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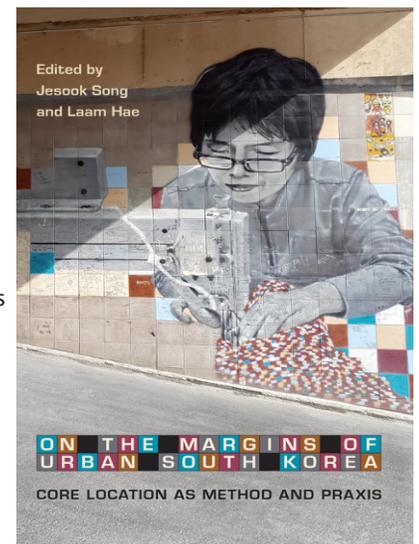
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On the Margins of Urban South Korea: Core Location as Method and Praxis

The edited volume, *On the Margins of Urban South Korea: Core Location as Method and Praxis*, examines the margins of urban, regional and transnational development in South Korea, and people's struggles against systemic injustices in these spaces. This book is the outcome of long-term collaborations among scholars trained in different disciplines, such as geography, anthropology, urban planning and politics. The volume's contributors first conceived this collective project in 2015. Initially, the project was about urban developmentalism in South Korea. In the subsequent years, however, we realized that we also needed to rethink urban developmentalism from a decolonialist perspective. We are a group of scholars originally from South Korea, but who are mostly now based in universities in the West; as such, decolonial knowledge production gradually became an overriding concern in our discussions. During this period, we were introduced to a century-old intellectual lineage known as "Asia as method" that East Asian scholars developed and we started to read and engage with the thinkers from this tradition.

Many of these thinkers were inspiring, but the work of Kuan-Hsing Chen, in particular, stood out to us. In his book, *Asia as Method* (2010), Chen calls for the de-imperialization and de-Westernization of our knowledge. Chen urges scholars who study Asian societies to critically reflect upon the practice of using the West as "the standard against which all other places are measured" (p. 253). He urges these scholars to multiply their point of reference by extending it to other countries and build a decolonizing world historiography that is rooted in places other than the West. Chen's argument was quite enlightening and encouraging for us who study South Korea, as our research is often looked upon as being parochial, and not relevant to the general, universal processes within Western academia. Consequently, the volume's contributors started to practice "Korea as method" in order to show a different, but still interconnected, trajectory of world history.

Baik Young-seo, another scholar in the lineage of Asia as Method, has also become important to our project. In particular, his notion of "core location" (Baik 2013) became the central analytic for us. "Core location" scales the idea of Asia as method to the local level. According to Baik, "core location" refers to a place with multiple marginalities in East Asia. The people inhabiting these core locations suffer from marginalities due to the systemic injustices generated by the geo-history of colonialism, imperialism, militarism and Cold War (and post-Cold War) dynamics specific to East Asia. Like the Marxist and feminist inspired notion of standpoint theory, Baik's "core location" privileges the epistemologies and experiences of marginalized peoples in understanding the world that we live in.



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Through this argument, Baik further stresses the importance of a place-based standpoint in East Asia, which helps us to decenter Eurocentric worldviews.

Additionally, Baik argues that we need to attend to the oppositional politics related to core locations. For him, core location is a locus of reflexivity for a universal common ground for trans-local resistance politics. Similar to transnational feminists' arguments, Baik argues that a common ground—a universal base that connects different sites of resistance—should begin from a profound insight about a particular place. The universality here does not imply trans-local replicability, but rather ideas and practices reverberating across diverse contexts.

Inspired by these insights, each contributor to our volume examines peripheral sites, the margins of development, as a method to understand the relational dynamic of the local and the trans-local as well as structure-agency tensions, and as a path towards decolonial thinking. The cases that the book chapters examine include the politics surrounding Chinatowns, the Jeju Global Education City, greenbelts, spaces of marriage migration, the international solidarity of community activism, an education welfare project in a marginalized neighbourhood, and the contested notion of "field" in relation to female textile workers in South Korea. While Chen's and Baik's works were useful to us in thinking through our cases, their ideas do not pay sufficient attention to the dynamics of global capitalism, especially in their racialized, gendered, sexualized and classed forms. The contributors to the volume recognize these limitations and seek to fill this lacuna. Through rich and illuminating case studies, we interrogate how multiple layers of geopolitical and geo-economic powers in East Asia are embodied and contested in different core locations in South Korea. We hope that these explorations can contribute to the exciting and fruitful dialogues that are taking place in the broader decolonialist scholarship, animated by researchers interested in transformative resistant politics.

Sources

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You can find more information about the volume here: [On the Margins of Urban South Korea: Core Location as Method and Praxis](#) (University of Toronto Press, 2019), edited by Jesook Song and Laam Hae.