

[controlling] the economy and [monopolizing] all social resources” (p. 10). In its place is the imperative to develop an administrative order through professionalizing bureaucratic functions.

While China may present a critical case in which the state–society dichotomy takes on increasing complexity, state-sponsored strategic intentions remain – and now seemingly more so – dominant of autonomous decisions of other stakeholders. In what ways has the evolution of urban neighbourhoods reflected the realities and consequences of such intentions? This is just one question to be asked of Wu’s book. The answers are in fact scattered throughout the chapters, though perhaps somewhat buried among thick descriptions. Another quibble I may have about the book has to do with the overarching sentiment of social determinism, which arguably nudges us to look beyond the force of economic agglomeration. But there is evidence sprinkled across resettlement as well as new neighbourhoods in some Chinese cities that mutual benefit-sharing has provided the foundation on which residents exercise agency in safeguarding social relations forged in their previous living environments (Min Zhang et al. “Agency and social construction of space under top-down planning: Resettled rural residents in China,” *Urban Studies* 55[7] (2018), 1541–1560). That, particularly when reinforced by human-centred design and planning approaches, has the promise of maintaining or even expanding social relations in an urbanized world of individualism.

A significant and ground-breaking contribution on an important topic, this book draws on an impressive reservoir of both English- and Chinese-language studies. The writing quality is very high. Wu pays meticulous attention to the sequence of events and multitude of factors driving the (re)development of each type of neighbourhood under study. As China continues to urbanize, socio-spatial transformation will no doubt keep apace. This book reminds us that urban transformation is far from a monolithic and nationwide phenomenon. The anchor at the local level, where urbanites live and interact, is clearly a generative foray. More importantly, the book is a critical addition to the recent canon of urban China studies that marks the commencement of renewed attention to empirically grounded theorization.

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Steering Political Currents: Policy Design and Implementation in China’s Smart Grid Industry

Hannes Gohli. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2022. 510 pp. €109.00 (pbk). ISBN 9783756005239

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The task of understanding China’s public policy processes is hampered by a combination of its unavoidable complexity due to the size of the country and its intentional opacity. The perverse outcome is a large and ever-expanding academic and think-tank literature on this topic that is difficult to keep up with. Thus, it is refreshing to encounter an analysis that brings together an under-appreciated theoretical frame with detailed empirical analysis of a narrow field of public policy in China. In *Steering Political Currents*, Hannes Gohli draws on steering theory to examine policy design and implementation in the smart grid industry.



For readers, such as myself, who are unfamiliar with German-language literature on public policy, Gohli's detailed explanation of steering theory has great value. This theory draws on neo-institutionalism, actor-centred institutionalism and systems theory to explain how governments induce change. Such steering can include direct government intervention, self-steering and cooperative corporatist steering. This hierarchical approach to the policy process contrasts with less hierarchical models of "governance." Industrial policy forms the second theoretical pillar of the analysis.

The low-carbon energy transition requires a much higher degree of electrification than we have today as well as the use of many types of renewable energy, some of which are intermittent. This requires the electricity grid, indeed the entire power system, to be "smart" – in other words, to be able to react in real time to fluctuations in both supply and demand. Two documents published in 2015 set the framework for smart grid development in China: the State Council's *Further Strengthening the Institutional Reform of the Electric Power Industry* ("Document Number 9") and the National Development and Reform Commission's Guideline on *Promoting Smart Grid Development*. These and their supporting documents are seen by Gohli as reflecting industrial policy.

The objective of this research was to test the relevance of political steering theory to the design and implementation of these policies concerning the country's smart grid development. Following the introduction, chapters two and three explore theories relating to steering and industrial policy, respectively. In chapter four, the author examines the history of steering in China since 1976, focusing on industrial policy. He shows how the strict central planning regime under Mao gave way to progressively greater decentralization, sophistication and transparency until Xi Jinping started to recentralize. The subsequent chapter explains the principles of smart grids and the trajectory of policies in China concerning electricity transmission and distribution. In this way, the first 269 pages set the foundation for the empirical research.

Chapter six describes the research methodology which takes the form of discourse analysis, focusing on power relations and knowledge circulation. The author draws on both documents and interviews: 77 documents from national, provincial and municipal websites that relate to Document Number 9; and 46 interviews in Jiangsu Province with government officials, equipment manufacturers and academics. The findings are then presented in detail in the 115 page-long chapter seven. Chapter eight (Discussion) and chapter nine (Conclusion) round off the book.

Space prevents any attempt to summarize the full range of the book's findings in this review. Suffice to say that this is one of the most sophisticated analyses of public policy in China that I have read, albeit that it is directed at a very narrow field of policy. It shows the complexity and variability of the policy processes. In some cases, the central government is very specific in its requirements and robust in its steering. In other cases, it is content to devolve and allow a high degree of self-steering. Participation in policy design by advocacy coalitions is also possible. Nevertheless, all parties subordinate to the central leadership act "in the shadow of hierarchy," as Gohli puts it.

In summary, Gohli concludes that steering theory has value in the analysis of public policy processes, despite a weakness in the first phase of the policy process – namely the initial call for a new policy. Building on earlier work by Doris Fischer, the author addresses the apparent dichotomy between "steering" and "governance" by identifying four modes of steering. "Hard steering" involves policy design by the political elite and the use of command-and-control policy instruments. In "indirect steering," policy design is negotiated, and implementation occurs through competition. "Soft steering" forms the third category. Here, the central government provides a broad framework which allows subordinate actors a degree of discretion in design and implementation. Finally, "no steering" leaves everything up to these actors. The key caveat is that the latter three categories all exist "in the shadow of hierarchy." In other words, local government officials and state enterprise managers must be very careful as the performance evaluation system remains strict.

In this book, Hannes Gohli has broken new ground, certainly in the field of Chinese energy policy processes. This research also provides a template for future research in other sectors.

The book appears to be a PhD dissertation that has been published without major redaction. As a result, it is both exhaustive and dense, though the quality of both writing and research justifies the length. The book demands of the reader an interest in policy theory, knowledge of power systems, a broad understanding of China's political system and the willingness to dive deeply into all these topics. As a result, the readership is likely to be academics and advanced postgraduates in the field of public policy, political science or energy, with an interest in China and the willingness to engage across discipline boundaries. For those intimidated by the size of the book, a useful summary is provided by Gohli's 2022 paper in *Energy Research & Social Science* 93, Article 102851. My main complaint is that the book lacks an index, sadly a common feature in student dissertations.

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Trans-Asia as Method: Theory and Practices

Edited by Jeroen de Kloet, Yiu Fai Chow and Gladys Pak Lei Chong. London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020. xvi + 228 pp. \$36.00; £28.00 (pbk). ISBN 9781538148105

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This slim volume is a welcome contribution to the ongoing and increasingly widespread effort to decolonize knowledge production in a globalized world. It is a timely critical engagement with the earlier endeavours of Asian scholars, particularly those related to “Asia as method,” an intellectual and political project advocating a paradigm shift for Asian studies from the “Asia–West” binary framework to “inter-Asian referencing” in order to disrupt Western epistemological dominance while forging regional integration and solidarity. Why is it necessary to expand the critical domain of “Asia as method” into “trans-Asia as method” at the present historical juncture? What are the possible configurations of the trans-Asia project? These two questions are the driving force behind the current volume, aptly edited by Jeroen de Kloet, Yiu Fai Chow and Gladys Pak Lei Chong.

Trans-Asia as Method comprises an introduction, a coda and nine chapters written by international scholars based in East Asia, Australia and Western Europe who come from diverse disciplines, including cultural studies, Asian American Studies, film and media studies, and theatre studies. Compelled by acute observations of contemporary social realities, the contributors problematize the term “Asia” and especially the presumed boundedness of the region in its many manifestations. Together, they push the methodological and disciplinary boundaries of Asian studies and the burgeoning field of inter-Asia cultural studies.

The first three chapters of the volume reflect on the necessity and analytical potential of the “trans-Asia as method” paradigm. Koichi Iwabuchi, considering the increasing cross-border flow of capital, people and media cultures in a globalized and technologically advanced world, conceives the trans-Asian approach as not only an academic methodology instrumental to theorizing trans-nationally shared matters from Asian contexts but also as a tactical approach to actualizing Asia as “a dialogic communicative space” (p. 28). Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet point to the new