

## Editorial Note

The 13th volume of *Comparative Public Administration* revolves around the major theme, “Local Governance in the Age of Technological Transformation and Global Uncertainty.” The umbrella topic has three sub-themes: “Policy Innovation and Technological Development”; “Natural Disaster and Local/Regional Resilience”; and, “Public Service Deliveries and Utilization of Local Resources.”

The last few decades have witnessed the rapid rise of information communication technology (ICT). Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon (GAFA), which are prime examples of this development, have become household words. In addition, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), 5G, and other dimensions of the fourth industrial revolution would eventually introduce dramatic transformation in our daily lives. These would soon impact on our work, at home and outside, in the public as well as private spheres. Particularly for the local public sector, digital devices, processes and systems would eventually become part of everyday routine operation and decision making.

While the countries in the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration (EROPA) region, i.e., Asia and the Pacific, have benefited from and progressed partly because of developments in ICT, they have at the same time been confronted with several disruptive challenges. Among these are natural disasters and climate change. Many countries in this part of the globe have experienced more devastating natural calamities including earthquake, tsunami, volcanic eruption, extreme flooding and drought, and more recently the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The countries in the EROPA area tend to share yet another common concern. Despite engagement with other sectors of the society like the private and non-government sectors, governments are still required and expected to deliver a host of public services more efficiently, equitably and effectively. With limited amount resources, this has frequently become an arduous task.

With these critical issues in mind, the editorial board of the current project met several times in Tokyo during the year 2019. They discussed and decided the overarching theme for this volume, while they also began searching for prospective contributors.

At the onset of the discussion, the members of the editorial board agreed to invite Professor Alex B. Brillantes, Jr. of National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines, as a lead author of the volume. Professor Brillantes is one of the most prominent scholars in the Asian region. We requested him to provide the basic theoretical frame and contour for this issue. Subsequently, with his colleague, Dr. Brillantes explained the ways by which various local governments in the Asian region respond to the massive wave of technological transformation in the VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world. Their study concludes by suggesting that e-governance, as a tool of public administration, may contribute to the growth of the 5Es plus A, which are indispensable components of public management: economy, effi-

ciency, effectiveness, equity, ethics and accountability.

Speaking of e-governance, the Board was fortunate to have a group of leading experts on e-government and innovation from Estonia. Despite short notice, Dr. Piret Tõnurist of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Professor Rainer Kattel and Dr. Veiko Lember of the Tallinn University of Technology agreed to our request to contribute a case study on the topic. Taking the City of Tallinn in Estonia as an example, they have sketched a procurement policy within the framework of specific institutional setting. They have demonstrated that technological development would often mediate both positive and negative impacts on the public sector of the country. Although the scope of their manuscript is confined to the European example, those of us living in the EROPA region would certainly learn a lot from their outstanding analysis of the European and Estonian experiences.

In addition to these authors, the editorial board extended invitation to several other prominent academics in the region to contribute a study on one of the sub-themes of the present issue. We are honored to have the contributions of the following esteemed scholars, intellectuals and experts in the region:

Professor Heung Suk Choi, Dean of the Graduate School and Professor, College of Political Science and Economics, Korean University. He examined a highly sensitive political issue in South Korea, e.g., conflicts over storage facilities related to nuclear waste disposal and construction of new nuclear power plants in the Republic of Korea. He has pointed to the importance of “deliberative democracy” and polycentric decision-making system as a tool to mitigate public conflicts and schisms.

Dr. Vu Thanh Van, Director of International Cooperation in the Academy of Journalism and Communication in Hanoi, Vietnam. The main focus of his research is on the urban and rural dichotomy in policy information and communication. The Vietnam experience provides lessons that may be instructive neighboring countries in the region.

Mr. Trilochan Pokharel and Ms. Achala Dahal, Directors of Studies at the Nepal Administrative Staff College, focused on building a resilient state and the need to improve the Nepal government’s capacity to address potential disasters in the future. Studying the state experience in rescue, relief, recovery and rehabilitation after the devastating Gorkha Earthquake in 2015, their study reviewed the policy initiatives and directions of the government of Nepal. Among the latter are the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal and legal instruments to make the country resilient and more prepared to address future calamities.

Professor Guochun Wu of the Institute of Geophysics China Earthquake Administration and her colleagues did an empirical study on community resilience amidst different natural disasters. In the Chinese social milieu, the authors lamented the lack of public understanding of disaster prevention and mitigation, and suggest the need to promote public awareness on climate change, mitigation and adaptation.

Dr. Achakorn Wongpreedee, Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Public Administration, the National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand, is another academic pillar in the region. In the current volume, he explored different conceptual frameworks that reflect the dynamics of decentralization and local government reform in Thailand. In his analysis, he contends that the recent process of decentralization

in Thailand has been slow compared to the previous decades. He also enumerated a number of impediments to account for the delay.

Professor Maria Fe Villamejor Mendoza, former Dean of the National College of Public Administration and Governance in the University of the Philippines, Dilliman, is a prominent Filipino scholar who has contributed immensely to the success of EROPA. In this volume, she has provided a chapter, which deals with the problem of delivery of quality services to local residents. She emphasized the importance of collaborative and participatory governance in providing responsive and effective public services, focusing on the experiences of the Galing Pook Awardees in the Philippines.

Professor Matsunami Jun, Dean of the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies at Kobe University, has written about privatization of local libraries in Japan. His manuscript centered around one of the unique schemes of privatization, i.e., “Designated Manager System.” The case study anchored on the experience of the private sector and the NGOs, suggests ways to avoid clash of different values between public and private sectors.

As editor in chief of the 13th volume of *Comparative Public Administration*, I would like to thank Professor Agata Koichiro of Waseda University, Professor Takada Hirofumi of National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Professor Koike Osamu of the Yokohama National University and Dr. Kikuchi Masao of Meiji University. Their inputs and perceptive opinions have been essential for the completion of the current volume. I also would like to express my sincere appreciation to President Sasaki Hiroshi and the staff members of the Local Autonomy College of Japan. They have extended to me important logistical support and collaboration.

Special mention goes to Dr. Kikuchi Masao. In the process of finalizing this volume, I was unexpectedly hit by anemia and had to be hospitalized for several weeks. While being absent from the front line, Dr. Kikuchi took over the tedious editorial tasks on my behalf. I do appreciate his help and support. Without his assistance, I would not have concluded this editorial work. It is my pleasure to have him listed as an associate editor of this edition.

Once again, I thank everyone involved in this awesome project for their cooperation and contributions.

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