

East Asian Patterns of Individualization and Its Consequences for Neighborhood Community Reconstruction

Young-Hee SHIM

Abstract

This paper attempts to articulate the concepts of individualization and neighborhood community reconstruction in close relations as dual aspects of the same coin—considering the strong community reconstruction experience in East Asia. So far, seldom has it been attempted to draw out this reciprocal relation in empirical research. Individualization has been widely discussed but with negligible attention to community reconstruction, and vice versa. Against this, the author attempts to grasp individualization and community reconstruction as concomitant historical changes in East Asia. The findings are as follows: first, through a review of the main outcomes of the researches on individualization in the West and East Asia, it turned out that individualization in the East is “family-oriented” or “community-oriented” individualization, different from that of the one-way development in the West. Second, through a review of empirical researches on consequences of individualization on community life—such as mutual help and solidarity—it turned out that consequences are mostly negative in East Asia. This enforced individualization tends to increase the level of anxiety in everyday life while the integrative function of the community decreases, leading to neighborhood community reconstruction efforts for the desirable future of the city.

Keywords: individualization, community reconstruction, anxiety of everyday life, family risks, social governance, East Asia

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Introduction

Some authors mentioned about the relations between individualization and community reconstruction or between risks and social governance (Han 2018; Jo-Han 2013; Ahn, Wui, and Yoo 2016). But how they are concretely related to one another is not clear. This paper is an attempt to articulate the relationship between individualization and neighborhood community¹ reconstruction as dual aspects of the same coin in East Asia. More specifically, it tries to show that individualization, a successful outcome of industrial modernity, brings forth not only such positive consequences, such as emancipation, but also the negative consequences like community disintegration, which in turn, work as a driving force for social governance experiments in East Asia.

This Janus-faced approach is needed for several reasons. First, in East Asia, seldom has it been attempted to pay attention to this reciprocal relation in empirical research. Individualization has been widely discussed but with negligible attention to community reconstruction, and vice versa. Against this, the author attempts to grasp individualization and community reconstruction as concomitant historical changes. Second, the idea of social governance has emerged as a response to disintegrating community in East Asia and this response has strong appealing force. There have been various attempts or movements to make *maeul* community, as exemplified by the Seongmisan (or Sungmisan) community in Seoul (Han, Shim, and Kim 2017; Yoo 2010; Wui 2013; Kim and Han 2008), the Qinghe experiment in Beijing (Li and Zheng 2018; Han, Shim, and Park 2017), and the Setagaya ward in Tokyo (Setagaya City 2013; C. Kim 2014; Taniguchi and Marshall 2016). There is also a need to explain these interesting phenomena of social governance which can be explained in connection between individualization and neighborhood community reconstruction.

My question is pretty simple: If individualization is related with social governance of risks, how are they related? In exploring this question, this

1. The word “neighborhood community” is used to represent *maeul* in Korea, even though community means network as well as neighborhood.

paper deals with the research on individualization in the West and East Asia in the following ways: 1) how East Asia differs from the West in terms of the patterns of individualization and its relation with community, and 2) within East Asia, how Korea, China, and Japan differ from one another in terms of their patterns of individualization. Furthermore, by reviewing the empirical research in East Asia on the consequences of individualization on community life, this paper aims to show 3) how serious the public perception of risks is over the destabilizing consequences of individualization on the family life, and 4) explore the relation between these negative consequences and social governance of risks as epitomized by neighborhood community reconstruction in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo.

Individualization Research in the West: One-Way “Libertarian” Individualization

The first way to show the relationship between individualization and community reconstruction/social governance is by reviewing the main outcomes of the research on individualization conducted thus far and comparing the similarity and difference between the West and East Asia. The problem consciousness is that the individualization research in the West has been one-sided, in the sense that it focuses on dis-embeddedness of the individuals, but not on the re-embeddedness of them (Shim and Han 2010, 2013). Dis-embedding here means being removed from the traditional commitment and support relationships, and re-embedding means getting into a new type of social commitment.² Research on the individualization in East Asia shows that in East Asia people are very much individualized but at the same time very much family-oriented. It shows that the family is still very important. In this sense, the path for individualization in East Asia is different from the West (Han and Shim 2016). That is, individuals are not only dis-embedded but also re-embedded into the community network.

2. These concepts will be discussed in more detail in the following subsection.

In this context, the paper will review research on individualization not only as a structural process of transformation but also as a relationship between the individuals and community in East Asia and the West. It will start with the individualization in the West.

Beck (1992), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), Giddens (1992), and Bauman (2001), among others, are famous for their theory of individualization. There are subtle differences among them, but they all have dealt with modernity and individualization as a structural way of transformation. Giddens (1992) focused on the reflexive identity of individual and the changing patterns of intimacy while Bauman (2001) focused on the critical and philosophical reflections on the ironical consequences of modernity and individualization. Since this paper is focused on individualization as a structural way of transformation, the paper will focus on Beck and Beck-Gernsheim.

According to Beck (1992, 127), the concept of individualization indicates a categorical shift in relations between an individual and the society with dis-embedding and re-embedding.³ Here individualization means that individuals get unleashed from the previous frameworks of welfare financed either by the state or business firms or by the family and have to take care of their survival via their own means (Han and Shim 2010; Shim and Han 2010). According to them (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 202-203), individualization works in the process of dis-embedding and re-embedding. Dis-embedding is described as a kind of liberation from the class, the family, and work routine.

Individualization liberates people from traditional roles and constrains in a number of ways. First, individuals are removed from status-based

3. Beck's (1992, 128) original explanation of individualization shows the following three-dimensional process: [D]is-embedding, *removal* from historically prescribed social forms and commitments in the sense of traditional contexts of dominance and support (the "liberating dimension"); the *loss of traditional security* with respect to practical knowledge, faith and guiding norms (the "disenchantment dimension"); and—here the meaning of the world is virtually turned into its opposite—re-embedding, a *new type of social commitment* (the "control" or "reintegration dimension") (italics original).

classes. ... Second, ... the entire structure of family ties has come under pressure from individualization and a new negotiated provisional family composed of multiple relationship—a ‘post-family’—is emerging. Third, the old forms of work routine and discipline are in decline with the emergence of flexible work hours, pluralized underemployment and decentralization of work sites. (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 202–203)

Thus, the individual is removed from traditional commitments and support relationships, but exchanges them for the constraints of existence in the labor markets. In spite of these new forms of constraints, individualized cultures foster a belief in individual control—a desire for a “life of one’s own.” Re-embedding in Beck’s sense is described as getting into new forms of reintegration, from the class to the identity, from the family to the post-family, and from traditional work to flexible work, but with new forms of control (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 203).⁴

Thus, individualization is a complex process related to conditions as diverse as cultural changes, legal entitlement, political participation, and internet communication, among others. First, individualization is related to cultural democracy. Individualization presupposes that individuals are liberated step by step from the taken-for-granted constraints exercised by collectives of various kinds. An outcome of this historical process is human rights or individual sovereignty. Second, individualization involves the emergence of an individual as a subject of legal rights. It is an individual, not any collectivity, that is legally entitled to make a claim for his right. Third, individualization means the emergence of an individual citizen as the subject of political participation whose mode of action differs significantly from that of collective actors. Fourth, the process of individualization tends to be further facilitated by the development of the communication and digital revolution.

At the same time, another approach in exploring the meaning of individualization today is how to manage risks and dangers that citizens may face in their lives. In Western countries, responsibility for risk management

4. This seems to me a continued dis-embedding rather than a re-embedding. For the reasons, please see note 6.

is shifting more and more towards the individual. With respect to the economic life, the concept of individualization assumes that individuals are unleashed from the previous frameworks of welfare, financed by either the state, business firms, or the family. In other words, individuals must take care of their own lives through their own means— as seen in personal insurance packages. We would like to call the basic idea that everything depends on individual free choices a “libertarian individualization” of the West.⁵

As has been shown in the above, Western theory of individualization has, in fact, unfolded with the tacit historical assumption of the individualist tradition. More specifically, individualization researches in the West, particularly that of Beck, is a one-way development of dis-embedding. Thus it is an objective process of “enforced individualization.”

Dis-embedding is a nonissue because it is exactly what is going on almost everywhere in the global risk regime today—which is clearly demonstrated by the analyses of Japan (Suzuki et al. 2010), China (Yan 2010), and Korea (Chang and Song 2010). This paper aims to provide some aspects of where and how re-embedding⁶ is proceeding and what kinds of consequences are produced (Shim and Han 2010, 2013; Han and Shim

5. This is one of the four types my colleague and I developed. They are “conventional types of collectivism,” “family-oriented striving individualization,” “public-minded participatory individualization,” and “self-centered libertarian individualization” (Shim and Han 2013, 196). Libertarian individualization may develop fully when such conditions are met as cultural democracy, welfare state, and classical individualism (Bauman 2001; Beck 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

6. The concept of re-embedding in this paper is somewhat different from Beck's. It is considered as searching for something else, something alternative to individualization. I use it in a sense different from Beck's, since Beck's concept seems closer to the continuing dis-embedding. More specifically, re-embedding, according to Beck, is considered as getting into new forms of reintegration, for instance, from the class to the identity, from the family to the postfamily, and from traditional work to flexible work, but with new forms of control (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 203). When we think from a broader spectrum, however, this seems, to me, not a re-embedding, but rather a continued dis-embedding, because the whole discussion is premised upon Western individualization which moves with soft networks constituting “libertarian self-oriented individualization.” As for me, “re-embedding” is something else, something alternative to Western individualization, and this is especially so in the case of East Asia, and I use the concept of re-embedding in this sense.

2016).⁷ For this, it is to be analyzed particularly in the case of East Asia.

Thus a question can be raised on whether the theory of individualization based on the Western tradition of individualism can be reasonably extended to East Asia. In this context we tried to demonstrate how individualization—as a structural transformation—tends to be combined with cultural traditions in multiple ways,⁸ making East Asia quite different from the West (Shim and Han 2010, 2013; Han and Shim 2016).

More specifically, we argued that East Asia is distinctive by its cultural emphasis on the value of flourishing community, including the family, and therefore consider this relationship to be of paramount significance for understanding individualization. In East Asia the individual has been considered not as a socially isolated, atomized, independent subject, but rather as deeply interwoven with the community and his or her family (Shim and Han 2013). Then how and why does East Asia differ from the West while comprehending common characteristics of individualization?

Individualization Research in East Asia: “Family-Oriented” or “Community-Oriented” Individualization

The relationship between individuals and community is an important factor

7. To analyze this my colleague and I have developed a model (Shim and Han 2010) utilizing Beck (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2002) theory of individualization. In order to better reveal the dynamic aspects of individualization as three dimensional process of “dis-embedding,” “disenchantment,” and “re-embedding” (Beck 1992, 128), we combined the structural-objective dimension and cultural-discursive dimension on the one hand, and push and pull factors of transformation on the other, and made a conceptual model (Shim and Han 2010). Seen from this conceptual framework, re-embedding is as crucially important as dis-embedding for individualization.

8. More specifically, we have argued that individualization as a structural transformation can be adequately understood only when both the push and pull factors and, hence, both socioeconomic and cultural-discursive dimensions are properly understood in close interactions. The push factor means a structural force compelling large numbers of people in a society to change their patterns of behavior. More often than not, this is socioeconomic in nature, whereas the pull factor is deeply associated with the cultural and discursive process of social construction (Shim and Han 2013).

that distinguishes East Asia from the West. Thus, I will review some research on individualization in China, Japan, and Korea. Many of them focus on the process of individualization, and a few focus on the relationship between individuals and community. I will focus on the latter.

“Striving Individual” in China

There are a few studies on individualization in China. Yan (2010) is representative. His work on “The Chinese Path to Individualization”⁹ traces the origin of the individualization process to the Maoist era and argues that some collectivist programs of social engineering and the socialist path of modernization under Maoism ironically resulted in a partial individualization of Chinese society. His more recent work deals with the issue of the relationship between the individual and community (2014).

In “Of the Individual and Individualization: The Striving Individual in China and the Theoretical Implications,” he deals with not only dis-embedding but also the re-embedding process of individualization in China. He argues that with the individualization process a new model of individual appeared in China, which he calls “the striving individual.” Through his interviews with a farmer in a Chinese village, he reveals that many people in China strive hard to make money for their children’s education and success. The “striving individual” is characterized as having a materialist

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9. Yan (2010) examines profound social changes during the three decades of the post-Mao reforms, discussing the contours of individualization in various aspects, such as the privatization of labor and the economy, rural-urban migration of workers, rights awareness, politics of lifestyle, and the self and the subjective domain of individualization. As a conclusion, Yan argues that there are similarities with the individualization process in Western Europe, but also some important differences. According to him, individualization in China is characterized by the management of the party-state and the absence of cultural democracy, the absence of a welfare state regime, and the absence of classic individualism and political liberalism. Unlike in Western Europe, where individualization results from the radicalization of modernity itself, Chinese individualization remains a developmental strategy under the direction and management of the powerful party-state. The Chinese individualization process remains at the stage of emancipation politics of first modernity. Yan’s argument is persuasive. However, Yan focuses on the dis-embedding, not the re-embedding, process of individualization (Shim and Han 2013).

goal in value orientation, but the goal is not for himself, but for his family. Thus, it is different from the “enterprising individual” of the West who is more oriented to expressive and postmaterialist goal and is self-oriented. In this sense it can be called not just “striving individual,” but “family-oriented striving individual.”

Yan’s recent studies on the striving individual indicate both an individualizing and a family-oriented tendency. This characteristic has also been found from our research on transnational marriages in Korea, particularly from the women from Northeast China and Southeast Asia who go to Korea for marriage (Shim and Han 2010). This characteristic indicates a type of individualization which may be called “communitarian individualization.”

“Porous” Individual and “Leeway” between Liberty and Deprivation in Japan

There is considerable research on individualization in Japan within the context of the family. Even though there are researches on individualization as a structural transformation in Japan (Suzuki et al. 2010),¹⁰ I will focus on the research on the relationship between individual and community. The relationship between individual and community has been touched upon

10. Suzuki et al. (2010) argue that two mechanisms were responsible for risk management in the first modernity: first, Japanese management/company-centrism (private corporations that guaranteed long-term stability for employees and their families), and second, land development policies implemented under the guidance of bureaucrats. This means that company-centered society and the developmental state functioned as a buffer. However, from the 1990s these systems were fundamentally destroyed by globalization and neoliberal policies. Japanese company-centrism broke down, paving the road to individualization of employment. Since then, individuals in Japan have had to rely on themselves and find their own way. Now, individualization within the context of the family, has advanced as the rate of unmarried people and divorce have climbed. They have demonstrated the tendency of disconnecting individuals from the first-modern institutions and placing the burden of survival on the shoulders of individuals. In this neoliberal context, individuals are encouraged to be independent and autonomous. Yet individualization involves not only dis-embedding but also re-embedding. However, their discussion remains largely tied to the role of the push factor and not well extended to the pull factor. Thus there is a further need for a research (Shim and Han 2013).

by Morita's (2009) and Ishida et al.'s (2010) works. Morita's accounts are insightful in revealing the characteristics of "porous individual" in Japan. However, their arguments are conceptual and need to be substantiated by empirical studies. Ishida et al.'s work fills this gap as it is based on survey research.

Ishida et al. define the individualization of relationships as the situation in which a "leeway" is allowed for the intervention of individuals making choices on their own in developing and maintaining relationships. They consider two types of discourse on relationship: 1) the "liberation" discourse that ties the individualization of relationships to individual self-realization and demonstration of individuality, and 2) the "deprivation" discourse that ties the individualization to the weakened state of existing relationships. They also investigate which aspects—liberation or deprivation—appear in family, company, and local communities with empirical data. They find that even though the Japanese are positive about living an individual life free from family and corporate relationships in the context of liberation, in order to deal with the risk of deprivation they easily resort to family members and corporate community that formerly controlled or bound them.

More specifically, with regard to the family, they ask the question, "What is the most important thing in your life?" within the reality of the increase in the number of single households (which comes as a result of the deprivation by individualization). The responses are highly suggestive: the proportion of "the family" among other items continue to increase from 12% (1958), to 13% (1968), 23% (1978), 33% (1988), 40% (1998), 45% (2008), while the proportion of "life, health, myself" decreased and/or remained as the same, with 22% (1958), 29% (1968), 23% (1978), 23% (1988), 23% (1998), and 19% (2008) (fig.1). This shows an increasing hope for "the family" contrary to the reality of deprivation of the individualization (Ishida et al. 2010).

Ishida et al.'s work on people's attitude to the relationship between individuals and community suggests some ideas about the possible reactions of the people in the individualized society. It is also very suggestive for both the citizens' attitude toward the relationship between the individual and community and for a community movement.

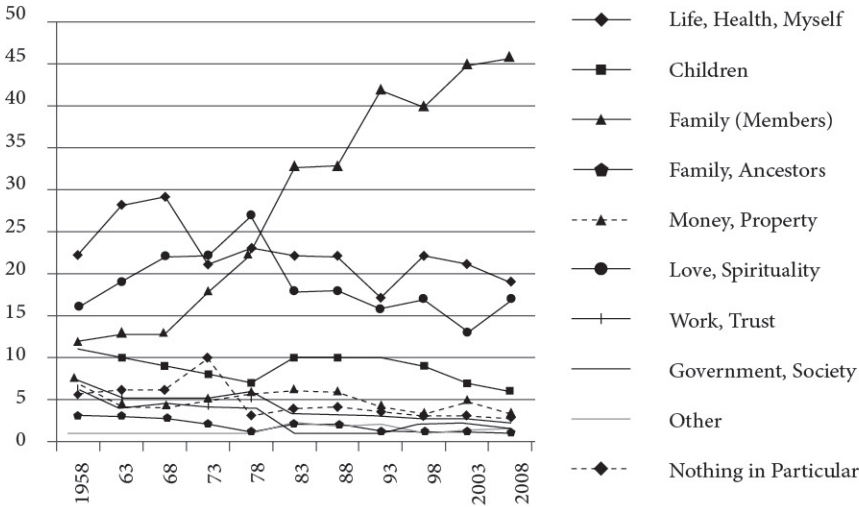


Figure 1. What is the most important thing in your life? (Ishida et al. 2010)

“Family-Oriented” or “Community-Oriented” Individualization in Korea

There have been considerable debates on the characteristics of individualization in Korea. Among them, Chang and Song (2010) and Shim and Han (2010, 2013; Han and Shim 2010, 2016; Shim 2011, 2013) are representative. Chang and Song (2010), combining the concepts of compressed modernity and risk society, characterize the individualization in Korea as “individualization without individualism.”¹¹ This is a very important observation. However, Chang’s discussion focuses mainly on

11. Chang considers the recent phenomenon of delaying marriage and low birth rates as risk-evasive individualization. His argument is that in this state of compressed modernity, the family, which used to be the welfare foundation for individual, has lost its functions as welfare resource or buffer zone, and that the family members have no choice but to be unleashed from the family and rely on one’s own efforts and ability, even though they are not equipped with strong individualism as in the West. Thus he calls the individualization in Korea “individualization without individualism.” (Chang and Song 2010)

the dis-embedding process of individualization, not on the re-embedding process. Thus, I focus on other studies which focus on the relationship between the individual and community.

Shim and Han (2010, 2011) attempt to deal with the re-embedding process of individualization based on empirical research, with the concepts of “the family-oriented individualization” (Shim 2013), “community model of the family” (Shim 2011), and “dual individualization” (Han and Shim 2016). They examine these because they show both individualizing and family-oriented tendencies. More specifically, in their work titled “the Family-Oriented Individualization and Second Modernity” (Shim and Han 2010), women marriage migrants turned out to be individualistic in the sense that they pursue their own course while taking the risk of being separated from their family, as a determined challenge to the survival uncertainty their family faces. They are “individualistic” because they leave their home in the face of various anticipated difficulties. On the other hand, they are also very family-oriented, that is, “familial,” because they come for better living conditions for the family, and, with family responsibility, do their best for their new family while enduring the difficulties for their families in the home country. This individualization was called “family-oriented individualization” (Shim and Han 2010). Perhaps, a similar example is the so-called “wild goose families” (Lee and Koo 2006) frequently found in Korea. This case proficiently illustrates individualization and family-oriented networks both traditionally and innovatively. This pattern of transformation is distinctive to Korea.

Another effort to integrate both the dis-embedding and re-embedding process of individualization is seen in their work, “Dual Individualization in East Asia” (Han and Shim 2016). This study argues that individualization in East Asia has a Janus face—showing a tendency of individualization of the west on one hand and characteristics of community-oriented individualization on the other. For this they developed two typologies of individualization: 1) the typology of individualization in society in general, and 2) the typology of individualization in the context of the family. The types in the first typology include conventional types of collectivism (type A), family-

oriented striving individualization (type B), public-minded participatory individualization (type C), and self-centered libertarian individualization (type D). The types in the second typology include integrated community (type 1), fragmented community (type 2), community-oriented individual (type 3), and self-centered individual (type 4).

The results are shown in figures 2 and 3. First, as to individualization in society in general (fig. 2), self-centered libertarian individualization of the West (type D) is highest in two East Asian cities, Tokyo (70.7%) and Seoul (52.1%), even though it turns out to be relatively low in Beijing (33.0%). Second, as to the individualization in the context of the family (fig. 3), the community-oriented individual (type 3) is the highest among the four types with 49%. Beijing and Tokyo show a surprisingly high proportion of type 3 or community-oriented individual, with 70.6% in Tokyo and with 56.3% in Beijing, showing the characteristics of the family relationship in East Asia. Seoul, on the other hand, shows a different distribution, showing the highest type in type 4 with 43.6%, with fragmented community type as the second. A closer analysis shows there is a change going on in individualization moving from type 1 through types 2 and 3 to type 4. Third, as to the more detailed analysis of the community-oriented individuals, which seems to be the characteristics of individualization in the context of the family, the results show that in Beijing and Tokyo, there are more community-oriented individuals not only among the elderly but also among the younger generations of the 20s and 30s. This seems to be because they face difficult situations in reality while individualistic in attitude. “Parasitic singles” and “hikigomoris” in Japan, “kenlaos” among the “balinghou” and “jiulinghou” in China could be examples (Han and Shim 2016).

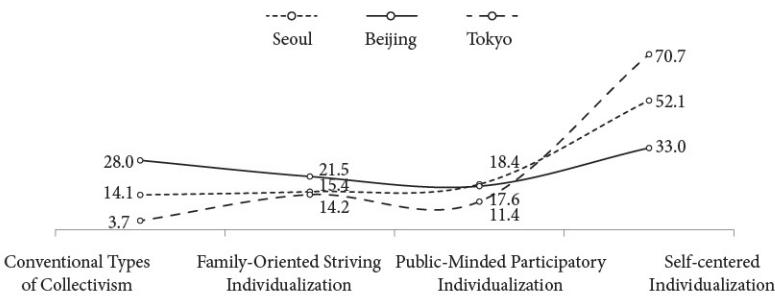


Figure 2. Distribution of types of individualization in general in three cities
Source: Han and Shim (2016, 156).

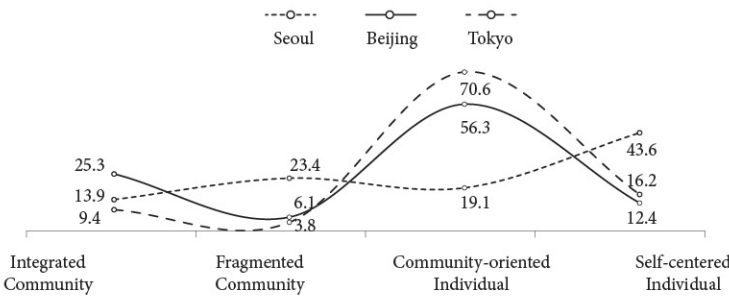


Figure 3. Distribution of types of individualization in the context of the family in three cities
Source: Han and Shim (2016, 161).

The research findings are very interesting. It shows that in East Asia people are very much individualized in society in general in urban transformation, but at the same time very family-oriented in the context of the family. In this sense the path for individualization might be called “dual individualization.” The implications of the findings are that although the individualization is underway, it has special characteristics of family-orientation unique to East Asia. It shows that the family has special meaning for East Asian citizens and thus the family, even though it faces many problems and crises, is still very important in East Asia.

Therefore, through the review of individualization in China, Japan and Korea, we can say that there are tendencies showing the dual aspects of individualization in all three countries: the “striving individual” (Yan 2014) in China, the “porous” self (Morita 2009), and empirical studies on “the leeway” between liberty and deprivation (Ishida et al. 2010) in Japan, and the concept and empirical studies of “family-oriented individualization” (Shim and Han 2010) and “dual individualization” (Han and Shim 2016) in Korea.

The dual aspects of individualization in East Asia are shown not only in empirical studies using statistical analysis but also in the neighborhood community reconstruction movements. These neighborhood community reconstruction movements are related to the negative consequences of individualization.

Empirical Research of Consequences of Individualization on Community Life: Anxiety and Family Risks

The second way to show the relationship between individualization and community reconstruction/social governance is by reviewing empirical research on the consequences of individualization on community life. The rapid increase of the single-person household shows how much a society is overflowing with individualization. According to a study (J. Kim 2016), the proportion of the single-person household in three East Asian cities increased from 4% to 29.5% in Seoul (1980–2015), from 30% to 50.6% in Tokyo (1980–2015), and from 8.7% to 23.7% in Shanghai (1996–2014), respectively.

As to the consequences of individualization on community life such as mutual help and solidarity, there can be two possibilities: one is liberation and the other is anxiety due to the loss of security. Individualization brings to ever growing people not only unprecedented freedom of experimenting, but also brings an unprecedented task of coping with the consequences (Bauman 2002). There are some discourses on negative consequences of risk and individualization (Park as cited in Ahn et al. 2016; Jo-Han 2013). In this section I focus on empirical studies on the consequences and observe whether empirical studies on the consequences of individualization in East

Asia show negative consequences. More specifically, I focus on empirical studies on family risks in East Asia based on a survey in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo in 2012 (Shim, Kim, and Kim 2014).¹² This study deals with important risks related to individualization such as anxiety in everyday life, and various family risks among others. Anxiety in everyday life is included here because it can be considered as a broader context of risk related with individualization. More specifically, anxiety in everyday life can comprise various aspects such as work, family, and relationship, and we can see the relative importance of family risks through these. Thus, I deal with anxiety in everyday life and family risks because they are good examples to discuss negative consequences.

High Perception of Everyday Life Anxiety in East Asia

First, in relation with “everyday life anxiety” (Shim, Kim, and Kim 2014), the following questions were asked about four items: “How strong a feeling do you have about the following everyday life anxiety?” The four items are: 1) I feel anxious that I may fall behind because competition is too severe in our society (anxiety over the competition), 2) I am worried whether I can manage if a member of the family falls ill or encounters an accident (worries about family accidents), 3) I am worried that an economic crisis may cause strain to my household spending (worries about household living due to economic crisis), and 4) I feel lonely and desolate because I have no one who understands me (loneliness and heartlessness). These questions are to see which aspects of everyday life are more important among the work-related (the first question), family-related (the second and the third questions),

12. The surveys were conducted by Prof. Li Qiang of Tsinghua University in China, by Prof. Han Sang-Jin of Seoul National University in Korea, and by Prof. Li Tingjiang of Chuo University in Japan respectively. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as sex, age, education, standard of living, and marital status in three cities are as follows: in terms of gender, there are more men in Beijing than in Seoul and Tokyo, while proportion of gender is similar in Tokyo and Seoul. In terms of age, there are more young people (in their 20s) in Beijing, while there are more elderly people (over 60s) in Seoul.

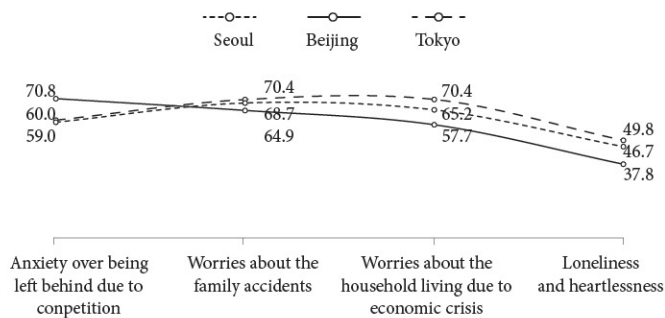


Figure 4. Perception of everyday life anxiety in three cities
Source: Shim, Kim, and Kim (2014, 250).

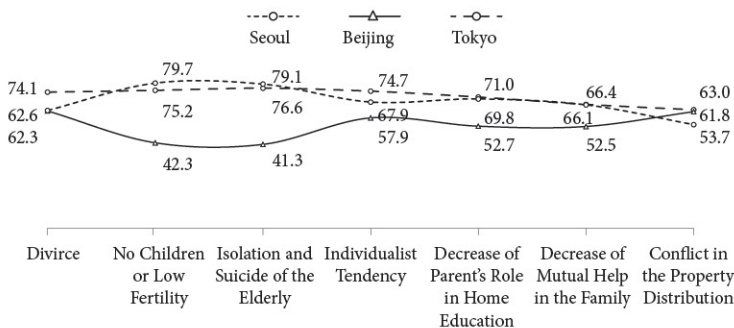


Figure 5. Perception of seriousness of family risks in three cities
Source: Shim, Kim, and Kim (2014, 251).

and relation-related anxiety (the fourth question).¹³ For the comparison the points were converted to scores on 100 points. The results are as follows: With regard to the perception of everyday life-related anxiety in three cities respectively (fig. 4), family-related and work-related anxieties are high with more than 50 scores and only the relation-

13. Here relationship could mean pure relationship. Pure relationship refers to a relationship for itself, not for material or other interests (Giddens 1992).

related anxiety is relatively low with scores lower than 50 score. When we compare the perception of everyday life-related anxiety in Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing (fig. 4), anxiety perception is higher in Seoul and Tokyo, and somewhat lower in Beijing, except in one: anxiety over being left behind due to competition, work-related anxiety.¹⁴ When we compare aspects of anxiety, the family-related anxiety is higher than the work-related and relation-related aspects, except for the work-related aspect in Beijing. More specifically, worries about family accidents (70.4, 67.2, 65.3) and worries about household living in economic crisis (70.4, 64.5, 57.6), that is, the family-related aspects, are higher than the work-related aspect of anxiety being left behind due to competition (63.0, 60.0), except in Beijing (70.7). Family-related aspects are also higher than the relation-related aspect of loneliness and heartlessness (49.8, 46.3, 37.7).

This shows that the overall tendency of everyday life anxiety in three cities can be said to be quite high. And this anxiety comes from the fact that one has no security against the family-related and work-related risk and has to take care of oneself when there are sudden accidents or economic crisis. The higher perception of family-related risks among anxiety in everyday life in Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing may be because individualization in East Asia has unfolded with no buffer zones such as welfare state, company, or family and individual responsibility is suddenly emphasized. And the relation-related anxiety, which can be attributed to individualization, seems to be still relatively low.

Seriousness of Various Family Risk Perception in East Asia

As to the “seriousness of various family risk” (Shim, Kim, and Kim 2014), the following questions were asked about seven items: “How serious do you think the following family-related risks are in our society?” The seven items are: 1) divorce, 2) low fertility, 3) decrease in the parent’s role in home

14. This could be because, in China, capitalism is relatively recently introduced, and people are more sensitive to competition, while in Korea and Japan people are accustomed to competition and take it for granted.

education, 4) isolation and suicide of the elderly, 5) individualist tendency, 6) decrease in mutual help in the family, and 7) conflict in the property distribution. They were measured in Likert scale (from 1 “not serious at all” to 4 “very serious”). For the comparison, the points were converted to scores on 100 points. Among these seven items, divorce, no children or low fertility, isolation and suicide of the elderly, and individualist tendency (1, 2, 3, 4) can be considered as the “second modern type” risks, which clearly show a transition to a risk society with individualization, while decrease of parent’s role in home education, decrease of mutual help in the family, and conflict in property distribution (5, 6, 7) can be considered as “the first modern type” risks.¹⁵

When we see the perception of family-related risks in three cities respectively (fig. 5), Seoul and Tokyo show a similar pattern, showing high scores in most of the items, and Beijing shows a different pattern. When we compare the perception of the seven family-related risks in three cities (fig. 5), family risk perception is higher in Seoul and Tokyo, and lower in Beijing except in one: conflict of property distribution.

From these findings, we see that family risks are high in the three cities, even though there are variations among them. More specifically, citizens’ perception on family risk as a whole is higher in Seoul and Tokyo. As to their perception on the two types of family risk, “the second modern type” is higher in Seoul and Tokyo, and “the first modern type,” particularly conflict

15. Since this research was focused on the family risk, the types of risk have to be redefined to fit the family context. In order to do this, we relied on the concept of the family in the first and second modernity. Among the various differences between the two, we paid attention to the difference in terms of the task of the family and the relationship between the couple. First, the task of the family in the first modernity is primarily, but not exclusively, material, while the task in the second modernity is far more emotional than material (Shim 2011, 26). Second, the relationship between the couple has also changed. To make it simple, the first modern relationship is based on sexual division of labor and gender inequality, while the second modern relationship is based on individualization and gender equality. In the former, the family functions as a strategic unit of community to survive, while in the latter we can find a specific relationship characterized by “I am me” (Beck 1992, 175), living “a life of one’s own” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 22). For more details, please refer to Shim, Kim, and Kim (2014).

in property distribution, is higher in Beijing. Compared to Beijing residents, we find that Seoul and Tokyo residents are more sensitive to family risk in general, and the second modern types of risk in particular indicates that the society in which they live has been transformed into second-modern life conditions with risks of individualization.

In sum, the research findings of the everyday life anxiety and family risks clearly show that risk perception of the second modern type (which certainly are due to individualization) is high and that the consequences of individualization are negative. This is because the shock of Western individualization is too high on the one hand, and because family-orientation or the community-orientation still remains strong. The empirical research discussed above support the argument that enforced individualization brings forth negative consequences. This is due to the lack of buffer zones—welfare state, classical individualism, and cultural democracy—in East Asia, which can lessen the severity of the negative consequences of individualization.

Aside from the empirical studies showing attitudes, grounds for the argument about a relationship between individualization and community reconstruction is based on the fact that there are so many voluntary local community movements and social governance experiments in three big cities in East Asia with high individualism. Thus I will discuss why there are so many neighborhood community reconstruction efforts in East Asia in the context of risk and individualization.

Why Neighborhood Community Reconstructions Efforts?

Recently, various efforts for community reconstruction or social governance of risks have emerged in East Asia. In Seoul, we find dual streams of the local residents' attempt to reconstruct the Seongmisan community and the policy of social governance of risks taken by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (Shim 2017; Han, Shim, and Kim 2017; Yoo 2010; Wui 2013; Kim and Han 2008). We also find the Qinghe experiment in Beijing (Li and Zheng 2017; Han, Shim, and Park 2017; Ge 2014), and the Setagaya community

reconstruction in Tokyo (Setagaya City 2013; C. Kim 2014; Taniguchi and Marshall 2016). These all indicate a strong pressure from society toward a better form of risk governance than the conventional paradigm of the bureaucratic state.

We see that the concerted efforts to build a new system of social governance and neighborhood community have something to do with the widespread public perception of risks that citizens either experience or anticipate. In Seoul, Jo-Han (2013), an academician and local community activist, points out the relationship between risk and community reconstruction.

Seoul is changing into a “a city of fragmented individuals.” Since the 1997 Asian financial crisis and 2011 Fukushima nuclear power plant accident, Asian people began to realize the limit of the growth and the fact that we are living in a risk society. Particularly in Korea, where we underwent the compressed modernization, the intensity of the crisis is more severe as shown in the intensity of the labor, unhappiness index, etc. ... In this situation it is fortunate that the word *maeul* (neighborhood community) is emerging in this unhappy “construction State,” because it is a proof that we still have the will to face the crisis squarely and to communicate, that is, we have the regional resilience. (Jo-Han 2013, 83)

Unleashed from the protection of either welfare state or economic firms, individuals tend to be isolated and are forced to deal with the life risks they face on their own (Shim and Han 2013). This enforced individualization tends to increase the level of anxiety in everyday life and, consequently, the community tends to lose its integrative function. In this context, depending on the availability of needed conditions, a strong need for community reconstruction emerges and evolves from society and politics as well.

In the case of Seoul, the most clear-cut example is Mayor Park Won-Soon who has put much emphasis on neighborhood community policy and introduced social governance of risks as one of his trademarks. He has also emphasized negative consequences of individualization. When asked whether a happy life is possible in Seoul, he replied as follows:

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When people live crowded, each individual tends to feel lonelier and more isolated. Thus they need social connection attachment. We cannot be happy with growth and development in material and external aspects alone. We can live happily when we are bonded and connected with the neighbors. That is why Seoul Metropolitan Government is emphasizing neighborhood community. (Park Won Soon, cited from Ahn et al. 2016, 5)

Life in Seoul is full of risks because of not only the side-effects of compressed economic growth such as the keen competition, increasing gap between the rich and poor, and the weakening of social safety network, but also the disorganization of the family and neighborhood community. As the neighborhood community disappears with the family being destabilized, the realistic chance for community-based infant care, family events, routine convenience, and information exchange also decrease. The individual's life is more and more deeply penetrated by risks of various kinds. In this context, the local residents' attempt at community reconstruction and the city policy of social governance of risks are meant to be a Janus-faced Seoul's response to risk society. Seongmisan community in Seoul, Korea (Han, Shim, and Kim 2017; Yoo 2010, 2012; Wui 2011, 2013; Kim and Han 2008), which is considered to be an "evidence of 'real utopia'" by Erik Ohlin Wright (Lee 2014),¹⁶ it can be understood in this context as a lively and representative example among neighborhood community movements.

In Beijing, China, there have arisen various models of social governance since the basic framework of social policy was shifted from "social management" to "social governance" at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCCP 2013; Han, Shim, and Park 2017). This shift can be understood as a response to the social risks accumulated after the market-oriented reform. More

16. In an interview with *Hankeyreh* in 2014 Wright said as follows: "The most impressive time in my stay in Seoul was the day at Seongmisan. The behavior of the grassroots in Seongmisan community was very interesting and the joint project of the residents unfolded here 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." (Erik Ohlin Wright, quoted from Lee 2014)

specifically, Chinese society emerged as a risk society after the collapse of the *danwei* regime (Han, Shim, and Park 2017). The party-state leadership defined social risks as developmental risks and responded to such risks with a society-building policy that was practically implemented in the form of the *shequ* (neighborhood community) reconstruction. The newly established social governance has the dual tasks of the policy, that is, the reconstruction of the social service supply system and the grassroots democracy building. This is clearly shown in the document on the social governance decision: “We must deepen social structural reform by centering on safeguarding and improving the people’s wellbeing and promoting social fairness and justice” (CCCPC 2013).

And in the same document, the risks that Chinese society confronts are revealed at first indirectly in the chapter, “Making Innovations in Social Governance System” in which the document describes the goal and method of social governance. For example, through a statement on “safeguarding the fundamental interests of the broadest masses of the people,” it indirectly admits social risks accumulated after the market-oriented reform. Through a statement about “improving methods of social governance,” it implies the collapse of the *danwei* system and turn from “social management” to “social governance.” And through a statement of “kindling the vigor of social organizations,” it encourages the social organizations (NGOs) to participate (CCCPC 2013).

The risks in China are mentioned explicitly in the latter half in “Innovating Systems that Can Effectively Prevent and Solve Social Conflicts.” And it finally confesses that this new social governance is to prevent and solve social contradictions which arise from various risks including the social stability risk of policies.

We will improve social stability risk assessment mechanism for major policy decisions. We will establish an open and orderly mechanism under which people can express their grievances, psychological intervention is conducted, conflicts are mediated and rights and interests are guaranteed, so as to ensure that the problems of the people can be reported, conflicts can be resolved and the people’s rights and interests can be guaranteed. (CCCPC 2013)

The Qinghe experiment can be positioned in this context. The new Qinghe experiment (Li 2016; Han, Shim, and Park 2017) started on the backdrop of fragmentation of the community (Ge 2014) and in this sense is related with individualization risks as well as other risks. It is characterized by the participation of various experts and “deliberative” governance model (Han, Shim, and Park 2017).

In Japan, the so-called matsizukuri, that is to make a local neighborhood community linking local government and experts together with the participation of the residents, has been widely expanded since the 1970s (Taniguchi and Marshall 2016). The neighborhood community movements in Japan were motivated by various risks such as ecological and environmental risks, nuclear disaster risks, residents’ autonomy risks, individualization risks, etc.

Setagaya, known as one of the first of these desirable neighborhood communities made with the cooperation of the residents and administration in Japan, is a good example, showing goals and motivations to overcome various risks. In its Setagaya City basic plan (Setagaya City 2013), Mayor Hosaka mentions various risks related with aging, low fertility, globalization, and natural disasters for re-examining the local communities.

Setagaya City’s demographics have changed greatly over the years due to Japan’s aging population and declining birthrate, causing a steady increase in the number of single and elderly households. With the globalization of finance, labor, information and other factors advancing, we are also faced directly with limitations in terms of natural resources. The current times also require that we tackle income disparity, a declining birthrate, and maintaining social security; among other issues. Additionally, the Great East Japan Earthquake and nuclear accident have shown us once again the importance and urgency of ensuring that we are always prepared in advance for natural disasters. Not only this, these incidents have served as an impetus for re-examining the way we live and the structure of our local communities. (Setagaya City 2013)

And among the nine visions he presents for Setagaya, the first is “respect individuals, and place importance on the ties between people,” which in turn

is clearly related with individualization risks. And he says, “we will create a wide range of locations where people can meet and gather transcending generation. We will emphasize people-to-people connections and ensure that every person can actively find a role or a place where they belong in the community based on their stage in life” (Setagaya City 2013). In this way it is similar to the efforts of city of Seoul. Disasters are another risk to overcome. In 1979 Setagaya designated two regions resilient for disaster under the slogan of “Let us make a neighborhood community resilient to natural disasters.” This was further strengthened since the 3.11 Fukushima nuclear plant accident. In the 1980s they held a residents’ meeting for neighborhood community making to listen to the voices of the residents. These voices were made into the ordinances in 1982, which has since become a rule. Furthermore, residents’ association for neighborhood community making was also made at this time (C. Kim 2014).

In sum, even though the risks each city confronts may be somewhat different, some more related with individualization, others less related, all three cities indicate a strong pressure from society toward a better form of risk governance than the conventional paradigm of the bureaucratic state.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper attempts to articulate the relationship between individualization and social governance of risks as dual aspects of the same coin of historical change in East Asia. More specifically, it reviews how the success of industrial modernity has brought forth individualization and how individualization results not only in emancipation but also in destructive consequences on intimate community that, in turn, works as a driving force for social governance of risks in East Asia.

The conclusion to be drawn is that: first, through a review of the main outcomes of the researches on individualization in the West and in East Asia, this paper shows that individualization in the East is “family-oriented” or “community-oriented” individualization, different than that of the one-way development in the West. Second, through a review of empirical research

on consequences of individualization on community life, this paper shows that negative consequences are publicly felt to be greater than the positive consequences. This enforced individualization has increased the level of anxiety in everyday life, making communities more and more destabilized, losing their integrative functions. Therefore, initiatives for neighborhood community reconstruction and social governance of risks in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo emerge in this context of individualization risks. And it started to gain public attention and support.

We can further formulate the reasons why social governance efforts are strong in East Asia. First, East Asia has a long tradition of emphasizing relationships. In this context, the shock of community breakdown will be greater and thus the efforts to overcome this will also be greater. Second, the path to individualization in East Asia is different from that of the West. While the Western pathway of individualization was supported by the welfare state, classical individualism, and cultural democracy, which functioned as the buffer zones against the threats to individual life. In East Asia, however, the negative consequences of individualization tend to be severe because the function of such buffer zones is becoming more and more fragile.

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