

Conference and Events

PPOL Hosted the Asia Pacific Public Policy Network Conference

PPOL Hosted Book Launch on “How Covid-19 Took Over the World: Lessons for the Future”

PPOL Visit to IPE in HKUST (GZ) Campus

PPOL Hosted the Asia Pacific Public Policy Network Conference

The Division of Public Policy (PPOL) has successfully hosted the 8th annual Asia Pacific Public Policy Network (AP|PPN) Conference on 1 and 2 June 2023. It is the second time that PPOL has hosted the conference, and this year's theme is "Public Policy in a Turbulent World" inviting experts across multiple disciplines from different parts of the world to talk about public policy issues in a post-pandemic world. The 2-day AP|PPN conference consisted of 2 keynote speeches, 1 panel conversation, 6 workshops, and 130 sessional talks.

The AP|PPN is a flagship conference in the Asia Pacific region for public policy scholars. The AP|PPN began with the opening remarks given by Professor Naubahar Sharif, Acting Head and Professor of PPOL, and Professor Xun Wu, Professor of the Trust of Innovation, Policy and Entrepreneurship, at the Society Hub, HKUST (GZ), and a member of the steering committee of AP|PPN, gave the welcome speech.



Professor Naubahar Sharif delivered the AP|PPN opening speech



Professor Xun Wu delivering welcome speech

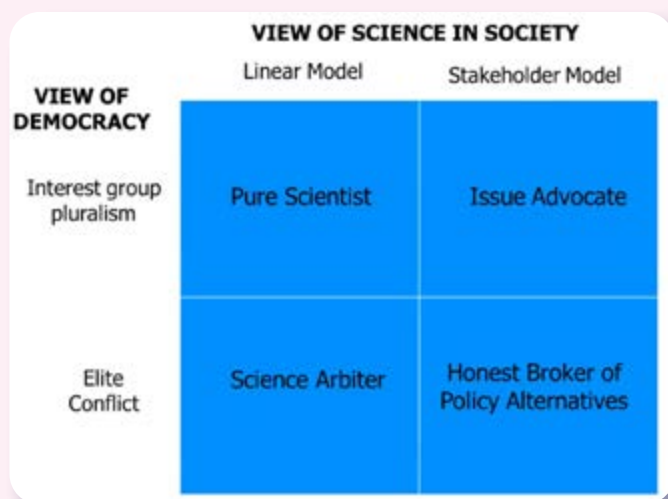
Keynote Speech by Professor Roger A. Pielke Jr.



Prof. Pielke Jr. delivering the keynote speech on Day 1 of AP|PPN Conference

Prof. Pielke Jr. who authored the book "Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics" and a few other books on climate change and politics is currently professor in environmental studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, he gave a keynote speech for the AP-PPN conference on the topic "Science Advise in the Covid-19 pandemic" which is public policy research beyond Covid itself, Prof. Pielke Jr. started the keynote by giving definitions to science, expert, policy, politics, and politicization of science, the politicization of science should be encouraged according to Prof. Pielke Jr.. He stated that there are four roles that experts can

play in policy advising, as shown in the figure below, and whatever advice given towards decision-making is policy advice, whether it is science advice, expert advice, or political advice. Professor Pielke Jr. gave some famous examples of advisory mechanisms, namely science, expert, political, and policy advice, and presented his research results under the context of Covid-19 pandemic. The Emergency of Science Advice in a Pandemic Emergency (ESCAPE) of Hong Kong, Italy, the Netherlands, and Japan during the Covid-19 pandemic were compared in his presentation, and examples of countries or regions that neglected (the US) or those that failed to incorporate expert advice (the UK, Japan, Italy, Hong Kong) can be generally be interpreted as a policy failure, followed by a comparison of how countries balance between economic growth and control of the Covid-19 pandemic, examples include the US, Dutch (the shadow advisory), the UK, Italy. Prof. Pielke emphasized that policy requires integration, not different islands of expertise. The concepts of shadow science advice, adversarial governance, stealth advocacy, and misplaced accountability were explained.



Four idealized roles for scientists in decision-making (Source: “The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Policy and Politics” by R. A. Pielke Jr.)

Keynote Speech by Professor Stuart Gietel-Basten

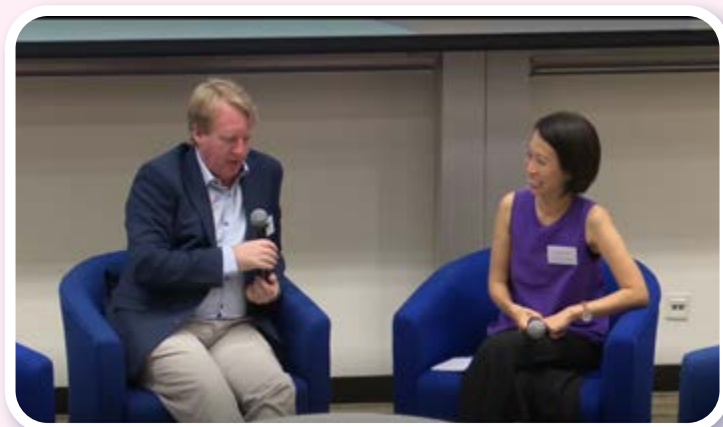
Prof. Gietel-Basten, Professor in social science and public policy at HKUST, author of the book “Why Demography Matters?” gave his keynote on “Is Demographic ‘Crisis’ an Inevitable Consequence of the Development Welfare State?” He pointed out the challenge posed by low fertility and the failure of two-dimensional pronatalist policies suggesting that the governments in Asia fail to address the fundamental and multidimensional causes of low fertility. Prof. Gietel-Basten presented the possible socio-theoretical reasons behind the low fertility rate: compressed modernity and the accelerated pace of changes in Asia as compared with Europe; clash of ideologies across generations; risks placed on the new generations’ shoulders arising out of the transition from family/ community collective to individual responsibility; inadequate social cushioning during the transition to compressed modernity; the work no.1 obligation; predominant strength of political and industrial authority; the compounding effect of education fever without enough family-raising support; lack of incentive to support people in work; the existential threat due to persistent gender inequalities, the dualization of the labor market, etc.. Looking forward to the future regarding this issue, Prof. Gietel-Basten suggested that there should be inclusive family policy responsive to the changes in the world, and to accelerate the gender attitudinal shift with zero tolerance for gender-based violence and discrimination. A social protection system should be set up early.



Prof. Gietel-Basten delivering the keynote speech on Day 2 of the AP|PPN Conference

Panel Conversation between Prof. Benjamin J. Cowling and Ms. Diana Jou

On day two of the AP|PPN Conference, we also had a panel conversation session between Prof. Benjamin J. Cowling, Chair of Epidemiology and Division Head of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of Hong Kong, and Diana Jou, seasoned journalist and Lecturer of HKU Journalism and Media on Covid-19 pandemic under the topic of “Looking Ahead: Rebalancing Policy Response and Science Advice for Better Crisis Preparedness” that reflected on the important issues during the Covid-19 pandemic and important lessons learned from a public health point of view, such as contact tracing, vaccine controversy and interesting research findings, vaccination hesitancy, public healthcare during Covid, science advice and conspiracy theory in other parts of the world, and more.



Panel conversation reflecting on policy lessons learned from the Covid pandemic



PPOL Hosted Book Launch on “How Covid-19 Took Over the World: Lessons for the Future”



From the left: Prof. Xiangwei Wang, Prof. Hualing Fu, Prof. Christine Loh, Prof. Richard Cullen, Prof. Naubahar Sharif, Prof. Alex He

In March 2023, the Division of Public Policy (PPOL) hosted a book launch for “How Covid-19 Took Over the World: Lessons for the Future” two weeks after the Hong Kong government lifted all mandatory mask-wearing requirements. As the Covid-19 pandemic has swept the world for more than three years, reflecting on the lessons learned at this critical juncture was very timely. We invited the editor and contributing author of the book, Prof. Christine Loh, SBS, JP, OBE, Chevalier de l’Ordre National du Mérite, Chief Development Strategist of HKUST; Prof. Hualing Fu, Warren Chan Professor of Human Rights and Responsibilities and Dean of the HKU Faculty of Law, contributing author of the book and keynote speaker of the book launch; Prof. Xiangwei Wang, Associate Professor of Practice at HKBU, former Editor-in-Chief of SCMP, and award-winning journalist as discussant for Prof. Fu’s chapter; Prof. Richard Cullen, Visiting Professor at HKU Law School, contributing author of the book; and Prof. Richard Fielding, psychologist at the Division of Behavioral Health, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, HKU as discussant for Prof. Cullen’s chapter. Prof. Alex Jingwei He, Associate Professor

of PPOL, HKUST served as the MC of the book talk, and Professor Naubahar Sharif, Acting Head and Professor of PPOL, HKUST as the moderator of the panel discussion session.

Prof. Christien Loh first introduced how the book “How Covid-19 Took Over the World: Lessons for the Future” came about, tracing to the precursor of the book “At the Epicentre: Hong Kong and the SARS Outbreak” on SARS published in 2004 and gave an overview of the issues and topics addressed in the book about Covid, the book has paid particular attention to adding to the existing knowledge by looking at issues that had been neglected and emphasized the articulation of what happened in Greater China during the pandemic. The book’s first eight chapters serve as background to the neglected issues, with the second half of the book, i.e. Ch. 9-Ch. 13 gives the government’s response to Covid, such as the speakers’ chapters, Prof. Hualing Fu on mainland China’s response to Covid-19 (“Pandemic Control in China’s Gated Communities”), and a chapter about Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau and Singapore’s response to Covid (“The Hong Kong

and Greater China Response to Covid-19” by Prof. Richard Cullen.

The keynote speech was delivered by Prof. Hualing Fu with Prof. Xiangwei Wang as the discussant. Prof. Fu shared with the audience the fruit of his study on the micro-institutions at the grass-root level and interaction between the state and society in China during the Covid-19 pandemic, the exercise of infrastructural power in mainland China, delineating the reason for the high political trust of Chinese people towards the government during the Covid-19 pandemic evidenced in China’s efficiency to mobilize people with minimal resistance, the social context for the initial success of zero-Covid policy in China in the early months and years of the pandemic, and why the zero-Covid policy failed in the case of Shanghai lockdown and consequently the end of the zero-Covid policy. Very important and valuable sociopolitical and legal concepts and viewpoints were brought up during Prof. Fu’s keynote, which was an intellectual feast for the audience. Prof. Wang shared with the audience his valuable first-hand experience during the Covid-19 pandemic in mainland China, and he witnessed the immense power of street officials in carrying out the zero-Covid policy and shared his views on the impact of the zero-Covid policy in mainland China.

Prof. Cullen gave an overview of his chronological and event-based chapter about Hong Kong during the pandemic, mainly on vaccination, zero-Covid, living with Covid, as well as Covid and Hong Kong’s social contract. Prof. Cullen pointed out that Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and Singapore all run

particularly sound public finance systems, so they could be cushioned from the pandemic by relying on fiscal reserves rather than borrowing heavily as in the case of most Western jurisdictions. About social contracts in Hong Kong, Prof. Cullen quoted Barrington Moore’s advanced version of class analysis that certain societal structures influence the primary protocols of a given social contract; this argument holds that operational political regimes are profoundly shaped by the social structure of a given jurisdiction. Prof. Cullen said the merits of Hong Kong’s primary Covid management policy had been intensely debated, but the well-being of the lower-income population has been prioritized in Hong Kong during the pandemic.

Prof. Fielding pointed out the great contrast between the response of governments of the Western countries and those in Greater China, while the West rapidly adopted ‘living with Covid’, it did so in a post hoc way, and the laissez-faire attitude of governance to the infection to gain a foothold was a failure from the beginning. Regarding vaccine hesitancy in Hong Kong, Prof. Fielding pointed out the importance of trust, that trust in the government goes hand in hand with what the government recommends.

The keynote speeches were followed by a Panel Discussion chaired by Prof. Naubahar Sharif; some thought-provoking questions were raised during the discussion session and encouraged the audience to think and reflect on the lessons learned from the pandemic in the past three years. The book launch concluded with great success.



Prof. Naubahar Sharif chaired the panel discussion



Prof. Richard Fielding

PPOL Visit to IPE in HKUST (GZ) Campus



Before the commencement of the Fall Semester, the faculty of the Division of Public Policy visited the Thrust of Innovation, Policy and Entrepreneurship (IPE) of the Society Hub of the HKUST (GZ) Campus. PPOL arrived at the beautiful HKUST Guangzhou campus on 24 August 2023. The faculty of PPOL were warmly welcomed by Professor Danyang Xie, Dean of the Society Hub, Professor Xun Wu, Chair Professor, and other faculty members of IPE. Prof. Xie extended a very warm welcome to the PPOL faculty and staff. IPE staff guided us to see the vibrant and dynamic campus and introduced the programs, such as the interdisciplinary teamwork, real-world-application emphasized RedBird Mphil program and supporting facilities like the Hybay and Maker Space.

We had the faculty meeting session in the afternoon. Professor Naubahar Sharif, Acting Head and Professor of PPOL first introduced our Division, its research strength and faculty profile, strategic areas of focus, ongoing research projects and the postgraduate programs offered by PPOL, followed by Prof. Xie's introduction to the thrust areas in HKUST (GZ) and Society Hub, pointed out that everything in the four thrusts in the Society Hub is incorporated by policy study. Prof. Xie recapitulated IPE's mission and cross-disciplinary areas and introduced taught and research postgraduate programs offered by the Thrust of IPE. Prof. Ye Qi gave the institutional history of the Society Hub at HKUST (GZ).

Each PPOL and IPE faculty member introduced their research background and shared their ongoing

research projects and recent research findings to explore the potential synergies and collaboration opportunities in respective areas of expertise, consolidate the existing collaborative projects, and identify related research areas to generate a synergy of long-term collaboration. Very inspiring and informative research areas and topics were shared and presented. Prof. Naubahar Sharif, Prof. Kira Matus, Prof. Alex He, Prof. Masaru Yarime, Prof. Magdalena Klemun, Prof. Xiaofan Zhao, Prof. Julien de Troullioud de Lanversin from PPOL presented their recent research work and on-going projects; and Prof. Ye Qi, Prof. Xun Wu, Prof. Jinyu He, Prof. Jia Li, Prof. Corey Xu, and Prof. Xu Zhang, Prof. Luoye Chen, Prof. Yun Hou, Prof. Chenyang Li from IPE presented their research work and on-going projects. The meeting between PPOL and IPE has been tremendously fruitful, and we look forward to collaborating with IPE in HKUST (GZ) in various public policy expertise areas.

