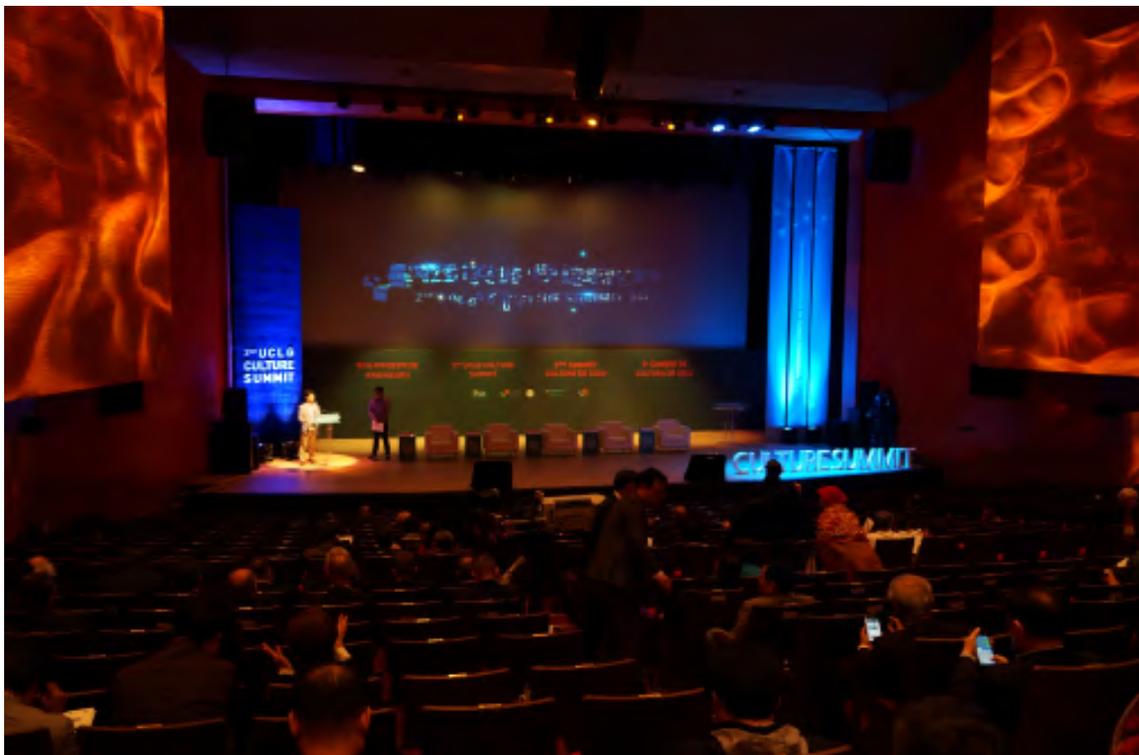


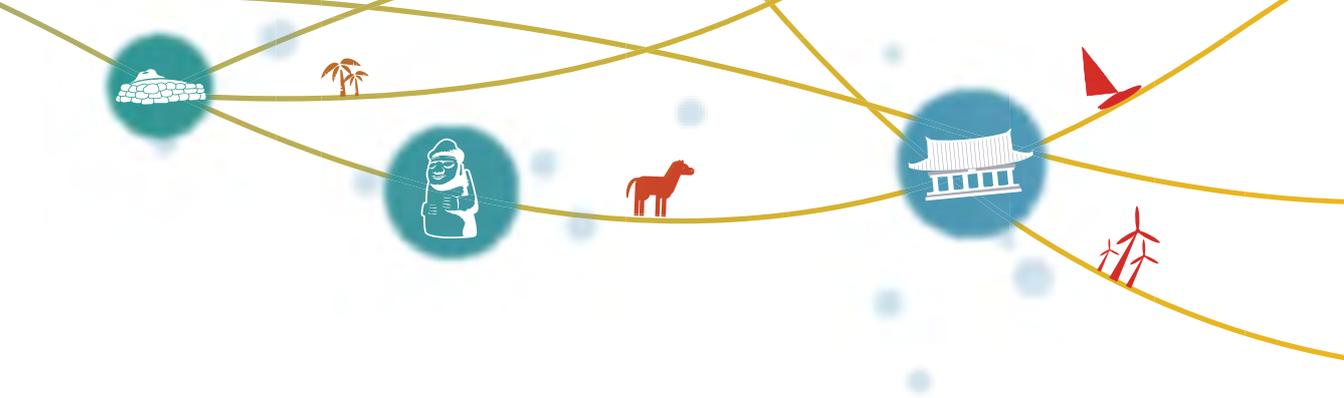


2ND UCLG CULTURE SUMMIT
COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS FOR
CULTURE IN SUSTAINABLE CITIES
JEJU (REPUBLIC OF KOREA)
10-13 MAY 2017

REFLECTIONS I MAKE IN JEJU ISLAND:
THE NECESSITY OF THE REGION
AND REGIONAL CULTURE

MR. **KO UN** IS A RENOWNED POET FROM JEJU





I have come here with only one identity, that of an honorary citizen of Jeju Island. With this decisive honor I would like to welcome you who have come from all over the world. This is a place where there is a lot of wind, a lot of stones and a lot of many other things. You are now part of this place.

The earth filled the larger part of its surface with the sea and then disposed dry lands once it had undergone diastrophic movements of the earth's crust at certain periods. The Afro-Asian and Eurasian continents, North and South Americas and Meso-America in the Western Hemisphere, the Oceanian continent and several islands are floating about by coincidental arrangement like a pastime.

Jeju Island has continued to experience long ages of the much troubled Black Current between the Jeju Strait and the East China Sea. Within the huge circle of the horizon that can never be reached in any one person's lifetime, the sound of the waves of every season's weather and in all directions never stops its rhythm. The waves breaking 700,000 times each day themselves go together with the unending progression of Jeju's past, present and future.

In the mid-1960s I lived for three full years in Jeju Island, captivated by the sound of the perennial waves, and this gave birth to genetic rhythms of intoxication in my poems. Therefore, Jeju Island has become for me one spiritual origin along the paths of my life.

The dialect of Jeju Island is something more than a dialect. Here the language of time and the language of space make a world of expression arise concurrently. The languages which have crossed over or drifted along by its long isolation surrounded by the sea, the ancient language born here and the later languages have continued to exist with a firm will to live on the volcanic ash soil that withstands the strong winds of Jeju Island.

»» LANGUAGE IS THE FIRST BASIS FOR SURVIVAL OR FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SURVIVAL. LANGUAGE IS THE CORE OF CULTURE

If this were not Jeju Island but a region of the Korean Peninsula or some part of Japan or the Ryukyu Islands or the southeastern coastal region of China, these rich languages from multiple ages could not have been stratified thus. In Jeju Island, an important center in the sub-tropical region, the languages of the northern continent or the medieval Korean and Mongolian languages of Northeast Asia and the ancient international languages around the sea of Northeast Asia gather to form a neutral park of languages.

When one word or two of the Jeju dialect is heard by moments amidst the sound of the strong, wild waves and amidst the sound of the wind that sweeps over the flowing slopes of Mt Halla, Jeju Island's dormant volcano, the sound of that indigenous dialectic tone turns the stone-walled fields below the wind-break hedges of rosebays into a sacred place of language.

It is a powerful miracle that this ancestral language of Jeju Island still manages to survive desperately and exists in the daily life of the people of Jeju Island as an existing dialect of cultural value in these tragic times when one or more languages of the world disappears every night.

This precious example, together with its sense of crisis, corresponds to the heated issues such as the region or regional culture. If a region is merely seen as a restricted area on a drawing divided into lots as a certain two-dimensional area, I would reject that kind of definition.



The province is a place where a unique lifestyle and an identity with cultural memory are profound. A region always has a significance that a necessity of time has made. That is why a region requires a culture of time preceding space. That is the reason why the local language used or preserved in that region as dialect and various idioms goes beyond the level of linguistic theory to form the overall core of life and history.

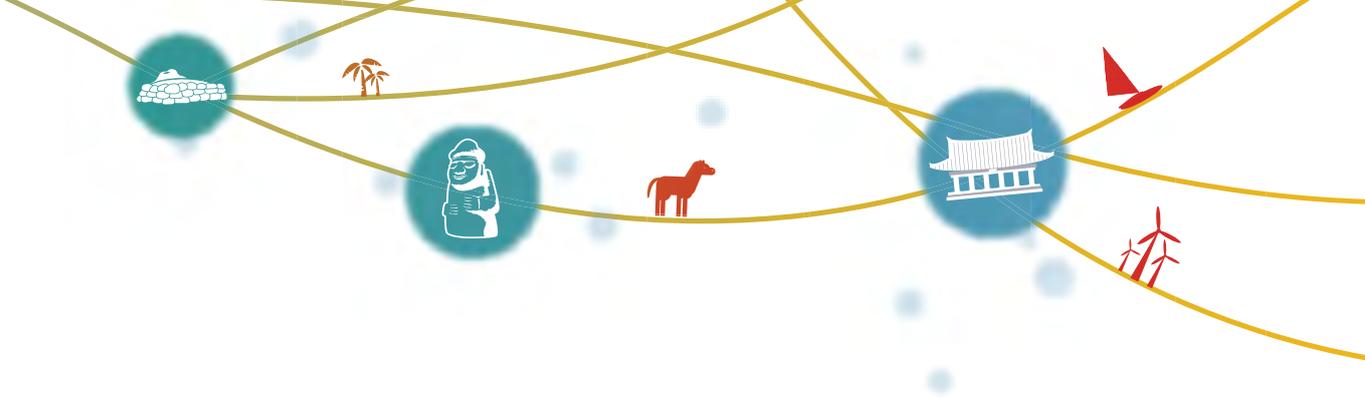
Nouns in one region became nouns when verbs were transported from another place, which reveals the mysterious cross-fertilization of Indra's net performed between one region and another.

Ttang or tta, one of the basic nouns that is a root-word of the Korean language, has become a Korean word through propagation transcending far-away boundaries. The ancient language of the Egyptian kingdom 4,000 years ago came drifting along all the way to the shores of far-off East Asia and became an old Korean word.

On the other hand, language concurs with the transiency of the phenomenon in the world that repeats cycles of birth and death over the course of time. That happens most conspicuously when language has no power of its own. For example, the European Mediterranean region or the Levant was very crowded with peoples with multiple languages. It was a living fair of languages in which different words got mixed together openly. Its diversity actualized the harmony of the world through education, trade and the process of assimilation. The traditions, customs and identity of each province met with others, they were open to each other and their virtues corresponded to each other.

The region brings forth cycles of culture in which there are times when the doors are closed and when the doors are wide open. The colorful scenes of regions and provinces, the happy international landscape around 100 BC manifested a place with multiple languages, then the age turned into a completely opposite landscape of unified language six hundred years later. Only Greek and Latin became effective means of trade as unified languages.





Since then it has been a reality of every place in the world that the dominant languages of ruling powers have annihilated the naturally rooted local languages. The reason that Neanderthals, despite being superior to Homo sapiens in historic terms, finally vanished at a certain period was because they had no language of their own. Language is the first basis for survival or for the development of survival. Language is the core of culture. It is for this fundamental reason that I set language forth as a premise when I try to emphasize the necessity of local or local culture.

It has been over 70 years since the Korean peninsula was divided, and languages hostile to each other between South and North have already helped move the heterogeneity of the regime away from the destined homogeneity. Originally the language of South Korea was centered on the middle class language of the Jongno area of Seoul, which was designated as its national standard language, so as a result the many indigenous languages and dialects of the regions have gradually weakened or declined. The North Korean language was more passive and the 'cultural language,' the language around the capital Pyongyang, became the ruling language that makes the dialects all over North Korea powerless. This kind integration and standardization of the modern Korean language has become the despair of modern language, which has also happened in many other countries.

»» HOME IS NOT A WORLD OF LOGIC BUT A WORLD OF INSTINCT AND ETHICS. IT IS A MORAL SENSE, NOT A LAW. IT IS NOT CIVILIZATION, IT IS NATURE. IT IS NOT AN ACQUIRED CIVILIZATION BUT AN INBORN CULTURE

Despite this series of events, there are reactionary emotions deeply placed in our minds that cannot be erased. Perhaps several 'regions' are unconsciously accumulated in anyone's lifetime. The word 'region' is pregnant with another name, 'hometown.' So 'region,' in spite of the daunting technological civilization of frontier digital industry and the 4th industry, may be stamped on the heart of each human being as the utopia of the human origin. That place is sure to be an inviolable 'self before self' that no power can intervene in thoughtlessly.

Each of us in this room has a precious past that was born in a region as our hometown. To a Berliner born in the capital city Berlin, his permanent domicile is the German capital, but his home is a place with human bodily temperature, a province of Prussia. The Hunan people born in the Hunan plains of mainland China continue to return to their distant home for the reunion of the Chinese New Year each year.

Home is not a world of logic but a world of instinct and ethics. It is a moral sense, not a law. It is not civilization, it is nature. It is not an acquired civilization but an inborn culture. It is not an area with a specific boundary, not a designed place. It is place of ancestors and maternity. It is a space returned to with remorse, where fatherland and mother tongue have long accumulated over time. It is a place of birth and death, a place of sowing and harvesting, a place of life where the joys and sorrows of life succeed one another. Therefore, the hometown is not a space of administration but a place of memories transmitted over the years. In this temporalizing of the hometown and memorizing of region, human beings enter into the space and time with neighbors with vague boundaries, whether it is a hometown or a province. A five-year-old child meets a neighbor's child for the first time after it quits breast-feeding. The self gradually comes closer to the relationship with others and the world.



How can it be only a landscape in human history? The plantain lily whose place of origin is Argentina crossed the Pacific Ocean and drifted ashore with its tough vitality on the Korean peninsula in East Asia, where it has become 'an indigenous flower' representing the maternal emotions of Korean women. The crinum lily native to South Africa has long become a flower appreciated as a special product of Jeju Island in Korea and the Kyushu region in Japan.

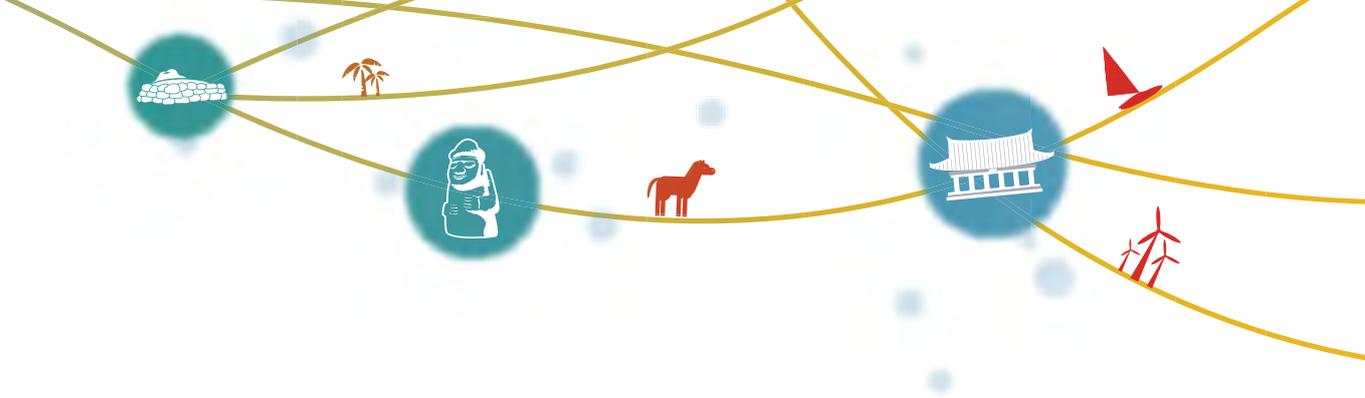
Perhaps the simplicity of agricultural society and the complexity of the long period of gathering and hunting prior to it may have formed, until now, a symmetrical structure of self or region and world or regional integration. So, if we objectify 'home' between nostalgia for a hometown and the melancholy of being away from the hometown, then our hometown will at once become a region.

»» EACH OF US IN THIS ROOM HAS A PRECIOUS PAST THAT WAS BORN IN A REGION AS OUR HOMETOWN

The philosophical proposition that pointed out that modern man has lost his hometown was one discovery in the first half of the 20th century. But today it has become a cliché. We are accustomed to the space of consumption of the breathless 'self' in urban civilization where the kinship with our home or region has been greatly reduced. The de-coloration of regionality because of a certain city or urbanization makes even our home only the third-person place of birth or of permanent domicile. The technological civilization and high-tech industry turn the hometown into almost a strange land.

75% of the world's population lives as objects of life in a city or around a city. In Asia, where the agricultural population is 90%, acute modernization has caused social problems such as the hollowing of rural areas and crowded conditions of urban poverty, which expunge the old life





values of the region and the perennial significance of the region. The problem of transferring farmers to the cities in China or the serious problem of giving up farming in Korea since the 1970s is more than a problem of social evil, fatal in reality.

How should a region establish the task of local culture and how should it obtain local autonomy and creativity in such a situation? The monistic system of a central government that blocks these heated questions is itself problematic. Also, on the level of the actual support-base of the regions and regional culture, and with the results-first attitude of the local bureaucracy, the cultural values of the region with its long-standing unwritten laws can rather be seriously damaged.

In the modern nation-state and the societies of the current infinite nationalist competition, wealth and culture are concentrated in the metropolitan and capital areas, and the region is likely to be simply subject to domination and to be removed from the subject of all welfare. Globalization also swallows all local and regional characteristics. Paradoxically that is why the spirit of the times and a time-transcending longing are growing stronger to confront these limitations. There is an old proverb saying "Truth emerges from the outer areas." However, such a special regional case cannot be expected because of the enormous expansion of the environs of capitals and metropolitan cities with concentrated power.

»» CULTURE IS CREATED AS SPONTANEOUS DELIGHT OUTSIDE OF THE RULING SYSTEM. CULTURE IS NOT A GOVERNMENT PRODUCT MADE ON DIRECTIONS FROM THE CENTER. IT IS A FLOWER THAT BLOOMS IN THE DREAMS AND CRIES THAT FLOW FROM THE LIFE OF A REGION

There are many cases where local autonomous societies on the planet imitate others in terms of the protection of their own culture, the production and enjoyment of culture. What is obvious is that culture is created as spontaneous delight outside of the ruling system. Culture is not a government product made on directions from the center. It is a flower that blooms in the dreams and cries that flow from the life of a region. Culture is a collective term for native regionality and the movement of impulse generating a new culture for that regionality.

Culture is an expression of the desire and will of life manifested even by the power of steel, but it is also a butterfly or one fragile flower. So technology that belongs to the material domain and culture that belongs to the spiritual domain have an inside-outside relationship. For example, industrial technology gives birth to the civilization of the industrial age, and digital technology produces digital culture.

There are multiple definitions of culture. Cultural anthropology has established 175 definitions. The question 'what is culture?' therefore, cannot be pinned down with only one correct answer. For most people, this indefinable culture is not something to ask questions about, it is just something to be enjoyed. By analogy, culture is liquor. Liquor is not something to be thought about, it is just a necessity of daily life to comfort the weary mind and body in the evening.

Raymond Williams called culture 'the whole aspect of life.' This means that culture is everything. Then, culture will have the definition of the unknown where its definition is not yet completed and its meaning is born anew everywhere in the world.

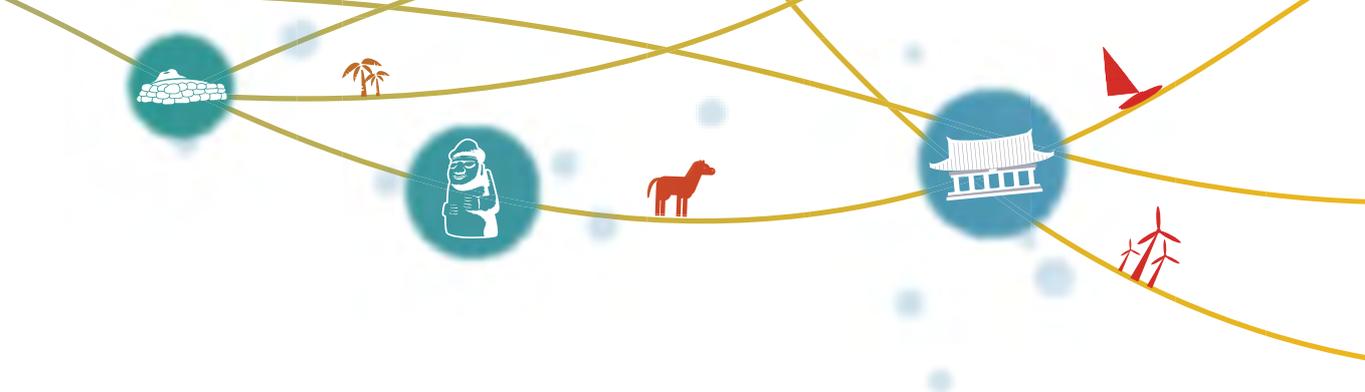
We do not hesitate to name the 21st century the 'century of culture' distinguishing it from the 20th century. This awareness has arisen from the justification for the integrity of culture and an

actual realization of the power of culture that was followed by the reflection that humanity made cultural values subordinate. Even economics says openly that there is no economy without culture. The cultural foundation is the key to even the most downright market growth and profit.

Kim Gu, a special political leader in modern Korean history, failed in real politics. On the other hand, Syngman Rhee, his counterpart, seized power. I assert that Kim Gu is a failed success and Syngman Rhee is successful failure. Opposite to Syngman Rhee's royal prestige and the authority of his studying in the United States, Kim Gu was a commoner by birth. Nonetheless, he declared a 'theory of the cultural state' based on wisdom full of suffering: "I want our country to be the most beautiful country in the world. I do not want it to be the most wealthy nation ... the only thing I truly want to have boundlessly is the power of high culture ... It is culture only that cultivates the spirit of mankind." Such a moving political aesthetics is something rare. He longed for a cultural republic where culture would be united by the whole course of life and speak out with the wisdom of that life.

What is critical here is the substantializing of decentralization. 'Culture of the region, for the region, by the region' should become a universal proposition for culture. Taking an example from Korean reality, after the implementation of the Korean Local Autonomy System since 1995, the roots of local autonomy have still not yet been properly planted. '20% self-governing with 80% central management' is today's local reality in Korea. The right of local personnel management is in fact controlled by the hand of central government. In Korea there is no such word as 'local government.' Local autonomy is often called in Korea a local self-governing body and sometimes considered as a private institution. In addition, the hegemony of a violent central taxation system where national taxation dominates local taxation is also a big obstacle to the region and regional culture. How can the foundation of local culture be justified in this situation?





The dependency of the regions on the central government may make even the vitality of the culture the same monotonous, schematic diagram due to the hypertrophy of central power. So the problems of the regions in Korea and other countries start with the desire for the settlement of decentralization. The dream of utopia starts with local autonomy. The road is a long, long one.

Culture is autonomy, not control. Culture is not passive but active. Culture is both the center of the circle and its circumference. It is the heart of the body. Culture is pregnant with a higher culture. We are aiming for a brilliant day when we can make every nook and cranny of the world into places of culture with this culture spirit.

Jeju Island is one of the charms of East Asia. It is beautiful. In its charm the myth of Jeju Island will never disappear but continue to exist for ever.

Now I will read you a little poem of mine that sings the connectedness of the human spirit.

A Certain Joy

What I am thinking now
is what someone else
has already thought
somewhere in this world.
Don't cry.

What I am thinking now
is what someone else
is thinking now
somewhere in this world.
Don't cry.

What I am thinking now
is what someone else
is about to think
somewhere in this world.
Don't cry.

How joyful it is
that I am composed of so many 'I's
in this world,
somewhere in this world.
How joyful it is
that I am composed of so many others.
Don't cry.

어떤 기쁨

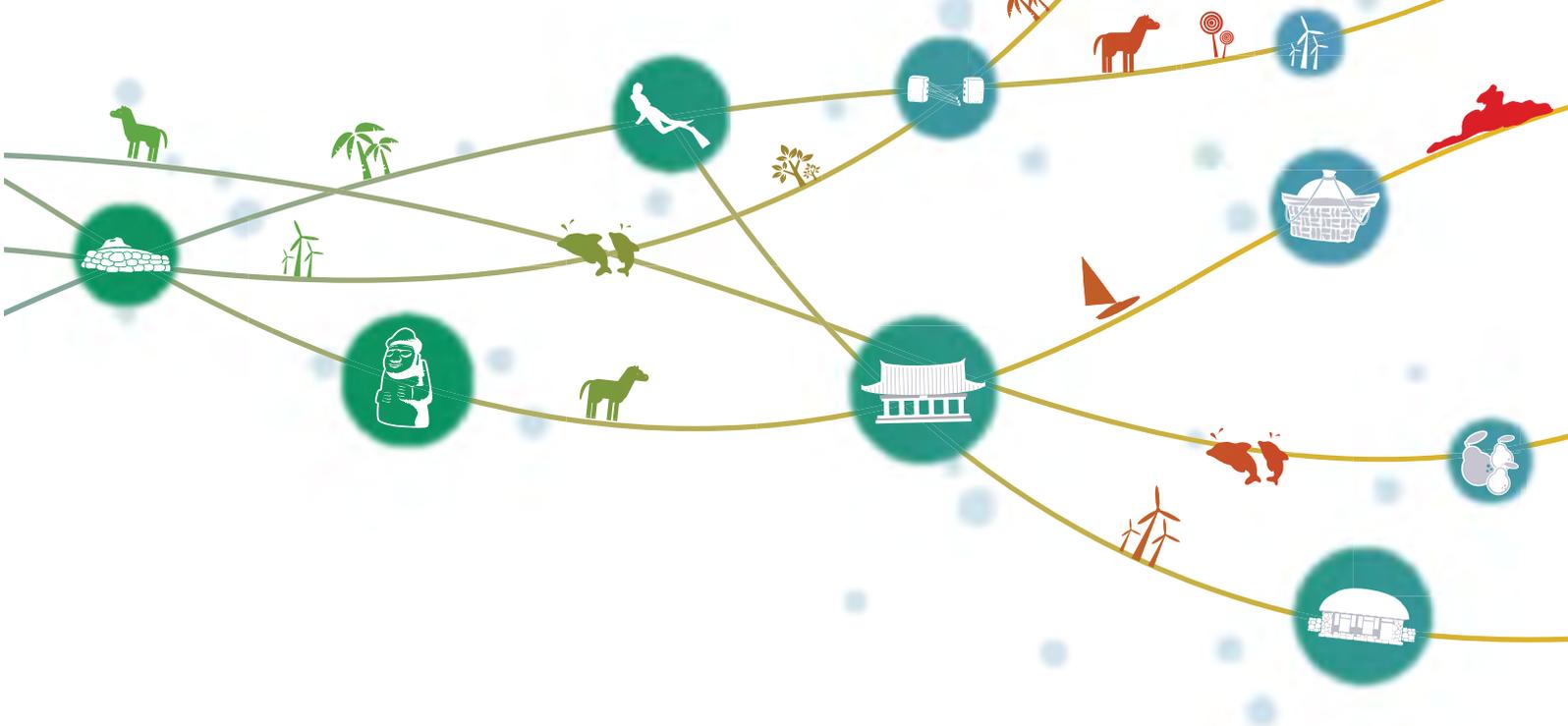
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울지 마라

얼마나 기쁜 일인가
이 세계에서
이 세계의 어디에서
나는 수많은 나로 이루어졌다
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