Social Conditions of Village Democracy in South Korea

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This paper aims to explore the social conditions for autonomy and democracy in the context of villages. In particular, it emphasizes village democracy as a new model of promoting civic participation while critically examining the existing community building model in Korea. As an alternative, village democracy has emerged to provide solutions for the problem of community building lacking democracy as well as resident autonomy with limited participation. Village democracy is a new model of citizen autonomy that has been experimented in Seongbuk-gu for the past two years. However, the determinants and the extent to which it has achieved socio-political success at community level of its achievements are yet to be further explored. Accordingly, the paper tries to examine the social conditions for village democracy as the most important foundation for autonomy and democracy.

Keywords: *community building, village democracy, citizen autonomy, civil society, Seoungbuk-gu*

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Introduction

Civic participation and its institutional opportunity structure have long been deemed important in the discourse on civil society in Korea. Those concerns are based on a high level of perceived importance and vulnerability of civil society in a political process of Korean democracy. Despite considerable efforts to promote civic awareness and strengthen civil society, the autonomy of local residents is still almost invariably linked to the institution of civil society. In Korea, this is closely related to the fact that a growth engine of civil society after democratization has not been properly rooted in the local community in an era of decentralization. In particular, this is because the concept of civil society and autonomy in Korea is still subordinated to a framework of relations with the state. However, autonomy must not only be conceptualized as freedom from the state or higher powers, but also include the capacity for developing or expressing local identity (Pratchett 2004). Also, civil society has more visibility and activity at local-level configurations, as evidenced by institutional reforms of Participatory Budgeting (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2008). Therefore, the development of local autonomy and democracy based on civic participation is required for the growth of local civil society.

Recently, there have been several attempts to institutionalize autonomy and civic participation at local level. Above all in the mid-1990s, community building (Maeulmandeulgi) led to the so-called *rediscovery of the village* with the resurgence of local government institution. Community building can be defined in a broad sense as the joint work of residents who are interested in the very living environment of their villages and who are transforming their local communities. Of course, community building can have varying forms by the interests of participants, the nature of business, and the way of resource mobilization. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a key to linking the subject, content, method and purpose in the community building is heavily dependent on the public changes of the village or local communities. In this context, community building is considered to provide resilience to local autonomy and open a new chapter for local civic participa-tions.

As we all know, Korean community building is an adapted version of Japanese "Machizukuri" (まちづくり). Since the late 1990s, it started to take root in the administrative system and civil society in Korea. In the process, several cases of Japanese community building provided useful guidance on the development of Korean local autonomy in the 2000s. It has provided a

good example for the implementation of a self-governing system based on local autonomy and resident participation. First of all, in the midst of expanding the institutional opportunity structure of local autonomy, it became evident that it is necessary for local residents and local governments to positively accept the governance paradigm of public-private cooperation through community building as a essential condition for citizen autonomy. It signified a departure from the centralized urban planning to decentralized local autonomy.

In addition, the background of Korean civil movements has had important influences on the spread of community building. The civil movements in the 2000s were criticized for it being the civic movements with no citizen involvement. As a result, the reflection of civil movements began to regard the grassroots level of local living unit and politics of everyday life as a new exit strategy for change. In this context, the grassroots civil movements have become one of the pillars of the community building by combining the local social movements and life politics, to meet local needs and restore the communality of a village.

In the 2000s, community building spread rapidly as the central government as well as local governments initiated a variety of community building projects. These projects paved a way to the diversification of subjects, participants, and objects in community building. Simultaneously, increased government intervention made the process of resource mobilization, once organized by voluntary wills of residents and pluralism, to be more dependent on the government administration (Jung 2012; Kim and Lee 2013). Subsequent administrative processes and actions rapidly institutionalized and commercialized community building. As administrations pursued the visible improvement of living environments through the community building projects, ordinary residents in relevant areas had more difficulty getting their voices heard. In fact, they were thoroughly excluded from the projects. The government, the specialists and a small number of active participants dominated the projects of community building.

Along with the prevalence of community building, more researches began to address a issue of resident participation. In particular, most quantitative studies for analyzing the factors on inhabitants' participation stressed socio-demographic and socioeconomic variables such as gender, age, duration of residence, social capital, educational background, income, and so on (Kwak and You 2005; Park and Kim 2006; Lee 2006; Lee, Lee and Jun 2009; Kwak 2013). These studies, however, are limited in that they did not go beyond identifying characteristics of the residents' who participated without

addressing or discussing what could be the universal implication of this phenomenon. Such limitation could be the result of the lack of attention to the various ways the relationship between community building and resident participation are structured. In addition, the administration-led nature and the degree of dependency of the villages in the process of institutionalization of community building plays a significant role in restricting the participation of citizens from below. It is considered that such limited analysis is nothing more than partial analysis.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the social conditions of autonomy and democracy with regard to villages by critically reviewing process of community building. To this end, we propose a new model of citizen autonomy, village democracy. It incorporates the nature of grassroots democracy that realizes a specific strategy of citizen autonomy while critically approaching the limit of community building without democracy. The term "village democracy" was first announced in Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, in 2014. However, the village democracy in Seongbuk-gu was promoted as a policy without being systematized theoretically. And the concept of village democracy is still unknown in academia. Therefore, there are little research on relevant attitudes and values of local residents relating to the village democracy. In this regard, this paper deals with a theoretical basis for the possibility and task of village democracy in light of the actual case of Seongbuk-gu.

Thus, we examined the social conditions for village democracy, which is considered to be the most important foundation for citizen autonomy, such as the scope of the village, sense of belonging to Seongbuk-gu and people's confidence in the community members. Closely looking into those, first, the scope of the village may be an important indicator for identifying how citizens perceive physical conditions and extent of autonomy for village democracy. We expect to be able to capture the features of potential participants and realistic units for village democracy by exploring the differences of the people who recognize the scope of the village. Also, factors affecting the sense of belonging to the village can be understood as important conditions to facilitate or promote the civic participation of the village democracy. In particular, the level of trust among members of the village needs to be discussed in order to understand the extent of community consciousness and citizenship. In addition, we explored the factors affecting the extent of village democracy such as their awareness about village democracy. Finally, we also addressed the measures or methods necessary to improve village democracy.

We do not focus our discussion on giving a theoretical justification to

the village democracy in Seongbuk-gu. This paper is a preliminary and also an exploratory discussion on the conditional context by which the importance of village democracy and the state of civil society come together. It is of utmost importance to build a connection between the theory and the reality of village democracy. In order to do so, a more delicate approach to village communities is required. Finally, it is expected that our discussion will contribute to the theoretical foundation for village democracy and community.

Community Building and the Rediscovered Village

Institutional diffusion of community building

The prototype of Korean community building emerged in a form of civic participation activities initiated by several civic groups in the 1990s. *Making Pedestrian Friendly Seoul Movement* (1996), initiated by the Urban Action Network, and the *Daegu Samdeok-dong Opening of Fence Movement* (1998) that the Daegu Love Movement Citizens' Conference spread throughout the country are representative examples. Initially, civic groups and NGOs were not interested in community building. However, since 2000, they have begun to see new possibilities of grassroots democracy and civic participation in the community building movements in response to the decline of the civic movements and revitalized citizen autonomy. Further, the institutional support for community building provided by the government has expanded. Particularly, the *Livable Cities / Community Building Project* by the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs and the *Livable Community Development Project* by the Ministry of Public Administration and Security started in 2007, and they have played an important role in spreading the community building project or movement. At present, community building is characterized by the combination of the administrative management, civic movement and inhabitants' participation.

As emphasized earlier, the community building was rapidly spreading like a sweeping trend in the 2000s with the help of institutionalization of residents' autonomy. In particular, several local governments have applied the project of community building to their administration and their cases are evaluated as successful business models. Projects such as *Creating a Beautiful Village in Gwangju Buk-gu* in 2000, *Cultivating Buk-chon* in 2001, and *Insadong District Unit Plan* in 2002 are some of the renowned examples.

These projects were based on the community building support plan established by pertinent municipalities. As a result, we witness a certain degree of institutional isomorphism in the cases of the community building. When Gwangju City established in 2004 the *Beautiful Community Building Ordinance*, community building in general has become a policy led by local governments. Especially since 2010, local governments faced the stagnant real estate market and actively attempted to complement and overcome limitations of the existing urban redevelopment plans by implementing the community building policies. As a result, villages in city areas became more than mere physical living environments and targets for improvement. They were given a new role as the locus for civic participation where culture, arts, and history could be multilaterally approached and reinterpreted. In the In the meantime, local administrations have established the institutional apparatus, such as the ordinance system, to promote the residents' active participation in community building in the process.

Counting the number of ordinances registered in the Enhanced Local Laws and Regulations Information System (2016), as of February 2016, there are a total of 104 ordinances related to community building. This suggests that 43.3% of the 240 metropolitan and provincial municipalities have enacted ordinances relevant to community building. The largest number of ordinances were enacted in 2012, which were 35 cases, accounting for 33.6% of the 104 ordinances. In particular, the Seoul Metropolitan Government enacted the Ordinance on Support for Community Development in 2012 (January 15, 2012) and 23 other boroughs enacted relevant ordinances in the same year except for Mapo-gu (2009) and Seongbuk-gu (2011). The institutionalization of community building has clearly diffused and such trend is likely to continue.

In short, the community building projects in the past were in essence a residential or environment movements led by civic groups and residents. However, since 2000, increased number of stakeholders and businesses have diversified the process of community building. Various actors such as residents, civic groups, experts, local governments and parliaments, and the central government have participated in community building. Especially, with expanded government intervention, resource mobilization for community building became more dependent on the administrative sector. It is noteworthy that such dependency is in stark contrast to the previous tactics of resource mobilization based on voluntary and pluralistic participation.

Above-mentioned characteristics of Korean community building projects imply that the increased administrative influence on resource

mobilization and management in community building had some negative effects on the form and the content of the civic participation in the process. Consequently, community building of the present time largely focuses on both changing and improving physical living environments. Furthermore, as the administration's influence on civic participation and resource mobilization became institutionalized, citizen autonomy has been undermined. Considering all the factors reviewed earlier, community building resembles the case of urban planning driven by the government and capital. Community building without democratic principles signifies a pessimistic phase. It is highly needed to deliberate deliberate on preventive measures and prescriptions.

Community building without democratic principles

One of the conditions that institutionally expanded community building was governance. Governance, as it relates to the spread of community building, was a nominal bridge between the government and residents. It involved various stakeholders as well as local administrations and residents while dealing with problems and agendas for the villages. For that, governance in a way provided the legitimacy of democracy in the process (Ansell and Gash 2007; Sirianni 2009; Smith 2009; Kim 2011; SM. Kim 2016).[1] In recent years, "networked community governance", which occurs in the context of a village, has gained traction as an optimal unit of solving problems that are intricately intertwined and upholding public values (Stoker 2004). In this light, the experiments relevant to various cooperative political processes at the village level can function as a foundation developing bigger imagination about small-sized democracy. This is because the village communities value both new and prior knowledge with which people can utilize in acquiring tangible and intangible resources. As such, many expect the capability of governance to be maximized at village levels for following reasons. First, governance can promote social capital and community cohesion. Second, it can improve service delivery by way of having voices heard in service planning and

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[1] Moreover, with growing interests on the network-centered 'collaborative governance' model, the discussions on the structure of the relationship in which various actors participate in collective decision-making and cooperation are being activated. Ansell and Gash (2007) modeled the conditions for successful co-operation by examining 137 cooperative governance practices. They defined collaborative governance as "a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly include non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative in order to develop or implement public programs or assets" (Ansell and Gash 2007, p. 544).

monitoring stages. Third, it allows for better meeting local needs by delivering their own services. Fourth, it draws attention to the "democratic deficit" through re-engaging citizens with government institutions (Taylor 2007, p. 300).

However, the way governance-centered community building was structured differs from the expectations of theory. This is because the governance system has been largely led by the government administration, rather than by the inhabitants, even further weakening the conditions of social relations which are necessary for community cohesion. In fact that the community building projects aimed at making visible improvements in the physical environments have made the support from the government seems more important than the participation of the inhabitants. In addition, in terms of resident participation in community building, the leading actors tend to be limited to a selected few who communicate with the administration and experts at ease.

As shown above, the diffusion of community building transformed its core from the principle based on the grassroots movement into that dominated by the logic of the government. Governance led by the government administration has not developed beyond the nominal value. Now community building is much better understood as being in the area of the government's administrative business, rather than it being the citizen autonomy movement. The community building projects are often seen as a means of providing public administra-tion services by using the inhabitants' or the private sector's own resources. From a more critical perspective, it seems rather evident that no local self-governance and self-sufficient villages can form with community building without government intervention. This indicates a fatal flaw in community building destitute of democratic principles.

In this context, it is necessary to revisit the issue of community building destitute of democratic principles from an alternative perspective. It is not a simple matter of applying democratic procedures and contents or merely strengthening those democratic elements in community building projects led by government. Nor is it a problem that can be solved simply by supplementing the material and institutional apparatuses to induce the participation of village residents into community building based on the formally structured governance. Such prescriptions could cause unnecessary competition among community building projects that are structured mainly on a basis of administrative performances. Moreover, it also has the risk of exposing and underscoring only the negative aspects of bureaucratic

administration or top-down administration lacking sustainability and effectiveness. Therefore, the key point is to identify the fundamental factors that cause confining community building within the administrative system and curtailing the actual, meaningful participation of the residents. To this end, this article proposes a new framework called *village democracy* which would not only diagnose, but also suggest solutions for the problem of community building lack of democratic principles and the problem of resident autonomy with limited civic participation.

Village Democracy and Its Social Conditions

Village democracy as a strategy for citizen autonomy

Democracy faces an urgent need for constant revision and improvement not only in its definition, but also in its specific institutions in accordance with changes in social and power structures. In the following four unsatisfactory situations, democracy was forced to reflect on the call for changes with regard to its capabilities; (a) incapacity to promote equality in social and economic sectors, (b) incapacity to make people feel that their participation is effective, (c) incapacity to assure that governments do what they are supposed to do, and (d) incapacity to balance order and noninterference (Przeworski 2009, p. 72). Such incapacities are easily found in any representative governments created by democracy. However, the political demands of citizens raise in response to the problematic situations come from their rational hope and belief that democratic institutions are able to be continuously improved. In this respect, the backdrop for village democracy we focus on here is based on the limits of uncertainty and incompetence of representative democracy. The idea of village democracy strongly reflects our conviction that alternative experiments of new democracy are possible.

Then, what is village democracy? We consider village democracy to be a strategy for citizen autonomy. Democracy aims at autonomy and villages are the basic unit of living community where autonomy is carried out. Here, autonomy functions as a force for village communities to shape and structure the principle of cooperative coexistence in an autonomous and democratic way. And village communities share the reflexive responsibilities of solidarity of the following results. After all, village democracy can be summarized as the effective strategy for citizen autonomy that pursues the order of self-governance, cooperation and responsibility so as to achieve the cooperative

coexistence in village communities.

For a long time, self-governance in democracy as a political idea has been understood as promoting freedom and equality harmoniously and implicating self-reflective and self-determined ability. In particular, the principle of autonomy states "we are free when we are bound only by laws we choose" and assumes self-governance to promote mature publicness of civil society which requires intense political and social interactions instead of it being a self-limiting (Habermas 1992; Dahlberg 2005; Przeworski 2010, p. 17). These ideas of self-governance can provide a useful model for resolving the dilemma of democracy which intensified as the disparities between the sovereign state and the people's sovereignty grew over time. For this reason, the ideas of autonomy and self-governance have long been celebrated as the core factors for "the power and appeal of democracy" (Dunn 1993, p. vi). Therefore, democracy, whose backbone has been the concept of self-governance, should implement the principle of autonomy essential for the expansion of rule of law and civic participation in civil society, as if it were an *autonomic nerve system*. In other words, citizens should equip themselves with regulatory functions free of government control that allows them to identify regional problems and resolve such problems based on the principles of autonomy, cooperation and responsibility.

However, since democratization, Korea's strategy of self-governance has largely focused on achieving political and economic outcomes from decentralization with local autonomy and balanced development. Of course, Kim Dae-jung administration's policy to transform of *Eup, Myeon, Dong* functions created a new momentum for renewing the emphasis on the village-based administration and residents' participation. Nevertheless, local autonomy was still subordinated to the larger central government and its system limited civic participation in practice. In this context, the institutional expansion of community building that has gained momentum since the 2000s can be interpreted as the strategy to promote citizen autonomy, in which the administration encourages and supports the participation of residents. In the process, however, the oligarchic decision-making customs, which relied on a small number of experts, bureaucrats and local elites for the sake of the efficiency and rationality in executing administrative procedures prevailed. Although the organization and function of the administration have been decentralized to some extent, the power structure of the administration still dominant the resources and knowledge as same as before.

The strategy for citizen autonomy pursued by village democracy stands in contrast to the existing local autonomy strategies in the following ways.

First, in village democracy, the mosaic of democracy consists of villages or small units of self-governance. In the democratic system, the self-governance of each village is in line with the idea of grassroots democracy. For example, ordinary citizens exert direct influence by participating in collective decision-making processes or public hearings on issues of budgets, laws and policies related to the relevant region or village in village democracy.[2] In this regard, grassroots democracy is one of the core repertoires of citizen autonomy pursued by village democracy. However, in order for this mosaic of democracy to be resilient enough, the small and diverse pieces of autonomy that embody village democracy need to be reconstructed to a form appropriate to the conditions and environment of the village in lieu of heavy formalization and uniformity by government administration. And this still remains a challenge to the extent that it is imperative that civil society experience and spread the political efficacy of civic participation.

Second, village democracy accompanies frame transformation from that of local autonomy to that of citizen autonomy. The existing strategy for self-governance centered on decentralization of power. In other words, citizen autonomy pursued minimizing the governmental administrative intervention on organization, personnel, policy, and finance through decentralization. As a result, the saying, "local autonomy is equal to administrative autonomy, and it becomes the residents' autonomy if it goes a step further," was established as a formula that gives an impetus to decentralization. Particularly, decentralization and balanced regional development through administrative autonomy were aimed at autonomy from the central government and performance competition with other regions. So, it was easy to falsely label the strong regionalist cohesion witnessed in local autonomy as a form of local identity or a sign of residents' autonomy. During this political process, the pertinent municipality and its inhabitants become united against the huge

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[2] A representative example is the budget system for the local people to plan and discuss how the budget of the local council will be used. Established by the Workers' Party in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989 and spread around the globe, the participatory budgeting system is a representative example of grassroots democracy. In Korea, with active influence of civil society, in 2003, the central government has begun to encourage local governments to organize the participatory budgeting system. Since then, in 2010, 103 local governments, 42% of all local governments, have enacted the ordinance for the participation of local residents. In 2015, Seongnam-si and Ulsan Nam-gu joined in the enactment of the ordinance, and all 243 municipalities in the country have implemented the participatory budgeting system. The participatory budgeting process of the residents consists of public participation committee, public hearings, meetings, surveys, and job openings. The level and effectiveness of the budgets vary greatly among the local governments. In particular, low levels of inhabitants' participation and lack of interest, and weak citizen representation of the participatory budgeting committee are the biggest problems.

central administration and other municipalities. This phenomenon could be a hidden legacy of incomplete democratization that focused on keeping the powerful statism in check.

In this context, it is necessary to plan citizen autonomy checking and balancing the growing local administrative power, just as the local governments pursued decentralization from the massive state power. It is because the limited decentralization strategy that has halted at the level of local autonomy should be further developed in more microscopic and diverse ways so as to contribute. A strategy for village democracy is a task that must be pursued in order to gain devolution of power from local governments to citizens, following the decentralization of power from the central government to the local governments. The core of citizen autonomy lies in the network of civil society and its organized capacity that manage citizens' power according to the principles of autonomy, cooperation and responsibility.

Third, the strategy for citizen autonomy of village democracy restructures the publicness of civil society based on the existential life of individuals. Under the existing strategy for self-governance where citizens' lives and politics are separated, politics and administration unilaterally shape citizens' lives. The existing systems and laws in the public sector and policies relevant to labor, environment, health, security, education, and taxes have a direct impact on the conditions of citizens' lives. Here, the definition of democracy is confined to political means and procedural processes within the scope of the representative system. Therefore, the life of citizens is once removed from politics or only the nominal form left of it, and gets excluded from the political process while left vulnerable to the ideologies trumpeted by the press. Through this vicious cycle of a phenomenon, citizens' lives and interests drift away from politics. This can be understood as social consequences of undermined democracy which seems to have become both a mere rhetoric, and the dominance of the administration as well as politics obsessed with formalities.

However, the strategy that emerges from the frame of citizen autonomy can bring about a new ideal type of democracy that can reunite citizens' life with politics. In other words, in such ideal democracy, citizens get to autonomously identify public problems in their daily lives, seek solutions collaboratively, and reflexively share the responsibility for the outcome of their actions. Through such political reconstruction, insecurities inherent in human life, such as alienation, isolation, suffering, poverty, anxiety, depression, division and demolition can be politicized as the public order of citizens that empathize, communicate, cooperate and coexist (Cho 2015, p.

63). Focusing on individuals' existential life, the reunification of politics and people's lives is the very core of the village democracy to the extent that it strengthens the publicness of the civil society.

Nevertheless, the frame of village democracy requires sophisticated defense logic. Reinterpreting the general discourse which has already been emphasized in the existing autonomy strategies would not be very helpful for constructing the substantial meanings of village democracy. In other words, the generalist approach argues that the autonomy strategy should supplement the representative democracy (Ahn 2007; Kim and Song 2011; Woo 2014; Kwon 2015), strengthen the residents' capacity for self-governance and the trust in the local governments (Park 2008; Kim and Lee 2014), and improve the administrative services through the governance channels (Kim 2008), do little more than reconfirming the justification of the results expected from a successful autonomy strategy. In the end, the issue that we should pay attention to is how to define the inner dynamics and the principles of civil society that drives village democracy in the context of real-life conditions. While the defense logic stands on the social consensus that determines where the realistic conditions and the theoretical ideas come together, the defense logic of village democracy is built on the analyses and theoretical reflections that are far closer to real life conditions empirically.

Social conditions for democracy in village community

After we have sought essentials features for a good society, going beyond being in a tug of war between theory and reality of village democracy, we now suggest the social conditions of the ideal village community as following. First, village communities should share *the sense of community* based on the common bond and social interaction. The sense of community is generally expressed when there are communal historical, spatial, and physical foundations among residents in the village community. The community sentiment is conspicuously manifested when the members' sense of unity or bond is interlinked with social interactions which aim to promote common interests. On the one hand, the sense of community is often based on the sense of belonging which comes from the members' sense of belonging and their subjective feelings that they naturally share. On the other hand, it is sometimes rooted in institutionalized norms which serves as a moral force that binds the community together. In the former case, people have a sense of local patriotism or a sense of belonging to their times or places of residence. From Yi-Fu Tuan's humanistic view on places, the concept of village is

formed and maintained in real life when people consider it a *field of care* born out of the emotional attachments such as familiarity and comfort (Tuan 1977). Sometimes, however, the concept of village is closely affected by collective interests such as a NIMBY phenomenon.

Contrastingly, in the latter case, the sense of community becomes the core foundation of *citizenship*. Citizenship is almost always reciprocal in its nature. So it has appeal as a social concept. But there is a more fundamental reason for this nature. It is that the rights and responsibilities among the members of society are the most primitive conditions for maintaining a stable human community (Faulks 2000, p. 13). In the end, the sense of community lays foundations for the structured civic consciousness which is reproduced by social interaction between individuals and communities, or between individual actors and the social structure within the social context that Giddens (1984, p. 25) defined as the "*duality of structure*." In this light, having strong community awareness means that individual identity is closely connected to the shared feeling among the members, and that the social interaction among members is highly structured. Thus, in order for a community to be maintained in the era of individualization, citizenship and voluntary associations need to play an important political role of reconstructing individuals' identity. In particular, the role of voluntary associations acting on the stage of the village or local is important, because they can reduce some degree of political disparity in village democracy, depending on their capacity to develop civic virtue and social trust (Kim 2016).

Second, in the ideal village community, the residents continuously and repetitively share a *network of lifeworld* based on intimacy and reciprocity experienced in daily lives. If a village is defined as a special unit that sets the primary radius for individual lives, people begin to employ social relationships as ways to achieve intangible beliefs, values, and norms by putting them in practice within village boundaries. For example, by exchanging greetings with neighbors, paying attention to neighbors' personal affairs or expressing and sharing their opinions on public issues, the residents in the ideal village democracy utilize as social capital the network of lifeworld experienced through everyday interaction. As they utilize human relations and consider these as fundamental resources in their daily lives, village community members can have more of an intimate social bond and a sense of belonging, unity and interdependence towards the idea of community, so-called *we-ness as a whole*.

The network of lifeworld in terms of social relationships is an important

foundation on which a dynamic structure of socio-economic solidarity can be created in a village community where the communal bond has been weakened or broken down due to individualism. However, the network of the lifeworld does not naturally merge with the field of social solidarity. Social relationships formed by reciprocity and altruism can promote solidarity in the lifeworld.

As it is well known, reciprocity is the key in inspiring the altruistic ties among actors, and is seen as an integral rule that leads to successful cooperation among them (Bolle and Kritikos 2006). This virtuous circle of reciprocity, altruism, and successful cooperation hints at the possibility of transforming the network of lifeworld into a field where socio-economic solidarity can be cultivated. In short, this indicates the level of potential in social relations. For example, the success of socio-economic solidarity as found in the cases of microscopic charity activities such as volunteer service or fundraising, organized solidarity among social enterprises, self-help enterprises, village enterprises and cooperatives, the active partnership between corporate social responsibility projects and nonprofit organizations, and a transition to universal national welfare represented by provision of free-of-charge care and free meals, all depend on the norms, institutions and potentials of social relations where reciprocity and altruism are engraved.

Third, village communities share the environment of *shared resources* available for ensuring residential stability and quality of life in terms of economy, education, culture, welfare, and life safety. For example, the public resources include a large number of common pool resources and public goods associated with residential stability and quality of residents' life such as the followings: markets, schools, libraries, child care facilities, disaster shelters, town halls, public houses, parking lots, garbage collection facilities, roads, parks, public gyms, theaters, pedestrian crossings, and surveillance cameras in crime-ridden districts. Among them, commons or public goods, classified as public facilities, are consumed competitively but given for free to consumers. From this, we see the very nature of environmental characteristics of village communities. And village communities with a wide range of shared resources show high levels of residential stability and quality of life.

However, we cannot help but point out a dark side of the city we are witnessing. Because of the market privatization in cities, the availability of common pool resource and should benefits are rapidly shrinking. Over the entire history of urbanization, provision of public spaces and public goods such as sewage systems, public sanitation and education has played a very

important role in the development of capitalism, whether they were provided privately or publicly (Melosi 2000; Harvey 2012, p. 72).

Nevertheless, public spaces and commodities are now the targets of market transactions. Squares or streets where people used to communicate with each other and children used to play have changed into implicit zones monopolized by the capital. Such spaces and commodities, once communal, now become something exploited for profits by the administrative authorities and travel agents who have colluded and left the aesthetics of the city in the hands of commercialization. As a result, "a livable village" in this context refers to a place with high asset values by making housing and land prices increased with convenient public transportation, nearby schools, hospitals, and consumer spots. As Harvey (Harvey 2012, p. 75) pointed out, even the newly created public spaces in New York's High Line project that turned old railway into parks provided more public value to the riches while leaving ordinary people behind. In this regard, the village community is faced with the challenge of protecting the existing common pool resources and supplementing them in the midst of rapid privatization.

To sum up, village communities share a sense of community, network of lifeworld, and common resources as they serve as the minimum units of community that shape the basis of individual existential and experiential life. A village community is primarily defined by demographic, cultural and economic, local characteristics formed in a specific space called a village. Ultimately, however, the village community can be redefined as a living community where people live harmoniously altogether based on the understanding of complexity, pluralism, or heterogeneity. Yet, we should be cautious of a romanticized version of the village community signifying peaceful coexistence. Instead, it is more accurate to say that village communities make it possible to even think of the great imagination of small politics necessary for living harmoniously altogether. The fundamental difference between village democracy we envision and the projects of autonomists, anarchists, or neoliberalists lies in village democracy's nature of being the *network of small life politics* that combines people's awareness, relationships and resources through cooperative governance in everyday life.

The Conditions of Village Democracy and Civil Society in Seongbuk-gu

In September 2014, Seongbuk-gu officially established the village democracy

plan as the key policy for the administration of the district. Then, in January 2015, it consisted of a group of village officers, the task force dedicated to the policy, and began to promote institutionalization of village democracy in earnest.[3] The village democracy in Seongbuk-gu aims to "raise residents' self-governance capacity, solve the problems in everyday life by tackling them together as a village unit, and restore village communities." For this purpose, the so-called *village plan* was established as a process to set up plans and implement measures to address the village's issues such as those related to education culture, welfare for public health, environment, economy, safety and etc. The village plan goes through the stages of preparation, planning, execution and evaluation.

The first step, preparatory stage of the village plan, is to find out the problems and the need projects in villages within Seongbuk-gu, and investigate available resources. To do this, a *neighborhood planning team* consisting of at least three people is formed. The second step is planning stage, where the local planning department prepares a *business proposal* and expands and reorganizes the organization into a village planning committee. The village planning committee establishes a *village basic plan* by setting the agenda for the village general meeting and examining the budget contribute to support the participation of the villagers, and holds the *village general meeting* after getting the approval of the local autonomous committee. At this stage, village planning committee consists of 40 to 50 individuals randomly chosen over 15 years of age. The third, execution stage reflects on the village plan and the participatory budgeting in Seongbuk-gu's business plans and budgets. Finally, in the evaluation phase, village planning committee evaluates and revise the village plan for the next year after profound deliberation on shortcomings. Seongbuk-gu first experimented village democracy in Gireum 1-dong and Wolgok 2-dong in March 2015. Then in 2016, village plan extended to other eight dongs including Dongsun-dong and Jongam-dong. It plans to institutionalize the system of village democracy in all villages within its administrative boundary.

The village democracy in Seongbuk-gu inherently has the fundamental limit as a local autonomy system as it is an institutionalized strategy for autonomy initiated by the top administration in the district. Nevertheless, it can be regarded as an encouraging experiment in that it has created an

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[3] Seongbuk-gu's projects related to village democracy are as follows: Village media, Participatory budgeting system, Open policy debate, Social economy festival and fair, Fair trade day event, Youth fair trade education, Sharing businesses on parking lot, room, furniture, book, Village planning, and Village Assembly.

environment conducive to voluntary civic participation in addressing the public agenda of the village and provided the actual institutional foundation for citizen autonomy. In particular, it is important to note that the administration has been developing transparent and fair institutional measures. By doing so, no material or institutional support by the administration will become the agent of power in the process of implementing village democracy. There is still great room for further development and as it is less than two years old, we should be cautious when evaluating the village democracy experiment in Seongbuk-gu. Let us explore the conditional context of civil society found in village democracy of Seongbuk-gu.

The following analyses are based on the results of *Maeulminjujuui-e daehan insikjosa* (A Survey on the Perceptions of the Village Democracy) conducted in April 2016 by the Institute of Social Research at Korea University. It is a survey of 1,129 men and women aged 19 and over who reside in Seongbuk-gu. The survey was based on the random sampling groups after proportionally allocating the respondents by gender, age, and region. It was conducted through face-to-face interviews using structured questionnaires. The maximum tolerance limit of the questionnaire was ± 2.92% p at 95% confidence level.

The basic perceptions of village and village democracy

At present, Seongbuk-gu residents' perceptions on village democracy is somewhat low. However, considering the basic direction of the village democracy project and the period of policy implementation no negative assessment is called for yet. What is in order is more conscious efforts to effectively understand which fields and factors are necessary to strengthen and expand village democracy. To achieve this, we will look at the social conditions of village democracy in three major ways, and then explain how they ought to function. The first condition for the implementation of village democracy is the scope of a village which is the basic unit of village democracy. The second is the sense of belonging to Seongbuk-gu and the third is people's trust in the community members. These factors are crucial for exploring the basis of social relationships and civic consciousness relevant to village democracy. Second, we examine the factors affecting the extent of village democracy based on the residents' awareness of village democracy. The factors affecting the residents' awareness of village democracy can have significant implications for strengthening necessary conditions for successful
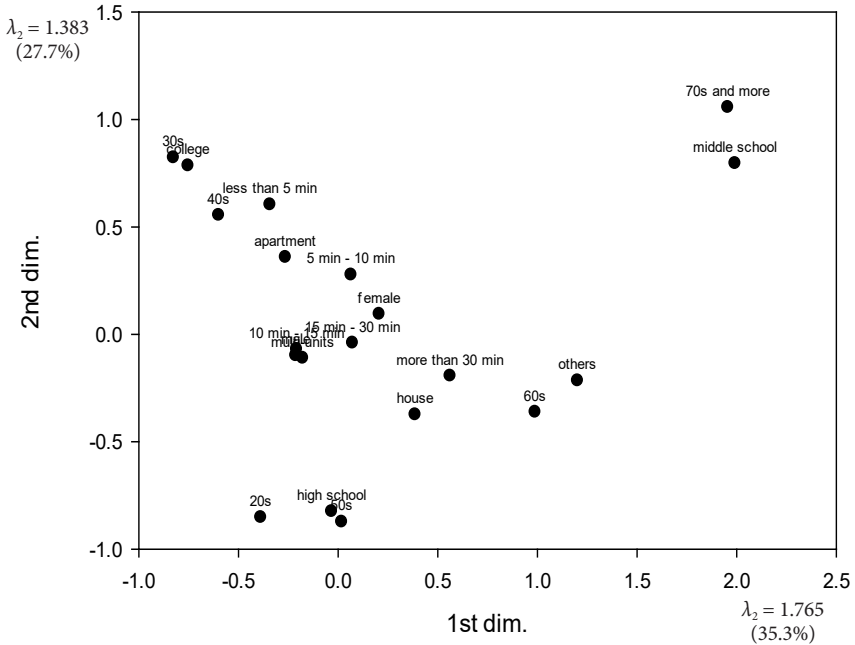
$\lambda_2 = 1.383$
(27.7%)

2nd dim.

70s and more

middle school

30s
college

less than 5 min
40s

apartment
5 min - 10 min

female

10 min - 15 min
migrants   15 min - 30 min

more than 30 min   others

house   60s

20s   high school
40s

1st dim.

$\lambda_2 = 1.765$
(35.3%)

FIG. 1.—Perceptions on The Scope of the Village by Gender, Type of Housing, Level of Education, and Age

civil society. Third, by studying the residents' expectations and projections on village democracy, we seek to examine measures or methods the residents themselves would develop and use to boost village democracy.

We examined how Seongbuk-gu residents' perceptions on the scope of a village vary by gender, age, type of housing, residential area and level of education. The followings are the results of correspondence analysis on their responses about various topics including the concept of village, the effect of the relationships with neighbors on the sense of belonging to the village, and their trust in Seongbuk-gu residents.[4]

First, the group that considers the scope of the village to be relatively small, as an area that is less than 5 minute-walk or 5 to 10 minute-walk, is mostly made up of apartment residents in their 30s and 40s. In addition, they tend to have at least bachelor's degree. Those groups who are relatively stable

[4] Correspondence analysis is an exploratory statistical methodology designed to analyze contingency tables. It provides information similar to those produced by multi-dimensional scaling and factor analysis (Greenacre and Blasius 1994). In Figure 1, the information on residential area is omitted for illustrative purpose.

in terms of socioeconomic backgrounds, like the aforementioned group, tend to have narrower perception on the scope of the village. The second group of respondents perceive the scope of the village as an area larger than the first group, which means they consider a village as an area that takes more than 15 minutes to walk the whole area. This second group mostly represents 20s and 50s, especially those who were only able to receive a high school education. They in general live in row house, multiplex houses or small studio apartments. On the other hand, unlike these groups that show distinct differences in their concepts of a village, there are people who have indefinite perception of village boundaries. Comparing to the first two groups, these people do not belong to any particular *dong-unit*, and do not show any commonality in terms of the socio-economic background, residential environment and residential area. This group mainly consists of those who are 70 years of age and older with less than middle school education. They reside in relatively poor residential areas, and in many cases, they live in flophouses.

We examined the factors that affect the sense of belonging to Seongbuk-gu, as it is the second condition that forms the basis of village democracy. We ran multiple regression analysis on the sense of belonging with the basic socio-demographic variables. The outcome indicates that the model including the variables related to relationships with the neighbors rendered a relatively meaningful result. The results of the multiple regression analysis of this model are shown in Table 1. The explanatory power of the whole model is 20%, which is significant at the 0.05 level (F-value 39.929).

Among the variables included in this model, the duration of residence, the existence of neighbors who can offer help, and the interaction with neighbors were found to be at the significance level .05. In other words, the longer a resident has lived in Seongbuk-gu, the more he or she become aware that there is a neighbor who can offer help, or the more he or she interacts with the neighbors, the higher the resident's sense of belonging as a resident of Seongbuk-gu becomes. The results suggest that the social relationship with neighbors is an important factor on predicting the sense of belonging as a resident of Seongbuk-gu. This may well be a good indication of the basic prerequisite for village democracy. Participation and autonomy should come first in order to serve as the basis for the awareness of social relations in local communities. Taking this into previous consideration, there is always a limit to the administration-led top-down enlightenment or policy promotion. The sense of belonging to Seongbuk-gu is more significantly influenced by the relationships among the neighbors in the local community rather than the

TABLE 1
REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON RESIDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING

Measurement concept	Measurement metrics	Model
Demographic and socioeconomic variables	Gender	-.059 (.042)
	Age	.028 (.017)
	The Duration of residence in Seongbuk-gu	.097 (.014)***
	Household income	.021 (.014)
	Educational attainment	.058 (.037)
Relationships among the residents	Neighbors that can help	.162 (.032)***
	Interaction with neighbors	.159 (.032)***
N		1,129
Constant		1.546***
R^2		.200
F		39.939***

NOTE.—Numbers in parentheses indicate standard errors.
*<.05 **<.01 ***<.001

vertical link between the residents and the administrative authorities. In short, the intimacy with neighbors can be an important foundation for both cultivating the sense of belonging as a resident of Seongbuk-gu and further boosting village democracy.

How residents assess other members of the community is an important element that can be the basis of village democracy. It is as important as individual perceptions on the scope of a village and their sense of belonging to the village or Seongbuk-gu. The members of the community can play an important role in unifying the villagers and promoting resident participation. The residents' own evaluations on local community members could serve as an important base for developing future leadership with regard to village democracy. The evaluation of these members is, of course, more relative than absolute. Therefore, it is necessary to examine its significance through relative comparison.

The level of residents' trust in the local community is shown in Figure 2.[5] Trust in neighbors was the highest with 3.50, followed by trust in educators (3.38), ward officials (3.16), local merchants (3.08), civic activists (3.03),

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[5] The residents of Seongbuk-gu were asked "how much do you trust people in each field" with regard to their neighbors, religious leaders, journalists, educators, civic activists, local merchants and ward officials, and their responses were measured from ① *do not trust at all* ⑤ *trust them very much.*
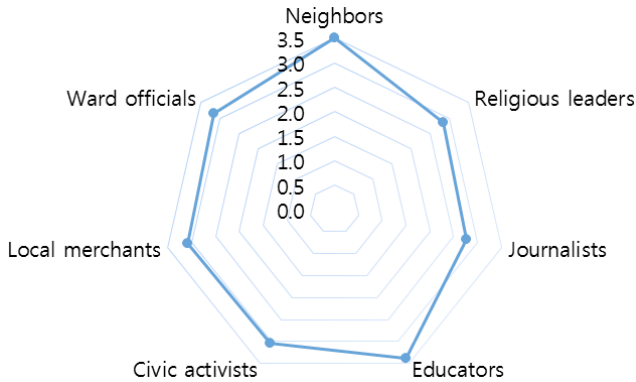
Fig. 2.—Trust in People by each Field of Community

religious leaders (2.85), and journalists (2.77).

The awareness for village democracy

Evaluating the performance of Seongbuk-gu's village democracy is not a simple task. In this section, we examined the performance indirectly through analysis on Seongbuk-gu residents' awareness for village democracy with various measures. In particular, we focused on one's relationship with his or her neighbors who have an important influence on his or her sense of belonging as a resident of Seongbuk-gu. Specifically, we analyzed the effect of relationships with neighbors, based on the awareness for village democracy, the awareness for community participation projects, their involvement in those projects and their intention to participate in the future.

However, the level of direct perceptions on village democracy (about 12.0%) was low, so analysis may be limited. As an alternative, we measured how much people know about village democracy through individual projects and policies of village democracy because in some cases, people do not even know that a particular project is a part of the village democracy at large. When we assessed residents' perceptions on individual projects and policies with this measure, the level of awareness for village democracy is about 31.6%, which is a bit higher than what the other measure indicated.[6]

First, the general tendency of awareness for village democracy is as follows. By gender, men tend to be more aware of village democracy than

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[6] For the ease of analysis, if one knows about one particular business, he/she is counted toward being *aware*.

TABLE 2
LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON AWARENESS FOR VILLAGE DEMOCRACY
PROJECTS

Measurement concept	Measurement metric	Regression coefficient	Wald	Exp (B)
Demographic and socioeconomic variables	Gender	-.197 (.134)	2.157	.821
	Age	.191 (.055)**	12.064	1.211
	The duration of residence in Seongbuk-gu	-.009 (.046)	.034	.991
	Household income	.132 (.043)**	9.306	1.141
	Education attainment	.372 (.117)**	10.098	1.450
Neighbor relationship	Neighbors that can help	-.120 (.104)	1.352	.887
	Interaction with neighbors	.428 (.103)***	17.403	1.534
N				1,129
-2LL				1350.783
x^2				58.162
Nagelkerke R^2				.070

NOTE.—Numbers in parentheses indicate standard errors.
*<.05 **<.01 ***<.001

women. By age group, 30-40 age group was more aware of village democracy than other age groups. In addition, the higher the education attainment level, the higher the awareness, and non-wage workers showed higher awareness of village democracy than wage workers. Residents who lived in Seongbuk-gu for 30 years or more were more aware of village democracy than residents who lived for shorter periods of time and people with a strong sense of belonging to the village are more aware of village democracy than the ones with a weaker sense of belonging. By residential area, mixed results were witnessed.

The results of the logistic regression analysis on Seongbuk-gu residents' awareness for village democracy project are shown in Table 2. Table 2 is the result of the hypothesis test on whether the regression coefficients included in the model is 0. Also, the value of x^2 indicates the difference between -2LL of the model containing only the intercept and the model of -2LL with variables of interest included by the researcher, and is 58.16. The probability of coefficients and differences being equal to zero is .000. The predictive model on awareness for village democracy project with demographic and neighbor relationship factors were statistically significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 3

Evaluation on Activities of Residents' Organizations and Interest in Village Community

(Unit: person, %)

Division		Evaluation of activities of residents' organizations					Total
		Not active at all	Not active	Neutral	Active	Very active	
Interest in village community	Not interested at all	18 (31.6)	7 (2.4)	14 (2.4)	4 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	43 (3.8)
	Not interested	19 (33.3)	139 (47.4)	165 (27.8)	24 (13.3)	0 (0.0)	347 (30.7)
	Neutral	9 (15.8)	97 (33.1)	304 (51.3)	81 (45.0)	0 (0.0)	491 (43.5)
	Interested	10 (17.5)	49 (16.7)	107 (18.0)	66 (36.7)	2 (33.3)	234 (20.7)
	Very interested	1 (1.8)	1 (0.8)	3 (0.5)	5 (2.8)	4 (66.7)	14 (1.2)
Total		57 (100.0)	293 (100.0)	593 (100.0)	180 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	1129 (100.0)
x^2		440.147***					

*<.05 **<.01 ***<.001

Specifically, awareness of village democracy project was higher in the age group of 30-40. Also, the higher the income and the higher the educational level, the higher the awareness for the village democracy projects. In addition, in terms of relations with neighbors, awareness for village democracy project was higher as neighbors interacted more actively.

Prospects for village democracy

So, how do residents in Seongbuk-gu perceive of village democracy in terms of its future prospects? We analyzed the residents' interest in the village community, their evaluation of the activities done by residents' organizations, the importance of quality of life and community participation. Table 3 shows the results of cross-examination of the interest in village community and the evaluation of activities of residents' organizations.

TABLE 4

IMPORTANCE OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME LEVEL

Household Income	Cases	Mean	Adjusted Mean
Less than ₩150M	118	3.56	3.55
₩150M ~ ₩250M	128	3.70	3.70
₩250M ~ ₩350M	212	3.63	3.64
₩350M ~ ₩450M	307	3.62	3.62
₩450M ~ ₩550M	204	3.70	3.70
₩550M ~ ₩650M	99	3.64	3.63
₩650M ~ ₩750M	20	4.10	4.07
More than ₩750M	41	3.93	3.92

NOTE.—Adjusted means are the means controlled for gender, education, and the type of resident.

First, if the villagers perceive that the activities of the villages are not active at all, their interest in their village community tends to be poor. In contrast, the higher their interest in village communities, the greater the interest of residents in their activities. Likewise, the more positive evaluation of the activities of the residents' associations, the more they are interested in the community.

Second, the residents of Seongbuk-gu generally perceive that the participation of residents is important in improving quality of life. Among them, those with relatively higher income are more likely to believe that the participation of the residents is important, compared to other income groups. This symbolizes the idea that the perception that quality of life can be enhanced through the participation of the people is related to an individual's economic situations or an existential condition of life.

In short, the difference in how people define the concept of a village varied by education attainment, residence type, and generation. Groups with relatively stable conditions tend to have narrower perceptions on the scope of the village, and older people and the poor tend to have wider perceptions on the extent of the village. Longer the period of residence, more active the interaction with the neighbors. Trust in neighbors and sense of belonging were found to have positive association. The Seongbuk-gu residents' awareness for village democracy and related projects were generally low. Age, education, income, and trust in neighbors were important factors that account for the different levels of awareness for village democracy. Results

also suggests that community involvement can be an important driving force for improving quality of life. Especially, high income households showed positive attitudes toward the importance of civic participation. All these findings suggest that more active efforts are needed. Further researches and explorations on local identity, sociodemographic factors such as age and education attainment, socioeconomic conditions such as housing type and household income, and the factors that can vitalize civil society such as intimacy and reciprocity among neighbors, social capital, and civic groups are called for. By doing so, we will be one step closer to fully grasping the social conditions suitable for the development of village democracy.

Discussions

We found that village democracy has its potential for success on condition that citizenship and civic participation be embedded in a healthy village community. The former means the normative consciousness and attitude required for a citizen while the latter encompasses a set of practices based on such citizenship in the public order. However, it should be noted that citizenship and civic participation differ not only in the historical and cultural characteristics of civil society, but also the awareness of diversity depending on the characteristics of the social relations that make up the village community, at a more specific level. Nevertheless, we intend to draw a conclusion of this study by discussing in what context citizenship and civic participation as conditions for village democracy should pursue minimum generalities.

    As we all know, the content of citizenship is as diverse as the definition of civil society. However, as in defining civil society, publicness and autonomy are common components among various definitions of citizenship. Autonomy is manifested through factors such as service, participation, and tolerance, which signify social roles as a more active citizen, while publicness means complying with basic duties as a citizen, including compliance of law and regulations and fulfillment of obligations at the least extent. However, the reality is that public citizens who are equipped with publicness and autonomy as defined above are rare to find. In South Korea, corruption is more severe than in other developed countries, and the basic political participation and interest of the citizens are at a relatively low level, as revealed by the low voter turnout. As the sense of community and social solidarity have weakened, only individualization which is a great change is noted conspicuously.

This low level of citizenship is closely linked to low social trust. Social trust has always been regarded as one of the fundamentals of social capital that enables cooperation and coexistence among the members of society. It also helps maintain and develop the society by promoting cooperation based on mutual trust and resolving conflicts. In contrast to private trust, which is formed based on intimacy among relatively equal individuals, public trust formed among individuals destined to have social differences and inequality is basically based on the awareness of systems, people, and groups that they do not know personally. In this sense, public trust operates as more fundamental cultural rules and norms that can be extended and generalized to the trust of society as a whole. Therefore, if citizens are not autonomous and do not serve the common good of the society as a whole, they will need more regulations to resolve social conflicts, maintain order, and guarantee the public interest. In this process, additional administrative and judicial costs are spent, which lead to additional costs for society as a whole and individuals.

This reality of immature citizenship can also be found at the level of the village community. It is hard to find a satisfactory level of social trust or solidarity among the people who have different socioeconomic backgrounds. Currently, the lives of the residents are not based on publicness and autonomy, but rather are shaped by the instructions from the government and the compliance of or resistance to the instructions. Therefore, the promotion of citizenship should be a priority task of civic participation which is necessary in order to make the conditions of civil society conducive to village democracy. In particular, citizenship with autonomy, responsibility and solidarity must be activated in order for the village to become a school of substantial democracy. So, how can citizenship be promoted and enhanced?

First, it is necessary to restore and reconstruct social relationships in village communities. In particular, policies and institutions that would encourage building strong solidarity among villagers need to be introduced and implemented. First of all, villagers should be provided with opportunities to develop relationships with their neighbors who they can ask for help and interact with. In order to do so, it is important to provide opportunities to accumulate shared experiences and share common interests offline or online. In other words, the first thing to be done is providing opportunities and conditions to find and meet neighbors and friends in their villages as many as possible. It is necessary to examine measures such as introducing a service mileage system at the community level, which has been implemented in several regions to promote the intimacy and public solidarity among the residents.

Second, there is a need for civic engagement programs that would help reflect the experience of the residents' own lives on institutions and policies in order to enhance citizenship. Enhanced private ties and friendships are the best that one can expect for a village community as a simple residential group. Furthermore, a village community as a group based on the shared residential area cannot be a sufficient condition to form a civil society. Therefore, the expansion of institutions and policies that can enhance citizenship should be carried out with the focus on citizens' experiences. For example, as in the case of Seongbuk-gu, by holding regular meetings such as the village general assembly and institutionalizing model of participatory budgeting and policy proposal debates, or supporting and encouraging projects such as co-parenting, community-based sharing projects and goodwill projects on a daily basis, villages can give the residents a chance to believe that their experiences with these engagement programs could change not only policies and institutions but also conditions of life. It is also possible to consider the introduction of social problem solving bonds, which have been implemented in several other countries. With social problem solving bonds, residents are guaranteed a certain level of profits by investing in problem solving bonds while local governments can reduce administrative and financial burdens and solve local problems by engaging their residents. In order to make these systems and policies sustainable, it is necessary to convince the residents that these experiences were positive through various forms of feedback so that they would be encouraged to participate continuously.

Third, it is necessary to develop and implement an educational program that will enhance citizenship in the long run. Currently, most citizens have not received any systematic education on democratic citizenship since their adolescences. Given that they have limited experiences as democratic citizens, the institutionalization of village democracy can backfire because they are not prepared. In this regard, it is necessary to actively provide secondary education programs for socialization of citizens. Especially, it is important to develop educational programs that are appropriate for the social, economic and cultural realities and current statuses of the targeted community, and the central government should make efforts to assemble and support the education programs. An exemplary practice is the Federal Democratic Citizens' Education Center or the Citizens' Education Center in Germany, which is in operation to foster liberal democracy.

We have explored the institutions and policies aimed at promoting citizenship and civic engagement in this article, and found that they basically

first aim to connect people with each other. In traditional societies, such processes had been based on bloodlines and regionalism within small local communities. If Korean society had been in the process of modernization and democratization over a relatively long period of time, a civil society based on a high level of social solidarity among citizens would have been formed. Unfortunately, the formation of citizens and civil society in Korean society remains an important social task which is yet to be complete. This is not a problem that would be solved naturally over a long period of time, but rather this is complicated by serious social problems that require the public sector's intervention and active policy responses. Serious social problems such as suicides, low fertility and population aging are making civil society more vulnerable. It is virtually ineffective to call for the restoration of the functions and roles of traditional communities. That would rather exacerbate the communities' extreme exclusiveness and isolation from the external world. Also, implementation of legal and institutional measures without active hands-on approaches of the public sector, the effect is likely to be superficial and formal. We have already witnessed this trend since the institutional democratization.

We cannot regard a society where the number of individuals who suffer from isolation and loneliness increases and these people are living passive life as a healthy society and a future-oriented society. Korean society is known to have low social capital and relatively low trust in public sector. The goal of social integration should not be enforced in the form of structural reform which is top-down and the central government-led. The goal should be pursued with soft approaches that reflect such changes in individuals' lives. It is now time for the public sector to make a cautious prescription strengthen the function and role of social integration, which connects isolated and disconnected individuals in village communities in various ways. Village democracy is oriented towards humanistic and microscopic social integration.

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