

Trust, Transparency and Transnational lessons from Covid 19

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Abstract

Comparing the mode of health crisis management in the four distinct jurisdictions of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the United Kingdom, this article considers how varying trust-transparency mixes provide the context for understanding the public governance of the Covid 19 pandemic. The case of Covid 19 illustrates a trust-transparency paradox, whereby trust requires transparency (witness the reaction to early attempts in China to deny the virus and control information), but transparency can undermine trust (insofar as it focuses attention on the malfunctioning of liberal democracies and their uneven management of the crisis). Trust (inter-personal, civil society, political) is key to controlling the virus in the immediate sense, while transparency (and openness) is the precondition for a longer term resilient and sustainable policy response. The relationship between transparency and trust makes most sense in the context of open societies, where these concepts can be meaningfully investigated and correlated. The task of disinterested political leadership falls particularly on the shoulders of the main democracies that should work to guarantee global health governance.

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