

Trends and Issues in Social Geography in the 2000s in Korea: (1) Theoretical Discussions

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Abstract : It can be suggested that social geography in the 2000s in Korea has achieved a considerable development, dealing with various theories and issues. This suggestion can be identified first of all with the publication of several texts of *Social Geography* in this period. For important theoretical discussions, the neoliberal glocalization process of capitalist economy has promoted geographical researches from the perspective of political economy, and the development of information and communication technology, increasing foreign immigrants, environmental problems such as the global warming, and social participation and empowerment of women in Korea have increased social geographical concerns with and theoretical discussions on informational society and city, multiculturalism and/or transnationalism, political ecology and environmental justice, and feminism. This paper provides a review on these major issues in recent theoretical discussions in social geography in Korea, and suggests a brief comment on its future development.

Key Words : Social geography, neoliberalism, multicultural society, informational society, political ecology, feminist geography

요약 : 2000년대 들어와서 한국의 사회지리학은 다양한 이론과 연구 주제들을 다루면서 상당한 발전을 이룬 것으로 평가된다. 이러한 평가는 우선 이 시기 여러 종류의 <사회지리학> 교재 발간을 통해 확인된다. 그리고 이론적 논의로서, 자본주의 경제의 신자유주의적 지구-지방화 과정은 이에 대한 정치경제학적 분석을 추동했으며, 정보통신기술의 발달, 외국인 이주자의 급증, 지구온난화와 같은 환경문제, 여성의 참여와 권리 신장 증대 등은 각각 정보사회(도시)이론, 다문화주의 및 초국가주의, 그리고 정치생태학과 환경정의, 페미니즘 등에 대한 관심을 증대시켰다. 이 논문은 2000년대 한국의 사회지리학에서 이론적으로 논의되고 있는 이러한 주요 논제들에 관해 검토하고, 한국의 사회지리학의 발전을 위한 간략한 논평을 제시하고자 한다.

주요어 : 사회지리학, 신자유주의, 다문화사회, 정보사회, 정치생태학, 페미니스트 지리학

1. Introduction

The development of a certain academic discipline

seems to be dependent partly on endeavors of researchers engaged in that discipline, and partly on changes in social reality which the discipline regards as its research subject. Social geography seems to be

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Table 1. Issues in social geography in the 2000s in S. Korea

General trends and theoretical issues	Empirical issues	
	Urban and communal social geography	Social geography of population and migration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication(and translation) of texts of social Geography - Political economy: neoliberalism - Multiculturalism: transnational migration - Theory of informational society: development of informational communication technology - Political ecology: environmental deterioration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urban housing and residential segregation - urban problems: poverty, crime, education, health care, etc. - social welfare, urban social space, urban and rural community building - Identity, sense of place, social movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population distribution and movement, regional reconstruction, population trend - Transforming to aging (or aged) society and social welfare for elderly people - Foreign immigrants and formation of multicultural social space

particularly the case, because its definition is quite different for individual researchers, and its subjects have to reflect the dynamic complexity of real society. The ambiguity of its definition and complexity of its subjects have made researches in social geography highly difficult, but at the same time they have inspired their challenge.

Though social geography in Korea is a specific field which started relatively late within the discipline, interests in the field has increased greatly in recent years. This paper is to examine important trends and various issues in social geography in Korea since the early 2000s. Korean society has experienced an expansion of socio-spatial polarization by the compelled process of neoliberalization after the IMF economic crisis, and the Korean government tends to ignore or dissimulate its severity, while continuously propelled neoliberal policies. In this kind of context, social geographers in Korea have endeavored to tackle with such social and spatial problems through active researches and education on them.

In order to see trends and issues in social geography in the 2000s in Korea, this paper describes briefly the development process of social geography in Korea and provides a review on general trends and major issues in

theoretical and conceptual discussions corresponding to recent changes in Korean society. The issues considered in this paper include the political economy perspective to analyze neoliberalism as both a dominant ideology and the actual mechanism, multiculturalism and transnationalism to see a massive foreign immigration, theories of informational society to deal with changes in social space generated with a rapid development of information and communication technology, political ecology and theory on environmental justice to deal with environmental problems, feminist geography and other conceptual issues suggested during the 2000s in Korea. Some other traditional, but specific, issues considered in this period (see table 1) will be reviewed elsewhere.

2. General trends of development of social geography

Even though it is not easy to define social geography briefly, one may define it in a preliminary sense as a specific field of geography that studies social phenomena and their relationship from the spatial perspective.

The development of social geography in Western countries seems to trace its origin back to Vidal's *Geographie Humaine* and to Ratzel's *Anthropo-geographie*. But it was on the 1960s when geographers' concern on social problems on urban housing and residential segregation, and socio-spatial disparity was heightened that social geography took its real place as a specific field of geography. Since then, social geography has made a significant advance, expanding its theoretical concern to various social theories including Marxism, postmodernism, feminism, and so on, and widening its research subjects including body, identity, gender, etc.

It can be said that the development of social geography in Korea began from the late 1970s and/or the 1980s, when the rapid state-initiated economic development brought about some social and spatial problems such as the massive rural-to-urban migration, formation of unauthorized settlements around the urban center of large cities, and urban poverty and other urban problems as well as uneven regional development. It was also at that time that some social geographers who finished his/her research for Ph.D. dissertation came back to Korea, and opened the course of social geography in Universities. Yet the positivist methodology made a mainstream in geographical research, and research subjects in social geography were mainly restricted within traditional ones such as distribution and movement of population, factorial analysis of urban ecology, and descriptive analysis of urban poverty(see Choi, B.D., 1996; 2002, ch.2).

Since the academic movement along with the democracy movement at the late 1980s made a moment of widening freedom of academic research, diverse types of social theories including not only behaviorism and humanism but also Marxism and postmodernism were introduced at the same time into social geography in Korea. Even though such a moment was made Korean social geographers very confusing, they tried to see so confusingly diverse social theories, and to ap-

ply them to various subjects which could be found in Korean society. For example, D. Harvey's two great books, *The Limits to Capital* and *The Condition of Post-modernity* were translated into Korean and published in 1995. And the first Korean text of *Social Geography* was published by Yeh, K.H.(1994) in 1994, though its main part was consisted with his translation of the English text of Jones and Eyles(1977) and was complemented with research results on Korean society. Park, Y.H. and Ahn, Y.J.(1988) also published their Korean translation of Maier, *et al.*, *Sozialgeographie*. These textbooks for teaching social geography seem to have reflected the fact that the course of social geography was open as a main subject in geography departments in university in Korea.

Facing with the IMF economic crisis in 1997, the Korean economy, once praised as a successful model of capitalist economic development among developing countries, was undergone a number of social and spatial problems, especially polarization of income and property, reducing government finance for social welfare, increasing household expenditure for private education, and environmental deterioration as well as economic depression. It can be presumed that these social and spatial problems might lead social geographers in Korea to take critical issues and theories into consideration more seriously. But there were not so many results in social geography in the early 2000s, even though Choi, B.D.(2002a; 2002b) edited his papers and published two books, *Contemporary Social Geography* and *The Limits to Modern Space*.

In the process of overcoming the IMF economic crisis, the increased investment into informational technology and industry have turned (seemingly unintentionally) Korea toward an informational society. But on the other hand, As Korean society in that process come to deepen its social and spatial disparity, and to meet a highly unstable real estate market, so demands for advancing social welfare and for stabi-

lizing urban housing were raised. Moreover, Korean society has made a transformation both toward an aging society with a low fertility and a high rate of elderly people, and toward a multicultural society with massive foreign labor workers and international marriage women. These dramatic change in Korean society in the 2000s seems to have increased interests in social geographical issues, which has activated researches on specific subjects in social geography, and which required new textbooks to see and teach new social issues, and hence three English textbooks have been translated and published in Korea almost at the same time in recent years: that is, *Understanding Social Geography* translated by Lee, W.H. and Ahn, Y.J.(2008), *Social Geography* translated by Park, K.H.(2009), and *Understanding Urban Social Geography* translated by Park, K.H. *et al.*(2012).

It seems to be true that, as Lee and Ahn write, “the textbooks of social geography used until now have made a great contribution to introduce social geography to Korea, and establish its identity, but there have been some limitations of them in reflecting rapidly accumulated academic achievements for last 3 decades”(Lee and Ahn, 2008, 8). There would be also some limitations of translated textbooks in considering some phenomena and processes specific to Korean society. Yet, the translation of Western books is one useful way to see theoretical discussions of recent issues and/or to consider theoretical arrangements of them in textbooks of social geography.

The original works of these translated textbooks were published in the 2000s, which not only deal with various types of social identity such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability which became recently social issues, together with traditional issues on urban poverty, housing problem, and crime, but also show a quite different frame of arrangement of subjects or chapters from the traditional one. These books put forward the relationship between socio-spatial action

and structure, or organize its contents along with the geographical scale, so that make us to think about how new social issues are constituted on various scales of space. There are also a number of original or translated works with special research results dealing with theoretical discussions and/or new social and spatial issues, as we shall see below.

3. Major issues in theoretical discussions

One element that makes social geography different from other fields of geography seems that it is very sensitive to various theories and concepts in social science and humanities. Even though some of social geographical researches are of course still dependent on traditional descriptive empirical approaches or on complex quantitative and statistical analyses, others show their tenacious interests in the political economy perspective, postmodern social theory, multiculturalism . transnationalism . postcolonialism . cosmopolitanism, political ecology and theory of environmental justice, theory of informational society, feminism, and other conceptual issues in order to tackle with newly emerging socio-spatial problems. These theoretical discussions seem to make a considerable contribution to development of social geography in Korea, even though most of them are introduced from and hence rooted on western literature.

1) The political economy perspective and neoliberalism

The political economy perspective seems to have a specific position in theoretical discussions in social geography in Korea, though it looks far from the mainstream. This perspective has been introduced, formu-

lated, and applied to Korean situations mainly on the basis of Harvey's work. All of his works published in the 2000s, including *Spaces of Hope* (Choi, B.D., et al., 2001), *The New Imperialism* (Choi, B.D., 2005), *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Choi, B.D., 2007), *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (Lim, D.G., et al., 2010), *A Companion to Marx's Capital* (Kang, S.J., 2011), *The Enigma of Capital* (Lee, K.G., 2012), and *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (Choi, B.D., forthcoming), have been translated and published in Korea. Introducing Harvey's works into Korea, there have been some critiques which pointed out some theoretical difficulties or limitations (Kim, G.H., 2006; Choi, B.D., 2009c), but his works are now so well-known and famous as to take a core position in political economy discourse in Korea. What is more, Lefebvre's great work on *La Production de l'espace* also recently has been translated and published in Korea (Yang, Y.L. 2011), and hence it seems to be expected that theoretical discussions from the Marxist perspective on social space would become more exciting.

Even though those works can be used as key texts for theoretical discussions from the political economy perspective in general, some critical consideration on signification and limitation of the political economy perspective seems to be necessary. Indeed, recent changes in the reality and emerging new research issues seem not only to have widened the external scope of research from the political economy perspective on social geography, but also to have made obscure its internal consistency, posing serious questions on the value of Marxist or political economy perspective. And hence, concerned with such questions as well as trends in recent research development from the political economy perspective in Western geography, Choi, B.D.(2007) provides a reconsideration on some debates and controversial issues in it.

But what is more important is to see how this perspective can be applied to empirical researches,

for example, to analyze critically neoliberal reconfiguration of urban social space for recent economic development or accumulation of capital (especially for 'accumulation by dispossession' in Harvey's term) with support of the government's neoliberal policies, and to suggest alternative urban social spaces for de-neoliberalization. Even though the term, neoliberalism seems to be disappeared in academic discussions and critical discourse of social movements as well as in government's policies, neoliberalism seems to exercise still its hegemonic power in Korean society both as an implicit ideology in social discourse of mass media and of government policy, and as a actual mechanism in almost all parts of Korean society.

From this point of view, Choi, B.D. has published a series of papers which analyzed both theoretically and empirically neoliberal urbanization an urban policies, and collected them in an edition titled with *The City of Capital* (Choi, B.D., 2012). In this work, he provides a positively critical introduction of Harvey's view on neoliberalism, and a comparison between theories of Harvey and Jessop on urban entrepreneurialism, defines neoliberalism and neoliberalization process in Korea as 'developmental neoliberalism', then analyzes concrete case studies on the crisis of real estate market (or built environment) in Seoul and the Capital region, on difficulties of construction of Incheon Free Economic Zone, on problems of private procurement for construction and operation of a road in Daegu, and limitations of Busan Biennale, and finally discusses de-neoliberalized urbanism and alternative urban policy.

One of core concepts in theoretical discussions for alternatives to neoliberal urban policy is 'the right to the city' for which both Lefebvre and Harvey suggested. Kang, H.S.(2009; 2010) and Hwang, J.T.(2011) try to reconsider this concept theoretically, and describe its possibility and limitations to be applied actually into urban space. According to them, the tendency that "justice and rights discourses are influencing

progressive urban academia” seem to be “a reaction against the force of neoliberal globalization”(Kang, 2009, 36). But as Hwang identifies, the discourse on urban rights can be divided into two types, and “the institutionalization of the ‘right to the city’” tends to “downsize the importance of a moral claim” for urban right, and hence it is important to see “the right to the city’ as the continuing interaction between a legal claim and a moral claim for the production of the alternative urban space” (Hwang, 2011, 56).

2) Transnational migration and multiculturalism

Another important issue in theoretical discussions include a group of concepts such as multiculturalism, transnationalism, postcolonialism and cosmopolitanism which have took a place central in discourse on multicultural social space which has been produced by a massive in-flow of foreign migrants into Korea since the 1990s. The uneven regional development between countries in the neoliberal process of glocalization and the time-space compression with development of transportation and communication technology have promoted international movements of labor power as well as commodity, capital and information. Foreign immigrants have rushed into Korea since the 1990s. Seen from the domestic situation, it also the period that small and old manufacturing factories could no longer meet their demand for cheap labour, because of the drainage of rural surplus labor.

The increase of foreign immigrants in Korean society has been so dramatical that most of Korean people, including policy makers and academic researchers, become interested in not only their ethnicity and culture but also their social and spatial influence. As a result, there have been numerous publications of texts and papers on transnational migration across national borders and foreign immigrants’ settlement process at

a new community, from a number of academic fields diverse from sociology, anthropology, welfare study, as well as social geography. But, above all, it can be pointed out that there has been little connectivity in researches among such diverse academic fields, and hence that a further development of theoretical discussion is required for interdisciplinary and integrated research on transnational migration and transformation to multicultural society of Korea (Choi, B.D. 2011b).

In the field of social geography, many scholars have increased their concern on these issues, and conducted their theoretical and empirical researches on them. For example, Choi, B.D. suggests that the concept of what he calls ‘multicultural space’ seems to be more insightful than that of multicultural society, because the process of international migration and settlement on a new locality should be seen itself as a spatial process. He examines significance and limitation of multiculturalism, dividing it into two type, that is, passive and active one, and arguing for space of struggle for recognition to realize the latter one (Choi, B.D., *et al.*, 2011, ch.2). Choi, B.D.(2011a) also has discussed significance and limitation of ‘multicultural coexistence’ which has been suggested as a core concept in Japan to develop multicultural policies and discourses, and suggested an alternative concept of ‘glocal citizenship’.

Together with the concept of multiculturalism, transnationalism, postcolonialism, and cosmopolitanism are also significant concepts or theories for researches on international migration and diaspora. A series of papers of Park, K.H. have discussed significance and limitations of such concepts in their operation in ideological discourse and actual process of power exercise. For instance, Park, K.H.(2005a) points out that the term ‘hybridity’, emerged as one of the most popularized leitmotiv especially in postcolonial politics, is argued to provide a critical ‘third space’, but can be easily articulated in producing new cultural discourse and empowering hegemonic subjects in

certain space. In a similar manner, Park, K.H.(2007) also points out tree pitfalls in transnationalism, and Park, K.H.(2009b) explores how the Korean state has tried to make the rise of the transnational apparatus through mobilizing what he calls 'transnational nationalism'. Furthermore, Park, K.H.(2012) discusses critically the Korean government's attempt to turn the national institutional framework of immigration policies to neoliberalism.

According to Park, K.H.'s works, multiculturalism, transnationalism, or even postcolonialism can be seen as a normative frame for foreign immigration policy on the one hand, and also can be mobilized as an ideological term of new discourse to generate and exercise political power. That is, as he properly points out, even though "transnationalism has become a key concept in explicating contemporary international migrants, especially their socio-economic networks and flexible cultural identities", there are some potential dangers internalized in that concept, because "it neglects diversity of transnational phenomena, heterogeneity of transnational migrants, and national articulation of transnationalism"(Park, K.H., 2007, 77). His critical investigation on transnationalism which has been supported by his empirical researches seems to be quite useful for reinterpreting a seemingly normative concept, even though he does not provide explicitly what is the theoretical ground on which he develops such a criticism.

Some geographers' concern on these concepts and on their related reality also has been expressed through translation of books such as *Geography of Postcolonialism* (Lee, Y.M. and Park, K.H., 2011) and *Cosmopolitanism and the Geography of Freedom* (Choi, B.D., forthcoming), and led to further discussions on importance or implication for geography education of critical multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism (Park, K.H., 2008; Park, S.H., 2009; Park, S.M., 2011), or specific issues such as 'feminization of international

migration' from feminism and feminist psychoanalytic perspective (Park, K.H., 2005b; Jung, H.J., 2009). Especially, according to Park, S.M.(2011, 91), the critical ideas of multicultural education can be compared with simple intercultural education in a way that "the former emphasis on the social structural changes by which discrimination can be eliminated", while "the latter focuses on the understandings on and coexistence of different minority groups". But it is important to see that multiculturalism, transnationalism, or other related concepts do not implicate in itself a normative concept, since, as Park, K.H. has properly argues, those concepts also can be mobilized for certain groups to hold and exercise political power.

3) Communication technology and Informational urban social space

The development of information and communication technology(ICT) and its influences on social space, which have been often conceptualized in terms of 'informational society' (or 'informational city') have generated another important issue in theoretical discussions of social geography in Korea. It is well-known that Korean society has experienced a rapid expansion of use of computer, mobile phone, and other high-tech communication equipments since the late 1990s when the government promoted the investment into ICT to overcome the economic crisis in 1997. The development of ICT and the diffusion of related equipments have made a great influence on social and spatial reconfiguration of Korean society, and hence increased academic interests on this issue.

One of important scholars who have provided theoretical bases for discussion on the issue is M. Castells, whose famous book, *The Informational City*(1989) and his trilogy on the information age, *The Rise of the Network Society*(1996), *The Power of Identity*(1997), *End of Millennium*(1998) have been translated into

Korean respectively by Choi, B.D.(2002), Kim, M.H. *et al.*(2003), Jung, B.S.(2008), Park, H.W. *et al.*(2003). But there have been few theoretical studies on socio-spatial changes in relation to transformation to informational society. Some examples of conceptual studies include that of Lee, H.Y. and Lee, Y.G.(2004) on the so-called 'digital' divide and the change of spatial structure by the increasing diffusion of the internet, and that of Choi, B.D.(2006) on development of ICT and its influence on social space.

In order to examine influences of ICT on daily activities with spatio-temporal reconfiguration, it seems to be better to put interests on socio-spatial relationships or networks rather than individual phenomena, which have been constructed under the influence of ICT. And hence, reviewing the works of Castells, Urry, and Latour, Choi, B.D.(2006) has argued that the development of ICT presupposes a creation of information network, and hence 'social space of network' becomes a new issue in the age of informational society. In particular, he suggests that social space of network seems to have three strata which has 'instant', 'functional' and 'physical' connectivity, and that it can be conceptualized "as not only a newly emerging social space but also as reconstruction of subjects' identity through his/her participation into information networks as a node"(Choi, B.D., 2006, 245).

Some more specific issues which can be considered in the transformation to informational society and city are a major concern of a series of Lee, H.S.'s papers. He first of all provides a review on four theoretical perspectives on how electronic media technologies involve and produce time-space dimensions in geometrical spaces: that is, "van Dijk's dual structure of networks as scale extension and reduction; Latour's actor-networks as fluid and hybrid networks; Virilio's dromospherical time as global media vectors; and Castells' timeless time as non-sequential flows" (Lee, H.S. 2006a). And then, concerned with the relations

between machines, cities and bodies, he explores how mobile networks are related with the physical space of the city and the psychological space of the body (Lee, H.S., 2006b). In a similar manner with Choi's emphasis on 'social space of network', Lee is interested in 'mobile networks' which have transformed urban spaces and human bodies simultaneously. In particular, according to him, "mobile networks involve the production of paradoxical emotional spaces in relation to mobiles users' emotions and desires to be dis/connected with mobile networks"(Lee, H.S., 2006b, 561).

Lee, H.S. has gone further to suggest an inquiry into the characteristics and implications of urban-scapes produced by internet cafes (widely called PC Bangs) in Korea (Lee, H.S., 2007a). His study on semiotic representations of subway space as the urban machine space of local mobility can be regarded as another insightful attempt to see how the spatio-temporal representations of the subway space form the space of 'non-place' on the one hand and the space of 'place' on the other". For him, "the subway space should be regraded to be not only the space of 'mobility' which people move in and through, but also the space of 'identity' which has effects on the ways form them to see the machine space and its urban space"(Lee, H.S. 2009, 301). He also emphasize imaginative geographies and critical geography education in networked cities (Lee, H.S., 2007b). This series of Lee, H.S.'s work seem to have made a valuable contribution to a theoretical consideration on informational social space, especially in terms of the relation between machines and human bodies and on the development of mobility and networked social space by electronic media.

4) Political ecology and environmental justice

Another important issue in theoretical discussions of social geography in Korea is concerned with envi-

ronmental deterioration and environmental justice. Local problems in physical environment have been somewhat controlled and hence considerably mitigated since the 1990s in Korea, but the four major rivers 'restoration' project which has been recently compelled by the Korean government against furious oppositions of civil society as well as the rapid increase of oil price and climate change problem keeps attention to the environmental issue. Even though environmental problems are usually seen as an empirical issue of environmental geography in Korea, political ecology and environmental justice become a new theoretical issue in social geography in a sense that it deals with certain problems in the relation and society and environment.

The social geographical concern with this issue seems to be reflected on endeavors' of Jung, K.H. *et al*(2005) and Kwon, S.C.(2008) to translate English Books with the same title of Political Ecology into Korean. When the original author, Robbins, was asked to give further comments for the Korean translation of his work, he writes that serious changes have been brought about in political ecology, as "Korean including farmers and workers have played an initiative role for international challenge against WTO for recent years", and his book is expected to provide Korean readers with a considerable insight to see these changes (Kwon, S.C., 2008, 6).

Apart from a consideration on how much Robbins' work has provided such an insight, there is another important translation which seems to be more fundamental and radical in approaching to the difficulty and limitations of overcoming environmental problems generated in capitalism, especially in the neoliberalization process of capitalist political and economic system: That is, the translation of Huh, N.H. *et al* (2008) of an edited book on the relation between nature and society written from an explicitly socialist perspective. And some implication of this translated book has been reflected on Choi, B.D. (2009b) which explores how

capitalism continues capital accumulation through environmental fixes despite ecological crises. After reconsidering some major concepts or themes on the relationship between nature and capital accumulation, such as Foster and Burkett's concept of 'metabolic rift', O'Connor's concept of nature as the condition of production, Smith's concept of production of nature, and the Castree's concept of environmental fix, Choi suggests a typology of strategies to control and use nature for capital accumulation especially in neoliberal capitalism, by combing types of subsumption of nature with types of environmental fix.

As environmental problems have been regarded as an important social geographical issue, so environmental justice becomes a new specific subject among those who are interested in that issue. A series of papers on environmental justice written by Choi, B.D. tried to see diverse traditions of social theories and philosophies on environmental justice. The book which collected those papers under the title of Critical Ecology and Environmental Justice (Choi, B.D., 2009a) divides theoretical discussions on environmental justice into three major traditions, that is, the liberal, Marxist, and post-modern formulation, and re-examines critically specific concepts and theories in each traditions. Even though there seems little resonance to his work, it seems to be a valuable attempt to formulate a general theory of environmental justice, constructed on the basis of three interrelated concepts of justice, that is, justice of distribution, justice of recognition, and justice of production. Eom, E.H.(2009) suggests an inquiry on the Third World environmental issues, especially focusing on an approach based on environmental justice, and suggesting some tasks of geography education.

5) Feminist geography and other theoretical issues

Another issue which has attracted social geographers is feminism. As mentioned previously, the feminist perspective, highlighting geographies of difference and identity, has been emphasized in researches on feminization of transnational migration or diaspora, especially on immigration of international marriage women. Apart from this issue, feminist geography could be introduced to social geography in Korea as a critical viewpoint to challenge dominant social boundaries of difference, such as gender, race or sexuality. In a patriarchal Confucian society, Korean geographers could not properly deal with those issues from the feminist perspective until the 1990s. But as Korean society needs or allows participation of women into labor market and other public fields, some important feminist issues has been highlighted on the front of social space, attracting social geographers' attention.

One can find this kind of geographers' concern with feminism in two important translated books of *Gender, Identity, and Place*, by Women and Space Study Group(2010), of *Feminism and Geography* by Jung, H.J.(2011). In translating these works, Women and Space Study Group (organized recently by young geographers and other researchers in Korea who are interested in feminist approaches on space) and Jung (a member of this group) need introductory guides for feminist geographers to see relations between gender and place as well as the meaning of place and characteristics of women's socio-spatial action. In a more specific manner, Lee, S.A.(2009) attempts to see the ways in which Seoul as an urban space can be read and interpreted from gender perspective, especially exploring the gendered segregation and representations of space in Seoul.

In addition to those major issues that we have discussed above, some significant attempts have been sug-

gested to conceptualize social space in relation to human being and society. For example, Park, S.K.(2007) tries to reconstruct the relationship between human being and space through the concept of everyday space, while deconstructing traditional concepts on space in previous geography. In a similar vein, he also discusses the relationship between human being and space through 'recognition', which he argues is not only the natural desire of human being, but also makes it possible to newly recognize the relationship between space and human being(Park, S.K., 2011).

Park, K.T.(2010) critically examine a variety of perspectives on the interactions among space, people, and society, including the works of Tuan, Entrikin, Lefebvre, and Foucault, and suggests that a new conceptual framework of understanding the interactions among them is needed. Park, B.G.(2012), paying special attention to the 4 important dimensions of socio-spatial relations, such as place, territory, network and scale, examines the ways in which these 4 dimensions are overlapped, interconnected and dynamically interacting with one another from the perspective of 'multiscalar networked territoriality'.

4. Concluding Comments

It seems to be suggested that social geography in the 2000s in Korea has attracted many concerns of Korean geographers (as well as non-geographers), and has made a considerable development to tackle with dynamic changes in Korean society. This can be identified in the publication of several original or translated texts on Social Geography with newly reconstituted frameworks in this period. They seem not only to reflect some geographers' concern on social geography, but also to make it possible to teach and diffuse social geographical thinking.

In particular, for theoretical discussions in social geography, the political economy perspective continues to make its theoretical significance to see neoliberalism as a free market oriented ideology and actual mechanism and to consider how it has been realized in and through urban social spaces. What is more, newly emerging diverse social issues, such as the rapid increase of foreign immigrants, development of information and communication technology and diffusion of related equipments such as computer and mobile phone, the dramatical rising of oil price and influence of global warming, and social participation and empowerment of women in Korean society have brought about serious considerations on multiculturalism and/or transnationalism, theories on informational society and city, political ecology and social and environmental justice, and postmodern feminism, activating theoretical discussions as well as empirical researches on those issues.

Dynamic changes in Korean society which would be worried about to make it more unstable and problematic seem to give a further influence on social geography in Korea. To deal with such a circumstance, more insightful theoretical discussions as well as more sophisticated empirical researches should be promoted. But what is problematic is that such theoretical discussions have been deployed around imported foreign social theories. Various socio-spatial phenomena that one can experience in Korean society is not so different from those in Western societies, because both of them are generated in the same context, that is, in the capitalist political and economic system, that one may not need to be negative against such discussions on Korean situations through Western social theories. However, the development of a certain society is path-dependent, and hence socio-spatial phenomena in Korea must appear its own characteristics which are specific to Korean society. Then it is highly important to see such characteristics specific to Korea which make

it different from Western countries. In other words, introduce and discuss about Western social theories, social geographers in Korea need to scrutinize both significance and limitations of them on the contexts of Korean situations, and to reconstruct them on the basis of empirical researches on socio-spatial phenomena in Korean society.

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