

A Discussion of W. Moran's Paper on Imperatives for Geography in Area Studies

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I enjoyed to read Professor Moran's paper, "Geography and area studies: towards a Pacific perspective". It would be quite appropriate to say that Professor Moran made thoughtful, convincing statements with regard to the subject of today's symposium, 'geography and area studies,' and that there is not much left to be added to the paper.

The first part of my discussion is on the disciplinary status of geography in New Zealand and Korea. I found a parallel between Korea and New Zealand with regard to the status of geographic discipline. Similar to New Zealand, the geography in my country also has a blend of components of different origins. There is a thread of traditional, indigenous geography. We do have a colonial component too, that is to say the Japanese influence on our geography education in the earlier decades of this century. There are also inputs from American and European geography, in that we are having more and more geographers who have their graduate training either in America or Europe.

Professor Moran stated that "geography has always been much more important in New Zealand..., whereas area studies has had much less impact." He then went on to mention on the status of area studies that "in small countries (like New Zealand), or those not central to the major global alliances, there is no

strategic need for a specific focus on area studies. Thus, the traditional disciplines are sufficient to maintain knowledge of the world. ... The New Zealand experience reflects centrality of Geography rather than strategy, and places geography at the heart of area studies." So, the major difference between the two 'Pacific neighbors' might be that the disciplinary status of geography in Korea is not as great as that of New Zealand.

In Korea, the discipline in fact has been less influential than what we want to have. We Korean geographers want to see an impressive revival of regional geography both in the academia and in high school teaching. Regional geography in Korea has been rather weak. There have been small number of researchers who paid attention to foreign countries, and in consequence little of foreign area studies have been produced so far. This is the background why we are having this symposium today. Perhaps we Korean geographers need to know how New Zealand geographers have managed to maintaining their such a strong position in academia.

The second part of my comments is on the subject of globalization and area studies. Professor Moran rightly pointed out the multifaceted character of globalization. The process of globalization is certainly much less homogeneous. It can be reflected differently

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in different locales. Moran mentioned that human geographers have done detailed studies of small areas such as cities and rural areas in order to examine how the globalization has been reflected in those local areas. He then went on to raise a question whether those micro-studies can be replicated at the meso-scale too.

If a regional-scale study is what Professor Moran meant by the "meso-scale", then I believe we geographers are well-qualified and ready to conduct such a meso-scale regional study. For instance, we do know that there are a number of studies on the subject of global-local interface, and that these prior studies treated some factors such as the differences in resource endowment, the accessibility to the major center of a region, centrality in the transport network, and local initiatives in development, as the key variables to look at the local variations within a region. We geographers are familiar with those key concepts, and well-trained how to materialize them. In other words, we have a methodology in our hands for a meso-scale regional study. A meso-scale regional

study might be an alternative towards what Moran meant by the "nomothetic approach" to regional geography.

Now, let me finish my discussion with adding a definitional comment on globalization: another aspect of the multifaceted character of globalization. As far as my knowledge goes, there are three different meanings of 'globalization' used in France: first, there is a term 'mondialization' when globalization refers to the development of economic relations at the global scale; whereas Frenches use 'globalization' in two other occasions, either to refer the emergence of environmental unbalances which threaten life all over the Earth; or to refer the development of an awareness of human responsibility concerning our planet. These varying uses of the term globalization are important to widen the horizon of future regional geography. The second and third meanings of the term allow us to pay attention on the environmental issues at the regional and local scales, on which Professor Moran put so much importance.