INTRODUCTION: GLOBAL CONCEPTUAL HISTORY: PROMISES AND PITFALLS OF A NEW RESEARCH AGENDA

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This opening chapter provides a methodological and theoretical framework for this volume's case studies on Asian practices of semantic innovation and appropriation of concepts describing the social, the economic, and their related semantic fields. The enterprise of writing global conceptual history – and introducing it as a fruitful approach within the recently evolved field of global history[1] – is complex and, in many ways, still uncharted territory. In what follows, I will develop the methodological and theoretical ingredients for a global conceptual approach in three main steps. First, global history is described as a field of historiography that embraces the perspectives and practices of transnational and entangled history. Second, conceptual history is introduced as a new approach within the field of global history and thus clad in a global and entangled gown. Necessary alterations to established practices in conceptual history follow from the new perspectives, and some consequences of this refreshed glance at concepts and their role are presented too. Third, method and approach are integrated into a theoretical framework of global modernity, and the contributions of this volume are presented and used as an example to illustrate the theoretical agenda. Through these three steps, global conceptual history is presented as a multilingual academic practice based on the notion of a polycentric rather than a nation-centric, Western-centric, or indeed anti-Western-centric approach. Conceptual history presents one possible way to operationalize global history when it is based on an epistemological horizon towards which European and Asian, or indeed any agency and semantics, are related on an equal basis and with equal validity.

The Transnational and Entangled Approach: The Nation within Global History

Since the end of the Cold War, historical narratives and explanatory approaches have increasingly moved beyond the nation-state. This inaugurated a period of reflection about the methods and normative assumptions on which historical

interpretation rests, especially on the role of comparison and of a Western-centric viewpoint. Historical studies, postcolonial criticism and theories of modernity and global interactions all acted to deconstruct historical logics as informed by Western concepts and thought patterns.[2] Accordingly, they called for an approach that would allow understanding the global in a new way– an approach that embraces a thematic and actor-based rather than a national and event-based framing of research. An approach that, for example, begins its analysis from clustered infrastructures creating economic dynamics, and from the trade routes and supply chains established (such as studies on Industrious Revolutions[3]), as opposed to an analysis of the state of a nation's economy between two points in time. It challenges the way historians construct their explanatory narratives. Inspiration for such an enterprise emerged from a multitude of interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological tools combining social theory, historiography, anthropology, postcolonial studies, literary criticism, linguistics, as well as philosophy and political thought. This has resulted in a methodological melting pot, in which the national perspective has not only been called into question, but relegated to secondary importance.

As we move beyond the nation, the catchphrase of so-called methodological nationalism sticks on the national perspective like a stigma in the social sciences as well as in the humanities. It is seen as a perspective that distorts global realities and historical shifts into national caricatures of a much larger phenomenon. With the provincialization of the national perspective, something that may be entitled methodological globalism emerged. The enthusiasm for the global calls for a just as cautious and critical handling of historical claims, however. This critical consciousness of global historical practices, of course, does not imply the necessity to write the national perspective back into focus. But neither should it ignore it completely. Networks, flows and transfers in transnational, trans-regional, and trans-local settings include the nation among other spatial units. For global history, however, it is time to deliver the goods after what seems to be a decade of mapping out what might ideally make up its constitutive parts.[4] This kind of global history does not find its point of departure or its goal in excluding the national dimension. Rather, it includes it, as an important element of global historical developments. The national level remains of high importance, as the tensions between global constellations and national politics and identities constitute one of the most prominent features of global history.[5] Simply relegating anything national to provincial status, and thus ignoring the national dimension when focusing on flows, transactions, transfers and networks, would be to ignore a highly important historical factor of the last 200 years, in which the nation emerged as the most successful polity form. Consequently, historical narratives, critical approaches and theories need to integrate the national dimension as one of several layers of space with very different characteristics.[6] To show that

relations and networks beyond the nation exist is a banality. The historical consequences of entanglements and networks are what matters. Historical agents thus need to be foregrounded. In other words, what do these flows and transactions do? Who entangles who, how, and why?

The Scope of Global History

Global history emerged in recent years as a field of writing history that embraces new theories and methods, emerging both from within the historical sciences and from other humanist and social sciences as they ventured to cope with understanding the global. Reflections on new approaches in global history emanated from postcolonial studies, from imperial history, from area studies as well as from a critical rereading of international history, world history (American style)[7] and economic history, in addition to other forms of social-science-based approaches.[8] All of the new historical perspectives entail a subversion and critique of global master-narratives based on a residue of Western-centric or Eurocentric perspectives;[9] they postulate polycentric history instead. It is an approach that may best be captured as a *critical entangled history*. Critical here means: (1) a movement beyond preconfigured assumptions as built-in features of the very questions asked by historians. This includes a constant reflection on one's own categories of knowledge and an assessment of established approaches and questions asked. It also includes a clear move beyond any assumptions of essentialized identities, cultures or religions, understanding them as dynamic and dialogical. (2) Critical entangled history also describes a movement towards an analysis of relations, transfers, power struggles and claims on legitimacy, against the backdrop of an epistemological horizon towards which each area of the world relates in an equal way. This approach calls for the development of sophisticated theoretical and methodological approaches. Therefore, this book embraces perspectives developed by entangled history, and it takes the critical perspectives of postcolonial history seriously.[10]

All the above-mentioned modes of writing history are practised from a transnational, transcultural and trans-local perspective. Transnational history is not a method as such; it has strong methodological implications, however. It describes a general take on historical development that comprises different methodological operationalizations. Transnational mostly signals a conscious move beyond the national perspective. This move not only connects spaces horizontally in a novel way; it also connects layers of space and actors on a vertical axis, from the local to the global. Global history today is characterized by the transnational perspective. Yet it also includes trans-regional, trans-local and transcultural levels.

Interestingly, the field of global history is under-theorized. Historians have for quite a while felt a motivation to counterclaim newly established narratives

of globalization; mostly not by taking issue with the very nature of the theories, however, but by showing the historicity of globalization, and when it supposedly really began.[11] It is equally banal to be content with showing entanglements for the sake of showing entanglements. Of course the world is, and was, connected. The critical potential of global history is gained by subverting modernization theories, Western teleologies and the recent neoliberal variations of the globalization narrative. The creative and explanatory potential of global conceptual history lies in the possibilities it offers for new and fresh looks at source material that may provide historical substance to and an understanding of today's experience of global complexities.

The Spaces and Times of Global History

While we may be waiting for the next big theory,[12] this theory should not – as mentioned above – exclude the national perspective as one element of global history. Rather, spaces are connected in what can also be expressed as a perspective of *spatial scaling*. This means that thematic and networked approaches from a global historical perspective combine their narratives of change over time with different spatial scales; from macro via meso to micro; from regions via nations to local structures; from global networks and institutions to regional ones and their national and local implementations and specificities – and back.

Global history unfolds in many spaces. It therefore challenges the historian as a single-author scholar with limited possibilities of language competence and deep knowledge of a specific field. It calls for a team-based approach. Certainly, single authors are very well able to embrace a global historical approach and to produce highly relevant historical interpretations; but a team of historians can incorporate more diverse empirical material and can thus integrate complex historical configurations in a common project and narrative. The different spatializations of global historical processes drive home the message that none of these spaces may be researched fully and completely. National history is established as striving for exactly this – for a fully fledged history of the nation and its space over time. Global history echoes back critically to this established imagination of the nation as a space that can supposedly be researched fully and thoroughly. In global history, space is patchy and poriferous and less easily confined.

The relations, and most importantly the effects of the relations, between layers of space are a crucial factor in modern history at least since the early nineteenth century, when tensions between the socio-economic organization of a polity in the form of nation-states and the global span of *laissez-faire* capitalism and imperialism manifested themselves and brought forward the so-called social question and the very concept of a national society. The global conceptual history proposed here takes this tension between the global and scales of space as its point of departure, and makes it part of its research agenda.[13]

New historical research beyond the nation moved from comparative approaches based on the nation-state to approaches focusing on networks, relations and general entanglements. While this methodological innovation derived from a disenchantment with established forms of comparison, the motivation to embrace new approaches to history was furthermore born out of postcolonial critique, the contemporary experience of globalization, and the new post-Cold War political and cultural contexts, all of which revealed a need to capture more complex histories of global relations and to contribute to the contemporary discussions with valid interpretations of history that may somehow provide explanations for our present world. This move beyond the national perspective is not only found in historiography, of course, and indeed it opens a broad platform on which historians can interact, debate and cooperate with other disciplines. The search for new explanatory models and methods is shared by almost all human and social sciences today, from law[14] to economics, from anthropology[15] to literary studies. In this field of historiographical innovations, new narratives have emerged, bringing fresh perspectives on the Cold War,[16] on the history of imperialism and the nation combined,[17] on global modernity,[18] or on the role of globally perceived intellectuals.[19]

The impact of global history on time is just as important as the impact it has on space. What time is global history? Can the temporal markers of, say, 1789, 1848, 1914–18 or 1968 be a useful frame for global history? No, global history would remain stuck in Eurocentric heuristics. Recent global historical writing has undermined and deconstructed Eurocentric periodization. From a global historical perspective, the period between the 1880s and the 1940s has emerged as one marked by the establishment of global interconnections and interdependencies.[20] Indeed this period is identical with the one that emerged from the research for this book. Without presetting the time with which this book is concerned, the authors of this volume, following the translations and appropriations of concepts of the social and the economic into a string of Asian languages, unfold their cases of conceptual innovation in relation to the social and the economic in exactly the same period. The appropriation of new concepts is always a sign of historical change. And when key concepts, such as 'society', 'social', 'economy' or 'economic' are introduced, reinterpreted and contested, something fundamental must be at stake within the respective polities. Yet it is not only important to time the translations and appropriations of relevant concepts, to locate them in time; it is also important to understand the time that is encapsulated in concepts, to see what historical unfolding, or temporalization, is produced through interpreted time in the relevant cases. More concretely, this implies understanding space and time as interrelated. When a neologism enters the semantics of legitimacy, other concepts change their meaning as well because they are related to the new concepts. 'Globalization' is such a term in our days. It has a broad semantic field,

including 'economy', 'society', 'market', 'nation' and more – and it has changed the meanings of all these concepts. The same happened historically when concepts of the social and the economic entered Asian languages and logics of legitimacy. In Malaysia, as Paula Pannu shows in Chapter 6, conceptualizations of the social and economic brought the concepts of race and nation to the forefront as Malay people and intellectuals grappled with the exclusionary effects of the social and the economic. Who holds citizenship? Who is part of the social body? All people living in the territory? So-called ethnic Malays only? Who pays taxes? Where, in which bordered territories are they redistributed and invested and for whose benefit? Such questions all include a spatio-temporal dimension. Historical narratives are produced to provide legitimacy and to develop a future within the space of Malaysia that would surely be better than the present.

Doing Global History

The demands for research on global history that lives up to self-proclaimed top-quality research standards are high. Global history is multilingual, and embraces a polycentric perspective. How can a single author carry out such comprehensive research? And how can one overall narrative be found when all is polycentric? Successful examples of multilingual, archive-based historical research have been published recently.[21] These works have managed to circumvent a European, Western, or nation-based approach while, at the same time, they are not simply reversing the trajectory by showing how things really began in the East – which would be merely a reversed West-centrism in still dealing with construction and deconstruction of a European or Western core.[22] Of course, it remains an important goal to show reciprocity between and transfers from East to West, yet these transfers also deserve to have their own independent historical consideration, beyond a deconstruction of European hegemony and the influence of imperial powers, actors and European thought as a point of departure. To investigate, for example, the impact of Chinese concepts on European thought should become a normal historical exercise that does not need to be embedded in a deconstructive discourse highlighting how European actors and powers influenced China first – a discourse that makes the Chinese perspective a suppressed one that needs to be given a voice. The fact that Chinese thought was highly influential on European notions of government, governance and science should rather be regarded from a perspective of equality, making the influence of Chinese thought a historical phenomenon in its own right and with important consequences. For instance, Wu Wei (无为) and Li (理) inspired Enlightenment economists, philosophers and monarchs, but especially the French physiocrats and their leading figure, François de Quesnay. Wu Wei was food for thought about notions of good government and political economy conceived of as a natural order, and it

influenced the Enlightenment notion of *laissez-faire*; Li was inspiration for coining thoughts about the role of the principle and questions of inner coherence.[23] Such a historical finding must not be further justified by a reciprocal analysis of a colonial or general European or Western impact on China – even though this would be very interesting.

Vice versa, for research on the appropriation and agency of Asian actors who actively translated, introduced and appropriated a string of select European concepts, such reciprocity is often called for too. To write a global history that takes all parts of the world and their historical relations epistemologically equally seriously without arbitrarily constructing equal importance between the entangled entities remains a difficult task, however, and the field in many ways is still a fledgling empirically and methodologically. The goal of a global history should be neither a methodological satisfaction derived from merely showing how global relations inform national and/or local conditions, nor a deconstructive satisfaction derived from showing that other parts of the world informed the Euro-American regions as well. The goal of a global history should be how these relations crucially played a role in shaping historical developments.[24]

One consequence of this basic difficulty in global history is to carry out research in global teams, so as to integrate not only a variety of source material but also different scientific traditions on an equal basis. Importantly, these teams should not only replicate national structures and perceptions, but develop an ability to implement the demands of a global history understood as transnational and entangled. That implies a basic shift away from the nation as a spatial and semantic starting point towards a thematic, networked approach that foregrounds historical actors and their spatio-temporal contexts.

The growing field of historical semantics, together with what I call global conceptual history, constitutes an approach to global history that promises to be very important when it tries to realize at least some of the criteria described above.[25] Such an enterprise, as practised by most recent global history writing, does not aim to cover the whole world and interpret it in one narrative. Instead, preconditions of global scope or impact are in the foreground – such as a globality of communicative possibilities, a global network of ideas, translations, perceptions, movements and concepts, mutually referencing each other in situations of political mobilizations, power struggles and legitimacy claims. Many of the complexities of such a history can be successfully met in a team. Furthermore, it is just as important to design this common research as a mid-term engagement over a considerable stretch of time. Global history needs global collaboration and dialogue. This is not an easy enterprise, as it implies consequences for the practice and methodology of long-established national research cultures. Such a demand for taking one's time runs against the grain of contemporary publishing culture, where output (i.e. quantity) dominates the definition of a good scholar. One of

the most obvious and yet also complicated issues is the question of the language in which the common research is to be carried out. Today, this language will be some form of global academic English. This leads to a communication and formulation of academic categories, through a process of double translation. Both the sources and the academic framework need to be communicated between the members of the global team constituted mainly by non-native speakers of English.[26]

Global Conceptual History

When writing global conceptual history, the focus does not need to be on a comparison between understandings of certain concepts, but on *relating* concepts, their transfer, translations and usage. The questions of a global conceptual history are: how are concepts in different languages related to each other? Who are the agents of transfer and translation? Who entangles what, when and why? How do concepts change their meanings through translations and entanglements? What is the effect of newly appropriated concepts on established semantic fields within the receiving languages? How are entangled concepts used by local agents? How do semantic fields change over a longer stretch of time? Which processes of socio-economic, political and cultural change can be illustrated and maybe even explained? How can shifts of semantic paradigms be explained through a global perspective?

From these questions, cases emerge that can be put into a comparative perspective with one another. Such a comparison has a question as a *tertium comparationis* that does not predetermine its answers. Whether or not meanings converge or diverge is not a useful question in such an activity, for example. It is expected. In fact, the differences in semantics and performance of concepts in different languages needs to be embraced as a given. Meanings are rarely (indeed never) stable, even within one language. A historical comparison of concepts will thus never be a comparison of equal units, of identical meanings, but in different languages. To cut short this discussion on how to compare at this point (I will elaborate on this question below), it may be sufficient to point to Heidegger's convincing logical point, that A never equals another A. It only equals itself.[27] The mostly transnational character of global conceptual history is illustrated by answering the above questions as well. As an example, the concept of self-determination after the First World War may be useful.

While the war was not a universally shared experience, the impact of the post-war period was felt in a multitude of areas all over the world.[28] Following the war, the Paris peace negotiations were characterized for a while by the ideas of President Woodrow Wilson.[29] His vision for an international order was based on the self-determination of all nations, yet this vision did not include immediate self-determination for the colonies as opposed to Lenin's version of the

concept. Rather, the notion of the civilizing mission was translated into a tutelage system that would supposedly help colonized areas to develop their polity.[30] Once development had led to maturity, these areas would be granted full self-determination. That was the idea. Naturally, national movements emerging after the war embraced the idea of self-determination, yet not the conditionality attached to it. The Korean independence movement, for example, emerged as an anti-Imperialist and anti-Japanese movement in the early twentieth century. Not only Koreans were activists in this movement. The British journalist of the *Daily News of London*, Ernest Bethel, for example, founded one of the most fiercely anti-Japanese journals, the *Daehan Maeil Sinbo*, together with Yan Gi-tak, the later president of the provisional government of the Republic of Korea (1933–5), as early as 1904. At the beginning of the twentieth century, independence movements all over Asia were global, seeing many actors in Western exile or immersed in transnational networks spanning Asia, Europe and the United States. Knowledge of foreign languages was common among these networks and Korean students picked up Western thought and concepts easily enough. Korean students in Tokyo listened very carefully to Wilson and reacted with a declaration of independence; and on 1 May 1919 Korean nationalists in Seoul publically read out a Korean constitution modelled on the American and French ones.[31]

Global conceptual history is certainly still connected to its disciplinary roots within the interpretive sciences of philosophy, hermeneutics and literary criticism. Here, we propose to add a new feature to the practice of conceptual history, one that can help the historian of global relations and transfers to understand global complexities beyond the mere study of images of the other. It is clearly transnational in taking networks, entanglements and their goals and impact as a point of practicing conceptual history as social and political history. Global conceptual history furthermore relegates national spaces to only being one of several possible spatializations of concept-based claims. However, to continue the exemplary case of self-determination, merely following the English concept of self-determination through a variety of source material and checking its appearance in foreign languages does not provide a sufficient level of sophistication. The Korean expression for – or equivalent to – self-determination must be taken into account as well. The role of the actors who use the concept in context must also be taken into account, making up variations of situations in which the concept plays a key role. The translations and semantic frictions emerging from the appropriation of concepts, such as for example nation, self-determination, independence and liberty, have to be followed up in order to better understand the Korean semantic fields surrounding self-determination.

Global conceptual history as proposed in this volume is embedded in the current state of the art of a historiography that is moving beyond the nation.[32] Certainly, to write a history of concepts as a story of translation, transfer and

transnational settings and networks that have a bearing on national debates and discourses of legitimacy also means that established approaches to conceptual history needs to be revised while the field is developed as a new approach. Furthermore, no broader historical semantic approach, and certainly no conceptual history, can ignore the last decades of debates on writing history. The diverse so-called turns taken in historiography – as in other disciplines within the social sciences and the humanities – serve to inform a twenty-first-century methodology of conceptual history that is conceived of first as a contextualized history of concepts[33] and second as an entangled and transnational one, and one which may ultimately serve as an approach to write a global political history. From the cultural to the linguistic, from the iconic to the spatial turn, modes of making sense of the past through history have been heavily and heatedly debated. The transnational and transcultural turn, and the experience of globalization that calls for new historical explanatory narratives, are only the most recent changes of perspective that inform a contemporary understanding and practice of historical semantics whose goal it is to get a grip on cultural, economic and political shifts and changes.

At first sight, global conceptual history sounds overambitious. By its ring one may suspect it to strive towards writing a global version of the German pioneering enterprise of '*Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*' by identifying and mapping so-called key concepts, their semantic fields and their counter-concepts in all imaginable languages and semantic traditions. The implementation of such a project would see hundreds if not thousands of historians working on encyclopedia entries in monograph length. Since such an enterprise would neglect the transfer and translation aspect highlighted by the transnational perspective on history, this is not the *raison d'être* of our take on global conceptual history.[34] Rather, the conceptual approach proposed here looks at concepts as embedded[35] in transnational and local discourses and semantic fields; it rests on a basis of theoretical and historical preconditions, such as robust connections between historical spaces and languages. It furthermore strives to link historical developments to the present. Proposing that the world was economically, culturally and politically interconnected by the middle to late nineteenth century, proposing that empire and capitalism had left their mark and that global networks of actors and structures of communication existed, that institutionalizations of trade and education were in place, and that mutual dialogical perception and reception between actors of different backgrounds and across regions took place, one can assume that a global conceptual history carried out as relational or entangled history is a road towards the capability of historians to combine theoretical aggregation with thorough empirical research in such a way that the theory does not predict the empirical result. Rather, it gives room for the source material to unfold, and to allow for a question-driven and mainly inductive historical analysis.

In order to do this, the study of concepts in different languages and semantic traditions looks for connections, frictions, translations, appropriations across languages, traditions and regions, while equally recognizing existing semantic traditions already established in the appropriating country or region and in its semantic settings. 'Social' was a new concept for Korean, for example, while 'economic' had a long history. Both the new and the old concept had a bearing on one another from the late nineteenth century, when notions of the social were introduced in Korea, and when notions of the economic translated from Western and Japanese sources inflicted a meaning change for the traditional understanding of economics as well (see Myoungkyu Park's Chapter 1, pp. 25–42). The goal of such an enterprise is not merely to stress flows and networks as such; it can, rather, only be to dig up the empirical roots and groundwork of today's global entanglements experienced and coined as globalization, and thus to counter mechanical narratives of automatic economic integration, mono-causal colonial domination and a one-size-fits-all theory of modernity. Indeed, the conceptual appropriation of concepts of the social and the economic in Asian languages was quite varied. Korean knew the economic but not the social; for Malay, both words were neologisms; for Chinese, two words denoting both the social and the economic existed before those words which were reintroduced from Japanese gained hegemonic usage (and meaning), and so on. Global conceptual history during high imperialism is thus a complex story of appropriation, translation and contestation, rather than a simple story of semantic domination in which the colonizers bring their concepts with them. This is not to deny the fact that schools and colleges run by the colonizers were a multilingual breeding ground for future political activity against the imperial overlords. Yet the story of conceptual appropriation is more complex than that. Local actors, their language, their interest and their specific situation need to be taken into account as well. This historical complexity is the point of departure for this book.

The Point of Departure

The above implies a modified understanding of conceptual history's point of departure on at least two main levels and a string of sublevels. It puts a focus different from that of recent debates on the relation of conceptual history to other disciplines or ways of making sense of sense-making:[36] (1) the theory and practice of comparison and what may be compared in connection with questions of divergence and convergence from paths of historical development conceived in this manner as well as with questions of the national space as a point of departure for global comparisons. (2) The notion of the role and meaning of concepts within one language (as argued by both the German and the English schools of conceptual and contextual intellectual history) in connection with questions

of translations between semantic spaces as well as the performative role of concepts in historical situations of semantic change and the political mobilization of concepts. While it is an established practice that conceptual history can supposedly only be carried out in one country, or rather, in one semantic universe expressed through the usage of the same language and a similar understanding of concepts, this position appears as oddly essentialist today. This also implies that conceptual history is reaching out from its established methodological and disciplinary habitat of philosophy, literary criticism, hermeneutics and discourse analysis as well as cognitive semantics and is used much more consciously – even though Koselleck already defended conceptual history as social history early on[37] – in connection with both the role of concepts in questions related to a power–knowledge nexus, legitimacy and ideology-building as well as general trends in historiography, and to thus serve as a point of entry for an understanding of broader historical and political processes.[38]

(1) The notion that concepts cannot be compared between languages rests on a traditional understanding of what comparison is all about. Within this tradition of historical scholarship, history is conceived of as a social science and theories and assumptions of convergence or divergence, of modernization and industrialization processes provide the platform on which historical interpretation takes place. Long-standing research trajectories, such as the question as to why there was no worker's movement or even socialism in the United States or Germany's apparent special way (*Sonderweg*) through history as opposed to the so-called normal Western European model are not applicable. Entangled history as transnational and transcultural history challenges this form of comparative history by simply breaking away from the national or regional space understood as homogenous and as constituting a thoroughly researchable entity as a point of departure. Another way of circumventing such a mode of comparison is to avoid teleology within the *tertium comparationis*.

Much of convergence theory goes back to the early Cold War and alternative macro-theories that may be coined as an interpretative struggle between Marxist and liberal theories of historical development.[39] Here, it is argued that while convergence may be observed when for example certain time regimes have a bearing on the practice of labour and on the structure of social life, or when certain political institutions are emulated and a similar stratification of economic and social conditions is observable, history remains open-ended and societies do not follow clear-cut stages of development. Instead of looking for convergence or divergence, the focus here is on actors, on strategies of political mobilization in moments of political, social and economic change, on the subtle but fundamental differences between countries even when they embrace common concepts or show similar forms of social stratification.[40]

Opposed to a focus on cultural essentializations or convergences of macro regions and nations, the research interest may lie closer to the source material as well as to the actual historical situation, and may also rather more fruitfully be based on frictions between meanings and practices that are transnationally linked in networks of mutual reception, perception, appropriation, translation and transfer.[41] Such a notion also allows one to theoretically make room for agency among the populations of colonized regions who actively appropriate concepts and practices from Western countries as well as other parts of the world (for example Arab words travelling with traders to Southern Asia); this is the story this book wants to tell, a complex, diverse story that revolves around variations of semantic appropriations and their role in both thought and practice. Such an effort begs for a clear distinction between modernization and modernity on a theoretical level. The former needs to be put into its historical context, as a key term that was further developed theoretically in the 1950s and 1960s, providing a narrative for the West as a cohesive region.

While modernization theory should in no way influence the methodological and theoretical perspective of global conceptual history, to perceive modernization as a certain form of comparison that is used by historical actors in non-European countries is nevertheless unavoidable. The notion of catching up with an imagined West was all-pervasive in Asian discourses. Thus modernization becomes a highly relevant object of analysis when it remains locked in the historical source material. How, and through which concepts, was a hierarchical relation between Asian countries and the idealized West established? This question plays an important role because many Asian countries, for example Japan, Korea, China and Thailand, embraced a conscious modernization process in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They compared themselves to other countries and to standards that were coined as representing the West, which was established as a normative ideal for Asian political and social discourse, and not simply as a pattern of thought imported by Western imperial powers.

It has become obvious that modernization theory in any form is neither an adequate tool to unlock historical developments, nor a convincing theoretical basis for global history. Modernity, despite its notorious quality of being a muddle[42] and a term that can hardly be defined yet hardly be avoided,[43] may prove to be more fruitful theoretically and inform historical investigation, not as an analytical term, but as a descriptive one, however. Therefore, the idea of global modernity is developed further below.

(2) The conclusion that concepts may not be compared across languages rests – beside the practicality of studying concepts in one language in detail – on a notion of national and linguistic containment of meaning that ignores links, translations, transfers and appropriations. Of course, translations are never a zero sum game, the meaning of one concept in one language will not be the same

in another language – and this is exactly the point: a semantic friction exists between these conceptual relatives and their linguistic expressions. In European languages, s*ociety*, *société*, *Gesellschaft*, *samfund*, *społeczeństwo*,[44] *società* – all have similar but different meanings and semantic fields, different histories of meaning, and different relations to each other as well as to further key concepts, such as economics or the nation. But do we need complete symmetry before we can compare? Would the non-equality of comparative units be just like comparing apples with oranges? This book assumes that indeed apples and oranges are perfectly comparable and proposes that it may be more fruitful (*sic*) and relevant to ask: where are connections between different versions of a theme? Do all concepts investigated refer to similar imaginations of social organization? Do they share a similar semantic field and similar counter-concepts? Did shifts in how social organization was imagined occur at a similar point in time and if so, why? Were there influences, links and transfers between semantic systems? Who were the historical actors involved? Of course there were influences, links and transfers, and it would mean losing a very promising approach if global historians were not to embrace historical semantics in a transnational, entangled configuration. Rather, this embrace opens new and fresh roads to historical investigation. It is thus rather less fruitful to transfer the convergence–divergence question onto semantic fields. A neat comparison or a strict construction of sender–receiver relations as well as the single-language-based practice of conceptual history would logically imply that linguistic units are somehow sealed-off spaces and units of isolated practices of meaning. It can be safely said that this is not the case. Do we find convergence of meaning in one linguistic sphere? Can we claim that the understanding of concepts is shared unanimously within one linguistic sphere? It may just as safely be said that this is not the case, either. Is not the relevance of any conceptual analysis mainly provided by the fact that concepts are contested, fought over, and dynamic in their meaning? Concepts are contentious, their meanings do not converge; they are constantly negotiated by historical actors in struggles of power and legitimacy. They provide legitimacy for agency, and established meanings will continuously be challenged and subverted at some point in time – and this general condition of what can be done with concepts when they are activated implies that even within one linguistic sphere they neither converge nor diverge, their meanings change continuously. The appropriation of concepts from foreign languages and their role as a new element within the space of semantic contestation is all the more interesting and allows for a history of concepts that is able to integrate textual analysis on the one hand and the contextual settings of texts, actors and their agendas, in which concepts are applied, on the other hand. The introduction of the social and the economic into Asian languages shook up and reconfigured the vocabulary of legitimacy in the respective countries and languages. How this came about, what the impact of the conceptual appropriation was, and who the actors of conceptual contestations were are questions followed in each chapter of this book.

Mapping Conceptual Appropriation

Consequently, conceptual appropriation is not measured against a fixed model or template. Rather, in this book a comparison is carried out that employs a question as its *tertium comparationis* as opposed to a norm: how, when, why and for which purposes have different social groups and actors in Asia appropriated conceptualizations of the social and the economic from foreign languages and socio-political cultures? To answer such a question and to unearth complex results from historical source material, I would like to suggest five categories along which a historical semantic analysis may be carried out: (1) hegemony, (2) avant-garde, (3) nostalgia, (4) periphery and (5) suppression. (1) *Hegemony* is understood in the Gramscian tradition that interprets semantic struggles over meanings as struggles of power and legitimacy. During the Cold War, for example, a conscious struggle over the meaning of concepts took place; both ideological camps occupied the same concepts – freedom, democracy, human rights, etc. – and also, obviously, very consciously struggled over the semantics of the social and the economic. The two systems of meaning – the liberal and the socialist – ensured that the semantics of the respective other came straight from the devil's toolbox. Planning, as proven by rational choice theory,[45] became an unnatural practice in the eyes of Western scholars and politicians. The self-regulating market, on the other hand, which was just as well proven through socialist scientific analysis, was presented as an anarchic system lacking any social conscience and thus without the slightest chance to achieve social balance and welfare for all. Asian states and actors, particularly India and China, often stood between the two camps. As a general reaction to the binary logics of the Cold War, a string of Asian countries joined the Group of 77 (G77), or Non-Aligned Movement, in 1961, following the initiative of Yugoslav president Josip Tito. India, Singapore and Korea joined as members, China became an observing country. The role of the Non-Aligned Movement in Cold War history is currently being re-evaluated and shows how conceptualizations of society and economy were much more than a simple clash between the East and the West. After the First World War, to return to the example of self-determination, Asian countries such as Korea and China illustrate a twist in the tale of Western dominance. They were not only disillusioned by the failure of liberal global vision, but also inspired by other Asian as well as by the Egyptian resistance to colonial domination following the First World War (See the chapters by Dominic Sachsenmaier, Hailong Tian and Myoungkyu Park in this volume).[46] This is only one illustration of a global web of conceptual transfer and local appropriations of concepts such as self-determination, which permutated through its multiple applications both inside and outside North America and Europe and are illustrative of struggles for hegemony not only between the two superpowers, but also within local political and socio-cultural settings all over the world. The semantic struggles over the meaning of concepts ultimately are struggles about the *normative order*[47] of polities. Historically, normative orders are embedded in

rationalities and semantic traditions of specific moments in time. The language depicting legitimate normative order thus needs always to be historicized. In the case of China, for example, her discursive positioning in the world underwent a process referred to as the internationalization of China. The effect of such an internationalization was a perception and active translation and appropriation of key European or Western terms. Social order and social change were projected towards a different future; logics of spatialization and temporalization, in which the new Chinese society was supposed to unfold, came into play. As Sachsenmaier shows in his chapter, the terms *xin* (new) and *jiu* (old) were increasingly used, putting Chinese experience on a timeline. Similarly, as Khuri-Makdisi and Pannu also show for the Arab and Malay cases, a verticalization of temporal logics can be witnessed in other languages and logics of legitimacy, too. The shift from a circular to a vertical understanding of time was not complete, however. Rather, vertical temporal logics, putting experience and development on a clear, straight line from the past to the present and the future, merged with more traditional, circular ways of imagining time. These examples again reveal that we cannot witness a complete Western takeover of Asian conceptualizations of time in connection with the social and the economic simply because vertical temporalization has been introduced.

Hegemony describes a semantic dominance of a certain meaning of concepts. One concept, for example freedom, can have many different interpretations and quite different semantic fields. This is dependent on the context of its usage. While former president of the United States, George W. Bush, would claim the concept of freedom as a key concept to legitimize war against Iraq, the French president, Jacques Chirac, and the German chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, stressed that freedom may only be served and reached through peace.

While hegemony constitutes the goal of any semantic struggle, from a theoretical perspective this struggle connects all actors within the framework of a common discourse. Discourse is here mainly understood as describing the general power–knowledge nexus and its practices of meaning-making within which historical actors find their space to manoeuvre and their opportunity structures. Hegemony is thus striven for within the confines of a discursive setting. While convergence suggests a fusion of horizons of meaning, hegemony suggests a predominance of a certain understanding of a concept among a dominant group of actors during and only for a certain period of time. Accordingly, semantic hegemony is never stable. What I call hegemony is similar to Reinhart Koselleck's notion of *Sattelzeit* or a transitional period. A *Sattelzeit* is a period of long-term semantic change during which established meanings are slowly undermined and replaced with new meanings. In his notion of *Zeitschichten* (layers of time), Koselleck connects three layers of temporal experience: a short-term, a mid-term and a long-term one. The *Sattelzeit* constitutes the long-term layer of time. The

crucial feature of the long-term layer is its apparent transcendental nature. It constitutes a seemingly immobile, unchanging normative horizon against which all experience and all expectation is projected and measured. Importantly, this temporal layer only appears to be transcendental.[48]

The hegemonic meaning of concepts creates the illusion of timelessness and thus constructs seemingly transcendental, universal truth. Here, I prefer using the term hegemony to that of *Sattelzeit* or transcendental temporal layer because hegemony includes the notion of the very performance of concepts and meanings. As Pannu has shown in her chapter in this book, *masyarakat* (the people) replaced *kerajaan* (kingship) as the key concept for any legitimate order in Malay political vocabulary. The concepts of the social and the economic have played a major role in providing the semantics for such a change in hegemonic meaning.

(2) *Avant-garde* can be understood as a position within a certain discourse and within a certain cultural, political or social field. To gain the position of recognized avant-garde means to be in the position of legitimate critique, as Koselleck showed in his study on *Critique and Crisis* and as can be witnessed in most moments of semantic turbulence.[49] Such a position is not easily gained, however, and the process of gaining it is just as contested. Today's acclaimed critic may well be tomorrow's enervating grumbler. The critic's audience comes into play here. Critique takes place in complex public settings and is not only a process of simple confrontation. Concepts and the way they are redefined, recontextualized or reinterpreted through the avant-garde again play the key role. In some instances, as in the Thai case (see Chapter 8, pp. 149–68), conceptual change is inflicted through the ruler. Thai monarchs pre-emptively embraced new concepts and introduced notions of the social and the economic into Thai language. The ruling elite functioned as an avant-garde to the established discourse to secure its power and to make sure that Thailand would remain connected to wider global developments. The choice of authors informing Thai conceptual innovations of the social and the economic illustrates the larger claim that each historical situation must be looked at individually in its complexity before jumping to conclusions about a larger unit called 'Asia' or 'Southern Asia'. For the Thai discourse on the social and the economic, classical economists such as David Ricardo and Adam Smith played a significant role. Yet so did Friedrich Gottfried Raiffeisen and his idea of the cooperative bank. The European social conditions were expressed by Raiffeisen in the typical European way, namely by claiming that society was constituted of three classes, the upper, the middle and the lower. This understanding of society was filtered out in the Thai appropriation of his work. Classes simply did not exist in Thailand, it was argued. The king himself remarked that in Thailand, all people are equal. It is a classless society. Only the king is superior. Obviously, the pre-emptive embrace of the social and the economic through the ruling elites in Thailand was an effort to tone down or even suppress the pos-

sibly explosive semantics of the social as it was conceived of in Europe. After all, European conceptions of society were founded on a friction between governing authorities and the citizens as well as between groups of citizens striving to make their varying voices heard and their demands met.

The concepts of the social and the economic played a more critical role for the positioning of, for example, new Korean political actors, as Myoungkyu Park shows in Chapter 1. New associations formed in the Korean political landscape, based on the newly established notion of the social (*sahoe*), claimed their place in the political and social landscape and formulated their interests. Furthermore, *hoesa*, a simple inversion of the two syllables of *sahoe*, came to denote business corporation, another conceptual innovation in Korea. The new associations and corporations ultimately acted as an avant-garde in the sense described above.

Semantic shifts and frictions often include a reordering process of historical narratives as new temporalizations are evoked. Mostly, variations of a good but lost past, of (3) *nostalgia*, appear alongside parts of the past, which the new narrative of history cuts off from the new present and the new future. The constant renegotiation of future orders brings a constant redepiction of nostalgic pasts in its wake.[50] Which pasts inform the future of the concepts of society and economy? In the case of Malaysia and Indonesia, for example, the emergence of national narratives, invoking an eternal past of Malays and Indonesians, went alongside social and economic shifts which can be traced through the introduction of the very concepts of the social and the economic in the first place. Narratives of past nostalgia connected to conceptual shifts usually become part of future-oriented discourses. They serve as a lost past supposedly to be re-established in the future.

During processes of conceptual innovation, other, formerly prominent concepts are pushed to the (4) *periphery*, or discursive fringes. It may also be the case that the latter concept remained literally stable yet had been reinterpreted. Indeed, this is the case with many key concepts. Some concepts, such as freedom, remain in a hegemonic position; yet undergo a shift in meaning. When following the introduction of new concepts, or the reinterpretation of established concepts, as illustrated by the innovation of the social and the reinterpretation of the economic in Korean, which other concepts and narratives are pushed to the periphery of the overall discourse and which further concepts appear prominently in a new semantic field of a new, seemingly transcendental normative order? In the Malayan case, 'nationhood' and 'race' came in the wake of the social and the economic, pushing *kerajaan* to the periphery. In Chinese, a semantic struggle of the social and the economic revolved around imaginations of Chinese society as egalitarian, based on the notion that all Chinese are members of the same nation, or as hierarchical, based on the notion that revolutionary change needs to be brought about in order to reach a better China (see Tian's Chapter 2 in this volume). In Arab, the social and the economic had become part of a new

hegemonic vocabulary by around 1908, as Khuri-Makdisi explains (see Chapter 5, pp. 91–110). Both concepts were inextricably linked with the concept of progress, reform, revolution and civilization as well as with variations of their own (political economy, socialism, etc.). Indeed, Shibli Shumayyil, one of Khuri-Makdisi's protagonists, exemplifies the complexity of conceptual translation and appropriation. He played a key role in introducing the term 'social' (*al-ijtima'i*) into the Arab language. A graduate of a Protestant college and thus a polyglot, Shumayyil fused traditional Arab thought, represented by Ibn Khaldun, with the intellectual fashion of his time, the late nineteenth century. The result was, from today's perspective, a seemingly eclectic mix of traditional Islamic writing with the Darwinist and liberal philosophy of his time. Shumayyil managed to fuse Ibn Khaldun with Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin and Ludwig Büchner. In the process of establishing a new hegemony of social imagination and political as well as cultural legitimacy represented by the interconnected concepts of civilization, progress, society, political economy, reform and revolution, older concepts of kinship and monarchy were pushed to the discursive fringes; in some cases even into a position of a counter-concept.

Which concepts, or possible interpretations of concepts, were consciously (5) *suppressed?* In the Thai case shown above, certain interpretations of the social as class struggle were consciously cut out in the hope of suppressing them. A difference between European societies and Thailand served as the argument for this suppression. In a wider sense, all struggles for semantic hegemony contain efforts at suppression. The struggle between the two intellectual camps in China described by Hailong Tian in Chapter 2 illustrates such an effort. Both Sun Yat-sen and Liang Qichao strove to dominate the meaning of the social and the economic, aiming at suppressing the other's perspective as a legitimate interpretation of the concepts. Suppression is thus not always a conscious act by restrictive governments wishing to filter out certain potentially dangerous meanings; it is what is often aimed at in historical moments of conceptual contestation.

When asking about the role of concepts in history with a focus on society and economics in Euro-Asian contexts, it is thus also asked whether the translation of concepts from English, French, German or Dutch played any role in struggles for semantic *hegemony* (in the Indonesian case, Dutch words reflected more contemporary concepts of civil rights, for example, while Arab words were used for the older concept of justice); whether some groups of intellectuals, politicians or artists managed to position themselves as the *avant-garde* and gain a recognized position to perform legitimate critique or change; and which traditional discourses, that is, which versions of the past are constructed as a narration of *nostalgia*? Which concepts and interpretations are relegated to the discursive *periphery*;[51] and which concepts and interpretations are *suppressed*, forbidden, cut out (only to, perhaps, return again in new semantic gowns later on in time)?

This book illustrates these five interrelated categories of conceptual contestation and conceptual change. The fundamental changes of Asian societies between 1860 and 1940 can thus be followed, illustrated and understood in a nuanced way. The period can be framed as a period of sweeping normative change that went hand in hand with social, economic and political change. Historical agents struggled against colonial rule as well as against traditional rule at home. With the concepts of the social and the economic came a semantic field including conceptualizations of progress, nation, race, class, civilization and more Western or European concepts. Established normative orders were undermined and finally overthrown. And yet, while these concepts were embraced by native intellectuals and politicians, Asian societies did not converge to Asian versions of the West. Western concepts were embraced, translated and appropriated. They were mixed with local semantics and merged with the contemporary historical situation. All Asian countries are nation-states today, they have concepts of the social and the economic with all their inclusionary and exclusionary elements; they have also moved towards a vertical temporalization of their social and economic imagination, without fully abandoning more traditional, for example Confucian, ways of temporalizing. All Asian countries adopted these concepts in unique ways. A diffusion model must be rejected. It cannot be sustained empirically. The introduction of Western concepts was in many ways a conscious decision at a particular moment in history, which was characterized by conceptual insecurity and innovation in moments of normative and political struggles, tensions and shifts. Indeed, modern globalization since the 1860s has a very complex past. Global conceptual history can help identify and clarify moments of historical change in a more sophisticated way.

Modernity and Colonial Experience: Towards a Global Modernity

Global conceptual history, when applied in the way sketched out above, is able not only to illustrate a process of increasing global communication, trade and traffic, it also allows us to find explanations and insights into power struggles and claims for legitimacy beyond the established narratives of economic flows, colonial domination and a one-size-fits-all macro-theoretical understanding of modernity. It allows, furthermore, an analysis of the colonial experience from a fresh perspective. This is achieved by moving from postcolonialism (which is connected to colonialism as the point of demarcation, just as post-nationalism and transnationalism is still connected to the nation as the point of demarcation) to global historical relations without diminishing the relevance of the (post) colonial experience and perspective. Furthermore, a polycentric understanding of global modernity serves as a point of departure rather than a Western-centric one. The concept of modernity is thus uncoupled from liberal theories in which

it is understood as a mode of economic and social organization and in which modernization is coined as a process that drives this modernity, and recoupled with a polycentric understanding of global modernity that is characterized by claims on the past and the future through a reference to present experience and where concepts are employed as the semantic carriers of pasts, presents and futures. Global modernity describes a web of connections both in space and over time. There is no latecomer in the race towards development and social stratification. Asian societies will not go through experiences the West has already had, neither will Arab or African societies do so. All have been on their individual roads for the last few centuries while they were simultaneously entangled with, and often deeply influenced (it cannot be denied) by, other parts of the world. Seen from this polycentric, entangled approach, colonial modernities have been just as constitutional of European modernities as vice versa.[52]

One essential precondition for such an endeavour is the exclusion of any form of temporalities of difference, or what I will call, with Reinhart Koselleck, *progressive comparison*, from the methodological and theoretical perspective employed as part of the heuristic framework and to treat Western and Asian concepts, their history and their entanglements in an equal way. The imposition of *progressive comparison*, which refers to notions of being temporally ahead and behind, of needing to catch up, of installing roads towards successful develop-ment,[53] of who should be part of the race ahead and who should be excluded, play an important role in history. Progressive comparison should not, how-ever, inform any historiographical approach. The important task is thus to take normativity and the teleology produced by progressive comparison out of the theoretical approach and to, rather, understand the historicity of temporalities as a crucial element of what describes modernity as well as the way in which experiences, imaginations[54] and expectations are linked temporally through concepts and the normativities they create.[55] A straightforward example for tra-ditional questions guiding historical investigation would be related to the old riddle of how Europe managed to get ahead of the world in the nineteenth cen-tury. Innovatively, historians today do not put civilizations on a timeline any longer, following dominant forms of empires or regions through history as a sort of handing over from one dominant civilization to the next (ultimately ending the story with contemporary Western hegemony). Rather, civilizations are seen in their relations with each other without the *a priori* assumption that one is trailing behind the other. This may be the point of view of the historical actors analysed, but is not the point of view of the historian any longer.[56]

Modernity creates multiple normativities, and concepts are their building blocks. Concepts have a normative function because of their crucial position in all discourses of legitimacy. Through concepts a temporal horizon, a goal and a supposedly adequate movement towards this goal is semantically constructed.

Temporal logics and the spaces in which it is proposed that they unfold characterize the multiple normativities of global modernity. This does not imply the seemingly natural movement of history towards a converging normative horizon inherent in modernization theories and in many integration theories.

Temporal logics are part and parcel of European and Western discourses of legitimacy, inclusion and exclusion. These temporal logics include the need for change or transition and may also be called *Leitdifferenzen*[57] (guiding differences), both of a positive goal-oriented kind as well as those pointing towards a transition into unchartered and simply unimaginable futures,[58] which install a concept as an exemplary positive norm and a counter-concept as an exemplary negative norm. Guiding differences have for a long time influenced conceptualizations of modernity. Advanced–backward, civilized–barbarous, holy–profane, moral–immoral, developed–undeveloped (the latter is today often euphemistically referred to as 'emerging'), etc. Different systems of guiding differences exist, however. The so-called functional differentiation of modern societies works, following Luhmann, on the basis of semantic *Leitdifferenzen*.[59]

The theoretical claim of a global conceptual history is thus that temporal logics are also inherent in non-Western discourses of legitimacy, inclusion and exclusion and that, indeed, it seems to be the case that variations of temporal logics have moved into Asian concepts of society and economics through the appropriation of Western thought, for example in the case of social Darwinist ideas in the Arab discourse or through the movement from cyclical to linear temporal logics in Malaysia (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 by Makdisi and Pannu, respectively). *Leitdifferenzen* inform the usage and define the role of concepts and counter-concepts in power struggles of claims for legitimacy. However, this does not allow the conclusion that this global phenomenon of the temporal logic of legitimacy claims makes for global sameness. Societies do not converge because semantic systems change their conceptual horizon through experience as well as through translation and appropriation of foreign concepts. The political and social histories of societies in which global conceptual entanglements occur may be very different, and may just as well show similarities (e.g. demographic trends, goals in life, everyday values, modes of production and consumption, etc.). Societies may have similar discourses of legitimacy evolving around similar concepts, they may also have similar legal structures or values, but these discourses may play out in very different social realities.

The approach of global conceptual history thus embraces an understanding of modernity different from classical or even more recent notions of modernity, modernization or multiple modernities and moves towards an understanding of global modernity that embraces fractions and tensions as its inbuilt features. It is important to foster an understanding of global modernity that is neither representing a prescriptive model for society, nor filled with an inherent progressive

comparative perspective, but is rather conceived of as a historical condition characterized by temporal logics, by the construction of pasts and futures as elements of power struggles and claims for legitimacy through concepts and the multiple normativities they are able to capture and permutate in continuous, entangled, open-ended and contentious processes of semiosis and power struggles.

Even the understanding of multiple modernities, introduced by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt as a critical reaction to the hegemony of the modernization paradigm and aiming to employ a polycentric approach, suffers from (a) the theoretical linkage of different modernities as movement through time – and thus making non-Western forms of modernity latecomers again, and (b) the presupposition of regional spatial containers that merely enter the modernity machine at different points in time. This regionalized form of methodological nationalism disregards both horizontal connections and influences as well as vertical tensions between a global situation and a regional reaction by making the region a closed unit analysed from inside only. Furthermore, temporal asymmetries are still stressed within multiple modernities. The imagination of the world as asynchronic space and thus the perspective of progressive comparison remains part of the heuristic framing of the scientific approach.[60] It is an interesting contradiction seldom commented upon that lies at the heart of Eisenstadt's notion of multiple modernities. While he begins his description of Western or European modernities with a focus on temporalization and the role of language that is similar to Koselleck, he does not employ this time-based understanding of what makes modernity to describe Asian and other modernities, but changes his theoretical horses by moving towards a history of regional blocs and experiences of industrialization and modernization.[61]

Global modernity, on the other hand, is meant to be a theoretical approach not based on progressive comparison, but on an understanding of the world from today's perspective, which includes the colonial experience and colonial modernity as historical experiences equal to any Western experience. Furthermore it theorizes modernity in the singular. Arif Dirlik explains:

> I understand the term global modernity in the singular, as a 'singular modernity', to use Frederic Jameson's phrase,[62] which is nevertheless productive of contradictory claims on modernity for which it has come to serve as a site of conflict ... At the same time, global modernity as a concept is intended to overcome a teleological (and ideological) bias for global commonality and homogeneity embedded in the very term globalization. It recognizes as equally fundamental tendencies to fragmentation and contradiction that are also products of globalization and of past legacies that find exaggerated expression in their projection on a global scene.[63]

The important conclusion from such a theoretical starting point is that contradictions and frictions emerge not just between societies but, most importantly, within and across them. Another important conclusion that becomes central for

global conceptual history carried out as critical entangled history is that claims for alternative modernities, claims for self-determination, or any claims made by non-Western actors become claims with equal validity.[64] Colonial modernity is part of global modernity, not a variation of some original form of modernity. By thus historicizing modernity, that is, by taking progressive comparison (or *Leitdifferenzen*) out of our own theoretical approach, the analysis of basic concepts – their entanglements, translations and the modes of their contestation – becomes part of a fundamental understanding of a global history built 'from the inside', by historical sources, discourses, actors, cases, etc., rather than through a top-down theoretical model. This integrative notion of a global modernity that embraces tensions and fragmentations *between, within* and *across* societies and their spatio-temporal discursive logics allows for an entangled approach to global history by establishing a transnational epistemological horizon, towards which European and Asian conceptualizations of society and economics are related on an equal basis. The case studies in this book illustrate this movement between, within and across spaces as concepts are consciously picked, translated and performed by Asian actors.