

Do East Asian Studies Really Exist?

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I have been actively involved in setting up East Asian studies at university level in Spain since I arrived there from China in 1984 and found that they did not yet exist at that time. The process was long and laborious. By the 1988/89 academic year we were able to introduce the study of Chinese and Japanese into an official undergraduate degree course and we created a Chinese Studies Centre and a Japanese Studies Centre. It took another 10 years to create an undergraduate degree in Area Studies that included a specialisation in East Asian Studies from a multidisciplinary point of view, still concentrating on China and Japan but also introducing Korean language studies. Five years later the Spanish government formally created an official undergraduate degree in East Asian Studies. During this entire process I was involved in university administration as a Dean of a Faculty and as a member of the Governing Board of the university. I also acted as an adviser to the regional and national governments and published studies of how to organise East Asian Studies. On the basis of this experience I would like to comment on the question “Do East Asian Studies really exist?” By this I mean to ask whether or not it is possible to carry out coordinated studies of an area recognised to be “East Asia” from a variety of humanistic and social science disciplines, or whether what we call East Asian Studies is simply the sum of a various uncoordinated academic offers based on Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies, Korean Studies, etc. A debate on this subject might make it possible to formulate some basic EastAsiaNet guidelines for the organisation of East Asian Studies.

East Asian Studies at Ca' Foscari University, Venice: Problems and Perspectives

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In the last ten years the demand of education in East Asian studies has rapidly risen in Italy. University enrolments have increased to unprecedented levels in centers with a quite long history in East Asian Studies such as IUO Naples, Università La Sapienza Roma and especially Ca' Foscari University, Venice, the main center on East Asian Studies in Italy. Moreover, the increasing demand has stimulated the development of new educational programs in Chinese, Japanese and Korean languages and cultures in several other universities.

At the same time, in a changing and complex institutional framework (due to the Bologna Process), a process of re-definition of university curricula in East Asian Studies has started in response to new needs emerging in the job market. The need of a more specialized curriculum in economy, law and politics of East Asia, functional to the new societal demands, was felt more than ten years ago. Moreover, the definition of area studies as a clear-cut realm of knowledge and research has represented a new challenge in the Italian academic and institutional framework.

My presentation will address the issue of the increasing demand of interdisciplinary curricula in East Asian Studies, ranging from East Asian languages, cultures and societies to economics, environmental sciences etc. It will focus on the difficult balance between a training in languages, cultures and societies and the development of professional competences.

East Asian Studies as embedded epistemology. Learning from Japanese Studies

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East Asian Studies and the reconstruction of human and social sciences. The question of Global Studies East Asian Studies have introduced within the Humanities and Social Sciences a self-reflective process, which is questioning the presuppositions of these disciplines born in the Western and Central European nations. This is a decisive evolution for these disciplines.

Based in the case of Japan and Japanese Studies, it will be shown that the projection of Human & Social Sciences on the Japanese context, required adjusting their presuppositions in order to explain Japan's evolution, including its present situation.

This self-reflective process is opening a critical examination and progressive overcoming of these presuppositions. Most important, the demarcations between religion, politics, society and economy are questioned: they have not only shaped the social experience in East Asian countries but they participated in the formation of political movements and policies having for goal to reshape these societies according to these demarcations and disciplines. This is particularly true concerning the conception of the "market" and of a "market economy". This explains why these disciplines have been sometime rejected as a type of colonization.

In fact, the reflexivity introduced by East Asian Studies acts as an embedded epistemology, opening conceptual innovations in human and social sciences providing a new framework for studying on a comparative basis the evolution of different societies, be it in Europe, East Asia or elsewhere. This is real scientific progress for these disciplines and for mutual understanding between nations.

Who Actually Needs East Asian Studies? – East Asian Studies at Charles University between the Tradition and the Change

Jan Sýkora, Charles University, Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies, Prague

Although since 1947, when the study of Japanese/Chinese language and culture became appeared on the curriculum of the Department of Far Eastern Philology, the study programs have been rearranged several times, their main axis focusing mostly on the so-called classical Japanology/Sinology-oriented field of studies has remained unchanged. The study programs included – or better say are still including the language related subjects, lectures on classical, early modern and modern literature, lectures and seminars on both ancient and (early) modern history, and a few lectures on the selected problems of the East Asian societies. Even though such curriculum, when established near sixty years ago, perfectly corresponded to the tradition concept of humanistic studies at Charles University, it seems to be full of crucial problems, since it does not reflect the shift in both academic and practical life at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The fundamental one is related to the question whether the East Asian Studies should include the issues “traditionally” belonged to realm of social science.

In my brief presentation I will focus on the following topics:

1. What is the principal mission of the East Asian studies at the age of the “research-oriented universities”? Do we cultivate the spirit of the academic curiosity or to focus on the education providing a full set of skills indispensable both for the employment/practical life and for the further academic activities?
2. Do we need any shift from traditional language, literature, history and art oriented study program to more interdisciplinary studies?
3. How to survive in the age of cutting budgets and other financial restrictions? How to finance the new programs in East Asian studies and where are the limits of the academia-business links policy?

Teaching about Regions? The Approach of the MA Program on East Asian Economy and Society in Vienna

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The paper will discuss the issue of teaching about a region, in this case East Asia. This involves a number of issues, such as the definition of the region and the actual design of the program and of the single courses. The core problems faced by educators are: (1) East Asian language (training as well as use in research); (2) methodological focus and how to achieve it; (3) the conceptualization of East Asian Studies (as a comparison of single country cases, or strictly supra-national). After a discussion of these areas, the option chosen in Vienna will be presented, pointing at strengths, weaknesses and area of application.

Theory is Good but Experience is Better: Harvard's Case Method

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Graduate students are on the threshold of working life. Within two years they need to build their expertise in their chosen fields of studies, and substantiate their employability to an extent that justifies two more years of full time studies and absence at the workforce respectively. According to the concepts of signaling and credentialism, attained degrees in general and degrees at institutions of higher education in particular rather serve the function of communicating personal characteristics of a job applicant such as discipline, endurance and motivation than qualifications that are specific to their respective field of studies. If this is entirely true, it would not matter what we study unless we finish our degrees. The reality in which on the one hand engineering graduates basically can choose from multiple job offers around the world; on the other hand, graduates from the cultural studies need to show creative self selling abilities to market their expertise to a wide range of branches and industries, clearly puts the theories of signaling and credentialism to the test. Whereas so called “hard” disciplines such as medicine, law, business administration and all kinds of engineering majors prepare students for specific workforces and therefore need to equip them with highly applicable knowledge, abilities and tools, the emphasis of higher education on cultural and regional studies lies on rather descriptive teaching methods with few apparent opportunities for future application at the non-academic job market.

The interrelated consequences of this heavily theoretical approach in cultural and regional studies are threefold. First, due to the high degree of specialization in their respective academic field, academic staff could easily lose sight of drawing the big picture when teaching their students which ultimately results in the mere accumulation of knowledge without sufficient embedding into context. As a result, although students receive in terms of quantity a lot of knowledge, the practical, experiencing and creative elements of learning are left out. And finally both, graduates and human resource managers have difficulties in identifying the applicant's core abilities which could possibly benefit the hiring organization.

In order to ensure contextual and systematic understanding, raise the practical learning experience and consequently raise the employability of graduates from cultural and regional studies, a teaching revolution is overdue. Looking at successful benchmarks, the case method from Harvard has become the mainstream teaching method in medical-, law and business schools in the US. “When students are presented with a case, they place themselves in the role of the decision maker as they read through the situation and identify the problem they are faced with. The next step is to perform the necessary analysis – examining the causes and considering alternative courses of actions to come to a set of recommendations.”¹

The aim of the presentation is to kick start a discussion whether the application of the case method is a reasonable teaching approach in the East Asian studies, and how cases in various academic disciplines in the East Asian context could possibly look like.

1 How the Harvard Business School case method works,
<http://www.hbs.edu/mba/academics/howthecasemethodworks.html>, accessed on 19.7.2011.

Western Transitology and Chinese Reality

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The so-called transition paradigm posits that once a country moves away from dictatorial rule, there is a linear process towards pluralism and democracy.

The Western transition paradigm is characterized by three core assumptions. The first is that a country moving away from dictatorial rule is a country in transition towards democracy. The second assumption is that the transition towards democracy unfolds in a sequence of stages. The third is a strong belief in the crucial role of elections in the sense that elections will serve to broaden and deepen political reform. However, several scholars have pointed out, the basic assumption of transitology often do not correspond to reality. In fact, often transitional countries enter a gray zone where they are neither clearly dictatorial nor clearly headed towards democracy. They get stuck in the transition process so to speak.

This paper intends to investigate whether this is a relevant discussion in relation to the Chinese case. Is it most likely that the Chinese reform process will get stuck in the middle? Has it in fact already happened? Are concepts such as democracy, free elections, pluralism and protection of civil liberties useful categories in discussing political evolution in China?

Even if such categories or concepts would be embraced by the Chinese leaders, it is not clear that they would be understood in a Western sense. One could imagine a scenario where there were free elections and protection of civil liberties within the framework of authoritarianism. The reason is that an important defining attribute of democracy in a Western sense is a level playing field. If the political playing field is strongly skewed in favour of the incumbents, opposition parties are heavily disfavored. This is clearly the case in Singapore case of competitive authoritarianism. The paper discusses the role of the state and the Party in China and whether a Singapore hybrid scenario of competitive authoritarianism rather than a Western transitology path would be more applicable in the Chinese case.

Positioning Asia in the Varieties of Capitalism Literature

Harald Conrad, White Rose East Asia Centre, University of Sheffield

One of the central debates in the business literature centres on the issue of convergence or non-convergence of business and management practices across countries (Degg and Jackson 2007). According to the proponents of the convergence school, increasing global competition forces companies to adopt best practices that are universally valid and applicable. This development contributes to a cross-national convergence of practices, an erosion of institutional differences among different national economies, and a trend towards more market-oriented institutions (e. g., Lane 1995; Kerr et al. 1962). In contrast, proponents of the non-convergence school stress the embeddedness of national management practices in their cultural and institutional context, with the comparative capitalism (CC) literature elucidating the institutional foundations of diverse national ‘varieties’ of business organization. According to this school, existing complementarities among institutional elements of national economies tend to thwart international convergence (e. g., Degg and Jackson 2007; Hall and Soskice 2001; Whitley 1999; Hollingsworth and Boyer 1997).

In my presentation, I will highlight some of the findings of recent research that has used the Varieties of Capitalism approach to study changes in East Asian business systems, comment on the convergence/divergence debate, and discuss how the study of East Asian capitalisms can contribute to the understanding and further development of the CC framework.

Bringing the State Back Out? How Fashionable Development Theories Can('t) Help Us Understand Economic Change in East Asia

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Those who study the origins of economic growth in East Asia will come across two genuinely Western theories which seem to be extreme opposites. For political economy approaches such as Mancur Olson's work on regime types and development, the state is the central category of analysis. In addition, Olson persuasively argues that dictatorship and sustainable development are not compatible. In contrast, the more recent literature on National Innovation Systems (NIS) delegates the state to the fringes and therefore holds appeals for democracies and autocracies alike.

Drawing on the development strategies of Taiwan, China and Myanmar, the paper illustrates the high relevance, but limited applicability of these theories: they are important and logical, but neither adequately grasps the complex interaction of actors, institutions and learning processes that have characterized economic change in authoritarian Taiwan and today's China. They are contrasted with a third theory, which is of high applicability for most East Asian cases, but of limited relevance for cases outside the scope of its development. "Developmental state" theories have been consistently modified to fit new cases, which makes it difficult to say what exactly the core elements of successful developmental states are.

Finally, the paper suggests a way of how these theories can be fused into an analytical framework that allows us to better capture the dynamics of innovation processes in nondemocratic countries. It builds on ideas developed in the context of a multidisciplinary China Innovation Research Group (Stefan Brehm, Christian Göbel, Barbara Schulte, Tommy Shih and Marina Svensson). Adopting an agent-centred approach, it argues that the development of innovation capacities entails not only technological, but more importantly also political risks, which not all autocrats are skillful or daring enough to take. Comparisons of the Chinese, Taiwanese and Burmese development paths illustrate this well.

The Political-economy of News Media in East Asia: A Study of Using the Propaganda Model in the People's Republic of China

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As news media in the PRC continues to change due to the increased flows of information across the globe, the sustained commercialization of PRC media and the growing importance of the media industry to the economy of the PRC, a more firm understanding of the political-economy of PRC news media is needed. Instead of re-inventing the wheel, most media scholars tend to use conceptual frameworks developed in Western countries to analyse non-Western media systems; others criticise this for being too Western-centric and instead insist on the development of new frames that are generated from the experiences of the non-Western countries themselves. The PRC is certainly no different in this regard.

This paper will explore the strengths and weaknesses of my research using a Western theory, Herman & Chomsky's Propaganda Model, to analyse news media production in the PRC. While it seems on the outside that the USA's largely private news media is not 'propaganda' and the government-controlled PRC news media is, I contend that it is not so simple. Using this comparative framework to assess the similarities and differences of both news media systems is, in fact, necessary to see just how 'unique' media system can be in the modern era of commercialism and how different modes of control can be used for the same political-economic ends.

Western Theory Meets East Asian Reality: Relevance and Applicability

Miriam Löwensteinová, Charles University, Prague

In my proposal, I'd like to touch on several themes or open following theses:

- 1: It is obvious that **in the past Easterners and Westerners met other methodological basis**. This thesis could be supported by many examples as to the approach to the material, the reading, interpretation and research, as well as the argumentation strategy is concerned. I.e. we have to be aware, two different traditions exist.
- 2: We often adopt the thesis that **today's East Asia has no own methodological basis and that Asian people are not able to adopt and use the western theories**. It is applicable in some extent to the contemporary research. E.g. Koreans try to incorporate the so called modern western (and fashionable) theories in their research. Nevertheless, it could not comprehend as an application of Western methodology; it is more the implementation of the certain sum of quotations, postulates or theories to the traditional ways of thinking.
- 3: **Some eastern methods are applicable** till now, esp. when reading classical or philosophical texts. The fact, that all the Western students who has studied in Korea and adopted the Korean style of interpretation are able to understand and read the classical texts, is really interesting. I.e. there are – though different theories and schools of interpretations of classical texts had been existed, the basic ways of reading that are necessary for the appropriate understanding.
- 4: **Some western methodology, especially literary theories, are applicable** to the old Korean literature when interpreting its structure and formal features; these are formalistic, structural analysis or ways of segmentation of the texts, close reading as well.

Conceptualising the Government of Life in Asia

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Over the last couple of decades, a number of social science scholars working in Asia have invoked Foucauldian notions of biopolitics and governmentality in their analyses and accounts of education programmes, employment practices, anti-smoking campaigns, population planning policies, biotech booms and the like in various Asian countries (e.g. Greenhalgh, Kipnis, Kohrman, Sleeboom-Faulkner, Ong, Chen, Sunder Rajan, Gottweis, Sigley). Yet these concepts were developed through analyses of the emergence of modern power/knowledge configurations in 18th and 19th century Europe. How is it then, that they have become so relevant in scholarly studies of social processes and practices in contemporary Asia? In this paper, I ask how we might think about such conceptual migration: how do concepts become relevant and gain traction when they travel?

IPR through the Looking Glass: Western Theory and Eastern Practice

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North-East Asia has for decades been one of the principal global centres of innovation and knowledge production. Japan, Korea and Taiwan have in the last decade been joined and overtaken by China in the production of patent applications, and today China is the world-leader in patent applications, if not approvals. IPR, Copyright and Trademark legislation have developed into important legal fields and tens of thousands of cases concerning patent and trademark infringement are heard annually in North-East Asian courts. Legal faculties at many universities in Japan, Korea and China teach courses on IPR law and there are important IPR centres at a number of universities, for example Waseda University. Many of the most visible cases have concerned Western enterprises. However, contemporary theoretical works on IPR and Trademark legislation produced in the US and Europe make scarcely any reference to Asian research and do not refer to cases heard in North-East Asian courts. For example, *The Common Law of Intellectual Property* (Hart Publishing, 2010) does not mention Japan, Korea or China, *Intellectual Property in the New Millennium* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) cites in a footnote one Japanese work but nothing concerning Chinese writings on the topic, *Trade Marks and Brands* (Cambridge University Press, 2008) does not mention China and only notes one Japanese case, and *Copyright and Piracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) – a work in which China might be expected to make a significant appearance, given the gravity of the copyright problems experienced by US companies in that country – appears in one paragraph only, at the same time as the book has an impressive bibliography of Western research running to 27 pages. In other words, research on IPR in leading publications remains resolutely dominated by the US and European experience. This paper briefly examines the extent and focus of IPR research in China and Japan, and reflects upon the difficulties engaged in applying currently available theoretical literature to analyzing the realities of Chinese and Japanese case studies.