

Newman M.K. Lam & Ian Scott eds., *Gaming, Governance and Public Policy in Macao*,
Hong Kong University Press, 2011, 320 pp.

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This book is a good summary of nearly all important transformations happening in Macao since the liberalization of the gaming industry in 2002. The changes of society are so remarkable economically that it would be surprising if concentrated, casino-driven foreign investments on this scale and at such speed in a very small place like Macao did not result in some social dislocation and instability (pp.xi). The 15 contributors who provided texts are experts in their field, and the editors, Newman and Scott have done a very valuable work in gathering them to give readers a fairly comprehensive view of Macao today. Newman is an active member in the Public Service Evaluation Committee and the Public Administration Reform Advisory Committee in Macao, and Scott is a well-known scholar and author studying issues in Hong Kong public administration. Thus this book combines both theoretical and practical reviews of various events that shape contemporary Macao.

Going through the pages, readers discover that each chapter points out outstanding issues. Chapter 1 demonstrates, in a historical way, how social stability and economic growth have compromised each other throughout the development of the gaming industry. Liberalization of the gaming industry results in modulating the existing balance among the city. New or inherited social-economic issues appear to seek for a new equilibrium. The editors have highlighted some critical political, governmental and social issues, where tensions are gradually increasing. They are the use of land, political culture, the position of the legislative council and traditional associations, civil service reform, corruption, labor issues, education, health, housing, and social welfare (p.13).

Chapter 2 discusses the contention between society in general and casino operators over the use of land. Imbalance of land development leads to irrevocable losses: the wall effect created by high rises, disappearance of gardens, lesser places in NAPE for public facilities, the blocking of the view of the Guia lighthouse,¹ destruction of wetland for the Cotai Strip casino and hotel projects, and so forth. The discontent, sparkled extensively since 2006 on the Guia lighthouse issue (p.31), arise mainly because of the government's lacks of transparency, the heavy presence of corruption and the lack of public consultation, something that may not be new in the territory but which is perhaps more resented nowadays than is the case with foreign investment. Better governance is thus the key issue to ameliorate discontent from general public (See Chapter 3).

Chapter 4 explores how to redress the above situations by increasing the accountability of the legislative council and the creation of committees for public consultation and professional reviews. The government revamps its image by shifting its law-making power from executive entities to legislature in response to socio-economic circumstances (pp.73-74). The traditional four major pro-Beijing associations, that is, the Macao Chamber of Commerce, the Macao Federation of Trade Unions, the General Union of Neighbourhood Associations, and the

¹ [Ed.'s note: The Guia Fortress and its lighthouse is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Added to a 17th century hermitage built atop a hill in Macao, the lighthouse has remained visible from the sea and city since its construction in the 1860s.]

Women's General Association of Macao, as explained in chapter 5, may well see their role changed in the process. Of course, it can be said that the civil service needs deeper reform due to insufficient support by the law; this is a civil service that is still under the shadow of the corruption case for bribery and money laundering of Ao Man-lung (歐文龍), Macao's former Secretary for Transport and Public Works (pp.98-99). In order to make the public administration more efficient, wage increases may not be as efficient as the government expects. For the population at large, unjust and structural unemployment is the main concern, with what in chapter 8 is qualified as a robust, yet volatile gaming industry. A new labor law has been one of the most obvious reactions by the government. As a particular example, chapter 9 details the case of croupiers, which interweave business, social and political incentives (pp.161). Education, discussed in chapter 10, is also part of the effort of the government facing the future, especially the up-grading of tertiary education, when present institutions in the territory do not seem to greatly appeal to local students, although improvements may be seen. Housing policy, discussed in chapter 11, is of course a hot topic with the huge increase of property prices.

Chapter 12 concludes that a market mechanism is not a magic means to ensure proper redistribution of wealth; not a new idea, but one that is worth reminding the government of, especially in times of economic expansion. That is why the editors, Newman and Scott, insist that the government, willingly or reluctantly, must consider new ways of governance to tackle issues in order to maintain stability and harmony in society while enjoying the city's economic growth.

Most of the events covered in this book are well known among the general public, but reading them definitely makes readers understand them better, even those living in Macao. This book documents dramatic changes in Macao that could be easily forgotten, but which it invites us to reflect on. Though the authors do not propose a blueprint for reform, they could have been at times more concrete in their arguments about the future.

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