

# Exploring the management of social enterprise from systemic perspective: the application of Deleuze's Theory of Assemblage

Jae Eon Yu, Business School, Korea University, Seoul, Korea<sup>1</sup>

Jeong-Woo Lee, Seoul School of Integrated Sciences & Technologies, Seoul, Korea<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

In this paper, we wish to evaluate a 'soft' systems approach to 'action learning' that takes place in exploring the management of social enterprise in Korea. To do so, we appreciate and present Deleuze's theory of an assemblage in order to explore social complexity as researchers rethink the value of participatory action learning through the process of problematization. It allows participants to be 'critical thinkers' on the given situations. To be critical thinkers, what is important for the process of action learning and research is not so on what is true of 'scientific knowledge' being appreciated, but it is on our thought and learning to what the 'narrative knowledge' produces in particular, local contexts. In this sense, we reappraise the value of a 'soft' kind of systems approach from the poststructuralist thought of Gilles Deleuze.

**Key words:** action learning, social enterprise soft systems approach, Deleuze's theory of an assemblage.

## INTRODUCTION

What is our understanding of the complex nature of organizations and social complexity? Poststructuralists see the nature of organizations as the 'pure becoming' or 'assemblage' that emerges from the interpersonal networks or the collectiveness of individuals (DeLanda, 2006). In this sense, the individual or self is considered a construction of social and cultural forces that takes place in the domain of discourse or language use in particular contexts. In other words, what is important for the understanding the complex nature of organizations and social complexity is not so much on what is true and false of 'scientific knowledge' being appreciated, as it is on our thought and research to what the 'narrative knowledge' produces in particular, local contexts. How do we know modern organizations and social systems will continually develop or sustain under a regime of capitalism that spreads out over our present time and even in the unforeseeable future? These issues will be some key challenges for leading edge research today. In particular, social enterprise becomes popular as it is a way towards an innovative approach for developing a new economy by creation of social responsibility and ethics (Cornelius *et al.*, 2008: Chell, 2007). However, the theoretical basis and governance of social enterprise are too vague and

---

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: Department of Business Administration, Korea University, Anam-Dong, Seongbuk-Gu, Seoul Korea, 135-701. E-mail: [yu9070@korea.ac.kr](mailto:yu9070@korea.ac.kr).

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence to: Institute of Ethical Management, Seoul School of Integrated Sciences and Technologies, Daehyun-Dong 67-7, Seodaemun-Gu, Seoul Korea. E-mail: [jwlee@assist.ac.kr](mailto:jwlee@assist.ac.kr).

complicated. 'Too vague' means that the conceptual-theoretical practices are not solid. 'Too complicated' means that the related concepts and practical problems are complicated and entangled. Deleuze creates a theory of assemblages, which is an epistemological breakthrough of modern thought that explicates the conceptual complexity of our being and life. The assemblage theory regards as one of the most innovative theory to understand and analyze the social enterprise, networks and social complexity in wider society (DeLanda, 2006). We will scrutinize some of the Deleuze's theory of assemblages, which allows us to propose 'rhizomatic systems approach' aiming at the analysis of social enterprise, and networks in a broader context that of the society as a whole. Having with rhizomatic systems views on organizations and society, those are included which help us to construct Deleuzian sense of ethics, what we call it as the 'minority ethics'. We will demonstrate the case study for understanding the systemic management of social enterprise in Korea. This example refers to the practical application of the assemblage's theory that will verify the significance of Deleuze's theory of assemblage in order to understand the structure, governance and characteristics of innovation of social enterprise as a pilot to set up a more in depth study of a variety of modern networks as the organizational form in Korean contexts.

## **UNDERSTANDING DELEUZE' S THEORY OF AN ASSEMBLAGE:**

### **Creating social reality: Seeing the organization as an 'assemblage'**

The nature of the organization is illusive because it is the product of an open-ended process of the discourse or dialogue in which a series of the virtual events takes place in the fields of discourse. The virtual events can be happened in an open-ended process of the narrative communication, events contain the 'memory' in the form of 'stories' shared by a group of people who involved in witnessing the events (Deleuze, 1990). Events can be emerged from the 'discursive fields' that exist between a signifier and a signified being created. Events can be made by the collectiveness that emerges from individuals who interact with one another in situations being observed (Lee, 1999). The organization is a very dynamic and complex network or system which derives from 'stories' or dialogue, and organizational members seek for favourable or unfavourable relationships amongst them in order to generate 'stories'. When we see the organization in this way, we can see the nature of the organization as an 'assemblage' which produces discourse, events and the images of 'becoming' in social contexts. When we see the organization as an assemblage, we can

separate those elements that play an 'expressive' role that refers to the expression of the legitimacy of the authority, whilst many of the resources that produce dependencies play a 'material' role in the assemblages (DeLanda, 2006: 68-81). The important point is that these assemblages take place not only in terms of space or authority structure but also in the form of Deleuzian sense of an event or a series of events. Spelling out the details of Deleuze's philosophy and assemblage theory will involve connecting the results of his ontological analysis with questions of epistemology. Such as Deleuze concerns himself with understanding both if the world exists in an objective sense (ontology) and how we can know a social reality (epistemology). As a *realist* philosopher, Deleuze (1994: 161) questions what is the nature of the world which generate dialogue and conversation that lies in its nonhuman and affirmative force? How do we understand those kinds of dialogue that happens as the "idea of thought" which describes as "Idea as problematising"? Michel Foucault (1984a: 117-118) introduces the concept of 'problematics' or 'problematization', and he shows up his unique positions to conduct research in social science. Foucault's notion of problematization can be used to explore the problematization of the current situations in particular, local contexts. We acknowledge that a 'history of thought' can be offered alternative perspectives on the problematic status and conduct in the 'history of mentalities' that constitutes a certain group of behaviours in organizational contexts. In this vein, Flynn (1985: 533) claims that problematization articulates "the ensemble of discourse and non-discursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and false and constitutes it an object of thought" For Deleuze, 'thought' may only be placed in the 'outside' where the 'surface effect' eventually come to contemplate in the form of events (that is, pure events) if thought is first freed from all 'transcendental' or 'quasi-transcendental' determinations in the form of "making problem" (Deleuze, 1990, 1994). For Deleuze, thus, the creation of concepts takes place only on the basis of a set of pre-philosophical and/or phenomenological presuppositions which it known as 'the plane of immanence' or the 'image of thought'. Having with the 'image of thought', we undertake research where we tended to call for a 'vegetal model of thought', that is the rhizome in contrast to the tree (Boundas, 1993, chapter 1; Patton, 1996: 7). To give the image of thought tends to be challenged to those of a classical or 'dogmatic' image of thought (i.e. Plato, Descartes, Kant and Hegel).

Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of society leads us to make 'thought' in which we encounter with the unconscious and ontological forces of life itself. The unconscious and ontological

level reveals itself most of all as 'virtuality'. In *A thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) create a new understanding of the practice of 'philosophy', in which their politics is not concerned with power as a dominant force but with the creative potential of life itself, we regards it as the minority ethics. For Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy is no longer a question of how can we interpret and evaluating the exercise of power in organizations, but finds the 'image of thought' which moves and transforms the transcendental nature of thought in experimentation. It produces singular (not in the sense of numerical but the meaning of qualitative) real movement or actions, movement in life or the joy, singular experience of becoming, for example 'becoming imperceptible' or 'becoming-molecular', the minoritarian character and dissymmetry of becoming, in which rhizome kind of multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities. The theoretical basis for such movements is the assemblage theory (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Borrowing the Foucault' notion of panopticon, every 'diagram' functioning as an 'abstract machine' that is no longer visual archive or a map, but cartography that "is coextensive with the whole social field" (Deleuze, 1988: 34). A cogent question is then a matter of how to bring the abstract machine into thought. Such singular movements and the resulting entities ('haecceities'), which is no longer fit to any existed beings, are possible when we turn our eye from the actual to the virtual. By means of transforming the virtuality into actuality we come to the new actual. We can discover this logic (or ontology) in *the Logic of Sense* (Deleuze, 1990), where he develops "the virtual and the actual" in the context of philosophy of language. His *Logic of Sense*, philosophy maintains relations with two dimensions in which a surface of thought represents the 'unthinkable' within a 'plane of immanence'. Upon the plane of immanence, there is an un-thought within thought affect which links thought directly to the corporeal bodies through an abstract machine which is a new entity, but still delineated by dotted lines. And there is also a line of 'outside' that has appeared upon the plane of immanence in which an effect of an unthinkable outside of thought can only be realized through 'sense'. This effect is called as an event, which is a pure event, i.e. virtual event which does not have any physical or material aspects of it. For Deleuze (1992), the image of thought explores the complex and dynamic natures of events, which challenges the traditional way of thinking towards understanding the nature of organizational changes, social complexity and life. We have found that thought encounters life in the pure event, that is, transcendental and virtual forms of body, which is a passive synthesis of time. Life is governed by chance according to the law of 'nature'. Deleuze develops logic of problematic thought that is only grasped by

'sense'. This thought will seek out 'singularities' in which power operates and mobilizes through particular points, that is to say an affect like "a state of power that is always local and unstable" (Deleuze, 1988: 73). This leads to the another characteristic of the diagram in which the power-relations do not emerge from a central point or unique locus of sovereignty, but at each moment move from one point another in a social field of forces and relations (*ibid*). The thought relates to the questions of value. For instance, 'which (singular) points are particular or remarkable, and which points are ordinary within a social field?' Deleuze introduced the notion of an aleatory point which means "problems" arise out of a "question". Two series of events are placed in relation by the aleatory point which represents the virtual and dynamic order out of which reforming of a series of events in which outside and inside can communicate in a coherent manner. Then, the aleatory point brings us to identify three different syntheses of events, which functions as 'transcendental' components of aesthetic. These are connection, disjunction and conjunction (Deleuze 1990: 23-25; 95-96). Deleuze and Guattari show how the cartographic functions of longitude and latitude define a body that as a map of variations in movement and speed relates to what Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the 'body without organs'. A body without organs refers to the "forces that intersect it and the things it can do" or "the temporal product of a larger exterior mapping of forces". Such a relational mapping is what Deleuze and Guattari term a 'haecceity' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 6). What Deleuze (1988) is interested in the process of becoming-haecceity, which take place within the "ontological" field by creating new (future) events, is concerned with the displacement or transformation and changes between the virtual and actual assemblages of the 'plane'. Following the thought of Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) make thought into a becoming instead of being of the world. Becoming occurs on the plane of immanence as the virtual dimension. When becoming occurs between A and B, both of these loses its strong identity and become into the other. Becoming is such act of becoming-others. Becoming is neither an imitation nor an identification of something. It is certainly not progressing nor regressing, but creating events or haecceities (that is singular events, and they calls 'monsters' sometimes) through creative involution between heterogeneous terms (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 238-239). In this respect, the creative involution takes place when one deterritorializes from oneself by becoming-haecceities, which leads us to appreciate new mode of existence in a social field. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish the abstract process of becoming from what one becomes, and the intensive concept which comprehends it, and trace processes of becoming a 'haecceity'. It designates neither an

identity of individuals nor a group or structure of several parts or points. To become is to make a singular *line of flight*. But where exist strongly fixed lines ('the striated space'), there cannot be occurred in the forms of lines of flight. To arrive at a line of flight, the rhizome or rhizomatic field must exist in a field of immanence, and occupies all its possible dimensions according to the principle of asignifying rupture that happens through a creative involution, which transverse the signified matrix in the sense of structuralism. It is not a molar identity but a molecular multiplicity which connects heterogeneous elements or terms (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 249). The rhizome deterritorializes thought, since it is itself pure becoming that is the most deterritorialized element or term. In this sense, the line of creative involution is possible as one no longer comprehends the whole in terms of a group or a structure, instead, merely extracts the new assemblages or makes multiplicities that place on a line of becoming. The rhizome is the expression-machine invented by Deleuze and Guattari (1976, 1987)'s philosophy which makes possible the creation of new assemblages of concepts. Rhizomatic systems or networks can only be possible in the assemblage. There are 'machinic assemblage' and 'enunciative assemblage' in a field of immanence. For instance, an organization is composed of in one side the machinic assemblage (the networks of its buildings, people, organizational structure and processes, etc.) and enunciative assemblage (that of its codes of conducts and rules, norms, regulations and cultural understanding between the organizational members, etc.) within a problematising field. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) define an assemblage by suggesting as follows. An assemblage is a kind of multiplicity in which machinic and enunciative assemblages are distinguished. An assemblage is constituted by the lines and velocities; assemblage is after all a kind of a series of events.

Let us explain a concept of the multiplicity. Generally speaking, the multiple is usually used as a predicate. Take an example, "there are ten people in our place." This example refers to external, spatial, actual, quantitative and numerical multiplicities. But, according to Bergson, there is a multiplicity that refers to the internal, temporal, virtual, and qualitative. For instance, "the ten people went to the city hall in order to complain their problems to the mayor." In this example, ten people become as one group. So they constitute an internal multiplicity of 'one'. In this sense, our body is a good example of internal multiplicity. It consists of many parts, and these parts ('many') constitute a unity ('one'). The internality of ten people's multiplicity is very loose (they leave each other soon), while that of a body is very strong (they will preserve their unity until the body dies), but in a fundamental sense

they are both a multiplicity. Those examples show us to understand what the internal multiplicity is. The internal multiplicity is virtual, not actual. And the virtuality is proportional to the internality. “There are ten people in this place.” In this example, the numerical multipl ten is explicated in space, actually presents themselves. On the other hand, ten angry people are im-plicated (in the sense of the French word, *pli*), that means internalized. And the more it has the internality/im-plication, the more it has the virtuality, which is not actually explicated but gradually explicates itself in time. The internal, virtual and temporal multiplicities are not a numerical sense, but a qualitative in the sense of Bergson. So we can have the qualitative multiplicity as it is constituted by many, but the many is not simple external many, but internalized many. It constitutes in a sense one, that is, a substantive unity. Qualitative and internal multiplicity is also virtual and temporal as internalized multiplicity is a folded multiplicity, as the word multi-*pli*-city itself indicated. And it is a temporal, not spatial, because internalized multiplicity is not spatially explicated, but explicates itself and folding in time.

Borrowing ideas from Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari’s developed their conception of assemblage. An assemblage is a qualitative version of multiplicity. Hence, an assemblage is appreciated in terms of social, ethical, practical versions of multiplicity. In consequence, an assemblage is a kind of qualitative, internal, virtual, and temporal multiplicities. We can easily realized that the qualitative multiplicity, especially its social version, in this sense, the assemblage can be seen as the form of organizations, networks in wider society (DeLanda, 2006). As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that assemblage consists of two dimensions, namely, machinic and enuciative assemblages. The machinic assemblage is the corporeal aspect of an assemblage, and the enunciative assemblage is the discursive aspect of an assemblage. This dual structure of an assemblage corresponds to the Foucauldian notions of non-discursive practice and discursive practice. Take an example, law and a jail or prison, zoology and a zoo, medicine and a hospital. Deleuzian sense of examples of assemblages refers to a game, a lecture, a wedding, a display and so on. In the case of a marriage, a wedding is constituted by machinic assemblage (which refers to bride and bridegroom, people, tables, flowers, and so on) and enunciative assemblage (which refers to the rules of the wedding hall, the declaration of officiator, cultural practice of a wedding, and so on). It is interesting to note that an assemblage is constituted by lines and velocities. Lines correspond to the lines of articulation, the lines of segmentation, and the lines of flight. Velocities

correspond to the velocity of territorialization, velocity of deterritorialization, and velocity of reterritorialization. In this sense, an assemblage is a matrix of lines, which refers to a 'territory' (in its sense of ethology), and there always occurs two kinds of social processes in the forms of deterritorialization and reterritorialization within social fields (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Pearson, 1999). Hence, to analyze an assemblage is to analyze the cartography of assemblages that happens through the movement with lines and velocities within social fields.

### **Becoming- haecceities and the 'minority ethics'**

Deleuze (1990) introduces the notion of an event. The *Logic of Sense* in Deleuze's work, aims to articulate an event as the point of contact between bodies and languages, and hence life and thought. An event extracts from the state of affairs, Deleuze (1990: 9-11) shows how an event is related with bodies, thought of life and language actualizes through neither designation, manifestation, nor signification, but an event emerges from the 'border' between subject and object (or "state of affairs"). The pure form of the event is the determination of the body, which affects our thought. A pure event inheres or subsists not in an empirical mode of existence, but in a transcendental mode of existence of the one who lives it, or in whom it is actualized. Thus an event has power to change or affect our bodies, our speech or statements and our way of life. Having extracted an event from bodies, their mixtures, their actions, and passions, Deleuze (1990: 182) shows that language is related to bodies, and thought of life. The bodies can serve as a ground for the event and meaning, but the relations amongst bodies, thought of life, and concepts are themselves conditioned under one another to form a ground for the event and meaning (Deleuze 1990).

Appreciating the value of critical systemic praxis, we acknowledge that the social sciences and systems approaches are not separate from questions of human values, ethics and multiple cultures for making ethical decisions in the contexts of designing an inquiring system (McIntyre-Mills, 2006). In the search for the alternative value for an inquiring system, we propose that 'Deleuzian Ethics' is needed for make the reflexive research possible on the sustainability of the modern organizations and societies that are conceived as the self-organizing and open systems. For Deleuze, he deals with ethics in terms of "what happens" within the formation of pure spatio-temporal dynamics. Put differently, it happens within the 'transcendental' dimension of pure becoming (that is a pure event) that always extends from a

pure past to future both at once through the process of problematization. This allows us to appreciate that an open system of a series of (pure) events can produce as a formation of 'chaotic dynamics' within the problematic fields. Deleuze (1990) explores the image of thought aimed at creating the 'ethical difference' that based on 'unthinkable' within a 'plane of immanence', it appears like a collection of simulacra and phantasms which refer to a problematic field. Upon the plane of immanence, an 'effect' of corporeal bodies has appeared in the present moment that can only be realized through 'sense'. This effect is called as a pure event which does not have any physical or material aspects of it. It has "impersonal and pre-individual singularities" aspect of its logical context at the same time (Deleuze, 1990: 103). For Deleuze, the image of thought explores the peculiar and unpredictable natures of events, which challenges the established way of thinking towards understanding the nature of the 'natural' world, chaos and life. Deleuzian ethics creates a new mode of unconscious thought and existence, and new possibilities of life which leads to pose the new sorts of questions and problems, and a creation of new values that makes the 'ethology of ethics' in which ethics is created by a series of ethics (Pearson, 1999). In experimentation, all transcendent presuppositions have to be renounced to refuse use of reason or rationality alone in the service of particular human interests. This allows thought to free and go beyond the boundary of 'territORIZATION', proceeds to the unthinkable of chaos. Here, the image of thought encounters the chaos from the concepts and ideas being created in the form of 'sense'. In experimentation, we receive questions from 'outside' and posing a series of new questions and problems, look for all chances and possibilities and construct assemblage and collage which produce a multiplicity of alternatives and solutions. The 'minority ethics' is related to the question of whose voices are heard in the way in which we overcomes in processes of stakeholder representation, which tends to be happened during the use of systems methodology. As for Foucault (1976: 11), through the process of subjectivization, a moral agent(s) can be created in the form of a form of sexuality which emerges from the relations of power (which reveals as force relation) and will of knowing or knowledge (that aims to disclose 'truth'). If the problem of the relation between truth and subjectivity runs through Foucault's entire work, it is the notion of 'governmentality' or governance, which allows him to transform it from a research around questions of power into research centered on ethics. Foucault idea of ethics is about the 'excluded' which we refer to as ethics for 'free man', which that of the governance of the self and of others is gradually appreciated (Deleuze, 1988). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) construct their own ethical reasoning, what we refer to as

‘the minority ethics’. The critical issue in ethics is how the creative becoming of human and self-cultivation (that is proposed by Foucault) are to be conceived and mapped out. In order to propose the minority ethics what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) aims to produce a new kind of reality and a new model of living systems, that is rhizomatic systems or networks in social fields.

## **CASE STUDY: the Rediscovery of Korea (ROK).**

### **Background information**

The Rediscovery of Korea (ROK) is a social enterprise which established 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1998. The company, which was originally non-profit organization, is engaged in providing various social service activities in order to preserving Korean historical heritages and cultural traditions. ROK has changed into social enterprise with social purpose that aim to create and provide job for the socially disadvantaged group and with economic purpose that aims to ensure the provisions of specific good and services through economic activities since early 2008. It is essential that ROK’s social services be continually assessed and updated through the participatory and collective approach to the management of ROK. To conduct participatory approach to the effective management of ROK, the researcher (Dr. Jae Eon Yu) recommended the Soft Systems Methodology as it is an action-oriented process of inquiry into problematical situations which serve to provide systemic process or structure to discussion amongst participants (Checkland and Poulter, 2006: 22). In this reason, the researcher and participants agreed to use Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) as a way of facilitating action research within the organization as action research regards as “an action-based approach to learning from experience that values the knowledge people develop by doing things” (O’Neil and Marsick, 2007: xvii).

### **What is a strategy for participatory action research?**

What is the purpose of action research in a participant-driven manner? Checkland and Poulter (2006: 176) claims that action research is suitable for social research at the level of situation, group or organization as researchers enter a social situation, taking part in the action going on and “using the involvement as research experience focused on the changing

process". What Heron (1996) defined action research as a researcher committed to do research "with" people rather than research undertaken "on" people (i.e. survey research, experimental research design, and observation methods) or "about" people (i.e. ideographic methods in ethnographic research). In exploring all forms of inquiry, with participatory process of knowledge-production and a self-reflexivity on the context, finding out key information about context: boundaries, values, perspectives or worldviews, relationships, social and political context, for example. In this sense, participatory action research (PAR) is useful as that which can be expropriated through relationships amongst participants in order to support those who wish to facilitate a learning process of organizational change or to be 'critical' about the use and values of systems methods. Of course, the organizational changes result from the continuing collaboration, discourse or dialogue and organizational learning over a given period of time (Whyte, 1991). Then, it possible to make PAR, which is underlined by the poststructuralists thoughts of Foucault's concept of problematization and Deleuze's theory of assemblage in order to conduct action research within organizations. Our strategy of PAR is identified as follows. Firstly, we will encourage the participants of action learning (or action research) to be active participants or changing agents who are determined to bring about changes in the organization (Whyte, 1991: 12). Secondly, we will guide that active participants should engage with a self-reflectivity which leads them to learn about how to learn about the problematic contexts. Doing so, it generates the collective way of thinking and acting with the learning model that leads participants to rethink the operations and management of the organization. This process will lead to open up a new perspective that will eventually contribute to basic changes in the nature of research, in effect, changes in organizational setting, structure, process of decision making, norms, beliefs and ethical codes of conducts within the organization by introducing new forms of organizational culture (Whyte *et al.*, 1991). Lastly, the 'sense' that is seen as the basis for making a 'pure event' which allows us not only to represent the image of world, but also acts upon it in certain ways from the self-generating process for making a series of events (Deleuze, 1990). Put differently, when participants see the current situations in terms of Deleuze's notion of assemblage which will takes place in the form of an event that interacts with other events, then, they will *make* a 'problem' that leads to accept that there are always other ways to open up the new possibilities or alternatives in the virtuality.

## **The processes of PAR using “systems thinking”**

Dealing with the current issues within ROK with a participants-driven manner, five key phases of participatory action research were identified. These phases are described as follows.

### **Phase 1: Carrying out systemic analysis**

In order to make the personal touch for making a connection with persons in the social field, Checkland and Poulter (2006)'s SSM was used for exploring the multiple perceptions of problem situation within ROK as participants agreed to use SSM as the problem-solving method. The basic process of the systemic intervention using SSM is summarized by the following stages.

#### Carrying out Analysis One (the Intervention Itself) of SSM

##### Finding out “key issues”

The methods of finding out a ‘rich picture’ of ROK were conducted by the study of the written documents, official records, questionnaire-based survey, social network analysis, observation and informal and formal interviews. It was identified that a centralized decision-making process was formed through a top-down hierarchy of ROK. There was a tendency for poor communication, lack of trust and understanding between managers and workers throughout the divisions in ROK. In an actual study, the archive of ‘information’ collected can include written documents and records, notes taken from formal and informal interviews with the members of staff within ROK. Only the facts which are considered to be of relevance for collecting events data and analyzing events data being collected in stage b are given as follows. In addressing any messy problem situations by SSM, the first step was to find out the current situations within ROK from the various perceptions as possible in order to draw a ‘rich picture.’ These perceptions were expressed as follows.

Person A:

“How can we create a condition for improving the participatory problem-solving ability

and effective interaction amongst the various working groups within ROK?”

Person B:

“Taking into consideration the benefit of Korean communities, what can we do about our business that gives us pride in our work?”

Person C:

“There are no trust and norms amongst the CEO, other managers and workers. Communication flow is top-down and managers exercise a directive leadership within ROK. Our corporate policy focuses mainly on the operational performance in terms of the financial criteria. Having with a top-down leadership within ROK, it is difficult to have communication and share the information and knowledge amongst all the levels of managers and workers within ROK.”

There were still some concerns about the ‘communication and governance systems’ that should be taken into account to affect both the operational, managerial, ethical aspects of the organization and psychological issues of employees in ROK. As the cultural and psychological issues of employees were influencing the management and operation of ROK, the political could not be exercised based on a particular single person or a powerful group within ROK.

### Model Building

The Model-building was concerned with the preparation of ‘root definitions’ and building conceptual models of the perceived reality. Having clarified the root causes of the problem contexts, root definitions were formulated, which seemed ‘relevant’ to the problem situations within ROK. These were the ‘the communication system’ and the ‘effective governance system,’ which are described as follows.

#### Root definition 1: The communication system

A ROK owned system aiming to improve communication amongst Chief Executive Officer (CEO), senior managers, voluntary workers and seeking to build trust between

managers and workers in order to increase understanding and cooperation amongst employees within ROK.

#### Root definition 2: The effective governance system

A ROK owned system aiming to have high degree of autonomy and responsibility of multiple parties of the Ministry of Labour (a government agency), managers and working groups in order to be good social enterprise to establish participatory and democratic processes of decision-making and will be necessary for improving the overall performance of ROK

Having with root definitions of the relevant human activity systems of ROK, the purpose of building conceptual models was to understand the purposeful behaviour of multiple perception of a 'human activity system' within ROK. The conceptual models contain ideas about the purposeful human activities which are concerned with the nature of the perceived reality in carrying out problem-solving activities within ROK. Conceptual models ('ought to be') were generated which seemed to be relevant to the problematic situation at ROK. These models were used to generate debate amongst participants in order to bring about desirable changes within ROK.

#### Carrying out Analysis Two (Social) of SSM

In SSM, Checkland and Poulter (2006: 31-34) suggest that analysts or participants find out their 'feeling' or 'flavour' of the problematic situation and its social texture. To do so, we identified those three elements of social texture within ROK, namely roles, norms and values that continually interact one and another in the given situation as follows. *Roles* refer to the formal roles of CEO, other executive directors and workers, and particularly the informal role of CEO was described as a 'dictator' within ROK. *Norms* were not identified as a conflict was happened between the CEO's expected behaviours associated with his roles and other group's norms within ROK. *Values* were not identified because conflict and contradiction took place within ROK as CEO wanted to use his power and authority to promote his self-interest of making ROK to be a profit-oriented company.

### Carrying out Analysis Three (Political) of SSM

The focus of Analysis Three is to find out the disposition of power in a situation and the processes for containing it (Chekland and Poulter, 2006: 35). We identified the 'commodity' of power as Checkland and Poulter (2006: 37) clearly made that "there was an unstated but very real hierarchy here" such as what are the commodities of power in a given situation. In ROK, obviously, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) had greater power on the basis of his authority and social position so that he dismissed several managers and workers as they disagreed with his ideas on the social enterprise which has an explicit aim to make a profit rather than creating benefit to the community. On these issues, participants concerned with how to distribute or relinquish power within ROK.

#### **Phase 2. Taking 'action'**

In phase 2, it is concerned with the development of interpersonal networks in order to build communities of inquiry and practice that aims to create an 'open space' which generate interactions between participants and others (including government, voluntary workers who are not members of full-time employees) within ROK. This approach was focused on more on the organizational process that facilitates to form informal groups and communities which were initiated by voluntary and participatory approaches that created and shared visions, interests, desires, belief and knowledge of managers, administrative staff, and voluntary working groups of people within ROK.

#### **Phase 3: "Problematizing" the identified problem context.**

During the process of PAR, participants were actively involved with the process of "debate and negotiation." However, different perspectives and perceptions of the real world situations amongst participants led to "conflict and contradiction" situations amongst the CEO, executive committee, an advisory board, and participants within ROK. Dealing with this situation, the researcher (Dr. Jae Eon Yu) advised an action learning team to problematize the identified problem context, which would allow them involved to pose a set of problems and questions within the given context. During this process of problematization, participants engaged with dialogue to reveal their appreciation of the coercive nature of power and an

actual presence of the unverifiable existence of power. For example, participants realized that most people have some power over others. So the senior workers and members of executive committee had power over CEO when they attended formal meetings and made formal and informal communication one and another within ROK. In this sense, participants believed that an active form of discourse or dialogue could have a transformative capacity in which participants would convert the present situation into a new state. This proved that it had positive and productive effects on existing power and knowledge relations within ROK. Thus, it is certain that discursive formations emerged from these problematizations of situational contexts within ROK. The process of problematization occurred due to multiple relations of the truth, power and ethics amongst participants (Foucault, 1984b)

#### **Phase 4. Entering the process of problematization**

By entering the process of problematization, participants appreciated the possibilities of all forms of new ‘assemblages’ that can be derived from the virtual possibilities within the problematizing field. Then, a new thought begins to address ‘problems’ of the existing rules and regulations within the current ‘assemblage’ in the social field. The process of problematization can be divided into three distinctive stages in which participatory learning has happened within the problem-solving practice. These stages can be summarized as follows.

##### Stage a: Collecting events data and analyzing them

To observe and appreciate “what happens” in terms of a series of Deleuzian sense of events within the problematizing fields, events data is collected and analyzed. The analysis of events data collected is based on a need for further development of making ‘problems’ that leads to the new possibilities within ROK. Events data collected during the process of problematization are given as follows.

- Event 1: Dealing with various issues within ROK, the participatory and democratic approaches are necessary. These approaches will lead to facilitate democratic decision-making process that is a collection of policies and practices linked in relationships with CEO, senior management groups, administrative staff, voluntary workers and other members within

communities in order to create shared values and social capital amongst them (6<sup>th</sup> August 2009).

- Event 2: The success or failure of our company as social enterprise depends on the development of business model, which create value for people and community that makes “problems” of current operation and management of our company to facilitate the processes of innovation and creativity within ROK (2<sup>nd</sup> September 2009).

- Event 3: We have to transform the current management system into ‘good’ management systems that enable the sustainable development of ROK through a transparency of accounting systems, which create and maintain trust and social value to both ROK and local communities within Korea (7th October 2009).

#### Stage b: Building new assemblages

From the events data collected in stage a, and a number of issues were highlighted by analyzing the events data collected, which will be used for discovering the ‘possibilities’ within the problematizing fields. It leads participants to building new assemblages in this stage. Becoming a ‘haecceity’ takes place through creative involution when participants deterritoriaize themselves in order to discover the possibilities through the selection and affirmation of future event (“what will be happened?”). Thus, relationships with others are crucial for achieving the ‘minority ethics’ that aims to create the social and culture values at the long-term sustainability of organizational, social and environmental progresses.

#### Stage c: Making ‘problems’

Having with the appreciation of building with new assemblages within the problematizing fields, participants can make a numbers of ‘ideal events that will be produced within the virtual fields of assemblages. In this stage, ‘problems’ will be selected and affirmed according to the conditions under which the ‘singularities’ are determined as ‘problems’. In this sense, the affirmation of ‘problems’ leads participants to discover the ‘minority ethics’ that creates ‘conditions’ for creating the sustainability of social enterprise that operated by the actual members of staff within ROK.

### **Phase 5: Making recommendations to the top decision-makers of the organization.**

A formal submission of the action learning report was made to the top decision-makers (i.e. CEO and executives committee). As a result of this event, the decision makers decided that certain recommendations should be made to bring about changes within ROK. The members of the action learning team then agreed to discuss the proposed changes with senior staff and managers who were in charge of implementing the 'actions planning' within ROK.

In this study, we propose a revised version of systems approach using the Deleuze theory of assemblages. A revised version as it called 'rhizomatic systems research' has developed from the previous research and practice (Yu, 2006a, b; Yu and Lee, 2008). The rhizomatic systems approach contains three distinctive phases of action learning/ research activities. Phase 1 and 2 are concerned with "real world" activities necessarily involving people in solving the problematic situation. Phase 3 is concerned with the reflection process of problematization, which collects and analyzes 'events data', building new assemblages and making 'problems' within the problematising field. The overall process is shown in Figure 1.

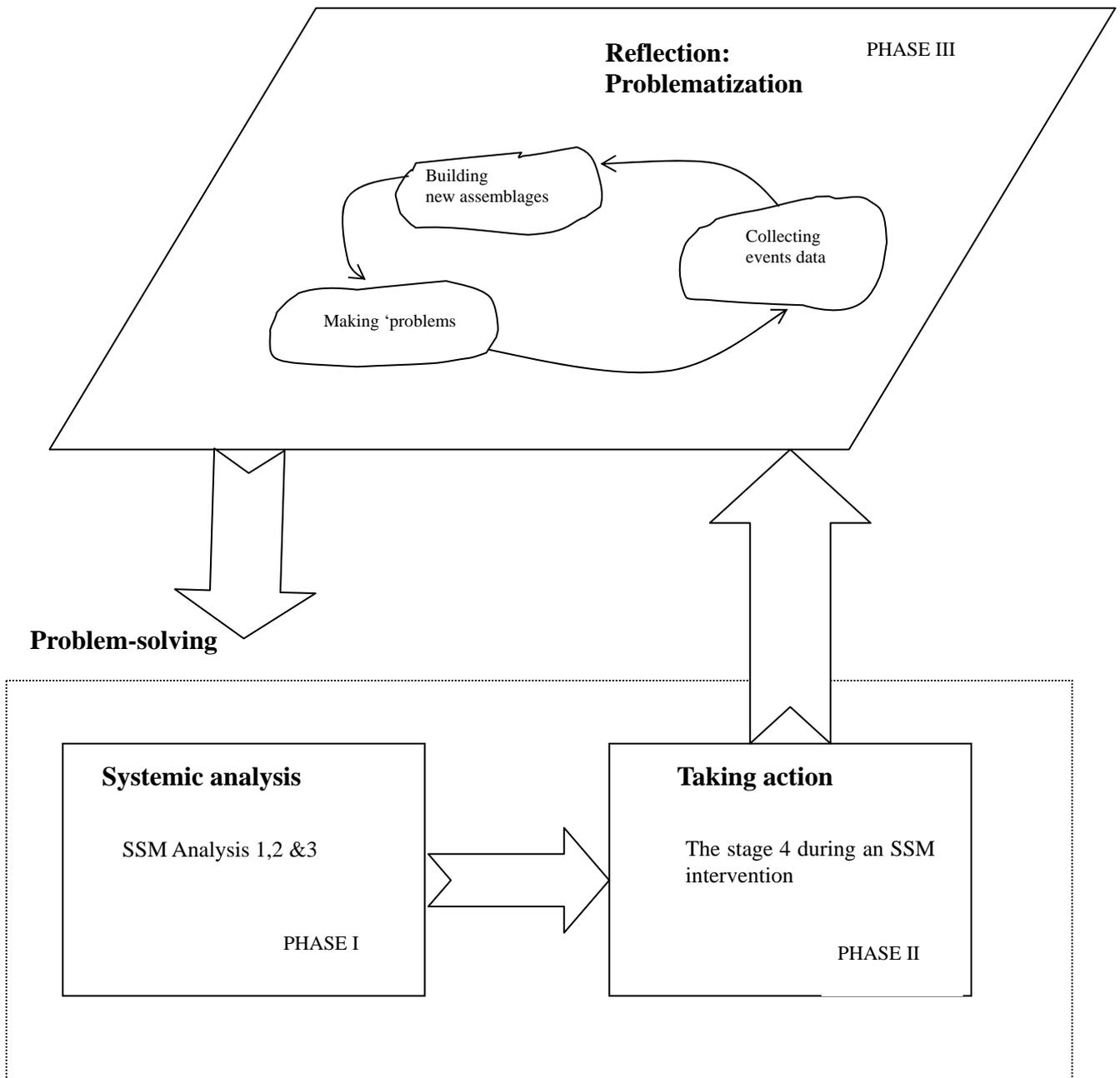


Figure 1. The three phases of the rhizomatic systems approach

## **CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In conclusion, we argue that a soft system approach is an effective tool for ‘action learning’ in a participants-driven manner. As Checkland and Poulter (2006) argued that SSM could successfully deal with a ‘requisite holism’ through structure debates about changes in the problematic situations within ROK. It facilitates learning about the problematic context. This was proved when we built the root definitions and conceptual models of the perceived reality within ROK. To make deeper understanding of problematic situations and contexts, Deleuze’s theory of assemblage is a very useful tool for facilitating participatory action research (or learning) through the process of problematization, when participants were to pose a set of ‘problems’ and ‘questions’ to explore all possible opportunities in the particular situations and contexts. Assemblage theory offers us to appreciate the nature of the organization that functions as an assemblage which plays an ‘expressive’ role in the given contexts. As shown in the case study that carried out within Korean social enterprise called ROK, participants engaged not only with problem-solving activities but also with a self-reflexivity through the process of problematization that facilitates the cultural, political and even ethical aspects of the ‘action learning’ took place within ROK. In this sense, we argue that Deleuze’s theory of assemblage is valuable when it combined with Checkland’s SSM, to highlight social dynamics of cultural, political and possibly ethical dimensions of the management of the organization.

## REFERENCES

- Boundas, C. V. (1993). *The Deleuze Reader*, (ed.) Columbia University Press, New York
- Chell, E. (2007) Social Enterprise and Entrepreneurship: Towards a Convergent Theory of the Entrepreneurial Process, *International Small Business Journal*, **25**(1): 5-26.
- Chekland, P. and Poulter, J. (2006) *Learning for Action: A short Definitive Account of Soft Systems Methodology and its use for Practitioners, Teachers and Students*, Wiley, Chichester.
- Cornelius, N. Todres, M. Janjuha-Jivraj, S. Woods, A. and Wallace, J. (2008) Corporate Social Responsibility and the Social Enterprise, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 81:355-370.
- DeLanda, M. (2006) *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, Continuum, London
- Deleuze, G. (1988) *Foucault*, Athlone Press, London.
- Deleuze, G. (1989) *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, (trans. Tomlinson, H. and Galeta, R.), Athlone, London.
- Deleuze, G. (1990) *The Logic of Sense*, (trans, M. Lester with C. Stivale), Athlone, London.
- Deleuze, G. (1992) *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, (trans. Tomlinson, H. and Habberjam, B.), Athlone, London.
- Deleuze, G, and Guattari, F. (1976) *Rhizome: Introduction*. Minuit, Paris.
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (1986) *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. (trans. Dana Polan), Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (trans. Massumi, B.), The Athlone Press, London.
- Flynn, T. (1985). Truth and subjectivation in the Later Foucault, *The Journal of Philosophy*, pp.531-539.
- Foucault, M. (1971). *L'ordre du discours: Lecon inaugurale au College de France Prouncee le 2. December 1970*, Gallimard, Paris.
- Foucault, M. (1976) *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, Korean version (1992), (trans. K. H. Lee), Namam, Seoul, Korea.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Allen Lane, Penguin Books, London.

- Foucault, M. (1981). *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, Penguin Books, London.
- Foucault, M. (1984a). Polemics, politics and problematizations, An interview with Michel Foucault, In Rabinow, P. (eds.), (1997), *Michel Foucault: Ethics, essential works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume 1*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 111-119.
- Foucault, M. (1984b). *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The use of pleasure*, Korean version (1997), (trans. Mun, K. J. and Shin, E. Y.), Nanam, Seoul Korea.
- Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the Human Condition*, Sage, London.
- Lee, J. W. (1999) *The Space of Discourse*, Min Em-Sa, Seoul Korea.
- McIntyre-Mills, J. (2006) *Systemic Governance and Accountability to Address "The Enemies within": Working and Reworking the Conceptual and Geographical Boundaries of Governance and International Relations*, Vol. 3, Springer, London, Boston.
- O'Neil, J. and Marsick, V. J. (2007) *Understanding Action Learning*, Amacom, New York.
- Patton, P. (eds.) (1996). *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Sarup, M. (1993) *An Introduction Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, 2nd ed., Harvester & Wheatsheaf, New York.
- Pearson, K. A (1999) *Germinal Life: the difference and repetition of Deleuze*. Routledge, London.
- Tsouvalis, C., 1995, *Agonsitic Thinking in Problem-Solving: The Case of Soft Systems Methodology*, PhD Thesis, University of Lancaster.
- Whyte, W. F. (1991). *Participatory action research*, Sage, Beverley Hills, CA.
- Whyte, W. F., Greenwood, D. J., and Lazes, P. (1991). *Participatory action research: Through practice to science in social research*. In Whyte, W. F. (eds.), *Participatory Action Research*, Sage, Beverley Hills, CA, 19-55.
- Yu, J. E. (2001) *Towards rhizomatic systems thinking in management science*. DPhil Dissertation, University of Lincoln, U.K.
- Yu, J. E. 2006a. Making Friends of Enemies: From critical systemic ethics to postmodern ethics. In van Gigch, JP. (eds.) *C. West Churchman Legacy and Related Works, Volume 2: Wisdom, Knowledge and Management: A Critique and Analysis of Churchman's Systems Approach*, Springer, New York.
- Yu, J. E. 2006b. Creating 'Rhizomatic Systems' for Understanding Complexity in Organizations, *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, **19** (4): 337-349.
- Yu, J. E and Lee, J. W. (2008). Creating Rhizomatic Networks and Ethics for the Marginalized Group, *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, **21**(4): 253-266.