

Research note

The Cosmopolitization of Remembrance — The Kwangju Uprising and the UNESCO “Memory of the World” Register

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Summary

The Kwangju Uprising of May 1980 represents an important turning point in South Korea’s contemporary history, as it played a decisive role in the subsequent democratization of the country. Despite the numerous studies done on the uprising, however, there has nonetheless rarely been any research conducted either on how it has been commemorated or on the development of remembrance discourses around it. This article thus focuses in particular on how to understand and explain the now apparent increasing urge to connect this uprising to incidents elsewhere in time and space, such as the Holocaust, and to protest movements in other countries, such as Argentina, Chile, and South Africa. Based on a single pilot case study of the process of inscribing the Kwangju Uprising into the UNESCO “Memory of the World,” the article develops a preliminary analytic framework wherein the phenomenon is explained as the “cosmopolitization of remembrance.” Actors with a stake in the remembrance of the uprising pursue a strategy of leveraging legitimacy by invoking globally accepted norms, doing so in order to promote their own take on the still highly contended interpretation of the Kwangju Uprising.

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Introduction

How does the cosmopolitization of remembrance work? According to the “cosmopolitization thesis” (Beck et al. 2004; Levy and Sznajder 2001; Levy 2010), collective memories are no longer confined to national societies but are instead increasingly “glocalized” through processes of interpenetration between global and local remembrance practices and discourses. This article elucidates the phenomenon

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of cosmopolitizing remembrance discourses and practices by examining one specific such case from South Korea (hereafter referred to as Korea). While the 1980 Kwangju Uprising has been the subject of manifold different studies, the cosmopolitization of its remembrance discourses and practices has not yet been addressed — which thus represents a desideratum. There are many different actors who have continued to engage in discursive competition over the Kwangju Uprising’s remembrance, such as victims’ associations, NGOs, intellectuals, authorities, and the Korean government itself. Hence, the cosmopolitization process of remembrance discourses and practices manifests in a wide array of artefacts. This case study focuses exclusively on one case — the inscription of the Kwangju Uprising’s documentary heritage into the UNESCO “Memory of the World” Register in 2011. The main aim of the article is to develop a preliminary analytic framework for studying the phenomenon of cosmopolitizing remembrance in Korea, and to do so from a comparative perspective. To achieve this, the specific characteristics of remembrance discourses and practices concerning the Kwangju Uprising are investigated here in a pilot case study.

The cosmopolitization of remembrance

The theoretical basis that this paper draws on is what could be called either the “cosmopolitization thesis” (Levy and Sznajder 2001) or “methodological cosmopolitanism” (Beck and Sznajder 2010). The basic underlying assumption herein is that as a result of globalization the “dualities of the global and the local, the national and the international, us and them, have dissolved and merged together” (Beck and Sznajder 2010: 383), generating a supranational site of collective remembrance. This notion of cosmopolitan memory describes the defining characteristic of a new kind of collective memory in the “Second Age of Modernity (*Zweite Moderne*),” one that is no longer confined to the boundaries of the national container of the “First Age of Modernity” — it is de-territorialized. Previously, nation-states had been the highest possible authority. As such, collective memory had been national history. The nation was the only possible foundation for a legitimate interpretation and memorialization of historical events.¹ But, with the critical historical juncture reached at the end of the Cold War in 1989, a paradigm shift finally began occurring. National boundaries began to lose their absolute authority. National sovereignty was replaced by a “cosmopolitan sovereignty” (Levy 2010: 582), which has led to legitimacy increasingly becoming a de-nationalized concept. Alongside the ongoing developments in communication and transport technologies, it was the memorialization of the Holocaust that generated and institutionalized this

1 Differences between nations were hence emphasized to ensure sufficient identification with one’s own one. Thus, the particularity of each nation prevented supranational comparison and the equalizing of the evaluations of historical events. This was especially true for events such as human rights, liberation, and/or democratization movements, since those types of concerns posed potential threats to the nation’s unity and legitimacy.

supranational site of remembrance discourses. As a result, increasingly “the global became a cultural horizon through which we can determine our local existence” (Levy and Sznajder 2001: 23).

This does not represent merely a simple shift from the local or national to the global, but rather a hybridization of memory. It is simultaneously both local and global. This is why Levy and Sznajder (2001) — drawing on Robertson (1995) — describe this shift as “glocalization.” They assume the existence of a dialectical interrelationship between local particularities and global universality, one that relates political, economic, and social experiences to each other in a supranational realm. In the case of human rights, they perceive that there is a certain global order of norms that evolve in tandem with the local path-dependent appropriations of these global values (591). As Kelner notes, “the universal is perceived through the particular, not in place of it” (874). In this way, the cosmopolitized Holocaust provides the institutional framework (Levy and Sznajder 2001: 237), as well as a glocal ethic of human rights that is difficult to escape from (Levy and Sznajder 2001: 238), and, thus, it can effectively be applied to contexts other than the Holocaust (231). A global human rights regime is institutionalized when it exercises normative pressure on the way in which states legitimately deal with human rights issues (Levy 2010: 591). The Holocaust, as a “modus of remembrance,” thus became a “model for national self-criticism that serves the world society as a legitimizing principle for spreading human rights” (Levy and Sznajder 2001: 232).

However, this does not mean the collective memory on human rights in the context of historical events converges to a homogenous global standard. Rather it is recursive, an open-ended dialectical process oscillating between the local and the global. As a kind of feedback loop, “local problems are resolved with recourse to global prescriptions while local solutions are inscribed in international institutions” (Levy 2010: 579). The effect of this is a “penetration of the domestic by the global, and vice versa” (Levy and Sznajder 2010: 100); thus, this does not lead to homogenization around a certain global standard, but instead to “hybrid form[s] of memory bridging the global and the local” (Levy and Sznajder 2006: 9, 27). Through practices of glocalization, Holocaust remembrance consequently became cosmopolitized — and ever since has provided a universal frame of reference with which to endow local historical events with the weight of universal legitimacy. This assumed relationship between “global expectations and their local appropriations” (Levy 2010: 580) is key for the theoretical deliberations that are presented in this article.

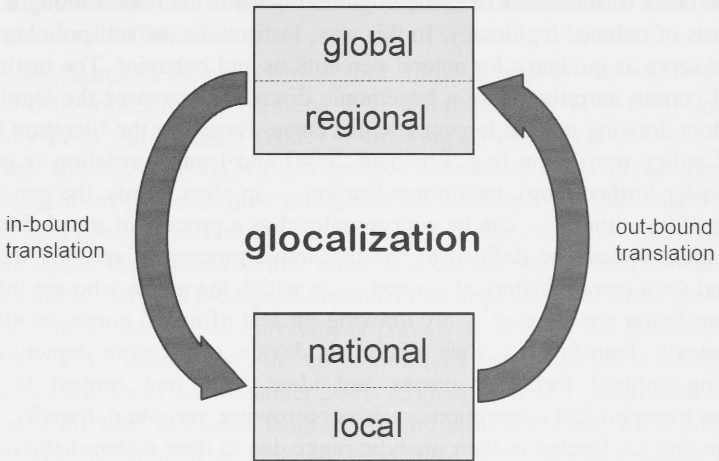
The heuristic device of “translation”

Cosmopolitized remembrance can be conceptualized as a sociocultural institution that is generated in the process of “translation” that discourses of remembrance moving between the local and global realm undergo. Institutions are norms or ideas that reduce the complexity of reality by setting conditions for appropriate action.

They involve mechanisms that associate nonconformity with increased costs: the economic costs of increased risk, the cognitive costs of increased thought, and the social costs of reduced legitimacy. In this way, institutions are self-policing conventions that serve as guidance for actors’ perceptions and behavior. The institutionalization of certain narratives into a hegemonic discourse increases the legitimacy of those actors drawing on that hegemonic discourse. Based on the literature from the fields of policy translation (e.g. Freeman 2006) and legal translation (e.g. Langer 2004; Mosler forthcoming), institutionalization — in other words, the generating or changing of institutions — can be conceptualized as a process of translation. Translating institutions can be defined as the discursive process of creating institutions *within* and *for* a certain historical context — in which the actors who are the bearers of the translation are situated — by drawing on sets of initial norms or ideas from other contexts. Translation is thus a heuristic device, a metaphor depicting acts of transposing cultural forms or norms and ideas from one context to another. It replaces metaphorical conceptions such as borrowing, reception, transfer, or transplantation that are limited in their analytic range due to their materialistic or organic connotations. By doing this we make a postpositivistic turn, as a consequence of which we are able to capture the key factors in the processes involved — such as the structure of meanings, the individual dispositions of relevant actors, the institutional arrangements, and the systems of incentivization (cf. Mosler forthcoming).

A successful translation presupposes that the new ideas and norms to a certain extent fit better with the existing ideational regime (or order) in which they are to be incorporated (cf. Acharya 2004; Phillips et al. 2004; Schmidt 2008). In this way, it can be assumed that even though translations in different contexts draw on the same initial set(s) of ideas they do not lead to their homogenization — although some sort of convergence occurring is not beyond the realms of possibility. This theoretical conceptualization corresponds to the assumptions posited by the aforementioned cosmopolitization thesis, which asserts that a global standard does not mean homogenization but rather a reciprocal or correlated inspirational constitution (Levy and Sznajder 2001: 18).

Drawing on the above deliberations, we can thus make certain assumptions — ones depicted in the figure below (see Figure 1). The cosmopolitization of remembrance discourses occurs through the recursive process of glocalization: the local or national discourses are integrated into a regional or global one, and vice versa. We can conceptualize this reciprocal giving and taking between the local and the global as processes of translation. The global translates into the local, and the local translates into the global. In this way, we can account for the dialectical process of glocalization as co-evolving with “inbound” and “outbound” translations. Based on this proto-model, in the case of the Kwangju Uprising we will be looking for *translators* (actors) at the local or national level who employ strategies of nationalizing, regionalizing, or globalizing/internationalizing the remembrance of this event in order to gain greater legitimacy.

Figure 1: Processes of remembrance glocalization

Source: Author's own compilation.

The Kwangju Uprising remembrance discourse and practices

The Kwangju Uprising of 1980 marks an important turning point in Korea's contemporary history. After the military dictatorship of Park Chung Hee (*Pak Chŏng-hŭi*) had come to an abrupt end in 1979 with his assassination, hopes were high among the Korean people that democratization was close at hand. However, the sudden power vacuum that opened up was soon filled by a newly emerging authoritarian ruler — Chun Doo Hwan (*Chŏn Tu-hwan*). Protests subsequently ensued both in the streets of Seoul and all over the country besides, including in Kwangju — a provincial city in the rural area of the southeastern Honam Region. Special forces were quickly dispatched to the area, and they proceeded to brutally quell the uprising — leaving dead several hundred people, while thousands more were injured or otherwise affected. This is why the incident is to this day often still referred to as the “Kwangju Massacre.” This bloodbath established a redline that the succeeding regime, under the designated new authoritarian leader Roh Tae Woo (*No T'ae-u*), would not be able to cross again. It thus had to cede to the demands of the people demonstrating in the streets of Seoul in June 1987 and to permit the constitutional reforms that would eventually lead to formal democratization. Today, the Kwangju Uprising is well known beyond Kwangju, Korea, and Asia, having become widely regarded as a prime historical example of a popular movement for democratization and human rights.

When we look at the commemoration practices taking place after the uprising, we can quite clearly observe three different phases to them. These resemble the three

phases that Levy and Sznajder (2001: 29) themselves established when analyzing the “Globalization and the Emergence of Cosmopolitan Memories” in regard to the Holocaust (Carnegie Council 2002).

The “nationalization thesis” I

The first period (1980–1987) started in the immediate aftermath of the uprising, and was characterized by victims’ associations, together with parts of the general movement for democracy, pushing for the public recognition of both the incident and its wider repercussions. Under the “nationalization thesis” (Jung 2005), they were seeking official — meaning national — recognition of the democracy movement’s legitimacy as such, as well as restitution for the brutal injustice that they and their loved ones had suffered. In the official narrative of events, the Kwangju Uprising was depicted as a communist rebellion against the state stirred up by North Korean infiltrators. The very act of commemorating the dead was thus illegal. For years after the uprising, the military government enforced a strict prohibition on publicly discussing the events in Kwangju (cf. Kim H 2011). It was only with the democratization advances made in 1987 that survivors would now no longer be ignored, and the course of events — as well as the names of the perpetrators — be made public for the first time. Up until the years of the Kim Young Sam (*Kim Yŏng-sam*; 1993–1998) government, the Kwangju Uprising was treated as only a local event.

The “nationalization thesis” II

The second period (1988–1994) began in 1988 with the National Assembly establishing the “Special Committee on Truth Finding of the Kwangju Democracy Movement,” with public hearings taking place on the unresolved related issues. It was only in 1989 that the “Kwangju Riot” was officially renamed the “May 18th Democratic Uprising” and that it was lawfully commemorated for the first time. A second milestone in this process was reached upon the commencement of the presidency of Kim Young Sam, who, as the first civilian president to rule after decades of military dictatorship, pushed forward various reforms. These included bringing to justice the main perpetrators of the suppression — namely former state leaders Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo. Now, even local government officials would participate in the memorial services. In 1990 victims of the May 18th Democratic Uprising began to receive compensation for their losses (under Act No. 4266). Later, at the end of the 1990s, May 18th was designated a national holiday to be officially celebrated, with even the president attending official commemoration ceremonies. Herewith the main items on the agenda of the victims, such as official recognition and compensation, had now been resolved — in other words, the “nationalization” of the remembrance discourse had been accomplished.

The “internationalization thesis”

The third, and currently still ongoing, period began in 1995, when memorialization practices shifted to strategies of what is usually referred to as “internationalization” (cf. Lewis 2006: 149ff.). Civil society organizations such as the May 18th Memorial Foundation increasingly engaged in remembrance practices and started to frame the uprising as a worldwide model for the development of democracy, comparing it to the Paris Commune and Auschwitz; the city of Kwangju, meanwhile, was depicted as a “Mecca of Democracy.” Often, the narratives employed stress the similarity and comparability of the Kwangju Uprising to the well-known democracy movements of other countries, such as those in Argentina, Chile, and South Africa. International events such as conferences, training programs, or award ceremonies are organized on a regular basis. Since the year 2000, for example, the World Human Rights Cities Forum has been hosted annually in Kwangju; at the May 18th Academy, international civil society activists can attend classes on democracy, human rights, and peace (May 18th Foundation 2014).

In 1995 a special law was enacted by the National Assembly that finally allowed the perpetrators to be punished (Act No. 5029). After the first democratic handing over of power to the Kim Dae Jung (*Kim Tae-jung*) administration (1998–2003) at the end of the 1990s, the promulgated “Special Act on the Kwangju Uprising” paved the way for the marking of this historical event. In 1998, on the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Asian Human Rights Charter was ratified in Kwangju. Meanwhile, Kwangju would also become a leading member of the World Human Rights Cities Forum. Most recently, the inscription of the Kwangju Uprising Archive into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2011 represents something of a culmination to the internationalization of remembrance practices for this event.

The UNESCO Memory of the World as a “global cultural horizon”

The UNESCO Memory of the World (hereafter referred to as the MoW project) is a program that was devised to safeguard the documentary heritage of humanity against future collective amnesia, neglect, or destruction. The program began in 1992 as a way to preserve and promote that documentary heritage. The initiative originally came about as a result of the growing awareness that important items of documentary heritage in different regions of the world were at risk of destruction due to a lack of adequate preservation measures, or that they were difficult to access. The main factors seen to be exacerbating the precarious situation faced were war and social upheaval. Also, shortcomings with regard to the provision of the necessary financial support and of manpower with the required expertise added to the problem (cf. MoW webpage). The first steps for implementing the MoW program were taken by the Director General of UNESCO after the National Library in Sarajevo was deliberately destroyed during the Bosnian War, in 1992. This incident

served to ignite awareness that important documentary heritage items were at risk. Another representative example of archives considered worthy of preservation is the records of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Timor-Leste, which include thousands of submissions on human rights violations that also document various atrocities perpetrated and other hardships endured in the years between 1974 and 1999 (cf. Harvey 2007: 363).

Individuals, organizations, and official institutions can apply for the listing of documents or archives in the MoW register. Being a program of UNESCO, a generally highly valued and respected “global institution” (Beck 2002: 63), the MoW can be said to serve as a globally shared point of reference. In this way, it embodies part of what the literature calls a “global cultural horizon” (Levy and Sznajder 2001: 23) or a “cosmopolitan imperative” (Levy 2010: 580). Hence, to inscribe the documentation of a particular commemoration project into its register automatically leads to gains of legitimacy and recognition at the local and/or national level for that project. At the same time, whenever an archive is inscribed its particularities are added to the MoW register — making it something to which, in turn, others can potentially relate. It also contributes to the legitimacy and prestige of the register itself.

Today the register holds almost 350 archival documents on various historical incidents, accomplishments, and personages worldwide. Out of these, 14 archives relate to events occurring as part of human rights or democratization movements in the post-World War II era. They include cases from, among others, Argentina, Chile, the Philippines, South Africa, and Korea (see Table 1 below). Once heritage documentation has been registered, the local organization may then use the MoW logo; furthermore, it is thereafter supported through an organizational network and the internet in the promotion of that recorded heritage. It may also apply to UNESCO for financial and technical support for the subsequent preservation of the heritage in question.

When the program first started its operations, almost all of the registered archives were documents from the pre-WWII era and were mostly of archaic origins. This is true for both the register of 1997 and for that of 1999. It was only from the year 2003 onward that a new trend would start, with post-WWII collections now being added to the register. When we filter the 350 registered items into cases relating to events associated with human rights, liberalization, and/or democratization movements unfolding after WWII, the number of items can be reduced to 14 within a timeframe of ten years (between 2003 and 2013). Most of this documentation concerns human rights or democratization movements that occurred in countries subject to the “Third Wave of Democratization,” or in the transition states emerging in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse.

Table 1: Human rights, liberalization, and/or democratization-related archives inscribed in the UNESCO MoW Register (2003–2013)

Year of inscription	Country	Name of item
2003	The Philippines	Audio Tapes of the People Power Revolution (March 22–25, 1986)
	Chile	Human Rights Archive of Chile (1973–1989)
	Poland	Twenty-One Demands, SOLIDARITY movement (August, 1980)
2007	Argentina	Human Rights Documentary Heritage (1976–1983)
	South Africa	Liberation Struggle Living Archive Collection (early 1980s–1994)
		Criminal Court Case, State vs. Mandela and Others (1960)
2009	Dominican Republic	Resistance and Struggle for Human Rights (1951–1961)
	Cambodia	Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archive (1975–1979)
	Paraguay	Archives of Terror (1927–1989)
2011	South Korea	Kwangju Uprising Archive (May 18–27, 1980)
	Brazil	Counter Information on the Military Regime (1964–1985)
2013	Israel	Pages of Testimony Collection, Yad Vashem Jerusalem (1954–2004)
	Bolivia and Cuba	Life and Works of Ernesto Che Guevara (1928–1967)
	South Africa	Archives of the CODESA and the Negotiation Process (1991–1993)

Source: UNESCO MoW webpage (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/memory-of-the-world/homepage/>).

Inscription into the UNESCO MoW register: actors, intentions, and narratives

Involved in the discourses surrounding the inscription of the Kwangju Uprising into the MoW register were certain key actors harboring their own particular intentions, ones that are — sometimes more, sometimes less — reflected in the narratives surrounding the event. The following paragraphs provide a snapshot of the involved actors, intentions, and narratives respectively. As to the first, neither the Korean government itself nor an official government agency applied for the inscription of the Kwangju Archive — rather, it was the decision of a nomination committee consisting of NGO activists, scholars, and politicians all closely connected either to the city of Kwangju or to the uprising. This fact is important to note, since in all other cases of documentation related to human rights and democratization movements registered with the MoW program to date the applicants and managers of the documentary heritage have been official agencies or organizations from the countries concerned — such as national archives or museums, secretaries of state,

supreme courts, or information agencies. The Korean nomination committee, in contrast, comprised eleven members, including: National Assembly member Kim Young-jin (chairperson), Ahn Jong-cheol (executive head), the mayor of Kwangju, the superintendent of Kwangju, the presidents of three universities in the region, and the presidents of related NGOs such as the May 18th Memorial Foundation, the Democratic Association for Honorable Persons and Victims’ Families, the May 18th Association for Detainees and Casualties, the Association for the Wounded from the May 18th Democratization Movement, and May Mothers’ House (UNESCO MoW 2010). While Mr. Ahn, who since 1986 has continued to research and collect testimonies and other documentation on the uprising (Choe 2011), provided the necessary expertise, Mr. Kim — as National Assembly member for his hometown in the province of South Chōlla and vice-president of the Forum of Asia Pacific Parliamentarians for Education (FASPPED) — possessed the necessary institutional resources to effectively initiate the plan of registering the Kwangju Archive with the MoW program (An 2009).

The intentions and expectations, second, of the applicants in registering the Kwangju Uprising Archive — which they understand as being in the tradition of movements such as the April 19th Revolution, the Busan/Masan Struggle, the Justice Corps War, the March First Movement, and the Tonghak Farmers’ War (Kim S 2011) — can be summarized as follows: they wanted to make the Kwangju “spirit” (“*chōngsin*”) of democracy, human rights, and peace known to the world; to elevate the “international status” (“*kukjejōk wisang*”) of Kwangju (An 2009); to receive “official recognition” (*kongin*) for the uprising as an incident representative of worldwide democracy movements; to obtain “worldwide acknowledgement” (“*segyejōk-ūro injōng*”) of the uprising’s historical significance and cultural value (Hankyoreh 2011); to spread the incident’s “legacy” (“*yusan*”) to countries in Asia and Africa now seeking democracy; and, to help them achieve that democracy (Pae 2011). Once the uprising was officially registered, the advocates of this move expected that: the nationalization and internationalization of the Kwangju spirit would be boosted (Hankyoreh 2011); that it would become a “reliable means of support” (“*pōt’immok*”) for keeping in check illegitimate state violence and violations of human rights in general (Pae 2011); and, that it would become a “(role) model” (“*kwigam*”) for the world’s and mankind’s universal values of democracy and human rights beyond Korea (Kim S 2011). In addition the applicants, in the aftermath of the successful registration with the MoW program, then set out to: inaugurate the Kwangju Peace Prize; obtain the status of a “UN Human Rights City”; and, establish the May 18th Archive and a May 18th Documentary Research Institute. Additionally, they expected even more international human rights activists visiting Kwangju would now study and seek to emulate the Kwangju spirit (Hankyoreh 2011).

In their reasoning for why the archival documents related to the Kwangju Uprising were of “world significance,” the applicants made, third, the following statements in

the nomination document (UNESCO MoW 2010): The Kwangju Uprising was a successful movement for human rights and democratization in Korea that also affected other East Asian countries. In China, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam “democratic movements attempted to follow in Korea’s footsteps.” Important activists from Indonesia and Sri Lanka are cited herein as being able to explicitly relate to Kwangju. Direct comparison is made with the “Audio Tapes of the People Power Revolution” of the People Power Revolution in the Philippines, to the sentencing of Nelson Mandela in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, and to several cases from Latin America — such as those of Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay. Certain eminent scholars from the United States — namely Bruce Cumings (University of Chicago), Edward Baker (Harvard-Yenching Institute), and George Katsiaficas (Wentworth Institute of Technology) — are cited as having stressed Kwangju’s global significance. Finally, a special UN human rights report is mentioned that proposes to incorporate compensation principles that were developed in Kwangju into the general UN rules of compensation for human rights violations.

While in explicit terms these statements are mostly concerned with serving outbound translations — meaning the dissemination of the Kwangju spirit, as a contribution to the world — they can be read as also implicitly serving inbound translations of the Kwangju remembrance discourse. For example, the actors involved posited that registration in the MoW program would serve: to spread the message of the necessity to keep a close eye on the retrograding domestic human rights situation in Korea (Pae 2011); as a clarion call to fight the present democracy crisis in Korea; and, to make clear how important it is to make efforts to safeguard Korea’s democracy (Kim S 2011). The following statement is another example of how in/outbound translations are mediated through the medium of the MoW program. It is worth noting that this quote is an excerpt from the address given by Davidson L. Hepburn, President of MoW, at the general conference held in Kwangju after the official registration of the uprising had been completed:

[...] following Nelson Mandela of South Africa, democratic movements in the Philippines and in Argentina as UNESCO Memory of the World [...] [t]he May 18th Kwangju Democratic Uprising, a monumental event in the world history of democratization, continues to be respected and highly regarded by the people in the world who pursue democracy, human rights and peace. I am firmly convinced that the democratic movement in Gwangju will remain a splendid world heritage in the hearts and minds of the 6.5 billion people of the world in the many years to come (Hepburn 2011: 2f.).

Contested remembrance

The remembrance discourse on the Kwangju Uprising is not uncontested, however. Rightist and conservative civic organizations in Korea tried to sabotage the registration of the Kwangju Archive twice during the application process. The first such attempt was made at the end of 2010 by the Korean Council for Restoration of National Identity (CRI) and the American & Korean Friendship National Council

(AKFNC), eight months after the application had been submitted. A representative of the group went to the Paris headquarters of UNESCO and requested that officials “carefully reconsider the decision to register the Kwangju-related documents with the UNESCO Memory of the World” (CRI 2011). This prompted UNESCO to halt the review process for the time being. Only after the Korean prime minister and the US embassy in Korea officially confirmed the accuracy of the historical facts presented and the uprising’s global significance was the process resumed (Ko 2013; Yi 2013). Shortly before the final inscription of the Kwangju Archive, the CRI sent another note refuting the idea that the uprising was of global significance (Hankyoreh 2011; Choe 2011; Ko 2013; Yi 2013). In their note, the CRI once again claimed that the Kwangju Uprising had been stirred up by North Korean special forces and implied that former president Kim Dae Jung might also have been involved. Moreover they suggested that the special acts passed in relation to the Kwangju Uprising might actually have been unconstitutional, and that the civilians who were involved in the struggle illegitimately and illegally resorted to violence (CRI 2011).

Another fact showing that the Kwangju Uprising discourse remains contested is that, in 2013, the New Community Movement (NCM, *saemaŭlundong*) was also inscribed into the MoW register. This is important to note because the NCM was a state-led initiative launched under the developmental dictatorship of Park Chung Hee in the 1970s. It was portrayed as a development program implemented to improve basic living conditions such as infrastructure and community income in rural areas, which to a certain extent it was and it did. However, it is also an undeniable fact that this state-led mobilization not only resulted in the destruction of traditional village structures and in highly indebted farmers’ households but it was also an integral part of the military dictatorship’s chosen strategy to avert the legitimacy crisis that the regime was then suffering from. The regime’s crisis gradually became acute, and finally culminated in the assassination of Park Chung Hee by the head of his own secret service in 1979. This is a noteworthy fact, since the 1980 Kwangju Uprising was a direct reaction to the death of Park being seen as having potentially produced an opportunity to bring an end to autocratic rule in Korea.

The Kwangju Uprising nomination statement explains the background to the incident by mentioning “the unforeseen death of a dictator who had taken control of the country following a military coup” (UNESCO MoW 2010). The official account of the NCM nomination document, however, omits this part of the equation, only stressing that “the spirit of “Diligence, Self-help and Cooperation” spread widely among the rural population,” and that “the movement laid the foundation for Korea to grow into a major economy, from [being] one of the world’s poorest countries.” (UNESCO MoW 2012). Thus, the inscription of the NCM represents a challenging — if not outright contradictory — narrative to the one of the Kwangju Uprising. In this way, it becomes apparent that here are two archives registered with the MoW program that represent historical narratives that are significantly in conflict with

each other. Hence, the disparate narratives and discourses surrounding these two events represent two competing and contentious ways of interpreting Korea's contemporary history.²

What is important to note when we compare these two camps is, first, that Korea is the only country anywhere in the world to have registered separate archives in the MoW comprised of competing discourses and narratives with regard to the national realm. Both sets of documents were registered by civic or quasi-civic groups, or by private individuals. The Kwangju Uprising application was submitted under the lead of the researcher Ahn Chong Cheol and the committee over which he presided. The application for the NCM Archive, conversely, was initiated by the Ministry of Culture during the Lee Myung Bak administration, but responsibility for this registration attempt was later transferred to the Saemaul Central Council. This was a reaction to criticism from the opposition that it was inappropriate and even illegal for the Ministry of Culture to submit documentation that had nothing to do with culture per se (Secretariat of the National Assembly 2012: 6–9; 21ff.; Sö 2012). The registration of the Kwangju Uprising, meanwhile, goes back to a longstanding process of documenting the past that had been occurring since the democratic handover in 1998. It was an initiative that emerged after the second democratic handover back to the conservative government.

Second, each of the two archives' hegemonic discourses represents the interests of one of the two opposing political forces in Korea — the rightist-conservative camp and the liberal-progressive one. The reason for this is that the two sides derive their respective identity and legitimacy from different strands of contemporary history of Korea — economic development in the case of the former, democratization in the case of the latter. Accordingly the rightist-conservative forces stress achievements vis-à-vis economic growth, while the liberal-progressives emphasize instead democratic progress. Consequently, in both cases we can find outbound and inbound translation activities — such as training programs to educate activists from abroad in the spirit and practice of either community development or democratization, peace, and human rights. Third, in respect to the discourse competition's outbound translation input, it is important to note that each of the two registered documentary heritages is attractive to a different group of countries or societies — ones mainly, but not only, situated in Asia. The NCM is popular predominantly with socio-economically less developed countries in Asia and Africa. The Kwangju Uprising,

2 This antagonism is reflected very well in the details revealed of the dispute taking place — over the application for the NCM to be inscribed to the MoW register — during a parliamentary hearing involving Member of Parliament Kim Han-kil of the opposition (liberal-progressive) United Democratic Party and the Minister of Culture Kim Ch'an. Kim, citing internal records related to the application preparations by the Ministry of Culture, suggested that not only was the dictatorship between 1970 and 1979 glorified but also that the application as such would serve to provide good publicity for the then presidential candidate Park Geun Hye (*Pak Kūn-hye*), the daughter of the late Park Chung Hee (Secretariat of the National Assembly 2012: 7–9).

meanwhile, is attractive mostly to those Asian countries that have previously endured authoritarian regimes or that still suffer under one.

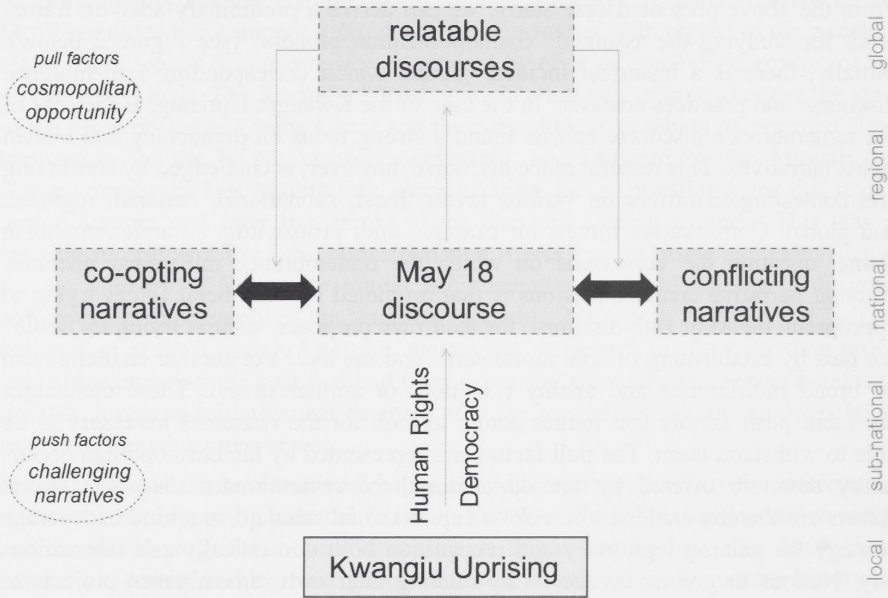
Conclusion

From the above presented case study, we can derive a preliminary analytic framework for studying the assumed “cosmopolitization process” (see Figure 2 below). Initially, there is a historical incident around which corresponding remembrance discourse and practices coalesce. In the case of the Kwangju Uprising, at the core of the remembrance discourse can be found a strong focus on democracy and human rights narratives. This remembrance discourse, however, is challenged by conflicting and contesting narratives on various levels: local, subnational, national, regional, and global. Conservative forces, for example ones propagating an anticommunism frame, question the very basis on which the remembrance movement operates. Another narrative creating tensions is that promoted by the liberal forces trying to appropriate the May 18th discourse for their own purposes, such as trying to “settle” the past by establishing official monuments and the like. Yet another challenge can be broad indifference and apathy (i.e. non- or antinarratives). These challenges represent push factors that induce actors to look for the resources necessary to be able to withstand them. The pull factors are represented by the cosmopolitan opportunity structure offered by the de-territorialized remembrance discourse realm. Actors are thereby enabled to invoke a supranational standard as a kind of leverage strategy for gaining legitimacy and recognition both domestically and internationally. Nations or groups invoke — by relating their own remembrance projects to those of other countries, regions, or time periods — a universal standard, and intend to ascribe universal value and global validity to their particular event. They pursue the “legitimacy leveraging strategy” of glocalizing remembrance, which transcends the national with the supranational or the local with the global — and vice versa. By this means of inbound translation, they can attribute universal value and global validity to the particular local remembrance narrative that they are advocates for.

Of course, the single case study addressed here has its limits in terms of empirical depth and as such the results cannot be generalized. Consequently, the assumptions posited here will have to be verified through further research — and probably readjusted. Nevertheless, this theoretically informed preliminary analytic framework still offers some initial insight into how it may be possible to approach the phenomenon of the cosmopolitization of remembrance, and into how to understand the increasing tendency in Korea to relate the Kwangju Uprising to historical incidents occurring in other countries. The framework can thus help scrutinize the evolution of remembrance discourses vis-à-vis historical events over time, specifically with regard to the mechanisms of the translation process and with respect to the key actors involved. In a second step, following the analysis of the Korean case, the study of comparable cases can be undertaken on the basis of this framework — in

particular so as to discover both what works similarly in other countries and what does not. In this way, it will be possible to systematically place the case of the Kwangju Uprising into a comparative context.

Figure 2: Preliminary analytic framework



Source: Author's own compilation.

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