

In its initiative "Key Issues for Academia and Society", the Volkswagen Foundation is supporting a new three-year research project to be launched January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 at the Interdisciplinary Centre for East Asian Studies at Goethe University:

## **Protecting the Weak**

### **Entangled processes of framing, mobilization and institutionalization in East Asia**

#### Summary

Since the mid-nineteenth century, East Asia has been the locus of ambivalent constructions of modernity vis-à-vis a Western modernity idealized as progressive and rejected as a suppressive "other" at the same time. We find the notion of "entangled modernities" formulated by Shalini Randeria and others most adequate to capture the interactive processes of translation, contestation, negotiation, and appropriation of Western concepts amalgamated with supposedly indigenous traditions that underlie the constructions of modernity in East Asia. These processes have been, and in many cases still are, highly relevant not only to the self-perceptions of but also to the interactions between East Asian and Western societies.

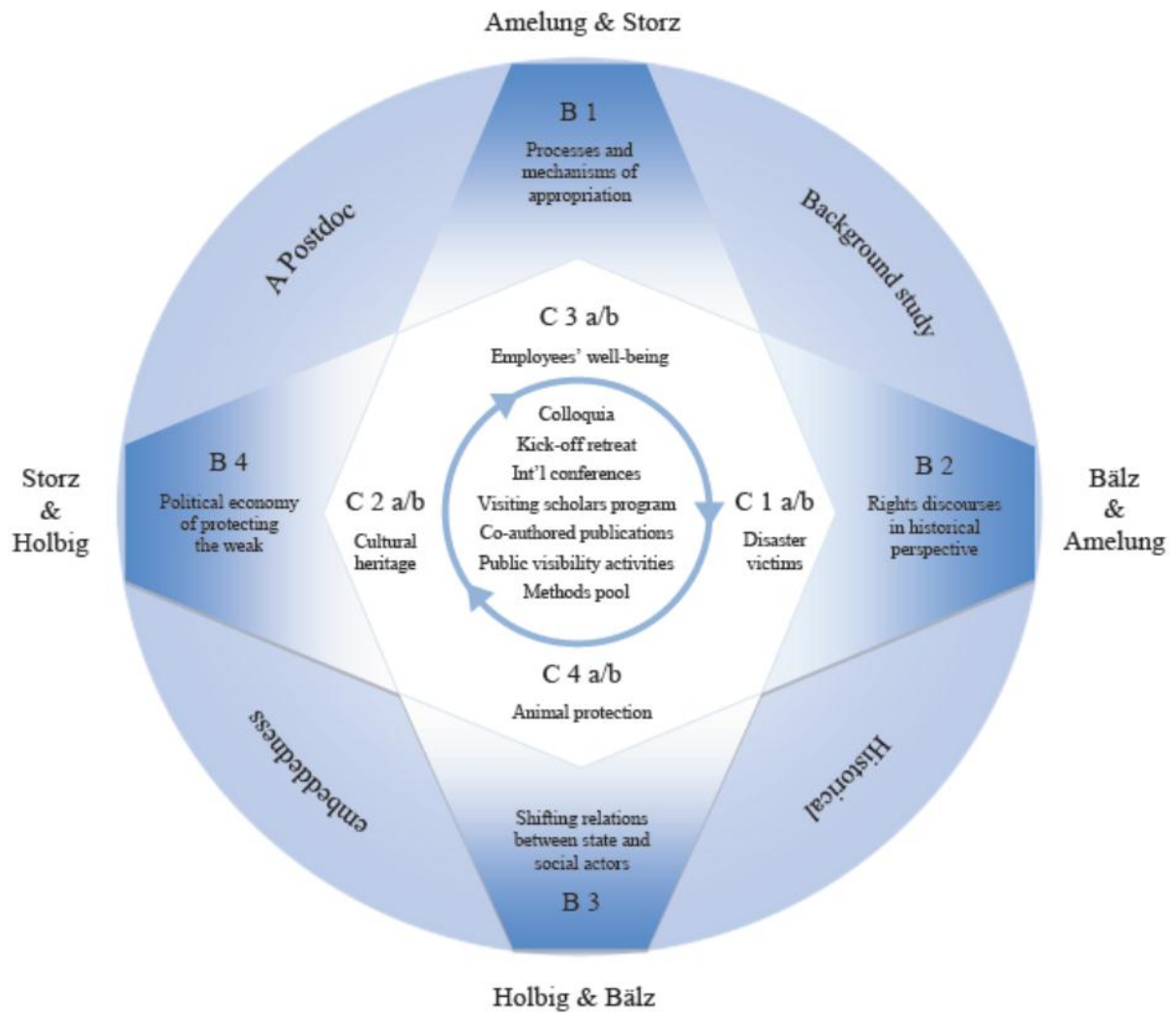
Against this backdrop of ongoing entanglements between the West and East Asia, we have identified a phenomenon that seems highly illuminating: In a paradigmatic shift from neoliberal and "third way" conceptualizations dominant over the past decades, we find a set of discourses and institutions in contemporary Japan and China which are making public claims for the protection of weak groups and interests in the name of a common good which is itself re-negotiated in the process. These claims for "protecting the weak", as we label them, resonate with seemingly similar recent debates in the West and take up specific socio-political, economic, legal and cultural discourses prevalent in the international public sphere. They at the same time can refer to a rich East Asian tradition of charity and philanthropy and therefore are particularly worthy of in-depth exploration as they reveal the transnational and dynamic nature of entanglements between Western and East Asian modernities in a most intriguing manner.

By analytically distinguishing between framing, mobilization and institutionalization processes and examining these processes at the intersections of international and domestic spheres, the proposed project aims to trace the constructions of modernity in Japan and China in the fluid integrity of their making. A systematic comparison between empirical cases

in the two countries will allow us to take account of the specificities of state-society relations, but also to better understand key stages and junctures in the empirical trajectories of emerging claims for protecting the weak. While we refrain from making any normative claims ourselves, we take seriously the various normative justifications of who or what should be protected and why from a positive analytical perspective.

Based on a selection of four pairs of comparative case studies – namely, calls to protect disaster victims, employee well-being, cultural heritage, and animals in Japan and China, which we have identified as exemplifying the outlined problematic – we are confident that we can make significant contributions to the empirical and theoretical research on the socio-political, economic, legal and cultural transformation of East Asian societies. These studies will be able to make use of a historical background study to be carried out by a post-doctoral researcher. This study will examine into the development of ideas and practices of philanthropy in East Asia during the late 19th and early 20th century, a period, which we consider as pivotal, since the impact of Social Darwinist ideas resulted in far-reaching transformations and also led to re-evaluations of the indigenous traditions. The case-studies will, moreover, be embedded in a common framework of four conceptual background studies that systematically engage the involved disciplinary perspectives (sinology/cultural studies, political science, law and economics), the proposed case studies will be undertaken by doctoral students working as tandem partners under interlocking cross-country supervision by the four project applicants. The research process will be integrated via a nested series of colloquia, organization of and active participation in international conferences, involvement of visiting scholars from East Asia and other national and international cooperation partners, co-authored publications, various outreach activities for the interested public, and a methods pool. The interdisciplinary research design can rely on the infrastructural resources and collaborative experiences of the Interdisciplinary Centre for East Asian Studies (IZO) as well as on Goethe University's comprehensive methodological training capacities.

By this interdisciplinary approach, we hope to provide an innovative impetus for the ongoing dialogue between area studies and the various disciplines. While this dialogue is still shaped by subterranean cleavages and tensions that had built up after the end of the Cold War, its implementation in the scientific community, as well as in the public sphere, has important implications for our future understanding of the production of non-Western world-pictures and their repercussions for Western self-perceptions and self-positionings in a globalized world. We are convinced, therefore, not only that our proposed project covers one of today's key issues of scholarly and public debate, but also that this issue will gain more relevance over the coming years with the increasing prominence of East Asian transformations and the greater presence of the voices of Asian scholars, whom we will invite to participate.





## Protecting the Weak

### Concepts, Discourses and Institutions in East Asia

Goethe University Frankfurt/Main - March 2-3, 2012

March 2, 2012  
Campus Westend,  
CAS I.811

9:00 a.m. **Welcome Adresses by Prof. Dr. Lutz-Bachmann** (*Vice President, Goethe University*)  
and **Prof. Dr. Iwo Amelung** (*Vice Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for East Asian Studies*)

**Part I: Protecting the Weak: Concepts and normative foundations**

9:45 a.m. **Prof. Dr. Bruno Amable** (*Sorbonne, Paris*): "Neoliberalism vs. 'protecting the weak' – a new ideology?"

10:45 a.m. **Prof. Dr. Raji C. Steineck** (*University of Zurich*): "Beggars as Bodhisattvas: Reasons for protecting the weak in the ethical traditions of Japan"

**Part II: Protecting the Weak: Concepts, framing and processes of legitimation in East Asia**

2:00 p.m. **Prof. Dr. Orna Ben-Naftali** (*Hebrew University, Jerusalem*): "Protecting children from violence: Corporal punishment and the rights discourse in contemporary China"

2:30 p.m. **Prof. Dr. Hyun-Back Chung** (*Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul*): "Women and state in the South-Korean modernization (1960-2002)"

3:30 p.m. **Dr. Ulrich Heinze** (*University of East Anglia, Norwich*): "Withdrawal and seclusion – psychosocial, communicative, and communal aspects of *Hikikomori* (acute social withdrawal syndrome) in Japan"

5:00 p.m. **Young Academics Forum** – with contributions from Thomas Boccon-Gibod, Ramona Grieb and Dr. Gabriele Koziol

March 3, 2012  
Campus Westend,  
RuW 4.201

**Part III: East Asia: Processes of implementation**

9:00 a.m. **Prof. Dr. Sébastien Lechevalier** (*École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris*): "Rising inequalities and welfare in Japan"

9:30 a.m. **Prof. Dr. Hualing Fu** (*Hong Kong University*): "The politics of rights: Access to justice in China"

10:45 a.m. **Dr. Nora Sausmikat** (*Asia Foundation, Essen*): "Recent changes in the field of animal protection in the framework of environmental protection in China"

11:45 a.m. **Concluding remarks and perspectives**

Concept: Prof. Dr. Iwo Amelung / Prof. Dr. Moritz Bälz / Prof. Dr. Heike Holbig / Prof. Dr. Cornelia Storz

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