

A Case Study on the Operation of Community School for Empowerment of Residents

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: In this study, success stories of residents participating Village Making Projects as urban regeneration escaping from government leading are introduced by community school. **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** This study was performed in 3 steps through participating observation. At the first stage, activities of the residents were observed in the whole course of community school in Seogu Nambumin-2-dong, Busan and contents and materials of Village Making Project were collected. At the second stage they were reviewed and analyzed and at the third stage suggestions and improvement directions were. **Findings:** Resident empowerment of urban regeneration and Village Making is achieved through formation of mutual relationship, creation of shared value of space and cultivation of problem solving ability. In specific, first, co-operative relationship needs to be set forth between planners and participants (residents) in the introductory stage. Second, they share the problem awareness based on this relationship and conduct survey on resources based on strengths of residents. Third, they gain knowledge and skills through collective group activities for problem solving. Fourth, they derive alternative solutions to various goals and methods based on critical thinking. Fifth, they decide the optimal alternative through discussion and seek methods for embodiment of the selected alternative. With this concept, community school was held with university professors participating as planners and coordinators to encourage participation of residents in Village Making and empowerment. **Improvements/Applications:** Based on the above results, a community school has a potential in the application of a new practical method for the empowerment of residents.

Keywords: Community School, Empowerment of Residents, Participating Observation, Resident Participating, Urban Regeneration, Village Making

1. Introduction

In existing urbanized downtown area, regeneration of community and cities is now becoming a new paradigm of urban revitalization. Recently, full scale local social welfare has been introduced to Korea in the term of "Village Making" with urban regeneration. This term is originated from "Machiskuri" in Japan in 1980s. In Korea, it is expanded to the policy led by local governments in 2000s based on achievements by residents' spontaneous participation. It is also evaluated to a project that central government, such as Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs and Ministry of Environment, supports systematically¹⁻³.

In Korea various kinds of Village Making Projects are being performed in 2000s as most of cities execute

their own projects. Seoul Metro City supports Village Making under the name of 'Village Community Making,' while Kyunggi-do supports it under the name of 'Warm and Blessed Community'. However, most of this Village Making Projects are executed an administration support oriented policy project or demonstration project. In other words, they are difficult to be developed sustainable residents-leading Village Making Projects as they are performed with the supports of central or local governments such as street environment improvement project^{4,5}.

In this context, this study investigates the process that 'community school' to learn village becomes the center of Village Making Project by gathering residents and improving their awareness to make residents-leading Village Making Project successful and desires to make it the center of local social welfare in Korean society.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Change of Urban Regeneration

The central government and local governments have lately been promoting 'urban regeneration' to pursue sustainable reorganization of cities through empowerment of local community members, accepting the criticism on the old urban regeneration methods that focused on physical improvements such as new town and joint redevelopment projects⁶. Among such efforts, 'neighborhood regeneration' focuses on communities with "improvement of living environment for neighborhood unit and boosting of street economy (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport" can be considered as regeneration that focuses on local community instead of urban unit. Some studies⁷⁻⁹ claim that universities, educational and research institutions with professional faculty, student, space and facility resources can make important contributions to the settlement of local issues in such process of community regeneration.

Ever since the 1990s, facility sharing activities such as lifelong college education, undergraduate volunteer and opening of playground have become popular in different sectors such as education, social welfare and urban planning¹⁰. Japan has been promoting urban regeneration through active cooperation with universities since the early 2000s. As Village Making with universities and local community stands out as an important task for urban regeneration and regional vitalization, universities and local communities are working together on various renewal projects^{11,12}.

University has various resources such as intellectual-human resource, spatial resource and facilities and economic resource. At the same time, universities are, in general, found upon fundamental mission of public service, as well as teaching and research. Recently in Korea, it has been argued that we should make use of such resource of universities in the process of urban regeneration through university-community partnership⁸.

2.2 Empowerment of Residents for Urban Regeneration

Autonomous local government system in the 1990 led to increased interest of residents about their regions and greater desire to resolve local issues through resident participation. The government and local autonomous entities are actively promoting resident participatory projects such

as Village Making Projects like 'Making Livable Village' and 'Making Happy Village'. Various resident education programs were operated as essential success strategies of such projects. These education programs are based on the empowerment approach that aims to increase capabilities of residents and resolve problems of their community through participation, but they are being criticized for the lack of practicality because most of lectures are for one-time only.

The necessity of resident empowerment for public facility planning and urban regeneration was proposed in the 1990s when Village Making was introduced. Resident participation did occur before this time period in the form of participation design, but this was mere participation design in the process not embracing the entire community. Resident participation in Village Making is very important because habitats and lives of residents cannot be changed without their own efforts.

Target place (physical space or village) and target learners (residents) must be understood in order to approach resident empowerment in the process of urban regeneration. In other words, 'understanding of residents about their village' and 'understanding of residents about the process of approaching empowerment' are required for communication between planners and residents. Although urban regeneration and Village Making were started to resolve spatial problems, they are not simple problems of space but often show problems of interpersonal relationship. Therefore, 'understanding place' and 'understanding of relationship' are required at the same time for Village Making¹³.

Learning of the target place is developed as 'description of space' – 'understanding of place' – 'determination of environment'. This means that planners make residents have greater awareness and knowledge about their villages and become attached to different places in the region for new Village Making. Environmental learning is a process to create better living environment and decisions of residents to make a better village must be followed. 'Understanding of relationship' can accomplish personal empowerment through change of attitudes, values and beliefs towards individuals or society by allowing planners and residents to become aware of one another and set up a relationship. Such personal empowerment is further developed by group experience, recognizing experience shared by and others. This enhances interpersonal relationship, which in turn enhances capability of the local community. This is the concept that explains diffusivity

of empowerment where change of individuals ultimately leads to change of village atmosphere^{14,15}.

Emphasized that an academy of urban affected the citizen's empowerment change on their 'self-confidence', 'information acquisition capability' and 'increased interests on the community'. This implies that an academy of urban planning is related to the citizen's empowerment change in a multidimensional manner such as changes in personal, interpersonal and sociopolitical, etc. even though it still can present limits¹⁶.

3. Proposed Work

3.1 Methods of Study

The target region of this study and its characteristics are as follows: As shown in Figure 1, the target region is 512-beonji area in Nambumin-dong, Seo-gu, Busan that extends 321 m in horizontal direction and 266 m in vertical direction. Total area of the target region is 53,525 m² with total population of 1,286 residents and 683 households. The ratio of elderly population above 65 years of age is 25%, which is about twice as high as mean ratio of Busan city (13.3%). Aging of this region is extremely serious. About 30% of residents are low income classes including 14.2% of basic livelihood security recipients and 15.0% of quasi-poor class residents. This region shows severe economic vulnerability with 16.0% of households failing to meet the minimum housing standard.

This study was performed in 3 steps through participating observation as show follows: At the first stage, activities of the residents were observed in the whole course of community school in Seogu Nambumin-2-dong, Busan and contents and materials of Village Making Project were collected. At the second stage they were reviewed and analyzed and at the third stage suggestions and improvement directions were induced.

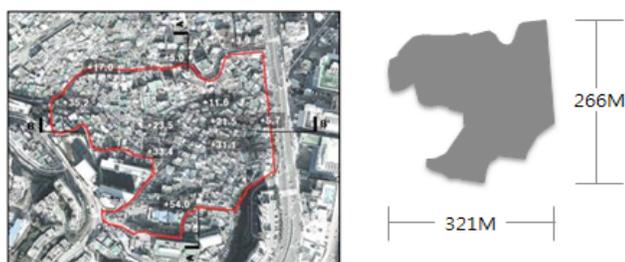


Figure 1. Target area.

3.2 Process of Study

Resident empowerment of urban regeneration and Village Making is achieved through formation of mutual relationship, creation of shared value of space and cultivation of problem solving ability. In specific, first, cooperative relationship needs to be set forth between planners and participants (residents) in the introductory stage. Second, they share the problem awareness based on this relationship and conduct survey on resources based on strengths of residents. Third, they gain knowledge and skills through collective group activities for problem solving. Fourth, they derive alternative solutions to various goals and methods based on critical thinking. Fifth, they decide the optimal alternative through discussion and seek methods for embodiment of the selected alternative.

With this concept, community school was held with university professors participating as planners and coordinators to encourage participation of residents in Village Making and empowerment.

The spatial range of this study is shown in Figure 2. This study used participation observation methods. Community school was held in Nambumin-dong Community Center for two hours on every Thursday (19:00~21:00) for 8 weeks from March 17 in 2016.

3.3 Program

Before building resident consultative group, community school was held for 8 week, 16 hours. Every week, it had a subject about the village and their community life and discussed how to make better community and village, sometimes fiercely. Table 1 shows the contents of community school program.

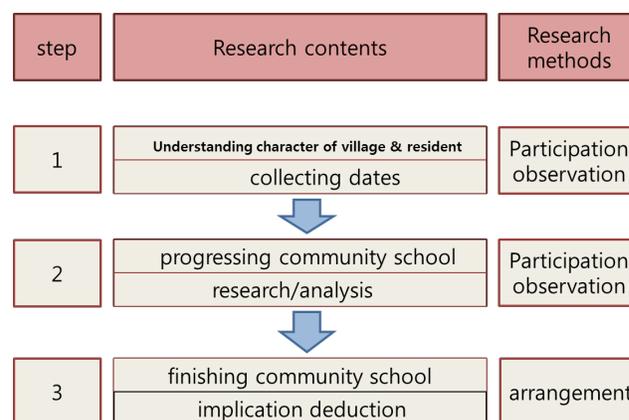


Figure 2. Progress of study.

Table 1. Contents of community school program

session	Contents	progress
1	Introducing of community school program <i>“Why we have to gather?”</i> Opening ceremony <i>“Who are you? I’m...”</i>	Community coordinators
2	To find and to share village treasure <i>“Wandering and discovering my village In a new way”</i>	Community coordinator (professor, Dep. of social welfare)
3	To share vision of village <i>“Guess what would be change in village... Then what we have to do”</i>	Community coordinator (professor, Dep. of urban design)
4	To visit developed villages <i>“What are the successful points to the develop villages?”</i>	Community coordinator
5	Vacant houses proposals in village <i>“How to use to vacant houses for village and community (Cases in Japan)?”</i>	Community coordinator (professor, Dep. of architecture)
6	How to repair house <i>“Shall we enroll and be diagnosed to repairing?”</i>	Community coordinator (professor, Dep. of interior design)
7	Village management, Making job in village <i>“Get a job and making money, it will lead the village to be plentiful”</i>	Community coordinator (professor, Dep. of management)
8	Closing ceremony <i>“Who will be empower leaders for the village?”</i>	Community coordinator

During the first week, residents were introduced and values of Village Making were shared. On the second week, a professor of social welfare came up with a mission for residents to take a look around treasures of the village and perform presentation on the treasures after two weeks. This process allowed residents to rediscover information and values of their village and space. They inspired the sense of community by sharing old legends and stories of the village easily neglected in the past. By adding values to antiques, residents spent time to share their common interest by storytelling. On the third and fourth weeks, residents discussed their dream village and

decided desirable location for community center (village development center), roads, cohabitation home and common workshop as illustrated in Figure 3. They visited the other village which has been successful experiences to “making village”. The village is managed to their own product and the village’s image by residents. They make their village stories to visit and purchase to visitor and distribute the profits for village.

On the fifth week, a professor of architecture gave a lecture on successful examples of empty house regeneration in Japan. She showed that between local university and community in Japan in which university plays a key role revitalizing local community through actives collaboration planning. On the sixth week, a professor of interior design gave a lecture on house repair policies of government agencies and local government entities. Contents of this lecture included requirements for households that can apply for house repair, scope of government grants, scope of support and application procedure for house repair. The operation cost of housing could be reduced through design process such as orientation of blocks and units, building envelope design, landscaping, road and parking etc¹⁷. The residents discussed their new housing and community center, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 3. Guess what would be change in village... Then what we have to do.



Figure 4. Shall we enroll and be diagnosed to repairing.

On the seventh week, a professor of economics explained job creation projects closely related to practical empowerment of residents. Residents paid much attention to this topic. Village companies can be formed later on by building common work facilities to manage woodworking, house repair and cafe businesses.

On the eighth week, participating residents and professors spent time to share their understanding about the Village Making Project and summed up 8 weeks of community school experience. Residents agreed that 8 weeks of education helped them gain deeper understanding of the village and depicted empty house regeneration of Japan they learned during the fifth week as the most meaningful and helpful lecture.

4. Conclusion

As the government including central and local governments leads the Village Making Projects in 2000s, Village Making Projects based on spontaneity and autogenesis of residents and civil society in 1990s became relatively daunting and government leading is predominant. In this study, success stories of residents participating Village Making Projects escaping from government leading are introduced by community school. It is expected a successful Village Making is achieved with changes in the village and enforced competencies of the village based on improved competencies of residents. It will lead a successful community work.

This study was focused on an actual case in Busan Metro city where Village Making Project is actively propelled and performed through participation observation. As reviewed in this study, to activate Village Making Project in early stage, participation of residents is a must. However, it is difficult to expect them to leading roles as they do not have experiences. Because of these reasons, it can be the beginning of Village Making to experience processes to encourage participation and to arouse self-respect through community school and to encourage spontaneous participation by identifying their own voices. In this process, Village Making can be a successful project where hardware and software are integrated.

The most significant part of community school in this study is that the school was supported by neighboring universities. Japan has already been emphasizing regional activities of neighboring universities since the early 2000s and there were many successful cases. Accordingly, human resources among primary resources possessed by universities or professors with expert knowledge and skills related

to urban regeneration and resident empowerment can be utilized to plan out and operate community schools in an organized manner. This in turn leads to fulfillment of the mission of universities to pursue local volunteer activities.

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