Chapter 1
Spectrum of Public and Private Spheres in East Asia: Theoretical Inspirations from Past and Present

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ABSTRACT
This chapter discusses the significance of cultural traditions for social development in East Asian societies, in particular Japan and Korea. The chapter treats culture and society in a broad sense in order to find out what makes the East Asian case specific. Moreover, the chapter provides a reinterpretation of Japanese social realities and social models in 2013 when Japanese politics and society are going through the transformation known as Abenomics.

1. REFLECTIONS OF JAPANESE AND KOREAN MODERNITY AND TRADITIONS

This book helps to transcend all kind of boundaries, including the national boundaries and boundaries of academic disciplines to search explanations to developments in East Asia. East Asia-specific discussions, of course, are linked to developments elsewhere, but there is also a need to analyse the impact of local traditions without becoming blind to changes in these traditions. In this chapter there is discussion about the significance of cultural traditions for social developments in East Asian societies, in particular, Japan and Korea. Social development and policies are made by people within the possibilities created by existing social and cultural realities. As this chapter will show,
there is always room for real ingenuity in seeking new directions for societies or their culture. In the end of the chapter I also draw together ideas about Japanese social model and how it is faring in 2013.

To make sense of the specific model of Korean social development, Korean authors often make references to the use of Confucian traditions to strengthen and legitimise state-led authoritarian development (see e.g. Han 1998, p. 5-27). Of course, Confucianism is the most natural starting point for any policy analysis that takes place in Korea or China. However, this should always be done with caution and by bearing in mind that Confucianism itself is a very diverse and rich intellectual tradition spanning a very long time. Furthermore, in contemporary context it is always mixed with a constantly transforming social theory and social reality. For instance, Korean social analysis may be built on the foundations of Confucianism, but it also needs to explain how Korea functions in the context of contemporary global community as a full and very important member and how Korean society deals with many of the same challenges that other societies are facing. On the basis of Korean social development, Kim Dae Hwan creates a most original analytical tool of dual-risk approach to explain how both the insufficiency of modernisation and modernisation in their peculiar mix have created risks and dangers for Koreans. Another name for this Korean model of modernisation would be “rush-to” growth or limping modernisation (Kim Dae Hwan 1998, p. 28-45). For me it appears that the dual-risk approach would also fit particularly well for Japan. In his comment on Kim’s article Beck argues that the concept of “dual-risk society” enriches the analysis of Western societies, too, because what is a dominant aspect in the Korean context might be an additive aspect in many parts of the West as well (Beck 1998, p. 201). This is a very important point. For me a better term would be “multiple-risk societies”, because in all societies there are multiple risk narratives and the whole idea of rigid classifications between traditional (pre-modern), modern and post-modern fit badly with most societies. It is even more so with dualistic classification of reflexivity either being there or being absent. In some other disciplines (than some branches of sociology) there has been far more sensitivity to traces of Eurocentrism, colonialism, racism, sexism and other forms of imposing one’s own values on other cultures without finding out about all the multiple ways of constructing the world. For me Korea is a perfect example of a multiple risk society and Kim Dae Hwan’s analysis merits compliments for raising the issue of the need to modify Beck’s idea of singular-risk approach and uniform reflexivity with something else that would make more sense in the Korean case. Beck seems to miss the point if he thinks that there is only a difference of “dominant” and “additive” elements. Instead, there is a whole range of alternatives and mixes, which would make far more sense in a context of multiple risk society.

For me the most problematic part in Beck’s comment is the use of such terms as “the West”, which goes directly against Beck’s own claim that risk society is already borderless, although Beck himself in other part of his essay includes the dichotomy between Western and non-Western on the list of boundaries that have collapsed. Beck uses reflexive modernisation in measuring whether risk society has arrived, but actual measuring of reflexivity or lack of it in modernisation is most difficult to accomplish. In its narrowest sense, reflexivity is used to measure who has understood the theories of Beck and others and only a slightly more open-minded interpretation would be juxtapose the enlightened intelligentsia of the world to the ignorant masses. This, of course, it not Beck’s main point, but a lack of cultural sensitivity is a major problem in applying the contemporary European social risk discourse globally. This is unfortunately true although for Beck reflexive modernity means going beyond most post-modern theories and not being bothered by boundaries in time and space. Beck’s concept of reflexive modernity in its mockery of boundaries