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Governance, Politics and the Environment



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Maria Francesch-Huidobro

Governance, Politics and the Environment

A Singapore Study



INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Singapore

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For Helmut

*Who helps me to understand that real knowledge is to know the extent of
one's ignorance*

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FOREWORD

Governance is a multidimensional phenomenon. It is sensitive to context by being applicable in various guises to different political systems in the developed and developing world alike. There are institutional components in the form of structures, rules, operational modes, and performance expectations. The significance of responsibility, responsiveness and legitimacy is appreciated, with a keen eye on control and accountability. The arrangements are containable within state boundaries, while also transcending such boundaries by embracing relationships both between states and across state-market-civil society divides nationally and internationally.

Fundamentally, governance as a political, social and economic construct is all about the existence, use and consequences of power. Power is distributed, exercised, and has effects in numerous ways, on which theories, models and ideas about governance serve to focus attention, both analytically and practically. The analytical comprises frameworks to guide and inform detailed empirical inquiries, while the practical includes measures that are influenced by, and ideally enhance, the everyday experience of designing, taking and reviewing policy initiatives. An underlying aim is to develop a well-honed capacity to understand and manage collective action as a matter of public interest and significance.

This book appropriately adopts a governance perspective in seeking to assess and make sense of environmental politics and policy in Singapore as a city-state with an interesting governmental system. The intriguing notion of “disciplined governance” underpins the analysis, with its origins in an appreciation of how illiberal democracies are usually structured and run by a tightly knit political-administrative elite. The elite has an ongoing interest in

maintaining direct and strict control, but can often over time expand its deliberative processes to involve sections of the wider society. It does this as a strategy of confined and contained inclusiveness either by itself recognizing the merits of such action, by force of political and social circumstances, or by a combination thereof.

The issues of discipline and strategy are explored through selected case studies which highlight different, but related, aspects of how state-society relations in Singapore have been forged and managed in response to matters of considerable environmental importance. The studies are detailed and clear in their depiction of key actors in terms of their motivations, involvement and interaction. The findings contain important lessons about the power of “persuasion”, “protestation”, and “circumvention” which are relevant not only, respectively, to the specific areas of environmental concern in each case, but also to ways in which state-society relations are likely in future to be configured and played out in other areas of public interest and activity.

The case analyses have the added value of confirming the utility of case study methodology. Each case is a fascinating story of politics and policy in action. There are plots, themes and threads that are fleshed out and supported by comprehensive interview material, coupled with extensive documentary-based evidence and insights. The result is a rich discussion of political and policy dynamics of the kind which only case studies are normally able to facilitate.

The book is to be commended for making a significant contribution to the literature on environmental governance, politics and policy. It is hoped and expected that its compelling analytical framework, supported by rigorous description and reasoning, will stimulate other scholars to explore comparatively the extent to which both the framework and findings are applicable to other systems of government and governance, illiberal or otherwise.

Ian Thynne
Charles Darwin University
Australia

PREFACE

The idea for writing this book arose from my theoretical concerns about the ways modernizing illiberally democratic states manage state-society relations and how such relations in turn affect public policy decisions. I am intrigued by the interplay of government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) relations within the Singapore environmental sector over Goh Chok Tong's fourteen years in power (1990–2004) during which claims have been made of greater inclusion of civil society actors in policy decisions. I suggest that these relations are crucial for understanding Singapore's ongoing process of state formation and reconstitution occurring outside the formal structures of power. While I observe a strong paternalistic Singaporean state and its sustained capacity for governability, I also observe the equally strong emerging demands from below on policy decisions. Sweeping regional changes to the sustainability of the 'one party' system model, most recently in Malaysia, certainly reinforce the commitment to this academic venture.

These two observations got me thinking. First, that research on environmental issues and policies in East and Southeast Asia in the past two decades had focused mainly on existing institutional mechanisms of environmental management, the establishment of new environmental management structures, the introduction of incentives to improve natural capital and foster environmental protection, and the culture of environmental or 'green' groups. Virtually no rigorous research had been directed towards the nature and significance of the existing relationship between government and environmental civil society in individual countries and how this relationship may evolved. Second, that the studies about Singapore state-society relations had dealt mainly with discussions on these relations with

regards to political oppositions or with general state-society conceptualisations. Subsequent studies on the activities and public participation of Southeast Asia NGOs in various areas of policy with reference to Singapore had only been a new version of earlier works on conceptualisations, and more recently, with the actions, motives and impact that the internal dynamics the Green Voluntary Movement, a 'green' coalition, may have had on Singapore's political landscape.

This book has been a long time in the writing. The past few years have been challenging and rewarding. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have walked with me along this important period of my life. Dr Ian Thynne, former Visiting Associate Professor of the Department of Politics and Public Administration, The University of Hong Kong (HKU), not only readily agreed to guide me in my writing but was through the process a source of knowledge, encouragement and generous support. From Dr Thynne I have not only learned how to 'muddle through rationally' in the often tumultuous waters of social enquiry but also to comprehend what it takes to be a respectable academic. Chair Professor of Politics and Public Administration, Professor John Burns; Dr Danny Lam; Dr Sonny Loh; Dr Miron Mushkat and Dr Lucy Cummings, were always available to lend their ears to puzzling queries and were ready to loan from their libraries. I also want to thank the Department of Politics and Public Administration for offering me a grant that enabled me to work on this project. I must also thank the Committee on Research and Conference Grants (HKU) for a travel grant allowing me to spend time in Singapore.

Many others in Hong Kong, from and outside HKU, have contributed to making this project possible. I particularly wish to thank Professor Ian Holliday, former Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, CityU, for several informal stimulating discussions at 'Oliver's Super Sandwiches'; Dr Y.S. Lee, Associate Professor of the Department of Geography (HKU) for allowing me to sit in his lectures on Environmentalism; Leo Goodstadt, for sharp and provocative conversations on Singapore politics; Professor Garry Rodan, Director of the Asia Research Centre (Murdoch) for insightful comments on early drafts; Professor Ian Scott, Dr Vivienne Wee and Prakash Metaparti who spared the time to read and comment on my work; Teem Wing Yip, for spending part of her holidays proofreading the material; Ed Stokes, for helpful comments on NGOs work; and the many colleagues who with their camaraderie made these years worth living: Dr Chris Skene, Dr Terence Yuen, Michelle Lui, Yolanda Tam, Dr Rikkie Au Yeung, Dr Alain Guilloux, Alex Chan; Dr Daniel Olivier, Roger Lee, Dr Benson Wong, Kelvin Sit, Dr Xiaoqi Wang, Liu Ning, Li Jing, Jonathan

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Many in Singapore have also contributed to make this study possible either by being valuable informants, sharp critics, or by simply making my stay during field trips to the city not only intellectually fruitful but also personally fulfilling. As my informants have chosen to remain anonymous I can only thank my Singapore friends and those who contributed to making the logistics of fieldwork possible. In particular, I thank Professor Lee Lai To, former Head of the Department of Political Science of National University of Singapore (NUS) and Professor Jon Quah, Professor of Political Science of the Department of Political Science (NUS) for accommodating me in their Department during fieldwork. I also thank Dr Kenneth Tan, Assistant Professor of the Department of Political Science (NUS) who spared the time to discuss the intrigues of Singapore's civil society. I thank the Institute of South East Asian Studies' administrative and library staff, particularly Mrs Y.L. Lee, Head of Administration, Miss Ch'ng Kim See, Head Librarian, and D. Gandhimathy, Head of Reference and Library Information Services, for accommodating my many requests. Rashidah Bte Salleh, Eusoff Hall (NUS) Administrator not only made my stay at the Hall possible but, with her ever ready smile, was a source of solace after a day's work. Mrs Cheah-Khoo Suit Poh and Mrs Yang-Peh Soh Bee arranged access to the Library of Parliament and spared the time to help me retrieve material, I thank them too.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AMP	Association of Muslim Professionals
APCEL	Asia-Pacific Centre for Environmental Law
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APU	Anti-Pollution Unit
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN SOM	ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting
ASEAN-ISIS	ASEAN Institute of Strategic and International Studies
ASOEN	ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment
AWARE	Association of Women for Action and Research
BAPEDAL	Badan Pengendalian Dampak Lingkungan Environmental Impact Management Agency (Indonesia)
BCD	Building Control Division
BDIPSS	Brunei Darussalam Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies
BG	Brigadier General
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCCs	Citizens' Consultative Committees
CCs	Community Centres
CDAC	Chinese Development Assistance Council
CDCs	Community Development Councils
CED	Consolidated Emissions Directive
CEF	Central Environment Fund Scheme
CFC	Common Fund for Commodities

CGIFF	Consultative Group on Indonesian Forests
CICP	Cambodian Institute for Cooperation & Peace
CRISP-NUS	Centre for Remote Imaging, Sensing and Processing of the National University of Singapore
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Jakarta)
DPGs	Development Guide Plans
DPM	Deputy Prime Minister
EDB	Economic Development Board
EIAs	Environmental Impact Assessments
ENV	Ministry of the Environment
EPA	Environment Protection Agency (U.S.)
EU	European Union
FU	Feedback Unit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GLCs	Government Linked Companies
GNP	Gross National Product
GONGOs	Government Non-Governmental Organizations
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
GRC	Group Representation Constituency
GSCS	Global Social Capital Survey
GSETA	German-Singapore Environmental Transboundary Agency
HDB	Housing Development Board
HSBC	Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation
IFA	Institute of Foreign Affairs Lao People's Republic
IFFN	International Forest Fires News
IFPRA	International Federation of Parks and Recreation Association
IIR	Institute for International Relations (Vietnam)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISDS	Institute of Strategic and Development Studies (Philippines)
ISEW	Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare
ISIS	Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Malaysia)
ISIS	Institute of Security and International Studies (Thailand)
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISSC	Industry Skills Standard Committee
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	International World Conservation Union

MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MINDEF	Ministry of Defence
MNCs	Multinational Companies
MND	Ministry of National Development
MNS	Malayan Nature Society
MPs	Members of Parliament
MRT	Mass Rapid Transit Corporation (Singapore)
MSD	Meteorological Services Division
MTI	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MYR	Malaysian Ringgit
NAFTA	North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement
NCMP	Non-Constituency Members of Parliament
NEA	National Environment Agency
NEPIs	New Environment Policy Instruments
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NMPs	Nominated Members of Parliament
NParks	National Parks Board
NPM	New Public Management
NPOs	Non-Profit Organizations
NSmen	National Servicemen
NSRCC	National Service Resort and Country Club
NSRS	National Skills Recognition System
NSS	Nature Society (Singapore)
NTUC	National Trades Union Congress
NUS	National University of Singapore
OB Markers	Out-of-Bound Markers
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (UN)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAB	Public Administration Branch
PAP	People's Action Party
PAs	People's Association
PPFSEA	Project Fire Fight Southeast Asia
PHKA	Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation (Indonesia)
PMSC	Personnel Management Steering Committee
PS21	Public Service 21
PSC	Public Service Commission
PSD	Public Service Division
PSI	Pollutants Standard Index
PUB	Public Utilities Board

PWD	Public Works Department
QUANGOs	Quasi-Non-Governmental Organizations
R&D	Research and Development
RCs	Residents' Committees
RSC	Remaking Singapore Committee
S21	Singapore 21
SAFRA	Singapore Armed Forces Recreation Association
SBWR	Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve
SDC	Sentosa Development Corporation
SEAs	Strategic Environmental Assessments
SEC	Singapore Environment Council
SG	Subject Group
SGP	Singapore Green Plan
SIIA	Singapore Institute of International Affairs
SINDA	Singapore Indian Development Association
SPCP	Special and Detailed Control Plans
TCs	Town Councils
Tote Board	Totalisator Board (Singapore)
TWC	The Working Committee on Civil Society
UBC	University of British Columbia
UK	United Kingdom
UN/ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNCED	United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
URA	Urban Redevelopment Authority
U.S.	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
WWII	World War II