Changes in the 1980s Nationalist *Minjung* Academic Communities and the Alternative Academic Communities

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Abstract

This research aims at assessing the changes that have occurred to the nationalist minjung *academic community, formed during the 1980s. The academic community advocated "nationalist* minjung *studies" in conjunction with academic activities outside of the university establishment and social movements that had been seeking social revolution. The community thus gave birth to counter-discourses in the knowledge community that had differentiated themselves from those of the 1960s and 1970s. The nationalist* minjung *academic communities, however, have been declining rapidly following the disintegration of the Soviet socialist block in 1991, the rise to power of a civilian government in South Korea and the adoption by that government of a new policy on knowledge. In an attempt to cope with the crisis and institutionalization of the 1980s nationalist* minjung *academic communities, alternative academic communities emerged in the 2000s that sought experiments distinguished from the institutionalized order of the collegiate establishments.*

Keywords: nationalist *minjung* academic communities, critical intellectuals, universal intellectuals, National Research Foundation of Korea, registered journals, alternative academic communities

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Introduction

This paper is intended to assess the changes that have occurred to the nationalist *minjung* academic communities that formed during the 1980s with the aim of promoting "nationalist *minjung* studies" in conjunction with academic activities outside of the university establishment and social movements that had been seeking social revolution. This development gave birth to counter-discourses in the knowledge community that had differentiated themselves from those of earlier periods. The nationalist *minjung* academic communities, however, have been declining rapidly following the disintegration of the Soviet socialist bloc in 1991, the coming to power of a civilian government in South Korea and the adoption by that government of a new policy on knowledge. As a consequence, researchers critical of the existing Korean society opted either to operate individually or to join the collegiate establishments. Through such a process, the academic community that had been formulating counter-discourses has been amalgamated with political power. This paper questions why the nationalist *minjung* academic communities were weakened and whether this weakening should be assessed as subordination to the established system and power.

The nationalist *minjung* academic communities as discussed in this paper are not a term that refers to academic societies or organizations. Rather, it is one that refers to the community of research groups that emerged, advocating nationalist and *minjung* studies in the process of democratization which coincided with the Gwangju Uprising of 1980. The reason why the adjective "nationalist *minjung*" is applied to this new academic community is that this community sought to negate the world view and epistemology of the petite bourgeoisie and began collective endeavors to formulate theories unified by the *minjung*-esque world view. Additional reasons for the appellation are that this particular community rejected uncritical and subservient acceptance of Western theories that lack relevance to Korean society. It sought to be critical of the conservative orientation of the mainstream academic community while striving to advance counter-

discourses that promoted social revolution in solidarity with *minjung* movements and nurtured reform-minded activist intellectuals.

Major changes in academic circles since the 1980s have already been discussed by other researches (Kum 1999; Choi 2003; Cheon 2010; Kim and Lee 2011). Accordingly, this research will not delve deeply into such changes. Instead, this article will focus on the historical changes of the implementations put forth by the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities. This paper will delve into the historical and sociological threads through which Korea's nationalist *minjung* academic communities were institutionalized at universities from 1998 on. To that end, this paper will discuss the history of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities in the 1980s, and then will look at the effects of the government's knowledge policy beginning in 1998. Finally, this article will examine the reasons for which alternative academic communities, different in nature from their 1980s counterparts, have emerged beyond the university establishment, as well as their prospects and implications.

Formation of the 1980s Nationalist *Minjung* Academic Communities

Symbolizing Korean intellectuals in the 1980s were critical intellectuals. Under the fascist governments, intellectuals stressed their social participation for the sake of *minjung* through the *minjung* theory, *minjung* sociology and *minjung* theology. As Western European intellectuals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were categorized as "particular historic personalities," confronting the tyranny of despotism and wealth, as universal spokesmen for justice and vanguards of the law, so were Korea's critical intellectuals in the 1980s accepted as spokesmen for universal ideas such as social revolution and the proletariat (or those possessing universal truth). They emphasized their rationale of standing on the side of the oppressed. To put this into Foucauldian terms, these Korean dissident intellectuals considered the proletariat to be the upholder of universality, irrespective of its

consciousness and the conditions at the time. These intellectuals also hoped to turn the universality nebulously embodied in the proletariat into a conscious form through their theoretical and political choices. They also believed that they themselves would then become the exponents of such a conscious form of universality.

In this respect, Korea's critical intellectuals in the 1980s were also regarded as producers of universal and practical knowledge regarding the working class, performing a prophetical function to realize the social revolution that would liberate the working class. With major upheavals like the Gwangju Uprising of 1980 occurring simultaneously, the critical intellectuals divorced themselves epistemologically from the established generation of academics within the liberalist framework of the 1960s and 1970s. These intellectuals tried to become "solidarity intellectuals," allying themselves with the working class for the sake of the liberation of it, as well as with "organic intellectuals" (J. Kim 2003). Throughout the 1980s, these intellectuals assumed a role of enlightening the masses so that they would participate in political struggles. They also served as universal knowledge producers, providing what they called "the truth of liberation" for democracy and social revolution.

Intellectuals critical of the authoritarianism and state-led economic development of the 1970s pursued nation-oriented studies based on the division era theory, national economic theory, and studies of Dasan Jeong Yak-yong, but most of them remained within the framework of personal relationships. In other words, their forums for discussing theories and practical methods of implementation in a collective and unified manner were weak. In contrast, intellectuals in the 1980s strove to make collective and communal efforts aimed at overcoming the limits of the preceding generation. The emergence in the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities was closely linked in particular with blanket dismissals of professors that occurred in May 1980 in the wake of the Gwangju Uprising. These dismissals were preceded by others in the mid-1970s which involved academics who opposed President Park Chung-hee's Yushin regime. Touching off the nationalist *minjung* academic communities was the

Dismissed Professors Conference, launched in December 1983. Economist Byun Hyung-Yoon, sociologist Kim Jin-Kyoon and women's studies scholar Lee Hyo-Jae created the hub of that community by establishing "research institutes." Lee had sponsored earlier critical social science studies and workshops, centered around her circle Saeeol (New Soul). When she was dismissed from her university in May 1980, Saeeol members inaugurated the Ahyeon Research Institute. The Hakhyeon Research Institute (named after Byun's pen name) came into being to conduct critical economics studies in 1982, when Byun was dismissed from his post. When Kim Jin-Kyoon was discharged by Seoul National University in July 1980, his followers set up the Sangdo Research Institute, which, with its increasing membership, conducted weekly debates. The Sangdo Research Institute developed into the Korean Institute for Research on Industrial Society (Hanguk Saneop Sahoe Yeonguhoe), which held debates on social constituents (Kum 1999, 220-223; Jung 2011, 51-53).

Providing important momentum for the formal inauguration of the fledgling nationalist *minjung* academic communities was a symposium jointly held by several academic organizations in June 1988.[1] The keynote speech, delivered by Kim Jin-Kyoon, clearly outlined the critical consciousness of the newly-inaugurated academic community. In defining the identity of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities, Kim Jin-Kyoon called for a divorce from a controlling petty bourgeois world view, theoretical conservatism, academic subservience, the blind introduction of Western theories and the subjection of Korea as a test bench of such theories. Kim then strongly urged intellectuals pursuing nationalist and *minjung* academic studies to participate in this proud rank and file that provided hope to the masses.

The Korean Institute for Research on Industrial Society, formed in 1984 as the initiator of the nationalist *minjung* academic commu-

1. The joint symposium was a great success with over 1,000 individuals in attendance. The atmosphere was one of such enthusiasm that debate and song followed the event at the playground (Yi et al. 1996).

nities, set forth its goals in the inaugural edition of its journal titled *Gyeongje-wa sahoe* (Economy and Society). It was to be a bold approach, in part by embracing research themes of progressive academic researchers, who had been disregarded by the conservative academic circle, and promoting a construction of a gramd theoretical framework for modern Korean history and interdisciplinary studies beyond the boundaries of specific academic disciplines (*Gyeongje-wa sahoe* Editorial Committee 1988). The four major tasks of the academic movement stated in volume 2 of *Gyeongje-wa sahoe*, published in 1988, are: 1) production of theoretical and empirical research based on the social movement's practical, critical consciousness,[2] 2) theoretical and empirical contribution to the social movement through establishment of strategies and tactics, 3) establishment of academic leadership and reform in the academic community of sociology, and 4) political and ideological activism based on academic authority.

The tasks of critical intellectuals stated by the nationalist *minjung* academic communities were to provide theoretical explanations for the *minjung* movement, educate the mass on movement ideologies countering the prevailing ideologies, and convert the grass-roots resistance movement from *an sich* (in itself) to *für sich* (for itself) (D. Yun 1987, 37). This is reflected in the inaugural declaration of the Korea Social Sciences Institute, which states, "We share the conviction that theories are identical to implementations and that research is the same as the movement. . . . We observe the principle that academic activities should respond to the demands of realities, and set as a major research goal the conduct of movements in a scientific manner and the implementation of sciences in movements" (*Donghyang-gwa jeonmang* Editorial Committee 1992).

Thirdly, this community discarded the previous apprenticeship-type academic reproduction model, as well as past tendencies to conduct research mainly for the purpose of promoting individual achieve-

2. The "social formation debate" was an epitome of academic endeavor to effect different ways of research within the academic community that had been biased toward the United States and conservatism before the 1980s (Choi 2003, 205).

Table 1. Formation of Academic Groups and List of Critical Journals and Organizations

Organization	Year inaugurated	Journal	Year founded	Additional Remarks
Korean Institute for Research on Industrial Society	1984	*Gyeongje-wa sahoe*	1988	Part of the Sangdo Research Institute
Institute for Korean Historical Studies	1986	*Yeoksa bipyeong*	1987	
Korean Association for Political Economy	1987	*Sahoe gyeongje pyeongnon*	1988	Part of the Hakhyeon Research Institute
Community for the Korean Political Studies	1987	*Jeongchi pyeongnon*	1997	
Korea Institute for Social Sciences	1987	*Donghyang-gwa jeonmang*	1988	
Korean Space and Environment Research Association	1988	*Gonggan-gwa sahoe*	1991	
Institute of Historical Studies	1988	*Yeoksa yeongu*	1992	Predecessor: Kuro Institute of History
Korean History Research Association	1988	*Yeoksa-wa hyeonsil*	1989	Predecessor: Mangwon Institute of Korean History
Korean Association for Studies of Philosophical Thought	1989	*Sidae-wa cheolhak*	1990	Predecessor: Institute of Social Philosophy
Korea Women's Studies Institute	1989	*Yeoseong-gwa sahoe*	1990	
Democratic Legal Studies Association	1989	*Minju beophak*	1989	
Institute for Korean Literature	1990	*Minjok munhaksa yeongu*	1991	

ment. Instead, the community emphasized the sharing of the fruits of collective research and the conference of them onto society. Furthermore, it rejected the standpoint of viewing social movements through the single vista of knowledge and, instead, advocated efforts to discover how to incorporate the urgent tasks of the entire range of *minjung* movements into its own intellectual movement so that it could help advance the cause of *minjung* movements as a whole (D. Yun 1987, 38-40). Members of this community also stressed internal disciplines and collective force that were agreed upon based on the internal ideological unity for such movements (D. Yun 1987, 44).

The 1980s academic community constituted mainly of Ph.D. holders and post-graduates produced in Korea. Individuals and organizations strongly critical of studies influenced by the United States played a central role. Although the number of students studying in the United States increased beginning in the first half of the 1980s, a perception prevailed in the humanities and social sciences circles that local higher educational institutions offered "better qualified studies" (Jung 2011, 50-51). Contributors to the journals published by nationalist *minjung* academic communities during the earlier years were mostly researchers at Korean graduate schools, who perceived that they could contribute to social revolution through academic activities (Yi et al. 1996).

As discussed above, the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities regarded critical intellectuals not associated with state power as movement exponents. Centered around a group of young scholars graduating from local graduate schools, they represented themselves as an academic community outside of universities and a group conducting practical movements that confronted the conservative academic community. In other words, they possessed programs for changing the established intellect and power framework inside and outside the collegiate establishments.

In terms of national and social revolution programs, however, the nationalist *minjung* academic communities and their constituents had clear limitations when it came to reformulating the lives of the masses and the average person's situation through their own commu-

nity concepts. A community built by critical intellectuals held strong mobilization power against the undemocratic and unjust order of the ruling class. However, the power was so insecure that the community would rapidly decline when faced with a certain phase of change, such as the disintegration of the Soviet socialist bloc in 1991. In fact, upon the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Korea's critical intellectuals began to doubt the reliability of the working class as partners for solidarity, and the weakened paradigm of support for social revolution rapidly blurred the boundary between the nationalist *minjung* academic communities and the institutionalized academic communities (D. Kim 1999; W. Kim 2011).

In programming an internal reform of the universities, too, the model of universal and dissident intellectuals began to crack in the early 1990s and brought about a basic danger to critical intellectuals' "reproduction structure within universities," the intellectual reservoir of the knowledge community. In addition to the disintegration of the Soviet socialist camp and declined mass movements, this is attributable to disintegrated hegemony in the 1980s academic community and the fact that the community, which had been concentrating excessively on social movements and practices outside of the university establishment, lacked a collective program for reforming the collegiate establishments, the base of its existence. As if reflecting this, the nationalist *minjung* academic communities, following the collapse of the Soviet socialist bloc, began to self-reflect, criticizing their own dogmatism and calling for openness. One case in point is the effective discontinuation in the early 1990s of the social formation debate, the core debate of the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities (Choi 2003, 198-199). Let us now review how the nationalist *minjung* academic communities responded to the collapse of the Soviet socialist bloc and the crisis the critical intellectuals' reproduction structure confronted after a civilian government came into being.

Institutionalization of the Academic Community Following the Inauguration of the Kim Dae-jung Government

This section discusses the division and institutionalization of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities following the inauguration of the Kim Dae-jung government, changes in knowledge and university policies and particularly the fusion of knowledge and power through the National Research Foundation of Korea. First, the community's political division was the most noticeable feature of that period. As the civilian government was inaugurated in 1993 and the strategy to engage *minjung* movements in presidential and National Assembly elections aborted, some intellectuals who had been engaged in massmovements and democratization drives stepped into politics through conservative parties.[3] Even within the nationalist *minjung* academic communities, debates occurred over how to respond to the civilian government in earnest (Park 1993; Seo 1993).

Second, causing decisive changes to the particular academic community were the 1998 financial crisis and the emergence of the Kim Dae-jung government and its new policy on knowledge. What initially brought about a rapid alteration in the Korean university community was "the education reform formula" announced in May 1995. It proposed the establishment of specialized graduate schools for training legal professionals, priests, ministers, and teachers and the concept of "graduate school-centered universities" began to spread in/around 1996 (Oh 2005, 451). Government-led intellectuals (so-called "new intellectuals") emerged under the Kim Dae-jung government to signal the initiation of a reformulated Korean intellectual community.

Changes in the university community, in particular, exceeded what scholars had imagined. Universities were restructured, management-minded CEO-style presidents appointed and the faculties' performance evaluation system underwent a drastic alteration with the

3. On "blood transfusion" from activist groups to political circles under the civilian administrations, see W. Kim (2000).

implementation of a scoring system involving not only research achievements, but also activities at academic societies, social services, collection of college development donations, sums of research funds acquired, accomplishments in joint academia-industry cooperation projects and the number of freshmen induced and that of graduates whose employment they arranged (Hong 2004, 64). Let us review how such changes specifically affected the nationalist *minjung* academic communities.

First, intellectuals' participation in government including those with critical views brought about a political split in the academic community. Under the Roh Moo-hyun government, in particular, so many committees were created that the government was dubbed "a committee government." Intellectuals assumed non-full-time committee chairmanships and played a leading role in formulating and enforcing the government's reform policies (Chun 2007, 74). This was brought about by the non-institutionalized nature of party politics, under which the ruling party, devoid of its own expertise and policy-making bodies, primarily recruited intellectuals with expertise and reputation (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, May 14, 2007). The problem, however, was the establishment of relationship between knowledge and power, rather than the intellectuals' political participation itself. The issues of political participation of intellectuals and their keeping reality at a distance cannot be fully accounted for by principles alone. The binary construction—either participating in or resisting the state or power—that persisted since the 1980s, suspended thinking about what sort of relationship should be established between knowledge and power and how much distance intellectuals should keep from power (D. Yun 1997). In a society like Korea that has undergone a succession of rapid political and social upheavals, the intellectuals' "interpretive activities" are by no means easy. Such activities are supposed to ponder a particular theme without being swayed by impending political and economic demands, think independently on a specific issue, illuminate minority issues from the perspective of the entire society, and organize the issues into policies and social actions (D. Kim 2001, 144). Division of the positions of members of the

nationalist *minjung* academic communities regarding intellectuals' participation in institutional party politics and government deepened at this juncture. But problems emerged within the ranks of that academic community as well.

The second change was the organizational weakening of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities. Following the inauguration of the civilian government, the academic communities could no longer stand on homogeneous ground as before. As more and more community members occupied academic posts in the establishment, the importance of "specialization" or "specialized research" became stressed (Yi et al. 1996). An awareness of combining progressiveness with specialization emerged in 1994. The 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities pursued a structure in which studies were verified in the real world, but this structure was soon replaced by one in which studies tried to catch up with and reflect reality, and outside shocks changed the trend of knowledge (Cheon 2011, 426). It became inevitable for members of the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities to join collegiate establishments. Although this academic community exercised intellectual hegemony in the campus and outside the establishment in the 1980s, it disintegrated during the early 1990s and was drawn rapidly into collegiate establishments (Cheon 2011, 428).

Third, a disciplining of critical intellectuals and academic communities through governmental knowledge policy started in earnest. It was a process under which critical intellectuals and academic communities were subordinated to the giant power structure, represented by the National Research Foundation of Korea that monopolized both funding and information. In other words, humanities and social science research were defined by the outside educational system, namely the tripartite elements of "enterprise state, higher education market and universities" (Cheon 2010, 185). The Ministry of Education and Human Resources, assuming a new knowledge policy in 2000, found low competitiveness, the essence of the overall crisis faced by Korean universities, and sought a solution in the elevation of university competitiveness. In evaluating competitiveness in knowledge, the min-

istry adopted general structural adjustments: reduction in college enrollment, excellence elevation through an evaluation system of the faculties (among other elements of universities), and quantification of university supports through selection and concentration (Hong 2004, 75; Im et al. 2004, 19).

This new knowledge policy was translated into tangible measures requiring the nurturing of "market-responsible manpower" and the reinforcing of arrangements for "cooperation among industry, academia and research institutions" in compliance with the paradigm of the knowledge-based economy. Accordingly, what became most important at the restructured universities was research achievement and the acquisition of research funding. In consequence, researchers were turned into "monograph-producing laborers" with limited room for imagination. Increasing the number of projects for which funding was acquired became the top priority of academic activities. The lure of so-called "mega-projects" and corresponding research budgets was the societal project for disciplining researchers to serve as research manpower, responding to the market under neoliberalism. And since the latter half of the 1990s, the National Research Foundation of Korea has played a godfather role in the Korean knowledge culture.

The National Research Foundation's policy of subsidizing research expenses resulted in unimaginable ideological and political effects. Whereas previous governments focused on controlling and inspecting learning and knowledge, the recent civilian governments have concentrated on performance evaluation, including such aspects as researchers' research capability, productivity and competitiveness of knowledge (Kang 2003, 27). Under the registered journal policy, launched in 1998, the number of officially recognized academic journals skyrocketed by approximately 25 times from a mere 57 journals in 1998 to 1,435 registered and candidate registered journals in 2006. The figures jumped to 109 registered and 428 candidate registered journals in 2001 and to 533 registered and 902 candidate registered journals in 2006. Needless to say, the National Research Foundation's registered journal policy initially upheld relative progressiveness. The premodern academic system of the collegiate establishments and aca-

demic society had to be reformed by some governing body. The National Research Foundation forced a reinvention of the academic community by introducing a systemized method, quantifying and verifying research systems. The National Research Foundation furthermore justified itself by introducing systems inclusively accommodating the requests made by beneficiaries of research funds. Such developments affected even the nationalist *minjung* academic communities, previously dubbed non-mainstream groups.

In stride with this trend, journals published by that academic communities were also registered in succession. As a result, starting from the latter half of the 1990s, submitted papers that were accepted through a review process began to take up a large proportion of the articles appearing in the journals, compared to commissioned articles that analyzed the political scene and proposed social praxis. This gave rise to a self-appraisal that such journals' "compound specialization" was unavoidable (Cho 2007, 8-9). As the National Research Foundation's evaluation system focusing on papers published in registered journals was established, a high wall was built between universities and social reality (Cheon 2010, 196).

"Standardized thesis-style writing," represented by registered journals above all, brought an end to the debates generated by the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities. The registered journal system led to the self-censorship of intellectuals and reinforced a trend of self-disciplining on the part of intellectuals. And the disappearance of multiple discourses made researchers concentrate on research linked to funding and projects, a consequence of a knowledge policy vividly revealing intellectuals' subordination to the state (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, May 14, 2007; Im et al. 2004, 21, 35).

Lastly, the nationalist *minjung* academic communities were institutionalized and failed to reform universities. Leading academic researchers joined mainstream universities from the mid-1990s, but no marked changes in the university system have been seen except for the institutionalization of critical social science specialties. Little progress was made in what the academic community pursued, like the overcoming of U.S.-oriented academic research, considerations of

and support for upcoming young researchers, a conscious reform of the conservative academic community, improved graduate school education and upgrading the treatment of part-time lecturers (Shin 2003, 383-384). The nationalist *minjung* academic communities were incorporated into the academic establishment and into academic societies without being able to collectively organize itself as an alternative to the neoliberal system, forcing competition between universities, researchers and post-graduates.

Where can we find the causes of what resulted in the institutionalization of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities? Though it had strong solidarity with social movements, the community, its operations being centered around out-of-campus research societies and institutes, had little effect on universities, the base of existence of researchers. Though the generation leading the nationalist *minjung* academic communities was reinstated in universities, it had little interest in improvements or changes in the established university systems and its practices (Shin 2003, 384-385). The 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities held varied programs for social and national reforms, but attached secondary importance to the reform of the collegiate community, the real foundation of researches.

Researchers, the primary constituents of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities as well as university faculties, were evidently responsible for the community's crisis and contradictions (S. Kim et al. 1997, 59). If so, are there no alternatives to the "corporatist intellectual" trend, a trend caused by the weakening and institutionalization of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities and the disciplined knowledge debates? Next section will discuss this question by reviewing attempts that alternative academic communities have made since their emergence in the 2000s.

Attempts by Alternative Academic Communities

Intellectuals holding perceptions different from those of their 1980s counterparts formed new small critical research groups in the 2000s.

One way of dealing with the crisis and institutionalization of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities was an attempt of alternative academic communities to search for new experiments outside of universities, distinguished from the institutionalized system within collegiate establishments. The new experiments differed from the institutionalized system of the collegiate establishments in the respect that they attempted a form of "direct communication" with the masses as individuals, groups and communities under slogans of postmodernity, post-authoritarianism, differences and pluralist values.

The cases of the Suyu Research Institute and the Multitude Network Center, research communities pursuing the order of communeism and autonomous community, will be reviewed in this section.[4] Both of them stress the importance of mass intellect and multitude. They also emphasize the production of new knowledge centered around the masses, freeing themselves from the hierarchical and elitist nature of the nationalist *minjung* academic communities. Why these alternative academic communities, classified apart from the nationalist *minjung* academic communities, came about and specific differences between the two groups will now be reviewed.[5]

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4. These include Kang Joon Mann, who asserted "independent intellect," the Philosophy Academy run by Vladimir Tikhonov (Bak No-ja) and Yi Jeong-u, and a group of establishments called the 1990s intellectual guerrillas. There are also a variety of alternative academic communities like the on-line seminar network Saeum, Nangok Research Institute, Study Space L, Review Hill, and Isolnet, however, due to space limitations, all cannot be named here. This article chooses the two groups not because they are representative, but because they have explicitly made public their alternatives to existing academic communities. A detailed study of alternative academic communities in the provinces may be made in the future.
5. The two communities underwent internal splits in and around 2009. The Suyu Research Institute, through a decade-long experiment, confirmed how much the scale of the commune of researchers can be extended. With the increase in the number of constituents eating and studying together, the number of lectures and publications also increased and their space expanded, but they reached a self-assessment that their expansion, under the greater title of "Research Space Suyu and Beyond," produced complacency and stagnation rather than free communication and contact with outsiders. Based on that assessment, they are undergoing a split experiment in six groups: Suyu and Beyond R, Suyu and Beyond Guro, Suyu and Beyond Gangwon, Suyu and Beyond Way and Suyu and Beyond N, for the

Background to the Formation of Alternative Academic Communities

The Suyu Research Institute was born in 2000 when the Suyu Research Office, a one-person setup founded by Korean literature scholar Ko Mi-Sook, merged with the Research Space Beyond, run by sociologist Yi Jin-gyeong. Their activities cover a wide range of seminars that cross barriers between particular academic specialties, mass lectures conducted with the general public and even anti-FTA campaigns. The Multitude Network Center (formerly the Multitude Culture Space WAB) started from a lecture given by Jo Jeong-hwan, an activist of the now-defunct South Korean Socialist Coalition of Workers. He organized the Multitude Culture Space WAB[6] in the course of translating and publishing Antonio Negri's theories of autonomism. Initiated in lectures, WAB has settled down as a space nourishing the intellect and sensibility of the public through the Internet, magazines, and its web journal *Jayul pyeongnon* (Autonomy Review).

Why did these scholar activists create the alternative academic communities? First, the established academic community was limited in that it was persistently locked up in subdivided disciplines. The 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities remained in their own territory of detailed specialties lain upon the premise of the collegiate branch learning system. Following the 1984 inauguration of the Industrial Community Research Society, the particular academic community underwent a "specialization" process by academic departments. That they were even divided by the "specialty system" of the mainstream was an outcome of their imitation of a formula of controlling academic and curricular systems according to established university departments (Kim, Kang, and Shim 2003, 1222; Kum 1999, 226-227). Under such relationships, the lack of communication between

purpose of incessantly normalizing, researching and communicating. They now exist as "CommuNet Suyu and Beyond." Multitude Network, as well, is said to have undergone a similar internal split at about the same time.

6. WAB is an acronym of "Within empire, Against empire, Beyond empire."

specialties deepened.

The second reason lied in suspicions about the university culture and academic community that lacked a true experimental spirit and imagination. As research financing by the National Research Foundation increased, research projects became researchers' main tasks. The crisis of the humanities and social sciences during the early 2000s institutionalized state support of research expenses, and researchers are now deemed to find it difficult to free themselves from addiction to research subsidies (Cheon 2010, 195). In addition, researchers, once they reach over 40 years of age, have a tendency to cease raising fundamental issues to society. Succeeding academic generations judged that they no longer needed to enclose themselves in the narrow communication structure provided by books and universities (M. Ko 2004, 43, 223). The leaders of alternative academic communities determined the reasons for the lack of experimental spirit and imagination of Korean researchers in the institutionalized structure of universities and the academic community.

Differences between the Alternative Academic Communities and the Nationalist Minjung *Academic Communities*

The 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities set their organizational goal at making a theoretical and empirical contribution to social revolution and securing academic hegemony and reform. It pursued internal ideological unity and discipline through group research so as to be able to serve the entire *minjung* movement, instead of merely performing research for research's sake. Distinguishing the two alternative academic communities from their earlier counterparts can be found first in their aims and characters. First, the Suyu Research Institute pursued a commune-ist community outside of capitalism. Closer examination reveals considerable differences between alternative academic communities, such as the Suyu Research Institute, and established academic communities, particularly in terms of their aims. The three domains of the community based on commune-ism that members of the Suyu Research Institute pursued

were (a) the sphere of such daily routines as work, play, eating and fun, (b) the "venue for learning" to gain knowledge about oneself and one's environment—knowledge not unrelated to human life and (c) the realms of knowledge relevant to everyday life and one's existence, meditation and self-discipline (M. Ko 2004, 289-290). But the character of the Suyu Research Institute was not clear from the beginning. Its members subsequently defined their network as the venue for sharing daily business independently of existing academic communities and established modes of academic pursuits. In essence, the Suyu Research Institute sought to serve as a mechanism for implementing relationships of mutual prosperity, rather than of mutual antagonism, that transcended capitalist competition and confrontation as well as capitalist law of money and value (M. Ko 2004, 12).

Similar to the Suyu Research Institute, which pursues a commune-ist community, the Multitude Network Center strives for an organizational form of an anti-monetary economy and an anti-state. The center, too, though devoid of previously established goals, stresses the importance of communication in cyberspace. It focuses on beings called a "multitude" or networkers who browse for fun various fields, mainly cultural ones, create fashions, and find pleasure in things previously unimagined (Jo 2000, 278). They, without presenting themselves as universal subjects, link a variety of people like students, corporate workers, housewives, writers and the unemployed to multitude network, can always discover something new through the life style of nomadic-rhizome (Jo 2000, 281; Multitude Network Center 2003).

Second, the difference involves the possibility of new organization. Under the current strategy of regulating the knowledge reproduction control system, the two communities are searching "new possibilities for organization," free from the institutional knowledge power structure (i.e. universities and academic societies). Such endeavors stimulate individuals and groups otherwise deprived of their own voices under the institutionalized universities and academic organizations, with the effect of being able to engage in an experiment of "organizing without institutions."

Regarding the specific organization of the alternative academic communities, the Suyu Research Institute strives to realize multicentricism, involving heterogeneity, and non-state and non-power experiments. The commune-ism they pursue differs in that it strives to realize multicentricism, band-style bonding and groups filled with contingencies, whereas their predecessors sought central control, ideological unity and consistency. In other words, commune-ism is featured by an organization that does not have a clear-cut organization chart and system (M. Ko 2004, 107, 152).

Unlike the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities, which relied on venues like the streets and seminar halls, alternative academic communities pursue methods of communication outside of conventional institutions and their characteristics, primarily through on-line communication networks. In this context, the Multitude Network Center (formerly the Multitude Culture Space WAB) is an open, non-institutional cultural space helping the multitude construct and expand their autonomous culture, linking them to cyber space while not completely detaching themselves from a traditional form of cohesion, provided by the venues created by established social movements and communities. In this respect, the Multitude Network Center is a space where the intellect and the sensibility of the multitude are ceaselessly exchanged. It also intends to link itself with larger networks.

Third, the alternative academic communities discussed try to establish themselves by departing from the enlightenment view of organization, grounded on the paradigm of revolutionary movements sought by the 1980s academic community and thereby pursue knowledge horizontal to power. The nationalist *minjung* academic community since the 1980s has had the organizational aim of instilling consciousness in the masses (a group less motivated by politics) by making theoretical and empirical contributions to social movement. In contrast, the alternative academic communities reassess the relationship between the multitude and intellectuals during the 1980s and, by emphasizing marginalized knowledge groups, negate hierarchy between intellectuals and the masses.

The Suyu Research Institute ascribes the current crisis of intellectuals to a "loss of praxis rooted in the intellectual field." In other words, it locates the cause of the crisis in the loss of fidelity to the fields of movements as well as those of their own lives. Important are intellectuals' will and practice to take the spot they stand on as a venue (B. Ko 2006). It is necessary for intellectuals themselves to become the minority and masses simultaneously, critical of the relationships of the 1980s.

The Multitude Network Center more or less shares this view. The universal intellectuals of the 1980s have died and the multitude is comprised of "new intellectuals" who have the potential to organize their own lives, they maintain.[7] Cited as characteristics of the multitude linked through various networks are autonomy from the state, independence from capital,[8] autonomy from mass media through not one-way but two- or multi-way communication, and autonomy from the center-oriented organizational formula of the working class (Jo 2000, 265, 280-281). In this context, the Multitude Network Center stresses versatile new struggles that do not suppress the multitude, distinguished from standardized universal struggles, organized in a top-down fashion by intellectuals (J. Yi 2002).

The alternative academic communities, by basically questioning the knowledge-power relationship, inherent in the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic community and social movements, pursue the relativization of the power of knowledge to regulate the masses, a typical example of which is the hierarchy that exists between teachers and students, intellectuals and the masses and the elite and the masses. By relativizing elements linked with knowledge power like academic cliques, personal connections and specialties, the alternative academic

7. Jo Jeong-hwan (2000, 278) asserts that the established progressive intellectuals do not hesitate to express their distaste of the lives of the multitude or networkers and caricaturize the position of intellectuals as universal subjects by placing the disorderly multitude in the thoroughly consistent rank and file of progress.
8. Members of the "multitude" communicate directly with one another without the medium of money. Free contact, free telephone, free homepage, and free mailing list represent the networkers'aspirations for direct communication (Jo 2000, 280).

communities seek possible "horizontalization of knowledge power."

Fourth, the alternative academic communities are searching for "new forms of solidarity," distinguished from those of the 1980s. The current impossibility of solidarity among intellectuals constitutes the core of the crisis of collegiate establishment. Rendering solidarity more difficult is the system imposed by the National Research Foundation of Korea (Cheon 2010, 187). New forms of solidarity are not identical to what existed between intellectuals and the masses, sought by the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic community. They should be reconstructed in the framework of common conditions of existence and aspirations of intellectuals and researchers. Noteworthy in this regard are the experiments of living other types of life through a joint ownership of intellect and changes in daily life, undertaken by the Suyu Research Institute and the Multitude Network Center.

Alternative academic communities differ from institutionalized academic society in that they constitute commun-ist space, composed of the many. They cover varied fields and interests, unrelated to the academic cliques and personal connections of institutionalized academic society (Ji 2004). In addition, they search for a new sort of solidarity with the multitude in a direction that escapes capitalist life and moves toward a life style of rhizome. The multitude's subversive power, so stresses the Multitude Network Center, calls for a new form of revolution in an era that does not permit revolution (Jo 2000, 279). The very life style of escape and nomadic-rhizome aspires to achieve "a revolution being made" with trust placed on the multitude, instead of pursuing preset goals such as socialism or a move designed to serve an overall social movement as was the case in the 1980s (J. Yi 2002).

The most important in alternative communities are changes in everyday life. Social movements and academic communities in the 1980s underwent agonies on social revolution, political lines, political scene, and social tensions, but did not contemplate deeply the existence and daily life of intellectuals themselves. In contrast, revolution approaches members of alternative communities when they "conquer

daily life" rather than state power or social structure. No revolution can occur unless festivals are celebrated in daily life, they maintain (M. Ko 2000). Fundamental is the notion that the daily life of the masses or members of alternative communities must change, and that no new border of knowledge evolves otherwise. The core change in daily life with the Suyu Research Institute, in particular, is the "*bapsang* (meal table) community." What changes when 50-odd members cook and eat together is not the mind of the group but its mode of living (M. Ko 2004, 139). "Joint possession of space" must not be overlooked either. Their principle that no individual can occupy a desk in a research office for more than a day constitutes an important part of their nomadic way of life, freed from the bourgeois possession of space (M. Ko 2004, 19).

Reviewed above are two alternative academic communities, research space Suyu Research Institute and the Multitude Network Center, with respect to their organizational aspirations and character, the nature of members, the identities they maintain (distinguished from established academic communities), their modes of organization and their forms of solidarity. It goes without saying that there exist criticisms of their new pursuits. Questions raised include: "Doesn't the ceaseless attempt to escape from the system, simply not to enter it, have its fundamental limitations?" "Can an escaping nomad truly exist? Is it not rather something that can exist only in an imaginary space?" "Is nomadism nothing but anti-intellectualism or anti-culturalism, failing to grasp and clearly explain reality in an intellectual way?" and "Don't such communities' assertions force the organized activists who are in a crisis situation, to put into practice politics of realism or spiritualism?" Those scholars engaged in such alternative academic communities make individual efforts, aiming to become "exceptions" by gaining freedom from neoliberal universities and systems through desertion and commune-ist experiments. The problem, however, is that the academic establishments exert such great power based on strong structures as to negate the existence and experiments of alternative academic communities. Given this, what is important is that scholars notice and continuously reflect on the powerful neolib-

eral structure of knowledge production that attempts to emasculate alternative academic solutions outside of the established system (Cheon 2010, 186). The searches of the new alternative academic communities will have to be revealed in non-standardized accumulative practices by which they can revise their own errors and practices while considering realistic conditions. The Suyu Research Institute and the Multitude Network Center, too, will find their materialized perceptions and practices in one open space they share as a collective, not accidental, implementation.

Conclusion

This paper addressed the questions of whether the 1980s nationalist *minjung* academic communities' aspirations to produce critical intellectuals have been weakened, and, furthermore, whether the communities were institutionalized into the collegiate establishments. If so, what caused such specialization and institutionalization? First, academic communities today are being restructured, not autonomously from the state but centered around money and profit, and intellectuals are amalgamated or excluded over the course of this search for profit. Second, "universal intellectuals," be they activists or those who work in solidarity with activists, pursued by the nationalist *minjung* academic communities, are realistically no longer effective. Third, the nationalist *minjung* academic communities failed to effect structural changes in the knowledge community itself, involving the university and academic societies. In the process of institutionalizing the 1980s academic communities, new "alternative academic communities" arose in various experimental forms. Some of them, including the Suyu Research Institute and the Multitude Network Center, attempt to produce counter-discourses outside the university establishment in various forms.

Researchers who led the nationalist *munjung* academic communities can be evaluated as having succeeded in creating discourses countering the state and capital and in achieving solidarity with

social movements. But researchers' efforts of basic reflection on universities and academic circles, the base of their professional existence, gradually declined. That academic community's criticism of the mainstream academic circle was focused on society as the object of research and content of its analyses. Its critical consciousness regarding the ideological effects of the knowledge they produce amongst specific power relations within and outside universities and what kind of leading bodies will be formed within universities was weak from the beginning (Shin 2003, 384). The core problem was that these communities failed to ponder the base of their existence—the locus of knowledge production and circulation—and where in that process they ceaselessly struggle against hegemonic power. What we should learn from the institutionalized 1980s academic communities is the painful fact that they failed to discover new theories constituting their epistemological foundation and lacked self-examination regarding the social relationships that prop up their existence.

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