia; governance model; shared roots; transnational knowledge transfer; contextualized lessons

Introduction

Asia has a long history of governance practice tracing back to the ancient times. This is especially the case for countries like China, which has accumulated a wealth of experiences in governing a giant empire with a huge population and territory. For example, its bureaucratic administration and civil service examination system had been a subject of admiration and imitation by Western thinkers such as Voltaire (Bodde, 2005). Despite this, modern governance has been predominantly based upon Western experiences and knowledge systems. The governance systems of many Asian societies such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan have been significantly influenced by Western theories and practices, or more specifically, by the Anglo-American liberal-democracy system (Cheung, 2012, 2013; Kim, 2012, 2017; Yun, 2006).

The Western dominance in governance could be seen in multiple facets. First, the several waves of management reform after the Cold War, including ‘New Public Management’ (NPM) and ‘good governance’ and their offshoots, were all derived from the West and have been experimented enthusiastically in Asia (Kim, 2017; Shih, Sun, &
The most influential academic associations of governance and public administration are usually based in the United States or Europe, organizing some of the most important conferences and publishing high-impact journals (e.g. the American Society for Public Administration and its publication, the *Public Administration Review*).

Second, the Western world has been dominant in shaping the standards of ‘good governance’ by constructing indicators to assess government performance, such as the ones introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These indicators are largely based upon the Anglo-American liberal-democracy system, emphasizing separation of powers, human rights, constitutionalism, etc. Partly as a result of direct or indirect coercive policy transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996), developing countries have to, as a norm, adopt these indicators to navigate domestic reforms and adjust their governance systems in order to obtain financial aids from these international organizations. Those so-called ‘stubborn’ countries such as China and Singapore, which insist on following their own paths of development and governance, have been labelled as ‘authoritarian’ regimes lacking ‘voice and accountability’ (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2011; Ortmann, 2012; Roy, 1994).

The situation began to change with the advent of the so-called ‘Asian Century’ and the advocacy of the Asian values by politicians such as Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysia’s Mahathir after the mid-1980s. The 2008–2009 financial crisis severely hit the Western world, while the world witnessed a (re-)emerging Asia of ascending global influence (Cheung, 2013; Drechsler, 2013), spearheaded by some of the ‘Asian Tigers’ such as Singapore and South Korea, China, and India. As a consequence, more and more developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America show their interest in the ‘China model/Beijing Consensus’ or the ‘Singapore model’ as alternative paths (Ramo 2004, Bell, 2015; Lai, 2016, Liu, Lee, & Wang, 2017; Zhao, 2017; Liu & Wang, 2018). For example, China has been invited to serve as development consultant for Grenada (Chan, 2017), and large number of officials from Africa and Southeast Asia were sent to China and Singapore to receive governance training (Ganapathy, 2017; Tugendhat & Alemu, 2016).

It is against this backdrop that an academic community in and beyond Asia began to explore the potential of emerging Asian models of governance and their characteristics. Although Asian countries have accumulated rich governance experiences from their own cultural and social heritages and political processes, there is inadequate effort in analysing them under systemic frameworks and their wider implications. This special issue, ‘Towards an Asian model of governance: lessons from Asian contexts’, is one of such efforts to fill the gap. The aim is twofold: to contribute to theory building of potential Asian models of governance by proposing an analytical framework, and to cultivate a dynamic academic community on the topic by integrating quality and up-to-date empirical studies.

This introductory article is organized into four sections. After reviewing the existing literature, we propose an analytical framework to gauge the existence of an Asian model of governance by factoring in two interlinked phenomena: shared cultural, historical norms and trajectories, and a growing trend of transnational knowledge transfer in the Global South. The third section introduces six articles in this special issue on governance practices and scholarship in seven Asian societies: South Korea, the People’s Republic of China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Their findings are also briefly analysed under the proposed framework. We conclude with some characteristics of Asian governance drawn from the articles and the significance of this special issue.
An Asian model of governance?

The declining economic and political influence on the global stage of the US and Europe significantly damped the developing countries’ confidence in the West-led international organizations and the management reform models campaigned by the Western world. As Joshua Ramo observed (2004), the prescriptive Washington-knows-best approach, a.k.a. the ‘Washington Consensus’ (a series of neoliberal policies emphasizing on fiscal discipline, trade liberalization, privatization and deregulation), has been widely discredited as it left a trail of destroyed economies around the globe.

Scholars began to challenge the assuredness of the conventional logic of ‘Western = Global = Best’ by questioning the universality of the Anglo-American system and their standards of ‘good governance’ for non-Western countries. Meanwhile, recent decades have witnessed growing scholarship on the contextualized governance experiences in Asia. In their review of journal articles on administration research in Asia written in English and published by SSCI-indexed journals from 1999 to 2009, Walker, Brewer, and Choi (2014) found that the volume of relevant publications had been increasing noticeably in the period. Special issues dedicated to Asian governance and public administration contributed importantly to the surge of the academic outputs. This trend has been further boosted in recent years as a growing number of academic outlets produced symposiums or special issues on governance in Asia, such as the International Review of Administrative Sciences in 2012, International Public Management Journal in 2013, and American Review of Public Administration in 2014.

Wolf Drechsler and Anthony Cheung are two major scholars in the recent endeavour of exploring the existence, uniqueness, and relevance of Asian models of governance and public administration. Drechsler (2013, 2015) argues that there are at least three paradigms of governance in the world: Chinese, Western and Islamic; and there is no such thing as the best paradigm, which has long been uncritically taken as the Western one. He describes the Chinese/Confucian and Islamic/Ottoman public administration as non-Western public administration which is of reference value in modern times for four reasons: (1.) a large body of theoretical literature; (2.) centuries of practice; (3.) strong relevance today; and (4.) a unique theory and governance background. Drechsler argues for non-Western public administration by citing Bouckaert’s (2011) theory that public administration has two dimensions, equity (goals) and performance (mechanism), based upon which ‘good governance/public administration’ could be understood as both ‘working’ and ‘ethical’. This argument lays a foundation for Drechsler’s proposition that there are diverse legitimate governance goals and mechanisms embedded in various civilizations and governance traditions, apart from the conventional Western public administration.

However, Drechsler does not go further to systemically explore the substance of the Chinese and Islamic paradigms of governance and public administration. Cheung (2012, 2013) to a certain degree filled this vacuum. He raised questions on whether there could be an Asian model of governance and public administration and depicted an Oriental (East Asian) model of governance in contrast to the Western (Anglo-American) model, covering the aspects of economy, state, public administration, and political order (Cheung, 2013). According to Cheung (2013), the economy of East Asian countries is state-led or state capitalism; state is considered as solution with bureaucrats-driven developmentalism; there is politics–administration fusion and strong Mandarin tradition
in Asian public administration; and the political order is based on benevolence, hierarchy of values and relationships, and cultural assimilation to achieve harmony. In contrast, the Anglo-American mode of governance described by Cheung is featured with liberal market capitalism; state considered as the problem; clear dichotomy of politics-administration and subdued bureaucratic power; and political order based on legalism, constitutionalism, citizenship rights, and checks and balance.

Despite the wide discourse about the Asian model of governance, there is no consensus on its existence and characteristics. It is therefore important to substantialize the discussion by critically assessing the existing scholarship in the field and unveiling the complexity. Besides, there is still a lack of empirical studies on governance and public administration in Asian societies, and the existing literature is mainly argumentations in nature. Authors in a special issue on ‘Public Administration Research in East and Southeast Asia’ published by *American Review of Public Administration* in 2014, argued that despite a growing academic community of Asian public administration, quality articles in mainstream journals on the topic remain disproportionally small and they are mostly descriptive and exploratory (Gao, 2014; Moon, Kim, & Lee, 2014, Sun & Lin, 2014; Walker et al., 2014).

**Shared trajectories and transnational knowledge transfer: an analytical framework**

Based on a review of the existing literature and the authors’ critical reflections, this introductory article proposes an analytical framework to gauge the existence of an Asian model of governance through incorporating two interlinked phenomena: shared cultural, historical norms and trajectories, and a growing trend of transnational knowledge transfer in the Global South. We argue that these two interlinked phenomena play a formative role in shaping the potential Asian models of governance and its substance. The shared cultural and historical roots lay the foundation of the potential Asian models of governance while the growing cross-border governance knowledge exchanges have facilitated Asian societies moving towards a broadly convergent model of governance. This argument echoes Cheung’s (2013) view that each governance system is shaped by its national tradition and historical evolution while horizontal process of policy learning and transfer from other countries also matters a lot in shaping a governance system.

We are well aware of the pitfalls of the Culturalist interpretation for socio-economic phenomena (Welzel, 2011; Yung, 2012) and that the influence of shared history has its limitations too. Their roles have to be sustained not only by deepened economic interdependency (intra-Asian trade today is more 50 per cent of the region’s total trade, a substantial increase from just 20 per cent in the 1970s [Das, 2014]), but also by extensive transnational knowledge transfer in the arena of Asian governance.

**Factor 1: shared cultural, historical norms and trajectories**

Shared trajectories and norms in Asia refer to (1) real and perceived commonalities that define Asian culture and values that also serve to distinguish them from the main characteristics of Western experiences; (2) decolonization processes after the World War II; and (3) the dominance of state capitalism/developmental state. The discourse on Asian
values, articulated by Asian leaders such as Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew (Zakaria, 1994) and Malaysia’s Mahathir Mohamed (Langguth, 2003), gained momentum in the 1990s and aroused heated debates since its birth, drifting between the two extremes of cultural relativism and universalism (Kim, 2010). From the former perspective, Asian values are the cultural orientations, beliefs, norms or attitudes unique to the Asian region that form the basis of their political, economic and cultural institutions and processes, thus exerting influence on one country’s administration (Chau, 1996; Kim 2010, Cheung, 2013). In the second perspective, the claim for Asian’s own standards is nothing but an attempt to suppress human rights and political competitions, and some even challenge the very existence of the Asian values (Thompson, 2004, Welzel, 2011; Yung, 2012).

While there is no doubt that Asian cultures are diverse and complex, the influence of Confucianism on political economic system and further on governance of Asian societies has been well acknowledged (Cheung, 2013; Drechsler, 2013, 2015; Fukuyama, 1995; Kim, 2017; Scott, 1996; Yun, 2006). Governance under the influence of Confucianism is characterized with paternalistic benevolence with the aim of economic development, social harmony, merit-based civil service system and exam, strong mandarin tradition, hierarchy of relationships, dominance of the civil service in the economy, etc. (Fukuyama, 2013; Cheung, 2013; Drechsler, 2013, 2015). Modern manifestations of these traditions are the so-called paternalist authoritarianism, meritocracy, bureaucrats-driven developmentalism and state capitalism.

Asian societies such as China, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan all adopted or are still adopting an state-centric style of governance to promote industrialization and modernization on one hand while to maintain social stability on the other (Roy, 1994; Thompson 2004, Wang, 2004). An essential feature of Asian modernization is the overriding emphasis on economic development and the state’s active role to intervene in and navigate the economy (‘governed market’ or state capitalism), opposing the Western mantra of free market capitalism (Chau, 1996; Ortmann & Thompson, 2014; Yung, 2012). In contrast to the situation in Western countries where government is often conceived as a problem, in Asian culture, government is considered as being capable of providing solutions (Mahbubani, 2010).

From our point of view, the significance of the Asian culture/values does not rest in itself, but rather in the political economy and institutions upon which cultural and historical influences are visible. Governance and public administration are not isolated but deeply entrenched in the eco-system of a country. During the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, in his search for ‘Asian formulas for Asia’s problems’, President Sukarno of Indonesia was inspired by China’s model of social engineering and economic development as well as the state’s political control of the society, and his learning from China was based upon what he considered the historical and cultural similarities of the Asian people (Liu, 2011). To a large extent, cultural, historical and normative similarities serve as a foundation of ‘Transnational Asia’ (Liu, 2018), which is a flexible geographical and cultural space encompassing the regions that are conveniently but problematically termed East and Southeast Asia. It is, more importantly, an evolving process and entity through which East/Southeast Asian countries dynamically engage with one another and with the external world, which in turn (re)shapes its own domestic agendas and development strategies.
**Factor 2: transnational knowledge transfer**

Transnational knowledge transfer refers to the process in which the tested policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, best practices or expertise are transferred and applied across countries (Duan, Nie, & Coakes, 2010). It has become increasingly prevalent in the Global South since the turn of the century. Cases discussed above can be seen as a historical predecessor of transnational transfer of knowledge about governance, economic development and public administration among Asian countries.

The thriving knowledge transfer among Asian countries is partly because of their geographical proximity and similar political, social and economic challenges. Liu and Wang’s empirical study (Liu & Wang, 2018) on the Chinese “Mayors’ Class” programme in Singapore reveals a shifting trend in transnational knowledge transfer in that increasing exchanges between countries in the broadly defined Global South has reinforced the departure from one-way flow of knowledge transfer (from the North to the South) that has dominated development discourse since World War II. To Laotians at the early 21st century, ‘China kind of symbolizes modernity’ (Kurlantzick, 2007). Mahathir Mohamad claimed in 2010 that ‘the Beijing Consensus shows that having a non-democratic can also give a good life for the people’. He further suggested that China’s ‘correct application of the Beijing Consensus had allowed the nation of 1.3 billion “very poor” people to become “the second-richest country” [sic] in the world’ (Today 2010).

Transnational knowledge transfer of governance knowledge mainly takes two forms, namely, public officials training and Government-to-Government (G2G) cooperation programmes. The former may be conceptualized as software transfer, and the latter is more about hardware transfer. A successful economic development strategy and process requires the skilful and effective combination of the both (Liu et al., 2017). Taking the China-Singapore case as an example, different governance education programmes provided in Singapore for Chinese public officials over the decades and the various G2G collaborative programmes, including the China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco City, and the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI), offered multiple platforms facilitating the close learning relationship between Singapore and China.

Following Deng Xiaoping’s visit to Singapore in late 1978, hundreds of high-ranking Chinese delegations were dispatched to visit Singapore. The ‘Singapore fever’ in China was further intensified by Deng’s Southern Tour in 1992 during which he made the widely cited statement that ‘Singapore’s social order is rather good. Its leaders exercise strict management. We should learn from their experience, and we should do a better job than they do’. (Vogel, 2011). Since then, over 50,000 cadres have been sent to Singapore almost on a monthly basis to study every aspect of the so-called ‘Singapore model’ (Liu & Wang, 2018). For instance, the "Mayors’ class" administered by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) has trained over 1,400 Chinese public officials of mid-rankings or executive leaders of State Owned Enterprises (SOE) since its establishment. The graduates covered 33 province-level administrative regions in China, almost all of the country, and most of the public official students have been promoted after their graduation (Liu & Wang, 2018). The positive feedbacks from these public official graduates indicate that governance know-how of Singapore has been successfully transferred to China and could be implemented in China in a selective manner and upon localization and adjustments.
G2G cooperation programmes constitute another major channel transferring governance and development knowledge between Singapore and China. The China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP) was established in 1994, with a clearly articulated vision of transferring the 'software' (economic development and management knowledge) of Singapore to China by Lee Kuan Yew (Lee, 2001). To date the SIP has achieved significant success in terms of both economic achievement and software/knowledge transfer, and now the experience of SIP has been spread to other cities in China and goes beyond the border to other countries (Interview with staff of SIP 2017, Inkpen & Wang, 2006; Pereira, 2003; Wang, 2013).

It is worthwhile noting that the relative levels of economic and social developments between Singapore and China have changed substantially over the past quarter of a century. As China becomes the second largest economy in the world and increasingly self-confident in its own path of development, variously called as the 'China Model', 'Chinese Way of Development' or the 'China Solution', Xi has highlighted the theme of mutual learning (huxue hujian) in his meeting with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in July 2017 (Xinhua, 2017), which heralded a new trend of the Sino-Singapore interactions.

Apart from Singapore, China has also paid attention to other advanced economies in East Asia, including Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong by sending delegates for study missions after its reform and opening up (Vogel, 2011). Transnational transfer of governance knowledge between China and other advanced economies in Asia has played an important role in facilitating China's economic modernization and the development of a modern governance system.

Transnational transfer of governance knowledge is not limited to China, Singapore and East Asian developed societies; similar learning endeavours have been undertaken by Southeast Asian countries. Since 2010, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have sent hundreds of high-level delegations to educational institutes in Singapore to receive governance training on urban development, industrial transformation and upgrading, etc. (Ji, 2013). These training programmes have been supported by their central governments, meanwhile receiving financial assistance from charity organizations such as the Temasek Foundation.

Apart from the charm of the 'Singapore Model', Southeast Asian countries were also inspired by China's continuous learning of the 'Singapore Model' and its economic success achieved afterwards (Liu et al., 2017). The thriving trend of cross-border governance knowledge transfer among Asian countries points to a possibility of increasing policy and administrative convergence in the region, thus shedding light upon the discourse on the potential of Asian models of governance.

**An analytical framework for the potential Asian models of governance**

Based on the literature about Asian governance, shared commonalities and historical trajectories, and evidence of the growing knowledge transfer among Asian countries, we propose an analytical framework for gauging the existence and characteristics of an Asian model of governance. As demonstrated in Figure 1, the y-axis represents the historical dimension of shared cultural and historical trajectories while the x-axis indicates the intensity of transnational knowledge transfer between Asian countries.

Applying this bi-dimensional framework would provide important clues about to what extent Asian models of governance are viable and relevant. Fewer similarities in culture and
history and rare knowledge exchange among Asian countries would lead to lower possibility of the existence of an Asian model of governance or even non-existence (see quadrant 3). Meanwhile, well-reserved cultural and historical traditions shared by many Asian countries and flourishing cross-border governance knowledge transfer could possibly result in shared models of governance in broad terms (quadrant 2). In a similar vein, quadrant 1 refers to a situation where the relevance of Asian models of governance declines as there is low frequency of knowledge exchange in the region despite rich similarities in history (historical similarities cannot be retained without continuous knowledge exchanges). Quadrant 4 refers to an opposite situation of thriving transnational knowledge transfer and low level of cultural and historical similarities which could only result in a seeming/superficial existence of Asian models of governance lacking historical foundations.

Equipped with this analytical framework, we can broadly estimate the existence of Asian models of governance in the regional level in addition to evaluating to what extent a country in the region could be categorized under the regime of an Asian model of governance. To be sure, after centuries of globalization which leads to fusion of ideas and policies, it is difficult to distinguish what elements of a country’s governance were originated from its own innovation and development and what were learnt from Western countries or neighbouring Asian polities. However, this preliminary analytical framework would be helpful in serving as an epistemic and analytical tool for an in-depth and systemic understanding of Asian governance.

**Lessons from Asian contextualized governance experiences**

This special issue is composed of six articles examining the governance experiences and scholarship in seven Asian societies either individually or comparatively: South Korea,
Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam, the People’s Republic of China, Malaysia, and the Philippines. A majority of the articles are revised version of the papers first presented at the *Lien International Conference on Good Governance* organized in November 2015 and October 2017 by the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration of the Nanyang Technological University, in collaboration with the American Society for Public Administration and International Institute of Administrative Sciences. The articles mainly examine two essential aspects of the governance experience of Asian countries: public administration and economy. Under these two umbrellas, the authors probe into a wide range of topics such as public policy scholarship, network governance, environmental policy-making, policy consulting, State-Owned-Enterprise (SOE) strategies, and industrial policies.

**South Korea: policy process scholarship**

The special issue starts with an article by Kyudong Park and Christopher M. Weible, centring around the potential of building policy process theories in South Korea. Like many Asian polities, South Korea is a relatively new democracy in an Asian culture with a legacy of authoritarianism. Its policy scholarship is inevitably influenced by both the imported theories from the West and the inherent necessity of ‘localization’ or ‘Koreanization’ of policy theories, especially in the case of building policy process theories. Based on meta-analyses of the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) and its application in South Korea, Park and Weible found three patterns distinguishing the South Korean policy processes from others. First, the South Korean subsystems tend to follow legacy of the South Korean political system and governance which was authoritarian. Second, the pluralistic characteristics in South Korean policy process are less than in Western democracies. Third, the changes in the governing coalition and external shocks are the main sources of policy change in the South Korean subsystems. Park and Weible argue that the accumulated South Korean ACF applications show potential for a Western theory to explain Asian policy processes and offered four strategies to foster policy process research programmes in South Korea: (1) recognizing the framework–theory distinction, (2) conducting comparative research, (3) developing methodology and hypotheses, and (4) growing the academic community.

Park and Weible’s research fills a research gap on policy process theories development in South Korea. More importantly, it provides with practical-oriented solutions to the current challenges based on solid literature review and meta-analyses. Effective implementation of these strategies would be helpful in guiding a research community forging ahead towards better policy process scholarship attuned to the South Korean context. It would also contribute to the efforts of promoting and fertilizing local governance knowledge in Asia, which is a critical prerequisite of grasping potential Asian models of governance.

**Singapore: network governance**

As a prominent learning target regarding public governance, Singapore has always been well aware of the importance of innovation and policy experimentation inasmuch as to retain its relevance and effectiveness in governance practice and performance. The second article, written by Celia Lee, focuses on the Singapore government’s efforts in experimenting and promoting network governance from the perspective of leadership. It is an
empirical qualitative research with evidence-based analyses of four cases of inter-organizational collaborations offered to examine the balance of control and autonomy. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews with individuals who have first-hand experiences in the networks. Her findings show that the network managers exhibited leadership activities from two opposing spectrums, namely, ‘from the spirit of collaboration’ and ‘towards collaborative thuggery’ to manoeuvre the balancing act thereby catalysing members and partners towards fulfilling the network agenda and subsequently achieving outcomes. These findings would inform future practice and research that not to frame control and autonomy as oppositions to one another but rather to accept that they had to co-exist in order to build trust and groom relationships while ensuring network agenda are met.

Unlike most Asian governance studies which have mainly focused on larger questions about system and regimes and with detailed policy questions, Lee’s study is more geared towards the wider public administration literature which traditionally examines questions of organizational and individual behaviours such as leadership. As such this article provides an alternative lens to probe into the newly emerging Asian governance practices which show signs of connecting with the wider public administration literature.

**Taiwan: environmental leadership**

The third article by Xuejiao Niu, Xiaohu Wang and Hanyu Xiao is also concerned with individual behaviours of leaders in public administration. Given that the roles of individual public administrators are largely ignored while policy actions and outcomes are mainly attributed to institutional factors, this study intends to fill the gap by examining the environmental leaders’ motivations and their relations with environmental policy formulation and implementation. This is a quantitative study and first-ever data collected from a survey and in-depth interviews in Taiwan central government was utilized to test the proposed hypotheses. The authors find that environmental leaders are motivated by both extrinsic instrumental causes for self-interests and intrinsic normative reasons to engage in broad issues in sustainability, with the formers outweighing the latter.

Niu et al. provide with an explanatory study based on quantitative data and involving sophisticated multivariate statistical analyses. This would help address one of the shortfalls in the literature on public administration and governance in Asia, namely, the lack of statistical techniques being used beyond descriptive statistics (Walker et al., 2014). From a methodological perspective, this article demonstrates an encouraging trend among scholars of Asian governance and public administration that the adoption of sophisticated analytical methods with explanatory purpose is a promising new direction of research.

**The Philippines: policy consulting**

Kidjie Saguin’s article focuses on policy consulting in the Philippines and its implications for other developing countries. Policy consulting and advice is an important component of policy-making in developed democracies while remains a new while rising phenomenon in developing countries. Saguin collected the recently made public database of bid notices for consulting services in the Philippines to examine the consulting demand. Similar to the cases in developed countries, the study confirms that the demand for external policy advice is growing in the Philippines. It is found that the government relies on external advice not only
on procedural issues but also on strategic and highly specialized policy advice. Like many other Asian developmental states, the government’s willingness in the Philippines to enforce institutional design and restrain itself from intervention is found to play an important role too.

Compared with the other societies discussed in this special issue, the Philippines seem to share less cultural and historical commonalities with other Asian countries. If applying the analytical framework proposed, the Philippines is more likely to be allocated in quadrant 3 or 4. However, Saguin’s study to some degree confirmed the close connections in governance style between the Philippines and other Asian societies, which is evident in the significant role played by the state in enforcing institutional design. Furthermore, the Philippines have shown keen interest in governance knowledge exchange with its Asian counterparts in recent years, thus there is high possibility that it could be included in a broadly defined Asian model of governance.

**China, Singapore and Malaysia: SOEs**

As many scholars have argued (e.g. Cheung, 2012, 2013; Kurlantzick, 2016), statism or state capitalism constitutes a key feature of governance in Asia. This is evident from the large number and significant influences of SOEs in Asian countries such as China, Singapore, and Malaysia. State-Owned holding (SOH) companies have been widely adopted to manage SOEs. However, the performance of SOEs under the structure of SOH companies/entities is largely unknown. Hyungon Kim and Kee Hoon Chung’s study applies a two-tiered framework Government – SOH and SOH – SOEs to explore how the interwoven dynamics among the three parties affect the overall effectiveness of the SOH and the performance improvement of SOEs.

The authors first explained why SOH is widely established in Asia. They find that SOH’s prevalence has to do with Asia’s model of economic development, in which the state has played a pivotal role with centralized authority. They analyse three cases, individually and comparatively Temasek in Singapore, Khazanah Nasional Berhad in Malaysia, and State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council in China. This article identifies three types of SOHs (entrepreneur investor, shadow investor and submissive investor) and evaluates their respective performance. This study sheds light on whether and how the successful Temasek model in Singapore could be adapted in other countries such as China.

**Vietnam: industrial policy**

The last article in this special issue by Guanie Lim examines Vietnamese motorcycle industrial policy and its evolutions. This is an empirical qualitative research based upon data collected in three Vietnamese municipalities: Hanoi, Can Tho, and Ho Chi Minh City. According to Lim, as part of its developmental strategy, the Vietnamese state has been actively involved in economic activities by nurturing its previously derelict motorcycle industry to one that is internationally competitive through the implementation of market-distorting policy measures as well as selective co-optation of international capital. This strategy, however, encountered strong resistance from both transnational corporations and international organizations in their attempt to liberalize the industry. And the industry has faced a bottleneck in upgrading its innovation abilities and international competitiveness.
This case manifests a key feature of the governance in Asian countries – state-led or state capitalism with strong state intervention in the economic development. Lim defines this reform process as being modelling after the Washington Consensus, albeit in a selective manner. It is more like a combination of Asian style state-led capitalism with some elements of Western liberal market capitalism. As such, Lim’s article offers a pertinent example of Asian state governance influenced by Western liberal-democracy system while essentially sticking to the principles of statism.

Concluding remarks

This special issue aims to contribute to the on-going debates on Asian governance from two perspectives. It puts forth a preliminary analytical framework for understanding emerging Asian models of governance. This preliminary framework is built upon existing literature on the Asian models of governance and the region’s shared roots and trajectories. It also aims at contributing to global scholarship by incorporating the concept of transnational governance knowledge transfer in the Asian contexts. Such a synthesis of vertical (temporal) and horizontal (spatial) elements, it is hoped, provides a tangible approach to further explore the complexities of modern transformations of Asian governance.

Empirically, the six case studies in conjunction with the bi-dimensional analytical framework have shed some light for an understanding of major characteristics of an emerging Asian model of governance. For instance, shared history, culture and post-colonial trajectories continue to play a part in influencing Asian models of governance. Although many Asian societies have democratized for decades, the influence of paternalist authoritarianism remains evident, as demonstrated in Park and Weible’s study on policy process theories building in South Korea, Saguin’s research on policy consulting in the Philippines, and Kim and Chung’s study on SOE in China, Singapore, and Malaysia. Other scholars have also argued that the long-standing learning relationship between Singapore and China has been partially driven by their similar style of authoritarian governance (Ortmann, 2012; Roy, 1994).

Case studies in this special issue have also demonstrated that the state and state-led capitalism remain a key force shaping economic development strategies and public governance. This is one of the key factors distinguishing the Asian political economy from their Western counterparts. Kim and Chung’s study shows that SOE has been widely employed as a tool to navigate the national economy in Singapore, China, and Malaysia, among other countries. Lim’s study on industrial policy in Vietnam coincides with this observation that the Vietnamese state has been actively involved in economic activities which in turn has some profound public policy implications. Furthermore, our case studies have also highlighted the importance of local governance innovation and localizing imported governance know-how from Western countries, which is thoroughly discussed in articles by Lee on Singapore, Park and Weible on South Korea and Saguin on the Philippines. Collectively, they point to an important trend in the evolution of Asian governance from being a pure recipient of governance knowledge from the West to a proactive innovator of local knowledge.
Note

1. Following the definition of existing literature such as Cheung’s (2013), we define governance as multifaceted, incorporating public administration, economy, state’s role and political orders.

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