



**Research workshop of EastAsiaNet in Duisburg, Germany,
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Abstracts (as of 1 April 2011)

Daniele Brombal, Ca' Foscari University Venice

Health Risks in the P.R. China: Scientific Development vs Scientific Method?

When it came into office in 2002, the Hu-Wen administration was confronted with the negative impact on social equity of the reforms launched in the late 1970s. The new leadership called for the adoption of a “Scientific Development” concept, based on a more rational, sustainable and balanced approach to social and economic development.

In the health sector, Beijing embarked on an ambitious process of reform, aimed at establishing an accessible, safe and efficient health care system by 2020. This effort has required considerable attention towards the assessment of health related risks, implying the strengthening of research on epidemiology, social and economic determinants of health, health care services accessibility, supervision of the pharmaceutical market. Main sources of data utilized for risk assessment are (a) routine data collection operated by health care institutions and (b) periodical field surveys coordinated by Ministry of Health.

Nonetheless, independent and reliable assessment of health risks still finds obstacles of technical, social and political nature. Accurate data collection is hampered by scarce coordination between central and local authorities and lack of adequate competencies at grassroots level, while a strong tendency to define research protocols and manage data collection and analysis in a way that ensures compliance with the targets set by government guidelines (rather than adherent to reality) has been reported by Chinese as well as foreign observers.

In a perspective of “global health”, the inaccurate assessment of health risks can pose concrete risks well beyond China’s borders. In recent years an increasing number of foreign cooperation agencies, academic institutions, government bodies have been providing relevant Chinese institutions with technical assistance in the field of health research and practical models of independent and scientific evaluation of health risks.

Rüdiger Frank, University of Vienna

Researching Regions? The Experience of the Program on East Asian Economy and Society in Vienna

The paper will discuss the issue of researching a region, in this case East Asia. We will do so based on evidence from the first research outputs produced in the context of the MA Program on East Asian Economy and Society. We will not only include the outputs of senior researchers, who have mostly been trained as single country specialists, but also consider our newly trained East Asianists and their choice of topics for MA theses. We thereby build a bridge to the topic of the upcoming autumn EastAsiaNet workshop in Vienna that will deal more specifically with teaching.

The issues we will look at include, obviously, the chosen topics and methodological approaches. In addition, we will also look at the use of languages and how the relationship of comparative studies and supra-national studies has developed. Based on the results, we will ask what that means for the future of East Asia research. We hope to be able to compare this with the experience of other members of the network and to have a critical discussion as to whether the chosen approach leads to adequate research results.

Sean Golden, Autonomous University of Barcelona

Discourse Analysis and the Study of Risk in a Chinese Context

This presentation will propose that reading between the lines of official policy statements in order to identify underlying issues of conflict and political struggle can be a valuable instrument for risk analysis in the context of contemporary Chinese studies. Discourse analysis can be applied equally well to the official policy statements of the UN or the EU in order to gauge the state of their relations with China or their mutual relations. The presentation will be based on a brief selection of case studies.

Thomas Heberer and René Trappel, University of Duisburg-Essen

Risk and Political Communication – a New Perspective on Evaluations and Incentives in Rural China

The evaluation system for the local public administration in China sets rules and targets for the conduct of local cadres, is an important factor in the selection of government personnel and nowadays is even used to promote moral standards for officials. In the academic literature evaluation processes in China are frequently portrayed as dysfunctional in controlling cadres' behaviour. Cadres – so the argument – attempt to obscure the true story by developing distinct counter-strategies. Whereas most of these studies focus on the control function of evaluations and found them wanting, our article takes a closer look at the relationship between evaluations and the incentive structure of local cadres.

The article pursues the argument of taking a new perspective on evaluations as an important tool for political communication. Higher levels of the local state (prefecture, province) use it chiefly to signalize priorities to lower administrative levels and, to a lesser degree, as a tool to gather information about the local conditions. The number of policies with priority status in the evaluations is rather limited. For county and township cadres the evaluation system primarily serves two functions. First, it gives them a good idea about the priorities of the higher levels of the administration and accordingly they can estimate the risks attached to flexible implementation. Second, leading local cadres also intend to use the evaluation system to communicate achievements to the higher echelons by all means. These achievements are one important factor in the calculation of the yearly rewards and future promotions. The article draws from fieldwork conducted in 12 counties/cities between 2007 and 2010.

Sierk Horn, University of Leeds

Interdisciplinarity at a Crossroads? Myth and Research Realities

Working across disciplinary boundaries helps to avoid silo-thinking, creates new perspectives or better reflects real world complexities. In short, interdisciplinarity enriches knowledge – or so the conventional perception. In an ideal world regional studies should be suited to fill this inherent gap. Yet, self-perception and perceptions by others do not necessarily coincide. The realities of breaching disciplinary terrain suggest disenchanting scenarios following a trajectory of dismissals on grounds of disciplinary contamination. Challenges potentiate at the international level. Based on a case study approach, the contribution attempts to shed light on possible routes to publications (and their pitfalls!) and limitations of quality assessment (particularly Research Excellence Framework 2014) as well as the risk of disciplinary rigidity for area studies.

Norifumi Kawai, University of Duisburg-Essen

The Use of Quantitative Methods to Study Risk in the East Asian Context

The aim of my presentation is threefold. First, I try to explain the general strengths and weaknesses of quantitative methods compared to qualitative methods. Second, I clarify what has been done, what kind of methods were employed and in what direction research is going in Asian-based economics and management research. The presentation also helps to get a clearer picture of time series trends in methods and presents what type of risk-related research has been done so far. Lastly, I highlight some basic methodological challenges (e.g., sampling, data collection, measurement, methodology etc.) confronting scholars undertaking Asia-based economics and management research with a particular emphasis on risk behaviour and attitudes at the individual and organizational levels. Suggestions are provided as to how these constraints can be solved.

Chun-Yi Lee, University of Duisburg-Essen

The Dilemma to Assess Risk in Governance – In the Case of China

This paper focuses on the dilemma of analyzing risk in China's governance from the perspective of state/investor/labour's triangular relationship. In the mid-1990s Zhu

Rongji formulated a new strategy for State Owned Enterprises (SOE) reform, the so-called 'Grasping the big and letting go the small'. This strategy was implemented to its fullest extent when Zhu became the Premier in 1998. This SOE reform forced enterprises to be much leaner on human resources expenditure. Unemployment in China in the mid-1990s therefore was incalculable but massive. After a decade, Chinese labour are still under these harsh circumstances, however, they have not yet organised a national-wide protest. The irony point here is, the People's Republic of China (PRC) privileged working class when they newly established in 1949. Half century passed, Chinese labours seem to lose their place in the world since the end of the 1980s, when China entered the period of economic reform. The Chinese labours have been silent because they even do not have powerful representative union in negotiation among the state and investors. Nevertheless, the implementation of new labour contract law on January 1, 2008 indicated that the government considered the rights of Chinese labour more than protecting employers' cheap labour costs. This paper starts from organizing previous Chinese labour researches' methodology, in the expectation to find a rather suitable methodological tool to analyse the current condition of labour conflicts in jeopardizing the so-called 'harmonious Chinese society'.

Carmen Amado Mendes, University of Coimbra (China Observatory)

Trust and Information Flows in International Institutions: the Case of the Macau Forum and the Mitigation of Political Risks to Business

Modernity is characterized by Giddens and Beck as being constituted by risk societies. Industrial, or post-industrial, civilization is increasingly preoccupied with the future and with safety, and this is most evident in the political economic sphere. The importance of trade and foreign direct investments for governments and multinational corporations is growing and so are the stakes involved in carrying out risky operations in markets that are not necessarily well-known to public and private entrepreneurs. Late modernity is also the age of information. The functioning of the global economy, and of the political structures within which it is embedded, relies increasingly on the rapid circulation of knowledge and data. Risk can be mitigated by possessing information, which strengthens trust. In this global societal context, international institutions, as Keohane points out, generate not only shared norms and operational procedures but also informational structures upon which representatives of differing economic and political cultures may work with less intercultural misunderstandings. Multilateral organizations also contribute to the circulation of data on political and business risks, and the organizational context can

increase the credibility of the information in circulation, beyond trust in the specific actors disseminating data.

The Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (PSCs), or Macau Forum for short, plays an important role in promoting familiarity with commercial opportunities. In 2008 alone Macau hosted around 100 high-level intergovernmental delegations. During these visits, the Chinese government increases its knowledge of the Portuguese-speaking markets and of the political and business risks they entail. The consolidation of experience dealing with these markets within the context of the Macau Forum has facilitated the expansion of investments and trade. In 2008, trade volume between China and PSCs doubled, reaching over US\$60 billion. At official meetings in Macau, businessmen, negotiators and policy makers build-up mutual confidence and develop familiarity with each others' national business landscapes. In this sense, the Forum could be considered as a method or tool for political risk mitigation. The Forum's Investments Working Group is of particular importance given that it serves as a meeting-place for the exchange not only of relevant commercial data, such as the conditions of member countries' political and economic regimes, but also of risk assessment methodologies and perspectives.

Toshio Miyake, Ca' Foscari University Venice

Reflections for an Interrelational Theory of Occidentalism: Trans/nationalising “the West”, “the East”, and “Japan” via *Cool Japan*

Following the end of the Cold War and the start of the War on Terror, new geopolitical and geocultural constellations of collective identity and alterity have emerged and have been intertwined with the globalising network of ethnic, media, technological, financial and ideological flows. In the case of Europe, the tensions between global competition, regional integration and national sovereignty are configuring new imagined geographies of “Occidental” identity, such as “the West”, “Europe”, and national identity. This neo-Occidentalism of the 21st century is shaping more fluid boundaries of inclusion and exclusion as in the modern past, but it is relying again on the contrastive construction of an “Oriental” alterity, which is deeply framed by the perceived threats projected on the new “Easts”, such as “Islam”, “China”, and migrants from poorer regions of the world.

This paper suggests that a paradigm shift in the social sciences and humanities as well as in area studies is more than ever needed for a critical and polyphonic understanding of the complex challenges posed by globalization in relation to issues of identity, culture, and power. It will address these challenges by introducing an

interrelational theory of Occidentalism, Orientalism and Self-Orientalism, arguing that its hegemonic processuality is mobilised by a cumulative intersectionality of identifying paradigms (civilisation, region, nation, race, gender, age, class, etc.) and by a strategical positionality of the different actors involved in this process.

Furthermore, in order to overcome the hiatus between general theory and ethnography of the globalising present, this paper will refer more specifically to a case study in Japan and in Italy related to the international success of a contested amateur webmanga (*Axis Powers Hetalia*, 2006). This will allow to illustrate the present re-negotiation related to the imagined geography of “the West”, “the East”, and “Japan” as could be seen in the intersection between institutionalised nation branding of *Cool Japan* “from above” and trans/national diffusion “from below” of Japanese popular cultures through internet and subcultural production, appropriation and re-production.

Stephan Si-Hwan Park, University of Vienna

Google Insights for Search: How to Measure Tolerance in East Asia

East Asia has become the widely used synonym for rapid economic growth and transformation. Extrapolating the current economic performance of all major economic regions to the future draws a clear picture: East Asia will surpass the United States as the global powerhouse within the next years (Letzing 2009, November 3). It seems that the continuation of the East Asian Miracle is inevitable.

Not quite so. According to Richard Florida, the East Asian societies need to catch up on one essential feature for sustainable economic growth in a highly globalized world: *tolerance* (Florida, Melander and Qian 2008: 32). Without *tolerance* highly skilled and creative people who are a prerequisite for economic growth in any region of the world rather live and work at places where they can express themselves freely, pursue their desired lifestyle and just be themselves without feeling judged by society (Florida 2004: 67–82). But this is not the whole story. Florida argues that only the dynamic and interdependent interplay between the three 'T's of economic growth – *Tolerance*, *Talent* and *Technology* will generate, enhance and sustain economic development in a region (Florida 2004: 249–267).

Whereas there exist a number of solid approaches in measuring talent and technology, the quantification and thus comparison of cultural phenomenons such as tolerance, is hard to accomplish and has basically left social scientists only the option of conducting personal interviews. In order to measure tolerance in East Asian societies, an alternative and complementary approach is suggested. It makes use of

the analytical capabilities of Google, the most frequently used searching website in the world today. Due to the unquestioned position of Google as the world's most popular searching technology on the web, Google has proved, to a limited extent, of its ability to predict future events and outcomes like influenzas, pandemics, or the winner of the European Song Contest in 2010. Just recently Google announced that it is currently developing a tool which will be able to predict future stock market events. Google already provides a tool for registered users which analyzes the interest in respective terms over the course of years, months, and even days. The data are broken down by country and subregion. The name of the tool is *Google Insights for Search*, and it is still in the beta stage, which means that Google engineers are currently adjusting and improving the tool on the basis of users' feedback.

The aim of the presentation is to demonstrate that social scientists in general and East Asian scholars in particular are well advised in combining traditional and more innovative research methods by maintaining scientific argumentation.

Werner Pascha and Markus Taube, University of Duisburg-Essen

Risk Related Behaviour of Individuals – the Perspective of Experimental Economics across Cultures

Experimental economics will be introduced both as a rather new method that allows analysing individual behaviour from a new perspective and with new types of data, and with respect to the issues of applying it in East Asian studies and in a cross-cultural or an inter-cultural context, particularly in terms of risk-related issues. To explain the method itself, the logic of the simple ultimatum game and of an investment or trust game can be introduced. With respect to the latter, the relationship between trust and risk can be discussed. The authors conclude that through studying risk perception, attitude and behaviour in experiments, one learns a lot – but probably not everything there is to be learned – about trust and thus about the glue of institutions. A few examples will be given of how this can be applied to “real world” issues of East Asian studies like gift exchange and corruption. A connection will also be drawn to the project of Duisburg-Essen's Graduate Training School on “Risk and East Asia” to contribute a number of studies to this important new approach.

Jon Solomon, Université Lyon 3 (IETT)

The Financialization of Knowledge and the Biopolitical Management of Geocultural Areas During the Transition from Industrial to Cognitive Capitalism

The crisis in the abstractions of risk calculation that erupted in 2008 in the U.S. housing market, spreading like wildfire across the global financial markets, was rooted in what Brian Holmes' calls the "artificial world model" (Holmes 2009) of financial capitalism that led to a "fundamental disconnect" between information and event. For the postcolonial critic, Holmes' diagnosis immediately calls to mind a much older phenomenon common to colonial history. Whether in Imperial Japan's invasion of China (Tanaka 1995) or Britain's governance of Palestine and the Middle East (Said 1979), there have always been crucial moments in the history of modern colonialism when the institutional production of authoritative knowledge about the colonial social formation had become so disconnected from the actual process of social composition that it actively contributed to policies ending in violence and/or disaster. Naturally, such examples of "disconnect" are not limited to colonial governance but are part of the modern problem of knowledge about the social and governance in general. What is so interesting – and dangerous – about the present time is that the various forms of "disconnect" appear to be merging in a single matrix. Rather than indulge in outmoded fantasies of decisive epistemological vigor that would once and for all resolve the dreaded problem of "disconnect", this essay aims to chart out a genealogy of the problem and describe a fundamental link between the "artificial world model" of financial capitalism and that of what are called in North America "area studies."