ASIEN 168/169 (Juli/Oktober 2023), S. 50–73

**Refereed article**

# Transnational Aspirations and the May 18 Spirit: The Legacy and Social Remittance of Korean Immigrants in Germany

Jin-Heon Jung (National Institute for Unification Education)

**Abstract**
This paper examines the transnational impact of the May 18 Democratic Movement on Korean immigrants in Germany, focusing on concepts of "transformation," "social remittance," and "aspiration." Through extensive ethnographic research, including participant observation and in-depth interviews, explored is how the spirit of May 18 has gone beyond its origins in 1980s Gwangju to influence the lives and identities of Korean migrants in the decades since, too. These individuals, having undergone significant transformations to their identity, continue to engage in transnational activism, driven by aspirations of democracy, human rights, and reunification. It is argued that the intangible social remittances these migrants transmit — as embodied in their emotional connections, cultural practices, and shared values — play a crucial role in sustaining and expanding the spirit of May 18's legacy across borders. By situating these narratives within the broader context of global civil society, the study highlights the ongoing relevance of the May 18 Democratic Movement in shaping contemporary aspirations and fostering transnational solidarity.

**Keywords:** May 18 Democratic Movement, Korean immigrants in Germany, social remittance, diasporic aspirations, structures of feeling

**Jin-Heon Jung** is a professor at the National Institute of Unification Education in Seoul, South Korea. He received his PhD in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He previously served as a research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany, and as the director of the Research Unit for Social Integration at the Institute of Korean Studies of the Free University of Berlin, Germany. His selected publications include *Migration and Religion in East Asia: North Korean Migrants' Evangelical Encounters* (2015) and *Seoul and Pyongyang Met in Berlin* (2022, originally published in Korean).

## Introduction

The May 18 Democratic Movement,[1] which erupted in Gwangju, South Korea, in 1980, represents a pivotal moment in the country's struggle for democracy. This movement, which was brutally suppressed by the military regime, quickly became a symbol of resistance against authoritarianism and a rallying point for human rights activists and democracy promoters. Despite attempts to silence it, the May 18 Democratic Movement's ripple effects transcended national borders, deeply affecting Korean immigrants in Germany who were exposed to these winds of change through the media reports emerging at the time.[2] The images of a brutal crackdown being broadcast on German television sparked a wave of solidarity among Korean students, migrant workers, and their European allies, leading to widespread protests in Berlin and other cities.[3]

For more than four decades, Korean immigrants in Germany have commemorated these events and the movement they spurred through the annual holding of a May Festival in Europe as well as other forms of activism. These individuals, many of whom had arrived in Germany as miners and nurses during the 1960s and 1970s, have become key figures in the transnational networks advocating for democracy, human rights, and reunification. The persistence of these endeavors raises several key questions: What has motivated these individuals to uphold the spirit of May 18 over so many years? How have their identities and aspirations been shaped by their experiences in both Korea and Germany? And, how do their transnational activities contribute to the ongoing legacy of the May 18 Democratic Movement?

This paper builds on the growing body of literature examining the relationship between Korean migrants and the May 18 Democratic Movement. Myŏn Kim (2013),[4] for example, focuses on the role the May Festival held yearly in Europe plays as a "public sphere" (Habermas, 1989). On this occasion, South Korean

1 In this paper the main historical event under discussion, which is known by various names, will be referred to as the "May 18 Democratic Movement," following the terminology established by the government and laws of the Republic of Korea. However, when directly quoting oral sources, the term "May 18 Uprising" will be used, respecting interlocutors' choice of framing. Depending on one's political perspective or historical viewpoint, this event is also referred to by different nomenclatures: the "May 18 Gwangju Uprising," "the May 18 Uprising," or the "May 18 Minjung Uprising," for instance. Conservatives, meanwhile, sometimes disparagingly call it the "Gwangju Incident." For further discussion of the May 18 Democratic Movement's naming, see Choi (2015).

2 It is widely known that Jürgen Hinzpeter (1937–2016), a German journalist who then worked for ARD in Tokyo, snuck into Gwangju to photograph and film the brutalities, sending the material back to his native country (see: http://maygwangju.kr/en/project/ju%CC%88rgen-hinzpeter/). For further discussion of the relationship between Hinzpeter and the memorialization of the May 18 Democratic Movement, see Jackson (2020).

3 Differing testimonies have been provided regarding the exact date of the Berlin protest. May 29, 1980 (as noted on the May 18 Foundation's blog: https://blog.naver.com/themay18/220661987392) is one claim; others state, meanwhile, it took place on May 30, 1980 (as reported by *Ohmynews*: http://bit.ly/ZQntl7).

4 The McCune-Reischauer system is used here to Romanize Korean words and phrases, with exceptions made for those that have official English names or translations.

migrants engage in discussions and activities concerning peace, human rights, and the home country's democratization. Myŏn Kim (2013) argues that while the Korean diaspora in Europe is relatively small compared to those in Japan or the United States, its efforts at promoting democratization have been notably lively and impactful. The May Festival in Europe, in particular, has played a crucial role in sustaining these initiatives by serving as a central forum for the Korean community to address and respond to the democratic crisis back home.

Furthermore, Gwi-Ok Kim (2019) explores the broader transnational impact of the May 18 People's Uprising and the June Democratic Uprising of 1987 on both South Korean society and the Korean diaspora in Germany. She details how these uprisings were instrumental to fostering a sense of unity as well as interpersonal communication among various Korean diaspora groups in Germany and Europe, ultimately leading to the establishment in 1987 of the Vereinigung für Demokratie in Korea (Association for Democracy in Korea; in Korean, Minhyŏp). Although ultimately active for only a brief period (1987–1992), Minhyŏp's existence symbolized the significant role that the Korean diaspora played in promoting democratization and reunification efforts, linking South Korea, North Korea, and Germany during a time of high geopolitical tension.

Meanwhile, Mi-gyŏng Kim (2020) discusses how the Korean-American community, particularly through figures such as Han-bong Yoon (1948–2007),[5] transitioned from collective action to broader social movements following their exposure to the May 18 Democratic Movement. Although her focus is on the US, the author's analysis provides valuable insight into how the spirit of May 18 has influenced Korean diaspora communities more broadly, including those in Germany. Drawing on these earlier perspectives, despite their tendency to focus on the cessation of activism or specific communities, the following highlights Korean migrants' ongoing aspirations, with a particular focus on the emotional dimensions and the enduring transnational impact of their activism.

The study uses ethnographic research, including participant observation of the May Festival in Europe — which I have attended annually ever since 2014. My consistent presence at the festival between 2014 and 2019 allowed me to build long-term, trustful relationships with key figures within the Korean Solidarity in Europe community. In 2020, during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted a combination of in-person and online interviews with these individuals. While health concerns and restrictions on social gatherings and travel limited face-to-face meetings, I made efforts to visit them in-person whenever it was feasible and safe to

5 A prominent South Korean democracy activist, Yoon was involved in the May 18 Gwangju Democratic Movement and would become the last fugitive sought for their participation. After fleeing to the US in 1981, he continued his activism, forming organizations such as the Minjok School and the Young Koreans United to support the movement. He returned to Korea in 1993, thereafter founding the May 18 Memorial Foundation. He dedicated his life to promoting democracy, being posthumously awarded the Order of Civil Merit in 2007. See: Kim (2020); https://www.grandculture.net/gwangju/donggu/toc/GC60005408.

do so. However, with a number of interlocutors, especially those located farther away or during periods of stricter lockdowns, I conducted interviews online.

Despite these challenges, the rapport I had established through years of prior in-person engagement allowed for a continuity of trustful and open communication. Given the circumstances, the study primarily relies on these intensive interviews. Specifically, I employed oral history as a key qualitative research method, collecting and preserving firsthand testimonies from individuals about their personal experiences and memories. This method is particularly valuable for capturing the voices of those who have lived through significant historical events, providing insights that are often absent from written records. By engaging with these narratives, I was able to better understand the subjective and emotional aspects of history, as well as the social and cultural contexts that shape individual and collective identities alike (Portelli, 1991; Thompson, 2000).

The May 18 Democratic Movement carries implications extending beyond just its local significance, resonating also with the frameworks of global civil society.[6] The latter refers to the transnational networks of individuals, organizations, and movements advocating across national borders for the upholding of common values such as democracy, human rights, and social justice (Kaldor, 2003; Keane, 2003). In modern states, where varying degrees of authoritarianism often prevail, the power of citizens' movements such as the May 18 one becomes crucial for upholding these core principles.[7] Accordingly the May 18 Democratic Movement should be seen not merely as a one-time historical event but as a harbinger of the future, an ongoing process that continues to inspire and nurture solidarity and democratic aspirations around the globe.

In exploring the enduring nature of the spirit of May 18, emphasized is the importance of said transnational networks to the promotion of universal values within a global "human ecosystem," understood as an interconnected web of relationships, communities, and movements that transcend national borders and influence one another (Appadurai, 1996; Castells, 1996). By examining how Korean immigrants in Germany have perpetuated and expanded on the spirit of May 18, revealed is the unique role this diaspora community has played in helping preserve and transmit democracy and human rights across borders.

6 Among the scholarship on the Gwangju Democratization Movement's overcoming of regionality, Geun-Ha Jung (2017) reveals that the movement's meaning remains regionally confined due to the concentration of researchers and experts in Jeolla Province and Seoul, actor-centric perspectives, and polarized evaluations influenced by regional biases. These factors, combined with the uneven geographic distribution of scholarship, hinder the nationwide unification of the uprising's significance and perpetuate its confinement within Honam, despite its recognition as a UNESCO Memory of the World in 2011.

7 See Scott (2020).

## Transformation and "Structures of Feeling"

The May 18 Democratic Movement's emergence and continued sustenance raises questions about the nature of the transformations occurring in this context, as encompassing both individual changes and broader societal shifts. These forms of evolution are deeply interconnected, as individual changes can catalyze societal transformations while history has demonstrated that macro-level societal shifts inevitably reshape individual lives. The Social Sciences have long explored this interplay, identifying general trends or the specific historical contexts to such social developments (Berriane et al., 2021).

To delve into the micro-level transformations occurring among Korean immigrants in Germany, I apply Williams' (1977) concept of "structures of feeling." What he emphasizes herewith is the importance of the emotional thoughts and responses emerging from one's daily interactions, as shaped more broadly by the dominant, residual, and emergent cultural elements of a particular era. These feelings not only reflect cultural shifts but also drive the transformation of both individuals and society at large. In the context of Korean immigrants in Germany, their experiences and evolving consciousness — influenced by indirect encounters with the spirit of May 18 — underscore the transformative power of these structures of feeling.

Individual-level shifts, as driven by heartfelt responses to events such as May 18, collectively contribute to broader social change. This dynamic is evident in the way that ordinary citizens in Gwangju, who were not activists but everyday people, underwent profound revisions to their identity that, in turn, catalyzed shifts in Korean society at large. Similarly, Korean immigrants in Germany saw a hybrid identity form due to their transnational experiences, internalizing new values of human rights and democracy while at the same time retaining their Koreanness. This transformation was significantly influenced by their indirect encounter with the spirit of May 18, spurring them to advocate for democratization and, later, reunification.

"Social remittances," as articulated by Levitt (1998), play a crucial role here. This term refers to the flow of ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital from migrants back to their home communities, as exemplified by the Korean individuals in question. Their transfer of values such as democracy, human and workers' rights, as well as aspirations for reunification across borders demonstrates the bidirectional transmittance of cultural and emotional resources impacting both Korea and Germany.

Appadurai's (2004, 2013) work on "aspiration," which frames the latter as a cultural capacity deeply connected to social practice and the experience of migration, is also of key relevance to our context. Aspiration, as a form of social remittance, is evident in the way that Korean immigrants in Germany have themselves kept alive the spirit of May 18, using it to fuel the ongoing struggles for democratization and reunification. These aspirations, nurtured in the context of their everyday experiences in Germany, continue to influence and revitalize the spirit of May 18 in

the homeland. By recognizing my interlocutors' lived realities as valuable political and social capital, underscored is the enduring significance of the spirit of May 18 for future social integration and instances of solidarity — both within the Korean diaspora and beyond.

## The May 18 Democratic Movement Through Oral History

Explored now are interlocutors' own narratives, as indicative of how they encountered and responded to the spirit of May 18 and interpreted the exact meaning of such lived experiences. As transnational migrants who have navigated across geographical and cultural boundaries, these individuals have inevitably experienced transformations in their identity, encountering unfamiliar values, worldviews, languages, and ways of being in Germany and Europe. Those relocating elsewhere often seek solace in familiar cultural elements from the homeland, such as religion and food, which they may recreate or modify as their new circumstances demand. At the same time, they tend to conform with local norms regarding public and private etiquette and interpersonal relationships.

This blending and merging of identities can be understood through the lens of "hybridity" Bhabha (1994). This refers to the process by which individuals combine elements of their original culture with those of the new one(s) they now inhabit, resulting in a transformed and multifaceted identity. This frame helps stress the dynamic and fluid nature of identity formation in postcolonial and transnational contexts, whereby the intersection of different cultures creates new, hybrid identities that resist easy categorization.

In the context of Korean immigrants in Germany, gender plays a significant role in shaping these transnational experiences and identity transformations. Many of those in question were women who had worked as nurses, a profession heavily influenced by traditional gender roles. In the patriarchal Korean society of the time, the sociocultural achievements of these young women were often marginalized. Consequently, a considerable number left their homeland with dreams of experiencing a more advanced Western European lifestyle. They embarked on their respective journeys to Germany with aspirations of learning a foreign language, accumulating cultural and social capital, and living cosmopolitan lives on a par with men, as described by Bourdieu (1983). These women not only had to navigate the expectations coming with a career in the German healthcare system but also to deal with the pressures of maintaining one's own identity in a foreign land. The gendered nature of such work often reinforced their role as caregivers, both in their professional lives and within their families, yet the experience also offered opportunities for empowerment and a redefinition of the status quo.

Male migrants, particularly those who worked as miners, faced a different set of challenges meanwhile. Steeped in Confucian ideals of male dominance and authority as established tradition, these men encountered new values vis-à-vis workers' rights and gender equality in Germany. This exposure often led to a reevaluation of their

roles both within the household and the larger community, contributing to a broader transformation of prevailing norms among the Korean diaspora.

When it comes to gender issues, hybridity underscores how these migrants negotiated their identities in ways deeply influenced by both their cultural heritage and new social dynamics first encountered in Germany. The transformation of transnational migrants' mindset in the process of navigating unfamiliar cultures, languages, and gender expectations has been extensively examined in Migration Studies. In the case of Korean immigrants in Germany, however, such identity shifts not only ensued from the new cultural and gender values they were exposed to in Europe but also from the radical change of perspective prompted by the dire political situation in the homeland.

## Awakening of a "Girl Breadwinner"

When considering the historical significance of the Korean nurses dispatched to Germany, the concept of the "girl breadwinner" offers valuable insight into the sacrifices made by these young women on behalf of their families in the 1960s and 1970s.[8] They used their hard-earned money in a foreign country, Germany, to rescue their loved ones back home from poverty, challenging the traditional son-favoring culture of Korean society. The fact that these nurses were highly regarded in West Germany and received salaries four to five times greater than they would have made in Korea saw immigration to Germany take on significant appeal, being a source of strong competition among that era's youth. To meet demand, short-term nursing assistant training programs were established, and teenage girls who had completed middle school often went into debt in pursuing certification, took exams, and then embarked on their journey to Germany.

Hyŏnok Jeong (born 1952, arrived 1969) exemplifies this generation of young women. Reflecting on her experiences, Jeong says:

> I am the eldest of seven siblings, and due to my mother's illness, I couldn't even attend middle school. [...] I came to Germany to repay my family's debts and earn money. I didn't even know where Germany was or where Berlin was; I just came here to settle my family's debts. For a long time I didn't speak a word of German, but after two years I quickly learned the language. There were no Koreans in my ward; I was the only Korean, so I faced considerable challenges.

8 There is a precious book, *Chaedok'an'gukyŏsŏngmoim* (2014), about the lives of female Korean migrants in Germany; herein, members of the so-called Korean Women's Group (for Self-Help) narrate their individual life trajectories in the context of transnational migration. In 1974, a group of Korean nurses in Berlin had founded said group to address the common challenges faced by their female compatriots in Germany, including issues related to restrictive labor agreements, immigration laws tying residency to employment, and difficulties in transitioning from working in nursing homes to in hospitals. The group also helped women navigate life in a foreign land, particularly in terms of the language and cultural barriers encountered. See: https://koreanische-frauengruppe.tistory.com/5 (in Korean).

In the late 1960s, Hyŏnok, then a young girl who had recently completed middle school, enrolled in a short-term nursing assistant program at a private institution and secured a job instead of pursuing further education in South Korea. Her commitment to her family was unwavering — she diligently repaid what they owed, sent money home to support her younger siblings, and kept only a minimal amount for her own living expenses. Her contributions allowed her parents to clear their debts, send the remaining children to school, and acquire farmland. She eventually met and married a German husband, started a family, and continued to embody the traditional Confucian gender roles and sacrificial spirit that she had been raised with. These ascriptions emphasized the importance of duty and self-sacrifice, which often saw the needs of the family and community placed above personal aspirations, a common expectation regarding women of her time.[9]

However, the events of May 18, 1980, in Gwangju marked a turning point in Hyŏnok's life. Watching the tragedy unfold on German TV had a profound impact on her, awakening what Williams (1977) describes as an "emergent feeling" — a new awareness and sense of moral duty that compelled her to act. This emergent feeling pushed Hyŏnok beyond her established roles as family breadwinner and caretaker. She joined the Korean Women's Group in Berlin and participated in street protests in Kurfürstendamm, which began as a pastime but quickly transformed into a deep and enduring commitment to social justice and activism.

The May 18 events catalyzed a shift in Hyŏnok's priorities and sense of self. No longer just the traditional breadwinner, she became an active participant in the struggle for democracy and human rights, carrying the spirit of May 18 into her ongoing work and activism. This transformation illustrates how Gwangju not only reshaped the political landscape in Korea but also had far-reaching effects on individuals living beyond the country's borders like Hyŏnok, who found themselves compelled to act – even from afar.

## Overcoming the "Red Complex"

Korean nurses in West Germany also engaged in reading groups alongside similarly aged students at the Free University of Berlin (FU Berlin).[10] While basic human rights were being violated in South Korea under the military regime, West Germany was itself in a more open and liberal-democratic moment. Following the 1968

9 These expectations often led to women's placement in roles reinforcing traditional gender norms, even as they navigated new environments abroad — a phenomenon well-documented in studies of Korean women in transnational contexts (Abelmann, 2003; Constable, 2005).

10 In addition to the nurses, there were also Korean students in Germany who would play a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for miner and nurse social activism in the decades to come. The former organized study groups and established pioneer organizations like Minkŏn (the Council for the Construction of Democratic Society). However, most of the students — with the exception of a few exiles compelled to remain in Germany — eventually returned to Korea. For a more detailed account of the students and elite professionals who led overseas social movements for Korea, see Lee (2015 and 2016).

Movement in West Germany,[11] the ideological spectrum broadened and became enriched by its embracing of alternative values, including universal human rights, equality, environmentalism, and a turning away from authoritarianism. However, the dispatched Korean workers found it challenging in time to shed a particular mentality deeply ingrained in them: namely a "red complex" whereby expressing dissent against the government was often perceived to be the act of "communists." Though they could now engage more freely in studying and discussing history and society away from the surveillance of the Korean state, they struggled to align themselves with the paradigms then gaining traction in West Germany. At the same time, the May 18 Democratic Movement would serve as a pivotal moment for some Koreans to realize that democracy could be achieved through popular participation rather than them needing to be cowed by the fear of state power. As Yŏngsook Choi (born 1945, arrived 1966) recalls:

> (But then) May 18 happened, and it was reported on ARD on May 22, 1980. The following day, we discussed the possibility of joining forces with students studying in Germany and contemplated our next steps. As we did so, the 'red complex' that had been entrenched in my mind began to wane. I realized what I needed to do, that I had a role to play, and the significance of the May Uprising started to shape my values. Consequently, all the activities I have been involved in since that time can be attributed to the May 18 Uprising, as it served as a driving force for me and solidified my values to a certain extent […]. For me, it was a significant moment because it dispelled [what had previously] held me back. The 'red complex' was frightening. [Even when I wanted to do something] I was haunted by thoughts like, 'Isn't this what communists do?' I had a phobia, but once it disappeared I felt liberated to take action. In that sense, the May 18 Uprising, to some extent, provided me with the values that define my existence as a human being.

In South Korea, the "red complex" is more than just anti-communist sentiment or disdain for North Korea; it can also encompass a deep-seated fear of totalitarianism per se. The division of East and West Germany was a consequence of the Second World War, whereas the Korean Peninsula — and not Japan, the defeated aggressor — was the entity split hereby, as later leading to the Korean War. Within this context, breaking free from binary thinking proved exceptionally challenging.

The "red complex," rooted in fear of an Other, thus lingered as a residual feeling. Yet the May 18 episode and its aftermath helped individuals like Yŏngsook shed this complex and emerge instead as individuals upholding the "values that a human being should live by." In this regard, the spirit of May 18 takes on a universality going beyond regional boundaries. It has prompted some overseas Koreans, namely those who have experienced international migration, to reconsider their perspectives and values in Europe. This exemplifies how Gwangju's historical experience has

11 For an overview of the 1968 Revolution, see: https://www.dw.com/en/1968-the-year-of-cultural-revolution-in-postwar-germany/a-43643818.

fostered transnational solidarity, connecting grassroots movements advocating for democracy and human rights across different parts of the world.

## Power Amid the Ordinary

While economic factors undoubtedly played a role in the migration of Korean nurses to Germany, various sociocultural considerations were also involved herein. In the European context, such aspirations represented those to a rather "ordinary" life. It was the kind of journey not necessarily requiring a high degree of political or historical awareness; instead, one was being offered the opportunity to experience the liberated lifestyle of Western women, fall in love, get married, and eventually settle down in another country.

While Hyŏnok was one of the last nurses to arrive in 1970s Berlin, doing so to support her family back in Korea, Jinhyang Kim (born 1943, arrived 1966) was among the first to seek a dream life in Germany's now capital. As she narrates:

> I consider myself fortunate that I did not come from a financially disadvantaged family or anything of the sort. So, I arrived here with dreams of self-funded overseas travel, imagining visiting Rome and Paris. I had initially planned to stay for three years and then return. I aimed to learn English and other skills during that time. Two years after my arrival here, I met my husband, and here I am. […] At that time, I did not possess any political consciousness, as I was living comfortably in South Korea under Park Chung Hee's dictatorship. [...] I had not personally witnessed the events related to Chun Doo-Hwan's. However, my husband gradually instilled in me a political consciousness.

Female Koreans who settled in Germany while working and starting families, such as Jinhyang, often found themselves exposed to progressive values that were taboo in Korean society during that era. These included gender equality, individual freedom, and human rights, ones that they primarily encountered through their interactions with their German husbands and same-age friends in the 1970s. West Berlin boasted a higher degree of freedom than the rest of West Germany. Situated at the forefront of the Cold War in Europe and surrounded by socialist East Germany, it was a place where individuals could traverse the Iron Curtain under the terms of the 1971 Four Power Agreements on Berlin. This enabled them to witness both regimes and to experience the crossing of borders to East Berlin or DDR. Similar to numerous young Berliners of that time, Jinhyang's husband Klaus belonged to the 1968 generation and was actively involved with the country's Social Democratic Party (further to, more uniquely, being a pioneer in the computer business). His progressive politics influenced Jinhyang and played a pivotal role in shaping her worldview.

The "1968 generation" refers to those who were radicalized by the cultural watershed known as the "1968 Revolution" in Germany. The movement emerging out of it, led by young people, sought to confront the country's Nazi past, promote alternative values, and break away from the conventions of previous generations.

The 1968 Revolution, ignited by opposition to the Vietnam War, was part of a transnational and cross-generational movement simultaneously stirring in the US, Europe, and Japan.

In the German context, vigorously advocated by those involved was not only anti-war sentiment but also de-Nazification, the rejection of authoritarian culture, the pursuit of gender equality, expanded individual freedoms, democracy, environmentalism, and communitarianism. These values marked a significant divergence from the beliefs the previous generation had upheld. During this era of social transformation, and amid a growing rejection of racist tropes and thought, young Germans entered into romantic relationships and marriage with the nurses who had immigrated from a small Asian country, Korea, creating space for the exchange of progressive ideas.

The values embraced by the 1968 generation, such as democracy, human rights, and the rejection of authoritarianism, resonated strongly with the spirit of the May 18 Democratic Movement in Korea. Both movements were driven by a desire to challenge oppressive regimes and promote a more just and equitable society. The exchange of values between Germany's 1968 generation and Korea's migrant workers, particularly in the course of romantic relationships like Jinhyang and Klaus's, helped to further reinforce and globalize the spirit of May 18, fostering a shared commitment to democratic principles and social justice across national borders.

Although Jinhyang was leading a seemingly ordinary life in Berlin, witnessing a news report on TV about the events in Gwangju had a profound impact on her. She conveyed her ominous and fearful emotions to other Korean-German couples who held social gatherings from time to time in Berlin. Subsequently, together with her husband, friends, and young children, she organized and participated in protests on Kurfürstendamm. She describes her experiences as follows:

> On May 30, 1980, after watching the Gwangju incident on TV, I went out to Ku'damm [Kurfürstendamm]. Together with my friends, we all participated in a demonstration for the first time, and it was then that I began to open my eyes to political matters. I learned through Gwangju what democratization truly means, and it became the foundation that has allowed me to continue working for the peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula, until now. The citizens of Gwangju are truly remarkable. Yes, we will continue to keep an eye on this, and together with my comrades, we will continue to wish for reunification […] and we will keep supporting the Gwangju movement in the future.

To this day, Jinhyang remains one of the longest-standing Korean immigrants in Germany actively engaged in various endeavors related to upholding and furthering the spirit of May 18, including issues such as the ones of "comfort women" and reunification.

## A Sense of Historical Debt

> Even now, it pains me deeply when I think of May 18 in Gwangju. I agreed to do this interview because May 18 was a turning point in my life. (Soonim Kim, born 1944, arrived 1966)

Soonim Kim first arrived in Frankfurt in 1966, and four years later she moved to West Berlin to work as a nurse in a new hospital. Her hometown is Janghŭng, about 70 kilometers south of Gwangju, and she attended a nursing high school in the latter. Before the events of May 18, she had deliberately avoided contact with other Korean immigrants, stating that she had "nearly been denied a passport due to guilt by association with her family background." She is referring here to an erstwhile South Korean law that punished individuals for their relatives' political activities, as causing widespread fear and self-isolation. Additionally, in light of the East Berlin Spy Ring Incident, she perceived Berlin as a "spy-infested" city.[12] This attitude reflected the paranoia of the Cold War years and accompanying concerns about government surveillance. While Yŏngsook from Daegu in Gyeongsangbuk-do was trapped in the educated person's "red complex," Soonim kept her distance from any "Korean organizations out of fear that her parents and siblings in South Korea might be harmed" — aware that her family in South Korea could be affected under the harsh authoritarian regime of the time if she were involved in any political activities while in West Berlin. However, when she first heard about Gwangju through German media, she was startled:

> In May of that year [1980], ARD was reporting on the situation in Gwangju. I felt like I was struck by a thunderbolt and plunged into pitch-black darkness. I couldn't think straight because it was Gwangju. I couldn't sleep, I didn't know what to do. But since I didn't have any interaction with Koreans, I didn't have anyone to talk to. My daughter was nine months old then, and I just went to FU Berlin carrying her on my back. When I saw someone who looked Korean, I asked them, "What is happening in Gwangju right now?"

Soonim had worked as a nurse during her first eight years in Germany, passed the college entrance exam, and then enrolled at FU Berlin. While studying in the Department of Economics she met a British student who she eventually married. When she heard of the Gwangju incident, Soonim went to campus, hoping to meet with someone Korean she could ask for more details. While wandering around, she was told by a passerby that the Department of East Asian Studies might be able to offer some insights.

12 A significant Cold War-era event, A significant Cold War-era event, this 1967 incident involved South Koreans accused of espionage for North Korea after visiting East Berlin, where the North Korean embassy was located. South Korean secret agents forcibly deported them to South Korea, where they were tortured and imprisoned. In response, the West German government and civilians campaigned vigorously for their return to Germany. Although they were released a few years later, the city name of Berlin came to evoke fear among ordinary South Koreans. For a more detailed discussion hereof, particularly in relation to its gender dynamics, see Yi (2019).

She finally reached the building, opened the door, and amidst the crowd inside, noticed a woman mimeographing with an infant on her back. That woman was Ŭiok Seo (born 1953, arrived 1974), who remains one of Soonim's best friends to this day. The latter accompanied them to the protests in Kurfürstendamm. Furthermore, with the assistance of her British husband and his friends, she composed a letter in English to the White House in Washington, D.C. It was a heartfelt plea to save the people of Gwangju. They suggested this idea because they understood her deep concern and believed that something had to be done. While she did not anticipate receiving a response, she felt compelled to take action to alleviate her feelings of guilt and indebtedness vis-à-vis the victims. Surprisingly, the White House did answer about half a year later — stating that the US government could not take immediate action as it would be equivalent to interfering in Korea's internal affairs.

Although not the words Soonim would have hoped for, she was determined not to turn a blind eye to the issues in her home country. She eventually joined the aforementioned Korean Women's Group, under whose auspices compatriot nurses and students of around the same age read books together, discussed sociopolitical problems, and socialized. She felt a sense of universal humanity and selfless solidarity with group members who brought their newborns to work while striving to address the situation in Gwangju. Citizen-driven democracy and a commitment to human rights, founded on the dignity of the individual, were the prevailing sentiments among young West German intellectuals of the day, including Soonim and her husband. Although divided into East and West, the Cold War hostilities between the two had already begun to wane following the implementation of the 1969 "Eastern policy"; a new era was gradually dawning.

As illustrated in the examples provided, the life stories of Koreans immigrants in Germany illustrate how May 18's significance subsequently expanded across time and space. These individuals were exposed to the prevailing mores of West German society while seeking to forge a transnational identity. This led to a hybridization of the Korean immigrant worldview and new values being internalized. In doing so, they underwent a qualitative transformation —as first triggered by news of May 18 — catalyzing the explosion of fresh thinking in their minds. This awakening from within empowered them to become agents of history, those driving social change.

Such transformation in one's identity and values at the individual level had a number of implications. First, as relates to the debate surrounding the nationalization and internationalization of the spirit of May 18given the importance of overcoming regionalism. For Korean migrants who sought to preserve the spirit of May 18, one's hometown — whether Gwangju, Chŏlla Province, or elsewhere — was of no relevance. For example, Yŏngsook, Jinhyang, and Ŭiok, all of whom came from Gyeongsangbuk-do, shared a deep emotional connection to Gwangju. This bond stemmed not from geography but also from the belief that the latter's people stood for human dignity and for democracy, which inspired them to embrace these

values and awaken politically.[13] In the same vein, one can argue that, for migrants, "hometown" often goes beyond one's personal ties to encompass the cherished image of one's native country at large. Moreover, this manifestation of solidarity was not limited to Koreans alone: while those from different places in the home country got along and worked together, their families and friends of German or other European backgrounds also supported democratization and reunification on the Peninsula, sharing a wider commitment to human rights and justice. This support from both Korean and non-Korean allies in Europe helped to broaden the scope of the May 18 spirit, fostering a transnational solidarity transcending national and cultural borders.

Second, the events of May 18 and their aftermath spurred endeavors paying no attention to these migrants' different backgrounds and current situations alike. Regardless of whether they hailed from impoverished or more affluent families, whether they had previously engaged with Korean communities like the Korean Women's Group, Haninhoe (Korean Association), churches, and similar or had chosen to remain isolated from other Koreans, and regardless of their level of social consciousness, the images that they saw broadcast from afar motivated them to act in solidarity. The pathways to such transnational activism hence began to take shape shortly after May 1980, ones not remaining limited to their original ties to a single event but continuing to evolve in the decades to come. This endurance, the memory of May 18, and the perpetuation of its spirit became integral to the communal rituals of the May Festival in Europe, being embodied in them indeed.

## The May Festival in Europe

An annual event, the eponymous festival has become a significant site for commemorating the May 18 Democratic Movement and fostering transnational solidarity, primarily among Korean immigrants and their invited German and European friends. Having been held for over 40 years now, it is marked by the participation of individuals from various backgrounds, including immigrants of different generations, local German families, and guests visiting from Korea. It is not just a remembrance of the past but also a practice that renews the meaning of the spirit of May 18through communal activities and shared memories.

Unsŏp Yoon (born 1948, arrived 1971), a former miner and then factory worker in Germany, is one of its long-standing participants. He reflected on the importance of the festival as follows:

> I think it's really incredible that the May Festival in Europe is 40 years old. Some years we've fed 300 people with homemade food. We invited domestic

13 The regional tensions between Gyeongsang and Chŏlla Provinces date back to historical political, economic, and social divides. Under South Korea's authoritarian regimes, the ruling elites — mainly from Gyeongsang Province — marginalized the Chŏlla region, leading to unequal development and political bias. This has contributed to a long-standing rivalry between the two regions surviving to this day (Shin and Lee, 2014).

> progressive figures to the festival, and we arranged meetings with German politicians, labor unions, and people from the Third World for the globalization of May 18. We made our efforts to ensure that the death of May 18 victims is meaningful and to inherit the spirit of May 18. I have been a member of the German Green Party since 1989, and I sent Green Party members to commemorative events on May 18 in Gwangju. In any case, I am proud to have played a role in the globalization of the spirit of May 18.

Unsŏp's expression of pride here encapsulates the festival's identity as a site of transnational solidarity, where the historical debt associated with the May 18 Democratic Movement is actively remembered and honored. His sentiment goes beyond the mere expression of self-satisfaction; it represents the collective will of those participating, breathing life into the historical event of May 18 and fostering a spirit of community among the May Festival in Europe's participants. This yearly gathering serves as a cultural space or, as noted earlier, a "public sphere" — one where Korean immigrants from different hometowns come together, forge connections, and build solidarity. Additionally, their families and friends, including those of German or other European backgrounds, show support for the democratization of Korea, further expanding the reach and significance of the spirit of May 18across borders.

Jonghyŏn Lee (born 1936, arrived 1965), a former miner and a living witness to the history of Korean immigrants in Germany, sees "empathy" and "solidarity" as key aspects of the May 18 Democratic Movement's significance:

> As time passed, after a year or two after the May 18 Uprising, [I realized] that it gave us something. The division of Korea caused the suffering of our nation, and I felt that a lot. I think that's what the May 18 Uprising is about, how we can be independent of foreign powers and talk among ourselves. But more importantly it affected us directly, because here in Germany we had each organization that was active during that time, right? The Korea Committee,[14] which I mentioned earlier; there was [also] the Council for the Construction of Democratic Society, there was the Korean Labor Federation, there was the Women's Group, and there was another one called the Overseas Christians for the Unification of the Homeland. These organizations were working in different directions, but through the May 18 Uprising they were able to come together and have this one commonality of what we need to do for the Korean Peninsula. I think that's what had a huge impact on me, the May 18 Uprising.

Jonghyŏn's reflections highlight how the movement first served as a unifying force for a number of smaller organizations existing within the Korean community in

14 A solidarity group founded in 1970s West Germany to support South Korean democracy and human rights movements during times of authoritarian repression. The committee worked to raise awareness about the Asian country's political struggles, helped organize protests, and collaborated with other international organizations. It focused on highlighting the suppression of democratic movements, such as the May 18 Gwangju Uprising, and advocated for Korean reunification, human rights, and peace. Over time, the group's activities contributed to the development of the broader Korea Verband. For more information, see https://koreaverband.de/geschichte/.

Germany, ones initially "working in different directions." Over the past 40 years, some have naturally dissolved as key members returned home or were disbanded (Lee 2016),[15] while others evolved into key supporters. The May Festival in Europe, with its enthusiasm, sincerity, and "genuine heart" continues to embody the spirit of the May 18 Democratic Movement. The event is organized with the goal of fostering solidarity not only among Koreans but also with their European allies too, illustrating the outward expansion of the spirit of May 18 as a form of social remittance that transcends borders.

## The Spirit of May 18: Aspirations and Generational Dynamics

The concept of "aspiration" is crucial for understanding how the May 18 Democratic Movement continues to inspire future-oriented goals among Koreans, particularly those within the diaspora. These ambitions are deeply rooted in the legacy of the events of May 18, embodying hopes for democracy, peace, and, notably, reunification. They are, however, not static; these aspirations evolve as they are reinterpreted and renewed by each generation, influenced by their unique sociopolitical contexts and experiences.

### Aspirations to Reunification: A symbolic Act of Unity

For the first generation of Korean immigrants in Germany, the aspiration tohas been one of the most enduring legacies of the events of May 18, 1980. This desired outcome would be profoundly influenced by these individuals' migration from a divided Korea to a divided Germany, where they would in time witness firsthand the fall of the Berlin Wall and the European country's subsequent reunification.[16] This historical moment was not merely an external event but a deeply personal experience that resonated with their own hopes for the Korean Peninsula.

Yŏngsook's account of the 1990 Pan-Korean Rally (Pŏmminjok Taehoe) in Pyongyang, North Korea, exemplifies this aspiration.[17] Participants from the diaspora, including Yŏngsook, brought with them jars of soil from the May 18

15 Lee (2016), a distinguished scholar and Christian leader, documented the history of the democratic movement primarily led by Korean immigrant intellectuals in Germany during the 1970s and 1980s, with a central focus on Minkŏn. Some of the movement's leaders faced accusations of sympathizing with North Korea, leading to charges of violating South Korean national-security laws and subsequent restrictions, preventing their return home for a period.

16 See: https://www.news1.kr/articles/3030144.

17 This groundbreaking event took place to promote the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. While representatives from the North Korean government and those from both Koreas living abroad participated, South Korean officials were absent due to ongoing political tensions. Around 50 Koreans from Europe, primarily from Germany, took part in the rally. The event emphasized solidarity among Koreans across the world, focusing on unity and dialogue in seeking to overcome the Peninsula's continued division. See: https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/knwldg/view/relKnwldg.do;jsessionid=gquiWHGOZrJeT8Vjnts Y6Zoj0AtrEaOMtxV7XCtl.ins22?menuId=KNWLDG_DICARY&knwldgNo=383.

National Cemetery in Gwangju and the Martyrs' Cemetery in the host city. During a solemn ritual, they merged these soils together and then later planted a tree in the demilitarized zone, symbolizing their deep yearning for the reunification of North and South Korea. This was not just a symbolic gesture but also a powerful expression of their belief that the struggles for democracy and justice, as represented by the May 18 Uprising, are inextricably linked with a unified Korea.

Yŏngsook reflects on this experience with a mixture of reverence and humor:

> We planned to have a ritual merging the soils on the first day of the event at Panmunjom and [they asked] what we needed for it. So, I said, we need a pig's head, a mat, and rice cakes. They asked why we needed a pig's head and whether we wanted a dead pig or a live one. So, I told them it should be a boiled pig head [...]. So, they boiled five pig heads and chose the most smiling pig head to put on the ritual service table when we went.

Her description, while light-hearted in tone, underscores the deep cultural significance of the ritual, where even the smallest details were handled with the utmost care to honor the aspirations behind the ceremony.

The ritual of merging soils from Gwangju and Pyongyang, coupled with traditional practices, illustrates how the spirit of May 18transcends regional boundaries and political ideologies. It unites the aspirations of Koreans across the world, linking the fates of North and South Korea in the collective memory and hopes of those seeking to bridge this divide. For Yŏongsook and her peers, this act was a reaffirmation of their belief that the values of democracy and human rights, which so many sacrificed their lives for during the May 18 Uprising, must also guide the path toward reunification.

## Generational Dynamics and the Evolving Spirit of May 18

While the aspiration for reunification remains a powerful force among first-generation Korean migrants, their offspring bring their own perspectives and priorities into the fold as well. These differences in outlook reflect the evolving nature of the spirit of May 18, as each new generation interprets and applies its lessons to their unique circumstances. Ŭiok Seo, one of Soonim's lifelong friends and someone well-regarded for her ability to connect with youth, observes the changing dynamics of activism thus:

> The younger generation, the activities around the Sewol Ferry tragedy,[18] and people like that, I was like: 'Oh, the younger generation's way of activism is different.' We had a center and were driven by organizations [...]. But the younger generation does not have this kind of a control tower [...]. The older generation should be quicker to recognize that the younger generation has changed and adapt

18 On April 16, 2014, the ferry MV *Sewol* sank off the coast of Jindo, South Korea, resulting in the loss of 304 lives, primarily high-school students.

> [accordingly], so that the [latter] can do something [...]. The older generation needs to move away from always being the boss or role model.

Uiok's reflections highlight the importance of intergenerational empathy and open communication to sustaining the spirit of May 18. The older generation, who were shaped by the collective, organization-driven movements of the past, are encouraged to recognize and support the younger generation's more decentralized, digital forms of activism. These newer forms of endeavor, while different in method, continue to embody the core values of earlier advocacy: justice,[19] human rights, and democratic engagement. By adapting to these changes, the older generation can ensure that their successors' aspirations remain relevant and resonant across time.

Moreover, the intergenerational dynamics at play within the Korean diaspora in Germany underscore more broadly how historical events are reinterpreted over time. The spirit of May 18, with its continuity and change, serves as a bridge between the past and the future, connecting the experiences of those who lived through the original events with the aspirations of those now shaping the years to come. The evolving interpretation of this key rallying event ensures that it remains a living, dynamic force rather than a static historical relic.

## Expanding Aspirations: From Reunification to Global Solidarity

The spirit of May 18 has also expanded to encompass broader issues of global justice and solidarity, particularly through the efforts of second-generation Koreans in Germany. These younger activists have embraced causes such as the "comfort women" issue, framing it within a global human rights context that resonates with other migrant and women's communities in Europe. Junghwa Han (born 1962, arrived 1978), who originally came to Germany to study before becoming a key figure in these ongoing endeavors, explains:

> "People from South America, people from Iran, people from Turkey, people from Kurdistan, they have much more similar experiences of dictatorship [...]. What I've noticed a lot lately is that there's a very strong movement of women who have recently immigrated to Berlin. The younger generation speaks English well, as do Korean women. Solidarity is much easier because they have a common language [...]."

The pursuit of universal justice that began with the May 18 Democratic Movement extends to the issue of Korean "comfort women," a continuing source of controversy often framed as a nationalist conflict between Korea and Japan. However, in the German and European contexts, this issue has taken on broader dimensions, connecting to themes of peace and the experiences of women in times of war. The involvement of Korean migrants in transnational movements for justice illustrates

19 Rawls (1999) defines "justice" as fairness achieved on the basis of two core principles: 1) equal basic liberties for all; 2) social and economic structures benefiting the least advantaged (see also, Hwang 2018).

how the spirit of May 18, while rooted in the specific historical context of Gwangju, has expanded to address global human rights issues. For instance, younger Koreans in Germany have engaged deeply with the "comfort women" issue, drawing parallels between this historical injustice and the ongoing struggles faced by women and marginalized groups worldwide.

This transnational engagement highlights how the spirit of May 18 has grown beyond Korea's borders to encompass universal values of justice and human rights. By connecting the historical trauma of the "comfort women" to broader global struggles, Korean migrants and their descendants reaffirm the enduring relevance of the values inspired by May 18. These values continue to guide their activism, providing a foundation for aspirations that transcend national boundaries and unite diverse communities in the shared pursuit of justice.

The spirit of May 18, despite its evolution over time, still inspires a range of aspirations among Koreans in Germany, from the deeply personal hope for reunification to broader wishes for global justice and solidarity. These aspirations, which are rooted in the legacy of the May 18 Democratic Movement, have expanded beyond the home country, resonating with compatriots worldwide. For Koreans abroad, particularly in Germany, this spirit embodies a collective struggle against oppression, injustice, and authoritarianism. By reinterpreting and renewing these values, each generation ensures that the spirit of May 18remains a living force, guiding their personal and collective transformation and fostering a shared commitment to human rights, peace, and unity across transnational communities.

## Conclusion

This paper has delved into the transnational impact of certain intangible assets — or "social remittances," involving the transfer of social norms, practices, and identities across borders —, as illuminated through the life experiences of Koreans resident in Germany, with a specific emphasis on their involvement in the May Festival in Europe. The study has investigated specifically how individual identities were transformed by exposure to the May 18 Democratic Movement and, by extension, the spirit of May 18. Unlike tangible assets such as the money sent via postal order, the effects of social remittances prove more challenging to quantify despite their great importance.

Through comprehensive fieldwork and oral history, with a particular focus on the organizers of the May Festival in Europe, I was able to grasp the ways in which Korean immigrant activists in Germany produce and disseminate social remittances as an extension of their continued endeavors to uphold the spirit of May 18. These remittances are conveyed through the implied expression of *Майт* or "heart," embodying the wisdom, passion, and empathetic appeal that surpass mere theoretical or intellectual forms of exchange. The potency of these narratives lies in their ability to transcend linguistic boundaries, reaching individuals on a profoundly emotional level.

To understand how these social remittances function, the concept of "structures of feeling" introduced by Williams (1977) has proved useful to this end. These structures of feeling represent the lived experiences and emotional currents within a society, ones often inarticulate yet deeply influential. In the context of Korean immigrants in Germany, the structures of feeling shaped by the spirit of May 18have become a key component of their social remittances. These are not just historical remnants; they are active and evolving, fueling aspirations for democracy, human rights, and reunification among the diaspora. As these structures of feeling are shared and transmitted, they contribute to the transformation of both individual identities and broader social dynamics, creating a continuous loop of mutual influence between the host and home countries.

The transformative impact of these social remittances extends beyond cultural exchange to encompass identity reconfigurations shaped by transnational experiences. The blending of cultural and social values can be understood through the lens of "hybridity" (Bhabha, 1994), which highlights how migrants merge elements of their homeland with new cultural norms to form multifaceted identities. Gender plays a significant role in these processes: Korean immigrant women, primarily nurses, navigated patriarchal constraints while aspiring to cosmopolitan lifestyles and empowerment, whereas male miners reevaluated traditional Confucian ideals in light of European values like gender equality. These transformative experiences are further amplified by the political turmoil in Korea, which shaped their evolving perspectives on democracy and unification. Such narratives demonstrate how identity transformations, fueled by exposure to unfamiliar cultures, align deeply with the spirit of May 18 and contribute to broader societal aspirations.

The notion of "transformation" is crucial here, as it encapsulates the changes occurring when these individuals internalize and reinterpret the spirit of May 18. This represents not merely a change in perspective but also a profound reconfiguration of identity that influences subsequent aspirations. For example, the aspiration to reunification among first-generation immigrants is deeply tied to their personal experiences in a once-divided Germany, where the fall of the Berlin Wall served as both a metaphor and a catalyst for their hopes regarding the Korean Peninsula. These aspirations, informed by the structures of feeling surrounding the events of May 18, are then transmitted back to Korea, influencing the ongoing discourse around democracy and reunification there.

Social remittance in this context does not stand for the passive transmission of culture or ideas; it is an active, dynamic process that involves the reinterpretation and reintegration of core values across borders. As these migrants engage in transnational activities, such as organizing the May Festival in Europe, they continuously renew and reshape their advocacy, making it relevant to the next generation and new contexts. This renewal is driven by these immigrants' contemporary aspirations, as informed by both historical experiences and current realities. Whether concerning democracy, human rights, or reunification, related

goals are continuously redefined and pursued through the diaspora's collective actions and prevailing narratives.

As such, these intangible assets are not just about preserving the past but also actively constructing a future informed by its key lessons. The narratives and stories that emerge from these communities are imbued with the emotional weight of lived experience, making them powerful tools for fostering empathy and solidarity across borders. In a world increasingly characterized by our digital interaction, the importance of these emotionally resonant stories cannot be overstated. They serve as a counterbalance to the often impersonal nature of online communication, reminding us of the enduring significance of human connection and the shared aspirations that unite us.

As humanity undergoes the transition from an analog to a digital world (Heitner 2020) against the backdrop of continued globalization, the significance of these narratives is only heightened. In this evolving landscape, the potency of storytelling and the emotional resonance that it generates become critical for fostering connection across highly diverse realms. Despite the advent of digitalization helping us to increasingly transcend traditional boundaries of time and space, global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic challenges, and geopolitical conflicts have underscored the enduring importance of physical borders, intensifying uncertainty.

Emphasizing the value of the narratives emerging from diaspora communities, notably Koreans resident in Germany, this paper has positioned transnational life stories as invaluable sociocultural assets. Infused as they are with aspirations shaped by the structures of feeling surrounding the spirit of May 18, these stories serve as human libraries. They nourish subjective selves, cultivating emotional solidarity and communal sensitivity across borders. Ultimately, these accounts contribute to a shared global narrative that transcends the limitations of the analog, embodying the transformative power of social remittances in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Acknowledgements

This study was partly supported by the May 18 Foundation through its 2022 Social Sciences research funding and partially by the Humanities Korea Plus Program (HK+), implemented by the Institute of Japanese Studies at Hallym University. The HK+ program was funded by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant, supported by the Korean Government (MOE) (2017S1A6A3A01079517). The author extends his sincere gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions and insights, which greatly improved the paper.

## References


Abelmann, Nancy. 2003. *The Melodrama of Mobility: Women, Talk, and Class in Contemporary South Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2004. "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition." In *Culture and Public Action*, edited by Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton, 59–84. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2013. *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. London: Verso Books.

Berriane, Yasmine, Anouck Derks, Andrea Kreil, and Detlef Lüddeckens, eds. 2021. *Methodological Approaches to Societies in Transformation*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1983. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John G. Richardson, 241–258. New York: Greenwood Press.

Castells, Manuel. 1996. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Chaedok Han'guk Yŏsŏng Moim (Korea Women's Group in Germany). 2014. *Togir Iju Yŏsŏng ŭi Sam, Kŭ Hyŏndaesa ŭi Kirok* (The Lives of German Migrant Women). Seoul: T'angdae. (in Korean)

Choi, Yŏngt'ae. 2015. "5·18 Hangjaeng-ŭi Myŏngch'ŭng Munje (On the Name of the 5.18 Uprising: Revolve Around 'Gwangju' and 'Minjung')." *Minjujuŭi wa In'gwŏn* 15(3): 113–148. (in Korean)

Constable, Nicole. 2005. *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Galtung, Johan, translated by Jongil Kang, Daehwa Jung, Sungho Lim, Seungchae Kim, Jaebong Lee. 2000. *P'yŏnghwajŏng sudane ŭihan p'yŏnghwa* (Peace by Peaceful Means) Seoul: Deullyeok. (in Korean)

Habermas, Jürgen. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Heitner, Devorah. 2020. *Tijit'ŏl wŏnjumin k'iugi* (Raising Digital Natives). Seoul: Changbi Publishers. (in Korean)

Hwang, Kyungsik. 2018. *Chon rolsŭ chŏngŭiront'em* (John Rawls's Theory of Justice), Seoul: Sam & Parkers. (in Korean)

Jackson, Andrew David. 2020. "Jürgen Hinzpeter and Foreign Correspondents in the 1980 Kwangju Uprising." *International Journal of Asian Studies* 17, no. 1: 19–37.

Jung, Geun-Ha. 2017. "5·18 minjuhwaundongŭi chiyŏksŏng kŭkpokŭl wihan panganyŏn'gurhaksullonmun chŏjawa haksulchi p'yŏnjungbunp'orŭl chungshimŭro (Plan Research to Overcome Regionality of 5·18 Democratization Movement: Focusing on the biased distribution of academic paper writers and journals)," *Han'gukkwa kukchesahoe* (Korea and Global Affairs) Vol. 1(2), 5–32. (in Korean)

Kaldor, Mary. 2003. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Keane, John. 2003. *Global Civil Society?*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kim, Gwi-Ok. 2019. "Han'guk kwa Togil ŭl Nŏmna dŭn Hanin Tiasupora wa Yurŏpminhyŏp ŭi Minjuhwa wa T'ongil Undong (Minhyop's Movement for the Korean Democratization and Reunification in Korea and Germany)." *T'ongil Inmunhak* 80: 113–150. (in Korean)

Kim, Hak-sŏn, Sŏn-u Hong and Kyŏng-suk Ch'oe. 2009. "P'adokkanhosa salmŭi chaejomyŏng (Recapturing the Lives and Experiences of Korean Nurses Dispatched to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s)." *Han'gukchigŏpkŏn'gangganhohak'oeji* (Korean Journal of Occupational Health Nursing) 18(2): 174-184. (in Korean)

Kim Mi-gyŏng. 2020. "T'aeransŭnaesŏnŏl Kwangju: Chaemi Hanin sahoeŭi 5.18 Minjuhwa Undong (A Study on Transnational Gwangju: May 18 Activism in the Korean-American Community)." *21-segi Chŏngch'ihakhoebo* 30 (4): 1–33.

Kim, Myŏn. 2013. "5.18 Minjujuŭi Wigi Kŭrigo Yŏrŏphanin ŭi Taŭngyangsang (The Crisis of Democracy and the Response Patterns of Korean Immigrants in Europe)." *Crisisonomy* 9(10): 69–84. (in Korean)

Kwon, Sook Do. 2019. "P'yŏnghwaŭi kwanjŏmesŏ pon namnamgaltŭng haegyŏlbanganŭi mosaek (A Study on the South-South Conflict Resolution from the Perspective of Peace Theory)," *Han'gukchŏngch'iyŏn'gu* 28(2), pp. 143–165. (in Korean) Lee, Samyeol. 2016. *Togiresŏŭi minjuhwaundong: minjuhwasahoegŏnsŏrhyŏbŭihoerŭl chungshimŭro* (The Democratic Movement in Germany: with a focus on the Council for the Construction of Democratic Society). *Korea Democracy Foundation*. (in Korean)

Levitt, Peggy. 1998. "Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion." *International Migration Review* 32(4): 926–948.

May 18 Foundation, edited by Jin-Heon Jung. 2021. *Kusulsaengaesarŭl t'onghae pon 5.18ŭi kiŏkkwa yŏksa11: togilp'yŏn* (Memory and History of May 18 through Oral History 11: Germany). Gwangju: The May 18 Foundation. (in Korean)

Portelli, Alessandro. 1991. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Rawls, John. 1999. *A Theory of Justice*. Revised Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Scott, J. C. 2020. *Seeing like a state*. Yale University Press.

Shin, Gi-Wook & Lee, Kyung-Sook. 2014. *South Korean Regionalism and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, Paul. 2000. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History. 3rd ed*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yi, Hee Young. 2019. "Iju yŏsŏnggwa pundan changch'iŭi chaegusŏng: tongbaengnim sagŏnesŏ 1994nyŏn 'an'gibu p'ŭrakch'i sagŏnt'ŭro' (Migrant Women and the Reconstruction of the Dispositive of Division: From the East Berlin-North Korean Spy Ring Incident to the Agent of the Korean CIA Affair)," *Hyŏndaesahoewa tamunhwa* (Contemporary Society and Multiculture) Vol. 9(1), pp. 1–44. (in Korean)

Yi, Samyŏl. 2015. "Tok-il-e-sŏ-ŭi min-chu-hwa-un-tong: min-chu-sa-hoe-kŏn-sŏl-hyŏp-ŭi-hoe-lŭl chung-sim-ŭ-lo (Democracy Movement of Korean in Germany)." *Kiŏkkwa chŏnmang* No. 33: 462–521. (in Korean)

Yi, Samyŏl. 2016. "Tok-il-e-sŏ-ŭi min-chu-hwa-un-tong(hu-p'yŏn): min-chu-sa-hoe-kŏn-sŏl-hyŏp-ŭi-hoe-lŭl chung-sim-ŭ-lo (Democracy Movement of Korean in Germany (the second part)." *Kiŏkkwa chŏnmang* No. 34: 363–438. (in Korean)

## Online Sources:

Deutsche Welle. *1968: The Year of Cultural Revolution in Postwar Germany*. https://www.dw.com/en/1968-the-year-of-cultural-revolution-in-postwar-germany/a-43643818 (accessed on August 20, 2024).

Digitalgwangjumunhwadaejŏn. *Yun Hanbong*. https://www.grandculture.net/gwangju/donggu/toc/GC60005408 (accessed on September 17, 2024).

Chaedok Han'guk Yŏsŏng Moim. https://koreanische-frauengruppe.tistory.com/5 (accessed on September 18, 2024).

Die Geschichte des Korea Verbands (The History of the Korea Verband). https://koreaverband.de/geschichte/ (accessed on September 20, 2024).

Ministry of Unification, Pukh'an Chŏngbo Pot'al (North Korea Information Portal), https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/knwldg/view/relKnwldg.do;jsessionid=gquiWHGOZr-JeT8VjntsY6Zoj0AtrEaOMtxV7XCtl.ins22?menuId=KNWLDG_DICARY&knwldgNo=383 (accessed on September 22, 2024).

News1. *April 16 Ferry Sewol Tragedy*. https://416foundation.org/en/4-16-ferry-sewol-tragedy/about-the-tragedy/ (accessed on August 20, 2024).

May 18 Foundation Blog. *Berlin Protests of May 1980*. https://blog.naver.com/themay18/220661987392 (accessed on August 20, 2024).

Ohmynews. *Korean-American Community's Perception and Response to the May 18 Democratic Movement*. http://bit.ly/ZQntl7 (accessed on August 20, 2024).