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Transforming Seoul:
Rethinking Neighborhood

2017-2-5 Transforming Seoul: Rethinking Neighborhood

[Case study]

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Seoul is a global megacity and a symbol of vibrant economic growth. With an estimated 10 million residents as of 2016, Seoul is the largest city in South Korea and the highest in density among OECD major cities. During the fast growth period of the 1970s through the 1990s, top- down policy approaches contributed pro-development projects that led to the construction of high-rise apartment blocks located in high-end areas and left low-end areas under-developed and marginalized.

Seoul's pro-development approach was criticized for promoting massive housing development at the expense of loss of community and social bonding. Over time, the problems of losing social value in neighborhoods have emerged as shown in the rise in crime that resulted in distrust of neighbors and left people feeling unsafe and lonely in their neighborhoods.[1] Growing problems caused by disputes among neighbors pushed the Seoul Metropolitan Government and local district governments develop solutions such as tougher building codes and regulations to mitigate neighborhood problems. However,

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1) Kang, Hyun-kyung(2013, February 17). "Apartment noise hard to handle." *The Korea Times*. Retrieved from http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2013/02/113_130616.html

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those directive policy measures were not sufficient to effectively resolve community disorder related to crime, danger, segregation and other issues that are deeply rooted in fear and distrust. Government controls showed little impact on root causes of the growing neighbor conflicts caused by lack of social connections in the neighborhood. Disputes among neighbors may reflect a lack of communication with neighbors and the serious malfunction of the rushed housing development that has ruined the city's social and human values.

Seoul has experienced a decline of social structures that would make it possible for civil society to exist. The core elements of social structures are ideas, beliefs, and formal and informal institutions that foster the norms of tolerance, belonging, and altruism that govern the behaviors of members of the community to make our society a better place. Sharon Hong (2012) lamented Seoul's aggressive physical infrastructure development and argued that the city must be decoupled from construction-based development: "In Seoul, Korea, rapid urbanization in the twentieth century nearly destroyed 600 years of history."[2] Loss of social and human values from rapid development seems to make the city a victim of its own success. Experts on urban neighborhoods also have noted there is an intangible but equally important dimension of neighborhood that provides social goods such as understanding, fellowship, belonging, tolerance and mutual respect. While failing to generate social norms for individuals and communities to connect with each other, traditional voluntary clubs, gatherings, civic groups, and service activities have disappeared from the life of Seoul residents.

Skepticism about Seoul's new-town development played a role in the

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2) Hong, Sharon (2013). Seoul: A Korean capital. In Nihal Perera &Wing-Shing Tang (Eds.), *Transforming Asian Cities*. London; New York: Routledge. p.20.

election of progressive leader Park Won-soon as mayor of Seoul in 2011. Encouraged by the frontier success of Sungmisan maeul (maeul translates to neighborhood), Mayor Park promoted qualitative participatory democracy via community building in an effort to provide opportunities to citizens to develop their own solutions to their service needs. The social activist Mayor was positive to turn Seoul a new city that is community based and produce desired outcome from CBP programs. Park argued, "Restoring sense of community is essential in creating a more humane society."3) The core of Mayor Park's Community Building Policy (CBP) is the belief that community organizations and activities of local neighborhoods will shape the social and human values of citizen life in Seoul in vital ways.

This idea of community building was well accepted and welcomed, especially by social progressives. Fouser (2011), a professor at Seoul National University, touted Mayor Park's Community Building Policy by saying, "As economic growth slows and democratic challenges mount, community building may be the only way to keep communities vibrant. It will be critical in attracting residents and businesses. Communities that pool their resources and work toward a common goal will prosper."4)

The political goals of a newly elected activist mayor who emphasized local initiatives and self-help (or self-governance) seem opportune and timely, but the notion of community building is less likely to be visible in short-term policy investment for a global city of 10 million people that is economically segregated and whose communities have been disintegrating over the past few decades. Community building had never been a high policy priority

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3) Park, Won-soon (2014). In Seoul, the citizens are the mayor. *Public Administration Review*, 74(4): 442-443.

4) Fouser, Robert J. (2011, December 5). Community Building in Korea. *The Korea Times*. Retrieved fro m http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinon/2011/12/314_100169.html

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of any of mayors of Seoul until Mayor Park administration. Thus it has been a major policy effort to create new institutions and administrative systems that would integrate the new value of community and idea of citizen engagement into the bounds of history long "development" based administrative system of Seoul government.

Community Building Policy in Seoul Metropolitan Government

The Seoul Metropolitan Government launched a progressive community building effort called Community Building Policy (CBP), which provided administrative assistance and financial support for citizen-led civil society building plans. It was Mayor Park's expectation to transform conventional policy paradigms from controlling regulations to government support that would nurture citizens' potential to realize the true meaning of deliberative democracy and civil society. The policy was designed in expectation of the engaged citizens' will seek solutions through sustained process of face-to-face interactions and then arrive at a legitimate consensus by embracing community voices and encouraging grassroots participation in local initiatives.

As an initial effort, the city of Seoul had created and revised city ordinances and budget proposals multiple times and launched a citizen board that is to be main policy advisory mechanism for the implementation of CBP. Driven by the spirit of citizen engagement, CBP advisory board (named "Seoul Neighborhood Community Committee") is comprised of civic minded citizen leaders, professional activists and city council members, and city administrators. Since its creation in April 2012, the committee has been holding monthly meetings and acted as an advisory board for policy directions and corrections.[5]

Under the system of CBP, the role of government changed significantly

from a directive authority to a partner in co-creating legitimate and contextual solutions for the distinctive needs of each community. In his effort to create public-private partnership, Mayor Park made an appointment of non-career professional to be a head of community building policy initiatives. Seo Jin A, director of Local Community Division in Seoul is a longtime community building activist who has been expected to reinvent values and systems of city administration. Director Seo said from her Herald newspaper interview "Developing social connection among individuals in our neighborhood should be the first key step in community building in Seoul." Her strong focus on social connection was expressed in an application condition for the city's financial assistance program. The program manual specifies that more than three local residents have to be leading applicants of project application and this condition expects to make those citizen applicants more accountable and responsible of carrying out the entire process of community project. She mentioned in the interview that the local residents' engagement is a key check point for the financial support decision for community building project applications. This condition of grant application may not be a conventional approach in majority of social service programs that had been delivered mostly by the established nonprofit organizations.[6]

The foundational principle of CBP is citizen leads and government supports. CBP strongly encourages ordinary citizens' to take the initiative to build their own community programs and adopt grassroots approaches to realize public and private sector partnership. A socially connected community will

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5) Seoul Metropolitan Government (2013). *Seoul, Life, and People.* Seoul, Korea: Seoul Metropolitan Government.

6) Choi, Won-hyuk (2015, September 9). "Interview with the Director of the Local Community Division in the City of Seoul." Herald, Retrieved from http://biz.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=20150909000157

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be eventually developed if citizens' have a social space to be together and resources to sustain the initial community building efforts. There are two assumptions in CBP. First, collective benefit will be generated if more people engage in civic activities and organizations. Second, those organizations and groups will encounter challenges to address the problems and need of government support due to their lack of physical and social resources.[7] The program aims to develop community capacity and allows citizens' to identify their own problems and needs, handle the problems, and address common needs of the neighborhood by building connections and trust. As such, the city of Seoul initiated CBP to administratively and financially support communities and citizens' in neighborhoods to respond to their unique problems and needs. CBP is considered a unique urban welfare approach that is based on culture and human values to ultimately strengthen the social capital of a neighborhood and help the community achieve civil society. Mayor Park administration was positive and ambitious about policy impact that CBP will be an alternative response to the welfare service demands for child care, education, services for youth, care for the elderly, safety, and so on and build a concrete mechanism that connects people through desirable social norms.

Seoul Community Support Center (SCSC): A Nonprofit Mediator

To implement administrative steps of CBP, the Seoul city government created a nonprofit organization to take charge of linking citizens to the government. In August 2012, the Seoul Community Support Center (SCSC) was established to connect community activities and community initiatives to the appropriate

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7) Seoul Metropolitan Government (2012). *Master Plan for Community Building in Seoul*. Seoul, Korea.

government agencies and mediate among diverse stakeholders including citizens', nonprofit organizations, local governments, and private businesses. As a key actor, SCSC is responsible for developing a collaborative governance that will benefit all participants in every stage of community building.[8] The three main activities of SCSC are:

- SCSC provides training, consulting, and counseling programs for citizens' and communities that need government and private supports to facilitate community activities and community initiative.
- SCSC plays an intermediary role between citizens' and government to match citizens' and communities' specific needs with customized governmental supports.
- SCSC promotes collaborative governance with administrative supports by mediating between the city of Seoul, local district governments in Seoul, private organizations, community groups, and individual citizens'.

Currently, these functions of SCSC are integrated into two programs. The Citizen Initiative Program encourages citizens' and community leaders to actively seek out alternative solutions to the specific service needs of their neighborhoods and assists in idea development by engaging in constant conversations with citizens'. The program is implemented in such a way as to provide financial and administrative supports to citizens and community initiative groups to ultimately produce sustainable community organizations and their activities. SCSC proposes potential activities that can be organized by citizen groups such as community childcare services, promotion of environmentally friendly neighborhoods, crime and disaster prevention, diversity programs supporting multi-cultural families, parenting community, art galleries, and so on.[9] The Community Capacity Building Program supports

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8) Seoul Community Support Center. (n.d.). *Hello? Seoul Community Support Center*. Retrieved on August 23, 2016 from http://www.seoulmaeul.org/programs/user/eng/index.html

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community building efforts by passing on to applicants of community programs key know-how for nonprofit management and best practices of project development. This program offers tailored administrative support to cultivate community building and network development in a neighborhood. For example, education programs are offered to educate interested citizens' about what community building is, why it is important, and how community capacity is built and to provide customized consulting services that fit to a unique neighborhood condition. Leadership training is provided as well to assist citizens to build supportive ties with other community groups to cope with everyday challenges by providing opportunities for frequent gatherings to freely exchange ideas and resources with other interested parties.

In 2013, SCSC awarded 212 parent groups for their communal child care projects and each group was supported by the city of Seoul with up to 2 million won (about $1,700).[10] Parent community has been a major activity of CBP, and SCSC supports initial development stage groups to grow to be a focal point for building social connections. Mom-moa based in Nowon-gu is a community of local mothers cook for families with special needs children. The members of Mom-moa community group actively engage in local events and share their common interests and needs in issues of child care and education activities.[11]

Community Building Policy Creates Collaborative Governance

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9) Seoul Community Support Center (2015). *Performance Report of Community Building Policy in Seoul*, Seoul Community Support Center.

10) Seoul Metropolitan Government (2013). *Seoul, Life, and People.* Seoul, Korea: Seoul Metropolitan Government.

11) Seoul Metropolitan Government (2013). *Seoul, Life, and People.* Seoul, Korea: Seoul Metropolitan Government.

Community Building Policy designs the process of policy implementation through collaborative governance. As illustrated in the figure below, collaborative governance strongly emphasizes sustainable partnerships between citizens' and government agencies that will ultimately create communities' unique solutions in the social context of neighborhoods. Community projects are supported in three stages of development, including the idea developing stage, the planning stage, and the action stage of the full-blown project that is expected to operate and generate positive outcome. Through collaborative governance in the three stages, SCSC as the nonprofit mediator plays a crucial role in managing community project applications and assisting citizens'.
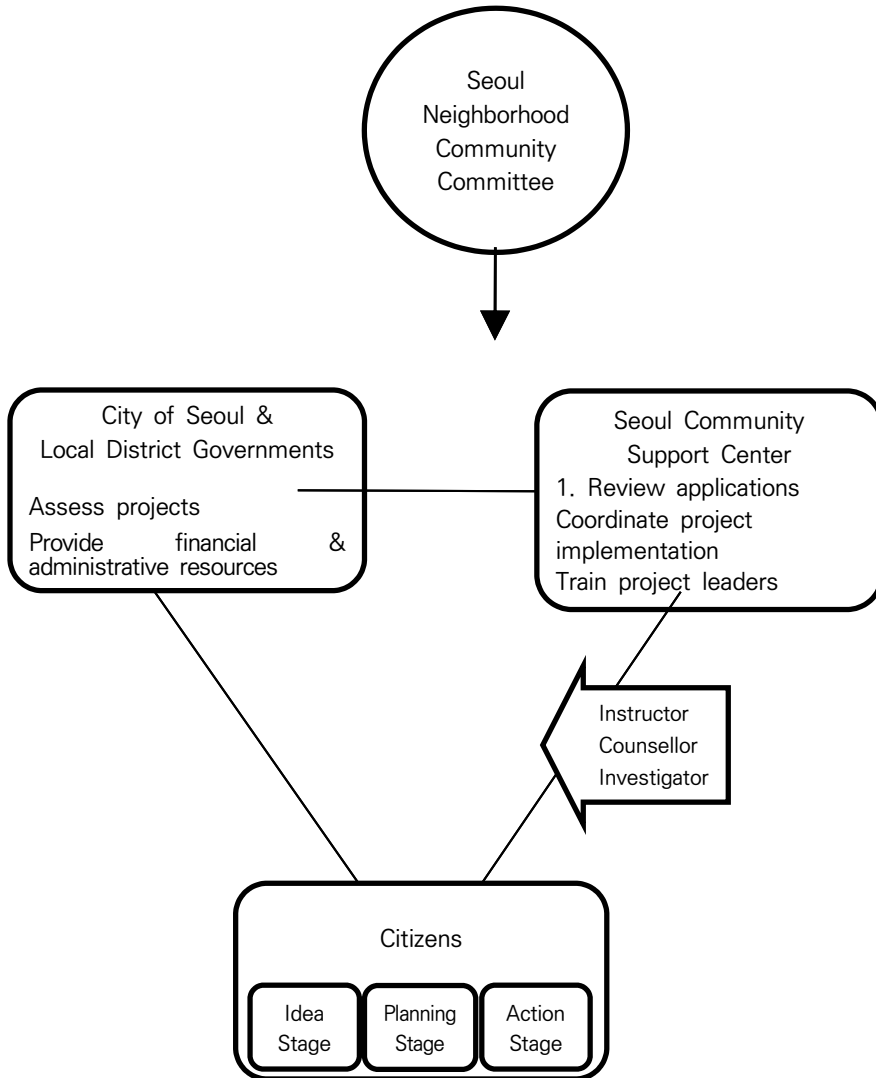
The figure shows the implementation process of the CBP. First, a citizen group applies for community project and receives consulting services from its local district government (Gu) including an investigation of existing conditions and assets of the neighborhood. After the process of consultation, this citizen group will propose their plan to SCSC. SCSC reviews the proposal and decides whether the project has potential to grow. After this initial review process by SCSC, the proposal is sent to the city of Seoul for final approval. Then the city of Seoul decides on the proposed plan by assessing its feasibility and necessity of the activities. Accepted proposals receive seed funding and administrative assistance from Seoul.

In the process of implementation, SCSC provides tailored assistance for the various development stages of community projects. For a community or groups of citizens' in the idea stage, SCSC helps them create networks or become involved in existing social networks in the neighborhood and educates them about meaning of civil society and practical steps of community building. Community project groups in the planning stage receive counseling services to design action plans for community organizations and projects.

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For the community project that is in the action stage, SCSC helps sustain community activities and projects and assesses potential assets, needs, and resources in the neighborhood to extend the scope and depth of community activities and projects. Urban farming project in Chungryangri, Dongdaemoon-gu has grown to be in the action stage project in rental apartment community.[12] From the inception of idea, SCSC has provided instructional and administrative assistance. In 2014 in developing stage of the project, the partnership of local leaders and SCSC developed educational opportunities for residents about community building and introduced diverse models of community based social clubs. There have been many workshop programs for better understanding of urban farming techniques.

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12) Seoul Metropolitan Government. (2013). *Seoul, Life, and People*. Seoul, Korea: Seoul Metropolitan Government.

| Figure 1 | Community Building Policy Governance

Seoul Neighborhood Community Committee

City of Seoul & Local District Governments

Assess projects
Provide financial & administrative resources

Seoul Community Support Center
1. Review applications
Coordinate project implementation
Train project leaders

Instructor
Counsellor
Investigator

Citizens

| Idea Stage | Planning Stage | Action Stage |

Resource: Modified from Performance Report of Community Building Policy in Seoul (2013).

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SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNITY BUILDING STORIES

Dobong-gu neighborhood association[13]

Dobong-gu neighborhood association started community gathering in 2013 with the support of financial aid and civic leadership education from the Dobong-gu government. Social interactions among citizens' created by community activities such as sport leagues, craft classes, etc., encourage them to concern more about community issues. A citizen leader who initiated community gatherings said, "Participation in those programs, I feel, helps us to create a sense of community and fellowship beyond our apartment complex because we are able to meet and communicate with neighbors who are not residents in our complex at the local sports league or craft classes." Mr. Kim, a member of an apartment complex neighborhood association, says, "Parents and teenagers have shown concern about community issues like care for the homebound seniors and green environment projects at the community gatherings." The interaction from community gatherings contributes to building social cohesion beyond mere interest-seeking. A member of a social club said "We have strong sense of social belonging that has been built from long residency in this community. Many residents show concern about issues and problems related to our community because people believe this is our community to live in and conserve." She placed an emphasis on stable residency as a key of success: "I believe we were able to carry out several community programs because lots of residents in our community have lived here for more than 20 years. I mean our people have a strong sense of belonging and their attachment

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13) Interviews used for the case of Dobong-gu neighborhood association were conducted in May 2015.

to the neighborhood moves us forward to be dedicated to community building activities."

Seoul is one of the busiest cities in the world. Citizens' living in Seoul are too busy to have interest in and participate in community issues. "Nobody wants to be a board member of a neighborhood association because being a board member require lots of time and dedication, but people living in this city are so busy, and they are very tired of their own life matters," said a board member of a neighborhood association. A community leader said, "Our neighborhood is active in community gathering and events. But, younger families do not participate in community activities very well. I think they live very busy life. And there isn't much of immediate benefit to offer from community activities to them." An official in local government stated, "People do not want to participate in community building activities because they think that engagement in community issues is bothersome in their busy life."

Hanyang apartment complex[14]

The Hanyang apartment complex had a difficult history of community conflicts caused by common area maintenance issues, and local government agencies received constant citizen complaints that blamed each other. The local government proposed the community to hold community-wide gatherings to listen to each other and learn their immediate and long-term demands. A team of government administrators and community leaders conveyed understanding of the situation and suggested a community social project that may foster open communication and mutual understanding among residents. With government support, residents initiated a recreation center

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14) Interviews used for the case of Hanyang apartment complex were conducted in May 2015.

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building project to promote face-to-face interactions among residents. The citizen leader who led the project said, "Neighbors met a couple of times in a week to play table tennis. Because we met very often in the recreation center, we could become friends and the social bonding and sense of tolerance developed. I think the conflicts in our community have been reduced since we launched the social sports project at the community recreation center."

A chairperson in a sport club said, "Our community had suffered from chronic divisions of groups and constant conflicts that made the neighborhood unpleasant and unsafe. But, I saw that this community center supported by CBP funds played a vital role in conflict resolution of our community because neighbors who did not know each other before frequently met in the community center to play table tennis and other social sports. Their involvement in activities in this center provided opportunities for people to engage in conversations about life matters and community issues, then we became friends, and finally fostered constructive dialog for solving misunderstanding among neighbors. Now, our community has started community meetings to discuss community issues."

CBP have made various revisions and correction of application process to make it as simple as possible and easy to develop one for ordinary people. Seoul Community Support Center (SCSC) is also a nonprofit support organization for citizen to approach and interact for them to engage community building programs. However, ordinary citizens' lack of professional skills and knowledge in community engagement and initiative for community building. A local district official said, "Community building and self-governing activities in apartment complexes are very difficult. It requires complex knowledge and skills to manage community common area and difficult issues." A citizen leader in Hanyang apartment complex said, "At first, I did not have any ideas what and how to do community gathering

and activities. I wanted to secure a space for community activities but I did not know how to write a proposal that explains needs of such a space for receiving government grant. I should say consulting from local government was very helpful when I prepare applications."

Seongbuk-gu, Doosan apartment complex[15]

Local district governments in Seoul provide education programs, consulting services and grant-in-aid for citizens' who are interested in community activities. As one of programs supported by CBP, local district governments in Seoul implemented green energy programs to reduce utility service charges and save energy for common area management for apartment complexes. By participating in this program, some of communities could reduce energy expense and create a community fund from common area maintenance fee savings. For example, the neighborhood association of Doosan apartment in Seongbuk-gu was able to save costs for their common area lightening with educational and financial support provided by the CBP energy conservation program. The savings allowed the association create a community fund and strengthen job security for community maintenance employees (Kyungbiwon) from temporary part-time to full-time employment with benefits. A member of the association said, "We could make it possible because lots of residents engaged in this energy saving program and from those activities we could build trust among residents." The program also

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15) The case of Seongbuk-gu Doosan apartment complex referred the resources: Sim, Jae-chul. (2014, December 30). Together with security in Apartment. In The 15 minutes that Change the World. Seoul, South Korea: CBS; Kim, Dong-hong (2013, December 23). "Seongbuk-gu, Community Building and Energy Saving." Money Today. Retrieved from http://www.mt.co.kr/view/mtview.php?type=1&no=2013122311112571090&outlink=1; Park, Sung-joon (2015, January 15). "Seongbuk-gu, Togetherness Movement in Apartment." Ajunews. Retrieved from www.ajunews.com/view/20150115095337539

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allowed citizens to be interested in energy conservation issues that affect everyone. A resident in the apartment complex said, "Through the energy program, we could understand how serious energy shortage is, and became more interested in various techniques in energy conservation as well as utility cost saving in common area of our neighborhood."

Doosan apartment residents have been engaged those programs and expressed their excitement about planned future activities. A local district official also noted that each of communities knows better than anyone else about their specific needs, culture, and assets as well as root causes of their unique problems. A public official in the city of Seoul said, "In implementation of CBP, we have to keep up accountability in evaluation of program results for each of community projects. Since each of community projects is unique to their specific needs there is no way to create universal indicators that would apply across the board at every local context. By knowing how hard to bring any visible outcome in one or two year (s), still we have to review and report the progress of policy goals." Although the Seoul government and 25 local district governments have agreed upon main principles and goals of CBP, each of stakeholders may have different viewpoints on policy priorities or performance criteria for the evaluation of policy impact.

Seongdong-gu, local community manager system[16)]

Seongdong-gu government operates a community manager system as a sub-program of CBP. The role of this community manager is to listen to residents' voice and foster community interactions and support collaboration among the diverse community groups to help them develop activities and programs that would benefit the community the most. In this process, CBP contributes seed funding along with expert advice on how to initiate and accomplish the planned projects. The director of the Seongdong-gu community manager system describes her main roles in CBP: "I make visits in local communities, listen to citizens' concerns and demands, and then inform city of Seoul and CBP agencies specific financial and administrative needs that may support citizens' initiatives and community activities."

Technical support and seed funding help communities to interact and may build their own capacity to solve their own problems. The chair of a neighborhood association in Seongdong-gu mentioned the essential role of government support in the process of program development: "The community manager of the local government made frequent visits to our community to meet us in person and listen to community issues and demands from local citizens'. And she introduced us good opportunities to receive community leadership training and financial aid to start off some of the community projects that were needed most. From these training programs, we learned skills and tools to develop programs and how to write a grant proposal to receive grant-in-aid. And the seed funding was used to carry out several community programs such as a music class, eco-village project, and conflict resolution committee."

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16) Interviews used for the case of Seongdong-gu local community manager system were conducted in May 2015 and January 2017.

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Seongdong-gu also provides programs for community leaders, community program development, and grant writing classes and constantly send information on grant opportunities and community resources for interested citizens. A member of a social club said, "We did not know what it was for community programs at first. We did not know how to write a proposal for the government funding program either." To address those difficulties, local governments provide leadership training programs and consulting services. A government official said, "Citizens' learn about the important role of civic leadership in local problem solving and understand the need of dedicated individuals who could be a head of mothers' gathering or volunteer seniors for vegetable garden. When they have received training, local residents are motivated to take the leadership role in their community."

Seongbuk-gu neighborhood association[17]

Citizens' experience democratic practices in community gathering and programs. A team leader of local community in Seoul said, "Citizens' who participate in community programs learn how to identify community issues and sources of conflicts through frequent communications with other neighbors in the programs." From the social gatherings and town hall meetings, citizens' are able to learn how to discuss with others and make decisions. This process may not bring a perfect consensus but it increases understanding about diverse views, preferences and interests. The discussion in neighborhood meetings allows citizens' to learn the meaning of democratic decision making to reach to a better resolution of their problem. For example, a neighborhood association of Seongbuk-gu changed its discussion style to more deliberative one to give

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17) The interviews used for the case of Seongbuk-gu neighborhood association were conducted in May 2015 and January 2017.

opportunities for every resident chance to participate and express her/his own views and interests and examine each of the issues carefully.[18] The board meetings often take more than three hours for examining various aspects of issues and weighing measures of alternatives. A chair of the neighborhood association said, "It takes usually three hours for each board meeting to discuss community programs and activities, and then board members may reach a consensus on any given topic. Throughout the process of lengthy conversation and discussions, we realize that consensus is difficult but possible."

The chair of board members in the association said, "I learned that we could reach to agreeable decisions on neighborhood issues through deliberative discussions. Deliberative discussions help us reduce misunderstanding by sharing information and listening to others opinions, and enhance understanding on our common issues like community recycling, use of parking space, noise complaints etc." And he said, "The role of community leader is important in the process because community leaders devote their time and effort to involve more residents in the deliberative process to reach to better decisions."

But the governments sometimes have to intervene in the internal matters of the neighborhood associations to promote transparency in their management and improve grant accountability. Government official in local district office said, "Our roles for community building are complicated and often confusing. We would like to respect local autonomy of neighborhood associations but at the same time it is our responsibility to examine and regulate neighborhood associations' finance to avoid mismanagement of

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18) Kim, Si-yeon (2015, July 04). "What happened in An Apartment Complex?" *Oh My News*. Retrieved from http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002123906

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community funding and mitigate potential conflicts for more transparent management of organizations."

Dobong-gu, social club[19]

Officials of the city of Seoul and local governments indicate that the lack of trust in the community is a key obstacle impeding community initiatives and the effective operation of community building programs in their neighborhoods. A government official said, "Community Building Policy (CBP) has been challenging because many communities have suffered from distrust between residents and board members of neighborhood associations. Lack of trust makes it difficult to mobilize human, physical, and financial resources to initiate community gathering and programs." He also added, "In a community with broken trust to their formal or informal leadership, people are likely to be suspicious about the other groups and easily engage in a power game." Thus it is essential that all aspect of community building processes should be open and transparent. A chair of a social club in Dobong-gu, said, "Previously, we had some conflicts in our community. Residents did not believe neighborhood associations because the managers of our neighborhood association had operated financial secrecy and did not open financial information to the residents properly. But, several years ago, new members were elected as board leaders and they opened financial information and minutes of board meetings to community members on a website." She also stated, "After opening the information to the residents, they started to participate in discussion of community issues and community programs. We realized that we had common demand for community daycare programs through

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19) Interviews for the case of Social club Dobong-gu were conducted in May 2015 and 2017.

open discussions among residents. The whole process of daycare project made us very proud to work together to achieve common goals." She mentioned that transparent management of community organizations helped the community overcome distrust and rebuild a positive culture for community engagement.

Although many community projects have done by residents themselves, government officials still concern about whether local recipients of government grant have proper representation of the people in the neighborhood. It is difficult for administrators to identify which project representing better and closer of the demands and needs of people in the neighborhood. An official in Local Community Division of Seoul said, "When we are screening for government funding for CBP applications, it is very difficult to say whether these CBP grant applicants truly represent needs and interests of their neighborhood. Skeptics worry about tax money will be used only for those professional activists who have knowledge and experience to receive government grant. I admit this skepticism reflects some parts of reality whenever I see familiar names from applications over and over again."

What is Next? Priorities for Effective Community Building

One and a half years after the establishment of the Seoul Community Support Center (SCSC), almost two thousand community projects had been applied for, and 776 applications received funding and administrative assistance from Seoul city government.[20] In neighborhoods in Seoul, community organizations and groups of citizens' have been providing social services to mitigate service needs and respond to their distinctive local problems. Their stories offer best

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20) Seoul Metropolitan Government (2013). *Seoul, Life, and People. Seoul*, Korea: Seoul Metropolitan Government.

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practices that might be implemented elsewhere. The evidence is clear that community-based initiatives are spreading and increasing in Seoul. Transformation of our neighborhoods remains slow, but change is occurring. In furthering community building today, a high priority should be given to addressing immediate obstacles in an effort to recognize effective community building practices. While the Community Building Policy (CBP) of the Seoul city government may create social platforms for civil society in the urban communities of Seoul, it is important to note that the role of government has to be limited in facilitating and assisting if CBP intends to develop citizen-led initiatives.

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