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Relational Understanding of Places

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Introduction: Core Location, Asia as Method, and a Relational Understanding of Places

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This volume seeks to provide rich and illuminating accounts of the peripheries of urban, regional, and transnational development in South Korea. It is the outcome of long-term and ongoing interdisciplinary collaborations and dialogues among scholars based in a variety of disciplines, including architecture, anthropology, geography, and political science. The key threads that bind each chapter together are the ideas of "core location" (*haeksim hyeonjang*), a term coined by Baik Young-seo (2013a, 2013b), and "Asia as method," a concept with a century-old intellectual lineage in East Asia, especially as developed by Kuan-Hsing Chen. Each chapter offers an empirical account of different sites in Korea. The focus on sites may sound counter-intuitive in light of current trends toward conducting transnational studies in the social sciences, especially in the field of area studies. While our focus is on individual sites, however, our optic is not localist; rather, our approach is a *relational* one, situating individual sites within the broader matrix of social changes occurring at the urban, national, regional, and global scale. A "site" is an interconnected place where different forces and processes intersect and often contradict one another to produce and constitute a particular constellation. In this volume, we examine the constitution of different sites in Korea and aim to understand these interconnections, especially through the frames of core location and Asia as method. These conceptual apparatuses, which are rooted in a long intellectual tradition in East Asia, proffer a *reflexive* perspective, compelling us to re-examine inherited and taken-for-granted categories and theories, and enabling us to embark on the decolonization of our research. Furthermore, they compel us, as academics, to bear in mind the issue of praxis – of theoretically informed political action. Accordingly, examining oppositional politics within different places, and analytically and politically linking these places with variegated oppressive and exploitative systems, is a key mandate of each chapter in this volume.

Despite being little known in anglophone scholarship, Baik's concept of core location has gained some currency among East Asian scholars, especially among those affiliated with the journal *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. Initially introduced as a heuristic device to understand geopolitical conditions in East Asia, "core location" refers to a place with lived experiences of multiple layers of marginality. It is, however, not only about a particular geographical site of marginalization. Core location, for Baik, is a prism through which to capture and problematize multiple, contradictory, and convoluted layers of power stemming from colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and Cold War and post–Cold War dynamics that characterize the particular geohistory of East Asia and that are deeply entrenched in people's lifeworlds at particular locations in East Asia. In particular, Baik attends to the dynamics of power struggles between transpacific imperial powers, such as China, Japan, Russia, and the United States, as forces that have shaped the marginal states of core locations. His prime example of a core location is Okinawa. Having been annexed by Japan in 1879 and occupied as a US military base since the end of the Second World War, Okinawa has been a site in which Japanese colonialism, US military imperialism, and sexual violence by American servicemen have become embattled issues.

The concept of core location is not concerned only with understanding and interpreting a particular location and struggles projected through it; it also explores what forms of praxis can emanate from this understanding. Rather than simply trying to understand a core location as a victim of imperial power struggles, Baik argues that it is precisely within these core locations, sites of the downtrodden, that the potential to generate new politics and regional and global solidarity lies. For example, Okinawa has been the site through which solidarity movements across East Asia and Southeast Asia were spearheaded against Japan's past and current imperialist violence, its far-right nationalism, and US military imperialism and militarized violence in the Asia-Pacific region. In a similar vein, Baik points to the Korean peninsula as a core location that is fraught with contradictions stemming from Cold War and post–Cold War dynamics.[1] For him, the division between North and South Korea is the embodiment of the sort of ongoing Cold War politics that implicates both Euro-American imperialists and fascist factions in Japan (Baik 2013b, 157; see also Paik 2013). Pointing to a similar context to Okinawa, Baik emphasizes the importance of the development in Korea of anti-American peace movements

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[1] Another example that Baik elaborates on is Taiwan's internal colony over aboriginal people (Baik 2013a).

and activism for reparations for Japanese war crimes, and he contends that these movements and activism are important fields for scholarly research. For Baik, the production of socially engaged knowledge is of the utmost importance. The three pillars of Baik's ideas are critical self-reflection (*seongchal*), praxis (*silcheon*), and communicative connection (*sotong*) (Baik 2012, 455). His concern is to discover and build a common ground, a universal base that connects different sites of resistance, but he argues that this universality should be based on profound insights about a place (*tongchalseong ui bopyeonseong*).

Kuan-Hsing Chen's "Asia as Method": Toward the De-imperialization of Knowledge

Baik's notion of core location not only intervenes at the level of ontology and politics in relation to East Asian spaces and scholarship. The concept is also loaded with a particular epistemology. According to Baik, it is at, and through, core locations that we can identify forms of "double marginality" (*ijungjeok jubyeonui sigak*) (Baik 2013a, 17–18, 45).[2] The first form of marginality refers to the people inhabiting downtrodden places who have been relegated to the margins within the geopolitical hierarchy within, across, and beyond Asia. The second form of marginality is the peripherialization of place-rooted standpoints in East Asia that have been rendered invisible under the hegemony of Western-centred world historiography and scholarship. Baik argues for a centring of the perspectives of East Asia away from this peripherialization. This problematic that Baik raises resonates with the long tradition of Asia as method, as was developed by Takeuchi Yoshimi and Mizoguchi Yūzō and, more recently (and often collaboratively), by Sun Ge and Baik Young-seo.[3] It especially echoes the key argument that Kuan-Hsing Chen expresses in *Asia as Method* (2010).[4]

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2   Some chapters in this volume refer to the idea of "double marginality" (*ijungjeok jubyeonui sigak*) as "twofold-peripheral perspective" or "two-fold peripheries," following Baik's own expression in English (2013b, 145).

3   Each of these authors has intervened differently in the tradition of Asia as method. But what binds these different intellectuals together is their interest in self-reflexivity, critical perspectives on oneself and others, self-transformation by understanding others, and understanding the world through the perspectives and lives of people, especially those most marginalized via historical injustices of wars and imperialism (see Yoshimi [1960] 2005; Mizoguchi [1989] 1996); Sun 2003, 2007, 2013; Sun and Yoon 2013; Yoon 2014).

4   Chen has mobilized, and collaborated with, other East Asia–based intellectuals to found the journal *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* and hold biannual conferences of the same name, which Baik also participates in.

In this work, Chen calls for the de-imperialization and de-Westernization of knowledge production. He argues that Western concepts that are premised on capitalist modernity "render everything else invisible or irrelevant" and therefore offer "inadequate analytical understandings of our own [Asian] societies" (2010, 224). Under Euro-American dominance, Asian history and historiography have become "a footnote that either validates or invalidates Western theoretical propositions" (226), and Western modernity and its theories become "the standard against which all other places are measured" (253). Chen urges that scholars challenge the process in which the West became the single reference point in the processes of knowledge production and circulation. For him, the particular geohistories of colonialism, imperialism, and Cold War and post–Cold War dynamics of Asia, as well as the liberalization and democratization processes in each country in Asia, reveal a different world history and historical perspective from the one in which the West has been central.

Taking issue with the practice of using the West as a reference point to understand other places, Chen highlights the urgency and importance of "multiplying and shifting our points of reference" (224). In particular, his interest lies in developing co-referencing between different countries in Asia, and he argues that Asians can come to grips with problems in their respective locations by inter-referencing with the structural problems and the resistant politics developed to combat them in each other societies, instead of looking toward the West for understanding and solutions (212). To this end, Chen engages with subaltern studies developed by Indian postcolonial scholars. In particular, Chen examines Partha Chatterjee's (2004) notion of "political society," a term that Chatterjee develops to explain the experience of Indian modernity, thus challenging the Western modern paradigm of "civil society" that does not entirely capture social formations in India. Here, Chen develops the method of inter-referencing to better explain Taiwanese society.[5]

Chen's Asia as method parallels the problematics raised by postcolonial studies. Postcolonial theories have stressed the world's heterogeneity, rejected historicism, and emphasized the local specificity and

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5 Chen was influenced by the work of Mizoguchi Yūzō, the author of *China as Method*. Drawing upon Mizoguchi, Chen argues further that "Asia as method" is a project of transforming Asians, "a precondition for arriving at different understandings of the self, the Other and world history" (253). Sun Ge also notes that Yoshimi, inspired by Lu Xin, stresses this aspect to criticize Japanese Sinologists who condescendingly objectified China (Yoon 2014).

multi-linearity of historical progression (Chakrabarty 2000). Postcolonialists have also asserted that local historical developments have been "judged almost exclusively against a European norm, and those histories which did not fit or comply with that norm were dismissed as 'incomplete'" (Anievas and Nişancıoğlu 2017, 44). Marxism's renditions of universalism and specific teleology, in particular, have been the primary target of postcolonial critique. Critics have argued against the Marxist resort to such binaries as those of pre-capitalism and capitalism, premodern and modern, pre-political and political, which do not capture the totality of life in non-Western societies (ibid.). These binaries, as well as other Marxist theoretical constructs, are not universal; according to postcolonial thinkers such as Chakrabarty (2000), they are rooted in the particular history of Europe and are, therefore, provincial.

Postcolonial scholarship has also influenced various disciplines within the area studies field, and there have been initiatives among area studies scholars to rewrite the history of each specific region against a Western-influenced historiography that is often closely associated with particular claims of "scientific truth" and universalism. Yet this new type of area studies scholarship has often been subject to criticism because it reifies native cultures, over-emphasizes insiders' knowledge, and denies that "the West" is already internal to the consciousness of natives (Dirlik 2005, 163). These area studies as well as postcolonial works in general have also been criticized for rejecting any form of universality and dismissing the broader political economic structures that have continued to generate violence, dispossession, and exploitation in different parts of the world (Dirlik 1994; Chibber 2013). For scholars such as Dirlik (1994), Harvey (1989), and Jameson (1991), postcolonial studies prioritizes discursive aspects of power, and they argue that its emergence is an expressive ideology of late, post-Fordist capitalism.

Chen's approach is in certain respects more nuanced than the types of postcolonial studies that these critics have found fault with. For instance, he argues that Asia as method, like Chakrabarty's (2000) project of provincializing Europe, is not a nativist or atavistic project (Chen 2010, 219). Chakrabarty, while emphasizing that "getting beyond Eurocentric histories remains a shared problem" (2000, 17) among postcolonies, also asserts that "provincializing Europe is not a project of rejecting or discarding European thought" (16): European thought is "both *indispensable* and *inadequate* in helping us to think through the various life practices that constitute the political and the historical" in different locations (6, emphasis added). In this regard, we agree with Anievas and Nişancıoğlu's (2017) argument that Marxist criticisms of

Chakrabarty that stress his supposed denial of Western ideologies' presence in the East, especially Chibber's (2013), are based on a misreading of his views. Similar to Chakrabarty, Chen (2010) maintains that it is important to acknowledge that the West is already entangled in the East, and that the West exists "as bits and fragments that intervene in local social formations in a systematic, but never totalizing, way" (223). The West as fragments, in other words, becomes "internal to the local," "one cultural resource among many others," and is an inalienable, if partial, part of Asian subjectivity (223). Therefore, Asia as method is not a project that is concerned with a sort of Asian particularity that makes Asia incompatible with the West. The study of China as method, for example, does not represent a search for an essentialized, fundamental core that is the "real" China. Such reasoning is vulnerable to the political manipulation of orientalist ideologies, those that echo the political campaign that once revolved around "Asian values" (Glassman 2016). In this way, Asia as method is about more than transcending the East-West binary (Chen 2010, 216).

Chen further proposes a new, decolonizing direction for world historiography. According to him, world history is not a history of the Western world and its interactions with its non-Western others, and should not be written as such. Drawing on Mizoguchi's *China as Method* ([1989] 1996), Chen argues that the world that conceives of China as method, for example, is a different world, a multiple polarity, "in that China is an element of its composition … and Europe is also an element" (Mizoguchi [1989] 1996, 94–5, quoted in Chen 2010, 252). For Mizoguchi, as well as for Chen, the study of a place anywhere on earth "impl[ies] one route toward an understanding of world history" (Chen 2010, 253), and, therefore, "the study of China … transcends China proper" (Mizoguchi [1989] 1996, 93, quoted in Chen 2010, 252).

Despite having shed new light on the need for a de-imperialized and decolonized mode of scholarship, the analytic of Asia as method, as developed by Chen and his cohort at *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, is not free of shortcomings. Its framework could be understood as a prime example of what Dirlik (2005, 164) called the "Asianization of Asian studies," a movement among Asian scholars who seek to counter the Eurocentric paradigms dominant in the Asian studies field and to usher in the perspectives of Asians themselves about Asian societies and problems in the field. While for Chen (2010), Asia as method is not only about establishing points of reference and connections between different Asian societies but also between ones in "Third World" countries, he does not elaborate on this point in his book. Therefore, the ways in which Asia as method can provide a universal platform for registering

a range of historical and contemporary transformative politics beyond Asia remain underexplored. This may be a serious drawback when we reflect on the increasing globalization that penetrates nearly all places of the earth and that has caused similar forms of dispossession and commodification. Furthermore, and in a similar vein, the bounded category of Asia, which is the primary geographical context of Chen's analysis, is far from unproblematic. Harootunian (2012, 18) calls Asia as method a "critical regionalism" where Asia is a political signifier, rather than a cultural one, that can mobilize different dissident and insurgent politics against the assemblage of multiple powers in Asia. Despite its critical signification of Asia, however, Asia as method may still be susceptible to the charge of spatial fetishism, in the sense that Chen does not problematize the notion of Asia itself (its supposed fixity and boundedness), thereby leaving the regionalization of Asia unquestioned (also see Dirlik 2005, 15; Morris-Suzuki 2000).

Moreover, despite all of the promise of Chen's Asia as method as a theoretical construct that helps us rethink the imperialization and colonization of knowledge production, its mode of analysis smacks of methodological nationalism, prioritizing the national scale within Asia as the central unit of analysis and comparison. Baik (2013a) proffers a corrective to this limitation, by rescaling the problematic of Asia as method to the local – that is, to the site or, in his translation, "location" (*hyeonjang*) – in his notion of "core location."

Situating Core Location within the Urban Studies Field

Baik seeks to further push Chen's problematic for the de-imperialization of knowledge production by turning our attention to the contradictions materialized within specific places in East Asia. This effort is not about the revival of the sort of essentialist empiricism that characterized the area studies field in the past, nor is it a reiteration of postcolonialist calls for attention to particularity and a rejection of universality. Baik (2013a, 47) argues that a universal common ground of trans-local resistance can be identified and imagined through core locations. The common ground shared across different core locations promises to be a generative force for a world consciousness, but the core source of this world consciousness stems from the critical reflection of individuals in these core locations on their relations to each other, to their own broader societies, and to people in other places. The sufferings of the people in these core locations are the sufferings of the world, and only by tackling these problems can the world envision and bring about its emancipation (62). Therefore, Baik's concern, while seemingly focused

on the local scale, can be understood as an effort to develop a method that helps us move toward a universal ground of solidarity between different people and places. Baik's approach to core location and its political insights also echoes the "standpoint theory" advocated by Marxists (such as Georg Lukács and, of course, Karl Marx himself) and feminists (e.g., Nancy Hartsock, Patricia Hill Collins, Dorothy Smith, and Sandra Harding) who privilege epistemologies, experiences, and praxis of (the most) marginalized and disenfranchised as the telling enunciations of multi-layered power structures and challenges against them (Mohanty 2003, 231–3). Attention to the most marginalized is the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice as well as systemic power (Mohanty 2003, 232).

While Baik's ideas do have their shortcomings (which we briefly address later), we also see that key components of his notion of core location can potentially countervail drawbacks of some versions of postcolonial urban studies works; at the same time, it can still be in line with the project of decolonizing analytic categories and Eurocentric historicism, the key contribution of postcolonial scholarship. As Eom suggests in her contribution to this volume, urban studies has not witnessed much theorization from the standpoint of East Asian cities (for important exceptions to this trend, see Park, Hill, and Saito 2012; Lees, Shin, and López-Morales 2016; Shin, Lees, and López-Morales 2016). Therefore, the notions of Asia as method and core location can provide a method for urbanists who are interested in urbanization in the so-called Global East (Waley 2013), a term coined to challenge the invisibility of East Asian societies within the dominant geographical nomenclatures of Global North and Global South. As a matter of fact, many chapters in this volume try to thread the problematic of core location and Asia as method with a range of theoretical and political questions raised by scholars in the urban studies field over the past few decades, including those in geography and anthropology.

Urbanists who are inspired by postcolonial problematics have contended that the framework of political economy, which has long been dominant in the field, implicitly takes Western cities as the "origin" or the "model" that can explain cities in non-Western societies, and that these approaches often assume an eventual convergence of different cities across the globe – that is, neoliberal cities (Roy 2011). Aihwa Ong (2007) argues that neoliberalism, for example, is a "mobile technology" and is an exception in Asian cities; that is, it is one of *many* forces that shape urban experiences in these cities and, therefore, does not capture the totality of urban processes in these cities, contrary to political economist accounts that often imply a convergence. Other postcolonial

urban scholars have also taken issue with the global city paradigm on account of its implicit economism, *a priori* analytical categorization, and supposed Eurocentrism (Robinson 2002; Shatkin 2007). In particular, Robinson (2002) proposes that the analytical expanse of urban research should be extended from global cities to "ordinary cities," which have been rendered "off the map" by Eurocentric urban studies paradigms.

While we agree with the questions that these postcolonial urbanists raise about the universalist frame of political economic urban theories, we contend that a universal common ground of resistant struggles against unjust capitalist exploitation, dispossession, and expropriation that have erupted across different locales in the world still needs to be identified, explained, and highlighted. Postcolonial urban studies have not paid sufficient attention to these issues and the possibility of a universal resistant front against systemic injustices. The episteme of Baik's core location – which starts its analytics from the marginalized places and people that have been oppressed by a range of structural violence, and their resistant actions against complex relations of power – therefore provides an alternative and critical method to the postcolonial urban paradigms that have focused mostly on the discursive challenges to academic Eurocentrism. We emphasize the significance of a pluralistic world view as suggested by postcolonialists, but we also think that multiplying references as a tool to contest Western hegemony may risk falling into the epistemological pitfall of liberal pluralistic thinking, and that a preoccupation with multiplying and pluralizing references can potentially neutralize or bypass historical violence and structural hierarchies. At this point, we want to bring attention to the triad of critical self-reflection, praxis, and communicative connection that Baik posits as the sources by which resistant forces challenge and eventually transform formidable material structures that constantly generate disparities, dispossession, and uneven development.

Therefore, core locations are not only important in revealing the contradictions, disparities, and unevenness that people in the periphery suffer from, but also provide an alternative epistemology for forming a common ground among people and intellectuals across different places who take global transformative politics seriously. While Baik does not explicitly engage with East Asian core locations' relationships to subalterns in the West, our take is that his ideas can still provide a tool for thinking, one through which we can ascertain a common ground that can be formed between subalterns both in the West and non-West. The ideas of core location and Asia as method can help highlight the importance and necessity of inter-referencing between activists and activist scholars based in different places, as a philosophical foundation for

scholars who are interested in the question of resistance and praxis. Therefore, rather than viewing this volume as furnishing yet another version of postcolonialism, our aim is to discuss how different places and territories are not sealed and mutually exclusive, and how they are converging on a universal horizon. This universality does not refer simply to trans-local replicability but also to ideas and praxis reverberating across divergent historical-geographical contexts that have emerged in opposition to multiple forms of systemic injustice.

One more issue that we want to raise pertains to how to investigate a location, a site, and a place in an increasingly transnationalizing and globalizing world. We take seriously Palat's (1999) call for a new way of approaching area studies. According to Palat, the decolonization of knowledge production behoves us to question the act of "unproblematically transposing trans-historical categories and historical trajectories" of Western social formations to non-Western ones. But he also contends that we locate and explain the "dense narratives of local processes within larger global forces of transformation" (116). In other words, local processes of change should be theorized in a relational way (vis-à-vis "a wider relational matrix"), whether these are "long term processes of capitalist expansion" or associated broader geopolitical configurations that local processes are integrated within, correspond to, constitute, and transform (116). This also connects to Gillian Hart's (2006) call for a critical rethinking of area studies. Stressing "relational understandings of the production of space and scale," she argues that scholars should heed "the divergent but increasingly interconnected trajectories of socio-spatial change that are actively constitutive of processes of 'globalization'" (981). Drawing on Lefebvre ([1974] 1991), she reminds us that spaces and places are not pre-existing entities, but are *socially produced*, and places should be understood as "nodal points of connection in wider networks of socially produced space" (Hart 2006, 994). What we, scholars who study specific areas, need to illuminate, she urges, is "power-laden processes of constitution, connection, and dis-connection, along with slippages, openings, and contradictions, and possibilities for alliance within and across different spatial scales" (982).

The broader forces and processes that Palat and Hart each discuss are the universalizing processes of (neoliberal) capitalism and its structural power that have synchronized different places with different histories to geopolicial trajectories. Grasping the dialectical dynamics of the local and the global within the capitalist system is not a strength of Chen's or Baik's work, and it is not central in the overall Asia as method school's problematics. These scholars' optic is mostly limited to the realm of ideas and practices of modernity in East Asia and imperialist and

militarist violence, including ones related to Cold War and post–Cold War political regimes, but not the ones associated with capitalism and its attendant class, racial, ethnic, and gender oppressions. These limitations certainly circumscribe the analytical and political purview of the concept of core location and Asia as method. The contributors to this volume recognize such limitations and seek to fill this lacuna. They seek to understand in a relational way each location that they examine.

Core Locations in Korea

This volume comprises seven studies regarding different core locations in South Korea. The contributors to this volume are in various ways engaged in "building ideas" (Sun and Yoon 2013) in relation to the problematics addressed in Asia as method and core location, reflecting them in their own research sites. Each study illustrates how a core location is shaped and produced by particular geopolitical and geo-economic histories at neighbourhood, urban, regional, national, and global scales. In particular, the different chapters examine how the multiple layers of geopolitical and geo-economic power that have characterized East Asia are embodied in the terrains of struggles within these core locations. These layers and power dynamics include the legacy of past Japanese colonialism as well as Japan's ongoing economic ascendency in the region; Cold War legacies that are still shaping geopolitical dynamics in the region (e.g., the tension between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, and the conflicts between North Korea and South Korea; Chinese empires old (before Japanese colonialism) and new (China's soaring economic power in the post-Mao era)); the transpacific ruling class and the US military-industrial complex; the expansion of capitalist regimes in the region, the latest rendition of which is an increasing neoliberalization of countries and increasing circulation of capital and people in the region; and corresponding regimes of racial, gender, sexual, and other oppressions.

Chapters in this volume show how these different geopolitical and geo-economic histories and presents are entangled with each other to effect complex constellations of power and injustices in different core locations in Korea. Furthermore, they also seek to show how these complex constellations of different processes are interconnected to broader global processes – that is, we seek to show how different core locations should be understood as the nodal points of "multiple historical/geographical determinations, connections, and articulations" (Hart 2006, 984). While we take seriously the question of situated knowledge, our vision does not privilege the local scale and difference.

The core location in each chapter is either a physical site of research or a conceptual space, and each contributor offers her own interpretations about the political and methodological significance of that notion. Each chapter also extends the parameters of the notion of core location, by intervening in each scholar's primary knowledge field, whether within home discipline (e.g., anthropology, architecture, geography, urban studies) and/or through thematic problematics in the research site (e.g., ruins, uneven development, foreign aid, solidarity, welfare, fields).

In chapter 1, "The Idea of Chinatown: Rethinking Cities from the Periphery," Sujin Eom examines South Korea's Chinatown in Incheon as a core location, a space rendered peripheral in Cold War East Asia. Historically, the Chinese community in Korea has been disenfranchised by Korea's ethnocentric national citizenship regime. The long history of discrimination toward this population has continuously forced ethnic Chinese to leave Korea, and often the Chinatowns that they had inhabited become derelict spaces. However, with the rise of China's economic power and the establishment of an integrated East Asian economic space, especially from the 1990s, ethnic Chinese and Chinatowns have surfaced as centres of cultural imagination and economic enterprise in Korea. While revisiting feminist postcolonial scholarship's emphasis on unevenness and its discussion of "ruins," Eom argues that both postcolonial studies and Asia as method scholarship need to pay more attention to the growing influence of the People's Republic of China in Asia following the termination of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Eom demonstrates that ethnic Chinese in Korea, who were peripheralized during the Cold War period, are again marginalized in the contemporary new search for Chinatown as an urban economic engine.

In chapter 2, "Seeing the Development of Jeju Global Education City from the Margins," Youjeong Oh examines Jeju as core location through the lens of Jeju Global Education City (JGEC). JGEC is an education-based urban development project initiated by the central government. It houses high-profile international schools and luxurious residential and commercial facilities in an English-speaking environment. Oh asserts that the development process and outcomes of JGEC both represent and reconstitute Jeju's double marginality through the intensified hegemony of English and the dispossession of Jeju's marginalized residents from the land. Engaging with the scholarly literature on "uneven development" and "neo-developmentalism," especially that developed among geographers, Oh examines the long history of dispossession that Jeju has suffered, and how that deprivation manifests itself in

complicated ways in the development of JGEC. In particular, she looks into the defilement of Jeju's ecosystem and the commercialization of space during a development process that prioritized developers, well-to-do people mainly from the mainland, and foreign capital, at the cost of the people of Jeju. Oh further points out that JGEC is an exemplary case of South Korea's unquestioned assumptions about English and development, but that, at the same time, the many contradictions that JGEC manifests complicate such desires.

Chapter 3, "Against the Construction State: Korean Pro-Greenbelt Activism as Method," also problematizes the issue of urban development by examining the struggles that unfolded in the 1990s over the deregulation of greenbelt lands in Korea. Laam Hae argues that greenbelt deregulation was a conjunctural outcome of the processes of democratization, decentralization, and neoliberalization in the late 1990s, but also shows how the mechanisms of the "construction state" – a historically sedimented institutional ensemble of the developmental state and Cold War and post–Cold War inter-regional geopolitics – were central to this process. In her examination, Hae engages with the notion of "articulation" as a way to rethink the frame of Asia as method. She further discusses the theoretical and political implications of the notion of core location, which in her case are various greenbelt sites in Korea that were the focal points of struggles waged between the construction-oriented state and environmental activists. She interrogates how examining these contested sites as core locations may help us rethink the postcolonial question. Furthermore, she argues that the particular struggles over the greenbelt that she examines can provide a window through which to view the topography of broader trans-local resistance.

In chapter 4, "Transnational Marriage Migration as Spatio-Temporal Fix in Pohang's Post-Industrial Urban Development through Saemaul," Hyeseon Jeong explores how Asia as method and Marxist theories can mutually expand each other through the case study of Pohang by employing Baik Yeong-seo's twofold-peripheral perspective for an analysis of the transnational intersection of patriarchy and developmentalism. Pohang's housing aid project in Vietnam for the natal families of women who are marriage migrants discloses the fear in Pohang that the economic difficulties of marriage migrants' families might interfere with the city's stability and development. It also shows how international development aid is implicated in amplifying the marginalities of marriage-migrant women while also trying to challenge them. Jeong argues that the notion of spatio-temporal fix (Harvey 2003, 2006), a Marxist concept that highlights the stopgap way in which capital

invests in built environments, can be applied to a variety of scale-jumping programs that attempt to provisionally remedy the socio-economic consequences of uneven development, such as South Korea's state-sponsored transnational marriage migration and Pohang's housing aid project in Vietnam for the natal families of women who are marriage migrants. In so doing, this chapter challenges the boundary of a region that is predicated on the idea of inter-referencing in core location and Asia as method, by presenting the unevenness between East Asia and Southeast Asia that is not considered in the extant Asia as method literature.

In chapter 5, "'Locations of Reflexivity': South Korean Community Activism and Its Affective Promise for 'Solidarity,'" Mun Young Cho examines the efforts of grass-roots activists in Korea who have been involved in anti-poverty community development programs in other parts of Asia. This development has been organized by the Korean Action for Overseas Community Organization (a pseudonym) in Seoul. Based on ethnographic research involving veteran activists and younger trainees of overseas development, the chapter interrogates the ways in which the globalization of South Korean community activism seeks to forge international solidarity. Cho highlights the processes in which Korea's veteran activists reflect on their current positionalities vis-à-vis those of overseas anti-poverty activists. For example, the chapter elaborates the activists' reflections on their own role as "double agents" – that is, as front-line activists in the global anti-poverty solidarity movement and, at the same time, project managers of the Korean government's support to aid-receiving nation. Here, Cho engages with the discussion of "inter-referencing" as developed by Asia as method scholars (in particular, Chen and Sun), examining the stories told by these activists, especially the contradictions that these activists recognize in their interactions with communities in the receiving countries.

Continuing the theme of community activism, chapter 6, "The Education Welfare Project in Pine Tree Hill: A Core Location to Assess Distributional and Transitional Forms of Justice," explores neighbourhood activism in Pine Tree Hill (a pseudonym) as a core location of tension between state-led social development and self-(re)generated development of "the social." Jesook Song demonstrates that activism in this particular community arose on account of its being neglected by the post–Korean War developmental regime. Ironically, the community received extraordinary attention after the Asian financial crisis by neoliberal governments that highlighted social development and welfare in order to alleviate the class polarization that resulted from the uneven national growth of previous decades. The Pine Tree Hill community

offers significant insights into people's sovereignty in their negotiations with the seemingly benign state and problematizes the ways in which the welfare state and social development promise to deal with the historical and structural unevenness produced by capitalism. In addition to its intervention in the problematic of welfare, this chapter also critically engages in debates surrounding anthropological theories of singularity and universality in conjunction with ideas about Asia as method.

In dialogue with the previous two chapters, which share anthropological interests, in chapter 7, "Situating the Space of Labour: Activism, Work, and Urban Regeneration," Seo Young Park interrogates the plural interpretations of the meaning of "fields" (*hyeonjang* – sites, scene, or locations) of garment labour by different actors, such as grassroots activists, garment workers, policymakers, and ethnographers. By focusing on Changsin-dong as a core location, a neighbourhood near Dongdaemun Market consisting of garment factories and garment workers' residences, this chapter analyses the layers and shifting frontlines of marginality of this neighbourhood. Dongdaemun Market was the hub of the state-led, export-oriented economy in Korea during the 1960s and 1970s, and accordingly became a hotbed of heated labour union activism at that time. But in the post-industrialization period in the 1990s, garment factories became scattered around the city and downsized into small-scale factories in Changsin-dong. In the new century, it has become an emerging site for the city government's new paradigm of urban renewal and rebranding. This change has transformed the relationship between the labourers and their work, and the word "field" has surfaced with different, and often conflicting, meanings and interests among labourers, activists, and policymakers. In examining these processes, Park highlights different temporalities and spatialities enlivened and embedded in this changing labour geography.

Core locations are both field sites and channels through which each contributor engages in a range of problematics, reflecting on the questions raised by the concept of Asia as method. Each study, while it does not explicitly engage with universality as such, reveals clues about the universal state of life and struggles over it, through deep, grounded research. The spirit of this project is about decolonization through self-reflection (*seongchal*), praxis (*silcheon*), solidarity (*yeondae*), communicative connection (*sotong*), and a shared interest in fighting uneven development in Korea and beyond. We hope these explorations mark the beginning of exciting and fruitful dialogues with other critical area studies and transnational scholars.

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