

Unfolding the Affective Atmospheres during the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis: The Constitution and Performance of Affective Governance in Taiwan

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Abstract : This paper examines the changing essences and effects of 'affective atmosphere' during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which have been facilitated and shaped the 'affective governance' in Taiwan. Due to long-term uncertainty and unpredictability, the COVID-19 pandemic not only caused unprecedented global crisis but triggered the public's negative emotional responses. This paper unravels how the shortage of Personal Protective Equipment and the proliferating fake news heightened people's fear and anxiety and how specific affective atmospheres can be provoked and manipulated to harness emotional appeals of citizens strategically in Taiwan. Through the in-depth interviews with diverse stakeholders involved, it unfolds the dynamics and strategies of affective governance, wherein public emotions and concerns are now given significant consideration in both policy measures and the affective expression of leadership, spatial arrangement, service delivery, and the interaction with citizens. Addressing psychosocial and emotional needs has become the core of crisis response mechanisms suited to dynamic affective atmospheres and pandemic situation. This paper also demonstrates that epidemic prevention and control is not merely the production of neutral or rational policy-making processes, as it is dominated by multiple emotions resulted from unexpected and salient events at different moments. It provides explicit insight into how different prevention scenarios operated effectively through political and affective mobilisation to strengthen emotional bonding and collective identity which energises collective action. Basically, successful affective governance calls for both negative and positive emotions, for both scientific and political decision-making, for both community and bureaucracy, and both quality and efficiency of private-public collaboration.

Keywords : affective atmospheres, affective governance, COVID-19 pandemic, private-public collaboration

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