



# The Cross-Regional Impact of Taiwan’s Same-Sex Marriage Legalisation: The Queer Economy of Welfare Mix

Iris Po Yee Lo\* , Sam Wai Kam Yu\*\* , Grace Ho\*, Issac Ng\*\*\* and Sze Man Lee†

\*The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

\*\*The University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

\*\*\*City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

†Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

**Corresponding author:** Iris Po Yee Lo; E-mail: [iris-py.lo@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:iris-py.lo@polyu.edu.hk)

---

*This article builds a bridge between research on the queer economy and that on the mixed economy of welfare by developing the ‘queer economy of welfare mix’ framework. While the two fields are related, there is a lack of discussion about the queer dimensions of the mixed economy of welfare or the mixed strategies employed by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals to explore the benefits and limitations of the queer economy. The purpose of our framework is to show how local and transnational goods provided by the mixed economy of welfare can enable LGBTQ+ individuals to organise their welfare through the mixed strategies – citizen strategy, consumer strategy, and consumer-citizen strategy. By examining Taiwan’s legalised same-sex marriage and its impact on Hong Kong and Mainland China, we demonstrate the empirical significance of the framework, which serves as an analytical tool for examining the government’s role in promoting LGBTQ+ individuals’ welfare and the challenges involved.*

**Keywords:** Queer economy of welfare mix, transnational goods, local goods, same-sex marriage, LGBTQ+.

## Introduction

This article is set against the backdrop of growing attention to the welfare of LGBTQ+ individuals and ongoing debates about the potential and limitations of the queer economy. In discussing the role of the market in LGBTQ+ people’s lives, scholars have raised important questions about the extent to which queer subjects are socially included as consumer subjects, but not as social subjects (Hennessy, 2000; McCaskell, 2018). This, to a large extent, echoes the concept of the mixed economy of welfare, which suggests that individuals organise their welfare through engagement in various sectors beyond the market, and that it is important to identify ways of improving individuals’ welfare through other sectors, namely the family and the government. While the literature on the queer economy and that on the mixed economy of welfare can be related, there is currently a lack of discussion about their commonalities and linkages. This article addresses this gap and builds a constructive bridge between the two fields.

Our objectives are two-fold. Firstly, we develop the ‘queer economy of welfare mix’ framework. It seeks to highlight the importance of diverse local and transnational goods provided by the mixed economy of welfare – which is comprised of a mixture of sectors, including the government, the family, and the market – in enabling LGBTQ+ individuals to organise their welfare through the utilisation of mixed strategies, such as the citizen strategy, consumer strategy, and consumer-citizen strategy. Combining a queer perspective with the concept of the ‘welfare mix’, highlighting the plural nature of the resources that contribute to welfare, we show how our framework serves as a valuable analytical tool for examining governments’ role in promoting LGBTQ+ individuals’ welfare, and the challenges involved.

Secondly, we demonstrate the empirical significance of the framework by focusing on Taiwan’s legalised same-sex marriage. Specifically, we analyse the policy’s implications for the provision of local and transnational goods and LGBTQ+ people’s use of strategies across three Asian locales with shared Confucian roots, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China. While legal recognition of same-sex marriage/partnership has become a heated topic in Asia in recent years (Tang *et al.*, 2020), little theorisation has addressed the potential impact of Taiwan’s legalised same-sex marriage on neighbouring locales. Focusing on these three locales enables us to discuss how the policy on same-sex marriage in Taiwan may translate into cross-regional exchanges of both market and non-market goods and enhance the welfare of LGBTQ+ individuals, not only within Taiwan, but also in Hong Kong and Mainland China.

This article is divided into three parts. The first provides an overview of the queer economy and the mixed economy of welfare. The second outlines our conceptualisation of the ‘queer economy of welfare mix’ framework and discusses its value in enhancing our understanding of how the government can influence LGBTQ+ individuals’ ways of organising their welfare. The third discusses Taiwan’s legalised same-sex marriage and its impact on Hong Kong and Mainland China, and summarises the lessons learnt from Taiwan’s case.

### Queer economy

Seeing capitalism as one of the key engines of cultural globalisation (Jackson, 2009), urban and queer scholarship has paid increasing attention to the development of the queer economy (Heiliger, 2015; Huang and Wong, 2019). This body of literature explores how the market has provided space for LGBTQ+ individuals to lead their lives and how consumption, space, and mobility are gendered, sexualised, racialised, and/or classed (Heiliger, 2015). To date, most studies have been conducted in urban gay centres in the Global North, focusing on the rise of commercial gay neighbourhoods, gay tourism, and a critique of the pink market, which predominantly targets middle-class gay consumers and marginalises less-privileged members of the LGBTQ+ community (Peñaloza, 2013). Less is known, however, about the landscape of the queer economy in Asia. It is worth exploring how LGBTQ+ activism and civil rights gains in Asian contexts can potentially contribute to a thriving pink market. Taiwan’s recent legalisation of same-sex marriage thus serves as a key starting point for discussing the dynamics of the queer economy in Asia, as we illustrate with examples from three Chinese societies – Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Taiwan – in the later part of the article.

The queer economy can be understood as a local and transnational economy that: i) caters to the needs and interests of LGBTQ+ individuals, and ii) calls into question 'the very idea of norms and normativity' and challenges the established cis-/hetero-normative order in market and non-market arenas (Gibson-Graham, 1999: 83). 'Queer' here entails decentring heteronormativity and challenging the hegemony of normative and restrictive assumptions and related practices (Butler, 1990), enabling us to expand our understanding of economic processes and their implications for different aspects of people's lives, namely family lives and working lives. As Seidman (1994: 174) argues, research on homosexuality is more than a study of a minority, but reveals 'knowledges and social practices which organise 'society' as a whole'. Extending this line of queer enquiry, we highlight the importance of studying how local and transnational goods are provided and consumed and critically explore what the queer economy can and cannot do for LGBTQ+ people. This can help to reveal a diverse economy through which the possibilities for different forms of queer lives can be explored and expanded.

The discussion of the queer economy offers valuable insights into ways of improving LGBTQ+ individuals' welfare. As we discuss below, LGBTQ+ individuals may employ consumer and citizen strategies to enhance their welfare within and beyond the market. Furthermore, they may seek support not only from their local communities but also through the transnational economy. When examining whether LGBTQ+ individuals have access to sufficient resources to improve their lives, it is crucial to consider not only their ability to afford an adequate amount of market goods, but also their eligibility to access sufficient non-market goods, to which we now turn.

### **The mixed economy of welfare**

Extensive research conducted since the early 1980s has examined the concept of the mixed economy of welfare, highlighting that welfare provision extends beyond the government to include the market and the family (Innes, 1996; Lewis, 1999; Powell and Miller, 2014; Chau and Yu, 2022). This perspective emphasises the important roles played by all the three pillars in promoting welfare. It underscores the significance of studying the mixed economy of welfare to deepen our understanding of how people's welfare is generated through diverse means. The novelty of our study lies in its exploration of the implications of the mixed economy of welfare for understanding how LGBTQ+ individuals navigate the spheres of the market, government, and family when organising their welfare.

#### *Diverse strategies for promoting welfare*

Echoing the discussion of the queer economy, the studies of the mixed economy of welfare emphasise diverse strategies that individuals can employ to enhance their welfare in market and non-market areas. Examples include the consumer strategy and the citizen strategy, through which individuals can proactively enhance their welfare.

The promotion of individual welfare through the acquisition of goods and services in the market is the essence of the consumer strategy. It largely hinges on a person's purchasing power (the affordability factor) (Lipsey, 1980; Yu, 1998). Meanwhile, the citizen strategy emphasises the importance of exercising one's rights as a citizen to improve welfare. The effectiveness of this strategy largely depends on the individual's

eligibility to access non-market goods (the eligibility factor) (Yu, 1990). One prominent example of a non-market good is the merit good, which the government believes people tend to under-consume and therefore should be subsidised or provided free (Sandler and Arce, 2002; Kapstein and Busby, 2010). It is common for these strategies to be employed together. Below are some examples:

- Simultaneously using the consumer and citizen strategies: Individuals may seek free consultations in public clinics as citizens while purchasing medicines from private pharmacies as consumers.
- Using the consumer strategy to create favourable conditions for employing the citizen strategy for welfare enhancement: For instance, migrants may purchase a private house in their host country to become citizens, thereby gaining access to government-provided goods and services.
- Leveraging the citizen strategy to create favourable conditions for employing the consumer strategy for welfare enhancement: One may choose to rely on government subsidies to purchase goods in the market.

### *Transnational goods*

In relation to the role of the consumer and citizen strategies in enhancing people's welfare, it is essential to recognise and explore the potential of not only local goods but also transnational goods in supporting these strategies. Transnational goods refer to goods that are accessible to people beyond geographical/national boundaries. There are two main types: transnational market goods and transnational non-market goods. Transnational market goods involve the exchange of goods between buyers and sellers who are usually not located in the same country/region. These goods can be traded online or through in-person transactions when buyers or sellers travel to foreign countries/regions. Similar to local market goods, the primary determinant of access to such goods is purchasing power (the affordability factor).

The studies of transnational non-market goods encompass various examples, such as global merit goods and global public goods (Anand, 2004; Bodansky, 2012; Kapstein and Busby, 2010). According to Kapstein and Busby (2010), global merit goods are goods that should be accessible to all individuals worldwide, regardless of their ability to afford them. While life-extending drugs are typically seen as private goods that are both rivalrous and excludable, they can be transformed into merit goods if every person in need, irrespective of financial status, can access them. At this point, they can be recognised as global merit goods. Global public goods are goods that exhibit the qualities of being non-excludable and non-rivalrous in the benefits they provide across countries/regions (Anand, 2004; Bodansky, 2012). An example is research findings collected by one country that are made available to people from other countries. Another example is policy practices implemented by one country that can be transferred and applied to other countries. These instances exemplify the nature of global public goods, of which the benefits and knowledge generated can be shared and accessed across countries.

Transnational goods can have different relationships with local goods. Firstly, people can use transnational goods as substitutes for local goods. For instance, individuals may rely upon healthcare services in other countries instead of their own to meet their health

needs. Secondly, the purchase of transnational goods and local goods can complement each other. For example, individuals may obtain a bachelor's degree from a local university to qualify for studying a master's degree abroad. This suggests that, by effectively coordinating the utilisation of both local and transnational goods, individuals may be able to obtain support locally, regionally, and internationally to improve their welfare.

### *Welfare outcomes*

In line with the ideas of the queer economy, the mixed economy of welfare recognises that welfare outcomes encompass more than just material gains. They also encompass other benefits, such as enhancing individual agency in organising social relationships and fostering more favourable social conditions. To exemplify this notion, this sub-section illustrates the potential of the consumer and citizen strategies to empower individuals to actively respond to their family relationships.

Utilisation of the consumer and citizen strategies, either independently or in combination, can have a significant impact on the creation and transformation of family relationships. These processes offer a range of potential outcomes. Firstly, individuals can reduce reliance on their families to meet their needs by embracing the citizen and consumer strategies. For example, they may delegate family care responsibilities to either the private or public sector (Yu *et al.*, 2015). Secondly, some non-market goods (such as public housing) are allocated based on family rights (Chau and Yu, 2022). By utilising these family rights to access non-market goods, individuals enhance the significance of their families in meeting their needs. Hence, the citizen strategy becomes a valuable tool to elevate the importance of families in promoting individual welfare. Conversely, it is not uncommon for family members to collectively purchase goods in the market. Therefore, the consumer strategy serves as a significant mechanism for reinforcing the importance of families in improving people's welfare. Thirdly, the application of the consumer and citizen strategies can facilitate the formation of new families. For instance, the utilisation of public and private reproductive services enables non-biological parents to establish two-generational families. When considering these possibilities, it becomes evident that employing the consumer and citizen strategies provides individuals with a wider range of options for managing their family relationships. Meanwhile, to ensure that individuals have the opportunity to exercise these strategies, an inclusive social environment where individuals are given freedom and support to make choices that align with their preferences is needed.

### **Conceptual framework: Queer economy of welfare mix**

Building on the discussion of the mixed economy of welfare and the queer economy, we have developed the 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework, which comprises three elements (see Fig. 1). These are: the availability of goods (input one); the strategies employed by LGBTQ+ individuals to utilise these goods to promote their welfare (input two); and welfare outcomes. This framework is mainly concerned with the extent to which LGBTQ+ individuals' strategies to utilise different goods may shape their welfare outcomes,<sup>1</sup> thereby identifying possible ways for the government to enhance the welfare of LGBTQ+ individuals and the potential limitations involved.

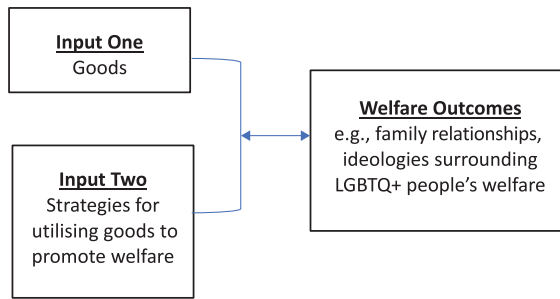


Figure 1. Queer economy of welfare mix.

Input one examines the wide array of local and transnational goods accessible to LGBTQ+ individuals, providing them with opportunities to employ strategies for improving their welfare. Input two focuses on the consumer and citizen strategies that LGBTQ+ individuals may engage in. Concerning the output, we examine the impact of these goods and strategies on the welfare of LGBTQ+ individuals. Building on the preceding discussion, this article specifically focuses on two welfare outcomes.

Firstly, we consider changes in the roles that families play in supporting LGBTQ+ individuals and whether the institution of the family has been reproduced, modified, and/or queered as LGBTQ+ individuals utilise the consumer and citizen strategies to build their own intimate and family lives. Secondly, we delve into the impacts of the consumer and citizen strategies on the ideologies surrounding LGBTQ+ people's welfare. Ideologies can be understood as a form of intellectual map to help people make sense of the world, find their place in it, and analyse political and social events (Harrison and Boyd, 2018). Reflecting wider power structures, ideologies are sets of values and beliefs shared by a social group and yet subject to change and resistance (Harrison and Boyd, 2018). It is thus important to examine different ideological beliefs regarding LGBTQ+ people's welfare and the reasons behind them. For example, ideological beliefs regarding whether diverse preferences should be respected, whether advocacy for LGBTQ+ welfare should be supported, and whether strategies for advancing LGBTQ+ rights and welfare should lean towards inclusion into the mainstream or subversive social transformation, still vary within and across social groups (McCaskell, 2018). The queer lens enables us to move beyond a narrow focus on economic flows of goods and identity politics and analyse how the implementation of different consumer and citizen strategies may reinforce normative beliefs and/or engender alternative forms of queer lives.

Combining the queer perspective with the 'welfare mix', highlighting the plural nature of resources that contribute to welfare (Powell and Miller, 2014), the 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework serves as a valuable analytical tool for examining governments' role in promoting the welfare of LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as the challenges in fulfilling this role. Government interventions have the potential to enhance LGBTQ+ quality of life by challenging the heteronormative logics that largely underpin welfare provision and ensuring the availability of diverse goods, including both local and transnational, market and non-market. The government can employ various methods to achieve this objective, such as directly providing merit goods to LGBTQ+ individuals, creating favourable conditions for them to access local market goods, and collaborating with other governments and international organisations to facilitate the provision of

transnational non-market goods. The implementation of these strategies directly influences the opportunities available to LGBTQ+ individuals to utilise citizen and consumer strategies to improve their lives.

However, it is important to acknowledge the inherent limitations in governments' efforts to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals through the provision of goods. The effectiveness of these efforts is contingent upon several factors. These include the extent to which LGBTQ+ individuals can afford and are willing to utilise the available goods through the implementation of citizen and consumer strategies, the willingness of other governments to engage in collaborative efforts to provide transnational goods, and the diverse ideological beliefs regarding LGBTQ+ welfare held by different stakeholders, including governments, politicians and pressure groups, LGBTQ+ individuals, and their family members.

To illustrate the empirical importance of the 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework, we focus on the impact of Taiwan's legalised same-sex marriage on Taiwan and neighbouring Chinese societies, including Hong Kong and Mainland China. The next section briefly discusses the challenges confronting LGBTQ+ people and their responses to these challenges across the three sites.

### **Three locales**

#### *Hong Kong*

Over the past few decades, Hong Kong has been positioning itself as 'Asia's world city' and an international financial hub. There have been a few judicial victories in favour of LGBTQ+ rights in certain areas, including visas for dependants and spousal employment benefits (Lo *et al.*, 2023). Nevertheless, same-sex couples still have no right to marriage, civil partnership, or adoption/the use of assisted reproductive technology (ART). There is also currently no legislation protecting LGBTQ+ people from any forms of discrimination.

Despite limited legal protection for the LGBTQ+ community, Hong Kong has witnessed ongoing LGBTQ+ advocacy centring around the pink market and gay pride events. For instance, since 2008, Hong Kong has hosted an annual Pride Parade. In the past few years, due to COVID-19 and political restrictions on public gatherings, LGBTQ+ organisations have taken a new approach to the Pride Parade by hosting a 'Rainbow Market', where local businesses and organisations gather to support the LGBTQ+ community. In November 2023, Hong Kong hosted the Gay Games, an LGBTQ-inclusive sporting, arts, and cultural event, with sponsorships from different corporations and support from government authorities.

#### *Mainland China*

Homosexuality per se has never been criminalised in Mainland China, although it was associated with the crime of 'hooliganism' until 1997 (Ge, 1995). Since 2001, the Chinese Psychiatric Association no longer considers homosexuality a sexual disorder or mental illness (Wu, 2003). It is noteworthy that the economic reforms implemented since 1978 have significantly facilitated market growth, leading to the emergence of LGBTQ+-oriented cyberspace since the 1990s (Lo, 2022). China has become the world's third-largest pink market, after Europe and the USA, with an estimated annual market value of over US\$300 billion (Jennings, 2017).

Despite these advancements, the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals in Mainland China remain largely unmet. Same-sex couples are still denied legal access to marriage and adoption/ART. Recent years have witnessed tightening state control over online and offline discussions and events related to homosexuality (Liao, 2019; Lo, 2022). Since 2017, homosexuality-related content in online shows and programmes has been banned by the state (Liao, 2019). These conditions may put LGBTQ+ people into a difficult position in which they need to adjust their lives in response to ongoing changes in state policies.

### *Taiwan*

Taiwan is often seen as the beacon of East Asian democratisation in relation to LGBTQ+ rights and advocacy (Kong, 2019). Its LGBTQ+ culture and activism have had a strong impact on both Hong Kong and Mainland China since the 1990s. For instance, in 1996, Taiwan published 'the world's first Chinese-language gay and lesbian magazine', entitled 'G&L'. One-third of its sales are in Hong Kong (Erni and Spires, 2001). Additionally, the term 'lala', now a commonly used identity category adopted by Mainland Chinese women with same-sex desires, originates from a lesbian character called 'lazi' in a Taiwanese novel about lesbians entitled *E yu shou ji* (Wang, 2015). Taipei, the economic and cultural hub of Taiwan, has also become known for its LGBTQ+-friendly attractions.

Taiwan's vibrant LGBTQ+ market activities and popular culture have made it the Asian reference point and a source of queer liberal ideals for many LGBTQ+ individuals and communities (Kong, 2020; Tang et al., 2020). This is important because LGBTQ+ people in Taiwan share similar struggles with their counterparts in other Chinese societies, given the shared Confucian heritage of filial piety. Empirical research has shown that LGBTQ+ people in Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Taiwan continue to face similar difficulties in handling relationships with their families of origin, who tend to uphold traditional family values and pressurise their adult children to marry the opposite sex and have children (Engebretsen, 2014; Lo, 2023; Tang et al., 2020).

### **Implications of Taiwan's same-sex marriage legalisation**

This section delineates the relevance of the 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework to the discussion of Taiwan's same-sex marriage legalisation, and discusses its value in understanding the roles and limitations of the government in promoting the welfare of LGBTQ+ people.

#### *Five kinds of goods*

Taiwan's same-sex marriage legalisation has contributed to the provision of five distinct types of goods: local market goods, transnational market goods, merit goods, global merit goods, and global public goods.

##### a. Local market goods and transnational market goods

Western research has found that jurisdictions recognising same-sex marriage generally witness an increase in tourism revenues (Badgett 1998; Portelli, 2004). This includes



revenues generated directly from LGBTQ+ individuals travelling to these destinations for weddings and honeymoons and those brought by tourism to other sectors, such as the hotel, catering, and entertainment industries. Taiwan serves as a case in point.

The Pride Parade following Taiwan's same-sex marriage legalisation, in 2019, saw an impressive turnout of over 200,000 participants. Local organisers reported it as the largest LGBTQ+ Pride Parade in Asia (Zheng, 2019). Furthermore, the Taipei government has strategically marketed Taipei for LGBTQ+ tourism. During the Pride Parade in October 2022, the city also launched the '#ColorTaipei' campaign, including the 'Rainbow Bus Tour' and the 'Rainbow Market' with hundreds of stalls. These initiatives aimed to encourage the development of the pink market through collaboration with various sectors and catered to LGBTQ+ individuals, allies, and tourists from around the globe.

#### b. Merit goods and global merit goods

Same-sex marriage can be considered a merit good as it grants same-sex couples publicly recognised status and enables them to exercise their family rights to access welfare benefits. In 2023, responding to LGBTQ+ organisations' petitions and several lawsuits fighting for marriage rights for cross-border same-sex couples, the Taiwanese government has taken one step further, allowing same-sex couples with non-Taiwanese partners from jurisdictions that do not allow same-sex marriage to register a marriage in Taiwan. Notably, this policy amendment has limitation – it does not apply to individuals from Mainland China because citizens of Mainland China are governed under a different set of regulations regarding marriage in Taiwan according to Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior. It has, however, expanded the availability of benefits generated by same-sex marriage legalisation to a larger number of non-Taiwanese individuals.

#### c. Global public goods

As the first in Asia, Taiwan not only represents a milestone in the LGBTQ+ rights movement in a Confucian society, but also exemplifies potential pathways to marriage equality and social change in the face of a wide divergence of opinions. Research has identified several factors contributing to the revolutionary change in Taiwan's marriage policy. These include: the accumulation of wealth, increasing education (e.g., opportunities to meet different others through university education), the rise of liberal values (Cheng *et al.*, 2016; Adamczyk, 2017), and long-term lobbying efforts by LGBTQ+ communities over the past decades (Chien, 2012; Jeffreys and Wang, 2018; Tang *et al.*, 2020). Importantly, these research findings not only contribute to Taiwan, but also serve as global public goods, which can be shared worldwide, particularly in regions influenced by the Confucian tradition, such as Hong Kong and Mainland China.

Nevertheless, the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Taiwan is not without its challenges, which highlight the importance of understanding the barriers to LGBTQ+ rights and the role of the judiciary in protecting the rights of vulnerable groups. This is evident in the results of referendum votes in November 2018. Approximately 72 per cent of voters agreed that Civil Code marriage should be restricted to one man and one woman and 67 per cent voted against the protection of same-sex marital rights (Zheng, 2020). This echoes previous research suggesting that the Confucian legacy, which emphasises the heterosexual family model as the backbone of a harmonious society, is still one of the key

stumbling blocks in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights in Chinese societies (Kong, 2019; Lo *et al.*, 2023; Lo, 2024). The fact that the Legislative Yuan passed a special law in 2019 legalising marriage for same-sex couples, without amending the traditional definition of marriage in the Civil Code, still demonstrates the hegemony of heteronormative values. Meanwhile, the ruling demonstrates that legislators in Taiwan abide by the international legal framework which prohibits any state, group, or person from destructing basic rights and freedom enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Zheng, 2020). This provides a global lesson in how to preserve justice through law and protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups while mediating conflicting opinions. This lesson is an important global public good, one that can benefit neighbouring Asian countries/regions and other parts of the world.

### *Consumer and citizen strategies*

The goods generated by Taiwan's policies on same-sex marriage have the potential to facilitate both Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese LGBTQ+ individuals to implement consumer and citizen strategies and combinations of these strategies to improve their lives.

#### a. Consumer strategy

Since same-sex marriage legalisation in Taiwan, a growing number of travel agencies, such as Airbnb, Hotel.com, and MyTaiwanTour, have promoted a 'Rainbow Tour' for tourists, including those from Hong Kong and Mainland China (Luo, 2019). Such consumption can entail not only gay tourism but also purchases of books, music, movies, clothing, and other services, such as wedding planners, photographers, and insurance services.

One notable example is same-sex couples' consumption of wedding-related services. On 7 May 2019, immediately after Taiwan's legalisation of same-sex marriage, it was reported that the wedding service website [www.marry.com.tw](http://www.marry.com.tw) listed a whopping 1,024 wedding businesses that welcome same-sex couples (Cheung, 2019). In Hong Kong and Mainland China, although same-sex marriage is not yet legalised, recent years have seen more wedding planners and photographers catering to the needs of same-sex couples who want to travel abroad to register a marriage (Liu, 2023). While there is currently no data about the exact number of same-sex couples who have consumed these wedding services across the three locales, the availability of these consumption options provides a channel for same-sex couples to celebrate their love and marriage.

#### b. Citizen strategy

Taiwan recognising same-sex marriage as a global merit good provides opportunities for LGBTQ+ individuals and communities to learn how to leverage the citizen strategy by asserting their citizen rights. For instance, during the fight for marriage equality for cross-border same-sex couples, BigLove Alliance, a local LGBTQ+ organisation in Hong Kong, joined with several Taiwanese LGBTQ+ organisations in a press conference to call for legal recognition of marital rights for cross-border same-sex couples (Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights (TAPCPR), 2020). Taiwan has become an increasingly important meeting point for LGBTQ+ activists, scholars, and politicians, especially those

from Asia, to learn from Taiwan's trajectory of legalising same-sex marriage. These activities contribute to preparing LGBTQ+ individuals from different regions to effectively exercise their citizen strategy.

At the legal level, the courts have become a common battlefield for LGBTQ+ rights in Asia. In December 2022, a same-sex couple consisting of a Taiwanese citizen and her partner from Hong Kong won their lawsuit and were allowed to register their marriage in Taiwan. But it was not until January 2023 that the restrictions on cross-border same-sex marriage was officially lifted. This ruling can be seen as resulting from citizen strategies employed by individuals who have filed lawsuits to fight for equal marital rights and by more than three years of community advocacy within and beyond Taiwan.

The citizen strategy may also relate to migration. The existing literature shows that many LGBTQ+ people in Hong Kong and Mainland China have thought about migrating to other jurisdictions with a friendlier environment and equal citizen rights for LGBTQ+ communities (Kam, 2020; Lo *et al.*, 2022). Legalised cross-border same-sex marriage in Taiwan thus provides an option for Hong Kong citizens with a Taiwanese spouse to consider migrating to Taiwan. As mentioned earlier, this option, however, is still not available to Mainland Chinese citizens.

### c. Combinations of consumer-citizen strategies

The consumer-citizen strategy entails a combination of consumption and political practices aimed at generating social change and enhancing citizen rights. As previously mentioned, consumer strategies have the potential to create favourable conditions for individuals to exercise citizen strategies. The market goods associated with same-sex marriage legalisation in Taiwan play a role in facilitating such conditions.

One example is celebrating a same-sex marriage and/or wedding overseas and claiming rights as a married couple in one's home country/region. The legal battles for marriage equality in Taiwan have real ramifications for the rights of LGBTQ+ citizens in Hong Kong. Given the limited spousal benefits earned through judicial reviews in Hong Kong in recent years, Hong Kong citizens who choose to marry their same-sex partner in Taiwan are entitled to certain spousal rights in Hong Kong, such as the right to apply for a visa for a dependant and spousal employment benefits.

Another example of this strategy is the 'Queer Asia Filming Project' produced by GagaOOLala, Asia's first LGBTQ-focused online streaming service (Tam, 2020). GagaOOLala produced a documentary series, '*Queer Taiwan*', to document both the supporting and opposing views in the fight for same-sex marriage and the stories of different LGBTQ+ families. It then released another documentary series, '*Queer Asia*', to further capture LGBTQ+ voices in neighbouring regions, including Hong Kong, Japan, and Vietnam. This example is significant because this Taiwan streaming platform capitalises on the market as an effective platform to disseminate LGBTQ+ stories but, simultaneously, it challenges the dominance of heteronormativity in the entertainment industry and in the commercial world at large. Apart from using traditional capitalist logic and asking consumers to subscribe to its content, GagaOOLala also turned to crowdfunding – raising money from the public online and inviting volunteers and sponsors to become co-producers engaging in the pre-production brainstorming and creative production process. In short, LGBTQ+ audiences from many parts of the world can not only benefit from consuming the cultural products of the 'Queer Asia Filming

Project', but they can also potentially take part in this political project. This challenges heteronormativity and equips LGBTQ+ individuals to engage in their citizen strategies, creatively and collectively.

### *Welfare outcomes*

The citizen and consumer strategies can play a crucial role in shaping LGBTQ+ individuals' welfare, improving their family relationships, and influencing wider ideologies about LGBTQ+ people's welfare. Nevertheless, these strategies are not without limitations.

In terms of family life and family-related welfare, Taiwan's legalised same-sex marriage has provided more options for LGBTQ+ individuals to develop their intimate and family relations (Huang and Hang, 2023). Importantly, gaining legal marital status grants same-sex couples the rights associated with families and enables them to access welfare benefits. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that LGBTQ+ individuals can be discouraged from utilising citizen and consumer strategies due to anticipated negative reactions from their family members. Previous research has found that same-sex couples in Mainland China may register a same-sex marriage without informing their parents due to parental disapproval of homosexuality (Lo, 2020). In Taiwan, many same-sex couples still hesitate to come out to their families of origin due to concerns about the family's face/prestige in the (heterosexual-) family-centred context (Pai, 2017). As a result, registering a same-sex marriage and even organising a wedding in public entails careful rumination, in the face of a dilemma between recognising one's sexual identity and committed relationship and navigating affective ties with one's family of origin. These socio-political factors must be taken into account when considering the effectiveness of the citizen and consumer strategies.

It is noteworthy that the queer economy incorporating LGBTQ+ consumers into the marketplace is a highly contested phenomenon that is potentially both liberating and alienating (Peñaloza, 2013). On the one hand, market recognition of the unique needs of LGBTQ+ individuals is significant because it represents social validation, renders LGBTQ+ communities more visible, and increases public awareness of diversity and inclusion (Peñaloza, 2013). On the other hand, there are ongoing debates about the ideological messages conveyed through the implementation of the citizen and consumer strategies. Scholars have flagged up the risks of 'homonormativity' and critiqued the ways in which particular forms of 'assimilated' homosexuality have themselves become normative (Duggan, 2002). For instance, engaging in same-sex marriage and organising a wedding has been critiqued by some feminist and queer scholars as a complicit assimilation into the traditional institution of marriage and the logic of heteronormativity (Jeffreys, 2004; Nair, 2010). Homonormative consumption practices may also create a divide within LGBTQ+ communities along the lines of class, gender, and ethnicity, and neglect the needs of less visible and less privileged members (Jacobsen and Zeller, 2013). Reliance on consumer strategies can be seen as an overemphasis on capitalism, through which LGBTQ+ individuals may be welcome as consumer subjects but not as social subjects.

### *The roles and limitations of the government*

As discussed above, the 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework is useful in analysing the roles and limitations of the government in promoting the welfare of LGBTQ+ people. This point is supported by the example of Taiwan.

As the government officially recognises the rights of LGBTQ+ people, such progress is often associated with a more LGBTQ+-friendly social climate that encourages corporations to target them as a market segment (Peñaloza, 2013). It also tends to encourage more LGBTQ+ people to claim and express their identities through consumption (Peñaloza, 2013), and thus to embrace the consumer strategy. However, such progress does not affect all LGBTQ+ people equally – for example, economically disadvantaged individuals may still struggle to use citizen and/or consumer strategies to access transnational market goods. The extent to which LGBTQ+ people's rights and partnerships can be recognised and respected is also contingent upon other socio-political factors, such as anti-LGBTQ+ religious forces in Hong Kong, the suppression of LGBTQ+ activism in Mainland China, and deep-rooted (heterosexual-)family beliefs in both societies (Engebretsen, 2014; Lo, 2022; Lo *et al.*, 2023), which continue to reinforce heteronormative ideological values in society.

It is worth highlighting two lessons learnt from the example of Taiwan. Firstly, the presence of factors that limit (or support) the government's influence on the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals through the provision of goods indicates that the queer economy of welfare mix encompasses more than just the availability and quality of goods. It also represents a contested space where the government strives to achieve its policy objectives, while LGBTQ+ individuals exercise their agency to improve their lives through the citizen and consumer strategies. Secondly, the discussion of the role of the queer economy in LGBTQ+ people's welfare cannot be separated from the socio-political realities associated with the family and the government. It is crucial to recognise LGBTQ+ people's autonomy in organising their welfare, as they have the agency to choose whether and how to implement consumer and citizen strategies to enhance their material well-being and influence wider ideologies about LGBTQ+ welfare. They may seek assistance not only from their local government but also from other institutions, such as foreign governments and international organisations. However, their ability to implement consumer and citizen strategies according to their own preferences remains constrained by various factors, including the eligibility factor, the affordability factor, and anticipated negative reactions from family members.

## **Conclusion**

This article builds a constructive bridge between research on the queer economy and that on the mixed economy of welfare by developing the 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework. It sheds light on the queer dimensions of the mixed economy of welfare by discussing how its operation can significantly affect LGBTQ+ people's welfare and reshape ideologies about it. It also reveals the mixed strategies – the citizen strategy, consumer strategy, and consumer-citizen strategy – employed by LGBTQ+ individuals to explore the benefits and limitations of the queer economy. While this article primarily focuses on Taiwan's same-sex marriage legalisation and its impact on neighbouring Chinese societies, including Hong Kong and Mainland China, it highlights the empirical significance of the 'queer economy of welfare mix' framework. Further research can focus on two areas. Firstly, it would be valuable to explore additional types of welfare outcomes within the framework. This would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse impacts of the consumer and citizen strategies on LGBTQ+ people's welfare. Secondly, more empirical research across a wider range of contexts is needed to examine

LGBTQ+ people's views about and experiences of producing and/or consuming local and transnational goods directly or indirectly generated through legalised same-sex marriage. By doing so, we can deepen our understanding of the interconnectedness between the mixed economy of welfare and the queer economy, and their implications for the welfare of LGBTQ+ individuals across countries and regions.

### Competing interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

### Note

1 Given the dynamic nature of the economy, we do not rule out the possibility that welfare outcomes, such as family relationships and ideologies about LGBTQ+ people's welfare, may affect the availability of goods and LGBTQ+ individuals' strategies to utilise different goods. The relationships between input and output elements are not linear and can incorporate feedback loops.

### References

- Adamczyk, A. (2017) 'Shaping attitudes in Taiwan: a case study (OK, but not in my family)' in A. Adamczyk (ed.), *Cross-National Public Opinion about Homosexuality: Examining Attitudes Across the Globe*, Oakland: University of California Press, 170–190.
- Anand, P. B. (2004) 'Financing the provision of global public goods', *World Economy*, 27, 2, 215–237.
- Badgett, L. (1998) 'The fiscal impact on the state of Vermont of allowing same-sex couples to marry', *The Policy Journal of The Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies*, 98, 1, 1–8.
- Bodansky, D. (2012) 'What's in a concept? Global public goods, international law, and legitimacy', *The European Journal of International Law*, 23, 3, 651–668.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Limits of Identity*, New York: Routledge.
- Chau, R. C. M. and Yu, S. W. K. (2022) *Welfare and Women in the Era of Productivism*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Cheng, Y. H. A., Wu, F. C. F. and Adamczyk, A. (2016) 'Changing attitudes toward homosexuality in Taiwan, 1995–2012', *Chinese Sociological Review*, 48, 317–345.
- Cheung, H. (2019) 'Rainbow weddings to the rescue?', *Taipei Times*, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2019/05/23/2003715634> [accessed 08.02.2023].
- Chien, T. C. (2012) 'From "same sex marriage" to "pluralistic family arrangements": the legislative movement for democratic intimate relationship', *Taiwan Human Rights Journal*, 1, 187–201.
- Duggan, L. (2002) 'The new homonormativity: the sexual politics of neoliberalism' in R. Castronovo and D. D. Nelson (eds.), *Materializing Democracy: Towards a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 173–194.
- Engelbrechtsen, E. L. (2014) *Queer Women in Urban China: An Ethnography*, New York: Routledge.
- Erni, J. N. and Spiers, A. J. (2001) 'Glossy subjects: G&L magazine and 'Tonghzi' cultural visibility in Taiwan', *Sexualities*, 4, 1, 25–49.
- Ge, G. (1995) 'Comparative research on hooliganism', *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, 27, 3, 64–78.
- Gibson-Graham, J.-K. (1999) 'Queer(y)ing capitalism in and out of the classroom', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 23, 1, 80–85.
- Harrison, K. and Boyd, T. (2018) 'The role of ideology in politics and society' in K. Harrison and T. Boyd (eds.), *Understanding Political Ideas and Movements*, Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 135–153.
- Heiliger, E. (2015) 'Queer economies: possibilities of queer desires and economic bodies (because "the economy" is not enough)' in N. Dhawan, A. Engel, C. H. E. Holzhey and V. Woltersdorff (eds.), *Global Justice and Desire: Queering Economy*, London: Routledge, 219–236.

- Hennessy, R. (2000) *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*, New York: Routledge.
- Huang, S. and Wong, T. S. T. (2019) "'More coming out, bigger market": queer visibility and queer subjectivity in the Chinese pink market', *Queer Studies in Media and Popular Culture*, 4, 3, 287–302.
- Huang, Y. T. and Hang, Y. C. (2023) 'Relational well-being among lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults in Taiwan: before and after the legalization of same-sex marriage', *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 21, 240–252.
- Innes, J. (1996) 'The mixed economy of welfare in early-modern England: assessments of the options from Hale to Malthus (c. 1683–1803)' in M. Daunton (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past*, London: UCL Press, 139–180.
- Jackson, P. A. (2009) 'Capitalism and global queering: national markets, parallels among sexual cultures, and multiple queer modernities', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 15, 3, 357–395.
- Jacobsen, J. and Zeller, A. (2013) 'Queer consumer economics' in J. Jacobsen and A. Zeller (eds.), *Queer Economics: A Reader*, Oxon: Routledge, 293–295.
- Jeffreys, E. and Wang, P. (2018) 'Pathways to legalizing same-sex marriage in China and Taiwan: globalization and "Chinese values"' in B. Winter, M. Forest and R. Sénac (eds.), *Global Perspectives on Same-Sex Marriage: A Neo-Institutional Approach*, London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 197–219.
- Jeffreys, S. (2004) 'IV. The need to abolish marriage', *Feminism and Psychology*, 14, 2, 327–331.
- Jennings, R. (2017) 'LGBTs in China are priming a pink economy that will overtake America's', *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphjennings/2017/06/22/chinas-pink-economy-is-quietly-but-quickly-growing-to-american-proportions/?sh=6255c205b98b> [accessed 08.02.2023].
- Kam, L. Y. L. (2020) 'Coming out and going abroad: the Chuguo mobility of queer women in China', *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 24, 2, 126–139.
- Kapstein, E. B. and Busby, J. W. (2010) 'Making markets for merit goods: the political economy of antiretrovirals', *Global Policy*, 1, 1, 75–90.
- Kong, T. S. K. (2019) 'Transnational queer sociological analysis of sexual identity and civic-political activism in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 70, 5, 1904–1925.
- Kong, T. S. K. (2020) 'Toward a transnational queer sociology: historical formation of Tongzhi identities and cultures in Hong Kong and Taiwan (1980s–1990s) and China (late 1990s–early 2000s)', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2020.1826835>
- Lewis, J. (1999) 'The voluntary sector in the mixed economy of welfare' in D. Gladstone (ed.), *Before Beveridge: Welfare Before the Welfare State*, London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 10–17.
- Liao, S. (2019) "'# IamGay# What about you?": storytelling, discursive politics, and the affective dimension of social media activism against censorship in China', *International Journal of Communication*, 13, 2314–2333.
- Lipsey, R. G. (1980) *An Introduction to Positive Economics*, London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Liu, X. (2023) 'Gendered economy: sociality and the lesbian consumer market in China', *Sociological Forum*, 38, 1, 214–234.
- Lo, I. P. Y. (2020) 'Family formation among lalas (lesbians) in urban China: strategies for forming families and navigating relationships with families of origin', *Journal of Sociology*, 56, 4, 629–645.
- Lo, I. P. Y. (2022) '(Dis)Engagement with queer counterpublics: exploring intimate and family lives in online and offline spaces in China', *British Journal of Sociology*, 73, 1, 139–153.
- Lo, I. P. Y. (2023) 'Dialectical family imaginaries: navigating relational selfhood and becoming a parent through assisted reproduction in China', *Sociology*, 57, 3, 642–658.
- Lo, I. P. Y. (2024) 'The interplay between intimacy and commodification: queer agency and vulnerability amid neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics', *The Sociological Review*, 72, 1, 118–136.
- Lo, I. P. Y., Liu, E. H. and Yu, S. W. K. (2022) 'Family and work lives of lesbians in China: implications for the adult worker model', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19, 11, 1–15.

- Lo, I. P. Y., Liu, E. H., Lai, D. W. L. and Yan, E. (2023) 'Reflexive planning for later life: minority stress and aging challenges among midlife Chinese lesbians and gay men', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 70, 14, 3470–3492.
- Luo, J. Y. (2019) 'Gay parade drives "rainbow tourism" craze! Over 21,000 people from 68 countries booked rooms', *LEZS*, <https://www.lezsmeeeting.com/post/read/1063> [accessed 08.02.2023].
- McCaskell, T. (2018) *Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism*, Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Nair, Y. (2010) 'Against equality, against marriage: an introduction' in R. Conrad (ed.), *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Marriage*, Lewiston: Against Equality Press, 1–10.
- Pai, I. E. Y. (2017) *Sexual Identity and Lesbian Family Life: Lesbianism, Patriarchalism and the Asian Family in Taiwan*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Peñaloza, L. (2013) 'We're here, we're queer, and we're going shopping! A critical perspective on the accommodation of gays and lesbians in the U.S. marketplace', in J. Jacobsen and A. Zeller (eds.), *Queer Economics: A Reader*, Oxon: Routledge, 304–329.
- Portelli, C. J. (2004) 'Economic analysis of same-sex marriage', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 47, 1, 95–109.
- Powell, M. and Miller, R. (2014) 'Framing privatisation in the English national health service', *Journal of Social Policy*, 43, 3, 575–594.
- Sandler, T. and Arce M. D. G. (2002) 'A conceptual framework for understanding global and transnational public goods for health', *Fiscal Studies*, 23, 2, 195–222.
- Seidman, S. (1994) 'Queer-ing sociology, sociologizing queer theory: an introduction', *Sociological Theory*, 12, 2, 166–177.
- Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights (2020) '[No "companion" around the stove, no way to start a family without legal support - cross-border same-sex marriage is hoped to be realised] press release 2020/01/21', <https://tapcpr.org/hot-news/press-release/2020/01/21/%E5%9C%8D%E7%88%90%E6%B2%92-%E4%BC%B4-%E6%88%90%E5%AE%B6%E7%84%A1-%E6%B3%95-%E8%B7%A8%E5%9C%8B%E5%90%8C%E5%A9%9A%E7%9B%BC%E5%AF%A6%E7%8F%BE-%E6%96%B0%E8%81%9E%E7%A8%BF> [accessed 08.02.2023].
- Tam, C. (2020) 'GagaOOLala: Asia's first LGBT-focused streaming service', *Hivelife*, <https://hivelife.com/gagaoolala/> [accessed 08.02.2023].
- Tang, D. T. S., Khor, D. and Chen, Y. C. (2020) 'Legal recognition of same-sex partnerships: a comparative study of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan', *The Sociological Review*, 68, 1, 192–208.
- Wang, S. Y. (2015) 'Cooperative marriage, a "fake marriage" or a new intimate alliance?', *MPhil dissertation*, The University of Hong Kong, The HKU Scholars Hub.
- Wu, J. (2003) 'From "long yang" and "dui shi" to tongzhi: homosexuality in China', *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy*, 7, 1–2, 117–143.
- Yu, S. W. K. (1990) *Report of the Research on the Housing Problem in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Society for Community Organisation.
- Yu, S. W. K. (1998) *Hong Kong Public Housing in Transition – Privatisation, Commercialisation and Residualisation*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Policy Review.
- Yu, S. W. K., Chau, R. C. M. and Lee, K. M. (2015) 'Using defamilisation typologies to study the Confucian welfare regime', *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 31, 1, 74–93.
- Zheng S. (2019) '200,000 join Taiwan's pride march five months after island legalises same-sex marriage', *South China Morning Post*, [https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3034705/200000-join-taiwans-pride-march-five-months-after-island?module=perpetual\\_scroll\\_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3034705](https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3034705/200000-join-taiwans-pride-march-five-months-after-island?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3034705) [accessed 08.02.2023].
- Zheng, J. T. (2020) 'Same-sex marriage development in Taiwan: constitutional ruling or putting equality to a vote?', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, <https://gja.georgetown.edu/2020/04/29/same-sex-marriage-development-in-taiwan/> [accessed 08.02.2023].