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# The Use of Deleuze's Theory of Assemblage for Process-Oriented Methodology

Jae Eon Yu\*

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**Abstract:** »Deleuze' Assemblage Theorie und ihre Anwendung in der Prozess-orientierten Methodik«. Dealing with the complexity of social change during the process of civilization, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) proposed the concept of an assemblage that is only grasped in the dynamic relation between the machinic assemblage (e.g., the structure of organizations, physical materials and resources) and the enunciative assemblage (e.g., regulations, governing principles and symbolic expressions). Exploring the complex relationship between social change and social networks in terms of Deleuze's theory of assemblage, we argue that the process-oriented methodology should be conceptualized as 'time-related research'. It is required to produce the 'process-generated data' in the form of Deleuze's sense of an event during the process of the time-related research. It includes the 'insider perspective' and 'judgment systems' which function as a detached 'outside perspective'. Such judgment systems are necessary for generating knowledge that supports social interventions in order to *make* or produce 'events data,' which are generated from an interaction between the machinic assemblages and the enunciative assemblages within social fields.

**Keywords:** process-oriented methodology, Deleuze's theory of assemblage, time-related research.

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## 1. Introduction

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To date, the assemblage theory has been applied on a very limited basis to the study of modern society and the process of social transformations which include the "civilizing process" in contemporary 20th century societies. As a society continuously changes and evolves, a set of social beings (e.g., human actors and non-human elements of assemblages) are perceived as a possibility that can bring about social changes in the 'societies of control'. Based on Deleuze's theory of assemblage, the processes of social changes proceed so as to cope with the composition of new assemblages which have to be designed and supported by the 'minoritarian ethics'. In this paper, we demonstrate how

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to apply Deleuze's theory of assemblage to understand the highly complex social situations that evolved from relationships of power, time and control in the contexts of Korean contemporary societies. Our proposal of the 'time-related research,' which is based on the 'minoritarians ethics,' provides a fresh perspective on the importance of the relationships between a 'machines' or machinic assemblage and 'diagrams' or enunciative assemblage when one is engaged with the process of social intervention. It also focuses attention on the interaction between the two assemblages of a 'machine' and 'diagram' in order to generate 'events data' through the process of problematization. Our study indicates that the assemblage theory provides a significant theoretical and methodological approach for understanding time-related research on the process-oriented appreciation of the civilizing process and the effects of the process of civilization in the contexts of Korean societies.

Elias (1978) explores a relational and process-oriented sociology that treats the social formation of individuals and their interdependent loops in society. In *the Civilization Process*, Elias (1994) proposed a theory of 'figuration' which assumes that social structure has evolved as a relational effect that recursively generates and reproduces itself. The term "civilization" has been invented to include a wide variety of facts ranged from a specific transformation of human behaviour, the level of technology, the development of scientific knowledge, to the form of judicial punishment and changes of economic, social and political systems at the time of a courtly-absolutist society. Elias (1994) questions what the "causes" or "motive forces" of social transformation that made the "civilizing" of Western societies actually happen. Following Elias's study attempts to contribute to develop a theory of "civilizing processes", contemporary social theories set off from understanding the process of complex social systems that seek to deal not with the functioning of (sub) systems in terms of understanding a distinction between the subjects and objects, but rather aspire to the study of the complex relations of people, social structure of rules and resources, and systems and social fields that are historical products of social processes, which is known as the 'process sociology' (Garbriel and Mennell, 2011). Interestingly, the systems theory of social autopoiesis seeks to deal with the meaning and life of social systems that are generated by the process of self-reproduction and self-organization in terms of an alleged relationship between communicative possibility and social organization (Luhmann 1989, 1995). More recently, DeLanda (2006, 3) argues that none of the 'idealist' social theories can successfully capture the real history and internal dynamics of social entities as the idealist sociologists are dealing only with society as a 'construction,' and they ignore such entities that are products of historical processes. He regards the idealist one as 'microreductionist,' which has the micro-macro problems of understanding social complexity (DeLanda 2006, 5). In contrast, the assemblage theory can offer a framework which provides an adequate picture of the relationships amongst human actors, networked communities and institutional

subsystems or organizations (e.g., the educational system, legal system, social systems, political systems and business organizations) in terms of relations of the interiority of actual and virtual mechanisms of assemblages that are seen as heterogeneous networks or “meshworks” (DeLanda 2006). In this view, the idea that societies can be seen as an effect of interacting heterogeneous elements which go through the process of creating and stabilizing their historical identity, was originally proposed by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. In this paper, we raise questions such as how it is possible to apply the process-oriented methodology in understanding the social complexity of the modern societies. We will investigate the recent phenomena of social complexity under the assemblages based explanation to understand the social process of civilization by exploring social relations, power, and control in the social fields from poststructuralist perspectives. More precisely, dealing with control, power and time within societies, how can we understand a social reality from Deleuze’s philosophical thought? One step further, how does the alternative community of social practices launch its desire into the existing social field in order to bring about desirable changes within the social field? In answering these questions, we need to use a social theory which can be used in conjunction with a process-oriented methodology in order to intervene in social practices. Social complexity exists but it is always an unstable and dynamic process in which social entities are fabricated, maintained and transformed by the relations of people, materials and systems in the course of their on-going interaction with each other within the social fields.

Our argument based on Deleuze’s theory of assemblage and ‘minoritarians ethics’ in modern metaphysics are derived from works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) and recent works of the ‘realist’ sociologists (Kaufman and Heller 1998; DeLanda 2006). In our paper, we first understand how the “civilizing process” happens in contemporary society and how the process of civilization happens within the “society of control”. Then, we introduce and describe the theory of assemblages and how it operates within the social fields from social ontological perspectives. Based on ‘time-related research,’ we propose the time-related research as the process-oriented methodology and demonstrate how it can be applied in social practice, in order to make sense of the assemblage theory that has been applied to understand the roles of a heterogeneous network of social enterprises and Korean microfinance institutes (e.g., Smile Microcredit Bank) within the context of Korean societies. Finally, we conclude with the usefulness of the assemblage theory for understanding social complexity in terms of a new thought of social assemblage systems, and derive implications for further research.

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## 2. What Does it Mean to Construe the Process of Civilization in Contemporary Society?

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When Elias (1978) asked the question of how individuals are “civilized” in a historical process of civilization, the answer lied in the creation of meaning and life of human beings in terms of ‘figuration’ as it evolves and changes through the process of civilization that leads to the process of interaction between individuals and social systems creating both a ‘small history’ of an individual and a ‘big history’ of society (Köstlin 1996). When Deleuze and Guattari (1987) found interest in the processes of a human history or civilization that developed from the ‘bottom-up,’ they focused on processes of civilization and natural evolution as a differentiated whole. This thought and analysis of Western history or process of civilization is represented as ‘creative’ based on Deleuze’s theory of assemblage and social complexity (Fuglsang and Sørensen 2006). Based upon the theory of assemblage, a thought has appeared in the present that moment that can only be realized through time, ‘sense,’ corporeal bodies and power (Deleuze 1988a, b, 1990). In Gosden’s (1994, 68-9) view, the process of civilization, is not seen as a static phenomenon, but as a process of becoming. Through a process of becoming, human individuals are particularly regarded as active elements in societies as social groups and their labour can alter societies, which Deleuze (1992) characterized as “control societies”.

Michel Foucault (1977) questions how power can be operated and utilized the human body under the operation of a social system called ‘disciplinary technology’ within Western societies. He takes the themes of power and genealogical history and pursues them in a concrete form in order to discover a moving moment of the social process in the modern worlds. Foucault defines disciplinary power in relational terms, as he viewed the body as an object to be manipulated, a machine, and looked at how to best optimize this machine’s capabilities, increase its usefulness, and integrate it into systems of economic controls (Foucault 1981, 139). In Foucault’s work, power is seen to derive from discourse. For instance, sexuality (in the form of power) is located in the broader context of changing forms of discourse between the medieval and the modern Western societies (Foucault 1981).

According to Foucault, power comes out of every passage of the social systems as the rule of law becomes the central codifying power in the modern societies and discourse is seen to be dominated by the state, science and the church and imposed on those below (Gosden 1994, 142-3). In this view, power arises from all aspects of social action, and power and knowledge are a closed link as the relations of force are seen as “the fibre or network” of the social domain (Smart 1983, 103). Time also is derived from relations as sets of relations of recursiveness linking past and future through the present. Time and power, which are regarded as elements of life, have the same all-pervasive

aspect of social systems. If operations of social systems involved the exercise of power, which is mobile and contingent, then the whole social process can be seen as an essentially temporal structure, a process of the unfolding power relations (Gosden 1994; Schirato, Danaher and Webb 2012, 50).

Within social practice, power derives from networks or relations between people and materials and these relations always involve change thorough time. Then power (with time) becomes a “motive force” of the social transformation. In this sense, power is much more than the sum of these relations of force as it becomes a process, a form and a strategy (Foucault 1981, 92-3). All societies create relations of power, but power in modern Western societies is used for regulation and oppression (Glasberg and Shannon 2011). In this sense, Foucault attempts to interpret the contemporary society as a ‘disciplinary society’ where power is exerted through networks of control (Deleuze 1992). As Foucault argued, the modern capitalist society follows the disciplinary control and panoptic rules in which the panopticon automatizes and functions as the mechanism of power and control of bodies, groups and knowledge through spatial ordering under the regime of the capitalist discipline. A civil society is central to a form of rule or government as Foucault argues, that focuses, on one hand, on the identity of the citizen and the processes of civilization; on the other hand, the social formation or the organization of abstract labour (Hardt 1998, 35). Following Foucault’s definition of disciplinary regimes that it is historical; and after disciplinary societies, Deleuze (1992) describes the society we are living in today as the “control societies” in which we entered a new type of society that he called a post-civil society. In a post-civil society, instead of disciplining the citizen as an identity that is defined by a civil society, the new social regime seeks to control the citizen as whatever identity, and it tends to establish an autonomous plane of rule, or anonymous system of rule such as CCTV, functioning like the panopticon. This autonomous plane of rule becomes the infinitely programmable machine that gives us an approximation of the ‘diagram’ of the new paradigm of rule (Hardt 1998, 36). In this view, the processes of civilization in a post-civil condition happen differently from the civil society, and the alternative community of social practices through group formation (e.g., the self-organization of concrete labour) will be the most powerful challenge to control in a post-civil society (Hardt 1998, 37; Latour 2005).

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### 3. Deleuze's Theory of Assemblages and 'Minoritarian Ethics'

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Having understood the process of civilization in the contemporary society, let us now turn to Deleuze’s idea of an event. If the process of civilization unfolds through an interaction between time and power as we discussed so far, then ‘events data’ are used for analyzing processes of organizational transformation

and social changes within practice as a number of researchers have argued (Yu 2004; Yu, Moon and Kim 2008). Using the idea of an event, Deleuze attempts to create new images for social reality based on his position of metaphysical “realism” which is known as materialist ontology (Murphy 1998). Like the contemporary physicist, David Bohm, Gilles Deleuze saw a “‘problem’ with the conceptual structure and operations of phenomenological thought” (Murphy 1998, 215), which was greatly influenced by Kant’s work of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that focuses on the “‘science of being’ in the direction of ‘phenomena’” (Murphy 1998, 211). For Deleuze, “this dissatisfaction takes the form of a critique of the” (Murphy 1998, 215) interpretive and phenomenological models of contemporary philosophy, and creates new images of thought through the image of a pure and metaphysical event for the materialist ontology that he has created for himself (Deleuze 1990). Deleuze’s sense of an event as a new image for philosophical thought has a similarity with Bohm’s logic of quantum physics. In Bohm’s quantum ontology, the nature of the “object” is completely different from how physics understands the nature of an object which is explained in terms of “the overall properties of matter and energy” (Murphy 1998, 215). The “object” of quantum mechanics “only exhibits [its] properties when it interacts with the experimental apparatus, at which point the object and the apparatus form an unanalyzable whole” (Murphy 1998, 215). In this sense, an “‘event’ would be a better term than an ‘object’” (Murphy 1998, 21) since it can be viewed as if there are material things in which “matter has wave-like properties, while fields of waves have particle-like ones” (Murphy 1998, 215).

### 3.1 Appreciation of Assemblages and Deleuze’s Sense of an Event

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) set out the theory of assemblages, based on Deleuze’s (1990) notion of an event that refers to a tool for the thought on the “ontology of becoming”. Deleuze and Guattari are not speaking about an actual physical state of events and processes of assemblages, but about qualitatively different processes that take place at all levels of social interaction. They highlight the process of ‘becoming’ in society as the product of ‘historical’ processes as some critical thinkers use the term ‘historical’ to include not only human history but also evolutionary history, which traces the “trail of ‘associations’ between heterogeneous elements” (Latour 1985, 1987, 2005; Law 1992; DeLanda 2006). In particular, DeLanda (2006) applied the assemblage theory to track the formation of social entities and the processes of social evolution which “cuts across the nature-culture divide” (DeLanda 2006, 3) that is the evidence of historical processes. He identifies two types of elements of assemblages. The first type is the actual mechanism that operates at a given spatial scale whilst the second element is the ‘diagram’ of an assemblage, which is a virtual and independent mechanism, “capable of being realized in a variety of

actual mechanisms” (DeLanda 2006, 31). According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the assemblage, which is an open system, is inseparable from coefficients of ‘territorialization’ and ‘deterritorialization,’ which are “increasing its degree of internal homogeneity” (DeLanda 2006, 11). and changing or even transforming into a different assemblage. At the same time, a territorial assemblage turns into what some elements “reterritorialize” when it connects itself with another assemblage. Deleuze’s notion of an assemblage refers to an ‘ontological’ temporary system that consists of two kinds of assemblages, which refer to a ‘machine’ or machinic assemblage and collective assemblages of enunciation (what we call ‘the enunciative assemblages’ hereafter) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7, 333-4). In short, Deleuze and Guattari identified two different forms of assemblages existing within social fields. One is the machinic assemblage and the other the enunciative assemblage. The machinic assemblage is viewed as a ‘machine’ or the body of social systems such as schools, prisons, and factories (Lazzarato 2006). For Deleuze and Guattari (1983), everything is a ‘machine’ and everywhere there is production in which ‘machines,’ which is a fragmented aggregate whose parts do not constitute a unified whole, operate in the modern world. A machine is like the living being so that a ‘desiring-machine’ operates with desire that “constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 5-6). The concept of machinic assemblage is a way of approaching reality from a new way of looking at the world (Marks 1998, 98-9). The enunciative assemblage, on the other hand, is expressed as ‘diagrams’ or an “abstract machine that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7) a set of statements that develops from the social interactions between a ‘machine’ and the ‘abstract machine’ (or the ‘diagrams’ in the terms of Foucault) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7). A machine or machinic assemblage is controlled by the enunciative assemblage. Both these forms of assemblages are closely linked. Without such control mechanisms of social domains, the societies of control could not happened and without the adaption of cartography to economic and political processes could not be taken place.

An assemblage is a ‘haecceity’ in the sense that it consists of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected, in which pure becoming slide into Deleuze’s sense of an event, where all identity disappears from self and the world. The event happens in the indefinite time (‘Aeon’) of the pure event. In a time of ‘Aeon,’” the paradox of [...] pure becoming, with its capacity to elude the present, is possible to create the event that is the paradox of infinite identity” (Deleuze 1990, 4) of the future and past (both directions at the same time). Deleuze’s sense of an event extracts from “the state of affairs” which are determined by the mixtures of bodies (e.g., tensions, physical qualities, actions and passions of bodies). All bodies are causes in relations to each other, and causes of certain things of “effects” which



are bodies, but, “incorporeal” entities that “are not physical qualities and properties, but rather logical and dialectical attributes” (Boundas 1993, 42 [Deleuze 1990:4-5]). This “incorporeal” effect is called as an event, which is a pure event without any physical or material aspects of it. Deleuze’s notion of an event is to create a ‘sense’ for concepts, and this sense appears on the ‘plane of immanence’ or ‘metaphysical surface’ of propositions within a language. The “event must engender out of the multiple dimensions of the proposition such as ‘denotation’ (an indication of the state of affairs), ‘manifestation’ (a representation from the subject), and ‘signification’” (Yu 2006, 317) (the symbolic transformation being generated (Deleuze 1990, 23-5, 95-6). In short, events generated from the dynamic process of an interaction between the machinic assemblages and enunciative assemblages. In this sense, the two types of assemblages link with one another to generate Deleuze’s (1990) notion of events that are appreciated by “becoming-haecceity” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 276-7).

### 3.2 Why We Want to Value 'Minoritarian Ethics'

For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), ‘becoming’ particularly refers to an event, and Deleuze’s theory of the assemblage is all about the discovery of an event in which the ontology of becoming can be realized through Deleuze’s sense of it. Deleuze’s sense of becoming is the occurrences of events, serialization of events, and events that usually indicate the movements of ‘territorialisation’ or ‘deterritorialization’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 291-2). This movement is regarded as a process or becoming ‘minoritarians’ or ‘minorities,’ which means “becoming-everybody and everything” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 470). If it is “becoming-everybody and everything”, it can be only possible through the making of a new assemblage and multiplicity of bodies on the ‘plane of immanence’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 262-4, 291-3). In this sense, the composition of a new assemblage has to be supported by the ‘minoritarians ethics’ or ethics for “minorities” or the “marginalized group” who are concerned with the critical or ethical awareness and a collective action which lead to transforming virtual events into actual events within social practice (Yu and Lee 2008). Through the transformative process within social practice, minoritarians ethics is concerned with the “minorities” or marginalized group who will create new social relations. In other words, the minoritarians ethics aims to create “what might be assembled in a new way” where collective actions take place within social fields, which leads to transforming virtual events into actual events within the ‘common world’ (Deleuze 1969, 18-9; Latour 2004, 239; Latour 2005, 41-6). As the purpose of minoritarians ethics is to account for the concerns of ‘others,’ minoritarians ethics should include not only the purposeful activities of human actors but the sustainability of non-human entities (e.g., ecosystems) which compose a common world, the kind of the world the ancient Greek

called a *cosmos* (Latour 2004, 8). In order to implement the ecological politics in social practice, we propose that the minoritarians ethics functions as a mode of resistance that questions and challenges the value and customs of society and a mode of existence of groups of people within a society, which is rooted in the present system or the actual assemblage that is intrinsically linked to its power of acting.

The minoritarians ethics is established on the basis of the emergent relations of actual and virtual assemblages in which a series of events generate in the form of processes of ‘civilization’ that happens ‘bottom-up’ at a local scale. Through the historical process of ‘bottom-up’ formation, the minoritarians ethics reflects the position of ‘the others’ or ‘minorities’ through the learning process of problematization (Yu and Lee 1998). During a learning process, participants should search for “all chances and possibilities” and create critical discourse which will produce a multiplicity of alternatives through openness to the ‘question’ and the determination of a ‘problem’. Above all, the minoritarians ethics is concerned with a question of the political struggle today, and has to be used to turn passive actors into active participants in order to bring about change in existing social systems through the application of ‘time-related research’ (Yu and Lee 1998). In short, based upon Deleuze’s theory of assemblage, the minoritarian ethics focuses on making sense of the collective actions through making new assemblage via the appreciation of Deleuze’s notion of an event or a series of events, which creates the condition for identifying ‘problems’ or making possibilities for new solutions (e.g., new actual assemblages in the social fields) in local and contingent contexts.

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#### 4. Our Proposal on Time-Related Research as Process-Oriented Methodology

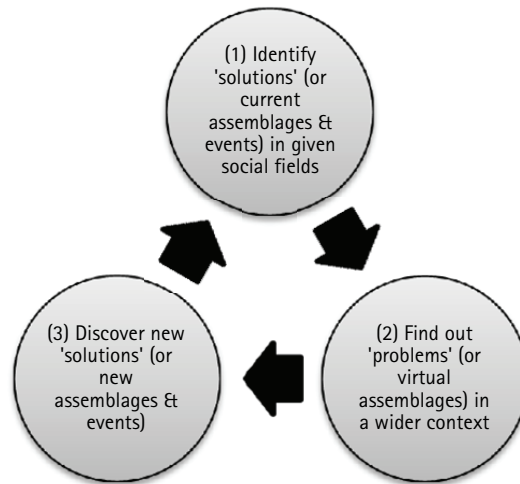
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Process sociology is seen as an appreciative process of uncovering the nature of the ‘civilizing processes’ and social behaviours through the ‘process-oriented methodology’ towards a history of temporality (Elias 1994). A useful starting point for understanding the nature of process sociology rests on the appropriate perspective, and assumptions about the importance and relevance of the nature of symbols in intergenerational processes (Gabriel and Mennell 2011). According to Gabriel and Mennell (2011, 8), time is a good example of a symbol that allows human beings to connect and integrate events in a high level of synthesis (Elias 2007 [1992]). When we consider the process sociology to be a ‘process-oriented theory,’ the researcher has to consider linking theory and data through a process-oriented methodology, as Baur and Ernst (2011) argued. Following their argument, we propose the time-related research as the process-oriented methodology, where social researchers need an ‘insider perspective’ as well as an ‘outsider perspective’ in order to participate and involve themselves

into the research process to create *verstehen* (Baur and Ernst 2011, 121). To do so, the notion of 'event time' is appreciated in 'time-related research,' where researchers appreciate Deleuze's (1990) sense of an event (Yu and Lee 2008). The features of events time are highly local and some are known to only a few organizational members. Events time flows unevenly, is discontinuous, and contains varying levels of contingency and indeterminacy with respect to the onset of event trajectories and even to their actual occurrence whilst the social time concept already presupposes culture. According to Deleuze (1990, 23-5), pure events occur within the spatio-temporal time of 'singularities' which engender out of the multiple dimensions of the propositions such as denotation, manifestation, and signification. In this sense, events give rise to an ultimate source of meaning, which is created from languages, bodies, and thought of life. In order to collect this kind of events data, we propose the 'integrative approach,' which generates events data using the techniques of questionnaires, documentary sources, interviews, discussion groups, and workshops (Yu 2001, 50). Linking the assemblage theory and events data in the process-oriented approach, a research strategy like the collaboration between researchers and participants is needed to collect events data through the research process of appreciating *a series of events* in social fields (Yu 2001, 48-50).

Our proposal on time-related research as the process-oriented methodology is carried out as follows. In phase 1 of the methodology, appreciators (e.g., researcher and participants in the time-related research) perceive reality through understanding of how actual assemblages operate within social fields. This refers to finding out 'solutions' in the sense of identifying actual assemblages in the given social fields. In phase 2 of the methodology, appreciators find out 'problems' that are perceived in the sense of the virtual assemblage which leads to the discovery of wider contexts where 'solutions' are evolved from. In phase 3 of the methodology, appreciators are engaged with the minorities ethics in order to discover the power or dominant force that controls the operation of an actual assemblage within social fields through the process of problematization. In the next phase of the methodology, a new assemblage is generated through an 'expectation' or 'solution' for what could happen in the future. In the time-related research, the continuous process of problematization happens in a cycle of the three distinctive phases of identifying 'solutions,' finding out 'problems' and discovering new solutions or new assemblages in social fields (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A Cyclic Process of Time-Related Research



In our proposal of the time-related research, the authority of experts and the privileged role of researchers can act as the ‘insider-perspective’ in the terms of Baur and Ernst (2011), whilst the methodology encourages participants (and the researcher sometimes) to make collective and creative ‘judgment systems’ in which members decide which values to assign and which values to include in order to maintain and defend their decisions (De Zeeuw 2010, 12-4). Thus, the ‘insider-perspective’ will be judged, as scientific knowledge within social practice is challenged by the collective through the ‘judgment systems’ function as the “detached outsider-perspective” in the terms of Baur and Ernst (2011, 121), to intervene in social practices through the process of problematization (Foucault 1984). In this way, the time-related research should operate through the functioning of two segments of ‘insider perspective’ and ‘outside perspective’ which functions as the judgment system. In line with this argument, in our proposal of the time-related research, the ‘inside perspective’ generates the primary learning process whilst the judgment system generates a secondary or meta-learning process during the process of problematization. While the primary learning process is concerned with the identification of the actual mechanism (or ‘solutions’ in the terms of our proposal on time-related research) of social reality, the meta-learning process leads participants to appreciate or identify a sort of virtual reality which is appreciated through the identification of possibilities in terms of virtual assemblages (or ‘problems’ or new ‘solutions’ in the terms of our proposal on time-related research) in social fields. Then, the actual assemblage is compared with complex relations of

power and knowledge that might have taken place within social fields. This comparison will lead to the desirable and feasible changes that are judged in accordance with ‘minoritarians ethics’ that function as norms and standards for a ‘judgment system’ which is operating well. The output of the secondary process of learning through problematization become the input of the primary process of learning that is happening through the recognition system, which deals with problem-solving or decision-making activities within a managerial context. The output of the secondary learning process is the judgment system. This judgment system, in turn, becomes the input of the primary process of time-related research which also produces output. The final outputs are collective learning and actions for making social changes which denote the end of the time-related action learning process. As the cycles of the methodology unfold through time, the initial appreciation or understanding of current situations are likely to be changing. This occurs through the interaction between the machinic assemblages and enunciative assemblage in which a series of events are generated with the appreciation of minoritarians ethics and find out possible and desirable ‘solutions’ or new assemblages which will contribute to bring about changes in given social fields.

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## 5. The Application of Time-Related Research Using the Assemblage Theory

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The purpose here is to exemplify how the assemblage theory works and to show how the ‘minoritarians ethics’ applies in social practice. The application of time-related research is presented to illustrate how the roles of social enterprises and microfinance institutions contribute to create the vision of a ‘community-based capitalism’ in Korea. It is based on research carried out by the author and undergraduate students of the business school at Korea University during 2009 and 2011. The process-oriented methodology based on time-related research is used to appreciate the events data through the observation of events data amongst the researcher and participants. To observe the phenomena or image of social complexity in terms of Deleuze’s sense of events, there are three distinctive approaches to be employed when the time-related research is conducted in the manner of the participant-driven approach. The first one deals with the observation of the external contexts, which is called the ‘observational methods’ in our proposed time-related research. The various ‘objective’ and ‘machinic’ factors are collected through the forms of diverse written materials, documents, company records, and visiting various venues within the head office of Smile Microcredit Bank (SMB) and its branch in South Korea. The second approach for time-related research deals with the observation of internal and ‘enunciative’ contexts, which is called the ‘participative methods’. In participative methods, the researcher can act as a part of the ‘judgment systems’

(in the terms of De Zeeuw, 2010). The researcher (sometimes with the collaboration of other participants) intervenes with the research process and carried out research activities using a number of qualitative methods (e.g., face to face interviews, group interviews, and a survey of using supplementary questionnaires). The last approach is called the 'integrative' approach, which deals with the complex interactions between the internal (or 'machinic') and external (or 'enunciative') contexts, which give rise to the generation of events data that is appreciated in the given situations.

### 5.1 Historical Background Information on the Situations of Social Enterprises and Microfinance Businesses in South Korea

It is widely known that the Korean economy is dominated by very large family-owned and controlled conglomerate enterprises called 'chaebols'. Generally speaking, authority within business organizations is highly centralized and personal, with formal procedures often less important than personal relationships. The 'chaebol' played a crucial role in the transformation and development of the economic and social systems during the recent decades, and societal culture has significantly changed and transformed throughout Korean societies under its political ideology and capitalism. Under the great influence of the 'chaebol,' Korean economic and social systems have been transformed and continuously evolved by the beliefs and management styles of top executives of business corporations. With a great influence of Buddhism and Confucianism in the cultural systems of the Korean society, Christian religion has been integrated into the lives of Koreans through historical processes of industrialization and "civilization" during the last centuries.

In social systems, the practice of Shamanism (through the worship of ancestors) shows the importance of the family system, which is emphasized and integrated fully into the teachings of Confucianism. Koreans are one of the most family-oriented people in the world. Maintaining family tradition and enhancing family prestige are the most important obligations to each family member. Korean Christians have discontinued this process of Shamanism worshiping, but still informally maintain the tradition of ancestor worship. In addition, through Chinese Taoism, Koreans conceived the universe as a hierarchical whole composed of parts, spaces, and times that correspond to each other. Believers in Taoism emphasize distaste for worldly affairs and a yearning for life in harmony with Nature. Koreans live with both ideals, succeed in society by following the traditions and then downgrade the significance of worldly success and develop a fatalistic view of the world.

South Korea is currently pursuing the transition into a 'community-based capitalism',<sup>1</sup> and trying to develop new socio-economic mechanisms to resolve conflicts between the sustainability of economic development and creation of social justice (Shim 2009). To meet these socio-economic aims, the Korean government has recognized that the 'social economy' and social entrepreneurship must play an extremely crucial role. The Korean government envisioned that a 'community-based capitalism' which encourages participation from the local governments, communities, and stakeholders in societies is key to maximizing the potential benefits from the development of the social economy through the creation of new patterns of transforming the Korean society towards the spread of middle-class values of the civil society.

In order to create new patterns of transforming society that operates through the opening of a new social economy, the Korea government (under the control of Ministry of Labour) established a new law for promoting social enterprises in Korea on 1st July, 2007. Since the Social Enterprises Promotion Act (SEPA) was made, the number of social enterprises reached around 578 in Korea at the end of 2011 (Cho 2011). According to SEPA, a social enterprise is defined as

an enterprise is engaged with business activities of producing and selling goods and services while pursuing social missions of improving the quality of local residents' lives by means of actively creating businesses and jobs for the socially marginalized or disadvantaged people in the society. (Cho 2008, 15)

In this definition, a social enterprise means that it creates social value using business ideas and models through the collaboration amongst government agencies, corporations, nonprofit organizations or nongovernmental organizations (NGO).

According to Shim (2009), the purpose of the community-based capitalism is to enhance the quality of human life that is based on a market economy where individual economic incentives are guaranteed at maximum. In order to guarantee maximum economic incentives at all levels of society, the Korean government provides financial aids to the socially disadvantaged or powerless people within local communities. In promoting the community-based capitalism in the Korean society, policymakers need to support lower-level income people in local communities. To do so, the Korean government made SEPA for

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<sup>1</sup> Community-based capitalism is the term used to describe the long-term strategy for sustainable social and economic development at the level of communities in South Korea (Shim 2009; Yu 2011). The system uses focused and organized philanthropy and business investment occurring simultaneously. In our paper, it focuses community values and resources into three key areas: The harmony, balance and sustainability of human communities with Nature in accordance with the law of Nature; 'Politics of Nature' that seek optimal conditions for life in a community according to the principles of justice, equality and freedom (Latour 2004); and 'minoritarian ethics' that includes "others" (e.g., socially disadvantaged groups of people in society, and non-human nature in ecological systems) (Yu and Lee 2008).

the maximum benefit of the socially disadvantaged people in the Korean society. Under the guidelines of SEPA, the Korean government made legal obligations for social enterprises to control the operational activities of social enterprises in Korea. Under the principles of SEPA, in 2009, the Korean Microcredit Financial Foundation and Smile Microcredit Bank (SMB) was established in order to offer funds that can be used by new social enterprises. There are five Korean banks that are involved in providing funds for the operation of new social enterprises under the control of Korean microcredit financial foundation and SMB. The main functions of SMB include the provision of microcredit businesses, micro-financial businesses, small insurance business and providing information about the employment on social services either based locally or in Seoul. By conducting several interviews with top managers and working staff at SMB, the author identified the problematic situations of the networks of social enterprises and SMB as follows. The government's role in social enterprises and SMB should support a way to achieve social policies for a more just cause to reach a more solidified Korean society through the focus on unmet social needs. Good examples of unmet social needs are providing jobs for the socially disadvantaged people in local communities, dealing with social welfare issues in collaboration with local governments and pushing Korean 'chaebols' to unease social disparity between the rich and poor within the Korean society. By investigating the problematic situations using the time-related research, the team of research realized that discourse on social enterprises and the micro-finance business is seen to be dominated by Korean government and policy-makers. As a consequence, the regulations of social enterprises and laws of the Korean microfinance business and microcredit banks became the central codifying power in the Korean society. In this sense, the Korean society is characterized as a 'disciplinary society' or 'control society' as we discussed earlier.

## 5.2 The Identification of Assemblages in the Heterogeneous Network of Social Enterprises and SMB

Applying the assemblage theory to the situation of social enterprises and the microfinance business in Korea, two distinctive assemblages were identified as follows. Machinic assemblages of the networks of social enterprises and SMB are the buildings of SMB, a network of social enterprises, people (e.g., managers, working staff, volunteers and advisory boards), and financial resources (e.g., 'dormant deposits'<sup>2</sup> and funds offered by 'chaebols' (e.g. Samsung,

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<sup>2</sup> Dormant deposits refer to a savings account that has had no deposits or withdrawal, that is, account owner initiated transactions, for an extended period – over ten years. After an extended period of time dormant accounts are seized by the states they are in under "unclaimed property" laws. Korean government used dormant deposits as financial resources for a Korean microcredit bank, namely Smile Microcredit Bank.



Hyundai, SK and LG). Enunciative assemblages of the heterogeneous network are regulations and laws imposed by Korean government (under the control of the 'Financial Services Commission'), with the guideline of SEPA, rules and regulation of SMB, and cultural systems in Korean societies. According to the assemblage theory, a society or social system is nothing more than a temporary assemblage of 'solutions' and the virtual assemblage of 'problems' in given situations. Based on interviews of staff and volunteers both in Korean social enterprises and SMB, the author identified 'problems' that Korean society, while proud of its economic success in last two decades, is nevertheless an 'unhealthy' state and a sick society. Under the great influence of a centralized form of Korean organizations, society, and 'chaebols,' not only do Korean people tend to be more 'docile' than they should be but Korean social values are mixed with individualism or capitalism as there are no clear common values in the societies (Yu 2011). In order to generate new possible solutions, there are such possibilities as the 'assemblage' of connections made between SMB and 'stakeholders' (e.g., chaebols, universities, and a network of social enterprises within Korea) that will open possibilities and engage with more people to become the resilient to crises and conflicts within the local situations. It is necessary to create the 'third space' which coexists between the needs of local communities (it has its own value) and local people's work (it also has its own value). Then the nature of the third space is completely different from the natures of the actual needs of local communities and local people's work. Similarly, the social enterprise, which is not only for making profits but also addressing social issues, is characterized as following 'univocal' elements. For example, it needs to have individual commitments, allow goodwill that will happen in communities in the form of the voluntary work have market relations, and have public supports (e.g., donations) and government involvements. In this sense, the social enterprise should create the 'third space' between the private profit-making company and voluntary and public organization. In addition, cross-cultural understanding and acceptance is paramount for the development or sustainability of community businesses as some community-based social enterprises (called 'village enterprises' in Korea) explore their business opportunities with "multi-cultural families", which generally means Korean men living with foreign partners or vice versa in local communities.

### 5.3 Time-Related Research: Appreciation of Events Data

Dealing with the problematic and uneasy situations in current contexts, managers and working staff of SMB organized a series of workshops and formal meetings to discuss the role of SMB within social networks, which includes a number of social enterprises in Korea during 2009 and 2010. They agreed on solutions that were generated from the interaction between machinic assem-

blage and enunciative assemblage in the given situation. These solutions contributed to generate the following a series of events:

- Event 1: Providing educational services for social entrepreneurs within Korean Universities (1st September, 2010).
- Event 2: Offering volunteering services to the local communities using 1500 volunteers who are members of Smile Microcredit Volunteers (SMV) of SMB (15th December 2010).
- Event 3: Providing loans of an amount of 75.2 billion won, Korean currency (this amount is approximately 70 million US dollars) to 11,036 people in local communities (15th November 2010).

Having identified a series of events 1, 2, and 3, that can be regarded as ‘solutions’ in the time-related research, the next step of the time-related research is to identify ‘problems’ in order to discover wider contexts in which other possibilities (in the sense of virtual assemblages) exist. After the members of an advisory team of SMB (e.g., Dr. Jae Eon Yu and Professor Y. S. Yun at Korea University) appreciated a series of events which were made by both the ‘insider perspective’ of decision makers (e.g. managers and senior staff at SMB) and the ‘outsider perspective’ of the local participants within social practice, the appreciators entered into the process of identifying the new virtual assemblages that were appreciated from the new possibilities in a wider contexts. During this transformative process of identifying new assemblages, new decisions were made through the process of problematization. In a next step, appreciators or decision makers reflected the position of ‘the others’ or ‘minorities’ through the process of problematization in which participants could search for “all chances and possibilities” in the local and contingent situations. In this way, a new thought proceeds as the ethical question that occurs in a form of the ‘minoritarians ethics’. Put differently, Dr. Yu and Professor Yun functioned as the ‘judgement systems’ in order to create or appreciate new and possible ‘solutions’ (or new assemblages) in social practice. A series of the virtual events were then generated to create critical discourse on how to empower people (especially for the ‘marginalized group’ in overseas Korean communities) who want to control their own life. Appreciating a new series of events, the new ideas of strategic decision-making was developing for redirecting the future of SMB and its associated network of social enterprises in local communities. In this sense, a new series of virtual events 4 and 5 (these events refer to ‘problems’ which were identified in a wider context), and event 6 (this event refers to a new ‘solution’) was appreciated through the process of problematization amongst participants as follows:

- Event 4: A new proposal for providing loan for international Korean community-based enterprises was submitted to the CEO of SMB, Mr. S. Y. Kim (7th February, 2011)

- Event 5: A new business model for providing loan for ‘green microfinance’ and grassroots microfinance was submitted to the CEO of SMB, Mr. S. Y, Kim (7th February, 2011)
- Event 6: A new proposal for providing loans for underdeveloped countries (e.g., African countries) was accepted by the CEO of SMB, Mr. S. Y, Kim (29th March, 2012)

Further research has been planned to carry out whether a series of virtual events 4, 5 and 6 turn out as new solutions in the real world.

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## 6. Conclusions

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In this article, we explored the problematic nature of the networks of social enterprises and Smile Microcredit Bank, in which we have demonstrated a series of events in the time-related research in the contexts of the Korean society. Applying Deleuze’s theory of assemblages into understanding the nature of social transformation, the main contributions of our time-related research is to understand the transformative process of civilization through the appreciation of the critical questioning of ideologies, dominant discourse, and identities that have prevailed within the Korean society. For instance, as shown in the case study, Deleuze’s theory of assemblage is useful for analyzing processes of organizational transformation and social change especially focusing on ‘minorities’ in the society. Further research will then be necessary to appreciate the assemblage theory for understanding how the minoritarians ethics can be applied within other contexts in order to make a new connection between the machinic assemblage and enunicative assemblage from critical perspectives.

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