

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: WRESTLING WITH THE ANGELS:
 SYNTHESIZING ASSEMBLAGE THEORY
 AND CONJUNCTURAL ANALYSIS IN
 EXAMINING THE KOREAN SPORT
 CONTEXT

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Given the increase of ambiguities and uncertainties in contemporary society in general—and in sport and physical culture in particular—it is essential to explore diversified elements simultaneously rather than fixate on only a single factor (Anderson, 2014; Horton, 2020; Law et al., 2014; Ryan, 2021). Accordingly, this thesis introduces Manuel DeLanda’s (2006a, 2006b, 2011, 2016) “Deleuzian-inspired” (Andrews, 2021b, p. 72) assemblage theory as a novel approach to understanding our complex society and its continuous transformations as “assemblages of assemblages” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 3). More importantly, just as DeLanda (2006, 2011, 2016) reorganized Deleuze’s notions when he suggested his own unique assemblage theory, I reconceptualize DeLanda’s assemblage theory by adopting certain vital concepts within conjunctural cultural studies, including the notions of conjuncture and articulation, to propose my own conjunctural analysis-based assemblage theory. Additionally, on a basis of my own version of assemblage theory, I then analyze three representative conjunctures that can be found within Korean history—a longstanding period of totalitarian regimes, the national economic crisis, and contemporary Korean society—in order to discern both dominant and overlooked assemblages within them as well as their endless mutations.

Considering the conspicuous paucity of theoretical and conceptual discussions concerning an assemblage and assemblage theory despite the growing academic attention paid to these concepts (Dewsbury, 2011; Savage, 2020), my clarification and reinterpretation of DeLanda's (2006, 2011, 2016) assemblage theory will make another meaningful contribution to the advancement of its theoretical and conceptual clarification. Analyzing three particular conjunctures within Korean history using assemblage theory will also ascertain the methodological and empirical potential of the concept by illuminating certain "more-than-human aspects of the socio-material world" (Müller & Schurr, 2016, p. 217) without adhering to anthropocentrism, thereby effectively bridging the scholarly gap that exists in the field of sport and physical culture, especially between the United States and South Korea (Andrews, 2019; Coakley, 2021; Tian & Wise, 2020). Ultimately, the critical engagement with and extension of DeLanda's (2006, 2011, 2016) assemblage theory will provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen the architecture of the complex contextual relations that can critically delineate how society has been formed and how it has come into being by offering a fundamental addendum to the contextual cultural studies approach while also investigating the structure and function of contemporary sport as multifaceted assemblages (Andrews, 2019; King, 2005).

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by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2022

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I owe an enormous debt of thanks to my advisor, Dr. David L. Andrews for not only guiding this thesis but for helping me cope with every vicissitude. It is impossible for me to fully express my deepest gratitude to him considering my limited English skills, but it is truly an honor for me to work with a figure who I admire the most. I also deeply thank my committee, Dr. Shannon Jette and Dr. Ronald Mower, for their continuous support and patience both for this project and my graduate school life as an international student. Additionally, I am grateful for constructive feedback from Dr. Michael Friedman, who enabled me to contemplate crucial but overlooked topics in my thesis.

The friendship and support of my fellow graduate students have been invaluable. They always warmly and willingly welcomed and helped me despite my unintentional noncooperation. I appreciate insightful comments from Brandon Wallace and Eric Stone for both my thesis and life in the US. A special mention should also go to Junyeon Won and Wontak Kim, who always helped me go through various unexpected issues in the US.

I am also thankful to influential scholars in South Korea who ultimately led me to PCS, including Dr. Yoonso Choi, Dr. Eunha Koh, and Dr. Sangwoo Nam. Without Dr. Choi's tremendous support, I would have never dreamed of studying abroad with wonderful people around me. Thanks to Dr. Koh, I gained priceless research experience which is also helpful in writing this thesis. Although I have never met Dr. Nam, all of his work is always fundamental to my research; most importantly, his book led me to meet Dr. Andrews.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to people outside my academic life. Without unconditional help from Becky and Steve Jantz, I would have failed to survive in the US. All of my general understanding of sport and physical culture is initially from Kunwoong Kim, my lifelong bodybuilding mentor. With his coaching and encouragement, I "stood up" and walked again. I also appreciate my friends in South Korea, including Gunho Wang, Junsuk Kim, Sungkwon Shin, Gimin Lee, Kang Yoon, Hansol Jung, Kihoon Shin, Yunghwan Kyun, and Sangchul Park, to name just a few. Lastly, I am truly grateful for the support from my family, mainly my mom. Even my existence would have never been possible without her tears and sacrifice. Thank you for everything from the bottom of my heart.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Despite continuous efforts to understand its complexities, the nature of contemporary society constantly evolves into unexpected forms and manifestations while impacting and being impacted by diverse factors, thus ever remaining equivocal. Therefore, rather than analyzing it by merely focusing on one particular factor, I argue that we require a broader perspective that can simultaneously mirror a range of social, political, cultural, environmental, technological, and economic aspects as a way to critically dissect its rather ambiguous, multi-dimensional character (cf. Anderson, 2014; Horton, 2020; Law et al., 2014; Ryan, 2021).

In other words, to understand “the rapidly shifting and changing fragments of reality which confront us today” (Hall, 2007, p. 276), it is necessary to examine a wide range of elements without adhering to only one feature. Consequently, engaging relevant concepts and theories is imperative for a more critical dissection of these multiplicities that exist within contemporary society. As Hall (2007) noted:

I would do without theory if I could! The problem is I cannot. You cannot. Because the world presents itself in the chaos of appearances, and the only way in which one can understand, break down, analyse, grasp, in order to do something about the present conjuncture that confronts one, is to break into that series of congealed and opaque appearances with the only tools you have: concepts, ideas, and thoughts. (p. 277)

Hence, I contend that embracing Manuel DeLanda’s (2006a, 2006b, 2011, 2016) assemblage theory will provide another meaningful way to more wisely scrutinize “the complexity of social

life” (Howell et al., 2002, p. 153).

Mostly in conjunction with Pierre-Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze initially developed the concept of an assemblage. However, many scholars criticized Deleuze’s work because of “mystification, deliberately obscure language, confused thinking, and the misuse of scientific concepts” (Sokal & Bricmont, 1999, p. xi), as well as “lack of clarity” (Sokal & Bricmont, 1999, p. 154). In this regard, DeLanda’s reconceptualization of Deleuze’s discursive explanations of an assemblage has improved the academic accessibility of the concept while also enriching the existing literature (Andrews, 2019). However, DeLanda’s reorganization was also subject to several critiques. As Buchanan (2021) noted:

Simplifying Deleuze and Guattari’s thought, as DeLanda tries to do, does not seem to me to be the right way of going about this because, apart from the strange model of scholarship it entails, of avoiding rather than working through conceptual difficulty, it necessarily leads to a diminished understanding of the concept. And yet that tends to be the way most commentators go about dealing with the concept of the assemblage, which no doubt explains both the uniformity of interpretations and the apparent reluctance in the field to return to the original source material. Assemblage has all but become a ‘received idea’ (as Flaubert put it), that is, an idea that is so well understood it no longer bears thinking about in a critical way. (pp. 2–3)

I do not believe that DeLanda merely simplified the concept of an assemblage by adulterating its original significance. Rather, considering the various critiques of Deleuze’s work illustrated above, DeLanda clarified Deleuze’s enigmatic explanations by providing new ways to understand society

as assemblages.

However, aligning with Buchanan's other argument, I maintain that the concept of an assemblage is now in a state of stagnation since only two ideas within assemblage thinking—relationality and heterogeneity—have received significant academic recognition without other important ideas being adequately contemplated. In other words, I assert that the concept of an assemblage has been used “in a relatively simplistic fashion” (Tomlinson, 2002, p. 46). Moreover, although relationality and heterogeneity are two crucial ideas, they are “only one dimension” (Tomlinson, 2002, p. 46) within assemblage thinking; they do not represent a complete theorization of an assemblage. Thus, despite its innovative potential, the concept of an assemblage “remains underdeveloped” (Tomlinson, 2002, p. 47) without the deeper implications of the notion being interrogated.

Consequently, rather than fixating on a “comfortable position” (Wright, 2001, p. 135), I argue that incessant theoretical and conceptual wrestling for a better understanding of an assemblage and complex contemporary society in association with the notion is critical. As Stuart Hall (2019) adroitly stated:

I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle, of *wrestling with the angels*. The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency. (p. 75, italics added)

Following Hall, rather than centering the discussion around only partial aspects by reiterating them, the concept of an assemblage truly requires persistent and somewhat extreme processes of “wrestling with the angels.” Hence, if DeLanda (2006, 2011, 2016) wrestled with Deleuze's

concept of an assemblage and suggested his unique assemblage theory, I will fight off DeLanda's assemblage theory and propose my own version of assemblage theory which I argue can facilitate a better understanding of contemporary society in general and sport in particular.

1.1 Research Question/Problem/Statement

Clearly defining the concept of an assemblage is impossible because the originator of the notion, Gilles Deleuze, noted rather little about it and seemed to have tried to avoid developing it as a single concrete theory (Buchanan, 2021; DeLanda, 2006b; Müller, 2015; Nail, 2017; Savage & Lewis, 2018). Instead, Deleuze regarded an assemblage as “a provisional analytical tool” (Müller, 2015, p. 28), too convoluted to elicit a clear definition (Buchanan, 2021). Thus, instead of proposing a one-dimensional fixed definition of an assemblage, I will first address the fundamental features that DeLanda (2006, 2011, 2016) delineated to highlight a fluid understanding and prevent static interpretations of the concept by merely focusing on relationality and heterogeneity.

The second question concerns my version of assemblage theory, which I will develop based on DeLanda's (2006, 2011, 2015, 2016) analytical explanations. However, I will embrace conjunctural cultural studies, mostly elucidated by Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg, to overcome the shortcomings that several scholars have identified in DeLanda's assemblage theory (e.g., Buchanan, 2015, 2021; Bueger, 2014; Harman, 2008, 2014).

Embracing conjunctural cultural studies on the basis of DeLanda's assemblage theory is my strategic choice because I believe what is more important than the theory is the “detour through theory” (Nealon, 2016, p. 727; cf. Grossberg, 1997, 2007, 2008; Hall, 1997; Wright, 2001).

Specifically, although my primary focus in this paper will be on DeLanda's assemblage theory, the "theory is not an end unto itself" (Grossberg, 2008, p. 34). Instead, a more fundamental question is using assemblage theory "to open new possibilities for transforming the existing context, and to imagine new futures" (Grossberg, 2008, p. 34). In short, with assemblage thinking, the ultimate goal is finding ways to challenge the status quo and truly "*make a difference*" (Andrews, 2008, p. 57, italics in original). Consequently, the synthesis of assemblage theory and conjunctural cultural studies will demonstrate the political sensibilities of my version of assemblage theory, ultimately helping to identify and bring about worthwhile social change.

I believe that leveraging both procedures will effectively expound my DeLandian understanding of assemblage theory. I will then use this theory to analyze three critical moments (i.e., conjunctures) within South Korea—a longstanding totalitarian regime, the 1997 financial crisis, and contemporary Korean society—while exploring movements and mutations of diverse assemblages within each moment. In conducting these case studies, I will identify dominant and unseen assemblages that exist within the Korean context. Hence, I ultimately hope to demonstrate that each assemblage is critically intertwined, revealing the Korean sport industry and, thereby, overall society as assemblages of assemblages (DeLanda, 2016).

Lastly, reflecting on the historically complex and context-specific conditions of Korean society (Andrews, 2019; Grossberg, 1997), I hope to identify and offer a "contextually specific" (Grossberg, 2018, p. 112) measure for desirable future reform. Based on these explanations, my research questions are as follows:

1. What is an assemblage/assemblage theory?

- a. What is my understanding of an assemblage (e.g., terminological problem: *agencement* and assemblage)?
 - b. What are the representative features of an assemblage (e.g., relations of exteriority, territorialization/deterritorialization, nonlinear causality)?
2. What are the distinctive features of my version of assemblage theory?
 - a. What are the shortcomings of DeLanda's assemblage theory?
 - b. How do I address them?
3. How can assemblage theory further the contextual understanding of sport?
4. What are some dominant and overlooked/unseen assemblages in the Korean sport context?
 - a. How has the Korean sport industry been organized and developed?
5. What are the implications of these findings and what future reforms are desirable?

1.2 Significance of Research

Elucidating DeLanda's assemblage theory and proposing my own version by embracing conjunctural cultural studies will significantly advance the extant literature, particularly concerning the fields of sport and physical culture. First, theoretical and conceptual discussions of assemblages remain scarce despite their academic potential; instead, too greater of an emphasis is placed only on relationality and heterogeneity. However, instead of these two notions, I assert that the ultimate point an assemblage and, therefore, assemblage theory should highlight is complex power relations and dynamics, ultimately enabling it to discover different possibilities for positive

social change. Hence, by focusing on reaching a (temporary) theoretical consensus and achieving conceptual clarification, my version of assemblage theory will suggest novel approaches that can more critically respond to contemporary moments for the purpose of creating different future possibilities (Hall, 2007; Wallace, 2019).

Second, my research will also enhance empirical interpretations of assemblages. As DeLanda (2006b) explained, “the lack of cross-cultural comparisons” and “the absence of detailed analyses of social mechanisms” (p. 7) could be seen as the primary shortcomings of his explanations on the basis of assemblages. However, I believe that the three empirical chapters of this thesis project can reduce these inadequacies. Since I will examine the Korean context and the diverse assemblages that exist within it, my investigation will provide a valuable opportunity to comprehend the rich cultural aspects of a non-Western nation by comparing them with DeLanda’s prior illustrations. Furthermore, since I will delve into three critical moments of Korean history, these conjunctural analyses will enable us to gain deeper knowledge regarding the complex social formations and historical transformations within the realm of sport in South Korea.

In addition, given the globalized nature of the sociology of sport, by introducing Korean sport sites and related issues to the academic field of the American sociology of sport, my research will effectively bridge the existing scholarly gaps between the two (Coakley, 2021; Tian & Wise, 2020). Moreover, this thesis is an opportunity to employ assemblage thinking more critically within the Korean context. My conjunctural analysis of the Korean context will directly respond to the longstanding need for greater critical attention paid to cultural studies in Korea (Andrews & Koh, 2002; see also Cho, 2012).

Third, although some scholars have sought to create research methods based on assemblage theory (e.g., Baker & McGuirk, 2017; Feely, 2019; Honan, 2007), the discussion of applicable research methods concerning assemblage thinking remains extremely marginal. My interrogation regarding appropriate assemblage theory-based research methods can, thus, significantly expand the academic knowledge regarding methodological discussions concerning assemblage thinking.

Fourth, my engagement of three conjunctures within the context of South Korea will serve as a critical response to Grossberg's (2018) and Andrews' (2019) calls for a macro-level examination of society. As Grossberg (2018) stated:

Cultural studies does not deny the value of intellectual and political work at these other levels of abstraction, but it does assert that work on the conjuncture—often but not necessarily understood at the level of the nation state—is crucial in the present context. In fact, cultural studies often seems to suggest that abandoning a critical engagement with either national or state formations in the contemporary context, whatever certain theories might assert, would be disastrous. (p. 109)

Thus, incorporating assemblage theory and the concept of the conjuncture will allow for a new way of understanding the macro-level interpretations of a nation (i.e., South Korea) as a connected and ceaselessly transformed entity entangled with numerous social forces. More specifically, as Andrews (2019) noted:

Oftentimes through the depiction of the personal journeys and struggles of athletes (particularly in regard to challenging raced, classed, abled, gendered, and/ or sexed structures of dominance in/through sport), the micro-politics of sport are routinely engaged as part of

the popular representation of a sports event, or the focus sports-related news, features, and/or commentaries. Conversely, discussions of sporting macro-politics—the relationship between sport and broader systems, forces, and ideologies of societal organization and governance—continue to be subsumed under the cultural weight of formulaic and anodyne popular sport discourse. (p. 4)

Hence, my analysis of the aforementioned three conjunctures within the South Korean context will contribute to the broadening of the usually overlooked examination of the relationship between sport and macro-politics by identifying the dominant forces that consolidate existing conditions and the unnoticed elements that can elicit different possibilities for positive social change within society.

Lastly, according to Millington and Wilson (2017), to realize radical contextualism as one of the major tenets of Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) and thereby ultimately achieve “a ‘flattened’ understanding of physical cultures” (p. 919), explorations of nonhumans, and even concepts beyond them, are necessary. Therefore, by considering assemblage theory, my thesis research will be an additional pathway to enhancing the “awareness of the key ‘actants’ within the physical cultural contexts” (p. 920), by further debunking anthropocentric perspectives in academic work (Fox, 2013; Prince-Robertson & Duff, 2016, 2019; Rick & Bustad, 2020).

Consequently, in addition to scholars’ continuous endeavors to develop theories and methods for articulating and re-articulating contextual cultural studies by proposing instructive and illuminating analyses (e.g., Andrews, 2019; Andrews & Jackson, 2001; King-White, 2018; Millington & Wilson, 2016; Silk, 2011), my thesis project will augment and reinforce an

architecture of complex contextual relations that can critically delineate how society has been formed and how it arose in association with sport in particular (Andrews, 2019; King, 2005).

1.3 Thesis Outline

After introducing this thesis with comprehensive rationales (Chapter One), Chapter Two reviews some relevant articles which can provide useful clues for developing my version of assemblage theory. Because theoretically and conceptually fruitful papers are negligible regarding assemblage thinking, I focus on certain scholars and their explanations of an assemblage. Chapter Three extensively and intensively explicates DeLanda's assemblage theory and my interpretations by adopting particular concepts within conjunctural cultural studies, mainly the concepts of conjuncture and articulation. It also includes discussions about methodological challenges and potentials of assemblage thinking by primarily highlighting the idea of rhizomatic relations. Ultimately, it acknowledges innate challenges for developing a concrete assemblage theory-based method and provides a brief and general overview of sport assemblages which I will discern within the three empirical chapters.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six focus on empirical analyses of the Korean context using my assemblage theory version. Each section explores respective critical moments within South Korea, from a long-term totalitarian regime to the national economic crisis and contemporary Korea. To specifically identify the emergence and development of sport as assemblages, I particularly shed light on certain assemblages, such as policy, teams and organizations, sporting events, and athletes. Finally, Chapter Seven summarizes the complicated variations of multiple assemblages within South Korea and proposes a way to engender a positive social change by suggesting a discussion-

based class that I term the “thesis–antithesis–synthesis module.” Ultimately, while addressing newly emerging questions, I conclude this last chapter by re-emphasizing the “wrestling with the angels” analogy.

CHAPTER TWO: Review of Literature

If I had to discuss the academic status of the concept of an assemblage, it would be indisputable that it is currently gaining conspicuous popularity within a wide range of fields—including, but not limited to archaeology (McArthur & Robinson, 2016), family studies (Price-Robertson & Duff, 2019), forest management (Li, 2007), geography (Anderson et al., 2012), language learning (Matthews, 2019), policy (Baker & McGuirk, 2017; Savage, 2020; Savage & Lewis, 2018; Youdell & McGimpsey, 2015), psychology (Prince-Robertson & Duff, 2016), studies on the selfie phenomenon (Hess, 2015), and technology studies (Bousquet, 2014; Lupton, 2017).

It is similarly used in fields associated with sport and physical culture. Specifically, the concept of an assemblage is now embraced while discussing various topics, including but not limited to athletes (Bagley, 2019), the city and the body (Rick & Bustad, 2020, 2021), disability studies (Carroll, et al., 2020; Feely, 2016, 2019), globalization and sport (Andrews, 2021b) the 2012 London Olympics (Fox, 2013), physical education (Varea et al., 2022), politics and sport (Andrews, 2019, 2021a; Andrews & Carrington, 2021; Beissel & Andrews, 2021), sporting talent (Olesen et al., 2020), and wave surfing (Anderson, 2012; Booth, 2020).

However, despite its increasing recognition across disciplines, theoretical and conceptual dialogues concerning an assemblage remain scant. More specifically, while the concept of an assemblage is now gradually receiving greater academic attention in various fields, this awareness is not yet either conceptually or theoretically oriented; instead, being more concerned with the commonly accepted definition of an assemblage—complex connections among diverse heterogeneous entities. While acknowledging the proliferating academic interest, Dewsbury (2011)

stated the following about the concept of an assemblage:

A note of caution: while the assemblage concept configures a dramatically different way of conceiving the world (after Braun 2008), its arrival does prefigure a dangerous trend to present an ever-growing undifferentiated magma of assemblages (becoming everything, amounting to nothing) resulting in ‘piecemeal appropriation’ and ‘middle-range theorizing’ (Marcus and Saka 2006, 103). (p. 149)

Hence, a more appropriate application of the concept of an assemblage is not merely naming every entity and individual assemblages with superficial interpretations of the concept but rather engaging in theoretically and conceptually sophisticated discussions aimed at facilitating a deeper understanding. Thus, despite the widespread and even somewhat explosive use of the term “assemblage,” only a handful of studies have thoroughly reflected upon the key ideas inherent in its concept.

In this section, given marginal theoretical and conceptual discussions about an assemblage, my review of the literature largely focuses on a few particular scholars who have outlined vital ideas related to its concept. However, I first and foremost explain terminological issues with the translated English term “assemblage” in comparison to the original French term “*agencement*” because understanding the term’s original meanings is the most foundational step to comprehending its overall concept and, thus, DeLanda’s assemblage theory. Additionally, I review several papers that include relatively fruitful theoretical and conceptual explanations of an assemblage while also proposing my own arguments based on DeLandian assemblage theory.

2.1 Terminological Issues

The English word “assemblage” is now widely used as the translation of the original French word *agencement*. However, many scholars argued that “assemblage” does not fully capture the French term’s original meaning—a core problem that results in a situation where “any and every ‘thing,’ or more precisely, any and every kind of collection of things has in recent times been called an assemblage” (Buchanan, 2021, p. 3). In this sense, Buchanan (2015, 2017, 2021), Nail (2017), and Wise (2014) aptly diagnosed the two words’ etymological issues. The word “*agencement*” originated from the verb “*agencer*,” meaning “to arrange, to lay out, to piece together” (Buchanan, 2021, p. 20) or “an ongoing process of juxtaposing and assembling” (Wise, 2014, p. 102). Accordingly, the noun “*agencement*” refers to “a construction, an arrangement, or a layout” (Nail, 2017, p. 22) or “the process of arranging, organizing, fitting together” (Wise, 2014, p. 91). By contrast, the English word “assemblage” signifies “to join, to gather, to assemble” (Buchanan, 2021, p. 20); more specifically, “the joining or union of two things” or “a bringing or coming together” (Nail, 2017, p. 22). Therefore, the former suggests a relationship and an ongoing, interminable process of arrangement, whereas the latter describes a collection or mixture (Andrews, 2019; Buchanan, 2015, 2017, 2021; DeLanda, 2016; Dewsbury, 2011; Nail, 2017; Phillips, 2006; Marcus & Saka, 2006; Wise, 2014).

Moreover, as Buchanan (2021) noted, one of the most overlooked factors is that “‘agency’ is at [*agencement*’s] core” (p. 20), which is critically related to one of the most important characteristics of an assemblage—relations of exteriority (or extrinsic relations) (DeLanda, 2006, 2016). As Alliez and Goffey (2011) stated:

Although the French *agencement* is something that might be said of the way in which elements on the page of a magazine are put together, of a palette of colours or of the arrangement of furniture in a room, in the use that Deleuze and Guattari make of it, it also conveys an active sense of agency as being what some or other entity does, a precious indicator of the constructivist horizon within which it operates. ... The term ‘assemblage’ does not really convey this crucial nuance of agency, even while it does capture the function of synthesis of disparate elements rather well—the irreducible bricolage of being first thematized with Guattari’s desiring machines. (p. 10–11, italics in original)

As the original term signifies, assemblages are both the processual and product; that is, they are not immobile but rather flexible entities that bear exclusive agency. Therefore, although *agencement*’s status as an “untranslatable concept” (Dewsbury, 2011, p. 150) cannot thoroughly mirror Deleuze’s authentic intention, the English word “combination” could capture the term’s subtle implications, which implies (1) the distinctiveness of each agentic component, (2) an endless process between disparate elements, and (3) unpredictable arrangements (Lexico, n.d.).

2.2 Assemblage in Various Academic Fields

Focusing on two different topics—psychology and family—Prince-Robertson and Duff (2016, 2019) embraced Manuel DeLanda’s assemblage theory to propose new perspectives on each respective topic. While they outlined the essential ideas inherent in assemblage theory in both studies, the concept of “relations of exteriority” was central in their approach, which implies that this idea is the crux within DeLandian assemblage theory, especially in terms of understanding the relationship between the parts and the whole. Before expounding relations of exteriority, they first

clarified “relations of interiority,” an idea that remains prevalent in academia. In relations of interiority, the parts exist only for the optimal function of the whole. Put another way, the components of the whole cannot independently “couple with and decouple from” (Price-Robertson & Duff, 2019, p. 1038) others without ignoring the influence of the larger whole they are part of.

However, in relations of exteriority, the components of the whole can freely engage with and disengage from others regardless of the larger whole’s dominance because their relations are “ontologically distinct” (Price-Robertson & Duff, 2016, p. 67). Specifically, the relationships do not determine their identities but are positioned extrinsically—regardless of the part-and-whole connection. Because the relationship between the parts and the whole is extrinsic, it signifies that various elements within the whole can freely change their relationships without being confined by the power of the whole.

Extending this idea, Price-Robertson and Duff (2019) pointed out another crucial characteristic of these extrinsically connected components. Since they can freely shift their relations with one another, they can not only circulate the place where they are interconnected but also diverse other sites on different scales. More importantly, because the specific situations are not identical at each scale, they do not “exert [the] same degree of influence in every instance” (p. 1038). Each component’s impact varies depending on its connections with others and different empirical sites.

Consequently, the concept of relations of exteriority can illuminate each assemblage’s exclusive agency and power within assemblage theory, which is not defined by their larger whole. In addition to the relations of exteriority, Price-Robertson and Duff (2016, 2019) addressed the

association between properties and capacities as another important characteristic of assemblage theory. To rephrase, properties are regarded as the given nature of entities, while capacities are not given but instead determined by consistent interactions among them while affecting and, in turn, being affected by others.

However, one could question the concept of properties because, in relations of exteriority, entities can adjust their relations regardless of regulations from others. In this respect, properties, which are the given nature of each assemblage, cannot accord with assemblage theory because this concept implies predetermined features of assemblages (Harman, 2008, 2014). Despite a question about properties, I believe that Price-Robertson and Duff's (2016, 2019) adherence to and illumination of DeLanda's assemblage theory concerning two different topics presents a model for observation since not many scholars have clearly pointed out the fundamental concepts of assemblage theory.

Savage's (2018, 2020) research concerning policy as assemblages also deserves of greater attention. In his first study with Lewis (2018), the focus was on policies in Australia, highlighting relations of exteriority as a key idea within an assemblage. Expanding on this concept, he also emphasized that the existence of an "inherent essence" (Savage & Lewis, 2018, p. 137) is unthinkable in assemblages. Rather, as "more a posteriori in nature," everything should be "emergent, contingent, and dynamic" (p. 137). Specifically, the development and implementation of policies are always subject to complex re/dis/assembling processes, and thus, a "definable essence" (p. 138) cannot exist in these perpetual processual formations. In this sense, Savage and Lewis (2018) argued that in order to more critically understand certain concepts (e.g., the national context of policies), scholars should perceive them as convolutedly interconnected entities

enmeshed with multiple extant ideas, practices, and institutions, without relying on preconceived assumptions because there are inevitably heterogeneous forces that affect and are affected by other countless elements.

In another study, Savage (2020) focused more on the concept of policy itself in the context of an assemblage. However, first and foremost, he identified a crucial yet commonly overlooked issue within an assemblage as the popularity of the concept proliferates in academia. Despite its increasing visibility, the concept of an assemblage is still “variously defined, and in some cases, lacks conceptual or methodological precision” (Savage, 2020, p. 320). In other words, in his view, although the concept of an assemblage is now being employed widely, our concrete conceptual and theoretical understanding of it is still lacking in that “various bits and pieces of policy” (p. 320) are now depicted as assemblages without deep consideration of the meaning of the concept.

Additionally, by calling attention to “how connections are made, what these connections look like, what is connected to what, and what these connections do” (Savage, 2020, p. 328), Savage emphasized notions of power, politics, and agency in assemblage thinking. Specifically, he argued that power relations are omnipresent among assemblages since they are not fixed but always contingent and subject to change, ultimately accompanying consistent resistance and dis/reassembly. His interpretation of power within an assemblage is crucial because, although scholars have identified relationality and heterogeneity as two core concepts in assemblage thinking, they have rarely delineated what assemblage thinking can do for a better understanding of our current society (Russell et al., 2011). More specifically, scholars have rarely expounded how assemblage thinking can introduce new possibilities to change the status quo by focusing on complex relationships and heterogeneous components (Russell et al., 2011).

Hence, Savage's (2020) research on policy as assemblages provided rich new insights for my version of assemblage theory. Before using the word "assemblage," it is necessary to clearly understand and explain specific ideas inherent in the concept. Moreover, associating assemblage thinking with complex power relations is more beneficial than merely focusing on relationality and heterogeneity. In other words, although relationality and heterogeneity are two important notions in assemblage thinking, the focus should be more on what we can accomplish with assemblage thinking in terms of suggesting new possibilities (Russell et al., 2011).

Along with assemblage thinking, actor-network theory (ANT) is another newly emerging and increasingly popular concept, which shares many similarities with an assemblage (DeLanda, 2016; Müller, 2015; Müller & Schurr, 2016). In this sense, Müller's (2015, 2016) comparison of assemblage thinking and ANT provided useful outlines regarding the various commonalities and differences between assemblage thinking and ANT. One of the most apparent differences between the two is "the neglect of the corporeal capacities of humans" in ANT (Müller & Schurr, 2016, p. 219). That is, compared to assemblage thinking, ANT focuses more strongly on nonhumans. Thus, the concept of an assemblage appears to be more flexible in addressing both humans and nonhumans in society without presupposing any particular hierarchy between the two.

Additionally, while ANT offers related helpful conceptual and methodological tools for empirical analysis, including terms, such as "black box" and "overflow," practical notions associated with assemblage thinking for empirical work are rather scarce. Although delineating convoluted relationships among diverse heterogeneous entities and individuals can be considered an important task to better understand society, without an appropriate conceptual apparatus, the explanations would be too descriptive (Acuto & Curtis, 2014; Allen, 2011; Harman, 2014; Müller

& Schurr, 2016). More importantly, despite the growing popularity of both assemblage thinking and ANT, Müller asserted that many scholars used the two “as almost the same” (Müller & Schurr, 2016, p. 226) without further theoretical and conceptual contemplation.

Hence, aligning with Müller’s (2015, 2016) studies, to avoid overly descriptive explanations, my version of assemblage theory requires conceptual and methodological criteria. Furthermore, my elaborations regarding DeLanda’s assemblage theory will provide an opportunity to more critically utilize the concept by drawing a lucid distinction between an assemblage and ANT.

Buchanan’s (2015) assessments of DeLanda’s assemblage theory are another valuable study, comparing how the theory differs from Deleuze’s (mostly in conjunction with Guattari) original intentions. First, he identified one of the most fundamental yet usually overlooked points in Deleuze’s thoughts regarding the nature of an assemblage. The concept of an assemblage was originally related to “questions of power” (Buchanan, 2015, p. 382). However, in Buchanan’s (2015) view, assemblage thinking now heavily focuses on “the complex nature of social reality” (p. 382) rather than unequal power structures. Second, he classified three main differences of an assemblage between DeLanda’s and Deleuze’s approaches:

DeLanda thus, departs from Deleuze and Guattari in three crucial ways: first, he always proceeds from the concrete to the abstract, whereas Deleuze and Guattari (following Marx’s famous reversal of Hegel) tend to proceed from the abstract to the concrete—the state is, first of all, an idea; it only subsequently functions as a structure of authority; second, it seems he cannot countenance a purely immanent form of organisation that is

not somehow undergirded by the transcendent ‘real’, whereas Deleuze and Guattari say the exact opposite—the state can only function as it does to the extent that it can become immanent; and, third, he reverses the actual-virtual relation—he assumes that the concrete ‘bits and pieces’ are the actual, whereas for Deleuze and Guattari it is the structure of authority that is actual and the ‘bits and pieces’ that are virtual. (p. 389)

Although several differences are evident between DeLanda’s development and Deleuze’s initial thoughts regarding an assemblage, I believe that these disjunctions are not the main issue. This is because what is more important is not the theory itself, but rather the question, “How would our current thoughts need to change” (Harman, 2008, p. 381) in order for a better future to be possible by employing theories? In other words, in my view, theories and concepts should be effective yet always “disposable tools” (Grossberg, 2018, p. 108) to interrogate the most vital issues affecting society (Grossberg, 2007, 2008; Hall, 1997, 2007; Wright, 2001). Hence, the focus should be not so much on the different applications of an assemblage between DeLanda and Deleuze but rather on how we can better understand society and propose other possibilities to change it by applying these theories and concepts (Grossberg, 2007, 2008; Hall, 1997, 2007; Wright, 2001).

Furthermore, as Marcus and Saka (2006) noted, despite its several distinctions, DeLanda’s assemblage theory is “the most thorough interpretation of the technical, abstract, and formal use of assemblage in the Deleuzian schema” (p. 103). Therefore, continuous wrestling with assemblage theory is a valuable task because this wrestling can not only progress the theory further while also elucidating its inherent ambiguities, but we can also apply the progressed ideas to identify the most relevant way to understand complex society by suggesting the most pragmatic methods for affecting positive change (Grossberg, 2007, 2008; Hall, 1997, 2007, 2019; Wright,

2001).

Nonetheless, Buchanan's evaluations provided an important point to ponder: the investigation of complex power relations using assemblage theory. Therefore, consistent with the research questions proposed in the previous chapter—particularly concerning the unique qualities of my version of assemblage theory (i.e., what are the distinctive features of my version of assemblage theory?)—my version of assemblage theory will highlight both key questions: (1) How can we delineate a complex society more effectively? and (2) How can we comprehend power dynamics in this complex society? (see also Buchanan, 2017, 2021; Lea et al., 2022).

2.3 Assemblage with Sport

Although it is increasingly adopted in the field of sport, in most cases, the term “assemblage” only highlights two ideas—relationality and heterogeneity, or in other words, “the connections between the diverse elements” (Vazquez Dominguez, et al., 2018, p. 226). That is, despite increasing acknowledgment of its conceptual and theoretical utility, by generally focusing only on the aforementioned two ideas, many scholars employ the concept of an assemblage without thoroughly scrutinizing it.

To reiterate, it is undeniable that heterogeneous entities and their complex relationships are essential in assemblage thinking. However, I argue that this is just one of many factors in assemblage thinking. Advanced from relationality and heterogeneity, I believe that greater attention should be paid to what impact and transformation these entities and individuals trigger as assemblages are simultaneously independent parts and wholes in society that can travel around disparate layers with their exclusive agency.

In this sense, only Andrews' (2019, 2021a, 2021b) research provided detailed explanations regarding the concept of an assemblage by depending on DeLanda's assemblage theory. Nonetheless, although his interpretations of an assemblage are useful as a pivotal conceptual and theoretical clarification of DeLanda's assemblage theory, I argue that his strong preference for relationality is not precisely concurrent with DeLanda's original intentions (see also Heffernan, 2022). Specifically, Andrews (2019) stated that "as an assemblage itself, the subject only ever exists relationally, as an expression of multiple assemblage articulation" (p. 47). In my view, this statement does not exactly reflect DeLanda's thoughts concerning assemblages because if assemblages only exist relationally, one cannot explain how each assemblage is also "detached from" its related assemblages "and plugged into a different assemblage" (DeLanda, 2006b, p. 10).

For example, in alignment with the idea of relations of exteriority, one of the most essential aspects of assemblages is that they can freely alter their connections without being constrained by the larger wholes. Additionally, when they change their relationships, albeit temporarily, this transition accompanies discontinuity and cessation. However, if the focus is exclusively on relationships, this view cannot clearly delineate the unrestrained movements of assemblages, breaks, or the end of these associations (see Harman, 2014).¹

I believe that his focus on relationality was initially derived from a (mis)interpretation of relations of exteriority. Andrews (2019) stated that the concept of relations of exteriority signifies "externally derived innovations," "externally generated transformation" (p. 48), or "externally

¹ This argument will be further explicated in the next chapter when discussing the "diachronic and synchronic interpretations of assemblages."

derived contraventions” (p. 54). In short, his understanding of the concept is that it describes a transformation prompted by external forces. However, as DeLanda (2016) noted, this concept actually indicates “relations that respect the relative autonomy of the parts” (p. 73). In other words, relations of exteriority are not about externally initiated assemblages changing others but rather that assemblages can secure their unique autonomy because their relations are extrinsic and not strictly determined by their linkages.²

Nonetheless, Andrews’ (2019, 2021b) emphasis on the concept of the rhizome in association with assemblages requires greater attention. Although DeLanda (2006, 2011, 2016) placed comparatively less emphasis on rhizomatic relations, I believe that this notion is crucial to better understand the deeper meanings of relationality and heterogeneity in assemblage thinking as originally stressed by Deleuze. As Honan (2015) explained:

Rhizomatic thinking and writing involves making ceaseless and on-going connections. Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be ... A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections. Mapping these connections can involve following ‘lines of flight,’ another figuration used by Deleuze and Guattari. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9). Following these lines of flight allows the possibility of creating new connections between quite different thoughts, ideas, pieces of data, discursive moments. These lines of flight move beyond and between, across and within

² This point will be also further explicated in next chapter when discussing the “relations of interiority and exteriority.”

those power relations as described by Foucault. (p. 210)

Hence, the concept of the rhizome in relation to assemblages implies that assemblage-based rhizomatic connections are always in an unfinished condition without adhering to an apparent starting or ending point. However, this incompleteness does not signify a deep-rooted stagnation but rather a consistent process of seeking new possibilities. Moreover, it is also related to complex power relations (cf. Feely, 2016; Honan, 2007; Markula, 2013, 2019; Sellers & Honan, 2007).

Andrews (2021b) also highlighted the rhizomatic relations within assemblages, but his interpretations were much more specific. Because the relations of assemblages are rhizomatic, “each of these [assemblages] has the possibility of being connected in affecting ways, yet no connection is guaranteed, nor does any element possess some preordained affecting ascendancy.” (p. 74). In other words, rhizomatic relations indicate that relationships among assemblages are not prearranged. Instead, the “empirical dominance and ontological influence” (p. 74) of each assemblage is only determined by its never-ending connections within specific contextual situations.

I assert that this rhizomatic relation needs more scrutiny in assemblage thinking because DeLanda’s (2006, 2011, 2015, 2016) initial focus was more on assemblages’ capacities—how each assemblage affects and is affected by others (Herman, 2008, 2014). It does not mean that DeLanda did not address the concept of rhizome while reinterpreting Deleuze’s original thoughts. Although he mentioned the concept while explaining nonlinear causal relations among assemblages, DeLanda (2006, 2015, 2016) did not explicate it as Andrews (2019, 2021b) did. However, I believe that the concept of rhizome is helpful for more critically understanding an assemblage because this

idea is directly related to assemblages' power and agency in that each assemblage's dominance is not guaranteed and vastly different according to its connections with others and the specific situations of empirical sites. Thus, in alignment with the concept of rhizome, a context-specific understanding is essential for analysis of each assemblage.

In summary, it is apparent that the concept of an assemblage is now widely used in various fields. However, without further elaborating its conceptual and theoretical implications, the majority of considerations are now focused on relationality and heterogeneity. Furthermore, despite some existing meaningful discussions regarding the theoretical and conceptual aspects of an assemblage, without a unified agreement, every entity and individual can currently be labeled as assemblages. Although reviewing useful articles identifies certain fundamental ideas within the concept of an assemblage—including relations of exteriority—this review generates several new questions: (1) What conceptual and methodological criteria are required for an assemblage-based analysis? (2) How can we more critically understand unequal power dynamics and structures using assemblage theory?

On this basis, in the next chapter, while reiterating the fundamental ideas of assemblage theory in greater detail, I will more deeply dissect DeLanda's assemblage theory by highlighting crucial questions, such as the connection between relations of interiority and exteriority, and the relationship between properties and capacities. Considering an assemblage's conceptual and theoretical complexity and potential, I argue that this continuous wrestling with the concept of an assemblage is imperative to allow a more appropriate and deeper application of an assemblage, ultimately suggesting different possibilities for society.

CHAPTER THREE: Theoretical Framework & Concepts

3.1 Manuel DeLanda and Assemblage Theory

Despite critiques by some scholars, particularly from traditional Deleuzian intellectual groups (e.g., Buchanan, 2015, 2021; see also Bueger, 2014; Grossberg, 2010; Harman, 2008, 2014; Lea et al., 2022), Manuel DeLanda's (2006a, 2006b, 2011, 2016) attempts to collate Gilles Deleuze's explanations of the concept of assemblage and create his own theory should be appreciated because his reinterpretations and rich empirical explanations (Harman, 2014) have made the concept applicable to many scholars working in various fields including geography.

Regardless of whether he was aware of the critiques, DeLanda (2006b) noted the following concerning his reconceptualization of the notion of assemblage:

I will give my own definitions of the technical terms, use my own arguments to justify them, and use entirely different theoretical resources to develop them. This manoeuvre will not completely eliminate the need to engage in Deleuzian hermeneutics but it will allow me to confine that part of the job to footnotes. Readers who feel that the theory developed here is not strictly speaking Deleuze's own are welcome to call it 'neo-assemblage theory', 'assemblage theory 2.0', or some other name. (p. 4)

In this section, I will delineate the same concepts as DeLanda (2006, 2011, 2016) did in his series of books and articles and will also reinterpret DeLanian assemblage theory on the basis of my

own arguments. While my interpretations are still mostly grounded in DeLanda's concepts, I employ different theoretical resources to justify my own version of assemblage theory. Thus, my reorganization and clarification of DeLandian assemblage theory do not dovetail with his main arguments. In this sense, my version of assemblage theory could be called "neo-DeLandian assemblage theory" (Andrews, 2019)

The first argument I would like to propose is that assemblage theory is not merely concerned with relationality and heterogeneity (Harman, 2008, 2014). Although these two ideas are certainly crucial in assemblage theory, a preoccupation with them could, in fact, nullify the numerous intellectual advantages of assemblage theory (Harman, 2008, 2014). It is, therefore, necessary to extend the ideas of relationality and heterogeneity to other, more essential, concepts within assemblage theory. Specifically, I believe that a greater focus should be placed on complex power relations.

Second, a more concrete understanding of "relations of exteriority," which is one of the main notions in DeLandian assemblage theory, is needed. Many scholars apply this idea only to the "relationships" between disparate elements. However, as DeLanda (2016) clearly explained, this concept is not mainly concerned with "a relation internal or external to something" (p. 2), but rather with "irreducibility and decomposability" (DeLanda, 2011, p. 184).

The third argument is that before entities and individuals can be labeled as assemblages, historically complex and context-specific analyses need to be performed simultaneously (Andrews, 2019; Grossberg, 1997). As a consequence, elucidating connections between and beyond various assemblages is not an easy task (Clarke, 2018). Prior to explaining some important characteristics

of assemblages, it is fundamental to first delineate DeLanda's understanding of society, to which I now turn.

3.1.1 The Part-To-Whole Relation

Before explaining his assemblage theory, I would reply to the question: "Who is Manuel DeLanda?" as follows: "He is a strong, possibly even extreme, anti-reductionist." In DeLandian assemblage theory, achieving a macro- or micro-understanding of society is inconceivable. Society cannot exist only for individual (i.e., micro-reductionism), and an individual cannot exist only for society (i.e., macro-reductionism); if one emphasizes the individual, society will become "a mere epiphenomenon" (DeLanda, 2006b, p. 5), while if the emphasis is exclusively on society, people will become "mere products of the society" (p. 5). Therefore, both micro- and macro-understandings of society have inherent limitations, ultimately hindering one from accomplishing a full and lucid understanding of society. Regarding meso-level understanding of society, as promulgated by several prominent scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens (DeLanda, 2006), this perspective represents the "intermediate level" (DeLanda, 2006a, p. 251) viewpoint, which highlights mutual interactions between two parts. However, this view is also problematic because if two elements form a new entity through their interaction, the focus will be more on this "mutually constituted" (DeLanda, 2006a, p. 251) new entity, which ultimately subsumes the constituent elements. In this respect, DeLanda (2006a) proposed another way to understand society, as follows:

The basic strategy will be to abandon the idea that there are only two (or three) levels between which one has to make a choice, and to bridge the level of persons and that of the

largest entities (territorial states like empires, kingdoms or nation-states) with many intermediate levels, each operating at its own spatial scale and having its own relative autonomy. (p. 251)

To rephrase, DeLanda rejected micro-, macro, and meso-level interpretations of society. In his view, society cannot be restricted to only two or three levels. Instead, it should be based on “a multi-scaled social reality” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 14). Specifically, in this multi-scaled society, neither the individual nor society is prioritized; every entity is equally important and they can achieve autonomy without being devoured by others.

Because entities do not lose their autonomy even when engaging in complex interactions, they can freely interact with other entities, including those at different scales. In DeLandian social ontology, “the whole exists alongside the parts in the same ontological plane” in that “the whole is immanent, not transcendent” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 12). This explains why it is commonly believed that DeLanda advocated “a flat ontology” (Andrews, 2019, p. 49). Multi-scaled, flat ontology is one of the main characteristics distinguishing DeLanda’s assemblage theory from Deleuze’s original notion of assemblage. While Deleuze only concentrated on three levels, namely “individuals, groups, and the social field” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 4), DeLanda (2016) firmly believed that “a more finely grained ontology, with many levels of social ensembles between the person and society as a whole” (p. 4) can provide a greater understanding of society.

In a multi-scaled society, every entity is unique and can move among numerous levels without restriction. Through such movement, an entity can freely interact with others. Here, the most important point is that it will not lose its autonomy. This concept helps provide a “big picture”

of assemblage theory, but some aspects remain unclear. Hence, the discussion now turns to the etymology of the term “assemblage.”

3.1.2 Assemblage or *Agencement*

How should we define “assemblage”? This question is difficult to answer, because while the English term “assemblage” only refers to a “product,” the original French term, “*agencement*,” relates to both “process” and “product” (DeLanda, 2016). DeLanda (2016) also highlighted this point as follows:

The word in English fails to capture the meaning of the original *agencement*, a term that refers to the action of matching or fitting together a set of components (*agencer*), as well as to the result of such an action: an ensemble of parts that mesh together well. The English word used as translation captures only the second of these meanings, creating the impression that the concept refers to a product not a process. (p. I, italics in original)

However, an even more important point is usually not considered; as Buchanan (2021) noted:

Agencement derives from *agencer*, which according to *Le Roberts Collins* means ‘to arrange, to lay out, or to piece together,’ whereas assemblage means ‘to join, to gather, to assemble.’ Agencement, as John Law has noted, encompasses a range of meanings that include ‘to arrange, to dispose, to fit up, to combine, to order.’ It could therefore just as appropriately be translated as arrangement, in the sense of a ‘working arrangement,’ provided it was kept clear that it described an ongoing process rather than a static situation. It could also be thought in terms of a ‘musical arrangement,’ which is a way of adapting an abstract plan of music to a particular performer and performance. Arrangement is in

many ways my preferred translation for these reasons, but it also has its problems, not least the fact it obscures the fact that ‘agency’ is at its core. (p. 20, italics in original)

As DeLanda and Buchanan explained, it is crucial to first understand the term “assemblage,” which may not fully encompass the originally intended meaning of the concept. In the first instance, an assemblage is a product, but this product is not static; it is subject to constant change. Simultaneously, it is also a process, which aims to become a product in a flexible manner. Hence, although it may appear like an oxymoron, an assemblage is nevertheless always intermediate between product and process. More importantly, an assemblage never loses its autonomy; its agency is always preserved.

With these three factors in mind (i.e., product, process, and agency), another question arises, namely “how can an assemblage emerge?” As DeLanda (2016) noted, “assemblages emerge from the interactions between their parts, but once an assemblage is in place it immediately starts acting as a source of limitations and opportunities for its components” (p. 21). Additionally, he (2006a) stated the following:

That once a larger-scale entity emerges it immediately starts acting as a source of limitations and resources for its components. In other words, even though the arrow of causality in this scheme is bottom-up, it also has a top-down aspect: the whole both constrains and enables the parts. (p. 252)

According to these explanations, several other characteristics of assemblages can be clarified. First, assemblages emerge due to consistent interactions between their constituent elements (i.e., parts). After assemblages emerge, they swiftly engage in both top-down and bottom-up interactions.

However, as I explained above, the term “assemblage” inherently and simultaneously encompasses product and process, such that the top-down and bottom-up interactions are intricate, continuous, and difficult to recognize. More crucially, during these complex interactions, entities do not lose their autonomy. Hence, parts of assemblages can be viewed as distinct assemblages in their own right, which maintain their autonomy while also allowing them to obtain additional elements inside. In other words, the constituent parts of assemblages can be perceived as other assemblages, which have complete autonomy while also serving as constituent parts (Acuto & Curtis, 2014; Harman, 2014).

In other words, each assemblage is characterized by “a cascading effect” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 71) within its inner assemblages (i.e., constituent parts), as well as between other assemblages. After an assemblage arises from its constituent parts, both the parts and the larger assemblage rapidly leverage each other. Therefore, while every assemblage is a unique entity with complete autonomy, it always exists within a population. DeLanda (2011) noted the following:

Although each assemblage is a unique historical entity it always belongs to a population of more or less similar assemblages. In other words, despite the individual singularity of each assemblage the process of assembly behind it tends to be recurrent so what is synthesized is never a single individual but many of them. (p. 186)

To rephrase, as a product and process at the same time, assemblages are always part of other larger assemblages, and these larger assemblages are also one of many parts of other bigger assemblages (i.e., consistent cascading effects). In this regard, although all assemblages are unique entities with unique autonomy, they always exist in populations (i.e., groups).

Some additional characteristics should be mentioned here: first, as a product and process, assemblages maintain their autonomy; and second, while maintaining their autonomy, they always remain part of a population (i.e., group) and interactions are perpetually occurring. Because of these characteristics, DeLanda (2016) favored terms such as “assemblages of assemblages,” and stated the following: “A further modification to the original concept is that the parts matched together to form an ensemble are themselves treated as assemblages, equipped with their own parameters, so that at all times we are dealing with assemblages of assemblages” (p. 3). He also illustrated the concept of “assemblages of assemblages” in a different way, as follows: “It also yields a view of reality in which assemblages are everywhere, multiplying in every direction, some more viscous and changing at slower speeds, some more fluid and impermanent, coming into being almost as fast as they disappear” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 7). For a more coherent pictures of assemblage theory to emerge, I believe that several more characteristics needed to be elucidated—relations of interiority and exteriority.

3.1.3 Relations of Interiority and Exteriority

To fully comprehend “relations of interiority and exteriority,” I believe that a stronger focus should be placed upon “interiority” and “exteriority” instead of “relations.” However, in the first instance, particular attention should be paid to DeLanda’s (2016) illustrations of these concepts. DeLanda (2016) explained relations of interiority as follows:

[A] relation of interiority is one in which the terms constitute each other by the very fact that they are related; or, to put it differently, one in which the very identity of the terms is constituted by their relation, so that the terms have no autonomous existence. (p. 62)

Under the concept of relations of interiority, if certain individuals and entities are linked, it means that they can be combined. However, they lose their identities through these connections since they will only intrinsically constitute the combination thus formed. In other words, the two entities cannot maintain their exclusive autonomy since the relationship between them and the newly emerging unity will define and confine their autonomy.

However, under the concept of relations of exteriority, the situation is quite different. As DeLanda (2016) stated:

On the other hand, when two groups of people related by descent enter into a political alliance, this relation does not define their identity but connects them in *exteriority*. It is a relation established between the two groups, like the air that exists between them transmitting influences that connect them but do not constitute them. The terms ‘interiority’ and ‘exteriority’ are somewhat misleading because they suggest a spatial relation, a relation internal or external to something. A better choice would be intrinsic and extrinsic, but the intent is clear: if a relation constitutes the very identity of what it relates it cannot respect the heterogeneity of the components, but rather it tends to fuse them together into a homogeneous whole. (p. 2)

Relations of exteriority dictate that individuals and entities will not lose their own identities through relations with others because their identities do not constitute these newly formed combinations; rather, their identities exist extrinsically regardless of their connections. In other words, if individuals’ and entities’ relations are extrinsic, they can “subsist independently of the relations they have with each other” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 10). In short, individuals and entities will

“retain their autonomy” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 10) without intrinsically constituting or being dominated by others because relationships do not determine their entire being.

Crucially, as DeLanda (2016) emphasized, these concepts do not signify “a relation internal or external to something” (p. 2) because they are not focused on the outside or inside conditions and transformations but rather indicate that each assemblage will not lose its autonomy in the formation of consistent and complex connections. In this regard, DeLanda (2006b) conceived of anything formed by relations of interiority as a “seamless whole” (p. 10) or “seamless totalities” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 13). A vital point to make here is that to prevent misconceptions in relation to the spatial dimension, DeLanda (2016) suggested alternative terms—extrinsic and intrinsic relations—which are separate from external and internal relations.

Allow me to provide a more specific example by using “colors” as assemblages. Imagine that there are “red” and “blue” assemblages. With endless interactions, these two assemblages can form a “purple” assemblage while the red and blue assemblages, in turn, become constituent assemblages. In intrinsic relations, after the formation of the purple assemblage, each red and blue assemblage will lose their own identities because they can, intrinsically, only constitute the purple assemblage. They cannot escape from the influence of the purple assemblage in that the whole determines all of the parts, and the parts, in turn, cannot exert their autonomy. In other words, the whole totalizes the parts, and the parts, thus, lose their distinctive autonomy.

On the contrary, in extrinsic relations, these whole-parts relations are quite different. In our example, after forming a purple assemblage due to the interactions between red and blue assemblages, all three assemblages can move around freely without restrictions, not only within

the background where they are included but also in various settings on different levels. In other words, they can freely plug into and detach from diverse assemblages across multiple scales. Moreover, the interactions between the red and blue assemblages do not always result in a purple assemblage. Their interactions could also result in various other assemblages, such as gold, yellow, black, or orange. Therefore, no particular outcome can be guaranteed beforehand while assemblages interact with other assemblages.

As a result, intrinsic and extrinsic relations do not indicate the spatial occupation of certain assemblages. Rather, these concepts are related to the phenomenon that each assemblage can move around various layers because their identities and autonomy always remain extrinsic without being restricted by their relationships with others in that the whole can be decomposable into its parts, and the parts cannot be reduced to merely seamless constituents of the whole.

In consideration of the concept of extrinsic relations, I believe that attention should be turned from relationality and heterogeneity to “irreducibility and decomposability” (DeLanda, 2011, p. 184). Specifically, as assemblages are determined by extrinsic relations, an assemblage (i.e., a whole), as well as its constituent assemblages (i.e., its parts) are all analyzable as they retain their autonomy when interacting with others. In line with multi-scaled ontology, this also means that assemblages can be incorporated into or disengaged from other assemblages (i.e., they exhibit decomposability) in the context of continuously occurring combinations without losing their autonomy (i.e., they exhibit irreducibility). Therefore, although relationality and heterogeneity are two influential concepts in assemblage theory, I argue here that assemblage theory is not merely focused on relational theory and that we, therefore, ought to focus more on how each assemblage secures its unique autonomy, which arises from its “extrinsic” relationship with other

assemblages—its irreducibility and decomposability. In this sense, Harman (2014) noted the following:

Relationality is also [a] characteristic of those closed systems' that assemblage theory aspires to replace. Relations must be [extrinsic] to their terms rather than constituting them, a favourite Deleuzean principle taken up with great flair by DeLanda. ... If assemblage theory wants to be a flat ontology, it cannot also be a relational holism, since it must grant autonomy to the various pieces of the cosmos rather than placing them amidst a harmonious whole. Nation-states, security guards, passports and citizens must not be defined by their relations, since they need to be able to enter and exit various relations at different times. (p. 122)

To understand how each assemblage can move between and beyond other assemblages at multiple scales, greater attention should be paid to the fact that autonomy can be safeguarded because individual assemblages do not constitute (larger) assemblages by losing their identities but that rather, their identities exist extrinsically while interacting with others. In this sense, to determine how they maintain their autonomy, the concept of extrinsic relations, which does not suggest spatial linkages, is crucial.

In summary, although many characteristics of assemblage theory have been elucidated, we still need to define the components of assemblages and understand each assemblage's impacts to the others. The discussion now turns to these two points.

3.1.4 Expressive/Material Components and Processes of

Territorialization/Deterritorialization

An assemblage has numerous constituents. Although these components are too diverse to all be clearly defined, DeLanda (2006, 2011, 2016) nevertheless identified two representative characteristics. At one end of the continuum, they assume material roles, and on another, they play expressive roles. DeLanda (2006b) pointed out that “these roles are variable and may occur in mixtures, that is, a given component may play a mixture of material and expressive roles by exercising different sets of capacities” (p. 12). In other words, while diverse components may fit somewhere on the continuum between material and expressive roles, they can also simultaneously assume both roles. Furthermore, DeLanda (2006b) highlighted that these “mixtures” could have different “capacities.” Two questions can emerge: (1) if material and expressive components can exist in mixtures, is it possible to precisely distinguish them? and (2) how do we define capacities?

Before addressing these two questions, two additional characteristics of assemblages should be noted: the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization. Territorialization can be divided into two features: external expansion and internal homogenization. Specifically, an assemblage exerts its influence in the spatial dimension; it constantly endeavors to expand its boundary or territory, which impacts other assemblages. Furthermore, it exerts effects within the non-spatial dimension by internally homogenizing and preserving its constituent assemblages.

Deterritorialization can also be divided into two features: external transformation and internal heterogenization, which have a mechanism in opposition to that of territorialization. Specifically, within spatial linkages, an assemblage can transform other assemblages. Moreover, internally (i.e., at the non-spatial level), it can heterogenize its constituent components. However,

“one and the same assemblage can have components working to stabilize its identity as well as components forcing it to change or even transforming it into a different assemblage” (DeLanda, 2006b, p. 12). In other words, depending on the context, an assemblage’s territorializing can be seen as deterritorializing from the point of view of other assemblages.

In addition to territorialization and deterritorialization, two other functions can emerge from expressive elements: coding and decoding. As DeLanda (2006b) noted, Deleuze pointed to some “specialized expressive entities” (p. 14) that can lead to complexities in society, including linguistic factors such as genetic codes, words, and languages. Subsequent to linguistic factors, particular codes emerged that added complexity. With territorialization, the process of coding cements and stabilizes assemblages, both internally and externally. Conversely, the process of decoding converts and undermines assemblages with deterritorialization, again both internally and externally.

For example, the more autocratic a society becomes, the more prevalent and rigid its coding structures will be (DeLanda, 2006b, 2016). On the contrary, the rapid decoding associated with genetic and linguistic assemblages is possible depending on the social setting (DeLanda, 2006b, 2016). In contemporary society, marked by the rapid development of various mass media, diverse media-related assemblages ranging from television and newspapers to social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter) can possess new linguistic-related expressive elements, which, in turn, contribute to the continual coding and decoding processes.

However, DeLanda (2006b) again invoked the term “capacities” to explain the processes of territorialization/coding and deterritorialization/decoding: “In fact, one and the same component

may participate in both processes by exercising different sets of capacities” (p. 12). While it is intuitive that an assemblage can exert both territorializing/coding and deterritorializing/decoding effects simultaneously, capacities requires elucidation. Thus, the discussion now turns to the relationship between capacities and properties.

3.1.5 Capacities: A “Magic Elixir”?

To render the relationship between properties and capacities more comprehensible, DeLanda (2016) used a knife as an example. A knife has many characteristics, such as sharpness and length. DeLanda (2006, 2011, 2015, 2016) highlighted how capacities emerge when an assemblage is affecting (and be affected by) other assemblages. For instance, a knife has a “cutting” capacity (i.e., can be used as a kitchen tool), but also “killing” capacity (i.e., can be used as a murder weapon). In other words, depending on the context, a knife can be part of a kitchen tool or weapon/crime assemblages. As a result, properties pertain to inherent characteristics and capacities to relational ones (Harman, 2008).

However, the problem here is that DeLanda “never fully develops what the properties of an assemblage are, defining them instead in terms of their capacities to affect and be affected by other things” (Harman, 2008, p. 379). In other words, due to excessive focus on relationships (i.e., affect and be affected), it is difficult to fully understand the characteristics of properties. Moreover, it is difficult to differentiate the material and expressive components of properties; DeLanda put too much emphasis on “capacities”, and by extension, “relationships.” As Harman (2008) noted:

But what is most interesting is that a thing’s *capacities* are what serve as DeLanda’s shape-shifting formula. The problem with this view, as in the aforementioned case of causation,

is that it never really tells us what the *properties* of a thing are outside its relations. Are the properties of an assemblage material, or expressive? DeLanda's answer seems to be "neither/nor." ... The danger for DeLanda in making capacities the magical elixir is that things become fully defined in terms of their relations to other things, and we begin to slide toward the very ontology of the seamless relational whole that he, like all realists, wishes to avoid. (p. 378, italics in original)

Instead of focusing on the relationships between properties and capacities, perspectives on assemblage theory need to capture many other important characteristics more fully. As I argue throughout this chapter, despite their importance, relationality and heterogeneity are not sufficient to fully delineate assemblage theory. I suggest that the focus should shift from: relationality and heterogeneity and irreducibility and decomposability, to complex power relations, which requires both context-specific and historically complex interpretations (Andrews, 2019; Grossberg, 1997).

3.1.6 Diachronic and Synchronic Interpretations of Assemblages

Because all assemblages can straddle multiple scales in terms of extrinsic relations, they never lose their autonomy. In other words, despite complicated combinations and connections between many assemblages, they can detach from and plug into numerous other assemblages in an unrestrained manner. DeLanda (2011) claimed that:

[T]he identity of an assemblage should always be conceived as the product of a historical process, the process that brought its components together for the first time as well as the process that maintains its integrity through a regular interaction among its parts. (p. 185)

Thus, "a wide range of social entities, from persons to nation-states, will be treated as assemblages

constructed through very specific historical processes” (DeLanda, 2006b, p. 3). In his updated book (DeLanda, 2016), this notion is asserted in a much stronger and clearer manner:

[A]ll assemblages should be considered unique historical entities, singular in their individuality, not as particular members of a general category. But if this is so, then we should be able to specify the individuation process that gave birth to them. (p. 6)

Assemblages are, thus, all specific historical entities, and additional characteristics thereof should also be considered. First, assemblages are not general entities. Rather, they are idiosyncratic entities originating from context-specific and historically complex processes. DeLanda (2016) rejected commonly used labels for assemblages, such as “markets,” “media,” or “athletes,” calling them “reified generalit[ies]” (p. 14). However, if the use of such generic term cannot be achieved, both context-specific and historically complex interpretations are required for a better understanding of assemblages.

Considering all of the above, including a strong rejection of reified generalities and the context-specific and historically complex nature of assemblages, the meaning of relationships in assemblage theory certainly requires a second look. As we have seen, a relationship in assemblage theory is not a mere connection between assemblages. While maintaining their autonomy, assemblages’ relations are not “logically necessary,” but rather “contingently obligatory” since:

the identity of an assemblage is always contingent and it is not guaranteed by the existence of a necessary set of properties constituting an unchanging essence. Or to put this differently, assemblages are not particular members of a general category but unique and singular individuals. Even if two assemblages resemble each other so much that no one

can tell them apart, each will still be unique due to the different details of its individual history. (DeLanda, 2011, p. 185)

In other words, an assemblage is a unique entity as both a product and a process of “the diachronic practice of historical contextualization” (Andrews, 2019, p. 34). Thus, it is important to consider two points simultaneously: the diachronic frame, which explores how certain assemblages have evolved historically, and the synchronic frame, which focuses on how each assemblage develops and transforms itself in specific social settings (Andrews, 2019).

Assemblages can be conceived of as the interconnectivity between heterogeneous components. However, to define the concept more precisely, assemblages are intricately associated with each other in three fundamental ways: first, through the relationships between the constituents of an assemblage (i.e., intra-connections); second, through the relationships between assemblage(s) (i.e., inter-connections); and third, through the relationships between assemblages at different scales (i.e., extra-connections).

However, it is also important to remember that these three types of connections are always in continuous metamorphoses, and within these mutations, notwithstanding temporarily, one of the connections could be terminated. For example, although assemblages are “a multiplicity of multi-scaled and multi-sited” (Andrews, 2021b, p. 73) combinations of distinctive individuals/entities and generative multi-components (Andrews, 2019, 2021b; Buchanan, 2021), in an extreme case, one could severely be remoted without any apparent interactions. Thus, in this case, inter-connections could be inconspicuous; however, through extra- and intra-connections, additional inter-connections could emerge. In short, assemblages always remain complex groups (i.e.,

populations), but they may not always exist relationally (Andrews, 2019).

3.1.7 Non-linear Causality and the Concept of the Rhizome

Due to heterogeneity in assemblages, it is easy to overlook causal relations. However, as I argue throughout this chapter, an assemblage is not a haphazard combination of multiple individuals or entities (Buchanan, 2021). In addition to the historically complex and context-specific nature of assemblages, “reasons and motives” (DeLanda, 2006b, p. 19) exist as to how and why the “selection and arrangement” (Buchanan, 2021, p. 117) of an assemblage emerge. That is, it is essential to analyze “how the various elements of the assemblage came together or how they interacted to produce the situation” (p. 119). These causal relations, however, are not straightforward; the concept of “same cause, same effect, always” (DeLanda, 2006b, p. 19) does not apply. Although assemblages are related, this may not always be in the same manner, which implies nonlinear causality (Anderson et al., 2012; Baker & McGuirk, 2017; DeLanda, 2006b, 2015, 2016).

To facilitate understanding of nonlinear causality, DeLanda (2006b) used the example of smoking/cancer. Habitual smoking could trigger cancer; however, smoking does not directly cause the onset of cancer. In other words, although certain actions may “increase the probability of the occurrence of a given effect” (DeLanda, 2006b, p. 21), “no series of events ever occurs in complete isolation from other series which may interfere with it” (DeLanda, 2006b, p. 21). Actions and events are always subject to a variety of unexpected and convoluted actions and events, which can have direct and indirect shifts.

Without evoking the concepts of “eternal essences” or “eternal laws” (DeLanda, 2015, p.

33), nonlinear causality is directly linked to the concept of the rhizome, which is one of Deleuze's principal tenets associated with assemblages (Andrews, 2019, 2021b; Conley, 2009; DeLanda, 2016; Honan, 2007; Markula, 2013, 2019). Specifically, while an arborescent structure aims for ordered and durable coordination, a rhizome instead seeks non-hierarchical, "perpetually changing alliances" (Andrews, 2019, p. 53), and directly rejects "preordained affecting ascendancy" (Andrews, 2021b, p. 74) as well as twofold formations (Andrews, 2019; Conley, 2009; Honan, 2007, 2015; Markula, 2013, 2019; Sellers & Honan, 2007).

Although an assemblage is a combination of multidimensional, complex relationships, these amalgams bear certain causal relations (Buchanan, 2021; DeLanada, 2006b, 2015, 2016). However, inferring causation is not straightforward, as the situation is always situated somewhere between "deliberate, conscious design" and "random, ad hoc experiments" (Buchanan, 2021, p. 124) with no clearly defined beginning or end (Andrews, 2019, 2021b; Conley, 2009; Honan, 2007, 2015; Markula, 2013, 2019; Sellers & Honan, 2007).

3.1.8 Rethinking Territorialization/Coding and Deterritorialization/Decoding: Complex Power Dynamics in Society

From relationality/heterogeneity and irreducibility/decomposability to diachronic/synchronic analyses and nonlinear causality/rhizomatic relations, many vital concepts in assemblage theory require constant attention. However, I ultimately argue that the concepts of territorialization/coding and deterritorialization/decoding warrant the most attention, because they are fundamental for clarifying complex power dynamics in society.

To reiterate, territorialization and deterritorialization signify more than mere spatial

boundaries. Specifically, according to Buchanan (2021), the concept of territory in assemblage theory represents “chaos defined as an existential condition rather than a physical state of affairs (though it can be that too)” (p. 85). Thus, the process of territorialization becomes “a temporary victory over the relentless forces of chaos” (Buchanan, 2021, p. 85), while deterritorialization implies “freefalling into chaos without a safety net or harness” (p. 89).

Put another way, assemblages are contingent on the constant process of reterritorialization—complex interactions among expansion/homogenization and transformation/heterogenization (Baker & McGuirk, 2017; Buchanan, 2021; DeLanda, 2006b; Feely, 2019). That is, each assemblage always strives to expand its influence while maintaining internal homogeneity (i.e., territorialization), however, it is also subject to metamorphosis or revolution (i.e., deterritorialization). Hence, assemblage refers not only to the interrelations between various elements. In addition to the complex relationships among individuals and entities, “a battle or an intense struggle” (DeLanda, 2016, p. 88) exists among them for stabilization and homogenization, or destabilization and heterogenization, to protect their own domains and emanate their distinctive powers (Buchanan, 2021).

I believe that applying the concepts of territorialization/coding and deterritorialization/decoding allows for more critical assessment of convoluted societal power structures and relations, where “reality is the endless becoming of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization” (Grossberg, 2003, p. 6–7). In particular, we should “find ways to open up new possibilities for producing reality (Grossberg, 2003, p. 7). Examining territorializing and deterritorializing factors that constantly expand/homogenize and transform/heterogenize our society will enable us to identify “not only danger but also opportunity”

(Andrews, 2019, p. 157); danger maintains the status quo while minimizing crucial social, political, and cultural assemblages, but there is an opportunity for societal transformation through the discovery of both dominant and overlooked assemblages. Additionally, such explorations may detect both coding and decoding elements thus promoting application of territorialization and deterritorialization. Ultimately, highlighting both territorialization/coding and deterritorialization/decoding should allow us to reterritorialize society to effect positive social change.

Unanswered questions still exist in relation to assemblage theory; for example, (1) are there desirable alternatives to the concepts of capacities and properties? and (2) how can we explore both the context-specific and historically complex aspects of assemblages, and their complicated intra-, inter-, and extra-connections? To address these questions, I will apply several fundamental notions in conjunctural cultural studies, including articulation and conjuncture, to which I now turn my attention.

3.2 Possibility for Collaboration between Assemblage Theory and Conjunctural Cultural Studies

As I illustrated in the previous sections, embracing several vital concepts in conjunctural cultural studies, such as the concepts of conjuncture and articulation, is my strategic choice for a more critical response to some rather ambiguous questions occurring in assemblage theory. In other words, I believe that applying concepts in conjunctural cultural studies will eliminate ambiguities in assemblage theory often originating from DeLanda's fixation on the relationship between capacities and properties (Harman, 2008).

Additionally, I believe assemblage theory should answer an essential question: “the consequence of theory” (Miller, 2021, p. 5). Specifically, it is undeniable that DeLanda’s reconceptualization of Deleuze’s assemblage contributed to the transformation of the notion of a more accessible and comprehensible viewpoint on the relationship between part and whole (Andrews, 2019). However, initiated from this point, I assert that assemblage theory should strive to answer this question: “What is assemblage for? What can it do to help us out of this capitalist [or neoliberalist] present?” (Russell et al., 2011, p. 576). Consequently, embracing conjunctural cultural studies in assemblage theory will allow the notion to more realistically and critically respond to compelling issues in contemporary society.

3.2.1 Cultural Studies: A Political-Intellectual Work

First, it is crucial to understand politically driven, interventionist characteristics of cultural studies as a “committed political-intellectual work” (Grossberg, 2010, p. 53). While cultural studies aims to examine popular culture, it does not analyze culture per se. Rather, by viewing culture “as a site of political struggle” (Clarke, 2014, p. 113), it endeavors to illuminate unequal power dynamics and relations in society, ultimately suggesting context-specific different possibilities (Grossberg, 1997, 2006, 2018, 2019). As Grossberg (1997) noted:

Cultural studies is interventionist in the sense that it attempts to use the best intellectual resources available to gain a better understanding of the relations of power (as the state of play or balance in a field of forces) in a particular context, believing that such knowledge will better enable people to change the context and hence the relations of power. Consequently, its project is always political, always partisan, but its politics are always

contextually defined. (p. 253)

As a political project with a strong interventionist mindset, cultural studies focuses on culture. However, this “culture” is always “a sort of constant battlefield” (Hall, 2019, p. 354) overflowing with “a continuous and necessarily uneven and unequal struggle” (Hall, 2019, p. 354). More importantly, within this contested area, cultural studies always seeks to identify other possibilities which can ultimately reformulate and transform the current context into a better place as a consequence (Grossberg, 1997, 2006, 2018, 2019).

In this sense, as Grossberg (1997) put it, “radical contextualism” (p. 253) is one of the major characteristics of cultural studies. To more effectively intervene and propose other, more relevant possibilities for social change within contexts, scholars should persistently examine context-specific, complex unequal power structures and connections, which are usually difficult to elaborate without a critical understanding of the specific social setting they want to explore. A strong sense of radical contextualism also makes cultural studies an interdisciplinary or even transdisciplinary project (Andrews, 2002; Andrews & Giardina, 2008; Andrews & Loy, 1993; Grossberg, 1997, 2006, 2018, 2019). While conducting context-specific research and dissecting unequally structured power relations, scholars should be familiar with diverse fields and knowledge without being limited to a particular discipline, such as those from sociology, anthropology, history, and disability/gender/race studies.

Additionally, they should base the project on an anti-reductionist perspective (Clarke, 2018; Grossberg, 1997; Hall & Massey, 2010). For example, although the economy is an important site as a research topic to analyze, it is just one of many elements in society (Hall & Massey, 2010).

Researchers should not solely focus on one dominant factor in society but delve into complex relationships among numerous prominent and unnoticed forces without sticking to predetermined assumptions (Andrews, 2002; Andrews & Giardina, 2008; Andrews & Loy, 1993; Clarke, 2010; 2018; Grossberg, 1997; Hall & Massey, 2010).

Aligning with cultural studies illustrated above, I should explain several critical differences between my version and DeLandaian assemblage theory. First, as I put substantial emphasis on complex power relations by expounding the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization, my version of assemblage theory embraces radical contextualism. That is, the major purpose of a synchronic interpretation that I highlighted in the previous section is an examination of each assemblage's development and transformation in specific social settings. The ultimate focus is on unequal power dynamics and associations among many assemblages in certain contexts to suggest other new possibilities. It also implies that my version of assemblage theory is a politically motivated transdisciplinary project: "a project that would work beyond disciplinary boundaries, devoted to a view that the social world did not divide neatly into the categories of social, economic, political—each of which 'belonged' to a discipline" that needs a wide range of background knowledge from various fields (Clarke, 2014, p. 116).

More importantly, since I highlight unequal power structures and linkages associated with territorialization and deterritorialization, I should mention the difference between DeLanda's and my own interpretation of flat ontology in the context of assemblage theory. While DeLanda's flat ontology signifies that "all entities must be treated alike" (Harman, 2011, p. 177), advanced from his conceptualization, flat ontology, in my conceptualization, focuses on the influence and evolution of complex power dynamics. In other words, although my version of assemblage theory

advocates extrinsic relations of assemblages that retain their autonomy within nonhierarchical multilayered formations, this does not mean that “all assemblages or assemblage relations are equally impactful” (Andrews, 2019, p. 62). Rather, “each of its myriad [assemblages] possesses the potential for securing a position of empirical dominance and ontological influence, as determined by the myriad articulations” (Andrews, 2021b, p. 74). In short, assemblages have “the same ontological possibility” (Andrews, 2019, p. 62) to stabilize/homogenize or destabilize/heterogenize themselves or others. However, the empirical leverages vary based on specific contexts outside of “pre-ordained, necessary hierarchies of assemblage influences” (p. 62).

Put another way, in my version of assemblage theory, assemblages maintain their unique agency in alignment with extrinsic relations. However, their powers are different based on specific empirical sites (Andrews. 2019; 2021b). That is, assemblages can freely move around within different scales, but their influences change depending on where they are situated (Andrews. 2019; 2021b).

Based on the explanations above, I believe that the detailed meanings of the synchronic frame, consistent with radical contextuality in cultural studies (Grossberg, 2018), are now understandable. In the next section, I explain my application of a diachronic frame, underscoring how certain assemblages have progressed historically, with the concept of conjuncture in cultural studies.

3.2.2 Assemblage Theory and Conjunctural Analysis in Cultural Studies

For a deeper understanding, it is necessary to peruse the concept of a conjuncture in cultural studies, developed by Stuart Hall, one of the most influential scholars in cultural studies.

In a conversation with Doreen Massey, Hall (Hall & Massey, 2010) outlined the concept of conjuncture as follows:

A conjuncture can be long or short: it's not defined by time or by simple things like a change of regime—though these have their own effects. As I see it, history moves from one conjuncture to another rather than being an evolutionary flow. And what drives it forward is usually a crisis, when the contradictions that are always at play in any historical moment are condensed, or, as Althusser said, 'fuse in a ruptural unity.' Crises are moments of potential change, but the nature of their resolution is not given. It may be that society moves on to another version of the same thing (Thatcher to Major?), or to a somewhat transformed version (Thatcher to Blair); or relations can be radically transformed. (p. 55)

In this quote, Hall pointed out several main features of a conjuncture. First, instead of viewing history as a linear development, it can be regarded as moving from one conjuncture to another, with disparate lengths (Clarke, 2010). More crucially, as a moment that could engender any shift, a conjuncture is formed out of multiple concentrated contradictions usually represented as a crisis. Furthermore, Hall later stated additional crucial characteristics regarding conjunctures during a conversation with James Hay:

A conjuncture is a period in which the contradictions and problems and antagonisms, which are always present in different domains in a society, begin to come together. They begin to accumulate, they begin to fuse, to overlap with one another. The ideological becomes part of the economic problem and vice versa. Gramsci says that they fuse into a ruptural unity, and that's the beginning of conjuncture. The aftermath of the fusion, how

that fusion develops, its challenges to the existing historical project or social order, the efforts of the state and the people who run it, etcetera, to contain that, or the success of change and transformation—*all* [speaker's emphasis] of that arc constitutes conjuncture. So, it's the accumulation and condensation of different strands of contradiction and problems. (Hay et al., 2013, p. 16, italics in original)

A conjuncture is a particular period of time during which initially discursive forces are intensely accumulated, creating a critical moment—a sort of chaos (see also Danewid, 2022; Hall, 2007; Jefferson, 2021). Hence, following DeLanda (2006, 2011, 2016), a conjuncture is a specific duration of time during which movements among various assemblages of assemblages are the most forceful and flexible with the most extreme processes of territorialization/coding and deterritorialization/decoding. In this state of the pandemonium, confusions and possibilities coincide in a convoluted combination of assemblages, requiring continuous intellectual investigation for social change (see also Clarke, 2018; Clarke & Newman, 2017; Grossberg, 2006, 2010).

Additionally, Hall identified enduring issues within the concept, implying that it is impossible to suggest a one-dimensional definition for the term:

I usually have used “conjuncture” to mean a narrow period of crisis. ... It seems to me that conjuncture should be very loosely used to describe a duration of time. To tell you the honest truth, trying now to write a definitive position is painful because I don't, well I cannot quite, settle for one or the other. I know in most of my writing I settle for the shorter duration, more classically a crisis-type period. But then I find myself talking about the

“neoliberal conjuncture” as beginning in the 1970s and still going on into the twenty-first century. So, there’s confusion around this term, and I think there always has been a little, and I acknowledge this in my essay [about the neoliberal revolution], or the version I’m working on at this moment. (Hay et al., 2013, p. 18)

Although his analysis mostly centered around “a crisis-type period,” Hall acknowledged that such a crisis cannot fully reflect the complexities of a conjuncture (see also Jefferson, 2021). Furthermore, certain forces could become the most powerful within a conjuncture, but “they never define it entirely” (Hay et al., 2013, p. 17). In other words, by rejecting the determinism that stresses only one particular element over others, it is vital to examine the intricate multiplicities that exist within a conjuncture.

Thus, the concept of a conjuncture, as well as conjunctural analysis, pertain to “particular historical moments and how to understand them” (Jefferson, 2021, p. 111). In other words, conjunctural analysis examines assemblages of assemblages, usually occurring in a critical moment for society. However, as Clarke (2018) put it, conjunctural analysis is “indeed the hard labour—or dirty work” (p. 84) because there are too many forces and questions to ponder. For instance, the labor includes exploring the nature of a particular moment, the end of one conjuncture and the beginning of another, the complicated relationships among various elements in one conjuncture, and most importantly, inspired by these points, it is essential to propose desirable future directions. Therefore, “historical specificity” (Hall & Massey, 2010, p. 65) is a principal intellectual capacity to more precisely delve into a conjuncture in order to transform this critical moment into positive possibilities.

In sum, by embracing the concept of a conjuncture in my version of assemblage theory, I characterize a diachronic frame that explores how certain assemblages have progressed historically as a conjunctural analysis—focusing on critical moments as a combination of condensed assemblages: “the multiplicity of forces, pressures, and contradictions that provided the context—the condition” (Clarke & Newman, 2017, p. 102). In addition to radical contextualism and conjuncture, now I turn my attention to the concept of articulation, which I believe can be used instead of the concepts of capacities and properties.

3.2.3 Assemblage Theory and Stuart Hall’s Theory and Method of Articulation

First, Hall (1996) used an articulated lorry metaphor to clarify the concept of articulation:

In England, the term has a nice double meaning because “articulate” means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an “articulated” lorry (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back (trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? (p. 141)

Hence, the concept of articulation is about relationships, but these linkages are “neither absolutely determined nor necessarily permanent” (Slack, 1989, p. 330) because they are always subject to change (i.e., rearticulation). Slack (1989) provided more detailed explanations of the concept as

follows:

The unities they form can be made up of any combination of elements. So, for example, we might examine the specific connections between theory and practice, religion and politics, or technology and gender. ... A brief look at the nature of this connection will serve to illustrate four interrelated implications of approaching social contexts as articulated: (a) connections among the elements are specific, particular, and nonnecessary—they are forged and broken in particular concrete circumstances; (b) articulations vary in their tenacity; (c) articulations vary in their relative power within different social configurations; and (d) different articulations empower different possibilities and practices. (p. 331)

In other words, following a strong rejection of essentialism and reductionism, articulation emphasizes diversified, context-specific connections with different possibilities for positive social change. Yet, the connected entities and individuals can freely detach from and plug into other relations without prearranged assumptions (DeLanda, 2006, 2011, 2016).

Consequently, instead of the concepts of properties and capacities that are part of DeLandian assemblage theory, I argue that articulation can be adopted. While specialized expressive components do exist since each assemblage can be viewed as a distinct assemblage or part of a larger assemblage based on the particular contextual situation, it is rarely possible to strictly distinguish them as either material or expressive components. Therefore, as an assemblage always exists in populations, the focus should be on assemblages' connections and their influences/consequences rather than on specific elements (DeLanda, 2006, 2011, 2016).

Inspired by Andrews' (2019) conceptualization, my version of assemblage theory will adopt articulation instead of capacity and property to delineate complex relationships among various assemblages. Each assemblage first connects (articulation I) with others internally and externally. Then, each assemblage expresses and experiences (articulation II) these complicated relationships in various ways, meaning that based on nonlinear causality, assemblages will exude intricate territorializing and deterritorializing effects on themselves and others.

3.2.4 Assemblage Theory as a Political-Intellectual Work: Assemblages Without Guarantees

My strategic intention is to synthesize several concepts in conjunctural cultural studies and assemblage theory to enhance the political sensitivity of assemblage theory by critically answering vital questions in contemporary society: "What is assemblage for? What can it do to help us out of this capitalist [or neoliberalist] present?" (Russell et al., 2011, p. 576). More crucially, considering the difficulty in exploring of numerous assemblages and suggesting other future directions, I believe that we need more caution before labeling entities and individuals as assemblages (Buchanan, 2021). As Andrews and Loy (1993) stated:

Within Hall's conjunctural framework, meanings and identities are continually contested with no guaranteed essence to any manifestation of cultural existence. There is, in fact, no necessary correspondence or noncorrespondence between specific meanings and identities, and particular cultural practices (Hall, 1985); thus a "Marxism without guarantees" (Hall, 1986a). (p. 269)

Following Andrews and Loy, analyzing assemblages in society is not easy because they are always

subject to consistent mutations influenced by diverse other assemblages. Before naming something assemblages, it is first important to sufficiently wrestle with context-specific and historically complex development of individuals and entities in society. Therefore, we cannot guarantee anything beforehand while analyzing assemblages of assemblages—assemblages without guarantees.

3.3 Assemblage Theory as Method: An (Im)Plausible Academic Experiment

Although previous sections illuminated many fundamental characteristics of assemblage theory, I still believe there are some additional questions that need to be clarified. Following DeLanda (2016), if “at all times we are dealing with assemblages of assemblages” (p. 3), is it possible to delineate all assemblages in society? Put another way, if “all components of an assemblage are assemblages in their own right” (Harman, 2014, p. 120), is it possible to develop assemblage theory-based method? Based on these questions, this section will address challenges and potentials inherent within assemblage theory, while reiterating several vital features of the concept. This will ultimately demonstrate that assemblage theory-based method requires the researcher’s specific objectives and strong commitment, which in turn will confirm the credibility of my version of assemblage theory.

3.3.1 Challenges and Potentials: An Endless Dis/Reassembling Project

The most difficult challenge of assemblage theory is that it is impossible to explore all assemblages in a particular context (Acuto & Curtis, 2014). In other words, an assemblage theory-based approach is an inherently limitless project that requires countless descriptions (Acuto & Curtis, 2014; Harman, 2014). As Acuto and Curtis (2014) stated:

As a method for unpacking categories, this approach can easily fall prey of a self-reinforcing process of endless deconstruction, never reaching what is from the start an impossible end: assemblages like ‘the state’, once opened, bear the risk of unveiling other ‘smaller’ totalities which, in their turn, might also hold internal realities in need of disentanglement, eventually resulting in the question of where to stop assembling and disassembling, and how. (pp. 10–11)

Hence, the first challenge of an assemblage theory-based method is that it requires the researcher’s endless (re)use of the term “assemblage,” which will render any analysis too descriptive (Harman, 2014). Moreover, because “terminology reflects ways of thinking” (Shakespeare, 2018, p. 2), I argue that overuse of the term “assemblage” could lead scholars to misinterpret the concept of assemblage as a static formation. Specifically, if the focus is solely on the term “assemblage,” one could intentionally (or unintentionally) perceive an assemblage as a fixed item without considering it as both product and process simultaneously. In this sense, the etymology of the term “assemblage” needs re-emphasis. According to Nail (2017):

An assemblage is not just a mixture of heterogenous elements; this definition is far too simplistic. The definition of the French word *agencement* does not simply entail [heterogeneous] composition, but entails a constructive process that lays out a specific kind of arrangement. (p. 24, italics in original)

To reiterate, as the original French term “*agencement*” implies, an assemblage is not merely about the complex formation and production of disparate elements. Because assemblages are always somewhere between the state of product and process simultaneously, overusing the term

“assemblage” may adulterate the original meaning, misrepresenting them as passive and immobile products.

Furthermore, the fixation on product rather than process could result in misinterpretation of the most vital idea in assemblage theory—extrinsic relations (i.e., relations of exteriority). Although DeLanda (2016) emphasized that this notion is not tied to spatial dimension, focusing on product rather than process could render assemblages as spatially related entities. For example, as a reminder, the main point of extrinsic relations does not signify that “the elements exist outside the assemblage” (Grossberg, 2010, p. 297) or “external interactions” (Woods, 2015, p. 30). Rather, “individuals’ identities are autonomous of the social relations in which they are embedded” (Campbell, 2021, p. 232). Specifically, extrinsic relations indicate that connected assemblages exchange their leverage. However, through this connection, they do not lose their autonomy because their relationship connects but does not control them. Thus, this does not mean that in assemblage theory, “the subject only ever exists relationally” (Andrews, 2019, p. 47), rather, assemblages exist in populations (i.e., they could be connected but always exist in mobile and mutable groups without prearranged guarantees) (DeLanda, 2006, 2011, 2016).

However, these challenges should not compel scholars to stop proposing assemblage theory-based method. This is because an application of such a method can enrich the resulting research. As Feely (2016) noted:

Rhizomatic modes of thought and analysis will never, and can never, lead to final closure (for Deleuze, knowledge production is divergent rather than convergent).

However, thinking rhizomatically about assemblages will allow us to draw ever more

detailed (but always incomplete) maps of particular entities, pose new questions and follow creative and experimental trajectories in academic analysis. (p. 876)

Following Feely, to embrace assemblage thinking will enable scholars to contemplate complicated combinations of diverse elements together with their influences on society. In other words, an assemblage-based endless academic investigation will enable scholars to identify dominant and unseen assemblages of assemblages in society.

Furthermore, by analyzing numerous assemblages and pinpointing their influences in society, this exploration will ultimately lead scholars to achieve “post-humanist and post-anthropocentric commitments” (Andrews, 2019, p. 47): the “unwillingness to privilege either the social or the material, its resistance to totalizing systems of thought and the reification of entities, and its insistence on the provisional nature of all assemblages as historically contingent entities” (Acuto & Curtis, 2014, pp. 3–4). Specifically, because critical assemblage thinking urges scholars to ponder numerous individuals and entities and their impacts on society based on context-specific and historically complex perspectives, this will make them abandon “human-centered privilege” (Harman, 2014, p. 121) without prioritizing either the human or nonhuman but conceiving them equally without hierarchical orders.

However, a crucial question remains unanswered: how to develop an assemblage theory-based method. Although it may be not possible to develop systematic method with assemblage theory, devising strategic ways to clarify complex relationships among diverse assemblages is viable. As Andrews (2019) noted:

Within any assemblage, hierarchies of influence derive from the contingent relational

proximity, and hence influence, of the assembled “disparate substances” (Grosz, 1994, p. 167); the task of any assemblage analysis being to map the contextual lines of articulation, and associated relations of determination between constituent elements. (p. 50)

Rather than creating fixed steps to analyze diverse assemblages, which could appear to be an assemblage as a static arrangement (see, e.g., Feely, 2019), I assert that assemblage theory-based method should focus on two points simultaneously: (1) how various assemblages are connected (articulation I) and (2) how each assemblage expresses and experiences these complicated relationships in various ways (articulation II). In other words, while examining convoluted connections (articulation I), it also enables scholars to consider how these connections simultaneously trigger stabilization and homogenization, or destabilization and heterogenization (articulation II). However, after “map[ing] the contextual lines of articulation, and associated relations of determination between constituent elements” (Andrews, 2019, p. 50), dominant and overlooked assemblages should be illuminated. More importantly, I believe that the ultimate goal of this analysis should be to suggest an answer for the “so what?” question: “the consequence of theory” (Miller, 2021, p. 5).

Specifically, aligning with Hall (1997), I believe that “theory is always a detour on the way to something more important” (p. 42). This is why my version of assemblage theory embraces conjunctural cultural studies and highlights complex power relations, concentrating on the questions posed by Russell et al. (2011): “What is assemblage for? What can it do to help us out of this capitalist [or neoliberalist] present?” (p. 576). Therefore, moved on from detecting assemblages that perpetuate social problems, or, new or dismissed assemblages, it is ultimately

fundamental to propose other new possibilities for social change.

Consequently, with the suggestion of assemblage theory-based method, it is necessary to acknowledge several inherent challenges. As the rhizome concept suggests, in assemblage theory, “there is no final coherence, no system of coherent networks; rather, there are complexities whose relations are uncertain—although we as researchers are required at some point to ‘present findings’” (Ruming, 2009, p. 458). In other words, it is unlikely to fully capture “all network connections and the complexity” (Ruming, 2009, p. 458) among countless assemblages. In this regard, although researchers always strive to provide “neutral account[s]” (Atkinson, 2014, p. 424), it is essential to heed researchers’ objectives, positionalities, and interpretations within their assemblage-related research, because the exploration of assorted assemblages is inevitably based on a researcher’s intentional judgments and ultimate study goals (Honan, 2007; Ruming, 2009). As my version of assemblage theory aims to augment the political sensibilities of DeLanda’s assemblage theory, my method aims to uncover (unequal) power structures and power dynamics within society, ultimately proposing other possibilities for social change (Andrews & Silk, 2015; Friedman & van Ingen, 2011; Silk et al., 2017).

3.3.2 Sport as Assemblages: An Overview

By explaining both DeLanda’s and my version of assemblage theory, I believe that representative characteristics of the concept are now clarified. As previous sections heavily focused on theoretical and conceptual features concerning assemblage theory, it would be somewhat difficult to fully construe specific components of an assemblage. Thus, this section will briefly explore contemporary sport assemblages and their constituent assemblages to

provide an empirical understanding of assemblage thinking.

First, numerous entities and individuals can be regarded as assemblages and constituent assemblages at the same time, such as:

material and expressive forms, human and non-human, animate and inanimate matter (i.e., athletes/coaches/animals, teams/franchises, game officials, game equipment and performance technologies, performances events [games/matches/contests], media broadcasts and content, products, services, spectators, viewers, consumers, sponsors, retail spaces, natural and/or built environments, leagues, competitions, tournaments, multi-sport events organizations, and governing bodies). (Andrews, 2019, p. 50)

In addition to these common components, sport assemblages could include various globalized constituent assemblages, including:

an assemblage of nationally localized football, futebol, fútbol, calcio, sokker, soka, or soccer assemblages, each of which is potentially (there is no necessary relation) articulated to, and becomes an expression of, the situated cultural, historic, aesthetic, political, and/or economic regimes of the nation in question. Hence, the game can, and indeed has, variously been cast as a material-expressive enactment of liberal capitalist, social democratic, socialist, state capitalist, communist, monarchic, and theocratic national assemblages. (Andrews, 2019, p. 52)

These assemblages could provide a broader illustration regarding sport assemblages. Based on these numerous assemblages in sport, I will now turn the discussion to context-specific and historically complex particular sport assemblages within South Korea. To examine these

assemblages more critically, I will adopt my version of assemblage theory, which accompanies radical contextualism and conjunctural analysis, to elucidate how various assemblages are related (articulation I) and how each assemblage communicates these complicated relationships in various ways (articulation II)—the convoluted processes of territorialization/coding and deterritorialization/decoding—ultimately suggesting new possibilities for positive social change.

CHAPTER FOUR: Sport Assemblages and Totalitarian Regimes in South Korea

4.1 Situating a Period of Totalitarian Regimes as a Conjuncture

4.1.1 A Brief Historical Background

Although South Korea is now generally regarded as one of the most advanced and prosperous nations, it was poverty-stricken only a few decades ago seemingly without a hopeful future. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, imperialist powers invaded the nation, followed by an oppressive period of colonization under the Japanese, from 1910 to 1945. After Korea became independent in 1945, the Korean War (1950–1953) split the Korean Peninsula into two, providing a contested field for the power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union (see Kim, 1988; Kwak & Kang, 2019; Park & Lim, 2015).

This list of multiple national disasters left Korean society devastated and rife with deep-rooted frustration. However, the state of affairs in Korea began to show a steady process of change with the emergence of military General Park Chunghee, who seized power after a sudden coup on May 16, 1961 (Ha & Mangan, 2003). Because of the unstable political foundation of the regime

and as a strategic method to redeem public support, Park emphasized economic development as the nation's pressing task (Cho, 2000; Choi, 2020; Joo, 2012; Yoon, 2009). He focused on export-centered policies and selectively supported business conglomerates (*chaebol* in Korean) to produce immediate tangible benefits (Cho, 2000; Choi, 2020; Joo et al., 2017; Kim, 2016; Kwak & Kang, 2019; Shin, 2000). The regime prompted these conglomerates to invest or donate millions of dollars, guaranteeing substantial leeway for widespread expansion (M. Cho, 2015; Choi, 2020; C. Kim, 2016).

Although South Korea experienced swift economic growth under the Park administration from 1963 to 1979, it fell into another pandemonium after his assassination by his political right-hand man, Kim Jaegyu (Ha & Mangan, 2003; Mangan et al., 2011). In the wake of this chaotic event, new military-based political groups, led by Chun Doohwan, seized control of the country, opening a continued totalitarian regime (1980–1988). While public opposition existed under the Park administration, the government effectively controlled them by putting forward developmentalism. However, under the Chun administration, since people no longer suffered dire poverty compared to the past, the genuine public desire was the country's democratization (Joo et al., 2017). Therefore, Chun encountered consistent public demonstrations, usually spearheaded by university students (Andrews et al., 2010; Mangan & Ok, 2012; Mangan et al., 2011).

In addition to the nation's internal discord, worldwide conditions were also turbulent. There was a fierce ideological competition between democratic nations, such as the United States, and communist nations, such as the Soviet Union and East European blocs. Moreover, these two presidents were often under national and even personal threats, especially from North Korea (see Ok & Park, 2015; Park & Ok, 2019; Tan & Bridges, 2019).

Consequently, I argue that a period of totalitarian regimes is one of the most critical moments in Korean history. After a long period of successive national disasters, Korea encountered extraordinary societal transformations under the governance of totalitarian administrations. Although people experienced rapid national development, the situation was still tumultuous, from endless public protests to communist countries' threats. In other words, this period particularly expedited appearances, expansions, and conversions of countless new and existing assemblages, externally and internally. In particular, sport assemblages underwent unexpected development during this moment stimulated by strategic connections among diverse assemblages, mainly due to administration assemblages, to which I now pivot my discussion.

4.1.2 The Expansion of Sport Assemblages during Totalitarian Regimes

When discussing the development of sport in Korea, it is impossible to exclude the totalitarian regimes. Korean sport during this period swiftly evolved under the government's enthusiastic support. President Park Chunghee was versatile in numerous sports, and President Chun Doohwan also enjoyed playing soccer (Ha & Mangan, 2003; Hong, 2011; Park & Ok, 2017). Thus, their keen interest in sport is understandable; however, this period intertwined with complex political intentions and contextual situations.

As military generals, both caught government power through a sudden coup. Promoting sport was their calculated measure to distract people's attention from vulnerable political foundations and suppression of opposing forces, including endless public demand for democracy (Andrews et al., 2010; Chung et al., 2009; Ha & Mangan, 2003; Joo et al., 2017; Kim, 2017; Kim et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2003; Lim & Huh, 2009; Ok & Park, 2015; Park et al., 2012; Park & Lim,

2015; Shin, 2009). Furthermore, since the international competitions between South and North Korea were extreme, sport was one of the most pertinent entities readily facilitating nationalism. Hence, touting sport as a national priority was totalitarian regimes' deliberate political choice to mask their insecure political legitimacy and predominate their influence over other countries (Joo et al., 2017). Thus, in analyzing the relationships between sport and other entities and their constant territorialization and deterritorialization as assemblages, it is important to explore totalitarian regimes' elite sport-first policies and their consequences.

4.2 Policies for Sport as Assemblages

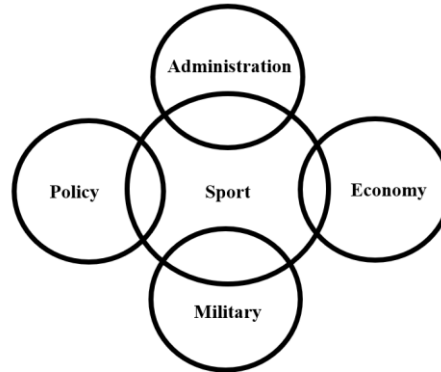
First, the Park administration facilitated elite sport by instituting a pension system granting athletes a certain amount of money based on their rankings in mega-sporting events (Ha et al., 2015; Park et al., 2012). Second, it introduced the Athletic Specialist System (ASS) in 1972. Under ASS, if student-athletes successfully demonstrated their athletic capabilities in various competitions, they could enter a prestigious university without attaining an outstanding academic record (Ha et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2020; Park et al., 2012; Park & Lim, 2015; Nam et al., 2017; Nam et al., 2018). Third, the Military Service Exemption Law of 1973 exempted male athletes who received medals in major sporting events, such as the Olympics or Asian Games, from serving in the army (Ha et al., 2015; Hong, 2012; Park et al., 2012). Given that the country still requires young Korean men who satisfy certain criteria to enlist in the army service due to the lack of a final peace agreement between South and North Korea, the law also implies a relationship between policy assemblages and the military and North Korea (Ha et al., 2015; Hong, 2012; Park et al., 2012).

There is also a link between policy assemblages and school sport. For example, under the motto “physical strength is fundamental for national power,” the government increased the time assigned to physical education in the regular school curriculum (Chung et al., 2009; Ha & Mangan, 2003; Kwak & Kang, 2019; Lee et al., 2003; Lim & Huh, 2009). It also created physical fitness tests and officially included them in the university entrance examination system (Chung et al., 2009; Kwak & Kang, 2019; Lee et al., 2003; Lim & Huh, 2009). Most importantly, the government established various elite sports schools, including the Seoul Physical Education High School and the Korean National Sport University, for more methodical cultivation of elite athletes and coaches (Kim, et al., 2020; Park & Lim, 2015).

In sum, sport assemblages regularly enlarged their territories during Park’s government through constant connections between administration and policy assemblages. However, given its turbulent period and the government’s military-related foundation, the influence of the military assemblages is conspicuous. For instance, the physical education classes resembled military training more than educational learning enhancing students’ health (Lim & Huh, 2009). Consequently, as shown in Figure 4.1, the consistent enlargement of sport assemblages was initially possible due to connections and territorialization among several assemblages, which initially maintained strong associations with the Park administration, including the economy, policy, and military assemblages. However, if sport assemblages consolidated their foundations by interacting with policy assemblages, mainly during the Park administration, their formations became more complex and diversified while associating with sporting organization and team assemblages. Hence, this consolidation created new sub-assemblages within sport, to which I now turn my point.

Figure 4.1

Sport Assemblages during Totalitarian Regimes



4.3 Sporting Organizations and Teams as Assemblages

Like policy assemblages, the initial step for enlarging sporting organization and team assemblages was possible due to Park's strong interest in sport. However, there is a more apparent connection between their development and policy assemblages. For example, enacting the National Sports Promotion Law (NSPL) in 1962 as a foundation for fostering sport in Korea, Park's administration unified various sport organizations, such as the Korean Olympic Committee (KOC) and the Korean School Sports Association (KSSA), under the control of Korean Sport Council (KSC) (Kwak & Kang, 2019; Lee et al., 2003; Lim & Huh, 2009). Therefore, the KSC, originally directing the widespread dissemination of popular sport, became the central semi-governmental institution administrating elite sport (Kwak & Kang, 2019; Lee et al., 2003; Lim & Huh, 2009). Additionally, after the South Korean teams met unsatisfactory results in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, where the country harbored sensitive historical memories, the government constructed a national training center in Taereung in 1966 (Ha et al., 2015; Kwak & Kang, 2019;

Park et al., 2012; Park & Lim, 2015).

Chun's government intensified this administration-managed expansion of sport assemblages as he constantly encountered massive anti-government demonstrations (Andrews et al., 2010; Joo et al., 2017; Mangan & Ok, 2012; Mangan et al., 2011). For instance, while implementing the so-called 3S policies—Sport, Screen, Sex—and easing restrictions, such as curfews and the requirement to wear school uniforms, the Chun administration amended the NSPL to add new language to clarify its political orientations to sport (Bridges, 2012; Ha & Mangan, 2003; Hong, 2012; Joo et al., 2017; Larson & Park, 1993; Park et al., 2012; Park & Ok, 2017; Shin, 2009). Specifically, in 1982, the government indicated that “the purpose is to contribute to the promotion of national prestige through physical education” (Shin, 2009, p. 155). By revising the foundational law of sport, the government explicitly stated its firm intention to focus more on elite sport and mega-sporting events in the name of national glory (Shin, 2009). In addition, the government established the Ministry of Sport (MS) as an independent government department and created the Korea Institute of Sport Science (KISS) near the Korea National Training Center to prepare for the hosting of mega-sporting events, such as the Olympic Games (Hong, 2012; Joo et al., 2017; Kwak & Kang, 2019; Won & Hong, 2015).

Furthermore, as another means of supporting athletes' military service and guaranteeing achievements in international sporting events, the government formed the Korea Armed Forces Athletic Corps (KAFAC) (generally, *sangmu* in Korean) in 1984 (Hong, 2012; Park & Lim, 2015). In addition to the Exemption Law, this center enabled groups of athletes who passed particular tests and interviews to fulfill their military duty while continuing their training (K. Choi et al., 2021; Hong, 2012; Park & Lim, 2015; see also An & Oh, 2010).

More crucially, the professional leagues also emerged during the Chun administration. Specifically, the administration compelled conglomerates, including Samsung and Hyundai, to support national sport organizations, promising tax-related advantages. Consequently, the chairs of many corporations took turns presiding over these organizations and providing substantial financial assistance. Ultimately this led to the formation of the professional league assemblages, including baseball, soccer, and Korean traditional wrestling (*ssirm* in Korean) in addition to existing sports, such as boxing and golf (cf. Cho, 2010; Ha & Mangan, 2003; Joo, 2012; Park et al., 2016; Park & Ok, 2017).

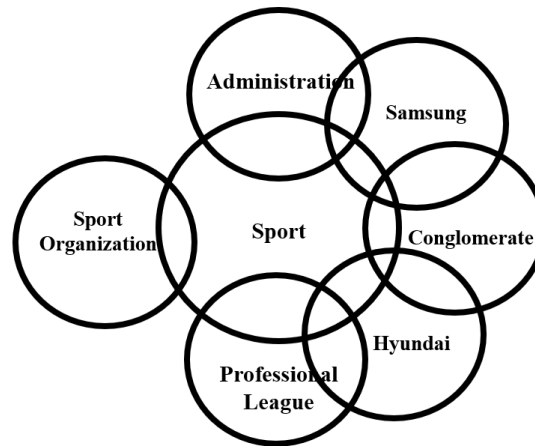
As a result, following the Park administration, the Chun administration also contributed to the rapid expansion of sport assemblages, particularly those of sporting organizations and teams. However, along with culture-related assemblages, such as the film industry, their focus was more explicitly on elite sport and sporting events. Nonetheless, Chun's intention was clear as the sport assemblages swiftly expanded their leverage due to the interaction between the administration assemblages. By encouraging the expansion of sport assemblages, he sought to secure a dominant position and minimize the possible deterritorializing effects of other assemblages, which could intimidate his dominance, such as the constant public demand for democracy.

In summary, sport assemblages experienced unprecedented growth during totalitarian regimes as one of the strategies for constant territorialization of administration assemblages while blocking the rise of possible deterritorializing forces. In other words, without reflecting diverse voices, especially from the population at large, the government strictly directed all processes (Kwak & Kang, 2019; Lim & Huh, 2009). In this way, connecting sport assemblages with policy–sport organization–professional league assemblages broadened their boundaries with the

assistance of the administration and conglomerate assemblages, including Samsung and Hyundai, as depicted in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

Sport Assemblages and Other Related Assemblages



Ultimately, the administration assemblages developed calculated communication between sport assemblages, including sport policy, organization, facility, and league, forestalling other assemblages' unexpected deterritorialization by bringing them into their direct control. In other words, because of the administration assemblages' strong territorializing effects, other disparate assemblages failed to spread their influence widely, maintaining the administration assemblages' widespread external and internal homogenization.

4.4 Athletes and the Media as Assemblages

4.4.1 Cha Bumkun and the Nation

Considering the substantial control of and impact exerted by totalitarian administrations with respect to various assemblages, the media was also susceptible to the strict censorship (Chung,

1992; Joo, 2012). Thus, media assemblages were an effective supplementary decoding device to reinforce administration assemblages' boundaries.

Under the totalitarian regimes, Cha Bumkun was the most influential sub-assemblage of athlete assemblages, as a soccer player who played in Germany between the 1980s and 1990s. Thus, his brilliant exploits often drew major media attention. As the first Korean soccer player to play in a foreign country, he frequently emphasized his ambition as a Korean athlete through the media. He reiterated his dedication to Korea in numerous media interviews:

If the Korean team passes the Moscow Olympic qualifying round, I will run for my mother nation even if they don't call me. I'm not here to earn money, but to learn soccer on behalf of Korea. When I return home, I will work as a coach to train my juniors. (Park, 1979, para. 13)

Cha demonstrated his devotion to Korea in regular media appearances. He used the phrase "mother nation" explicitly, which is far more powerful and nationalistic than the term "nation." The media credited Cha's success to his perseverance and diligence highlighting his humility. For instance, the media emphasized Cha's statement that "the ways to quickly overcome the opponent's tackle or teammates' non-cooperative attitude is my path to greatness," adding that "extraordinary, steady training, and effort are the only way to solve this complex problem" (*Dong-A Ilbo*, 1979, para. 16). Moreover, the media frequently discussed his abstemious lifestyle:

Cha Bumkun's serious attitude toward training and his obsession with practice, touched Coach Buckman and drew sympathy from his teammates. Fellow players are surprised by Cha Bumkun's tremendous amount of practice and call him "an innate soccer human." ...

Cha Bumkun ... lives like a testament of monks with exhaustive physical management to maintain his best condition. (Lee, 1980, para. 19)

Hence, hailing Cha as the personification of perseverance through media assemblages was conducive to expanding/reinforcing administration assemblages because it could contribute to the homogenization of the public assemblages (e.g., Korean citizens) by highlighting nationalism and the essential characteristics that the administration wished them to internalize as Koreans

Additionally, while the media mentioned capitalistic elements in this connection, such as Cha's economic success, at the end of each article, it consistently portrayed him as the pride of the nation, who overcame insurmountable odds. For instance, after introducing the increased transfer fee and the insurance taken out on his legs, a newspaper article concluded by describing Cha as "a proud Korean who endures the jungle of soccer alone" (Lee, 1980, para. 53). Another piece highlighted Cha's income through advertisement contracts and referred to him as "a world-class star born in Korea" at the end of the article. (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 1984, para. 40). Hence, capitalism-related assemblages, such as economic success and income, existed in this period, but they were usually embedded in nationalism assemblages, rarely obtaining an opportunity to define their boundaries.

4.4.2 Cha Bumkun and Confucianism

As a near neighbor to China, Korea has long been profoundly influenced by Chinese culture. Confucianism, in particular, has been a national dogma since the founding of the Joseon Dynasty in the 14th century (see Haboush, 1991; Robinson, 1991). The primary goal of Confucianism is the orderly functioning of all members of society. That is, when "there is

government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son” (*Institute of Traditional Culture*, n.d., para. 15), the people can enjoy peace. This philosophy contributed to the Korean people’s longstanding adherence to:

harmony and consensus, a strongly developed ability to feel shame and the loss of face, frequent use of the words “we” or “our,” collective interests, family-owned companies, ideologies of equality prevailing over individual freedom, in-group customers getting better treatment, relationship prevailing over task, and high-context communication. (Ryu & Cervero, 2011, p. 143)

Rather than focusing solely on private concerns, Koreans highly value interpersonal relationships, such as those between “father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and [among] friends,” resulting in “high collectivism” (Ryu & Cervero, 2011, p. 143) as the shared priority throughout society. However, I contend that Confucianism implicitly allows unequal male-female power relations in Korea (Choi, 1992, 1997; Kim & Park, 2003; Robinson, 1991). While emphasis on family-related concepts reserves ultimate power for the head of the household (primarily men), it constantly reduces “a woman [to] only a contingent identity as a wife and mother—that is, as an instrument that perpetuates the male line” (Choi, 1992, p. 107). Consequently, Confucianism has reinforced patriarchal and androcentric ideals in Korean society, by confining women’s status to that of good wives and wise mothers (Choi, 1992, 1997; Kim & Park, 2003; Oh, 2015; Robinson, 1991).

Confucian illustrations were prevalent in the media coverage of Cha as additional territorializing and coding tools for reinforcing the position of the administration assemblages. For

example, due to Cha's success, related assemblages such as family, particularly his wife, Oh Eunmi, was thrust into the limelight. The media portrayed her as an ideal wife and wise mother, as follows: "Oh Eunmi, who has a calm voice and is clear of consideration, is known as Cha's practical manager in the sports world. It was in the spring of 1973 that Cha first met this frugal helper" (Ji, 1978, para. 21). The media depicted her personal life in the following way:

Daily life is about dealing with housework and raising a baby. It is a life without leisure.

However, on the day of the game, the only joy is to go to the stadium regularly, "although she doesn't know soccer well." (Lee, 1980, para. 30)

Oh was regularly portrayed as a sensible lifelong companion who assisted Cha in improving his performance in the stadium. She was portrayed as a housewife who managed countless errands for him. Although she was regarded as Cha's closest supporter, her role in the media was strictly limited to being an assistant who was unfamiliar with soccer. In this portrayal of Cha's wife, the media overlaid Confucianist beliefs such as the concept of family and sacrifice. This Confucianism-centric coverage marginalized women's roles by placing a substantial emphasis on their handling of their secondary roles as a female supporter. However, this was ultimately helpful for cementing the location of administration assemblages while preventing any unnecessary deterritorialization from public assemblages, such as a demand for democracy. Specifically, if regime-centered nationalism underscores the public's duty to work hard for the country, Confucianism taught people how to behave with respect to others, and by extension, to corporations and the country (Kim & Park, 2003).

4.4.3 Cha Bumkun and Japan

The interaction between Confucianism and media assemblages were supplemented by Japan-related assemblages, which were shaped by the media's deliberate coding strategies. Specifically, two years before Cha's transfer to Germany, a Japanese soccer player named Yasuhiko Okudera played for FC Köln. Due to the strained relations between South Korea and Japan, the Korean media spotlighted their matches, exemplifying them as a microcosm of the conflict between the countries. Okudera was painted as a terrified, unskilled player in the constant spotlight on Cha's performance.

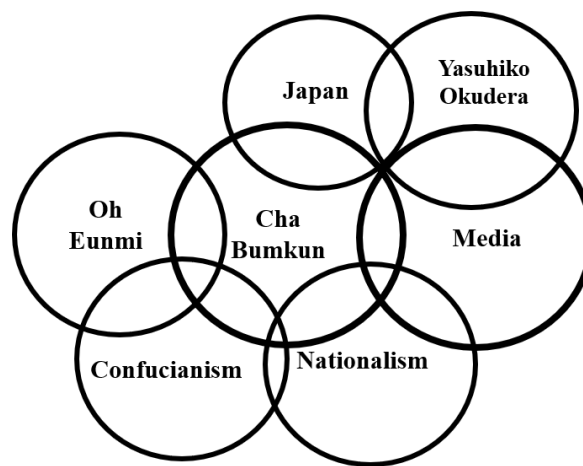
For example, when Cha played well, the media praised him and frequently compared him positively to Okudera: "Meanwhile, Okudera played a poor game as if he was intimidated in this game, which was incomparable to Cha, who played a spectacular game" (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 1979, para. 10). Thus, the comparison between Cha and Okudera was a purposeful territorializing/coding strategy adopted by the media to bolster the strong nationalism in Korea. By reminding people of the painful history of Japanese colonizing, the media indicated the need for hard work and diligence as a means of outshining Japan while strictly following the administration's orders, without opposition.

In summary, the connection between the media and athlete assemblages, especially with respect to Cha Bumkun, was conspicuous under the totalitarian government. However, considering the condition of Korea following long periods of national trauma and the regimes' fragile political legitimacy, with the associations between Cha with particular assemblages, such as nationalism, Confucianism, and Japan, the media aided to constant enlargement of the administration

assemblages, both internally and externally, as presented in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3

The Cha Bumkun, Media, and Related Assemblages



4.5 Sporting Events as Assemblages

In addition to the media assemblages, administrations also deployed another sub-sport assemblage more explicitly—the sporting event—to reinforce the status quo. For example, the Park administration regularly held the President Park’s Cup International Football Tournament, named after Park Chunghee (Kwak & Kang, 2019; Lim & Huh, 2009). More crucially, the successful hosting of the 42nd World Shooting Championships in Seoul in 1978 prompted the government to bid for the Olympic Games (Bridges, 2012; Hill, 1996; Mangan et al., 2011; Mangan & Ok, 2012; Park & Ok, 2019; see also Park & Koack, 2010). In 1979, Park announced

that the nation would tender a bid proposal to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (Bridges, 2012; Hill, 1996; Mangan & Ok, 2012; Park & Ok, 2019).

Although the government terminated plans for hosting the Olympic Games after Park Chunghee's assassination in 1979, it again became central as the ideal method for enhancing national pride with solid governmental support during the Chun administration. Chun's objective was clear; he intended the advancing of the Olympics to encourage the escalation of sport assemblages for the prevention of unanticipated other assemblages' deterritorialization. However, hosting sporting events failed to completely territorialize assemblages, ultimately becoming the most critical momentum that created strong deterritorialization, to which I now turn my attention.

4.5.1 The 1988 Seoul Olympic Games

Before the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, due to ideological confrontations between the democratic and socialist camps during the Cold War, two previous events—the 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games—had become seen as two “imperfect half Olympics” (Kim & Yang, 2014, p. 272) because of each camp's nonparticipation respectively. Thus, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) hoped to host “a boycott-free Olympics” (Bridges, 2012, p. 65) without political strife (Bairner & Cho, 2014; Bae & Woo, 2019; Bridges, 2012; Joo, 2012; Kwak & Kang, 2019; Ok & Park, 2015; Woo & Bae, 2019). In other words, due to the consistent threat of deterritorializing effects from the Cold War–democratic–socialist camp assemblages, the IOC assemblages including the Olympics hoped to reterritorialize their position by diminishing unanticipated deterritorialization/decoding forces such as boycotts.

Two candidates competed to secure the right to host: Seoul in South Korea and Nagoya in

Japan. South Korea was handicapped because Japan had previous experience hosting the Olympics in 1964, whereas South Korea was a small country with much recent turbulence (Mangan et al., 2011). However, an anti-Nagoya Olympics associations led by civil organizations in Japan launched letter-writing campaign to IOC members expressing opposition to Nagoya's hosting. This situation boosted Seoul's chances by decreasing/destabilizing the relationship between the Olympics and Japan and thereby consolidating/stabilizing the link with Korea (see Bairner & Cho, 2014; Hill, 1996; Joo et al., 2017; Kim & Yang, 2014).

However, South Korea needed to cope with two additional assemblages to forestall the deterritorialization/decoding threat, both externally and internally. First, externally, due to a perception that South Korea's attempt to host the Olympics was a risk that could bolster capitalism and damage socialism on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea persistently interrupted the relationship between South Korea and the Olympics assemblages (Bridges, 2012). The IOC was able to conduct careful discussion regarding sharing venue locations in South and North Korea proposed by Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro's suggestion of a co-hosting deal (Bridges, 2012; Lee, 2020). Nonetheless, registering its opinion that South Korea "was unfit 'in every respect' to host the Olympic Games" (Bridges, 2012, p. 67), in 1987, North Korea even bombed Korean Air Flight 858 to increase social dislocation (Ok & Ha, 2011; Park & Ok, 2019; Tan & Bridges, 2019). As a result, North Korea was a major deterritorializing force that intimidated the dominant position of the IOC-Olympics and the administration assemblages in South Korea.

Despite North Korea's distraction as an element of deterritorialization, many socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union, were played the role of important territorializing forces. For instance, although the Soviet Union initially did not intend to participate in the 1988 Olympics,

pressures from some Eastern European states that had boycotted the 1984 event prompted the Soviet Union to commit to participating. Thus, the powerful socialist nations, which had solid connections to North Korea, contributed to territorialization/coding of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, which prevented the North Korea's deterritorialization of the event (see Bridges, 2012).

However, although Korea was eager to host the event, it did not have sufficient financial and diplomatic sources to secure its dominance. Consequently, it compelled the chairs of conglomerates to support the plan (Bairner & Cho, 2014; Bridges, 2012; Joo et al., 2017). Chung Juyung, who founded Hyundai and played a key role in hosting the Olympics, recalled this period in the following terms:

“It was when I was the chairman of the Federation of Korean Industries. Without saying a word to me in advance, one day in May, the Minister of Culture and Education brought a paper, saying that it was a presidential approval, and I was appointed as a president of a private seven-member committee.” ... The mission was handed over to Chung just because of two things: (1) he has a lot of money and (2) he is a chairman of the Federation of Korean Industries. ... However, at that period during the 1980s, no one imagined that South Korea could host the Olympics. (Kim, 2014, para. 1)

Led by Chung Juyung, conglomerate assemblages created a preparatory committee for the Olympic bid, with members including Kim Woochoong from the Daewoo corporation and Choi Wonseok from the Dong-Ah corporation. They used their relationships with IOC members and various businesspeople worldwide to establish extensive support (see Kim & Choi, 2018).

It is commonly believed that hosting the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games led to positive

outcomes for the country and increased public attention on sport. First, it brought Korea an improved worldwide reputation (Bairner & Cho, 2014; Bridges, 2012; Cho, 2022; Kwak & Kang, 2019; Mangan et al., 2011; Ok & Ha, 2011). Leveraging this, the government also expanded its diplomatic relationships with socialist nations, such as China, Hungary, and the Soviet Union (Bridges, 2012; Joo et al., 2017; see also Merkel, 2020; Vandenberghe, 2017). Further, many corporations, such as Samsung, were able to exhibit their technologies and products to representatives of other nations (Bridges, 2012; Joo et al., 2017). Hence, as a vital component of sport assemblages in Korea, the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games contributed to the rise and consolidation of the relationships among various assemblages, such as the administration and conglomerate.

However, there were several crucial yet minimized assemblages during and after the event for the dominance of the administration and sport assemblages. Specifically, while designing accommodations for visitors, the government arbitrarily chose the land and began construction through several corporations (Nam & Kwon, 2008; Park, 2008). Furthermore, in the name of “city beautification” (Nam & Kwon, 2008, p. 385), the government justified harsh violence, and many people lost their residence without receiving proper compensation (Joo et al., 2017; Nam, 2007b).

Additionally, although the Olympics enabled the nation to improve the social environment in Seoul while enhancing public transportation and diverse facilities (see Joo et al., 2017; Larson & Park, 1993), it ultimately aggravated “the hyper-centralization of the nation” (Joo, 2012, p. 49). In other words, only Seoul and some locations within it, mostly limited to the south of the Han River, experienced rapid development, which intensified the gap between the south and north of Han River and Seoul and the remaining rural areas (Joo, 2012; Joo et al., 2017). Therefore, while

expanding the Olympics assemblages in Korea, many different assemblages that were perceived as barriers became subject to comprehensive homogenization, losing their positions. While the administration–conglomerate–sport assemblages were augmented, the public assemblages, which could generate deterritorialization, were curtailed to ensure the amplification of the dominant assemblages.

Nonetheless, it would be remiss not to mention that widening the Olympics assemblages, whether this was intended or not, contributed to the rise of the democracy that resulted in subsequent deterritorialization of the administration assemblages, which led to the first nonviolent transfer of power in Korean history (Andrews et al., 2010; Bae & Woo, 2019; Bridges, 2012; Cha, 2009; Joo et al., 2017; Park & Ok, 2019; Rowe, 2019). Despite the extensive cultural policies that President Chun implemented to distract public attention, demonstration continued to urge constitutional reforms, which prompted international concern for this domestic discord in Korea (Joo et al., 2017; Larson & Park, 1993; Ok & Park, 2015; Rowe, 2019). In this sense, on April 13, 1987, President Chun proclaimed in his “Defense of the Constitution speech” that “the government would keep the current constitution” because (1) “there was not much time left before the Olympics” and (2) “there was not much time left before his term ended” (Bae & Woo, 2019, pp. 186–187).

While this announcement brought marginal protests, mostly among university students, after it was disclosed that a Yonsei University student named Lee Hanyeol died as a result of a tear bomb launched by riot police, extensive and intensive public protests exploded, leading to the “‘29 June Declaration’ or ‘the ‘Special Declaration for Grand National Harmony and Progress Towards a Great Nation’” by Roh Taewoo, the presidential candidate for the ruling party (Bae & Woo, 2019,

p. 187; Vandenberghe, 2017; see also Nabilah, 2021). As a result, the government officially withdrew its earlier announcement and embraced a direct presidential election in February 1988 (Bae & Woo, 2019).

Consequently, with the increasing global attention occasioned by the Olympics assemblages, administration assemblages, mainly Chun assemblages' calculated political tactics—utilizing sport assemblages to maintain their control of other assemblages—failed to thoroughly suppress the increasing deterritorialization/decoding process from the public (Joo, 2012; Joo et al., 2017; Larson & Park, 1993; Rowe, 2019). Ultimately, Chun transferred his office to one of his closest friends, Roh Taewoo, by means of a direct election instead of military action.

4.6 Conclusion

In this first empirical chapter, I explored sport assemblages within the conjuncture when the totalitarian regimes extended their powers in the name of national glory. To territorialize/code their political boundaries and prevent other assemblages from deterritorializing/decoding their dominance, sport assemblages were widely promoted by the regimes through deliberate calculation. In this respect, the rise and rapid development of sport assemblages were the consequence of complex connections among various assemblages, including policy–facility–organization–military–conglomerate assemblages.

Furthermore, the administration assemblages effectively connected and expanded specific sub-assemblages within the sport assemblages to enable their endless growth and internal stabilization. For instance, the relationship between administration and conglomerate assemblages resulted in the emergence and reinforcement of sport organization and professional league

assemblages. Additionally, as one of the prominent athlete assemblages, Cha Bumkun was effective territorializing/coding forces that secured the administrations' territories by associating with the media.

The complicated connections among the IOC-Olympics assemblages were another aspect of the administration assemblages' intentional choice to reinforce their domination of other assemblages. Although the Olympics seemed to be successfully incorporated with the administration assemblages while diminishing probable deterritorializing forces, it resulted in endless transformation of intra-, inter-, and extra-links among numerous assemblages, even leading to the rise of democracy in Korea. In other words, the administration assemblages associated with the Olympics assemblages as an option to ensure the process of territorialization/coding. However, the influence of the Olympics assemblages was rather larger than they initially expected, and it therefore triggered a concentration of numerous unexpected external, even global connections, ultimately contributing to the heterogenization/destabilization of the administration assemblages.

Consequently, the convoluted relationships among sport, administration, conglomerate, the economy, policy, organization, facility, and military assemblages (i.e., articulation I) and their endless territorialization and deterritorialization demonstrate that nothing is predetermined for assemblages, which are always subject to intricate homogenization/stabilization and heterogenization/destabilization (i.e., articulation II).

CHAPTER FIVE: The National Economic Crisis and Sport Assemblages in South Korea

5.1 Situating the National Economic Crisis as a Conjuncture

5.1.1 A Brief Historical Background

After the collapse of totalitarian regimes and the achievement of democracy during the 1980s, South Korea enjoyed peaceful internal circumstances with optimal economic growth (Cho, 2000; Heo & Roehrig, 2010; Shin, 2000). In alignment with this positive situation, the government at the time—Kim Youngsam administration (1993–1998)—focused on two representative social reforms: (1) the eradication of corruption and (2) globalization (*segwehwa* in Korean) (Cho, 2021; Heo & Roehrig, 2010; Kang, 2000; Nam & Koh, 2014; Shin, 2000). Thus, it proclaimed that the country would weed out the deep-rooted undesirable relationship between the political and business circles and encourage the participation of foreign forces in domestic markets by easing financial regulations (Heo & Roehrig, 2010; Nam & Koh, 2014). Furthermore, because President Kim was eager to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the central administration minimized their own interventions and instead promoted local governments' power (Heo & Roehrig, 2010; Nam & Koh, 2014). In short, while seeking so-called small government (Ha, 2005; Kim, 2000), the market-centered orientation and decentralization accelerated instead of traditional government-led economic developmentalism (Heo & Roehrig, 2010; Joo et al., 2017).

However, the Kim administration overlooked several crucial points in this process. First, despite the government's declaration, the major authorities, including the conglomerates and the ruling party, did not favor rapid economic reforms while abandoning their privileges (Heo &

Roehrig, 2010). Furthermore, the impending presidential election in December 1997 distracted the government from the emerging crisis in that the administration did not pay sufficient attention to the serial economic downturn of its adjoining Asian nations, including Thailand and Malaysia (Carson & Clark, 2013; Cho, 2008; Kang, 2000; Shin, 2000; see also Merkel, 2020). Most importantly, Kim opened the market to transnational corporations even though the country was not prepared for this drastic change, especially given its weak foreign currency (Cho, 2008; Heo & Roehrig, 2010; Jeong & Cho, 2020; Kang, 2000; Shin, 2000). As a result, Korea officially solicited the intervention of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1997 (Choi, 2020; Nam & Koh, 2014). Merkel (2020) described the circumstances from which this intervention was derived:

South Korea and several other Asian countries experienced a dramatic devaluation of their currencies and massive capital outflows after the confidence of major investors turned from over-exuberance to contagious pessimism. While unemployment rose quickly, the stock market crashed and lost nearly half of its value, and South Korea's currency, the won, depreciated by over 60 percent. The economic crisis unfolded only a few months after South Korea had reached the \$10,000 per capita income level and was a severe blow to the country's economic aspirations and national pride. (pp. 216–217)

Hence, as the nation had only recently recovered from its historical scars, the repercussions of the “IMF crisis” (Cho, 2008, p. 85) were considerable. Since the Korean government had traditionally implemented powerful interventions, people found it difficult to accept “the powerlessness of their government” (Cho, 2008, p. 90). Massive employee layoffs occurred in every sector, and many conglomerates declared bankruptcy.

Consequently, I assert that a period of national economic crisis is another important conjuncture in Korean history. This period threatened the conventional position of the government by proliferating public displeasure toward it. In this sense, the widespread transformation was inevitable to stabilize the prevalent societal chaos while distracting public attention from pressing social issues. In other words, following the consistent de/reterritorialization of multiple assemblages, the territorialization and homogenization of dominant assemblages were necessary. Sport assemblages' re/disassembly was also apparent during this period, to which I now turn my discussion.

5.1.2 The Transformation of Sport Assemblages during the National Economic Crisis

Just as sport assemblages, particularly elite sport, experienced remarkable enlargement with totalitarian regimes' intentional promotion, they faced extensive transformation during the country's economic downturn because all of the presidents during this time, particularly Kim Youngsam (1993–1998) and Kim Daejung (1998–2003), placed less emphasis on sport than the prior administrations (Cho & Lee, 2013; Ha, 2005; Hong, 2012; Park & Lim, 2015; Seo & Park, 2011). Although the general elite sport-centered framework was maintained by South Korea hosting mega-sporting events, such as the World Cup in 2002, the government emphasized popular sport over elite sport in an effort to differentiate itself from previous totalitarian regimes and address its adverse internal situations (Cho & Lee, 2013; Ha, 2005; Kim, 2000; Park & Lim, 2015; Seo & Park, 2011). For example, the downsizing of the Ministry of Sport (MS)—the independent government department that existed during the Chun administration—resulted in the elimination of every sport-focused department mainly during the Kim Daejung administration, that eventually reorganized it as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT) (Hong, 2012; Kim, 2000).

As a result, the traditionally strong relationship between sport and the administration assemblages was transformed while triggering the deterritorialization of many sub-assemblages that exist within sport assemblages. However, sport assemblages once again gained an opportunity to expand their boundaries when the administration assemblages created a new connection to North Korea-related assemblages, which were initially viewed as a powerful deterritorializing force during totalitarian regimes and to which I now turn the discussion.

5.2 The Kim Daejung Administration and Pro-North Korea Policies

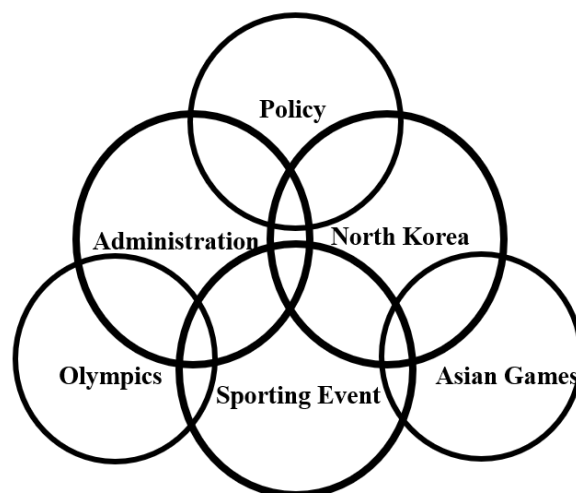
One of the main differences between the previous conjuncture and this one is a remarkable expansion of North Korea-related assemblages under the support of the Kim Daejung administration's pro-North Korea policies. Specifically, as represented by his "Sunshine Policy," President Kim Daejung was notably attentive to North Korea, seeking to build a positive relationship with it (Cho & Lee, 2013; Choi, 2020; Ha, 2005; Kunis, 2017; Merkel, 2008; Merkel & Kim, 2011).

Using the hosting of sporting events, such as Unification Table Tennis and Basketball Competitions, as part of inter-Korean exchanges, South and North Korea made some meaningful improvements in their relationship (Ha, 2005). Furthermore, the joint parades between the two nations at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and the Busan Asian Games in 2002 were considered one of the Kim administration's notable achievements (Bridges, 2015; Ha, 2005; Lee, 2017; Merkel & Kim, 2011; Min & Choi, 2019; Van Tassell & Terry, 2012). North Korean people even set foot on South Korean soil to participate in the Busan Asian Games, despite the two nations remaining in a state of armistice (Lee, 2016, 2017, 2020).

The most evident fruition of these pro-North Korea policies in relation to sport might be President Kim's award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000, by which his contributions to the improvement of inter-Korean relations were noticeably acknowledged in the front of the whole world. Consequently, although the relationship between the sport and administration assemblages was not strong, the administration assemblages' focus on North Korea indirectly contributed to the expansion of one of the sub-assemblages within sport assemblages—sporting event assemblages. In this regard, unlike the previous conjuncture, the relationship between North Korea and the administration assemblages seemed to perform effective territorialization as a way to stabilize other assemblages, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. However, while forming the 2002 World Cup assemblages, North Korea once again became a deterritorializing threat, to which I now shift the attention.

Figure 5.1

The Relationships Among Sport, North Korea, and Governmental Administration Assemblages



5.3 The 2002 Korea–Japan FIFA World Cup

Although sporting event assemblages enlarged their territories while connecting with North Korea and administration assemblages, it would be remiss not to mention the 2002 Korea–Japan FIFA World Cup during this conjuncture as the most impactful sub-assemblage of the sport assemblage, which contributed to the comprehensive reterritorialization of every other assemblage, both internally and externally. Thus, this section extensively and intensively analyzes the 2002 World Cup as assemblages by outlining three process periods: (1) before the event, (2) during the event, and (3) after the event.

5.3.1 Before the Event

Although initial discussions about South Korea hosting the World Cup first emerged in 1989 after the Roh Taewoo administration (1988–1993) had hosted the 1988 Seoul Olympics, it was not until the Kim Youngsam administration that the actual projects were launched (Park, 2008). However, given the prevalent social conditions after the 1997 economic crisis, it would have been difficult for the administration to put forward a plan that would have received considerable public support (Joo et al., 2017; Park, 2008). In this sense, Japan’s participation in the bidding process provided the Korean administration with a practical pretext to underscore the importance of the event (Butler, 2002; Joo et al., 2017; J. S. Lee, 2015; Merkel, 2020; McLauchlan, 2001; Park, 2008). Specifically, in 1989, Japan announced that it would officially participate in the 2002 World Cup bidding process, and installed a professional soccer league (J League) in 1993 (J. S. Lee, 2015; McLauchlan, 2001; Park, 2008). By emphasizing the deep-rooted sense of historical rivalry between Korea and Japan, the Korean government readily justified the nation’s engagement in the

World Cup bidding process (Butler, 2002; Joo et al., 2017; J. S. Lee, 2015; Merkel, 2020; McLauchlan, 2001; Park, 2008).

However, there were two apparent barriers to proceeding with the project. First, Korea required a substantial financial investment to host the World Cup (Park, 2008). Second, due to the 1997 economic crisis, the public perception of hosting sporting events was rather negative (Joo et al., 2017; Merkel, 2020; Park, 2008). In consequence, similar to previous sporting events, such as the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, the government obtained support from conglomerate assemblages, including Samsung, Hyundai, LG, Hanwha, and Hanjin, ultimately gathering more than 15 billion won (Joo et al., 2017; Park, 2008). In particular, Chung Mongjoon, the new president of the Korea Football Association (KFA) during this period and one of the most influential figures at Hyundai as a son of the founder, Chung Juyung, convinced President Kim Daejung by emphasizing the benefits of the construction of new stadiums for the host (Joo et al., 2017; J. S. Lee, 2015).

Additionally, to gain public support, the government promoted regular reports from the Korea Development Institute (KDI), one of the representative national think tanks that was commonly viewed as a trustworthy governmental institution in South Korea at the time, highlighting that hosting the World Cup was necessary for national rebuilding and an improved economy during the economic downfall (Chung, 2004; Joo et al., 2017; Merkel, 2020; Park, 2008).

Furthermore, there were several political reasons for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) to allow Korea and Japan to co-host the event. First, it hoped to promote a sense of reconciliation between the two nations in that an intense bidding process would not be desirable (Butler, 2002; Joo et al., 2017; Lee, 2017). Second, it was noted that a wider global

dissemination of soccer as a sport would be possible if the event would be held in Asia (Joo et al., 2017). Most importantly, using every possible means, the FIFA (and South Korea) wanted to link the event to the reunification of South and North Korea in that then-President João Havelange hoped to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (Butler, 2002; J. S. Lee, 2015). Therefore, despite becoming involved later than Japan, complex intra-, inter-, and extra-connections among diverse assemblages emerged and fluctuated even before the event, from conglomerate and the KDI to the FIFA, Japan, and North Korea.

After the confirmation of South Korea as the host, the KFA recruited prominent foreign coaches, such as Dutch Guss Hiddink, to learn about advanced soccer strategies, aiming to accomplish favorable outcomes on the domestic field (Kim & Lee, 2020; J. Y. Lee, 2015). For Hiddink, serving as head coach of the South Korea team was a second chance to redeem his fame after experiencing several missteps in Spain (J. S. Lee, 2015). However, the interactions between Hiddink and South Korea soon met enormous deterritorializing forces. The national team's poor performances against the increasing public expectation generated many negative prospects in the impending World Cup. Furthermore, Hiddink's progressive coaching methods, which did not accord with traditional Korean viewpoints that underlined strong devotion and intensive training, continuously engendered misgivings. More importantly, his unconventional player selection, which put forward rather unpopular athletes—including Park Jisung—decreased the number of positive assessments (see J. S. Lee, 2015). Hence, despite its complex connections and mutations among numerous assemblages for the World Cup, the national team assemblages initially failed to successfully expand their territories while constantly being subjected to deterritorializing threats.

5.3.2 During the Event

However, as if having the last laugh, Hiddink and South Korea accomplished an exceptional result—fourth place in the tournament. The more surprising outcomes the national team achieved in playing against the leading European soccer teams, including Portugal and Italy, the more the entire society broke into wild excitement. Amid this widespread festive atmosphere, the dominance of the so-called “Red Devil syndrome” was the most notable as “an iconic cultural symbol of modern South Korea at the 2002 World Cup” (Merkel, 2020, p. 217). Wearing “Be the Reds” t-shirts, popularized by the Red Devils—the official fan club of the national soccer team—all streets and stadiums were tinged with red color and “the Republic of Korea” (*Taehan min’guk* in Korean) shouting in unison (cf. Choi, 2002; Hong, 2013; Jeon & Yoon, 2004; Joo, 2006; Joo et al., 2017; Koh et al., 2007; Lee & Cho, 2009; Yoon & King, 2012).

Nonetheless, it would be remiss not to mention several Korean corporations’ substantial success during the event, especially for SK Telecom, which supported the Red Devils. While some corporations, such as Samsung and Hyundai, reaped visible benefits as official sponsors of the 2002 World Cup, SK Telecom achieved significant benefits despite not being an official sponsor of the event. Notwithstanding its unauthorized link to the FIFA, SK Telecom successfully promoted its brand through ambush marketing, ultimately attaining dominant status during the 2002 World Cup (see Chang, 2007; Hong, 2013).

Consequently, thanks to the national team’s enormous success during the World Cup, conventional assemblages, including the Korean administration and conglomerate assemblages, recovered their dominance, which was previously damaged by the national economic crisis.

Nonetheless, considering the seemingly solidified, positive inter-Korean relations throughout the Kim administration, there was unexpected provocation from North Korea. As Lee (2020) explained:

During the global football tournament, a North Korean navy vessel crossed the sea border and attacked a South Korean navy patrol boat. This naval confrontation killed 19 seamen and wounded 33 sailors. This was an unexpected military provocation given the amicable relations that the two Koreas had maintained in the early 2000s. It was largely considered an attempt by North Korea to sabotage South Korea's endeavour to impress the world by hosting the premier football championship. (p. 229)

Overall, the adoption of sport assemblages to improve the relationship between South and North Korea produced meaningful progress. However, they failed to endure in the long term, implying mutable links among various assemblages and the limitations of sport as the sole promoter of inter-Korean relations (Bridges, 2015; Min & Choi, 2019; Van Tassell & Terry, 2012; Vandenberghe, 2017; see also Pulleiro Méndez, 2022).

5.3.3 After the Event

The enlargement of the World Cup assemblages was so massive that their impacts were extensively influential—even after the event. While the remarkable results of the Korean national team contributed to the enlargement of athlete-related assemblages by creating new sport heroes, including Guus Hiddink and his players on the national Korean soccer team (Lee et al., 2007; Lee & Lee, 2008), it also helped related assemblages' unique connections and expansions with other assemblages. Specifically, thanks to the successful outcome of the event, Chung Mongjoon, the

then-president of the KFA, earned explosive popularity, enabling him to arise as a powerful presidential candidate for the upcoming election in December 2002 (Chung, 2004; Joo et al., 2017; Lee, 2003; J. S. Lee, 2015). Although he failed to secure this position in the end, the sudden emergence of Chung as an influential figure in Korean politics demonstrated multi-dimensional connections between sport and disparate assemblages, such as politics.

Additionally, because of Korea's relatively late participation compared to Japan, the government failed to establish practical schemes for post-stadium plans. In other words, the nation constructed ten stadiums for the World Cup, but the actual profit produced from these venues remains negligible in that only the Seoul World Cup Stadium has returned profits every year. Hence, the failure of devising realistic post-event plans continues to provoke some issues, even now, more than 20 years after the end of the event. In short, despite the creation of positive public sentiments and the elimination of deep-rooted national depression induced by the economic downfall, the inflation, conversion, and, therefore, reterritorialization of the 2002 World Cup assemblages are still ongoing with no prearranged assumptions (see Haruo & Toshio, 2002; Joo et al., 2017).

Along with Korea's massive success in the 2002 World Cup, one could assume that its domestic soccer league (K League) would have experienced significant growth with exceptional public support (Chang, 2007). However, as a product of the interaction between the totalitarian regime and conglomerate assemblages, the professional soccer league encountered an unanticipated crisis after the World Cup, to which I will now turn the discussion.

5.4 The Professional Leagues

As a result of the consistent communication between the totalitarian administration and

conglomerate assemblages, the professional league assemblages in Korea, including those of baseball and soccer, maintain a unique league system. Specifically, although professional leagues in Korea generally mirror Western formations, particularly those in America and Europe, their ownership structures are usually controlled by their parent corporations—conglomerate assemblages (Humphreys & Watanabe, 2015). That is, rather than the teams making tangible financial profits themselves, their management relies on the parent corporations' philanthropic financial contributions (Lee & Fleischman, 2019). In this sense, teams in professional leagues usually become one of the parent companies' marketing tools for the advertisement of various brands (Chung, 2004; Fort, 2019; Fort et al., 2015; Jang & Lee, 2019). Out of this systemic formation, the economic crisis of 1997 brought about unanticipated aftereffects for each professional league, as described by Hong (2012):

Between mid-1997 and April 1998, 50 teams in 19 sports were disbanded. In the three months from January to March 1998, 10 teams were liquidated, which resulted in 212 male athletes, 143 female athletes, 39 head coaches and 35 assistant coaches losing their jobs (Lee 2003). (p. 31)

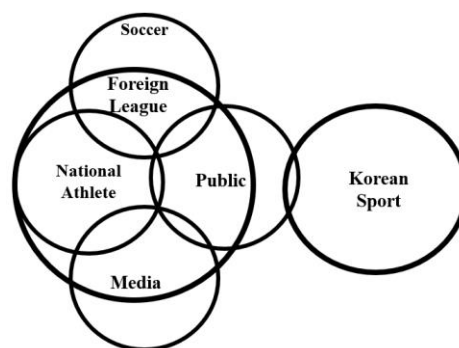
During the national economic crisis, the consecutive downfall of sport leagues and teams also impacted soccer. For example, because its parent corporations went bankrupt, Taejeon Citizen experienced financial hardship (Chang, 2007). Furthermore, despite soccer receiving increased public attention in response to the extraordinary success during the 2002 World Cup, a continuous exodus of talent and penetration of transnational economic forces were apparent. Specifically, based on their outstanding performance in the World Cup, many prominent Korean athletes, including Park Jisung, Lee Youngpyo, and Ahn Junghwan, transferred to prestigious European

teams (Chang, 2007). While the public and the media paid significant attention to the European teams for which these national athletes were playing, this focus on foreign leagues ultimately enforced the idea of the K League being a relatively “less ‘sexy’ domestic league” (Chang, 2007, p. 499), leading people to focus more on international-level games than on internal matches (Chung, 2004).

In sum, thanks to the 2002 World Cup taking place in Korea, soccer assemblages, one of the constituents within the Korean sport assemblage, rapidly broadened their leverage with athlete assemblages. Despite several new connections being formed between sport and other assemblages and these assemblages’ expansion, the professional league assemblages in Korea lost their dominant position during this conjuncture. The athlete assemblages’ detachment from the Korean sport assemblages and their incorporation into externally connected assemblages, such as foreign leagues, heterogenized the overall professional league assemblages by turning the media and public assemblages’ attention toward these national athlete assemblages, as illustrated in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2

The Transformation of Sport Assemblages After the 2002 World Cup



However, the formation of new connections between other sub-sport assemblages, such as baseball and golf, and foreign league assemblages was also conspicuous as athletes' exploits in foreign leagues, particularly those of Park Chanho in Major League Baseball (MLB) and those of Pak Seri in the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), attracted greater public interest as media content while triggering a rapid decrease in their internal fan bases (Chung et al., 2015; Fort et al., 2015; Kim & Lee, 2015). Nonetheless, similar to the case of Cha Bumkun discussed in the previous chapter, these high-profile athlete assemblages were subject to the media assemblages' territorializing/coding strategies to secure the position of dominant assemblages in Korea, to which now I shift the discussion.

5.5 Athletes and the Media as Assemblages

5.5.1 The National Hope and Incessant Efforts

During the period of economic downturn, two Korean athletes were elevated to the status of national heroes: (1) Park Chanho, the first MLB player in Korea, who showed extraordinary achievements for the Los Angeles Dodgers during that period, and (2) Pak Seri, one of the most talented female golfers in the history of both Korea and the LPGA (see Ok & Park, 2020) (Cho, 2008, 2009; Koh & Lee, 2004; Nam & Koh, 2014).

Because Korea was suffering a grave economic downturn following the 1997 market crash, the media often portrayed Park Chanho and Pak Seri as the country's only hope and as sources of vicarious happiness. The media nicknamed them "Korean specialist" (Park) and "golf queen" (Pak) (Cho, 1998; Chun, 1998; Hwang, 1999; Jang, 1998; Lee, 1999), and it praised them as courageous champions who uplifted the public (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 1998). Additionally, in the wake of the

athletes' extraordinary performances, the media consistently emphasized their persistent efforts and regularly framed these efforts as an attribute that the public should internalize (Jung, 2001; Koh & Lee, 2004; Nam & Koh, 2014).

5.5.2 Confucianism: Family and Humility

A robust strain of Confucianism also pervaded these athletes' representation in the media. For example, although Pak and Park were not related by blood, the media cast them as Korean siblings (Cho, 2008; Jang, 1998). They were also dubbed Korea's son and daughter, and their family members received considerable attention (Cho, 2008). Specifically, pointing out the robust paternal love Pak received from her father, Pak Juncheol (Ahn, 1998; Yoon, 1996), the media lauded Pak Juncheol as his daughter's biggest but strictest supporter and coach, claiming that he trained Pak like a Spartan warrior (Ahn, 1998). These stories framed Pak's efforts and her father's commitment as vital contributors to her rise to fame (Ahn, 1998; Yoon, 1996).

However, while Park's family members also received media attention, when it introduced his mother, Jeong Dongsoon, the focus was merely on how her cooking skills improved his performance in each game (*Dong-A Ilbo*, 2001). In other words, like Pak's father, Park's mother was an important supporter, but the media situated her within the traditional Confucian paradigm in which women are the hidden and unrecognized helpers who are relegated to household duties (Choi, 1992, 1997; Kim & Park, 2003; Robinson, 1991).

In addition to depicting Park and Pak's family members through a Confucian lens, media outlets also acted as social regulators delimiting acceptable Confucian expectations. For example, when Park returned to Korea after experiencing a successful season as a top pitcher for the LA

Dodgers, he received massive media attention (Go, 1997; Kim, 1998; Lee, 1997). Reporters recorded his every movement, and he was celebrated as a national hero (Cho, 2008; Go, 1997; Kim, 1998; Lee, 1997; Nam & Koh, 2014). However, during this temporary return, Park failed to embody the characteristics of a Korean Confucianist hero. Specifically, he focused on profitable events without showing humility or gratitude to others, which prompted one media outlet (Lee, 1997) to castigate him as follows:

However, it is necessary to point out that Park Chanho gave off the stench of too much money. Park Chanho moved to the national stage amid a tight schedule, but he only promoted lucrative events and did not visit social organizations or orphanages. When Park Chanho first entered Gimpo Airport, he said, “I want to meet the people who have helped me.” However, all he did was host an event with his teachers through the Park Chanho Supporters’ Association on the 19th. (para. 28)

To adhere to Confucian norms, Park should first have expressed gratitude to others when he returned to Korea. However, according to media evaluations, by fixating on remunerative events, he failed to satisfy behavioral standards in Korea’s Confucianism-dominated society (Go, 1997; Lee, 1997). As a result, although Park received extensive media coverage, his detractors argued that he should be more unassuming as a Korean-born sport victor.

Pak also received widespread criticism when she violated conventional Confucian expectations. In an interview with the American magazine *Golf for Women*, she implied that she was considering becoming a naturalized citizen in the United States to participate in the Solheim Cup (Chung, 2001; Koh & Lee, 2004; Park, 1999). Although she repeatedly explained that the

magazine structured the interview in a misleading fashion, the Korean media framed the story as an urgent controversy, instigating immense public backlash (Chung, 2001; Koh & Lee, 2004; Park, 1999). People lambasted her as an ungrateful traitor, stripping Korea's national daughter and symbol of hope, of her established social status overnight (Chung, 2001; Koh & Lee, 2004).

In sum, the media assemblages' highlighting of particular athlete assemblages during the nation's economic crisis contributed to the (re)territorialization and (re)coding of several traditionally dominant assemblages, including those of the administration, nationalism, and Confucianism. By presenting endeavor as an important characteristic for the public to emulate, the administration assemblages attempted to reduce any assemblages that could destabilize their dominance. Underlining Confucianism was a common strategy for several conventionally prevailing assemblages to magnify/homogenize themselves and others through the media assemblages. Although instances of destabilization and heterogenization, which threatened the status quo, occurred intermittently, including Park's connection to financial benefits and Pak's likelihood of naturalization, the media assemblages again coded the established Korean norm, emphasizing nationalism and Confucianism, which allowed the administration assemblages to secure social stability.

5.5.3 Conglomerates: Samsung and Lee Kunhee

The media assemblages' focus on these two national athletes also helped conglomerate assemblages guarantee their leading position. Specifically, while many newspapers praised Park and Pak's income level, deeming it helpful for earning foreign currency (*Maeil Business Newspaper*, 1998), some media outlets highlighted the economic success derived from their

sponsorships. In particular, alongside Pak's achievements as a golfer, her major sponsor, Samsung, received continuous attention (Ahn, 1998; Chea, 1998; Kim, 1998). Pointing out Samsung's unconditional support for and dedication to Pak, the media underscored the benefits Samsung obtained as her main sponsor, including a large (but usually exaggerated) amount of money (Y. Park, 1998). Additionally, reporters portrayed Samsung's chairman Lee Kunhee as a prescient, admired figure who was particularly discerning in his dedication to national success (Chae, 1998). For instance, one news article (Chae, 1998) highlighted Chairman Lee Kunhee's obsession with golf:

With Pak Seri's victory in the U.S. LPGA Championship, Samsung chairman Lee Kunhee's attachment and tenacity to golf become famous. He even practices 5-6 hours at a time. ... Samsung stresses the golf industry as a promising future business that can propel the Korean economy forward. In Samsung, golf is regarded as a 'special business.' Because of his [chairman Lee Kunhee] strict order, Samsung is also pushing for Astra [one of many brands in Samsung, Pak's main sponsor] to advance to the U.S. market. (para. 1)

Hence, while Park and Pak were represented as role models, the companies that endorsed them, especially Pak's sponsor, Samsung, also received highly positive media attention because of the athletes' success. In other words, by linking themselves to outstanding athletes' remarkable activities, Korean conglomerate assemblages could widen their territories externally while stabilizing their constituent assemblages internally.

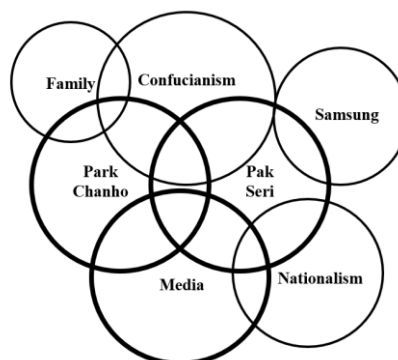
As a result, during the national economic downturn, Confucianism and nationalism assemblages continued to play a vital mediating role through their relationship with the media

assemblages (Koh, 2009; Nam et al., 2010). By emphasizing family-related tenets as well as the contributions of their family members, the media framed Park and Pak as national heroes (Cho, 2008; Nam & Koh, 2014). However, the the media's marginalization of females compared to their male counterparts reinforced the stereotypes of the Confucianist patriarchal ideology in Korean society (Choi, 1992, 1997; Kim & Park, 2003; Oh, 2015; Robinson, 1991). In addition to these gender-focused power relations, the media postulated fixed roles for Korean athletes that adhered to Confucianist ideals. When Park and Pak failed to fulfill these ethical obligations, they suffered stinging rebuke from the media, and subsequently the broader populace (Chung, 2001; Koh & Lee, 2004).

Moreover, their extraordinary performances facilitated the expansion of conglomerate assemblages, including Samsung and Lee Kunhee. Therefore, as depicted in Figure 5.3, this strategic territorialization and coding of existing assemblages, including nationalism, Confucianism, media, ultimately diminished the possibility of (de)territorialization of other assemblages and their sub-assemblages during the national economic crisis of 1997.

Figure 5.3

The Pak Seri, Park Chanhoo, Media, and Related Assemblages



5.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined sport assemblages in relation to another pivotal conjuncture in Korean history: the national economic crisis. Because the administration assemblages were less interested in extending their boundaries by connecting themselves with sport assemblages, several commonly powerful sub-sport assemblages, including elite sport, lost their previously dominant positions in this conjuncture. Additionally, the relationship between the administration and North Korean assemblages was intensified as the government, mainly that under President Kim Daejung, strived to improve inter-Korean relations.

However, after the rise of the World Cup assemblages, the communication between the administration and sporting event assemblages was reinforced through the enlargement of related assemblages, such as conglomerate, athlete, and Red Devils assemblages. Nonetheless, during the swift development of the World Cup assemblages, North Korea—one of main territorializing forces concerning the administration assemblages—became a sudden deterritorializing factor that intermediated the dominance of the administration assemblages.

While the successful territorialization of the World Cup assemblages provided the administration and conglomerate assemblages the opportunity to reterritorialize (i.e., expand externally and stabilize internally) their reduced boundaries during the economic downturn, the World Cup assemblages did not allow for professional league assemblages, particularly K League, to magnify their territory. While many constituent assemblages within athlete assemblages bolstered their territories by linking themselves to other foreign league assemblages after the rapid enlargement of the World Cup assemblages, these external connections triggered unexpected

detritorialization of professional league assemblages in Korea by shifting the media and public assemblages' attention away from the professional league assemblages. Therefore, although the emergence of the World Cup assemblages was crucial for the reterritorialization of conventional assemblages in Korea, it did not generate positive territorializing effects for several sub-assemblages within sport.

Analysis of the relationship between the media and athlete assemblages, such as Park Chanho and Pak Seri, revealed the media's strong coding role in the external growth and internal stabilization of traditionally powerful assemblages in Korea, including those of administration, nationalism, and Confucianism. Through the media's strategic coding effects on athlete assemblages during the economic downturn, the administration assemblages could prevent possible detritorialization of the public assemblages and promote the enlargement of several conventional assemblages, such as those of Confucianism and nationalism. The connection between the media and athlete assemblages also allowed conglomerate assemblages, particularly Samsung, to reinforce their influence. However, a more interesting finding was that the media assemblages regulated possible detritorialization of athlete assemblages by strategically emphasizing Confucianism.

In consequence, the relationship between articulation I (complex connections among various assemblages) and articulation II (complex territorialization/coding and detritorialization/decoding among various assemblages) was intricate within this second conjuncture. Furthermore, assemblages' continuous movement within multiple scales was significantly intricate. Therefore, this again demonstrates that historically complex and context-specific interpretations of assemblages are essential to more critically understand assemblant

relationships (Andrews, 2019).

CHAPTER SIX: Sport Assemblages in Contemporary Korea

6.1 Situating Contemporary Korea as a Conjuncture

6.1.1 A Brief Historical Background

Although the successful expansion of sport assemblages—mainly the 2002 World Cup—during and after the national economic crisis stabilized various assemblages by assisting dominant assemblages’ (re)territorialization, including the administration, conglomerate, and nationalism, a rise of global economic regression again reterritorialized society. In 2008, the international financial crisis penetrated the Korean Peninsula and caused massive deterritorialization of conventional assemblages, particularly the administration (Im, 2018; Moon, 2009). This meant that new assemblages and additional territorializing forces were necessary to restabilize/re-homogenize intra-, inter-, and extra-connections among multiple assemblages in South Korea. In this situation, two politicians gained public attention—Lee Myungbak and Park Geunhye (Suh, 2018).

Lee emerged as the optimal presidential candidate because of his accumulated popular imagery. He was regarded as a successful businessperson of the Hyundai Construction and Engineering Group and mayor of Seoul, who had presciently dealt with economy-related issues (Choe, 2013; Herskovitz, 2007; Kang, 2016; Moon, 2009). Furthermore, a well-known television drama named “the years of ambition” that was partially based on Lee’s life story garnered him visible public attachment (Herskovitz, 2007). Therefore, Lee was commonly considered a qualified candidate who could rescue South Korea’s ailing economy.

The rise of Park implied a more complex public sentiment. She was the daughter of President Park Chunghee, who had spearheaded South Korea's economic progress while oppressing the public with totalitarian authority. The continuous economic hardship triggered "nostalgia for the authoritarian regime" (Suh, 2018, p. 54) by reminding people of the rapid economic development during the authoritarian regime as positive memories while overlooking the totalitarianism aspect of the governance and favorable global atmosphere during that period. In this sense, the ascendancy of Park Geunhye was rather contradictory because most of her support came from working-class people. Specifically, the majority of Park's supporters were working-class groups—who were considered to have endeavored to achieve economic development and democratization of the country under previous oppressive totalitarian regimes (see Lee & Brown, 2018; Suh, 2018). Suh (2018) adroitly noted this point as follows:

It is a great historical paradox and remains a puzzling enigma in the field of democratization and civil society in Korea that the working or lower class—which contributed most to remarkable economic growth, was oppressed most by the iron-fisted dictatorship, contributed significantly to toppling the long-time authoritarian regime in the democratization movement of the 1970s and the 1980s, and further assisted democratic progress after the authoritarian fall—has begun to glamorize the autocratic leaders of the past. Working class people suffered from authoritarian tyranny in the past and rose up against it; but now they were missing Park and fulfilled their longing for him by electing his daughter as national ruler. (p. 56)

Hence, the favorable public perception of Park was paradoxical considering the past harsh experiences of authoritarianism under the Park Chunghee regime. However, this also signified how

deeply rooted the Confucianism–nationalism assemblages were in Korean society. As Suh (2018) noted:

Rampant belief in the benevolent, paternalistic role of the state led them to consider relief from poverty and economic hardship as the prime moral and obligatory duty of the state and to deem it imperative for the state to intervene to fulfil this normative responsibility. Thus, they tended to attribute the socioeconomic predicaments they suffered to government failures. The rising disgruntlement of the public generated authoritarian nostalgia for the ‘good old days’ of Park Chung-hee’s leadership. (p. 58)

While strong nationalism and Confucianism enabled people to experience economic miracles in a relatively short time span (Kim & Park, 2003), these two forces allowed the government to maintain a powerful interventionist position in Korean society. Rather than relying on incompetent governance, the public wanted to hail a new reliable administration with innovative reform plans that could overcome the international crisis by improving the domestic economic situation. As a result, Lee became president of South Korea considering his perceived positive public image as an economic expert (2008–2013) and Park was his successor (2013–2017).

To respond to public demand more critically, the Lee administration firmly stressed economic recovery as a national priority. By emphasizing “practicality and pragmatism” and “results rather than procedures” (Fiori & Kim, 2018, p. 156), President Lee widely adopted entrepreneur-like approaches by embracing neoliberalism as the administration’s political orientation (Choe, 2013; Kang, 2016; Lee et al., 2010; Moon, 2009). For example, by highlighting “supply-side welfare” (Im, 2018, p. 31), the government’s focus was on the self-independence of

low-income groups rather than the straight governmental provision of certain benefits to them (Kang, 2016; Lee et al., 2010). However, his “aggressive neoliberal policies” (Lee et al., 2010, p. 361) caused fierce public displeasure, especially among working-class people, ultimately engendering national protests (Hwang & Willis, 2020; Kang, 2016, 2017; Kim, 2011; Lee et al., 2010). As Lee encountered continuous public demonstrations—particularly early in his terms as president—this experience discouraged him from communicating with the public throughout the remainder (Fiori & Kim, 2018).

Since Lee’s primary focus was on economic revival, sport assemblages during this period failed to gain opportunities to enlarge their territories with traditional support from the administration assemblages. In this regard, Lee’s sport policies were a target for criticism even before he became president. As a presidential candidate, several scholars criticized his presidential campaign promises concerning sport policies as too superficial (Chung, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2010). Lee intermittently tried to use sporting events such as the Olympics to increase his popularity; for example, he gave a speech at Durban in support of PyeongChang’s bidding process (Joo et al., 2017; Lee, 2020) but the administration’s attention on sport was not significantly visible. Consequently, the intensified extra-connections between the administration and global assemblages initiated by the worldwide financial downturn meant that the fluctuation of extra-/inter-/intra-connections among diverse assemblages, including sport, was significant.

While the inauguration of President Park Geunhye was possible because of nostalgia about the authoritarian regime arising when faced with an economic downfall, the development of sport assemblages during the Park administration was also negligible. Although Park’s government proposed a different slogan to the Lee administration’s “Sports for all,” namely “Sports for [a]

lifetime” (Choi et al., 2013, p. 480), it generally maintained a similar orientation toward sport. A noteworthy event in the evolution of Korean sport during the two administrations could be the merger of the Korean Sport Council (KSC) and Korea Council of Sport for All (KOCOSA), which launched the Korean Sport and Olympic Committee (KSOC) in 2016 (Y. D. Choi et al., 2019; Kwak & Kang, 2019; Park & Lim, 2015; Zae & Son, 2018).

However, despite some scholars’ positive anticipation that this “single organizational structure” (Kwak & Kang, 2019, p. 27) would allow more pragmatic operation between elite and popular sport and improve the balance of funding support between various sport sectors, such as international and participatory sporting activities (Kwak & Kang, 2019; Park & Lim, 2015), an investigation reported that this integration was heavily linked to several politicians’ personal interests in consolidating their powers, including President Park and her close friend Choi Soonsil (Nam et al., 2018; Park, 2016). This scandal eventually brought about comprehensive, still ongoing, and multi-dimensional transformations of every assemblage in Korea—including sport in particular—to which I will now shift this discussion.

6.1.2 The Impeachment of President Park Geunhye

Despite President Park’s solid approval rating, public displeasure exploded due to two representative national incidents—the Sewol ferry disaster and the Choi Soonsil scandal. First, on April 16, 2014, the Sewol ferry, which was heading from Incheon to Jeju Island, sank causing the deaths of more than 200 innocent students from Danwon High School. While many Koreans criticized the poorly managed national crisis response system, one of the most contentious mysteries was “Park Geun-hye’s ‘disappearance’ for seven long hours from the scenes on the day

of the sinking” (Fiori & Kim, 2018, p. 162). This perceived irresponsible behavior of the national leader caused a widespread public backlash, which substantially decreased public support for the government (see Fiori & Kim, 2018; Hwang & Willis, 2020).

Even before the shock of this incident could abate, another telling matter emerged in that President Park’s close friend Choi Soonsil was deeply involved in state affairs associated with her personal interests (Fiori & Kim, 2018; Hwang & Willis, 2020; Kim, 2018; Nam et al., 2018; Park, 2016). She manipulated Park and attempted to privatize numerous sport organizations—including KSOC—while appropriating public funds, thereby transferring control to the K-Sport Foundation—one of Choi’s leading organizations—to embezzle funds from the public and private sectors (Kim, 2018; Nam et al., 2018; Park, 2016). A more shocking revelation was that many conglomerates including Samsung colluded with Park by donating considerable amounts of money. As Kim (2018) noted:

In late October 2016, news about President Park Geun-hye’s long-term confidant Choi Soon-sil—not holding any elected post and not accountable to anyone—was exercising strong influence in the areas of culture and sports-related policies, including founding the Mire Foundation and the K-Sports Foundation took Koreans by surprise. Over a period of time then President Park Geun-hye met with Chaebol leaders individually and, as per the charges by the prosecution, asked them to contribute substantial donations to the two foundations in order to support her policies aimed at boosting the creative economy. (p. 287)

The personal influence of Choi Soonsil was substantial; she even intruded in the university

admission process for her daughter, Chung Yoora. Furthermore, Chung's posting on Facebook, "Blame your parents. Money is also ability" (Kim, 2018, p. 289) resulted in massive public resentment, which generated substantial additional reductions in public support for the president. Therefore, Park Geunhye, who had contaminated Korean politics with corruption and nepotism, was impeached as initiated by a nationwide public candlelight vigil (Hwang & Willis, 2020; Kim, 2018; see also Kang, 2019). Consequently, during and after this national political scandal, sport assemblages such as professional leagues have experienced endless re/disassembly, to which I now pivot my discussion.

6.2 The Professional Leagues in Contemporary Korea

6.2.1 A Brief Overview

In baseball, 10 teams are currently competing under the supervision of the Korean Baseball Organization (KBO) (see KBO, n.d.); all of the teams are named after their parent companies (e.g., Samsung Lions, Doosan Bears, and Hanwha Eagles), instead of the region with which they are associated (Fort et al., 2015; Lee & Fleischman, 2019). Unlike baseball, many teams in the K League (i.e., soccer) have adopted names from their cities of origin and parent companies (e.g., Ulsan Hyundai, Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors, and Suwon Samsung Bluewings) (Kim & Kwak, 2015).

Furthermore, it would be remiss not to mention the difference between the management styles of the corporation- and supporter-based teams within the K League. For the corporation-based teams, because their parent companies usually cover all of their expenses via substantial financial assistance, they can reap direct visible benefits while guaranteeing high ranks. However,

the management of supporter-based teams, such as Daegu FC, Gangwon FC, and Incheon United, must respond to their teams' conditions more strategically because their financial status is less stable than their counterparts. Consequently, the main goal of supporter-based teams is to boost their profits with a limited budget (see Jang & Lee, 2015; Kang et al., 2020).

6.2.2 The Aftermath of the Choi Soonsil Scandal

However, because the secured interconnections between conglomerate and sport assemblages significantly weakened during and after the Choi Soonsil scandal, both the professional league assemblages and their sub-assemblages experienced a broad deterritorialization. For example, it is indisputable that Samsung's support on every team within numerous leagues is still influential because of its many-sided financial assistances on numerous teams, including the Samsung Lions (baseball), Suwon Samsung Bluewings FC (soccer), Seoul Samsung Thunders (basketball), and Daejeon Samsung Bluefangs (volleyball) (see also Cho, 2010). Nonetheless, since Samsung diminished the amount of money it usually granted to its sport teams to support Choi Soonsil and her daughter Chung Yoora, nominally declaring that their decreased support was a strategy to improve the efficiency of the overall management; this retrenchment led these teams to confront the loss of traditionally dominant positions with unexpected financial difficulties (Choi, 2016; Kim, 2020).

However, despite particular focus on contemporary professional leagues in relation to the Choi Soonsil scandal throughout this section, it is important to remember that the impact of this national incident is multi-dimensional since its specific consequences on society remain unfathomable. For instance, there is now suspicion that as a part of Choi's plan, Kim Jong, then-

vice minister of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) conspired with several of his close colleagues to privatize KSOC after the integration of KSC and KOCOSA (Park, 2016). Consistent with this plan, Hanyang University, where Kim had previously worked as a key professor, was subject to regular suspicion that it had established sport management-focused graduate programs using money unfairly allocated by the government with Kim's help (Choi & Kim, 2016).

Most importantly, because sport was deeply embedded in this political scandal, the public perspectives regarding sport itself in Korea become much more negative than before. Therefore, despite relatively decreased attention on the scandal, without significant transformations, I argue that the Korean sport assemblages now face comprehensive deterritorialization as they are still entangled in it and many questions remain unanswered.

Nonetheless, these chaotic situations also provided a chance for a new administration assemblage to emerge. Since President Park and the ruling party lost public trust, President Moon Jaein (2017–2022)—from the Democratic Party of Korea—was elected in May 2017. Moreover, the transformation of the North Korea-related assemblages was notable as Moon particularly emphasized the improvement of inter-Korean relations similar to the previous governments, such as the Kim Daejung administration. Thus, the emergence of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games provided a change to reterritorialize sport assemblages in general and connections between North Korea and administration assemblages in particular. However, the Olympics assemblages again oscillated between territorialization and deterritorialization, to which I now shift the discussion.

6.3 The 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games

Despite its well-preserved natural environment and valuable ecosystems, Gangwon Province in general, and PyeongChang in particular, has long suffered from relatively backward conditions because the compact mountains it is surrounded by are a barrier to the implementation of necessary infrastructure (Byun & Leopkey, 2021; Joo et al., 2017; Lee, 2016, 2019, 2021a; Park & Ok, 2018). In this sense, unlike previous mega sporting event assemblages, such as the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and the 2002 World Cup, which was developed in relation to the central government, the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games assemblages were initially spurred by the local government because it hoped to advance the region's underdeveloped conditions by hosting the sporting event (Joo et al., 2017). Han Wangki, the incumbent governor of PyeongChang since 2018, who witnessed all of the processes linked to the Olympics, described why PyeongChang was so passionate about hosting the event:

We have no vision. PyeongChang county is the fourth largest local government in the country. ... It is two and half times the size of Seoul. Although the area is large, there is not much land to use. Forests account for 84% of the total area, and 58% of them are national forests. It means that we cannot use 58% of them because they are regulated by many policies, including the Forest Protection Act, the Baekdudaegan Protection Act, and the Environmental Protection Act. ... We cannot take advantage of the forests because of these regulations. ... We tried to make our dreams come true through the Olympics. (Ha, 2020, para. 32)

Although the geographical characteristics were one of main factors that heterogenized Gangwon—

PyeongChang assemblages within South Korea, these characteristics ultimately became an optimal territorializing element for which PyeongChang received legitimacy for the hosting of the Olympics (Joo et al., 2017). Since Muju also wanted to host the event, PyeongChang needed to win an internal competition to become the chosen candidate (Joo et al., 2017). In this regard, “PyeongChang’s better climate to support the winter sports, as it is located further north” (Joo et al., 2017, p. 96) became its major strength in winning the competition against Muju. However, although PyeongChang strived to host the event, without solid assistance from the central government, it failed to secure the role of host, losing out to Vancouver and then Sochi in the end (Joo et al., 2017; Merkel & Kim, 2011; Park & Ok, 2018).

After two consecutive failures, PyeongChang changed its strategy, which initially put considerable emphasis on themes related to North Korea. Specifically, the local government’s primary focus was on improving inter-Korean relations through the event (Joo et al., 2017; Lee, 2020). However, in its third attempt, it changed its central topic to “spreading winter sports to Asia” (Joo et al., 2017, p. 96). While this main theme could be also risky because winter sport in South Korea is still unpopular (e.g., see Byun & Leopkey, 2021; Choi et al., 2021), there were robust reconnections between two conventionally vital assemblages for the Olympics assemblages in Korea during this third attempt: the central government and conglomerate assemblages (Bridges, 2012; Byun & Leopkey, 2021; Choi et al., 2021; Joo et al., 2017; Merkel & Kim, 2011; Nam, 2007a).

While the local community in Gangwon Province initiated discussions about hosting the Olympics, the involvement of the central government intensified as time progressed, prompting corporations’ cooperation so they could reap the benefits of hosting the Games. Specifically, after

PyeongChang failed in the first bid, then-President Roh Moohyun (2003–2008) proclaimed that the government would fully assist the Olympic bid with support from the public and private sectors (Merkel & Kim, 2011; Nam, 2007a; Park & Ok, 2018). Perceiving hosting the Olympics as an opportunity to recover his decreasing public support, subsequent President Lee Myungbak also openly participated in the bidding process (Joo et al., 2017).

Following the government's robust intervention, conglomerate assemblages, including the chairs of large corporations, directly or indirectly engaged in the Olympic bidding process. For instance, as members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)—although both Park Yongsung, former chair of Doosan and then-president of the Korean Sport and Olympic Committee (KSOC), and Lee Kunhee, chair of Samsung, were regarded as the most influential figures who could lead PyeongChang to win the bid—both Kim and Lee were on trial for involvement in corruption (Bridges, 2012; Joo et al., 2017; Merkel & Kim, 2011; Nam, 2007a). Since their influence and networks were vital to securing a firm position in the bidding process, then-Presidents Roh Moohyun and Lee Myungbak granted them a special pardon to promote the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics more widely (Bridges, 2012; Choe, 2009; Joo et al., 2017; Nam, 2007a).

In addition to conglomerate assemblages, the association between the Olympics and athlete assemblages was conspicuous. For example, Kim Yuna, a legendary female figure skater who was one of the most popular athletes of that period (e.g., see Nam et al., 2010; Oh, 2019), also actively participated in the bidding process by emphasizing why PyeongChang must host the Olympics and highlighting new stadiums in the region (Joo et al., 2017). Despite conglomerate and athlete assemblages' territorializing efforts, there were constant deterritorializing threats from

two representative assemblages: the environment and North Korean assemblages.

During PyeongChang's third Olympic bid, concerns related to the environmental impact of the Winter Olympics obtained increasing attention (Joo et al., 2017; Kim & Chung, 2018). The massive construction projects undertaken to build stadiums demolished linked natural areas, including Mount Gariwang (Kim & Chung, 2018; Lee, 2016, 2019, 2021a; Park & Ok, 2018; see also Yoon, 2017). Along with the environment assemblages, the rapid expansion of North Korea-related assemblages was a deterritorializing factor. Specifically, France, Austria, and Germany announced that they would boycott the Olympics if security problems related to North Korea were not fully addressed (Adu, 2017; Agence France-Presse, 2017; ANI, 2017). In response to these security issues, the South Korean government tried to engage in constant dialogue with North Korea. Some politicians suggested employing a co-hosting strategy, similar to what had been proposed for the 1988 Olympics, but North Korea did not respond to this idea (Joo et al., 2017; Jung, 2017).

The situation shifted dramatically after the impeachment of President Park Geunhye and the subsequent inauguration of the Moon Jaein administration, as Moon aspired for North Korea's participation in the Olympics (Jung, 2017; Lee, 2020). Consequently, with positive gestures from North Korean leader Kim Jungun, South and North Korea discussed potentially meaningful actions regarding the Olympics, ultimately leading to the launching of a unified women's hockey team (Cho, 2022; Lee, 2020, 2021b, 2021c; Podoler, 2020; Rowe, 2019). Therefore, the improved relations between South and North Korea due to the impeachment of Park and later change of administration resulted in significant progress between South and North Korea, culminating in a joint march under a unified flag in the opening ceremony (Cho, 2022; English & Murray, 2022;

Lee, 2020, 2021b, 2021c; Podoler, 2020; Rowe, 2019).

The general belief concerning the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games is that it was a peaceful event that demonstrated the power of sport through the improvement of inter-Korean relations (Byun & Leopkey, 2021; Lee, 2020, 2021c; Merkel, 2020; Podoler, 2020; Rowe, 2019). However, there were many issues that were overshadowed by these dominant discourses. First, while the countries discussed the possibility of a unified women's hockey team representing two nations, some South Korean players were excluded without valid reasons. Podoler (2020) adroitly noted this:

Many argued that it was simply unfair to sacrifice the South Korean players who had been preparing and [practicing] together as a cohesive team, a team which was also ranked much higher than the North Korean team. Others claimed that [it] was a sexist decision that showed disrespect, and that 'the men's team was never considered for integration.' (p. 324)

In addition to the dismissal of certain athletes in the name of the nation, the norovirus outbreak was an important but discounted issue. More than 300 people were infected during the Olympic Games, including four Olympians (Etchells, 2018; Shin, 2018; Sung, 2021). Furthermore, many volunteers voiced complaints about poor management and treatment, but they were neglected regarding issues, such as unclean accommodations, poor meal provision, and disorganized training (see Y. I. Choi et al., 2019; You et al., 2021).

Although several years have passed since the event, there are still some inherent issues to be solved. First, specific post-Games utilization plans for the stadiums are still lacking, ultimately

shifting the entire cost burden to citizens via taxation (Lee, 2019, 2021a; Park & Ok, 2018). Second, the environmental disruption PyeongChang suffered was even more pressing (Lee, 2016, 2019, 2021a; Park & Ok, 2018; see Kim & Chung, 2018). Gangwon Province is not only responsible for restoring these areas but also has to worry about the resulting natural disasters, such as landslides, which the environmental destruction related to the construction has exacerbated (Choi, 2019).

Considering that “hosting an environmentally sustainable Winter Games” (Joo et al., 2017, p. 106) was a major facet of PyeongChang’s promotion, the environment assemblages simultaneously emanated territorializing and deterritorializing influences. In other words, the territorialization of PyeongChang and Olympics assemblages became successful by connecting themselves with the environment assemblages. However, in the long term, the territorialization of the environment assemblages caused the deterritorialization of the PyeongChang and Olympics assemblages, which is still a vital problem to solve.

The relationships among North Korea, PyeongChang, and Olympics assemblages were similar to the example illustrated above. Although North Korea-related assemblages were initially a threat to the relationship between the PyeongChang and Olympics assemblages, by (re)connecting themselves to the Moon administration assemblages, they became a beneficial territorializing force for the PyeongChang and Olympics assemblages. However, this positive impact of North Korean assemblages was rather ephemeral. Specifically, although there was an ideal advancement in the relationship between South and North Korea after the Olympics, North Korea still threatens the global community by brandishing its military programs, particularly its nuclear weapons, which constantly aggravates inter-Korean relations. Consequently, the widespread territorialization of the relationships among the Olympics, Moon administration, and

North Korean assemblages ultimately failed to secure dominant power due to the North Korean assemblages' volatile deterritorialization.

Hence, unlike the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the collaboration between South and North Korea during the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics produced several meaningful outcomes. However, these peaceful joint efforts were arguably reduced to “a meaningless PR stunt” (Merkel, 2020, p. 221) because the PyeongChang, Olympics, and Moon administration assemblages failed to completely homogenize North Korean assemblages in the long run.

6.4 Athletes and the Media as Assemblages

Throughout the previous two conjunctures, the media assemblages commonly served as an effective coding tool to consolidate the position of dominant assemblages. However, within contemporary society, while highlighting athletes' individualized characteristics, they emanate both coding and decoding powers, which triggers homogenization/stabilization and heterogenization/destabilization of assemblages including the administration. To explore the relationships among athletes, the media, and different assemblages in contemporary Korea, this section examines two high-profile Korean athletes: Son Heungmin, the most popular Korean soccer player, who now plays for Tottenham Hotspur FC in the English Premier League (EPL), and Ryu Hyunjin, the Korean Major League Baseball (MLB) player who now plays for the Toronto Blue Jays. The cases of Son and Ryu provide valuable opportunities for comparison with other prominent athletes, including Cha Bumkun and Park Chanho, ultimately revealing the changes in the media's focus between the past and present.

6.4.1 Individualization and “K-Culture”

Unlike Cha Bumkun, who was described as a laconic and abstemious lonely champion in the club, Son has been described as a core team member, and a “mood maker” (T. Kim, 2021; Park, 2019) who helps foster a positive atmosphere. News stories also often focus on Son’s deep relationships with other key team members. For example, the media depicted Dele Alli, a midfielder, as Son’s “best friend” (*Busan Ilbo*, 2018) and depicted Son and Harry Kane, a striker, as “the strongest duo” (Kim, 2020).

As Son’s prominence steadily increased, his private daily life attracted considerable media attention. News outlets began presenting diverse stories, including an article about his collection of various expensive cars (Ryu, 2021). The media usually connected Son with celebrities in the entertainment industry, often focusing on his relationships with female Korean pop stars. Furthermore, many Korean celebrities revealed their connections to Son via various outlets, including interviews, private social network services, and television reality shows. An example for this passage is from the *Herald Economics* (2018):

Mindful of the misunderstanding, Yoonha [Korean female pop star] said, “I met Son Heungmin for the first time on the radio,” adding, “When he comes to Korea, I often communicate and have a meal with him.” ... Yoonha also joked about her new album, saying, “This album seems like a promotion for Son Heungmin,” drawing laughter. (para. 11)

Since Son earned dominant status as an athlete and celebrity in Korea, the media increasingly fixated on his personal life, as such stories boosted readership.

The media coverage of Ryu has also focused on his individualized stories rather than explicitly connecting him with the nation. More specifically, in the past, the media frequently linked Park Chanho's exceptional athletic performance to the country and presented him as someone that the public should imitate. In contemporary Korea, although Ryu Hyunjin is the center of baseball-related news, he has not received particular consideration for his country, often solely being deemed a noticeable athlete (Nam & Koh, 2014).

In other words, while the media regularly illustrated Park as "pride of Korea" or "a Korean hero" (Go, 1997; Kim, 1997; Kim, 1998; Lee, 1997; Nam & Koh, 2014), it has simply depicted Ryu as a remarkable pitcher in his club (Hong, 2019; Nam & Koh, 2014). More crucially, media outlets have used negative words, such as "the worst," "downturn" or "slump" (*Herald Economy*, 2021; S. Kim, 2021), to overtly address Ryu's failure, which would have been unimaginable in the past (Nam & Koh, 2014). An example of this case can be seen in the *Herald Economy* (2021):

Due to Ryu Hyunjin's repeated slump, Toronto is expected to reorganize its starting rotation for the rest of the season. Toronto is aiming to advance to the postseason as an American League wild card. However, due to Ryu Hyunjin's sluggishness today, Toronto was also disadvantageous in the wild card competition. (para. 16)

Moreover, the players around Ryu repeatedly have received so-called "name tags," such as "Ryu's teammates" (Park, 2020; Yun, 2017) or "Ryu's assistant" (Hwang, 2021; H. Lee, 2021). Consequently, while the media focused on the relationship between popular athletes and the country considering specific contexts in the past, in contemporary society, Son and Ryu have been more individualized, with the media focusing primarily on the prominent athletes' every move as

indispensable figures beyond the nation (Y. Cho, 2015; Nam & Koh, 2014).

Despite the prevailing individualized media representations of Son and Ryu, it would be impetuous to conclude that nationalism has vanished completely. As a deliberate promotion of Korean culture (K culture), the media has presented Son and Ryu as key national sporting figures who have heightened foreigners' awareness of Korea. Specifically, as two of many representative athletes among other Korean athletes, the media has typified them as major driving forces of "K-Sport" (Korean Sport) and national pride (Jung, 2021; Kang, 2021; W. Lee, 2021). The most obvious example of this promotion is President Moon Jaein's reference to them when orating his New Year's speech in January 2021 (Kang, 2021):

In his New Year's address, President Moon said, "Our sports players and coaches with excellent skills are also K-content to promote Korea in themselves," adding, "many athletes, including Son Heungmin, Ryu Hyunjin, Kim Kwanghyun, and Ko Jinyoung, delivered hope and courage to our people and the world." (para. 8)

Specifically, despite the media's focus on individual athletes, Son and Ryu are still subject to the country's use of sport as propaganda. The media has represented them as two of the major forces promoting Korean culture in Korea and worldwide. In other words, the relationship between the media and administration assemblages has waned, and the media has become more directly connected to the athlete assemblages. In this association, the media has highlighted negative performances by the athletes, which could deterritorialize/destabilize the boundaries of the administration assemblages. However, it does not indicate that the traditional relationship between the media and administration has been destroyed. Through spotlighting the athlete assemblages,

the media assemblages have still assisted the territorialization of the administration assemblages by connecting athletes with Korean culture and nationalism.

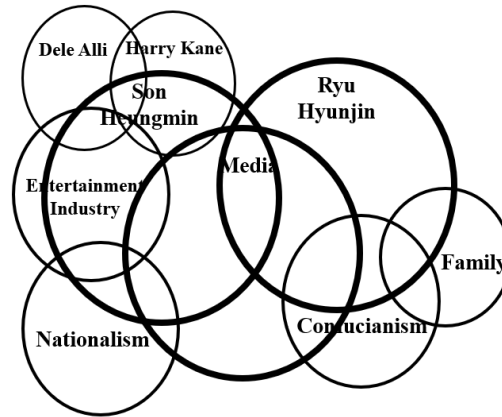
6.4.2 Confucianism and Athletes

Like Cha, the more media scrutiny Ryu received, the more his family members, particularly his wife, Bae Jihyun, gained media attention. However, in highlighting her body shape and appearance (Hong, 2019; *Joongdo Ilbo*, 2018; Jung, 2019), the media still demonstrated powerful Confucianism-focused, sexualized coverage of women (Koh, 2009; Nam et al., 2010). For instance, media outlets introduced her first and foremost as Ryu's wife, usually describing her "radiant beauty" (Hong, 2019; Jung, 2019) or "the beauty of her leg lines" (*Joongdo Ilbo*, 2018). Moreover, the media constantly illustrated her support and assistance of Ryu as his wife as an important factor that eventually resulted in Ryu's victory (Hong, 2019; S. Kim, 2019; Park & Kim, 2018).

Consequently, in contemporary Korea, the conventional relationship between the media and Confucianism assemblages has remained strong through the emphasis of family, one of the dominant components of the Confucianism assemblages. By linking itself with Confucianism assemblages, the media still took a coding role, but it simultaneously emanated decoding influences, which could threaten the established assemblages' territories. In short, as presented in Figure 6.1, compared to the past, the association between the media and other assemblages has become more complicated. The media assemblages do not solely work for dominant assemblages, instead more frequently collaborating with multiple assemblages.

Figure 6.1

The Son Heungmin, Ryu Hyunjin, Media, and Related Assemblages



6.5 Conclusion

In contemporary Korea, the transformation of sport assemblages was much more convoluted. In the past, the strong connection between the administration and sport assemblages enabled sport assemblages to expand their exclusive territories while internally homogenizing disparate sub-assemblages. However, in contemporary society, as the relationship weakened, the development of sport assemblages was noticeably stagnated. Moreover, the impeachment of President Park became an explicit deterritorializing factor by reducing the relationship between sport and conglomerate assemblages, which traditionally maintained a strong link. As Samsung, one of the most powerful constituents within conglomerate assemblages, steadily ceased its connection with sport, many sub-assemblages in sport, such as professional league, began experiencing substantial deterritorialization. Therefore, because of the heterogenization of several conventional assemblages in Korea, such as administration and conglomerate, this fluctuation also

impacted on sport assemblages.

The analysis of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games as assemblages also revealed several similarities and differences compared to the previous two conjunctures in Korea. Several assemblages, including administration, conglomerate, and North Korea, still retained exclusive positions. However, their associations were more intricate. The initial development of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics assemblages emerged from local administration, not central government. However, due to consistent failure to expand their territories, the local administration assemblages steadily linked themselves to central government and conglomerate assemblages, such as the Moon administration and Samsung.

Furthermore, the evolution of the environment and North Korean assemblages was unique in relation to the Olympics assemblages. The link between the environment and the Olympics assemblages was crucial, as it eventually led to PyeongChang hosting the event. However, the territorialization of the environment assemblages, including Mount Gariwang, eventually became a deterritorializing element on the entire region of PyeongChang. Additionally, the connection between the Moon administration and North Korean assemblages brought about several meaningful collaborations between South and North Korea during the event, such as the joint march. However, North Korean assemblages ultimately deterritorialized the Moon administration assemblages by continuously threatening the stability of the Korean Peninsula.

In addition to the mutation of the environment and North Korean assemblages, the relationship between the media and athlete assemblages differed in contemporary Korea compared to the two previous conjunctures. The media assemblages became more explicitly connected to

Son and Ryu by focusing on personal stories. However, traditional assemblages in Korea did not disappear. The relationships among the media, nationalism, and Confucianism were still robust in that media outlets highlighted Korean culture and the athletes' prominence in relation to the nation. Moreover, conventional Confucianism-focused media coverage still marginalized females while emphasizing their male counterparts. Hence, unlike the media assemblages in previous conjunctures, which assisted in the expansion of the administration assemblages by emitting a strong coding power, the media assemblages in contemporary Korea exuded both coding and decoding influences by more explicitly connecting themselves to individualized athletes.

Ultimately, the relationships among different assemblages within different scales constantly shift without predetermined rules. In other words, the intra-, inter-, and extra-connections among assemblages vary and their endless (dis)engagement with others is always flexible, which demonstrates the perpetual incompleteness of assemblages (Andrews, 2019; Grossberg, 2018).

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

Through historically complex and context-specific examination of sport assemblages within three representative conjunctures in Korea, it is now rather obvious that sport assemblages have continuously connected with several dominant assemblages, namely (1) governmental administration, (2) conglomerate, (3) policy, (4) North Korea, (5) media, (6) Confucianism, and (7) nationalism. Under totalitarian regimes, the administration assemblages—including those of Presidents Park and Chun—actively interconnected with sport assemblages to expand their territories and stabilize other assemblages, such as the public. In this sense, the convoluted connections among various assemblages, such as the administration, policy, conglomerate, facility, organization, and sporting event, allowed the rapid evolution of sport assemblages' overall boundaries. Since the relationship between the administration and media assemblages was robust, this led media assemblages to exude strong coding power through athletes, particularly Cha Bumkun. Owing to the media assemblages' successful coding role, the administration assemblages could safely expand their territories by reinforcing their relationships with other assemblages, such as Confucianism and nationalism.

However, despite the administration assemblages' strategic communication with sport assemblages to consolidate their dominance, the widespread territorialization of sporting event assemblages—mainly the 1988 Seoul Olympics—deterritorialized the administration assemblages. Thus, although the administration assemblages amplified their influence by effectively minimizing the deterritorialization of several assemblages including North Korea, the unexpected growth of the Olympics assemblages ultimately heterogenized administration assemblages while

contributing to South Korea's democratization.

During the national economic downturn, as the relationship between the administration and sport assemblages was weaker than in the previous conjuncture, it triggered a comprehensive deterritorialization of all sport assemblages. However, following the increasing interaction between North Korea and administration assemblages, the reterritorialization of sport assemblages intensified. In particular, sporting event assemblages were usually connected to North Korea and administration assemblages. For example, through several meaningful collaborative efforts in the Olympics—such as a joint march under a unified flag—it seemed that sporting event assemblages could achieve beneficial roles in the territorialization of the administration and North Korean assemblages. The rise of the 2002 World Cup assemblages also contributed to the extensive (re)territorialization of conglomerate and administration assemblages after the economic crisis.

However, North Korea's sudden attack during the World Cup was an unexpected deterritorializing force, considering the strong connection between the administration and North Korea-related assemblages during this period. Nonetheless, the media assemblages' coding effects to link several national athletes—such as Park Chanho and Pak Seri—to conventionally deep-rooted assemblages, including nationalism and Confucianism, helped the administration assemblages consolidate their position by diminishing potential deterritorializing impacts from other assemblages.

In the third conjuncture, the metamorphosis of sport assemblages was much more complicated. Despite the initially weak connection between sport and administration assemblages, several national incidents—primarily the impeachment of President Park—resulted in an endless

shift of sport assemblages that continues to the present day. The role of media assemblages was intriguing because although the media maintained its traditional coding position while connecting itself with the government, it more explicitly focused on individualized athletes and their private stories.

A brief summary of the transformation of sport assemblages within three conjunctures in Korea explicitly reveals inherent characteristics of conjunctural-assemblage analysis: “provisional, uncertain, open-ended and happily incomplete” (Grossberg, 2018, p. 108). That is, different assemblages could create diverse territorializing/coding and deterritorializing/decoding influences in relation to the intensities of their connections among other assemblages. In other words, conjunctural analysis-based assemblant relations are never fixed and are always subject to boundless changes between and even beyond different scales (Andrews, 2019).

Since conjunctural analysis-based assemblage theory is always processual and can diverge significantly depending on the historically complex and context-specific focus, I argue that these “always unfinished and fluctuating” relationships accompany a lacuna that could produce “potential change” (Hall & Massey, 2010, p. 55) by creating new relationships. Consequently, I assert that it is possible to engender positive social changes by generating new assemblant formations in the Korean context, to which I now turn the discussion (Andrews, 2019).

7.1 “Freedom for the Thought That We Hate:” Desperately Seeking Paulo Freire Within Korea

At the outset of this project, I argued that scholars should persistently question and adjust concepts and theories in response to complex contemporary society more wisely. To support this

statement, I quoted Stuart Hall's (2019) "wrestling with the angels" analogy:

I want to suggest a different metaphor for theoretical work: the metaphor of struggle, of *wrestling with the angels*. The only theory worth having is that which you have to fight off, not that which you speak with profound fluency. (p. 75, italics added)

Extending Hall's descriptions concerning theoretical work, I believe that South Korea needs more open space to candidly address diverse angels without limiting itself to theories but encompassing more varied topics, such as Japan, North Korea, China, racism, disability, multiculturalism, gender, politics, and sport.

Unfortunately, due to being confined by traditionally strong powers from the top (e.g., government and conglomerates) and disastrous historical memories associated with particular countries, including China, Japan, and North Korea, it remains difficult for people to freely discuss certain topics in Korea. Society can easily stigmatize people who discuss such topics as unfairly biased supporters, labeling them pro-Japanese collaborators or communists. Based on this context, as a meaningful first step, I believe that "freedom for the thought that we hate" (Lewis, 2007, p. 183) is necessary for the Korean context. However, this does not mean that people should forget all historical contexts while moving forward. Rather, my argument is about critically analyzing the past as a fundamental means of comprehending current situations.

University campuses could be optimal sites in the first step of providing open spaces to publicly and intensely discuss sensitive topics for two reasons (Andrews, 2019). First, change should be initiated from the bottom up (i.e., from the public) (Andrews, 2019). Second, I believe that university students represent the future of the nation, as they can deeply engage in vital social issues directly after their graduation. In other words, they are groups with the potential to elicit

other new possibilities in Korea. However, I would be remiss not to mention the importance of professors' roles as teachers and facilitators. Paulo Freire (2005) adeptly illustrated teachers' role in discussion as follows:

It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours.

We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their situation in the world. Educational and political action which is not critically aware of this situation runs the risk either of "banking" or of preaching in the desert. (p. 96)

Concurring with Freire, professors are neither leaders nor imposers in this open space. Rather, they are facilitators who assist in the smooth progression of discussions by encouraging introverted students' active participation, or more simply, they are additional participants in the discussion who aspire to learn. In other words, this discussion should seek a non-hierarchical structure as all participants have equal positions.

As an example of this discussion-based class, I suggest the thesis–antithesis–synthesis module. If someone first proposes an opinion about certain topics (i.e., thesis), others can suggest other ideas by supplementing them (i.e., antithesis). Hence, through consistent discussions based on the thesis–antithesis–synthesis module, people can reach a conclusion that satisfies all relevant parties, encompassing a range of viewpoints (i.e., synthesis). However, there are two notable important points here; first, before proposing alternate ideas in response to counterparts' opinions, each party should acknowledge their opponents' comments appropriately. In other words, if someone submits an idea, people should first thank and accept their opinions without launching indiscriminate attacks. More importantly, synthesis does not mean an ultimate conclusion; it is just

a temporary consensus, and people can facilitate continuous thesis and antithesis discussions that aim for subsequent synthesis.

In addition to regular discussions with others, the design of the thesis–antithesis–synthesis module facilitates conversation with our inner selves. Specifically, after a heated, somewhat extreme discussion, students should take time to review conversation independently. In this respect, after each discussion, there are writing sessions or assignments (Jho, 2012) that help students contemplate the question: “Who am I in relation to today’s topic?” This self-reflective writing allows students to “rigorously self-evaluate their own location, and implication, in the operations of power and privilege” (Andrews, 2019, p. 155). In other words, through deep thought, I hope that students can critically perceive themselves as products and process within their society while pondering the various dominant and unnoticed assemblages around them—both contextually and historically.

To rephrase, while discussing sensitive topics, students can rigorously judge the interrelationships between themselves and others. Furthermore, through analytical, self-reflective writing, they can communicate their inner thoughts and identify their context-specific and historically complex positionality. Ultimately, the thesis–antithesis–synthesis model can motivate students to ascertain the various benefits of discussion-based problem-solving by carefully discerning themselves and their intra-, inter-, and extra-relationships within the society in which they are situated.

7.2 Concluding Remarks

In March 2022, Yoon Seokyoul was elected as the new president of South Korea following President Moon Jaein. Yoon’s emergence was rather surprising because, first and foremost, he

strongly expressed that his political orientation will be different from that of the Moon administration. Furthermore, he was not a conventionally accepted politician in Korea but rather the Public Prosecutor General.

Although he is now surrounded by many supporters with thunderous applause, I am curious about how Yoon's next five years will differ from the Moon administration. Will the Yoon administration transform common relationships among several conventional assemblages, including conglomerates and policy? What about sport assemblages? Will they encounter unexpected (re)territorialization? More importantly, will the rise of the Yoon administration open another new conjuncture in South Korea?

As the newly emerging questions illustrated above demonstrate, my conjunctural cultural studies-based assemblage theory cannot have a complete conclusion. The endpoint is another beginning, and this new introduction will produce multiple unanticipated assemblages (Rodman, 2013). This is why conjunctural analysis based-assemblage thinking is always "provisional, uncertain, open-ended and happily incomplete" (Grossberg, 2018, p. 108), and why we must keep wrestling with the angels without fixating on predetermined orders.

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