

SEEK, SHARE, AND SPREAD: THE THREE KEY WORDS OF SEOUL CITY'S SOCIAL INNOVATION

The city of Seoul has made social innovation relevant to citizens' daily lives and has brought fundamental changes to how we live and are connected to others. Innovations in public service, the sharing city, and the autonomous districts are the main areas showing the three key concepts of social innovation actively pursued in Seoul.

The HOPE INSTITUTE

INNOVATING PUBLIC SERVICES

Visiting Community Service Center: Chatdong

In 2014, a mother and her two daughters committed suicide due to the hardships of life in Seoul, leaving the last words "We are badly sorry..." and setting aside a small amount of money for rent and utility bills. No welfare services were available for them, even though they were without income due to poor health conditions. The incident shocked Korean society and spurred changes in social support systems, including welfare services.

Responding to this incident, the Seoul Metropolitan Government took the social innovation approach, which changed not only the welfare service system itself but also how to deliver services to the right persons at the right time. By shifting the concept of welfare service delivery from "going for" to "coming to", the **chatdong** program, meaning visiting community service, was launched. Previous welfare services were only available to those who walked into the center, but through the **chatdong**, civil servants (called "our village action officers") come to meet people and offer needed services. Action officers also find available resources in the community and connect people to take care of each other. As visiting welfare planners, they work hard to eliminate welfare blind spots, such as in the tragic incident in 2014, by locating neglected poor households and linking them to the correct support. Unused space in community centers was opened for social support activities and education. Since the **chatdong** project started in 2015 and in 80 villages (dong) of 13 autonomous districts (gu), 12,281 households were newly assessed as being in poverty. The project expanded to 342 villages in 2017[1].

SHARING CITY INNOVATION

Car Sharing, Bicycle Sharing, and Seoul Innovation Park

Another aspect of social innovation in Seoul is sharing. The "sharing city" is not just a symbolic concept but a critical means by which Seoul – as a mega city with ten million residents – tackled chronic urban problems such as traffic, pollution, and parking. Car sharing initiated by the 'Nanum Car' project displays Seoul's innovative public policy. This solution utilizes private car sharing services while the city effectively provides public parking spaces to them. It was

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successfully implemented, and usage and interest among citizens continue to grow. As of 2015, it had 1.9 million registrations and 4,011 users on a daily average [2]. 'Ttareungi' is a public bicycle sharing system. Residents in Seoul who were fed up with traffic jams and air pollution responded enthusiastically to these green wheels [3]. In 2015, the service launched with 2,000 bicycles in 150 places, and in 2017, the scale expanded to 5,600 bicycles in 450 places. Further plans will make the program even more convenient, with up to 20,000 bicycles and a smart phone app.

Sharing in Seoul is economic, eco-friendly, and not limited to things or vehicles. For instance, Seoul Innovation Park shares spaces and more than that – it shares innovation itself. It is the place to display innovation ecosystems as



Social Innovation in Seoul City: Seek, Share, and Spread

fields of activities, not just theoretical links. It provides a park for residents, a research center for innovators, and an incubation space for young entrepreneurs. It is where resources and knowledge are shared, and social values are embraced. Youth Hub, Social Innovation Support Center, Village Community Support Center, and many other social innovation groups are located in this park. Synergic networking and collaboration are also shared. By the end of 2015, about 190 groups had joined.

SPREADING SOCIAL INNOVATION THROUGH SOCIAL ECONOMY

Gangdong Social Economy Support Center

For social innovation cases it is important to scale up and to spread. Many local organizations play an important role in this regard. Gangdong Social Economy Support Center is one of the prominent intermediary organizations initiated in 2012. The Center's goal is to create a sustainable social economy ecosystem, including private, public, and citizen sectors. It aims at building a social economy hub through networking between social economy groups and private partners, while discovering new social economy players such as social enterprise, ventures, and entrepreneurs. Ultimately,

it promotes the social economy of the district of **Gangdong** and enhances the capacity of the community [4]. The district's problems of lacking an industrial infrastructure as well as being a bedroom community for commuters had to be confronted, however, the Center is now leading community-based social economy revitalization. Distrust among inhabitants and social fund starvations have been overcome by the active volunteer work of local people. Residents could develop their capability to express their own voices about local pending issues through a bottom-up process. Especially by focusing on pursuing contributions and development in the community, intermediary organizations like the Center activated existing local community networks and conducted trainings to awaken the value of the social economy and inspire social innovation in the process.

SPREADING SOCIAL INNOVATION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Dobong-gu's private-public governance

Traditional development concepts usually concentrated on civil engineering and mega-sized construction, which often resulted in weakened local finance, civil conflicts, and environmental degradation. Tackling these issues, **Dobong**,

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one of the autonomous districts of Seoul, pushed ahead with a policy reflecting sustainable values of environment, society, and economy by pioneering a shift toward software-centered development. It enacted a Sustainable Development Ordinance in 2015, a first among basic local governments [5]. To provide a basic plan for sustainable development, the district organized a Sustainable Development Committee. One way to understand how the social innovation perspective of **Dobong** is working is to see it in the form of governance. It openly elected members of the Committee to reflect various opinions from residents and experts. In order to stipulate a sustainable development vision and goals, it operated a special committee to confirm the vision of “**Dobong**, where people and nature connect, and where everyone wants to live”, and held a ceremony to declare it with the city's inhabitants. **Dobong** has ongoing discussions between the Sustainable Development Committee members and civil workers to establish related action plans and unit tasks. Escaping from government-centered administration, the district built a new, social innovation-oriented administration paradigm that harmonizes with sustainable development through consensus among local members.

CONCLUSION

When facing various urban issues and social challenges, Seoul listens to citizens' voices by way of collaborative governance and innovation, and thus achieves social innovation together with its citizens. Under the leadership of Mayor Park Won-Soon, Seoul initiated social innovations in various areas. It has brought new changes through public service innovation, sharing city innovations, and innovation dissemination across autonomous districts. By doing so, one-sided public welfare services were switched to more interactive ones in which people can live their everyday lives with a stronger sharing spirit and sustainable city environment, and these innovative policies ultimately can be disseminated into basic administrative units. Seoul is assiduously pushing the wheel of social innovation in order to make bigger changes for the Korean society.

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