Korea Journal, vol. 58, no. 1 (spring 2018): 12–40.

The Historical Context of Social Governance Experiments in East Asia: *The Challenges of Risk Society*

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Abstract

This paper articulates an interpretation of neighborhood community reconstruction in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo, as instances of social governance from the perspective of risk society: an important historical backdrop for community reconstruction in East Asia. The paper is composed of six sections. The first clarifies conceptual strategies and historical assumptions. Theories of social governance and risk society are merged to produce the core conceptual framework of this research. The second section explains why the three community reconstruction cases presented, namely Seongmisan in Seoul, Qinghe in Beijing, and Setagaya in Tokyo, were chosen for this research. The third section attempts to trace the origin of risk society to specific developmental strategies in East Asia, rooted in the state-centered bureaucratic-authoritarian rush for development. Such analysis clarifies the dual aspects of East Asian modernity, bright achievement and risk society, as two sides of the same coin. The fourth section examines public perception of risks in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo, based on citizens' survey data. The fifth section is an empirical analysis of risk society formation in terms of social construction and discursive formation. The final section extends to cover public anxiety and risk demonstration as a driving force for the social governance of risk.

Keywords: risk society, social governance, neighborhood community reconstruction, social construction of risk, discursive formation, East Asia

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This work was supported by Global Research Network program through the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (2017S1A2A2038049). The author thanks referees deeply for their constructive criticism.

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Conceptual Clarification and Historical Assumption

This paper deals with neighborhood community reconstruction as an empirical object that signifies a new trend in development. This trend is assumed to be related to such negative consequences as the fragmentation and destabilization of community in the process of rapid economic development (Shim 2018). More specifically, this paper is primarily aimed at clarifying the historical context of this new trend from the perspective of risk society. This requires an active intervention into the current theoretical debates on governance, risk society, and community. Given the fact that each of these domains has its own discursive histories, the question of how to link them is of decisive importance for this research (Han and Shim 2010). Presenting the logical and substantive relations of these domains in full is beyond the limitations of this paper. It is necessary, however, to explain here as clearly as possible how these domains are related. Therefore this paper will show to what extent these interventions can be empirically supported and what remains to be investigated further.

The concept of governance is popular in social sciences today. Bevir (2013) demonstrates many factors facilitating the transition of the traditional concept of government to a new paradigm of governance. Yet the boundaries between government and governance remain fluid in many respects. Governance means a restructuring of the mechanisms and processes of ruling practices usually monopolized by the state. Governance presupposes more or less open and reciprocal processes of consultation, not only among state actors but also by inviting input by non-state actors, such as experts, opinion makers, NGOs, and business people. It is important to note that governance is neither linear nor homogeneous. It involves a variety of possible options and approaches, including state governance and social governance. State governance may refer to a specific type of institutional arrangement in which the government still plays the most crucial role. In contrast, social governance is characterized by the significant role of bottom-up operations.

When distinguished in this imprecise manner, there exist considerable fluidities between these two modes of governance. Thus, a more specific

distinction is needed. Considering a broad overview of various experiments of social governance in East Asia, it is quite clear that the mode of social governance can be identified as either more top-down or bottom-up, or more bureaucratically regulative or participatory consultative, depending on where social governance takes place (like Beijing or Seoul), and to which problem it is applied (like air pollution, residential security, adult diseases, or food contamination). The concept of social governance is currently still in the initial stages of formation. To improve its conceptual rigor, the main characteristics, modes of operation and typologies of social governance should be established as clearly as possible. As an initial step, I would like to propose the following six definitions. First, social governance emerges when a society faces serious challenges which the bureaucratic system as the state alone can no longer adequately solve. Second, social governance requires the participation of civil society members together with state actors. Third, social governance is characterized by a kind of interaction between government and society which encourages initiative from the bottom. Fourth, the issues of social governance are defined not by the government but by the members of a community. Fifth, social governance presupposes an active role of such consultative organizations as residents' committees. Sixth, social governance involves diverse patterns and types, depending on the combination of its two essential functions, that is, the supply of services and the role of representation.

Let's then turn to the theoretical debates on risk society or global risk society. There are abundant discourses on risk society and reflexive modernity today (Beck 1992; Giddens 1994). I want to interpret these discourses as a critical approach to modernity. This perspective is particularly significant for East Asia because it is well documented that risk society poses serious challenges to East Asia and social governance can serve as a response to this challenge, as shown in this paper. Yet it should be noted that the concept of risk society is also complex, fluid, and unclear. There are so many types of risks sensitizing attention, including some as yet unknown. Given the vast range of emerging risks, it is difficult to precisely define the role of social governance. However, at this initial stage of research, since it is true that risk society produces high-consequential dangers which call for new

innovation, it is meaningful to try to define social governance in its relation to risk society.

Therefore, I want to see social governance as an actual or potential (pre-emptive) response to the challenges (threats) of risk society in East Asia. The concept of "risk" in risk society differs from conventional types of risk. In other words, risk society is not just continuity from industrial society but involves a rupture or metamorphosis. Risk society has evolved out of industrial society but in such a way that it gains new forms, characters, and modes of operation. Consequently, it is not possible to solve the complex risks characteristic of risk society simply by extending the conventional logic of state-centered crisis management (Han and Shim 2010). A new framework of social governance is crucial. However, it remains to be seen whether the risk governance in question will move in a participatory and democratic direction, or operate in a more authoritarian and control-oriented way.

To go one step further, I want to apply the concept of social governance to community. Community is also a concept which is not easy to define. This paper is concerned solely with neighborhood community, yet such community can be approached as a social enterprise, as evident in the current social policy of Seoul Metropolitan Government. Bowls and Gintis (2001) speak of "community governance" including neighborhoods from a similar perspective. In this case, community can be considered as a sector distinguished from the government and market. The reciprocal interaction within social enterprises cannot be fully explained by the logic of the market. However, we can start from the assumption that neighborhood community has been seriously deformed (albeit with considerable variation) in East Asia in the rapid process of urbanization. Individualization has progressed to such an extent that the role of community in sustaining emotional ties and solidarity has been severely damaged. As a result, isolated individuals are increasingly exposed to risks and anxiety, with almost no protection from community, while having to be responsible for their own lives. This actually means a real dimension of risk society. The new trend of neighborhood community reconstruction has gained momentum in this historical background.

Many research topics can be derived from the conceptual clarification outlined above. For example, the concrete formation of risk society in East Asia and its link to the particular form of social governance calls for careful analysis, especially by drawing sensitive attention to specific neighborhood communities in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo. This will be attempted in further research. The purpose of this paper, however, is limited to clarifying the historical background of social governance from the perspective risk society.

Three Cases of Community Reconstruction in East Asia

The empirical object of this study is neighborhood community reconstruction in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo. Such reconstruction involves two dimensions. The first is grassroots governance in which community residents participate, discussing community issues and thereby cooperating to rebuild community and overcome past dependency or lack of mutual support. The second is the level of city government (whether on the metropolitan, municipal, or district level) where a new policy of social governance is adopted and implemented. Needless to say, these two levels are often interrelated. Yet how they are related varies depending on the specific situations of the communities at hand. There is no reason to suppose that multiple experiments can be explained by a single model of governance. Furthermore, such experiments are new. In the case of Beijing, the experiment started some years ago and there is still a long way to go. At this stage, however, it is important to formulate a common basis or framework for this research.

Again, an important question is why it is useful and desirable to relate social governance to risk society. It is clear that neighborhood community is not a new topic. Related issues have frequently been discussed in research areas such as community studies, urbanization studies, urban planning, housing policy, and gentrification studies, as well as local government and environmental studies. This research, however, differs from previous efforts because it seeks to redefine neighborhood community from the perspective of social risks and social governance. But, again, why is a risk perspective

necessary? A good answer can be found in the recent policy change in China, from the paradigm of social management to social governance, which was declared in November 2013 by the third plenary session of the 18th central committee of the Communist Party of China. This declaration clearly shows that the conventional framework of state bureaucracy alone can no longer handle the fundamental challenges of risk society. These challenges included not only economic disparity but also participatory pressures from the bottom, cultural changes, and hyper-consequential life risks. Feihu Li (2015, 863) correctly formulated these conceptual relations and advocated the need to interpret "Chinese social governance innovation from a new global perspective of the theory of risk society." This policy shift was a response to social risks accumulated after the collapse of the *danwei* (workunit, 单位) regime in the process of market-oriented reform. The core of this experiment lies in the *shequ* (neighborhood community) reconstruction. Social governance then has the dual tasks of reconstructing the supply system of social services and expanding the avenue of participation for community residents.

This research has chosen the Qinghe experiment in Beijing as the site of empirical and comparative study. There are some reasons for this choice. First, this experiment is new but has its own history going back to the 1930s. Second, it is led neither by government nor by market forces, but by sociology professors at Tsinghua University in Beijing (Li and Lu 2017). Third, the basic mode of operation in social governance is neither top-down nor wholly bottom-up, but lies somewhere in-between. Fourth, though it is too early to evaluate the final result, the experiment has achieved considerable success in organizing residents' meetings and carrying out community development projects. The process of cooperation and consultative decision-making used is quite remarkable (Q. Li 2016; Wang 2010; Han, Shim, and Park 2017). Fifth, given the political reality of the party-state regime in China, this experiment implies the possible evolution of civil society out of the backdrop of fragmented community (Ge 2014).

In Japan, a specific strategy called *matsizukuri* has been taking root since the 1970s to rebuild local neighborhood communities based on participatory networks of local government, experts, and residents.

Setagaya City[1] is known as one of the first and the most successful outcomes of such neighborhood community reconstruction. In 1979 Setagaya designated two regions resilient to disaster under the slogan: "Let us make our neighborhood community resilient to natural disasters." This risk-preventative mode of social governance was further strengthened following the beginning of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011. Setagaya has been chosen for this research for several reasons. First, in Setagaya, explicit attention has been shown to the tasks of risk prevention and management. Second, the city has a long history of participatory community development. Third, it has adopted a step-by-step approach, which also deserves attention. For example, when a small park (so called pocket park) is made in the city, it is not made all at once, but little by little, according to the residents' cooperation. The plan map for the neighborhood community was not made by the ward office, but by the residents. Fourth, the role of the residents' association is strong and autonomous. Setagaya Support Center for Neighborhood Community Making was established in 1992 and it now functions as Setagaya Trust Foundation for Neighborhood Community Making, for sustainable neighborhood community reconstruction (C. Kim 2014). Examining Setagaya will enable the investigation of the specific trajectory of community development, along with the broader implications of trust, participation, and cooperation.

In the case of Seoul, the Seongmisan (or Sungmisan) community has been chosen for several reasons. First, it represents a remarkably bottom-up and thus democratic pathway to community reconstruction. Second, it is sharply distinguished from the circumstances in Beijing and Tokyo because it was led by a specific group within the college-educated young

1. Setagaya City was established in 1932 with the merging of two towns and two villages, Setagaya, Komazawa, Tamagawa, and Matsuzawa. Later, in 1936, another two villages, Chitose and Kinuta, merged with the municipality to form Setagaya City as it is today. The city has now grown into the largest residential community in Tokyo. Over the years, residents and the city have pursued autonomy and sought to build a tolerant and vibrant community, while working together to protect the culture, traditions, and precious natural environment of the area, including the Kokubunji cliff line, many rivers, and farmland (Setagaya City 2013).

generation, who shared democratic struggles in Korea during the 1980s. Thus, the history of this community is dynamic and energetic. From 2001 to 2003, for instance, there was a struggle to save Seongmisan mountain from an environment-hostile development (Han, Shim, and Kim 2017). During this period, the press began to call the village Seongmisan community (*maeul*) and the residents themselves gained their identity as community members. This struggle was significant because it provided the opportunity for people to gather and nurture solidarity, and also develop many other important activities based on this (Yoo 2010; Wui 2013; Kim and Han 2008). Third, this community shared deep pragmatic concerns for the issues of everyday life. An idea of social governance originally started as a "communal childcare cooperative," in order to overcome the burden of childcare. As the cooperative became popular, it expanded to other child care cooperatives, with afterschool care programs set up as the children went on to primary school. In the end, an alternative school was formed. This pattern of evolution deserves careful attention. The fourth reason for choosing Seongmisan community is that Erik Ohlin Wright[2] described this community as "evidence of a real utopia." Finally, this bottom-up model of social governance was later transmitted to the social policy of Seoul Metropolitan Government (Ahn et al. 2016). Therefore this case enables investigation into how the two levels of social governance can come, in due course, to interact.

Bureaucratic-Authoritarian Development and Risk Society

The social governance of risks in East Asia has something to do with the consequences of East Asian modernity. The origin of this modernity can be traced back to Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Japan began to adopt a model of catching up modernization, under the leadership

2. Wright said: "The most impressive time in my stay in Seoul was the day at Seongmisan community. The behavior of the grassroots was very interesting and the joint projects of the residents were unique. The outcome of Seongmisan is amazing, considering the situation that most of the movements do not take firm root giving birth to new organizations" (*Hankyoreh*, July 21, 2014).

of a strong state backed by efficient bureaucratic apparatus, disciplined bureaucrats, and an educated labor force. The strong state functioned as the central coordinator and pace maker for the whole processes of modernization, while keeping politics and society under strict control to maintain social order as a precondition for state-led rapid industrialization. The bureaucratic-authoritarian (BA) model of economic development was first established in Japan, and then later transmitted to South Korea in the 1960s (Cumings 1989; Im 1987) and then to China from the 1980s (Han 1988).

Here again, the significant variations in the trajectories of the BA state among East Asian countries should be noted. Korea, Japan, and China differ considerably as to the composition of ruling groups, the internal relations among them, dominant ideology, the policies of exclusion, and their consequences. With this in mind, state-centered BA development is meaningful in East Asia for the following reasons. First, despite historical variations, the strong state can be identified as a key explanatory variable for modernization in the three countries. Second, a privileged role was given to the economy and security—ideological and oppressive—state apparatuses with the same imperative of steering economic growth and controlling the society efficiently. Third, the BA model turned out to be remarkably successful in achieving economic growth in all the countries, at least for a number of decades. Fourth, consequently, all three countries were fundamentally transformed from agricultural to industrial societies, with a rapidly growing middle class and skilled labor force. Fifth, the BA model not only produced the bright story of economic success but also entailed the unintended dark reality of complex risks (Han 2015c). Finally, the BA model produced a strong legacy of state-centered mentality and value orientation.

Therefore, East Asia represents a specific type of BA development, distinguished by its strong discipline and cohesion among bureaucrats, distinctive work ethics, Confucian meritocracy, and institutional commitment to economic development. This East Asian type of BA state differs significantly from the Latin American type. Furthermore, the concept of the BA state is more accurately explanatory than that of "developmental state" because it can explain not only the developmental consequences but

also the production of risk society. The implantation of the BA state in Korea via the Yushin political reform during the 1970s has already been thoroughly investigated (Han 1988; Im 1987). Cumings (1989) traced the origin of the Korean BA state back to the Meiji restoration in Japan, while Amsden (1989) explained its economic function of modernization and emphasized its repressive function. The BA legacy is still politically alive in Japan, as evidenced by Prime Minister Abe's continuing reference to the Meiji reform (2018), to reinforce Japan as a wealthy and militarily strong state (Auslin 2018). In China, the topic of BA development remains rather marginal in the academic community, due to a preoccupation with the Chinese characteristics of political development. However, considerable attention has been paid to the bureaucratic capacity of inclusion and exclusion as an indicator of political and social development (Yang 2001; Ren 2013).

In Korea, BA development has had a positive impact on industrial development during the 40 years from 1955 to 1995. On the other hand, rapid industrial development has become a road to a risk society. To review the Korean development during this period briefly, per capita income was just US$65 in 1955 but it increased to US$12,282 in 1995, an increase of about 190 times. During the same period, GDP increased 400 times more, from US$1.4 billion to US$556.3 billion, and export value increased 500 times more from US$24.6 million to US$125.06 billion. These statistics testify to "the miracle of the Hangang River" and the profound social changes in employment patterns, occupation structures, and educational opportunities that took place during this time.

The push for economic growth began in light manufacturing industries during the 1960s and then moved to heavy and chemical industries from 1973 (Han 1988). The results that emerged from this deepening process included the rapid expansion of exports; fast developing automobile, semiconductor, shipbuilding, and steel industries; the establishment of large industrial complexes in southern cities such as Changwon, Ulsan, and Gumi; the construction of high-rise buildings in downtown Seoul, Busan, Daegu and other major cities; a huge increase in the number of passenger cars; rapid development of communications infrastructure; and the spread of consumption-oriented culture.

Similar trends can also be observed in other East Asian countries. During the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, the so-called "four little dragons" of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore were often cited as economic development role models for developing countries. Since 1979, when China took up the open-door and reform policy, China also began to undertake modernization, and became a symbol of global economic and political power in a short span of time. From 1980 to 1991, for example, the annual growth rate of GNP per capita soared to as high as 9.8% in Taiwan, 8.7% in Korea, 7.8% in China, 5.6% in Hong Kong, and 5.3% in Singapore, whereas the average annual growth rate of all other developing countries in all regions was only 1.3% (Han 2017a, 330). A brief overview of contemporary world history after the Second World War clearly shows that East Asia moved much faster than other third world regions to become an exemplar of "catch-up modernization."

However, today East Asia is full of uncertainties and risks. Everyday life risks (accidents, violence), civilizational risks (climate change, international terrorism), and technological risks (radiation, GMO) are all manifest. In addition, the lack of transitional justice deeply affects East Asia, with the history of Japanese colonialism still remaining a major source of tension and conflict. In such circumstances, the persistence of state-centered development adds another dimension to risk society because the political elites who occupy state power are deeply inclined to take as many advantages as they can, by advocating a confrontational politics of national interests. In addition, the nuclear policy of North Korea, together with the geopolitical hegemony conflict between the United States and China, makes this region extremely hazardous. Against this backdrop of harsh reality, we need to sharpen our eyes to comprehend the complex risks East Asia faces today.

Public Perception of Risks in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo

Now let's examine the public perception of risks in East Asia. Citizens' survey data collected from Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo in 2012 demonstrates to which kind of risks citizens are more attentive, concerning the questions of how

likely they are to occur and how dangerous they may turn out to be if they do occur. For the sake of convenience, I call the former the likelihood of disaster and the latter the magnitude of danger.

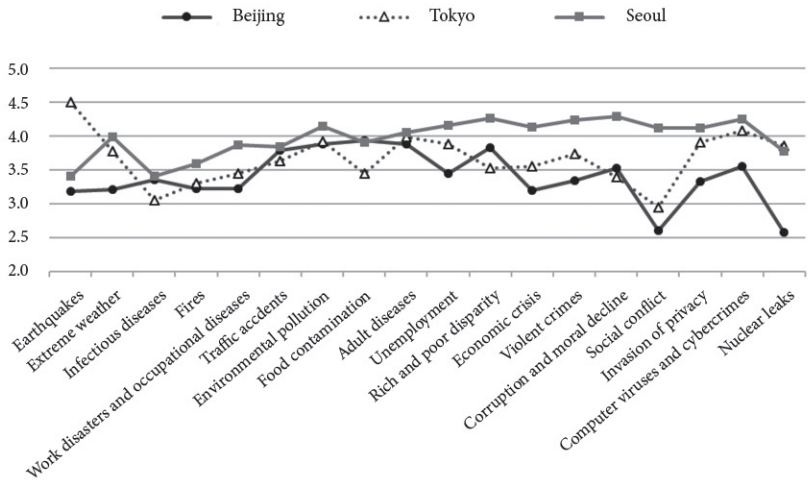

Figure 1. Perceived likelihood of disasters in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo (scale: 1-5)

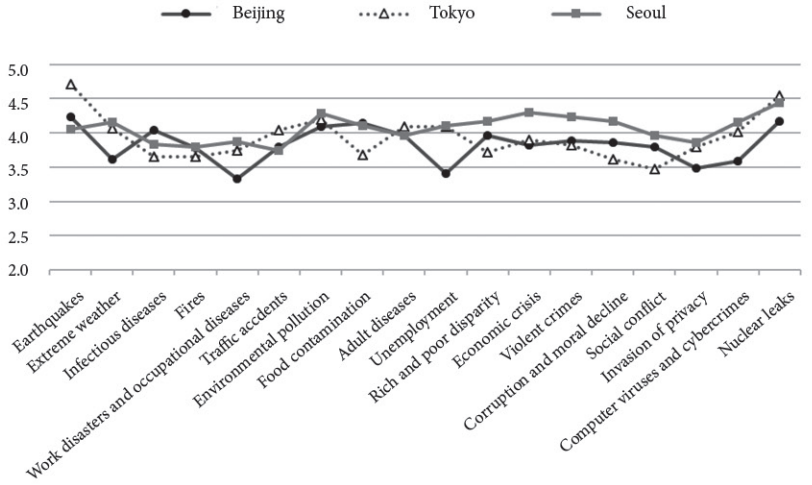

Figure 2. Perceived magnitude of danger in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo (scale: 1-5)

Figures 1 and 2 show that risk perception differs significantly from one city to another, though the overall level of sensitivity is consistently high (a mean of higher than 2.5 for all kinds of risk in each city). The level of sensitivity is highest in Seoul, particularly concerning the likelihood of disaster. Tokyo comes next while Beijing is relatively low. In some cases the citizens' responses contrast sharply. In Beijing, for instance, the perceived magnitude of danger is very high for earthquakes and nuclear radiation leaks, but the perceived likelihood is very low in both cases. In contrast, the pattern of Tokyo citizens' responses shows high sensitivity to each case in both dimensions. This indicates that these two types of risks are likely to become the nodal points in the social construction of risk society in Tokyo, but not so in Beijing. Therefore, care must be taken not to fall into a simple mechanistic comparison of statistics across the three cities. Social construction, by definition, is always context-specific, depending on how citizens see the issues at hand. What needs to be determined, therefore, is where the perceived magnitude of danger and likelihood of disaster converge into the higher zone of sensitivity in each city because social construction may evolve around those types of risk with higher sensitivity.

As table 1 shows, in Beijing, the higher zone of sensitivity includes contaminated foodstuffs, environmental pollution, economic disparity, and health risks including adult diseases and infectious diseases. Put more simply, the nodal points of social construction are contamination of foodstuffs and environmental pollution. In Tokyo, earthquakes and nuclear radiation leakage occupy prominence, together with environmental pollution and adult diseases. Seoul shows quite a different result. The nodal points include corruption, economic risks including income polarization, environmental pollution, and violence. This shows a basic socio-epistemological ground for the social construction of risks. Needless to say, the concrete pathway depends on many other factors such as lived experience of catastrophes, the role of the media, public discourse, social movements, and politics.

Table 1. Magnitude and Likelihood of Risks in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo

	Beijing				Tokyo				Seoul			
	Magnitude		Likelihood		Magnitude		Likelihood		Magnitude		Likelihood	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
Earthquakes	4.23	1	3.18	16	4.71	1	4.5	1	4.05	11	3.4	18
Extreme weather	3.62	14	3.21	14	4.07	6	3.78	8	4.16	7	3.98	11
Infectious diseases	4.04	5	3.35	9	3.65	16	3.05	17	3.84	16	3.41	17
Fires	3.78	13	3.22	13	3.66	15	3.3	16	3.79	17	3.59	16
Work disasters and occupational diseases	3.33	18	3.22	12	3.75	12	3.44	14	3.87	14	3.87	13
Traffic accidents	3.8	11	3.79	5	4.04	7	3.63	10	3.75	18	3.84	14
Environmental pollution	4.09	4	3.88	3	4.2	3	3.92	4	4.29	3	4.14	6
Food contamination	4.15	3	3.93	1	3.68	14	3.45	13	4.11	9	3.91	12
Adult diseases	3.97	6	3.88	2	4.09	4	3.98	3	3.96	12	4.05	10
Unemployment	3.41	17	3.44	8	4.09	5	3.88	6	4.1	10	4.15	5
Economic disparity	3.97	7	3.82	4	3.72	13	3.52	12	4.17	5	4.26	2
Economic crisis	3.82	10	3.2	15	3.9	9	3.55	11	4.3	2	4.13	7
Violent crimes	3.88	8	3.34	10	3.82	10	3.73	9	4.23	4	4.23	4
Corruption and moral decline	3.86	9	3.52	7	3.61	17	3.39	15	4.17	6	4.29	1
Social conflict	3.79	12	2.61	17	3.47	18	2.95	18	3.96	13	4.12	8
Invasion of privacy	3.48	16	3.33	11	3.8	11	3.9	5	3.86	15	4.12	9
Computer viruses and cybercrimes	3.59	15	3.55	6	4.02	8	4.08	2	4.16	8	4.25	3
Nuclear leaks	4.17	2	2.58	18	4.54	2	3.85	7	4.44	1	3.78	15
Average	3.83		3.39		3.93		3.66		4.07		3.97	

Risk Society as Social Construction and Discursive Formation

Risk has dual dimensions and qualities. It possesses an ontological basis. It refers to dangers which exist in the real world. Thus, we can talk of the modes of production and distribution of risks. At the same time, risk is always socially constructed. All constructions are selective; it can never be "representative." The definition of risk depends on knowledge. People become aware of hidden or implicit risks as knowledge progresses, changing perceptions. For example, as individualization becomes more and more radicalized, such intimate spheres of life as love, marriage, and family, turn out to be risky, far from being secured, as can be seen in the Western way of life today. Changes in culture sensitize attention to hitherto unrecognized risks. Therefore, there is a good reason to take the social constructionist approach to risk. How citizens view risks and how communicative interaction goes on are important questions to ask in the study of the formation of risk society.

Some salient characteristics of the public perception of risks have already been outlined for Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo. Starting from this, I want to examine the historical formation of risk society from the perspective of social construction and discursive formation. This choice is based on the considerable success of methodological debates and empirical research in these two directions. This examination will be extended to public anxiety and risk demonstration, which works as a driving force for social governance of risks as an alternative form of development.

In this regard, I already proposed above that we see the middle of the 1990s as a threshold to risk society in Korea. The Korean public began to be deeply shaken and shocked from 1994 by such catastrophic disasters as the collapse of the Seongsu bridge over the Hangang River, the collapse of the Sampoong Department Store in a middle-class district of Seoul, and the gas explosion in the Daegu city subway, which all followed in quick succession. People suddenly realized how precarious human life was, and how meaninglessly so many lives could be lost. On the surface, these accidents seemed to have resulted from technical flaws. However, it became clear that these disasters were nothing but the outcomes of "organized irresponsibility"

and "manufactured risks" intrinsically related to the strategy of the state-centered rush for BA development (Han and Shim 2010). Risk society visibly emerged as people began to worry about high-consequential disasters that could happen at any time and any place (Han 1998; Yee 1998). The perception of risk society was originally shaped by large-scale accidents since the mid-1990s, and this specific focus has continued, as reflected in the 2014 Sewol ferry tragedy.

Another focal point in the social reconstruction of risk is concerned with economic risks. This has something to do with the Asian financial crisis which affected the whole country in late 1990s. According to government estimates at the time, 22,828 medium and small size businesses closed down in 1998. The Bureau of Statistics announced that between April 1999 and April 2000, a total of 1.2 million employees lost their jobs. In other words, 9.7% of blue collar workers and 13.9% of white collar workers lost their jobs during a single year. The unemployment rate increased from 2.6% (November 1997) to 6.7% (April 1998) and it soared to 8.7% (February 1999). The number of regular workers decreased drastically while the number of irregular workers increased. As of April 1997, regular workers made up 54.9% of the total wage earners, but by April 1999 this had dropped to 48.2%. Because all of this was related to the financial market of the global economy, Korea became deeply entangled in global risk society (D. Kim 1998; Han 1998; Seong 1998).

This paper seeks to show how these accidents and crises gave rise to a strong concept of risk society through the processes of social communication and interaction. In the case of Korea, the way society responded to the challenges of risk society can be documented by producing intensive discourses advocating a fundamental change in development policy. This reflects the normative potential kept alive in the hearts of the public (Han 1991, 2003, 2014a, 2015a).[3] This public sensitivity began to work as a

3. This has something to do with the fact that parallel to the BA model of state-centered development, the strong moral energy of protest and deliberation continued to express in various forms. However brutal and merciless the bureaucratic and military control might be, the moral forces unfolded continually not from the margin but from the center of civil society, such as prestigious universities, churches, and cultural sectors of arts and media. The

driving force for a social governance of risks, as an alternative model of development which is more reflexive than instrumental, more participatory than authoritarian, and more life-oriented than money-oriented. The idea of social governance was born out of this context, owing much to the role of such opinion makers as intellectuals, journalists, policy makers, and various activist groups.

Of particular significance in this regard is the warm reception of Ulrich Beck in the academic and public spheres. He captured public attention by arguing that risk society is different qualitatively from industrial society, that the risks we face today are highly transnationally interconnected, that it is no longer possible to solve this problem by conventional methods of risk management, and that risk society calls for a new type of governance which requires citizen participation together with open communication, transparency, and responsibility of the public institutions.

Historically, the first international conference in which a paper on Asian risk society was presented was perhaps the 6th International Conference on Asian Sociology in 1995, which took place in Beijing (Han 1995). Soon afterwards, the Korean quarterly journal *Sasang* (Ideas) devoted its whole autumn 1998 issue to the analysis of Korea as a risk society. At the same time, *Korea Journal* also devoted its entire spring 1998 issue to the various aspects of risk society (Han 1998; Yee 1998; Chang 1998; Seong 1998; B. Kim 1998; D. Kim 1998).

In this process the public became capable of recognizing that the emergence of risk society is intrinsically associated with the dissolution of the moral foundation of society. Risks were diagnosed not simply as a technical problem, but more fundamentally as a political and moral problem. Because instrumental calculation came to penetrate deeply into human relationships and because everyone became preoccupied with obtaining material gain as much and as quickly as possible, argument went on that there was no

Korean story of modernization shows interesting interactions of these parallel developments which have made the society open and plural. In other words, critical self-reflection has been deeply built into the process of modernization. High potential for public reasoning and deliberation has grown in history. This also means that the public has become sensitive to the future possibilities than being satisfied with what has been achieved. This explains why the public perception of risks in Korea is much higher and sharper than in other countries.

consideration for the safety (security) of life, together with the long-term consequences of quantitative growth that was too rapid. State administration, banks, and credit institutes were supposed to protect citizens' life and security, but it was argued that these institutions were immensely involved in creating and spreading risks, rather than controlling them. Various authors identified the logic of the BA state and its developmental policies as root causes of high-consequential life risks (J. Kim 1998; S. Kim 1998; Y. C. Kim 1998; Lee 1998; Moon 1998; Shim 1998). These critical discourses put strong pressure on society and politics to consider an alternative development.

In China, the main social focus on risk society is drastically diversified from one region to another. Large-scale earthquakes have occurred frequently in the central areas of China such as Sichuan. However, the citizens of Beijing seem to assume that Beijing is relatively free from this concern. Here, the nodal point of social construction of risk society is focused on health-related risks, such as food safety and acute epidemics like SARS (Thiers 2003) on the one hand, and environmental issues like air pollution and yellow dust, on the other. In fact, health and environment are closely related: yellow dust is not simply an environmental problem but a serious threat to public health.

He, Mol, and Lu (2012, 442) defined China as a risk society by the fact that the average annual GDP growth of 10% from 1978 to 2011 was accompanied by more than 33,000 environmental accidents between 1991 and 2010, including "chemical spills, algal blooms, blood lead accidents, oil spills, food poisoning, flash floods, and sand storms." Despite the government's efforts to manage these risks, the situation doesn't seem to be improving. Indeed, they argue that "this perseverance of environmental risks and accidents and the widely perceived incapability of the Chinese government to effectively address these risks and accidents have contributed to an increased lack of trust and credibility in environmental authorities among the Chinese public" (2012, 442). This represents one of the burning points in social construction of risks in China, particularly in Beijing.

Closely related to this, health-related risks occupy high priority in Beijing (Yan 2013; de Jong 2016). As examined by Fabiansson and Fabiansson (2016), perceptions of risk are particularly sensitive on issues of food safety and health. As discussed in the next section, over three months

in 2008 massive demonstrations occurred in Seoul on the issue of mad cow disease. This case shows that the definition of risks by citizens can be dramatically different from the definition by the government. In China, the ordinary people's worries about food safety is so high that a precautionary principle has been introduced to the food safety law in order to minimize the harm caused by contaminated food stuffs (Yi 2016). As to the trust of medical institutions, the citizens of Beijing are observed to be highly sensitive to the difficulties involved in meeting with doctors when they become sick. On the other hand, one can easily find that many citizens come out to the public parks near residential areas early in the morning for physical exercise to maintain their health.

The influence of Ulrich Beck on the social construction of risks in China is less significant than in Korea. However, most of his books have been translated into Chinese. He also receives the spotlight when risk society is on the agenda in China. In particular, the interview he gave with Deng and Shen (2010) at Fudan University, Shanghai, wielded considerable impact on his reception in China. Attention to the political risks of China has also been sharpened. In view of the increasing middle class with diversified predispositions, it has become a public concern where governing risk might come from (Ren 2013). Another view is that China is in the process of developing its own authoritarian integrative governance model to perform the role of political risk aversion (Xie 2016).

The Japanese way of social construction of risk is heavily preoccupied with a three-fold catastrophe, involving the chain reactions of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis as epitomized by the 2011 Fukushima disaster (Fluechter 2011). Even before this triple disaster, Japan was deeply sensitive to environmental risks and natural hazards. This tendency has been greatly reinforced by the triple disaster of the Fukushima catastrophe. In this case, the dangers involved are extremely complex, diverse, far-reaching, and long-lasting. Therefore, the process of constructing risks is also unavoidably complicated, touching on many issues. For instance, earthquake and tsunami may represent natural hazards, but these natural hazards became deeply intermingled with highly advanced technology like nuclear power, to produce a horrible man-made catastrophe. Concerns about environmental

risks has surfaced as an extense debate on the issues related to power plant construction and management technology, professional codes of conduct for technical workers, safety communication, and the role of risk-control organizations. It also requires a high degree of institutional accountability and political responsibility. To that extent, this experience was powerful enough to shake the whole of Japanese society from the bottom. The production of collective action, discourses, the feeling of despair, the desire for hope and solidarity was abundant, feeding bottom-up energy for a new Japan. The question of how to keep Japan from such terrifying triple disaster and create a safe country has become a burning issue of profound political and social significance.

Another interesting track in Japan is found in the area of individualization and family risks. At first, Japanese people were interested in Ulrich Beck's message on environmental risks. After that, Japanese academic circles showed great interest in his theory of individualization (Ito and Suzuki 2012). This means that the social construction of risks is quite selective in Japan, with preferential treatment of individualization. This selectivity is well captured by Takeda (2011) who demonstrates how the Japanese way of social construction of family risks differs from the European pattern. In Europe, the family risk is seen from a value perspective. Consequently, the family is seen as undergoing fundamental changes due to the radicalization of individualization. In contrast, in Japan, the family risk is largely traced back to being an economic problem. The family risk means the existence of "parasite singles" within the family who fail, or refuse, to find a job in the labor market. To solve this, family-related government authorities and academic researchers have proposed a structural reform of the labor market to mitigate the family risks through flexible employment and labor deregulation.

Public Anxiety and Risk Demonstration

The social construction of risks sometimes entails collective action and confrontation, expressing public anxiety. One example of this was the large-scale candlelight vigils in Korea, especially in Seoul, in which millions of

citizens joined voluntarily for more than three months from April 2008 (Han 2014a). The key issue was the public worry about mad cow disease (vCJD) that might result from the government decision to lift the suspension on U.S. beef imports. This problem can be traced back to 2003, when a case of mad cow disease was confirmed at a U.S. cattle farm. The government at that time halted imports of American beef in response to the demands of concerned citizens and animal medicine experts. After the conservative government took office in February 2008, high-ranking officials as well as business organizations of the United States began to wield pressure on the Korean government to resume beef imports. Washington maintained that a free trade agreement with Seoul, an important issue at that time, could not be ratified unless the Korean government allowed the resumption of American beef imports. In this situation, on April 18, 2008, the first day of the Korean president's official visit to Washington, the Korean government announced that an agreement had been reached and the Korean market would be made open to American beef. On April 29, 2008, the MBC television channel aired an investigative program, *PD sucheop* (PD Notepad) showing a video clip of "downer" cows at U.S. farms with the statement that people who consume American beef could contract the human form of mad cow disease. This inspired many young people to participate in candlelight vigils, which climaxed on June 10, 2008, when one million citizens joined a protest in Seoul (Han 2014a).

Of particular significance in this regard is the sharp competition between two camps that emerged in due course: the mainstream power bloc and the citizens' alliance. The former is composed of the Korean government, mainstream conservative newspapers, business organizations, economists, and such foreign powers as the U.S. government and international health organizations. The latter is composed of young citizens and women in particular, groups of animal medicine experts, critically-oriented minority newspapers, MBC television, and some religious groups. The mainstream power bloc advocated the paradigm of national interests in relation to the free trade agreement with the United States, whereas the citizens' alliance advocated the paradigm of life politics, putting emphasis on the danger to public health. The two camps struggled hard to get as much popular support

as they could using various means. The two camps showed remarkably different attitudes to mad cow disease. The citizens' alliance sensitized attention to people's right for health while the power bloc discredited their worries as relying on unfounded rumors. Despite large disparity between the two camps in terms of opportunity structure and resource mobilization, the citizens' alliance was able to gain overwhelmingly greater public support, forcing the president to issue an official apology on May 22, 2008 (Han 2014a).[4]

Risk demonstration gained far more explosive attention when Korea went through two catastrophic disasters in 2014 and 2015: the Sewol ferry disaster and the MERS disaster (Han 2015b). The Sewol ferry disaster was a typical case of a man-made disaster, resulting in 295 of the 476 passengers on board losing their lives. Emotions such as anger, sorrow, and frustration began to spread all over the country via television broadcastings. The rules for safe operation of the ferry were not implemented from the beginning. Then efficient rescue efforts were blocked by false information conveyed to the passengers in the ship, the complete incompetence of the maritime police, the irresponsibility of certain crew members, and distorted communication between concerned bureaucratic agencies. It was later discovered that the disaster was not even properly reported to the President. As criticism began to be focused on the Blue House and the President, all the issues became more and more politicized, and the ruling and the opposition parties, as well as their organized supporters, confronted each other using all kinds of ideological weapons of stigmatization and labelling (Han 2015b). This indicates that the political parties, state

4. Nevertheless, the government continued to hold the official view of defining the candlelit vigils as founded upon unscientific rumors, rather than recognizing the right of the people to express their views on health. In a nation-wide survey in January 2010, therefore, an attempt was made to test how the respondents would react to the contrasting view. Those who accepted the government position occupied 19.2%, whereas those closer to citizens' judgment represented 60.9%. Those who stayed in the middle made up 29.9%. Furthermore, those who viewed the movement to be legitimate and peaceful were far greater than those who did not. The patterns of responses were proven to be closely correlated. Those who saw the issues from the eyes of citizens were inclined to evaluate the candlelit vigil as legitimate (43.7%) and peaceful (48.1%), and those who took the progovernment perspective defined it as illegitimate (32.8%) and violent (26.9%). (Han 2014a)

apparatus, and other related public institutions were not prepared for how to effectively deal with the dangers of risk society. In this context, the bereaved families formed an association and initiated risk demonstrations, advocating two main objectives to achieve. The first was a full investigation to uncover the truth about the incident and who or what was responsible, and the second was the construction of a safe Korea.

One year later, collective panic swept over Korea from May to June 2015 due to the threat of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), turning into another typical case of man-made disaster. The spread of MERS could have been effectively controlled if the health-related authorities and hospitals had taken the strong early measures needed to control the virus, including comprehensive medical examination and surveillance. However, as was the case with the Sewol ferry disaster, the government authorities were unprepared to deal with the sudden attack of MERS and thus lost critical time for the initial response. They repeated that there was no need to worry about MERS, despite the undisputable increase in the number of confirmed patients. They even warned that those who spread rumors about the outbreak would be punished.[5]

As a response to the Fukushima disaster, the antinuclear citizens' movement in Japan also provides a telling story, demonstrating how risks were socially constructed. In this regard, Hasegawa's observation is useful.

> The protest was fueled by the participants' anger about the Fukushima nuclear accident, their anger and distrust of the responses of the electric power company and the central Government, and their own feelings and sense of daily life.... Mothers, in particular, are worrying about their children's safety, and the contamination in foods, school lunches, water, homes, schools, swimming pools, on the paths leading to schools, and playgrounds. No matter where we are, whatever we do, and whatever we

5. According to the magazine *Hankyoreh 21* (201), the Sewol ferry disaster and MERS outbreak share six main common characteristics. The first is failure of effective early response. The second is the lack of reliable information, particularly about the number of the victims. The third is the lack of keen attention paid by the president. The fourth is the easygoing judgment of the control tower. The fifth is the lack of advanced facilities and trained human resources. The final common characteristic is the occupation of decision-making positions by non-experts.

> eat, we are always aware of the level of radiation. Innocent smiles have disappeared. We can no longer trust official government and media reports on "safety." (Hasegawa 2014, 65-66)

Here we find exactly the same logic and pattern of expression as in the case of Seoul risk demonstrations. As in Seoul, the risk demonstrations in Tokyo were based on voluntary participation rather than organizational mobilization. They did not result in rock-throwing or violence, and they continued for a long period, spreading into other cities nationwide. They also produced a sense of popular solidarity and aspiration for a participatory and safe life in the future.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have attempted to show how risk society has been formed in East Asia as a background of social governance experiments in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo. Yet the analysis has not done enough to grasp the concrete interconnections of the challenge of risk society and social governance experiments. Such interconnections may vary depending on whether we deal with the grassroots level of neighborhood community reconstruction or the city level of social governance policy. This paper is intended to show that we need to sharpen these theoretical interconnections if we want to grasp the current experiments of social governance in East Asia in a systematic way. Such a systematic understanding requires extensive empirical research in the future. With the perspectives suggested in this paper, we can move further to examine how the challenges of risk society have been embedded into the institutional or organizational designs of social governance; to what extent the social governance experience of Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo converge or diverge; and how the grassroots levels of governance and the city levels of governance interact with each other in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo. Likewise, the concrete formation of risk society in terms of social construction and discursive formation needs to be more fully investigated, particularly in China and Japan. Although the present study offered an initial contribution,

more research is needed. It is hoped that this paper will serve as a platform from which studies of greater depth and specificity may be taken.

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