

Despite histories of corruption and co-optation, it is still possible to re-invigorate established political structures with a new spirit. Popular nationalist movements have the potential to serve as a vehicle of ethical and political transformation in an era when predatory agents of capital are running wild. (p. 220)

I strongly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in finding freedom in entangled worlds, scholars who wish to understand the interplay of imagination and collaboration and activists and political actors who believe in “unexpected connections that can make new things come into being” (Kirksey citing Anna Tsing, p. 218) in the midst of overwhelming political and economic odds.

## REFERENCES

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*Singapore's Ageing Population: Managing Healthcare and End-of-life Decisions*. Edited by Chan Wing-Cheong. London: Routledge, 2011. 222 pp.

The policy issue of old-age security has received growing attention as populations age and problems with existing policies begin to emerge. In 1994 the World Bank proposed a three-pillar pension system to meet the objective of old-age security. One of the central elements of the system is to reduce poverty among the old. Recently, Holzmann et al. (2005) proposed a five-pillar pension system to attain the objective of ensuring universal old-age income security for all citizens in a country. Again, it placed considerable emphasis on the

need to alleviate absolute old-age poverty. However, poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. It must be understood in dimensions beyond that of income alone. Indeed, health is one of the most important dimensions in analyses of old-age poverty. While the system proposed by Holzmann et al. placed considerable emphasis on health, it remains unclear how such a system can be financed and managed. As a rapidly advancing industrialized economy with high growth rates, Singapore has started experiencing the pressures of a rapidly ageing population. Unfortunately, the current system of old-age security in the country is not robust in handling old-age poverty.

Against this backdrop the publication of this edited volume is timely. The eleven chapters address several problems relating to old-age healthcare. They provide a multidisciplinary review of the challenges of achieving a humane and effective healthcare system for the elderly in Singapore. The universal relevance of the topic means that lessons from Singapore as drawn in the various chapters can also benefit policymakers, service practitioners and scholars interested in gerontology more generally.

Delivering a sustainable healthcare system for an ageing population — like Singapore's — requires a holistic approach. This volume rises to the occasion by providing a rich multidisciplinary perspective on this important and debated topic. The contributors include authors from myriad backgrounds: medical service professionals; a public prosecutor; academics in sociology, law, medicine, anthropology and psychology and authors from the Singapore Ministry of Health and the country's National Cancer Center.

The conventional approach of addressing the challenges of sustainable healthcare for the elderly through the provision of hospitals will only solve a small part of the problem. The various chapters of this book thus discuss the wider associated challenges and prospects; they incorporate both empirical evidence and other material to support their recommendations. And, rightly, a number of the recommendations put forward are directed not only to authorities and medical service providers but also to scholars and practitioners conducting research involving the elderly.

Examples of some interesting discussions are those on the importance of reducing moral panic caused by an ageing population (Chapter Two), the importance of meaningful relationships (Chapter Four), the place of death (Chapter Seven), conceptions of life and death (Chapter Nine) and the well-being of patients as an integral part of the caregiver's satisfaction (Chapter Five). Chapter Ten invites further consideration of the hotly contested debate on physician-assisted suicide; its author takes a clear position in the debate by advocating physician-assisted suicide. It is the author's view that terminally ill patients experiencing unbearable physical, mental or emotional pain with no prospect of improvement need medical assistance to end their suffering through a Physician-Assisted Suicide Act. Finally, Chapter Eleven concludes the volume by reiterating the point that research involving vulnerable communities should be responsive to the health needs and priorities of the community, and that the community should derive tangible benefits from the results of the research.

Attention to three important matters could have added value to the discussion provided by this volume. First, while Chapters Four and Five examined cases of older Chinese people in Singapore, it would have been beneficial to expand the studies to include other ethnic groups to see if there may be contrasts. Second, a chapter or two addressing economic and financial management would have added substantial value to the volume. These additional chapters could examine future challenges and tasks relating to the development of a financially sustainable healthcare system, something mentioned as one of the objectives at the beginning of the book. The multidisciplinary approach of the book would have gained from contributions by economists on the economic feasibility, macroeconomic implications, net present value or economies of scale of various approaches to healthcare for the aged. Third, as each chapter in the book analyses that issue from a specific dimension, a chapter giving the picture of the whole healthcare system in Singapore would have served the volume well. That chapter might examine each dimension of the healthcare system in relation to the system's other dimensions. To give just one example, the legal

framework of the Singapore healthcare system treated in Chapter Eight might be considered in the holistic context of the aspects of the system treated in other chapters.

## REFERENCES

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*Planning the Lower Mekong Basin: Social Intervention on the Se San River*. ZEF Development Studies, Volume 16. By Ly Thim. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010. 223 pp.

*Floods and Farmers: Politics, Economics, and Environmental Impacts of Dyke Construction in the Mekong Delta/Vietnam*. ZEF Development Studies, Volume 18. By Pham Cong Huu. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011. 183 pp.

I have chosen to review these two books together because they deal with different, but related, issues in water-resource development in the lower Mekong Basin. Concerns related to development and to conflict in the Mekong Basin are in the news almost daily. These two books help us to understand the full picture and role of participants, ranging from the international donors and experts to those at the village and farm levels, who must bear the consequences of decisions in which they have had no part.