
Introduction: The Quest for a Balanced Economic Growth and Social Development — Ideas and Practices Promoting Social Cohesion In Greater China

Ka Ho Mok, Ka Kuen Leung* and Yeun Wen Ku†*

In the last few years, governments in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong have tried to promote social harmony through adopting various measures to help those people who have been socially marginalized throughout the period of the Asian financial crisis in 1997 to better adapt to the rapidly changing socioeconomic environment. Unlike the precrisis period that governments and people of these societies had enjoyed a very steady economic growth, as what the World Bank called it as an “East Asia

*Faculty of Arts and Sciences, The Hong Kong Institute of Education.

†Department of Social Work, National Taiwan University.

miracle”, nowadays citizens living in these economies confront unpredictable economic growth, widening gap between the rich and the poor, growing unemployment, reduction in wages and immense pressures for enhancing their global competitiveness by cutting production costs in an increasingly globalizing economy context. To strike for a balance between economic growth and social development, these governments have begun to review their economic development policies, adopting new strategies to promote economic growth with considerations given to enhancing social harmony. This chapter attempts to set the context for the present volume, with particular reference to examine the notions of social cohesion and social harmony in the context of three Chinese societies, namely, Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that the importance of “social cohesion” has been recognized by a growing number of nation states across different parts of the world, we are still having difficulty in reaching any consensus on how “social cohesion” should be defined. Even when people can come to an agreement of the definition of “social cohesion”, they would encounter problems in agreeing on ways to promote “social cohesion” because of the tensions between the promotion of social cohesion and the quest for economic competitiveness in the global market place. This chapter sets out in this wider context to critically review the notion of “social cohesion”, examining also the relationship between promoting “social cohesion” and social policy and governance. More specifically, this chapter highlights some critical themes when debating about social cohesion, with particular reference to how the concepts of “social cohesion” and “social harmony” have been incorporated in public and social policies in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The final part of the chapter outlines the structure of this book and major arguments of chapters in the present volume.

2. UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIAL HARMONY

People hold different interpretations of the notion of “social cohesion”. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word “social” means

“the organization and relations between people and communities” and “cohesion” means “the tendency to stick together”. However, when the concept is interpreted in the empirical world, we should pay attention to the following aspects, including an identification of the form of society, location of the positions and roles of different social groups within, as well as clarification of the constitutive elements of cohesion. At the personal and community level, social cohesion is often defined as an “affective bond (feelings of solidarity) between citizens”; friendship, relationship and family are thus the manifestations in social lives (Chipkin and Ngulunga, 2008, p. 61). This line of thought runs coincident with “social capital” theory, which explicates that features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust ... facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1995). Social cohesion is essential to the making of a good social life as seen in this light.

Moreover, for “social cohesion” is an ambiguous concept, other scholars tend to understand and characterize it not only by its own virtues, but also by the deficiency of its absence, in order to make the concept more concrete. Jenson (1998) identifies five pairs of dimension of social cohesion: belonging/isolation, inclusion/exclusion, participation/noninvolvement, recognition/rejection, and legitimacy/illegitimacy. Based upon this categorization, Bernard (2000, p. 19) introduces the sixth dimension, equality/inequality, and further develops these six dimensions into a typology by which social cohesion can be systematically examined in the empirical world (see Table 1).

Table 1. A Typology of Dimensions of Social Cohesion.

Spheres of activity	Character of the relation	
	Formal	Substantial
Economic	Insertion/exclusion	Equality/inequality
Political	Legitimacy/illegitimacy	Participation/passivity
Sociocultural	Recognition/rejection	Belonging/isolation

Source: Bernard (2000, p. 19).

In the typology, Bernard divides “spheres of activity” into three domains: economic, political, and sociocultural and character of relation into two forms: formal and substantial. Formal relation refers to the formal principles as explicated by state policies, while substantial relation the substantial reality that is the outcomes of these policies. This conceptualizes social cohesion as both guiding principles and goals of policies (independent variable affecting policy) and policy outcomes (dependent variable affected by policy). In fact, what also makes the definition of social cohesion so complicated is that its measurement encompasses indicators of objective well-being and also of subjective well-being of the residents, whose criteria and judgment of social cohesion vary with the economic, political, and sociocultural specificities of the place within which they are living and on which they are drawing reference (Duhaime *et al.*, 2004).

Besides defining the scale and form of social cohesion, the intrinsic nature of social cohesion also needs critical examination. To many people, “social cohesion” used as a policy metaphor and knowledge can trigger a moral imagination that it “deals with how participatory relations *ought* to operate, relies heavily on *representation* and has *emotional* (rather than rational-calculative) foundations (Harris and William, 2003, p. 206, original emphasis). This imagination renders an intuitive good conception of social cohesion in the absence of an investigation into its actual meaning. However, the seemingly self-evident appraisal of social cohesion draws criticism from critical perspective, which posits that consensus-building and seeking common ground in public arena have always been treated as a trick of assimilation and an excuse for negligence and suppression of social differences (Fraser, 1997). According to Maloutas and Malouta (2004, p. 452): taking it (social cohesion) at face value limits its scope to a vague positive target, on which almost anyone can agree, but which can at times legitimize policies that do not really face issues of oppression and inequality.

Putting the above observations together, it is clear that we would encounter difficulty in building a consensus for how social cohesion should be defined and be examined. The confusion and ambiguity, yet also the vitality, of the concept are best illustrated by a wide range of

social cohesion studies across different parts of the globe. For instance, Canada is among the first tiers of Western countries to address social cohesion as part of government agenda for promoting multiculturalism to order to measure up to the worldwide recognition as an immigrant and culturally diverse society. Other research may focus on racism in Africa (Chipkin and Ngulunga, 2008), ethnicities in Europe and Central Asia (Heyneman, 2000), economic inequality and insecurity in Latin America (Tokman, 2007). That being said, social cohesion is interpreted as a “quasi-concept” in regard to the diversity of both relevant academic and policy literatures (Bernard, 2000). On the one hand, the concept maintains a vagueness so as to be adopted and explored by various actors in various situations. On the other hand, it is concrete for it has to draw empirical relevance to the reality.

To avoid a static definition of social cohesion and to link it to the empirical world, Chan *et al.* (2006, p. 290), therefore, propose a broad and an integrated definition of social cohesion, referring it to a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that includes trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations. Members of society are defined as actors at all levels: individuals, groups, organizations and institutions. Differing from the definitions discussed earlier which focus on examining the constitutive elements and virtues of social cohesion, Chan and colleagues highlight the importance of the context and the dynamism of social cohesion as an exposition of the juxtaposition of interactions of all stakeholders in the society. This thesis is well-taken in this present volume in order to examine the notion of “social cohesion” in this fast-changing world in the midst of globalization.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL COHESION AND SOCIAL POLICY/GOVERNANCE

Although we have difficulty to come to a simple agreement on the definition of “social cohesion”, a growing body of literature related to social cohesion has emerged in the last decade or so (see for example,

Popay *et al.*, 2006; Silver, 1995). Sen (1990, 1992, 2000) contributes to the discussion of social exclusion by providing a useful framework for analysis. According to Sen, social exclusion is caused by various deprivations, which prevent people from having “a minimally decent life” (Sen, 2000, p. 10). Sen argues people suffering from social exclusion are the result of the *inherence of deprivation* and the *intention of deprivation*. Under the notion of “inherence of deprivation”, people experience *constitutive deprivation*, which is related to some kinds of social exclusion that are intrinsically part of deprivation and *instrumental deprivation*, which is excluded from some other things is not capability deprivation on its own, but rather, this type of exclusion may further result in deprivation. In regard to *intention of deprivation*, there are two major forms of exclusion, including *active deprivation*, which occurs when a group of people are deliberately excluded by policies or regulations; and *passive deprivation*, which comes about through social processes in which there is no deliberate attempt to exclude (Sen, 2000, p. 21). Obviously, the discussions on “social exclusion” and the debates regarding “social cohesion” should go hand in hand.

Having discussed the complexity of the concepts of “social exclusion” and “social cohesion”, one may ask how these concepts are related to social policy formulation and modern governance in the globalizing world. In particular, some key questions would be raised when debating the relationship between making social policy decisions and the promotion of social cohesion, including:

1. Is there a particular group of people being excluded, marginalized, discriminated or deprived in the society? What particular groups of people are they?
2. What are the reasons for that? Economic, political, cultural, or religious factors?
3. What needs to be done for the state, market and civil society to integrate the society?

The first two questions simply deal with the identification of the socially excluded actors and the social structures behind or that

engender the exclusions. While the third question is the most challenging and controversial one for it points to the solutions of the problem, questions like “who should play what part to solve the problem?” and “who should be blamed for the problem?” surely raise the heat of the debate. Beyond scapegoating, these questions touch upon the critical questions regarding the arrangements of the economic, political, and social systems, of which juxtapositions ultimately affect the way governance is structured.

From the administrative perspective, social cohesion studies are concerned about the management of a society than the understanding of personal feeling, though the two are inextricably linked. To eradicate the social exclusion and minimize the social conflict, governments are required to undergo an all-round overhaul of the economic, political, and social institutions and the social policies which each institution is responsible for (see Wong *et al.*, 2006). Social policy is often meant by the policy that affects the social rights and economic well-being of people. According to Mkandawire (2004, p. 1), social policy is defined as collective interventions in the economy to influence the access to and the incidence of adequate and secure livelihoods and income. It is notable that the major force behind that intervention has always been the government through the means of welfare provisions, such as on education, health care, housing, social security and pension. As argued earlier, social cohesion can be referred as the outcome of social policy as well as the necessary condition on which social policy can be successfully implemented. But whether the provision of social policy/social service can bear fruit depends on the way the society is governed. Therefore, the quality of governance is essential to social policy delivery because it sets the tone for design, representation, coordination, and execution of social policy. To policymakers, social cohesion should be promoted in order to push forward policy agendas smoothly and ensure legitimacy, which are the foundations of good governance.

Traditionally, governance is a synonym for government and government-centered actions, but recently governance is emerging as a new paradigm (Jessop, 1998). According to Rhodes (1996, pp. 652–653, original emphasis), “governance signifies a change in

the meaning of government, referring to a *new* process of governing; or a *changed* condition or ordered rule; or the *new* method by which society is governed”. Governance in pluralistic and diverse societies is no longer confined to dominance, authority, and exercise of state power, but rather a static-initiated mechanism of seeking ways to manage the society in an effective and efficient way, in recognition of the fact that the role of government has been retrenching due to the rise of market power and civil society (Merrien, 1998). Stoker (1998) succinctly outlines five propositions for this new kind of governance:

1. Governance refers to a complex set of institutions and actors that are drawn from and also beyond government.
2. Governance recognizes the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.
3. Governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action.
4. Governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors.
5. Governance recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority. It sees government as able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide.

Noting that government alone cannot solve every problem, “trust” is always posited as a form of social virtue that binds society together (Fukuyama, 1996), acts as a changing agent of political attitude in government spending (Rudolph and Evans, 2005), and is a facilitator in formulating the public policies and enhancing the governance (Ku, 2009). Here, trust is essential to the relationship among individuals and groups and their relationships with the government. Whereas trust is vital to the harmonious relationship between the government and the society, especially in a fractionalized, pluralized, and democratic society, the conception of policymaking should change from a simplistic and mechanical “means-and-ends relationship” to “instrument mixes and governance” that places more

emphasis on “increased coordination, partnership, civil participation, and network development” (Ku, 2009, p. 155). Seen in this light, social trust can no longer be simply implemented and ordered by the state, rather it is a “social atmosphere and culture” that the state can indirectly promote by encouraging civic participation and shared actions with voluntary associations (Ku, 2009, p. 154).

Considering the importance of social cohesion in public policy and governance, a growing number of governments have swiftly committed to pushing the agenda for social cohesion. It was particularly prevalent in Canada in the 1990s and Europe in the 2000s (Hulse and Stone, 2007). Similarly, other transnational intergovernmental organizations are keen to follow the trend. For instance, the Council of Europe defines social cohesion as “the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization” (Council of Europe, 2004; quoted in Turzi, 2008, p. 131). In Latin America, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) refers “social cohesion” both to the efficacy of established social inclusion mechanisms and to the behavior and values of members of society (ECLAC, 2007; Quoted in Turzi, 2008, p. 131). In one of the United Nations’ meeting, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon once addressed, “Social cohesion” is crucial to efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals — our common vision for building a better world in the 21st century. We cannot meet our goals on hunger, poverty, education, environment and health, if economic growth benefits a few while many others are woefully left behind” (United Nations, 2007), despite his vision of social cohesion is more on a global cooperation level.

4. CRITICAL THEMES IN UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL COHESION

There are three major themes related to the quest for social cohesion in the midst of rapid social and economic changes, namely, social cohesion and economic competitiveness, social cohesion and urban governance, and social cohesion and welfare regime.

4.1. Social Cohesion and Economic Competitiveness

While it is illusory to perceive there is only little discussion on social cohesion in Western societies, where individual liberties and rights always precede societal compromise and consensus-building (Wong *et al.*, 2006), the similar issue of social inclusion/exclusion in relation to economic growth has been intensively researched. In fact, modern studies on social inclusion can be traced back to French sociologist Durkheim's studies on social solidarity in the 19th century. His categorization of "organic solidarity" and "mechanical solidarity" has vividly captured the transformation of modern society from agricultural economy to industrial economy. His concern has linked work to the moral dimension of solidarity, worrying that division of labor could lead to the dismantling of collective norm and social order (Levitas, 2005, p. 22).

Social conditions undoubtedly have changed drastically for the past two centuries, thus the way how social cohesion is to be achieved entails an overhaul, but the concerns for social cohesion and economic inequalities remain persistent and passionate. One of the most pressing concerns of social cohesion is its compatibility with economic globalization (Eraydin, 2008). The inquiry is whether in the context of globalization the economic competitiveness of a region can go hand in hand with its cohesion. From a leftist's perspective, globalization is an extension of capitalism and wealth accumulation, aggravating the inequality between the rich and the poor and undermining social justice. To reconcile the left and right, Giddens (1999) proposes the political doctrine of "third way", fostering economic freedom and prosperity as advocated by the right, while promising equally distributed wealth and basic needs of all people as promised by the left. His idea is empirically supported by research studies (Ritzen, 2001; Rodrik, 1999) that generally indicate that the more cohesive the societies are, the stronger economic growth they possess because all stakeholders in the society are more willing to come together to confront the challenges.

It is against such a wider context that a number of governments are now targeting economic growth and poverty reduction without

undermining the conditions of social equality and justice. In accounting for the social policies and welfare system in Britain under the leadership of the New Labor in the 1990s, Levitas (2005) argues a competition existed between two discourses of social exclusion: redistributionist discourse (RED) and social integrationist discourse (SID). The redistributionist discourse articulates social cohesion with social justice and points to a more equal and just distribution of wealth and resources. The social integrationist discourse aims to achieve social cohesion through an accessible system to accommodate as many people as possible. Similar to Durkheim's idea, the New Labor administration chose to adopt the social integrationist discourse through maintaining the quality of life by engaging everyone into the employment market.¹ Obviously, this policy agenda of New Labor was not unprecedented and surely it would not be the only one to do so. For example, in 2005, the European Union re-launched the Lisbon Strategy. The premise of this strategy is set to promote social inclusion/cohesion through creation of better jobs and maintaining sustainable economic growth (Dieckhoff and Gallie, 2007). It is in the quest for a solution to make social cohesion and economic competitiveness compatible and even synergistic (Fainstein, 2001) that governments worldwide are now rethinking the relationship among the state, market and society and reconfiguring it into a cooperative and reciprocal one.

¹ There is a crucial point demarcating social justice from social inclusion that can be noted here. As Gray (2000) points out, "inclusion" does not necessarily imply "equality". What social inclusion concerns about instead is the provision of fair opportunities of access and satisfaction of basic needs. It means that once basic needs are met, the matter of distribution will become irrelevant. Following this thought, it is explained, for example, that universal public services, such as libraries, are based upon the idea of inclusion rather than equality. As Gray (2000, p. 31) succinctly puts it, "the ideal of inclusion, then, is distinct from any ideal of equality, but it acts as a constraint on inequalities at both the bottom and the top". Apart from achieving equality, accommodating social differences is also the core element of social justice (Lister, 2000), which recognizes the heterogeneity of a society rather than to search for a homogeneity.

4.2. Social Cohesion and Urban Governance

Social cohesion is almost a universal virtue, regardless of the size and form of a region. Yet, it is the social cohesion in cities that has caught the spotlight. What drives the problem of social cohesion in cities so unique is that they are more open, inclusive, and pioneering, and therefore are more exposed to influences and forces beyond their own borders than rural areas. Not only physical infrastructures have to be rebuilt to accommodate and cater for a diverse population, values, and identities of people are also always subject to constant contestation and reconfiguration. As Forrest (2009, p. 291) explains, “cities ... will have an influx of newcomers, new housing areas, new employment patterns, and an almost inevitable weakening of the intermediate institutions that have previously constituted much of the social cement. This may relate to the weakening of traditional family structures, trade unions, and other political organizations, religious groups or the erosion of less visible norms and routines which have grown up in more settled times”. As a result, social cohesion in urban setting is under greater challenge than in rural areas, giving rise to the inquiry that how urban governance will be reformed accordingly.

Drawing on the case of Britain, Kearns and Forrest (2000, p. 1006) demonstrate that urban governance occurs simultaneously at different spatial scales: national/interurban, city/city-region and neighborhood, with each scale tackling different dimensions of social cohesion, such as fostering “common values/civic culture”, “social solidarity/wealth disparities”, “place attachment”, and “social networks/social capital”. For different governance situations vary in different spatial scales, the realization of social cohesion, therefore, is largely determined upon interconnectedness of those scales, which may be “potentially contradictory as well as complementary” (Kearns and Forrest, 2000, p. 1013).

As one of the urban studies leading scholars Manuel Castells postulates, we are now living in a globalizing and “network society”. According to Castells, a network society is characterized with global networks of wealth, power, information, and images, which circulate and transmute in a system of variable geometry and dematerialized

geography (Castells, 1997, p. 359). In this regard, we can argue that a rigid physical locality, such as cities and rural areas, may not be a valid unit of analysis, because people in cities are heterogeneous due to different networks they are engaging in. In line with this logic, governments will have to devise and differentiate workable strategies to cope with social demands at all levels. As Kazepov (2005, p. 32) explains the networking mechanism of urban governance, for example that, “passive policies (such as unemployment or social assistance benefits) are still defined mainly at the national level, where activation policies are defined more at the local level”. Taking education as example, it has long been hailed as an important tool of integrating children from all walks of life by empowering them with knowledge and social skills. While education policy may be decided on a national level, the provision of information services, for instance, public libraries in the communities for enhancing literacy for minorities, is largely locally addressed (see Caidi and Allard, 2005; Pateman, 1999). An integrated policy framework is therefore needed to make different programs and plans of different levels complementary to each other.

All in all, to improve the efficiency of public service delivery, modern governments need to assert their roles in establishing, coordinating, and mobilizing the responsible stakeholders in society to rally behind the common cause of good urban governance. But the biggest obstacle toward this goal is that government no longer has absolute power to direct all good wills and resources to its favor, for many things are now out of its command and control.

4.3. Social Cohesion and Welfare Regime

Marshall (1950) defines social rights as the rights of citizens to social welfare on the basis of citizenship. On this basis, whether citizens conceive the society in which they are living in is cohesive is often based on the benefits they can receive as equal individuals under just law. Hence welfare system is critical to making social cohesion and economic well-being compatible. Esping-Anderson (1990), in his seminal book *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, identifies the liberal, conservative, and social democratic types of welfare regimes.

Each of them entails a different kind of relationship among the state, market, families, and individuals: For liberal regime, the government steps back in public spending and lets the market function to its full extent; for conservative regime, the government also favors a strong market and remains limited in state intervention, while at the same time emphasizing family support on which people in need can rely; for social democratic regime, the government takes up a progressive role in providing (universal) public services to citizens and redistributing wealth and resources. The social democratic policy agenda is similar to Anthony Giddens's "third way" theory discussed in the earlier part.

Based upon Esping-Anderson's general categorization, there are further attempts to identifying the welfare systems on a regional level, which can be easily shown in the literatures on East Asia, including places like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Theoretical concepts like "Confucian welfare state" (Jones, 1993) and productivist welfare capitalism (Holliday, 2000) are proposed to highlight the economic, cultural and historical developmental commonalities among those states and argue that they have contributed to the evolving of the so-called "East Asian welfare model" (Aspalter, 2006). However, all these conceptualizations discussed above have recently been criticized, given the empirical reality has been challenged and rendered the presumptions of the theory irrelevant for the East Asian countries (Wilding, 2008). The reason is the previously taken-for-granted high economic growth, justifying for low welfare spending in East Asia, cannot stand in the midst of the global economic crisis and the growing challenges resulted from the globalizing economy.

To a larger extent, another argument for welfare reform worldwide is because nowadays working class is no longer the only victims or laggards in the globalizing economy, whereas middle class, career professionals and young university graduates who previously enjoy a considerable stable work and living are also exposing to new risks and uncertainties, which are largely beyond their control and sometimes even beyond their nation states' control. Yet, nation states are urged to reconsider the rationale of their welfare systems to cope with the changes in employment market. For instance, in explaining the effects

of globalization and economic liberalization upon European cities, Kazepov (2005) attributes the differences of those effects to corresponding welfare regimes (such as, North Europe as neostatist welfare regime; Continental Europe as neocorporative welfare regime; South Europe as neofamilistic welfare regime) that despite the seemingly unstoppable force of globalization, local welfare institutions still provide a structured normative, cognitive, and regulative context for local policy deliveries and can act as filter, moderator, and intermediary to external contextual change.

To recapitulate, we have brought up three recurring themes of social cohesion in recent years: economic competitiveness, urban governance, and welfare regime. Despite they are addressed individually above, they have strong interrelations and constitute a holistic challenge to social cohesion worldwide:

Under the context of neo-liberalism, economic competition has become the core task of every government. It should strive for economic efficiency while at the same time ensuring social equality, especially for those lagging behind in the globalizing economy. Therefore, governance, especially urban governance in diverse and pluralistic societies, is being challenged to deliver appropriate social policy that rightly addresses the social problems facing each particular social group on one hand and that is also fostering and compatible with economic growth and development on the other hand.

Construed as such, social cohesion needs case-specific examination of every place to take the social, economic, and political contexts into account.

5. CHANGING POLICY CONTEXTS FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL HARMONY IN GREATER CHINA

In the previous part, we have discussed three major themes related to the promotion of social cohesion in the rapid social and economic change context. In this section, we will focus on how these themes are interpreted, articulated, adopted, and responded in the three Chinese societies, Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

5.1. Mainland China: Social Harmony as New Governance Paradigm

Throughout the last 60 years, the Chinese government has undergone three phases of policy paradigms since its establishment in 1949: “catching-up development policy” (1949–late 70s), “unilateral economic growth” (1978–2003) and “people-centered development” (2003 onwards). For the first phase, the core principle of development was to deliver policies and programs to increase the productivity to compete with Western developed countries. The transformation from the second phase to the third phase is a watershed of governance from an economically led one to a socially led one (Ngok, 2009), which is relevant to the discussion here. In 2003, the Chinese Central Government first launched the guiding governance principle — “scientific approach to development” (*kexue fazhanguan*) (CCCCP, 2003) at the Third Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, advocating a full development of people’s well-being. In the quest for a harmonious society, Chinese President Hu Jintao further introduced many new terms and phrases to delineate the policy focus of his administration, such as “maintaining the advanced quality of Communist party members” and the “New Three People’s Principle”: “power used for the people, benefits raised for the people, affection centered on the people”, that aim to address the basic needs of ordinary people. Besides official discourse, there have been enormous debates and discussions about social cohesion/social harmony in the society by prominent political figures and opinion leaders. For instance, some local journalists and academics identified eight challenges to building a harmonious society, with particular emphasis on the widening gap between rich and poor, corruption, and a lack of protection for some social groups (*Xinhua News Agency*, 8 October 2006).²

² The experts cited in the newspaper article were Huang Weiting, associate chief editor of Red Flag Press and Shen Jie, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Five other challenges to social cohesion identified by them were unemployment, an inadequate social security system, unsustainable economic growth due to environmental pollution, backwardness in science, education, culture, medical care and sports, and a general lack of managerial skills.

According to Wong (2008, pp. 3–4), “In general, the European concept of social quality is founded upon a higher level of economic development and modern institutional arrangements, including political democracy, for negotiating differences in social and economic affairs; whereas, the Chinese concept of social harmony may reflect the concern on governance for settling social conflicts due to China’s low economic standards and seemingly incompetent institutional arrangements, as illustrated by its poor governance scores”. Recognizing the diversity and complexity of social problems in urban China, the Central government has sought ways to improve the urban governance since the early 21st century. To decentralize the state power, according to Central Government’s policy documents released nationwide in 2000 (Ministry of Civil Affairs, PRC, 2000), “community” was proposed as the basic unit of urban administrative organization that the idea of “community building” should be implemented to counter the “cultural, social and political fragmentation which is often seen as a negative consequence of globalization” (Bray, 2006, p. 531). The notion of “community building” is regarded as the tool to rightly address local problems and to rejoin the fragmented parts of society, and maybe more importantly, as the channel through which the Central government can perform “party building” at a grassroots level by the establishment of corresponding urban institutions (e.g., Residents Committees, Street Offices) and provisions of various kinds of social services. All in all, the practice of “community building” points to the new mode of “governance through community” and “self-governance” of the community.

For a country as large and diverse as China is, geography and the flow of people should also be taken notice of for understanding social cohesion. In recent decades, scholars have started paying their attention to problems arising from urban–rural migration, for example, some have focused on the importance of employer provision, personal social network and nongovernmental efforts in overcoming the inadequacy of state provision for migrants (Li, 2006). In addition, some scholars call for more efficient and effective government efforts and expanded role of nongovernmental organizations in providing safety nets to citizens in light of dismantling of the “iron rice bowl” employment system (Cook, 2002), while some others concern about

income disparities between urban residents and rural migrants (Meng and Zhang, 2001).

In the eyes of the some China observers in the West, the Chinese government's recent call for social cohesion is a hidden agenda of strengthening the control of the Chinese state, especially silencing the dissident opinions (Baum, 2005). For instance, Cheng (2005), Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC), posited three premises underlying a harmonious society in Mainland China are (1) a strong unity that though there are conflicts among social members, they are not antagonistic; (2) an inclusiveness that seeks common ground yet recognizes differences; and (3) a flexibility and capacity in enhancing the state of social cohesion. To achieve these goals, Cheng believes the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party should be strengthened by stressing the need of rule by law, enhance the educational and cultural status of citizens, and hold firmly the flag of nationalism. In his opinion, these suggestions should be based on the premise of a strong state led by the Chinese Communist Party.

Even with Chinese government's hard state power and soft approach of social harmony, attack and sarcasm targeting to it have not totally disappeared. For instance, starting from January 2009, a cultural prank of an imagined creature, the "grass-mud-horse", has become a fad on the Internet. Songs and poems were written about the grass-mud-horse, which pronunciation in Putonghua, *caonima*, resembles a Chinese slang. In the original song, there is one line of lyrics which says "They (the grass-mud-horses) defeated the river crabs in order to protect their grassland". What makes this prank so politically sensitive is that the Putonghua pronunciation of "river crab" (*hexie*) resembles to that of "harmony" (*hexie*), with a difference just in pitch. Obviously, this prank aims at overtly criticizing the social harmony agenda of the Chinese government. Therefore, no sooner had this prank been popularized on the Internet than related online sources were strictly censored.

Despite the livelihood of Chinese people has been improving in the past three decades after the opening up of the economy, what they

are concerned is now beyond economic well-being but more social and cultural, best illustrated by the emergence of new social movements in Mainland China: the enduring “rights protection” (*Weiquan*) movement against corruption and authoritarian rule; the environment protest in June 2007, where over a thousand of citizens in the city of Xiamen in Fujian province took to the streets to protest against the construction of a chemical factory in the community, which they feared it would affect the environment and the health of the people living around; the protest against torture on dogs and eating cats in Beijing in 2006 and 2008 respectively. China is now experiencing urbanization, informationalization, and globalization simultaneously, such developments have inevitably posed enormous challenges to the Chinese regime to design and carry out specific policies for every specific group. It has to do with a way of decentralizing state power to market and civil society while maintaining the state legitimacy.

5.2. Taiwan: Party Grievances Resulting in Social Conflicts

Comparing to Mainland China, social cohesion/harmony has received less attention as a political discourse in Taiwan, but it does not mean that social stability is not taken care by the Taiwanese society, especially when the state of social cohesion can also be documented and examined through the presence of social conflicts. In Taiwan, party grievances have dominated social conflicts in past few decades. Democratization, welfare provisions, and cross-strait relations have been the dominant issues that have set the two major parties Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DDP) apart in stance on social policy and put their supporters in dismay. Although these three issues seem to be distinct, they are in fact inextricably linked. As Ramesh (2004, p. 15) argues, in the face of lacking formal recognition from international organizations due to China’s diplomatic power, since the 1980s Taiwan has been using democracy and social development to appeal to the international community in quest for their support.

Besides the geopolitical factor, the relationship between democratization and welfare provisions already has a great explanatory power over the ideological differences among the Taiwanese people. In Taiwan, political trust of people seems to fall along the party lines. In comparing political trust, defined by people's belief toward the political system, between China and Taiwan, Shi (2001, pp. 415, 416) argues that cultural factor has a part in determining the political trust alongside with rational calculation and choice, and finds that political culture is a governing and significant factor that contributes to the difference in political trust between China and Taiwan. In China, authoritarian culture can diffuse people's grievances should state policies are not measuring up to public expectation. Adopting Weber's conception of authority and legitimacy, we can argue that the transition of Taiwan government from an authoritarian regime to a democratic state indicates a change of basis of legitimacy from traditional authority to rational-legal authority. That explains why welfare reform and other social policies development in Taiwan have come concomitant with the process of democratization since the 1980s, driven and triggered by various emerging social movements and a "demanding civil society" (Hsiao, 1990).

Traditionally, Taiwan was categorized as one of those "productivist welfare capitalism" in East Asia, which possess the following characteristics, as Paul Wilding suggests:

Low public expenditure on social welfare; a productivist social policy focused on economic growth; hostility to the idea of the welfare state; strong residualist elements; a central role for the family; a regulatory and enabling role for the state; piecemeal, pragmatic and ad hoc welfare development; use of welfare to build legitimacy, stability and support for the state; and limited commitment to the notion of welfare as a right of citizenship.

(quoted in Holliday, 2000, p. 715)

For these states, social policy is subordinate to economic policy that the former is seen to be the condition and tool for the actualization of the latter (Holliday, 2000). However, as Aspalter (2006, p. 294) suggests, since the 1950s the long-time ruling party KMT has decided

to advance social policies primarily for the purpose of gaining public support and establishing the state's legitimacy rather than fixing the goal on economic development. Yet the implementation of those policies was far from universal and egalitarian, since the major beneficiaries were mostly military personnel, civil servants, teachers, private school employees and low-ranking district and block officers, who were the core base of supporters of KMT and the authoritarian regime. Another commonly seen deficiency of Taiwan's welfare system is that it has been highly fragmented across different occupations, with each insurance scheme of different provision benefits and entitlements covering the different sectors of the workforce. With the two above-mentioned characteristics, Taiwan's welfare regime is regarded by some as one characterized with "etatism" and "corporatism" respectively (Ku, 2000, p. 88).

In the face of the competing or even conflicting interests in the welfare system, since the opening up of the democracy and the slowdown of economic development from the 1990s, the two Taiwanese major parties have been competing in proposing the numerous welfare reform initiatives that can help improve people's lives in order to build up or retain their political power, thus creating serious ideological and political conflicts that are still fettering the achievement of social cohesion in the territory until now. Besides legitimate policy debate on the role of government in welfare provisions, party competition in Taiwan, however, is so fierce and threatening that it may result in violence. In 2006, there were rumors that some DDP-controlled or affiliated clandestine radio stations have advocated DDP supporters to assassinate KMT chairman Ma Ying-Jeou, then the current Taiwan President (*Yazhou Zhoukan*, September 2008). Despite the fact that Ma was elected in 2008 with a comfortable size of vote margin, party bickering remains antagonistic. After Taiwan's economic downturn for the past decade, the decision of President Ma to forge amiable relationship with Mainland China in return of economic benefits has stirred waves of controversy and conflicts, angering the DDP supporters who fear that Taiwan's economic cooperation or even integration with China would eventually lead to a loss in political autonomy. In short, what can be anticipated in the discussion of social cohesion

in Taiwan in near future would be the further welfare reform and the coupling of economy and polity, which is largely determined by the cross-strait relations. Thus, the lens of party competition through which social cohesion/social conflict is to be understood remains a valid tool.

5.3. Hong Kong: Economic Restructuring and Democratization as Social Debates

Hong Kong has been labeled as the “city of protests” in recent years, when it has undergone significant economic and political changes since the 1997 handover. The economy, concomitant with the stock market, has gone up and down dramatically in the Asian Financial Crisis, the SARS crisis, and the 2008 global financial turmoil; the political reform on universal suffrage has been in stalemate in which the relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China is often weakened. Feeling the heat of the rise of several major Mainland cities such as Shanghai and Guangzhou, the trust of Hong Kong people toward themselves, their government, and their city are being put into doubt.

The Hong Kong government has recognized this alarm and intended to deliver policies to change the course. Former Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa, in his Policy Address in 2005, strived to achieve social harmony for Hong Kong. The Policy Address, entitled “Working Together for Economic Development and Social Harmony”, proclaims that:

Hong Kong people have always attached great importance to social harmony. The saying “A family that lives in harmony will prosper” epitomizes harmony as a core value in our tradition. A stable environment is the prerequisite for social progress, economic prosperity, constitutional development and better living.

(Hong Kong SAR Government, 2005a, p. 10).

In echoing the change of governance of the Central Government from economic development to social development, political jargon such as “‘people-based’ governance” was posited in the Policy

Address. The Hong Kong government also vowed to maintain the fairness in governance, stabilize the middle class, strengthen the sense of national identity among citizens, and pledge for unity and respect for different political views on the basis of “One Country, Two Systems” principle. After Tung Chee Hwa stepped down in 2005, his successor Donald Tsang, then the former Chief Secretary, recurred to the theme of social harmony in his own Policy Address in the same year. In the opening paragraph of that Policy Address, entitled “Stronger Governance for the People”, Tsang pledged to “secure a ‘people-based’ government which pursues excellent governance, a harmonious community and widespread economic growth.” (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2005b, p. 1). However, the economic and political crises after the handover and the failure of government leadership in dealing with them have deepened and triggered social conflicts (Cheung, 2003). Moreover, the corrosion of social cohesion was also aggravated due to Hong Kong people’s growing cynicism toward the community participation (Chiu, 2005) and declining trust toward their political representatives in the legislature (Ma, 2007). Social trust toward the state, political society, and civil society seems to have been deteriorating, resulting in a fragmented society within which social conflicts are often unresolved.

Under these circumstances, Hong Kong scholars are keen on developing indicators to measure the social cohesion quantitatively to better the governance (see Chan and Chan, 2006; Wong and Wong, 2005), especially focusing on the relationship among social cohesion, public perception/expectation, and the quality of governance. For instance, in 2006 and 2008, the Department of Social Work and the Hong Kong Institute of Asia Pacific Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong have conducted population-wide telephone surveys to keep track of Hong Kong people’s perception of social cohesion. In 2006, there were 38% of respondents agreeing Hong Kong was a cohesive city, 39.6% said so-so and 22.4% disagreed (Department of Social Work and Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, CUHK, 2006). In 2008, there were 37.8% of respondents agreeing that Hong Kong was cohesive, 41.4% said so-so and 20.3% disagreed (Department of Social Work and Hong Kong Institute of

Asia-Pacific Studies, CUHK, 2008). The results indicate a drop in the answers of both “agree” and “disagree”, but a modest increase in “so-so”, but the overall pattern of people’s evaluation on social cohesion remains stable. In the two surveys, Hong Kong people perceived “conflict between the rich and the poor” as the most serious threat to social cohesion; “conflict between citizens and big corporations” the second; “political conflict” and “family conflict and lack of cooperation and love among family members” the third in 2006 and 2008, respectively. To quest for social cohesion, Hong Kong people showed their concerns in both surveys that “maintaining a clean and just government”, “defending the rule of law and protecting individual liberty and property” and “developing the economy and creating jobs” as the most important agendas in promotion of social cohesion. All these suggestions point to a decent and effective government, creating pressures for the nascent SAR administration to live up to the public expectation.

For social welfare in particular, Hong Kong has long been seen as a neo-liberal state which espouses the economic philosophy of “small government, big market”, gaining the recognition of being the freest economy in the world for 14 consecutive years.³ However, as Chang (2004) argues, the conventional and commonsensical thinking that East Asia is a “social-policy-free-zone” has not been true for it has overlooked the presence of success of those policies that have addressed a wide range of social problems but just have not been counted as traditionally defined “welfare policies”. The misconception in Hong Kong is best indicated by the expansion of welfare services in the 1970s, when people started to receive the provisions of public housing and nine-year free education. Yet, many critics still see Hong Kong government as an uncompassionate regime, pointing to the high numbers of Gini Coefficient over the years, and the absence of minimum wage law and collective bargaining, to name a few. Hong Kong government’s welfare system is under more severe

³ The Heritage Foundation conducts the rankings. It is an American think tank, which promotes fiscal conservative economic philosophies.

criticism especially in the face of financial crisis, whereas there is a lack of synchronization of old neo-liberal welfare regimes and new social risks, such as work stability and family integrity, posed by technology-triggered globalizing economy (Chan, 2006).

When passive citizenship is at stake, an active citizenship is now being promoted in Hong Kong by a new wave of democracy and urban movements emerging in recent years, of which concerns have extended beyond economic well being to social and cultural lives. For instance, the rise of conservation movements is aiming to pressure the government into reconsidering a new kind of economic growth that should be compatible with environmental protection, preservation of collective memory, and identity and community building. In short, what is at stake in Hong Kong will be the strike for economic growth for the middle class and under-class along with Hong Kong people's search for a new identity through (re-)discovering their legal and discursive power over their resources and benefits (such as public spaces), these parallel developments will lead to a new reconfiguration of the relationship among the market, the society, and the state. The legitimacy of the government will be in jeopardy should it fail to reform its governance to cope with these changes such that it can be easily subject to challenge from the civil society due to its lack of mandate given by universal suffrage.

6. ABOUT THIS BOOK: THE ORIGIN, THE STRUCTURE AND THE MAJOR ARGUMENTS

The theme of social cohesion, whatever label it is adopted (such as social inclusion, social integration, and social harmony), is prevalent in academic research and policy agenda around the world. The recognition of the importance of social cohesion often goes hand in hand with the quest for a stable and prosperous society, characterized by equality, justice, freedom, and effective governance. When reviewing the evolution and use of "social cohesion" as policy concept in North America (The United States and Canada), Europe, and Australia,

Hulse and Stone (2007) recount that governments tend to address social cohesion on the dimensions of social capital, social exclusion, but neglects the also important cultural dimension. As Levitas (2005, p. 21, emphasis added) elicits, “exclusion is understood as the breakdown of the structural, *cultural* and *moral* ties which bind the individual to society”. In Chinese societies, social cohesion is often argued with moral and social order derived from Confucianism (Baum, 2005). This underlying cultural factor may hold the Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong societies in common, despite their different historical, social, economic, and political differences. But whether this cultural commonality really accounts to the unique meaning of social cohesion in Greater China remains a challenging and intriguing question.

In this book, social policy is meant by the policy that affects both the objective and subjective well-being of citizens, economically and socially. On this basis, social cohesion is both the social condition and social consequence of the execution of social policy, which is determined by the mode of institutions, the delivery of policies, and the quality of governance (see Easterly *et al.*, 2006). Even there is criticism that “social cohesion” may run against the principle of individual rights and is being used as a sugar-coating for social control by the powerful, especially in under-developed democracies, the proposition of achieving social cohesion is generally well-received by ordinary people, as they hope that it may signal a change and departure of governance from an economic-led one to a people-centered one. In the past few decades, the intensification of economic inequalities and political grievances has created far more social conflicts in Greater China. Contributors in this volume address the following major themes when discussing social development issues, changing governance and social policy implications in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

1. The definition of social cohesion and its uses as policy concept.
2. The transformation of urban governance and political reform.
3. The strive for economic well-being via welfare reform.

Putting the above discussions of social cohesion in the Asian context, social cohesion is not yet a well-researched concept and well-practiced policy tenet as compared to its North American and European counterparts. For Greater China in particular, the notion of “social cohesion” (*shehui ningju*) and “social harmony” (*shehui hexie*) are more commonly adopted by Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong than the idea of “social inclusion”. Yet, it needs more effort and time to examine whether this rhetorical difference can yield theoretically significant new ingredient to social cohesion studies, but we think that this book is the right beginning to embark on this effort.

Most chapters in this book were selected from the papers presented at the “Symposium on the Quest for Social Cohesion in Greater China: Challenges for Social Policy and Governance” held in June 2008 at The University of Hong Kong. The Symposium was co-organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong and the College of Social Sciences, National Taiwan University, while a few chapters were selected from other international conferences related to social development and social policy in Greater China and Asia. The present volume is organized into three main parts; in each part various kinds of social development and governance issues in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong will be examined. After the present introductory chapter, part I of the present volume focuses on a theme of “Concepts of Social Cohesion and Policy Responses”. Chapters in this section touch upon the backgrounds and interpretations of the concept of “social cohesion” in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. More specifically, these chapters deal with issues related to how their governments’ policy agendas, resources allocation, mentality and mode of governance have adapted to promote social cohesion.

In Chap. 1, Tsang and Chu study the youth development of a newly developed town in North West Hong Kong — Tin Shui Wai, which is regarded as a “city of sadness” for it encompassing various kinds of social problems, ranging from unemployment, youth gangs and family violence to suicide. Departing from a top-down governance approach, the authors adopt a bottom-up perspective to

examine the motivations, strategies, and limitations of different community stakeholders — schools and teachers, religious groups, youth service agencies and businesses — who have successfully collaborated to transform the once bizarre living environment into a more dynamic and safer place for youth development. Drawing upon this success, the authors explore that social capital and social networks among residents, alongside with economic well-being, are the keys to cohesion in a community setting, where a bottom-up initiative is also equally important, if not more, as a top-down one.

In reviewing the shift of tone and substance of Chinese Central government's policy agendas in the past three decades, Ngok and Zhu attempt to delineate the recent change of governance from simply addressing the economic development to fostering social development, and how this change has translated into policies and actual practices in Chap. 2. The authors argue that since 2003, when the government first proposed the idea of "harmonious society", a wide range of policies including education, health care, employment, housing and social security have been modified and launched to meet the pressing demands of citizens. Ultimately, the reforms taken serve the legitimacy of the central government. But on the other hand, social unrest may happen should the government's actions cannot measure up to the heightened public expectations. Therefore, "social harmony" in China is a double-edged phrase that the government should raise and operationalize it in a careful and cautious manner.

Believing that welfare provision is inextricably linked with politics since it involves interests and resource allocation, Ku reviews the development of welfare politics in Taiwan since 2000 in Chap. 3. With particular reference to welfare reform, Ku documents how the long-time opposition party DDP finally took the power over the ruling party, the KMT, by winning the presidential election in 2000 and 2004. He examines that, under the DDP's eight-year administration, the Taiwanese society was divided or polarized on several fronts: the employed and the unemployed; workers in different industries whose works are subject to different influences of global division of labor; income inequalities between households. In addition to these were the rises in crime and suicide cases. Altogether these worsening social

conditions have contributed to the diminishing trust in government; intensifying party bickering and scapegoating, which have poisoned the politics of Taiwan, led to the stalemate in welfare reform and division of the country. But fortunately, the expansion of volunteer services and the maintenance of traditional family ties have constituted an informal and bottom-up force and helped establishing and fostering trust, which is essential to the stability of society.

In Chap. 4, Chan, Chiu, and Chiu argue that whereas a number of social cohesion studies focus on the delivery of government policies and the measurement of objective well-being indicators, it is no less significant and insightful to examine the subjective dimension of social cohesion. Adopting a well-established “Perceived Cohesion Scale” (a measurement of “sense of belonging” and “feeling of morale”) developed in Western context, the authors have done two large-scale surveys on how Guangzhou and Hong Kong residents perceive the notion of “social cohesion”. The statistical results indicate that generally Hong Kong residents enjoy a lower level of “perceived cohesion” than Guangzhou people. The authors believe that this difference may be caused by the two different welfare provision systems. Furthermore, the influx of struggle for identity during the political transition after the 1997 handover may also contribute to the low level of “perceived cohesion” of Hong Kong people.

Part II addresses a theme of “Social Change and Urban Governance” by looking into the political transformations behind the shift in urban governance in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. In this part, the three chapters have examined urban governance at the level of city, which has widely been seen as the unit of competition in the globalizing economy. In Chap. 5, Lui examines the thesis of global city in the context of Hong Kong. Rejecting the established and conventional theses on the evolution of global cities, which tend to be structural and ahistorical, Lui attempts to dig into the particular process of how a global city comes into being by exploring the economic, social, political, and historical specificities. Having recapped the economic and political structuring of Hong Kong after the 1997 handover, Lui uses the West Kowloon Cultural Development project, the mega-cultural initiative by Hong Kong

government to project Hong Kong to the world stage, as a case to demonstrate the potential and limitation of Hong Kong governance. He argues that the weak mandate of the governing administration resulting from an absence of universal suffrage, and its isolation from the civil society due to rigid bureaucracy has contributed to the failed governance in Hong Kong. Underlying this failure is also the lack of cohesiveness in the existing power structure, where different business interests are competing for rent-seeking activities. In order to search for good governance, Lui believes the government should re-establish itself as an arbiter and a coordinator of various interest groups.

In Chap. 6, Mok and colleagues study the “three mountains” (education, housing, and health care) in social policies in eight Mainland China cities. Having conducted large scale surveys in the eight selected and representative cities, the authors discuss how the urban households within and between cities have been experiencing the hardship as a result of the financial burdens in terms of household expenditure related to education, housing, and health. Reversing the socialist policy of welfare provisions in the Mao era, Chinese governments in post-reform period have embarked on the effort of privatizing the social services in order to alleviate the burden of the state; the increasing financial costs on city residents are the result of that. The authors find that despite the overriding force of marketization and privatization, urban households in different localities suffer various degrees and ways of hardship. Ultimately, this comparison studies of different cities shed light on the understanding of the complexity of urban income disparities in Mainland China.

In Chap. 7, Chien and Wu give an account of the practice of “urban governance from below” in one of the most prosperous and politically significant cities in Southern Taiwan, Kaohsiung, which is a center of many heavy- and light-manufacturing industries. Paying particular attention to urban reform and public space (re-)construction, the authors examine the introduction of the operating mechanisms of “advocate planners”, “community architects and planners”, and “citizen conferences” in urban administration, which play a significant part in

the process of urban design, public consultation, and bargaining of interests. This “urban governance from below” in Kaohsiung is a pioneer and an exemplar of citizen and community participation in Taiwan, decentralizing resources, control and power to residents over the communities and public space by allowing them to select their representatives and voicing out their own opinions. Yet this bottom-up approach of governance is far from ideal, mainly due to the resistances from the vested interests in public and private sectors, the ambiguous professional role of the “advocate planners” and “community architects and planners”. And whether this “urban governance from below” can be implemented nationwide is really subject to decision and determination of the local state.

Part III of the book chooses a theme of “Economic Well-Being, Urban Poverty and Pensions Reforms”, critically examining the welfare provisions in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Equality and broadly distributed prosperity are the pillars of any stable and cohesive society in which welfare regime is responsible for enhancing the economic well-being of people, thus it is the core concern in the four chapters in this part. In Chap. 8, Chui and Ko alert that in Hong Kong the ever-increasing aging population has been giving rise to elderly poverty. They critically examine the mechanism of the pension scheme, the Mandatory Provident Fund and how it should be reformed to tackle elderly poverty. Elderly poverty has long been a social problem in Hong Kong even during the period of soaring economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s. In a neoliberal economy such as Hong Kong, personal responsibility and reliance are always put ahead before state support. While advocating that “bringing back the state in” is the right direction to pension reform in the future, the authors argue a low-tax regime should be kept intact to maintain Hong Kong’s competitiveness in the globalizing economy. To seek a way out of balancing fiscal vitality and social assurance for the needy, the authors propose that the government can use its financial reserve to expand social security schemes in the short run to cater for the elderly people, who are left out of the nascent pension scheme, which was established long before they had retired.

Similar to Chui's chapter, Lau and Mok discuss in Chap. 9 the problems facing the provisions and deliveries of welfare services in Hong Kong, which are posed by economic restructuring from manufacturing to service sector amidst the trend of globalization, aging population, and privatization and marketization of public services. Under these circumstances, the authors engage in the latest debate on whether East Asian welfare models, in particular the idea of "productivist welfare capitalism", which relies on the premises of high economic growth and productivity, are still appropriate and relevant to the understanding of Hong Kong welfare regime. Submitting to the governing principle of "small government, big market", Hong Kong government, like many other East Asian states, have been advancing policies for the prime goal of economic growth; social policy and social development have been made subordinate to this agenda. But the authors argue, while Hong Kong have been experiencing the above structural changes in recent years, the livelihoods of low-skilled and -educated workers and the elderly become at stakes, requiring new social policies to fix the problems of the current employment market structure and social security scheme.

In Chap. 10, Zhang, Lum and Xu deal with the rising phenomenon of "new urban poverty" in Mainland China cities against the background of urbanization and economic development. The authors explain that the restructuring of state-owned enterprises, the failure of them granting benefits to labor, the liberalization of market and the commodification of public services are the major causes of "new urban poverty". These new economic restructurings have exposed many urban residents into new risks and uncertainties, and what is worse is the government policy that replaces the state provisions of social services with personal choices and responsibilities. Under such context, the authors examine the subjective economic well-being, the degree of economic hardship and economic capacity of urban households in eight selected cities and how these "economic well-being variables" vary with demography, housing environment and development level of a city. While results show that people with higher incomes and living in highly developed cities do not necessarily possess a higher

level of economic well-being, it is argued that a “new urban poverty” is emerging in Mainland China.

Shi concludes the present volume by addressing the transformation of pension insurance system in Taiwan along the progress of democratization from the 1990s until now. Over the years, the Taiwanese government has failed to deliver an integrated pension system, causing lasting policy confusion and inequality of welfare provisions. Old-age security system in Taiwan has long been status and occupation-oriented; both approaches having been leaving certain sectors of old-age population into plight without covering their needs. The author argues that the major impediment toward such a reform has been the conflicts of interests and seizure for power between the two major political parties, the KMT and the DPP. In reforming the pension system, the two political parties have always skewed the benefits toward their voting constituencies, overtly putting their own political interests before public interest, thus failing to achieve an equal pension system for all people. It is illustrated by the fragmentation of different pension institutions, which are often uncoordinated due to the lack of an overarching institutional framework. Therefore, ambitious efforts will be needed to set aside party competitions to put welfare reform back on track.

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