
Introduction

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Dramatic socio-economic transformation in East Asian societies over the last two decades has brought social policy and social welfare issues to prominence. Since the 1990s, in response to national as well as global pressure, there have been substantial developments and reforms in social policy in the region from Japan to South Korea, and to China, and such policy developments have been embedded in the particular economic context. Rapid economic growth in the region in the latter part of the twentieth century – for example, Japan’s post-war economic miracle followed by its bubble economy in the 1980s and the remarkable developments of the other East Asian newly industrialized countries (NICs) of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan – has contributed to raise the profile and presence of East Asia upon the global stage. Despite the setback of the Asian Financial Crisis (AFC) of the late 1990s, the more recent re-emergence of China and India into the global economy has brought about the prediction that the twenty first century would be the ‘Asian century’ with its political, economic and cultural dominance in the world (see Kohli, Sharma and Sood, 2011). Compared with Europe where current academic and policy discourse is persistently focused around economic crisis, recession and austerity measures, the picture in East Asia is thus more mixed, including a more optimistic outlook driven by economic recovery and growth, albeit with uneven impacts in the region. It is partly in this economic context that East Asia as a region has attracted interest in the analysis of social policy over the last few decades.

Such interests for policy learning are indeed strongly associated with the economic success of many small nations in the region. The ‘unique’ working of the East Asian systems on, for example, employment practice and welfare provision has been researched and theorized in relation to the wider socio-economic context. The developmental state thesis in the 1980s is one example, which paid particular attention to the ‘visible hand’ of the state, such as its financial capacity and regulatory power in orchestrating economic growth in mid-twentieth-century Japan (Johnson, 1982). Subsequent analyses have, however, pointed out the more complex and mixed influences of other sectors, including the role of corporations (Pempel, 1999). The productivist welfare capitalism thesis is another, which attempted to highlight where the East Asian economic success

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originated by exploring the relationship between the economy and social policy initiatives (see, for example, Holliday, 2000; Gough, 2004). Key features of the productivist thesis are concerned with the subordination of social policy to economic objectives, and the stark contrasts of different recovery paths across East Asian societies resulting from the AFC, which further delineated their productivist positions within the region (Holliday, 2005). In any case, there are some common features identified in welfare systems in many East Asian societies, including a residual element of direct state welfare provision (e.g. low public spending, low state benefits, limited availability of schemes), and distinctive roles played by each sector in the welfare mix (e.g. the regulatory role of the state, occupational-based welfare, family contributions to welfare) (Izuhara and Forrest, 2012). Moreover, an attempt to integrate social and economic policies led to the development of the 'productive welfare' agenda under social investment policies in many advanced economies in the late 1990s (see, for example, Morel, Palier and Palme, 2011). In East Asia, it is largely in response to societal ageing, and it is manifested in expansions of public provisions supporting specific groups such as children, women and families. Such economic activation policy through human capital investment is, however, not necessarily distinctively East Asian, since it has also been found, albeit in different rationales and approaches, in Anglo-Saxon liberal welfare regimes (Peng, 2011). Other shared features are also evident in other parts of the world. For example, the US may be considered as 'productivist' in the sense that it emphasizes investment in education and skills over traditional social protections (Hudson and Kühner, 2009). The strong presence of the informal sector on the delivery of welfare is common among Southern European states, and those 'familial' states are the ones which are similarly suffering from the recent demographic transition such as extremely low fertility.

While the similarities of societies in the region tend to be overemphasized, it is in fact a diverse and dynamic region in terms of size of country, political structure, level of economic development, institutions, colonial histories and even 'culture'. Thus the developmental stages of social policy programmes and policy responses to contemporary social issues tend to vary widely across societies. How to define East Asia as a region is indeed a debate in itself, but the region includes, for example, the small city states of Hong Kong special administrative region (SAR) and Singapore, as well as the large and world's most populated country of China. There are complex relationships among the 'Chinese societies' of the People's Republic of China, the SARs of Hong Kong and Macau, and the Republic of China (Taiwan). The political economy of the nations also differs from the capitalist democracy found in Japan to the transitional economy, now

ambiguously known as *market socialism* or *state capitalism*, of China. There are thus inevitable complexities observed in the areas such as governance, citizenship, welfare and property rights associated with a series of policy reforms in those societies.

Another phenomenon worth noting in relation to the analysis of social policy in East Asia is its pace of social transition, which forms an overarching backcloth to this volume. Compared to Europe, the speed of socio-economic and demographic change has been phenomenal. Taking ageing of the population as an example, the process of societal ageing started much earlier, sometime in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, and took much longer in many European societies. For example, it took Sweden 85 years and France 115 years to double their rate of older people aged 65 and over in the total population from 7 to 14 per cent. In East Asian countries, the same process has taken place more recently and is happening within a couple of decades (US Census Bureau, 2009). The impacts of such rapid social transitions have thus produced a lumpier picture of welfare development across different cohorts and generations, and substantial variations can be found in welfare systems and policy processes across East Asian societies, requiring sensitivity in approach when comparing social policies within the region and beyond.

One of the aims of this volume is knowledge production through the comparative analysis of social policy across East Asian societies. In the process, it also contributes to the ongoing debate around an 'East Asian welfare model' – whether or not there is such a model and if so how distinct East Asian welfare regimes are compared with their Western counterparts. Much of the debate stems from one strand of comparative social policy research – welfare regime theories. It originated in the 1980s but was provoked by Esping-Andersen's seminal work *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990). Reviewing the distinctiveness or otherwise of welfare systems in East Asia is indeed part of knowledge production and knowledge transfer in the wider discipline of social policy. However, Western conceptions and theories tend to dominate comparative analysis of welfare systems through preconceived frameworks such as welfare typologies, and the analysis of state activities (Midgley, 2004). In a similar vein, as Smelser (2003) argues, there is a tendency for Western 'categories' to be imposed on non-Western societies through comparative analysis, since many recent terms relevant to social policy analysis such as 'bureaucracy', 'differentiation' and 'civil society' draw upon Western experiences as their point of origin and reference. Furthermore, Western-dominant welfare state research may not have provided an accurate picture of welfare provision in East Asia. The limitations that often confront comparative and international social policy research are its reliance

on available quantitative data and its reliance on more measurable state welfare such as the size of public expenditure, the role and function of the state, and the level of state benefits.

The debates on welfare regimes have moved on from those of the early 1990s. Since then, the region has been hit by regional and global economic recession and the general impacts of globalization. The uneven impacts of economic boom and bust provide a distinctive context for the following analysis on policy developments and reforms to take place, which requires a radical realignment of the socio-economic trajectories and policy directions in the region. The post-bubble and post-AFC lessons indeed highlighted varied policy responses and recovery paths across different societies. For example, while Hong Kong and Singapore remain 'productivist' with evident welfare retrenchment in response to the financial crisis, others, South Korea in particular, show paradoxical welfare expansion in an era of global recession (see Holliday, 2005; Kwon and Holliday, 2007). Even within one society, there are parallel approaches of welfare retrenchment and welfare expansion across different social policy fields. The Japanese government adopted neoliberal policy on housing, embracing the private market (e.g. the abolition in 2007 of the Government Housing Loan Corporation, which used to provide long-term low-interest loans to assist middle-income families to achieve home ownership), while widening services and providers through a new social insurance programme on long-term care for older people in 2000, and introducing universal non-means-tested child benefits in 2010 (which now has been abolished). Such differentiated trajectories again challenge the conception of a (singular) East Asian welfare model. Moreover, differentiated impacts of the global economic crisis on these societies have meant growing social divisions within and between cohorts and groups. In East Asia today, there exists debate around the necessity for developing greater safety nets and better social protection to address new and emerging social risks and social inequalities associated with rising urbanization, changing families, increasing labour mobility, and rising unemployment through industrial and labour market restructuring to name but a few. It is thus timely to take stock of where we are at in terms of social policy developments and research on East Asia.

Furthermore, until recently comparative analysis of East Asian social policy tended to focus on the established welfare state of Japan and the emerging welfare regimes of the four 'tiger economies' of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. Japan was for example the only East Asian society which was included in Esping-Andersen (1990)'s analysis on comparative welfare capitalism. This is largely due to the limited availability of comparative data produced by international organizations

such as the OECD and the World Bank. Only Japan and South Korea are, for example, members of the OECD, and South Korea's more recent entry to the organization limits comparative data to certain trends over time. Two decades on, there has been a wealth of social policy research involving a range of East Asian societies. Much of the recent debate about social policy and welfare in East Asia – welfare regime theories in particular – preceded China's re-emergence on to the world stage. China, as for the case of Japan in the 'three worlds of welfare capitalism' typology (Esping-Andersen, 1990), also sits awkwardly in such debates, which tend to assume democratic capitalism as a prerequisite for the development of social policy. This is clearly a major issue in conceiving of a distinct 'East Asian welfare model', although the purpose here is not to embrace such a model but rather to highlight variations and distinctive characteristics across the societies. In addition, China's remarkable transition from a planned economy with a low-level but universal welfare provision based on work units to marketization and privatization can no longer be ignored. This volume therefore attempts to bring China more fully into the contemporary social policy debates in East Asia. It also attempts to provide a fresh and updated perspective to the study that adds more dynamism to existing comparative analysis.

STRUCTURE OF THE VOLUME

This volume consists of five parts. It begins with a collection of chapters in Part I exploring the processes and factors shaping welfare systems in East Asia. In order to provide a solid background for the analysis of subsequent chapters, Part I presents some historical and theoretical contexts focusing on distinctive and shared policy processes and identifying and exploring how the influence of social policy development originates.

The first chapter, by Hudson and Hwang, presents a broader picture of welfare state development in the region by comparing the complex processes of policy development in three selected societies: Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The analysis is delineated into three phases covering contrasting periods, 'early social policy adoption', 'social policy adaptation following economic changes' and the 'more recent "new politics" of welfare'. The link between social policy and politics is also highlighted in this chapter. In Chapter 2, Takegawa devotes his analysis to the development of social policy in Japan, since the position of its welfare capitalism remains ambiguous in the global context in comparison with both developed European and other East Asian societies. This chapter challenges the fitness of perceived features of East Asian welfare capitalism such

as Confucianism, familialism and productivism when we apply them to Japan, and highlights where Japanese social policy currently stands in an era of globalization and the global economic crisis. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the legacy of colonialism in the development of East Asian social policy. Chang and Ku in Chapter 3 trace back the origins of colonial policy in Taiwan and South Korea before the Second World War and examine the impacts of Japanese colonialism on their economic transformation and social policy development. It is followed by Caraher in Chapter 4 examining the British colonial legacy in Hong Kong and Malaysia. In both cases, the structural shift brought by the colonial governments laid down the fundamental principles of the developmental welfare model in those societies. Both of the chapters highlight some positive influences of colonial policy intervention in areas such as economic development, modernization of institutions and improvement of public health and education, but with inevitable human costs of ethnic tensions, uneven development and widening inequalities in society. These chapters also highlight the path-dependent nature of policy trajectories – how past policy decisions continue to shape post-colonial policy development. The final chapter in Part I (Chapter 5) by Ngok explores how market-oriented economic reforms have shaped the development of social policy in China since the 1980s. In the reform era, the previous socialist policy regime based on collectivism and social equity gave way to a more ‘productive’ social policy system, which produced significant social dissatisfaction and inequalities. The chapter provides the useful socio-economic and policy contexts of the reform period, including the expansion of the state’s social commitment in the new millennium to understand issues explored in some of the subsequent chapters in this volume.

Issues and impacts which derived from more recent demographic and economic changes in East Asia are the themes of Part II. The four chapters in this part are generally concerned with how recent structural transformation of the economy and demography impacts upon different groups of people in different societies. Mok begins with an evaluation of the lasting impacts of the regional and global financial crisis on East Asian social development in Chapter 6. It provides a comparative analysis of the two city states of Hong Kong and Macau and their struggles to tackle social issues including rising unemployment and growing poverty. By doing so, the chapter tests the sustainability of the productivist welfare model and highlights contrasting policy priorities between the two SARs. Chapter 7 by Lau uses the concepts of social equity and generational equity to frame the analysis of socio-demographic change and the impacts of the recent global financial crisis on the labour market and social policy development in China. Rapid economic transformation and distorted demographic

patterns as a result of the one-child policy have widened the income and wealth gap between the rich and the poor and also created a generational gap, which require urgent policy responses. Linking demography and economic change, the chapter also discusses the impact of changing families on care provision for older people. Chapter 8 by Forrest and Izuhara focuses on the particular age group of 30-somethings in Japan and China. Neither old nor young, this age cohort tends to be overlooked in the major social policy debates, yet this is the group which has been exposed to the major structural shift of the labour market in those societies. Using the analysis of secondary data, the chapter highlights the contrasting attitudes and practices of those in their 30s in relation to their work, housing and family formation between Japan and China. Social policy responses to demographic ageing are explored in Chapter 9 by Mehta. Rapid ageing of the population has been a shared phenomenon in East Asian societies in recent years, which raises a number of issues in the key policy areas of housing, health, social care and social security. This chapter examines the challenges facing the East Asian approach with its heavy reliance on conventional family support.

The chapters in Part III examine a series of key social policy theories and concepts from developmentalism and productivism to citizenship and gender. Most of the debates stem from the Western construction of welfare regimes and related theories, and thus in many ways the chapters in Part III fill a gap or consolidate the existing theoretical and conceptual debates in social policy from East Asian perspectives. In Chapter 10, Choi reviews two of the most influential debates in comparative East Asian social policy – developmentalist and productivist welfare theses. These two theories ‘offer a powerful account of why East Asian welfare regimes differ from their Western counterparts, paying particular attention to the role of the state’ (p. 207) and why these welfare states have been relatively underdeveloped. It then explores the validity of these theses in the current socio-economic and political context and their relevance to understanding the nature and trajectory of East Asian welfare regimes. The developmental state thesis continues to be a theme examined in Chapter 11 by Walker and Wong. The chapter revisits the idea of ethnocentrism in comparative social policy studies to examine whether it is still a relevant perspective in view of the increasing use of the welfare state label for East Asian welfare systems such as South Korea and Taiwan. Comparing six East Asian societies, despite the ‘institutional anomalies’ from the perspective of the Western construction (whether the state-led or society-led welfare development logic), it argues that the exclusion of some societies from the ‘welfare state club’ is not necessarily legitimate given their existing social protection. The distinctive contribution of Chapter 12 by Kennett, Chan

and Ngan is to extend the debate beyond the existing East Asian welfare model and address the challenges and contradictions confronting the welfare systems in East Asian societies by exploring how particular patterns of social protection interact with governance, social cohesion and well-being in relation to gender and status. The analysis of the chapter is based on original research in four East Asian cities: Hong Kong, Beijing, Taipei and Seoul. It demonstrates that the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion around gender and status are embedded within a wider context shaped by power relations, institutional arrangements and cultural norms, which can in turn be linked with access to social protection and participation. Gender is also the main analytical framework for Chapter 13. In this chapter, using the data from a series of qualitative research, Sung fills a gap in the existing East Asian welfare state literature from a gender perspective. The chapter examines the gendered assumptions of welfare states in East Asian societies, South Korea and Taiwan in particular, in relation to the expectations and experiences of women in balancing paid work and unpaid care work. Patriarchal family tradition and policy shift to gender equality coexist in those societies, producing tension and ambivalent feelings in women caught between modernity and tradition.

Part IV considers research and society in East Asia. There are four chapters in this part, exploring various aspects and approaches – some methodological and others more conceptual and philosophical – in relation to conducting social research in East Asia. First, a sensitive aspect of conducting research in Chinese societies is discussed by Lui and Liu in Chapter 14. Albeit to different degrees, the presence of the state is highly evident, especially in its interaction with both the economy and the society in Chinese societies such as Hong Kong and Singapore. In the case of China, the state is even more prominent and visible in regulating the social and economic activities of the nation. Drawing upon the authors' research on the middle class and civic organizations, the chapter highlights the importance of political sensitivity in carrying out research on Chinese societies and our understanding of social changes in contemporary China. The role of philosophy and ethics is probably one of the under-researched areas in East Asian social policy, despite our preoccupation with Confucian ethics as the major influential factor when analysing the characteristics of welfare policy and delivery in East Asia. Applying the Confucian model of welfare based on the Confucian conception of social justice and ethical principles in Hong Kong, Chan in Chapter 15 advances our understanding of the entrenched moral ethos and rationale for the social practices and policy of society. The chapter promotes the naturalistic approach as opposed to the philosophical approach as a platform for philosophers and social scientists in conducting cross-disciplinary study.

In Chapter 16, Park and Jung discuss the current limitations of comparative studies of welfare development and review the existing comparative datasets in the region. The lack of comparative data due mainly to the non-membership of many East Asian societies in international organizations poses a considerable challenge to those who pursue quantitative comparative analysis of welfare programmes in East Asia. The diverse and mixed categories of welfare state programmes also require the cooperation of different national governments to create more standardized datasets for comparison. Park and Jung propose the value of active collaboration of experts in the East and West to construct comparative and standardized datasets for the region. A qualitative method of inquiry is an effective tool for revealing many aspects of social life and constructing meaningful knowledge which quantitative approaches would find it hard to capture. Drawing on their own experiences in qualitative research in East Asia, Izuhara and Forrest explore how a qualitative approach can be used to understand intergenerational relationships within families in Chapter 17. This chapter provides a detailed account of the research approach used and issues in relation to the fieldwork conducted in three East Asian cities.

The final part of this volume, Part V, presents various debates around selected contemporary social policy challenges in East Asia. This is by no means an exhaustive list but instead highlights emerging issues and policy developments in some of the key social policy initiatives – housing, migration and the changing face of the labour force, poverty and the working poor, cross-border higher education, and the increasingly mixed economy of care provision. In Chapter 18, Ronald examines how East Asian housing policy pathways have been established in relation to emerging welfare systems, social policy and economic developments in the region. This chapter compares and contrasts the recent reorientation in housing policy in response to the financial crises cross-nationally. The large influxes of urban–rural migration have created a new social division in Chinese cities. Migrant workers are one of the most vulnerable groups in transitional China, and thus the policy responses to deal with the new issue are the theme of Chapter 19 by Wong. The chapter reviews the passage of migrant rights attainment in citizenship, with focus on social rights and the gaps in obtaining or accessing social rights. If migrant workers form one of the most vulnerable groups in China, the ‘working poor’ – those who fall below the poverty line despite their employed status – have attracted much of the public and policy debate in contemporary Japan. In Chapter 20, Iwata discusses the emerging issue in the context of poverty and welfare state development, and argues the importance and necessity of developing a ‘secondary safety net’ (a policy measure between contributory social insurance and means-tested public assistance) for the

working-poor population. In an era of globalization, recent economic collaboration and integration extend to include cross-border collaboration in higher education among the Chinese societies of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Lo in Chapter 21 uses the broader political economy as a framework to analyse motivations, agenda and outcomes behind recent cross-border student flows in Greater China. This chapter highlights a tension between a pragmatic consideration in the pursuit of political and economic benefits and a commitment to the pursuit of social ideals. Chapter 22 by Yamashita, Chan and Soma concludes this volume with the re-evaluation of family-centred care arrangements in East Asia. Family-based care has been prevalent, and policies have promoted such practice in East Asia, but such a traditional model of care has been under great scrutiny as a result of recent social change. Drawing upon the authors' database project, this chapter re-evaluates the assumed uniformity of care provision and financing across five East Asian societies and highlights variations in the mixed economy of care cross-nationally.

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