An Ethnography of a Sewing Neighbourhood Under Threat in Contemporary Seoul



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Image 1

Abstract

This thesis presents an ethnographic study of the Changsin-dong neighbourhood in Seoul, specifically focusing on the small-scale sewing workshops agglomerated in the area. Changsin-dong is a district in which the sewing industry has remained as a manufacturing base for the largest clothing complex in Korea, called Dongdaemun. I aim to analyse the local specificities of Changsin-dong, which represent socially 'close-knit' networks, economically inter-dependent local value chains, and politically intertwined urban development agendas, from both macro and micro points of view. Using a range of theoretical and empirical approaches to document and analyse everyday life in the sewing neighbourhood, this research explores the contradictory complexities and microscopic dynamics that exist in this urban community in the heart of the city. The two sides of this community are demonstrated by the incompatibility and simultaneous coexistence between: (1) the interlinked local network and the tensions and frictions among locals; (2) sewing workers' passiveness towards the vanishing industry and their activeness in each choice in day-to-day spheres; and (3) developmental pursuits and regeneration schemes in urban planning. In order to unveil the behind-the-scenes ambivalence of the industry and its community, I seek to understand their interconnected local network in relation to everyday practices of gift exchange, the sociality of sharing, and local surveillance. This may, in turn, reveal how the local community plays a role in sustaining the local economy, in both advantageous and disadvantageous ways. Moreover, in a sunset industry, I will explain how the industrial system has influenced individuals' working environments and their attitudes, and how individuals react to, adapt to, and overcome this dying industry, which can be related to the concept of social navigation (Vigh 2007). Finally, I will investigate the intricate interests, political interventions, and pragmatic constraints of urban regeneration in Changsin-dong, in connection to anthropological discussions on governmentality and infrastructural fetishism (Larkin 2013: 333). Taken together, I seek to examine the daily struggles, dilemmas, negotiations, and contradictions in the urban sewing community, which has survived but has also isolated itself; an industry that is declining and transitioning at the same time; and urban regeneration, which once looked bright but is now fading.

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Notes on Text

In order to avoid misunderstandings by readers, I shall refer to two types of sewing businesses as 'sewing workshops' and 'industrial-residential units', even though the local term is actually 'factory' (*gong-jang* 공장), implying the solid industrial manufacturing system in the Changsin-dong neighbourhood. Industrial-residential units are seemingly archetypal small-scale houses, but in fact, sewing people divide their houses into two separate spaces, which is mirrored in their verbal separation between 'house' (*jib* 집) and 'factory' for the living space and working space, respectively. They even use household electricity in the 'house' space while they use industrial electricity in the 'factory' space, so I shall call this type of residence an industrial-residential unit. The 'sewing workshop' is a different type of workplace from that of the industrial-residential unit, to which sewing workers commute and do not live in the same building.

In the text, I call my research participants by their first names, but when I cite Korean academics, I strive to reveal the first name and last name together, since Korea is a relatively homogeneous society with a few dominant surnames (for example, 21.5% for Kim, 14.7% for Lee, and 8.4% for Park (The JoongAng, 7 September 2016), as there are more than five Kims in this paper). When referring to non-academics, by contrast, I shall use the order of surname and first name, which is the standard order in Korea.

When using the Korean language in describing local terms, I have placed the Romanised Korean text (and sometimes with Hangul letters, occasionally followed by Chinese characters) after the translated form, according to the regulations governing thesis writing at my institution of study, and with the goal of ensuring a smoother transition for readers. All the local terms and their original forms can be found in the appendix so that readers can refer to the terms as needed. Meanwhile, although there are several systems for Romanising Hangul, they are not universally employed by native people because Korean is a language invented based on pronunciations used by the public. While the Chinese and Japanese languages, for example, have standardised rules by which symbols for certain pronunciations are written in English abbreviations, Romanised Korean letters may be a hindrance to a full understanding for readers who can read Hangul. Since Romanised Hangul is merely written in English as it sounds, the notations are irregular and differ based upon individual pronunciations. (Even different translation

software has different pronunciations of the same word.) For instance, when referring to *jeong* (정), a Korean community sentiment that is covered in detail in Chapter 3, it can be written as *jung* or *cheong* in English, which can be pronounced 중 or 청 in Korean. Thus, when describing some critical local terms, I have incorporated Hangul letters to ensure a more accurate rendering of the terms. When Romanising local languages, I have placed a hyphen between syllables, which may not necessarily be common within one word, to deliver the exact letters of Hangul.

This research was conducted between 2019 and 2022, but for the sake of convenience to readers all the figures given in Pounds Sterling are based on the average exchange rate of 2022, which was 1 GBP = 1500 KRW.



Image 2

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Research Questions

At around 9 am, Changsin-dong's sewing workshops begin to open one by one, much like many other industrial districts in Seoul. Dongdaemun is an area in which most of Korea's inexpensive, non-branded clothing is designed and produced, and Changsin-dong is located across from Dongdaemun Market, with Dongdaemun Station in the middle. Dongdaemun Market (i.e., Dongdaemun Shopping Complex) is the largest fabric wholesale market in Korea, selling all items related to the clothing manufacturing industry, including subsidiary clothing materials. At this time of the morning, the wholesale fabric market also begins to open, and merchants from countless stores in the market, as well as designers who want to buy fabric, move about busily. Designers, who carry large plastic bags of fabric or sample clothes, check the necessary items while constantly calling someone, somewhere, namely, Changsin-dong's sewing workshops. On such mornings, sewing workshops receive various requirements from designers – such as specific designs, design modifications, quantities, sizes, fabrics, colours, and deadlines – and begin their work according to these instructions once they arrive at their workshops. Soon, motorcycles carrying fabrics are scattered on the streets of Changsin-dong and the Dong-daemun area, and the sound of sewing machines, electric cloth cutting knives, and steam from irons emanate from the workshops.



Figure 1.1. Motorcycles in front of the Dongdaemun Market, waiting for the light towards Changsin-dong. The area behind the brown hill on the right is Changsin-dong.

Unlike the designers and motorcycles moving vigorously from the Dongdaemun Market to convey rolls of fabrics to sewing workshops, workers at the sewing workshops toil all day long within the confines of their workshops. Garment cutters move around their garment-cutting desks most of the day, while sewing workers sit and work all day, taking turns in front of their sewing machines and overlock machines. Sewing practitioners, commuting to a larger workshop or living in their industrial-residential units, start sewing the remaining work from the day before, and garment cutters begin to draw patterns for a design ordered that day, or directly cut fabric with patterns provided by a designer. The time the cutting jobs take is dependent upon the amount to be cut, as well as the specifically required design, but it normally takes from one to three hours for each item. When the cutting job is completed, the cut pieces of fabrics are arranged according to the design, bound together, and delivered to the sewing sector. The bunches of cut pieces are distributed to people working in larger workshops, as well as to small workshops that are subcontracted to the larger workshops.



Figure 1.2. A motorcycle delivering rolls of fabrics on a street in Changsin-dong.





Figure 1.3. Bunches of cut fabrics bound after cutting jobs, waiting for distribution to the sewing sector.

In the case of large workshops, owners usually live near their workplaces in the Changsin-dong neighbourhood, and in the case of small workshops run by one or two sewing practitioners, a space is renovated in their homes and used as a 'factory' (*gong-jang* 공장). A large workshop usually means that there is a space for garment cutting, because patterning and cutting jobs require a sizable space compared to sewing, and because such jobs are difficult to execute in small workshops located in renovated homes. The small workshops, namely, industrial-residential units run by one or two practitioners, are usually subcontracted to larger workshops that allocate a certain number of jobs to their workers and subcontractors. These larger workshops are maintained through subcontracts with several small workshops. When their workloads are too heavy, the larger workshops, called 'main workshops' (*mae-in gong-jang* 메인 공장), often share their work with other, larger workshops, and such arrangements serve to maintain social bonds with neighbouring workshops. Accordingly, even though the larger and smaller workshops are spatially independent, they are still closely connected within the socio-economic realm, along with the subcontracting system as well as the close-knit local network. This interdependent local network forms the basis of not only their work, but also their lives, through the sharing of their common interests under the name Sewing Town (*Bong-jae Ma-eul* 봉제마을) over the history of competition in the industry.

Because most of the cut fabrics are somewhat heavy, cutting practitioners are usually male, and sometimes, busy workshops hire part-time or daily workers who provide delivery services only. Once the bundles of cut fabric are given to each sewing practitioner, the sewing section starts to unpack the bundles they have received, and examine the enclosed sample clothes. From morning to evening, sewing workers listen to the radio or engage in phone calls with friends while constantly sewing. Some people sew carefully, dedicating their entire bodily strength to the task, whereas others sew technically, using their fingers. The clothes produced may appear uniform, but the techniques of individual sewing practitioners vary in terms of how they use their bodies, the know-how of sewing, the order of work, and the duration of work, and the neatness of sewing.

The sewing workers' lunch and dinner breaks take less than 30 minutes each, and shortly after a quick meal, they return to their seats and work. Working hours spanning 9 am to 9 pm are common, but when there is a lot of work, they typically leave work at 11 pm. In the midsummer and the midwinter seasons, when the sewing practitioners complete the production of summer clothing before making thicker autumn clothing, as well as the production of winter clothing before making new spring clothing, they finish work around 6 pm, or even 2 pm, since there is little work in these two off-peak seasons. During the summer holiday, especially when the entire Dongdaemun wholesale markets are closed for a specific week for summer vacation, all sewing workshops in Changsin-dong also go on holiday, because the supply of fabrics and various garment-manufacturing materials does not flow smoothly. As sewing work has tended to decrease in Changsin-dong in recent years, occasionally the workshops may not be open when there is no order for the day.

When designers find it difficult to explain a particular requirement by text, or when some negotiations regarding the unit price are needed, designers visit the workshops to explicate designs and try to negotiate lower labour costs in person. In order to meet the agreed-upon schedules with the designers, the sewing workshops in Changsin-dong work ceaselessly. The clothes made through the entire processes of the design, cutting, and sewing are then delivered to a specific workshop that offers finishing touches. The finishing jobs are the most labour-intensive among garment manufacturing jobs because they must be done by human hands, including catch-stitching, attaching buttons, washing, ironing, and the like. Since these last-touch workshops can start work once the sewing component is done, these workshops are usually open around 3 pm and close at about 4 am. As such, the ironing steam flowing out from these last-touch workshops continues until late dawn, as they are busy working to complete the production and supply of the clothes to wholesale clothing markets in the Dongdaemun area.

When all the finishing work is complete, between 8 pm and 3 am, the clothes are conveyed to an appointed wholesale market. In other words, the cutting and sewing work, which began with a confirmed design draft, is conducted from 9 am to 11 pm, the sewed clothes are delivered to the last-touch workshops for the finishing process late at night, and the manufactured products are delivered to the clothing wholesale market and are put on sale

at dawn or in the early morning hours. These wholesale clothing markets are usually open from 8 pm to 5 am, or from 12 am to 12 pm, depending on the shopping mall. Therefore, the streets around the dawn wholesale markets light up overnight within the vicinity of the stores, with buyers who are selecting various items, designers from online retailers, and owners of retail stores in other regions.

In the heart of Seoul, this Dongdaemun area – in which large clothing wholesale markets, the largest fabric wholesale market in Korea, wholesale markets for garment manufacturing materials, large shopping malls, and the recently built Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP) are agglomerated – is indeed regarded as a fashion mecca, not only for Korea, but also for East Asia at large. In the 1970s, the Dongdaemun clothing market gradually developed as a hub of Korea's domestic manufacturing industry, and the liveliness of the Dongdaemun market peaked in the 1990s, in conjunction with the development of the fashion industry and that of nearby areas. By virtue of the development of the wholesale market, the Dongdaemun market used to actively interact with retailers outside of the country, namely, traders from nearby countries, such as China and Japan. In addition to merchants and various clothing-related workers, the large shopping malls along the wide avenue attract younger generations and foreign tourists. DDP, a cultural space built as a new icon of creativity and innovation in Seoul, has held cultural events such as showcases for newly launched products, exhibitions, international conferences, forums, and fashion shows since its opening in 2014. Likewise, Dongdaemun is well settled as a representative area in Seoul and South Korea, where both the production and consumption of clothing have been executed simultaneously.



Figure 1.4. The façade of the Dongdaemun Design Plaza. (Source: DDP website, https://ddp.or.kr/)

Changsin-dong, one of the localities of the Dongdaemun area, has more than a thousand sewing workshops, and the remaining garment-manufacturing businesses in this neighbourhood have underpinned the Dongdaemun clothing industry in the centre of Seoul. In contrast to the 'fancy' architecture and huge shopping malls in Dongdaemun, Changsin-dong consists of two- to four-storey buildings and small houses. These small homes used to be unauthorised shanties, which began to accumulate in earnest in the 1960s. Along the side of the Cheonggye Stream, which flows through the Dongdaemun area, the number of shanty houses increased. Since Changsin-dong is also adjacent to the Cheonggye Stream, those small, roughly-built houses came to incrementally enter the Changsin-dong neighbourhood.

Because the terrain is steep, hilly, and rocky in Changsin-dong, there are limits to widening roads and constructing high buildings with deep lower ground levels, and due to these topographic features, the development of Changsin-dong has been sluggish. For this reason, in contrast to the Dongdaemun area, which is filled with large shopping malls and glittering shops, illegal forms of buildings and small-scale houses remain in Changsin-dong. When I participated in the planning stage of an urban regeneration project in this neighbourhood in 2014 and conducted quantitative research in 2016, I found numerous views (frankly, including my previous research) of Changsin-dong exhibiting the negative judgement that the district is impoverished, and the quality of life is poor. A variety of primary factors contribute to negative views of Changsin-dong: narrow alleys and stairs, which restrict the use of cars; old low-rise buildings, denoted as 'faulty deteriorated buildings' (*no-hoo-bul-ryang gun-chuk-mul* 노후불량 건축물) that are far different from commonly constructed high rises in other districts of Seoul; the prevalence of small industrial-residential units; and lower economic status and a relatively older generation in Changsin-dong compared to other neighbourhoods in Seoul, as well as long working hours for sewing workers, which seem to render work-life balance unsatisfactory for residents. Nowadays, traces of the shantytown have almost been erased, and many buildings and houses have been renovated to improve the quality of life. Yet, the modifier of Changsin-dong as a once-poor village, called 'poor hillside village' (*dal-dong-nae* 달동네), still follows this neighbourhood, and the topographical features still constrain the physical development of this area.

By virtue of the relatively slow development and form of the huddled houses, the local community in Changsin-dong is often said to be older and more tightly connected than the general urban communities in Seoul, much like a rural community. Compared to the high-rise apartment-style housing in many large complexes in Seoul, small houses and sewing workshops assembled in the neighbourhood have created a culture in which neighbours easily look after, take care of, and even watch each other. Relatively little migration into the local community and long periods of settlement of the residents have also contributed to its long-term survival. Among the myriad sewing workshops, the common interest in the same sector – within the same socio-economic and spatial realms – has drawn the community closer. These thousands of small-scale sewing workshops have gathered in this area and maintained the *gong-jang* system in the local value chain, but their close-knit, small-scale working environments can be seen as a form of a pre-industrial community. This thesis is about this 'country-like' (*si-gol-got-eun* 시골같은) urban community.

> This town is country-like, literally. This neighbourhood appears rural, where everyone knows one another. It doesn't look like Seoul. People know all the neighbours in this neighbourhood, even in the top area. We got to know each other while doing this sewing job, as we are all working in the same sector. People who live in an apartment may have all different jobs, so they may have few community gatherings. But for us, we all do this [same work]. If something happens to a household, we all know… Since it's like a rural community, people are munificent. People open their doors while working, and when someone is coming, they all just say, 'Come on in'. Looking at other districts [in Seoul], it doesn't work like this. Doors are locked, and people don't even know each other there. [Conversely], there are a lot of community gatherings here. One person can be seen in this society, and [he/she] can also be seen in another society. This neighbourhood is close-knit, and we can get a humane vibe here.
>
> - Young-joo, a female owner and sewing practitioner of Naeng-guel Fashion

Consistent with this statement, Changsin-dong is a country-like community that entails various features of the city. The contradiction between 'rural-like' and 'urban' hallmarks can be understood by examining the micro and subtle dynamics in their daily lives. Accordingly, this study is an exploration of the daily dynamics and two-sided realities that occur in the small-scale sewing workshops – the average number of workers in a workshop in Changsin-dong is three (Korean Apparel Industry Association 2013b: 47) – in this urban

community. From a microscopic view, I seek to examine how they have survived to date and how individuals respond to and cope with a vanishing and ageing industry.

In terms of urban dynamics, people usually conceive of social change in a large unit of a city from a macroscopic point of view. However, in this thesis, I would like to view the community from both macro and micro angles. From a macro view, Changsin-dong is an urban manufacturing district, but from a micro view, it can be seen as a rural-like community remaining in the city. From a macro view, in a similar vein, it may be seen as a community that simply disappears in history, but from a micro view, we can look at residents' daily struggles to endure and overcome their declining livelihood. These dual-sided peculiarities may fall in between structure and agency, much like the contradiction between a structural reality of being forced to lose a job due to the competitive global labour market and the social navigation of individuals responding to socio-economic changes. Furthermore, along with heterogeneous individuals' choices and agency, invisible governmentality at the state level also needs to be acknowledged. Governmentality might remain invisible in the daily lives of sewing workers, but when it comes to issues related to urban planning in this community, intricate political intervention exists, and it actually permeates their everyday lives. It is not merely a matter of either macro or micro perspectives, structure or agency, and top-down or bottom-up, but, rather, an attempt to encompass all of the ambivalences demonstrated by this contemporary sewing community, ultimately revealing dialectic relationships beyond the dichotomies. Many of these traits seem incompatible and paradoxical, but in fact, the subtlety of everyday life inevitably guarantees such contradictions.

1.2. Methodology

Recruitment

The first time I visited Changsin-dong was in early 2014, when I initially encountered urban regeneration while working in a public art studio. I was given a job to create a proposal to

win a public-funded project related to public art for Changsin-dong's urban regeneration, and from then on, I started to walk around the neighbourhood and conduct field surveys. After working at the public art studio, I revisited Changsin-dong for my first master's research to collect data, with my research interest in the role of local governance and resident satisfaction in urban regeneration. However, while conducting a quantitative survey, I met a person who challenged my superficial and theory-oriented questionnaire, which was not based on realities on the ground. He was Kyoung-ju, who worked as a manager at the local Urban Regeneration Center (now Changsin-Soongin Urban Regeneration Cooperative). He was weary of researchers who brought questionnaires written in difficult academic jargon that did not reflect local circumstances in the neighbourhood. He said that these cursory interests by academics and journalists made urban regeneration more of a spotlight, indicating that residents felt detached from it. After a brief conversation with Kyoung-ju, I became sceptical about the quantitative research I had prepared for more than six months, and was thereby motivated to come back to Changsin-dong to gain an in-depth understanding of the neighbourhood, which led me to study anthropology.

Kyoung-ju is the first person I officially met in Changsin-dong. After that, I visited his office to listen to the perspectives of the working-level staff, and after a few years, when I was preparing my MPhil thesis in anthropology at Oxford, I reached out to him again. As soon as I arrived in South Korea to commence my MPhil fieldwork in the summer of 2018, I revisited his office to explain my MPhil research, and he introduced me to my first research participant, Jong-im. Jong-im, usually called Mrs. Kim Jong-im or Dong-gue nim[1] by Kyoung-ju, invited me to her industrial-residential unit, and I headed straight to her house. After an hour or so of conversation, she accepted my proposal to conduct participant observations in her workspace, namely, her home (i.e., industrial-residential unit), in which Jong-im, her husband, and their two adult daughters live together. She and I negotiated my visits to her place to about three times a week in order not to burden herself and her family members. For my MPhil research, Jong-im introduced me to her sister, Sook-ja, and her friend, Young-joo, who are running their sewing workshops with their families and other

[1] Dong-gue is Jong-im's stage name for her business, and *nim* is a gender-neutral respectful suffix that can be easily used in general situations in Korea.

sewing practitioners, respectively. In fact, at the recruitment stage, some sewing workshop owners rejected my plans to carry out my research in their workplace since they were always busy working against the clock every day, and since it would be awkward if a stranger stayed all day to observe their behaviours and patterns while they were working. In the end, I was able to obtain access to three different workshops for my MPhil research: an industrial-residential unit, in which Jong-im and her husband work together as a sewing unit; a sewing workshop, in which Sook-ja, her husband, and her adult son work together; and a larger sewing workshop run by Young-joo, in which around five non-kin people work together.

In addition to this snowball sampling through Kyoung-ju and Jong-im, Young-joo introduced me to Byung-choon, who runs one of the largest workshops in Changsin-dong, called Soojin Apparel for my long-term doctoral research. Based upon the established rapport with my research participants in my MPhil research and the newly recruited larger workshop, I observed four different workshops during my DPhil fieldwork, taking turns to examine their daily lives in depth. Originally, the fieldwork was scheduled to be conducted for one year beginning in October 2019, but due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the period of fieldwork was extended to one and a half years, from October 2019 to April 2020. I also intended to make official contact with local cooperatives, administrative agencies, and the local government to participate in some meetings and request interviews, but because of the social distancing regulations during my fieldwork, only a limited number of interviews were allowed. In conjunction with the arranged recruitment, I also planned to randomly visit some sewing workshops in Changsin-dong to see broader perspectives, but this was constrained as well since people were cautious to let a stranger into their places, and since I also needed to minimise the risk of infection for securing the research participants I normally met, as well as myself as a researcher. Because most of the planned interviews with local social entrepreneurs, activists, public servants at Seoul City, and officials at the Jongno-gu Office were cancelled, I conducted formal interviews with the president and the manager of the sewing cooperative at the end of the fieldwork.

Prior to the implementation of the participant observation and interviews, I handed out the participant information sheet and the written consent form to my research participants so

that they could ask questions about the research and thereby fully understand the purpose of the study. At the beginning of the recruitment, the written consent form was designed to make the fieldwork go more smoothly and make my research participants feel comfortable with the research. However, some of my research participants could not be bothered to read all of the text-based information on the physical copy of the consent, since they were always busy working. In these cases, consent was orally obtained.

Data collection

Over the course of fieldwork, I usually commuted to the workshops to spend a substantial amount of time from morning to evening for in-depth observation. During my MPhil ethnographic research, which was comparably shorter than the doctoral research, I normally spent the most time at Jong-im's workplace, but for the DPhil research, which was planned to span for more than a year, I spent more time at Sook-ja's workshop. As Sook-ja's workshop was separated from her house, whereas Jong-im lived with her family in her industrial-residential unit, which might be easy to encroach on the private spheres of her family. Hence, I spent the longest amount of time at Sook-ja's workshop, around three days a week, and flexibly visited Jong-im, Young-joo, and Byung-choon's workshops. For instance, when I arrived at a sewing workshop in the morning, I sometimes left in the afternoon and went to another workshop, spending time there until the evening. I often took these turns so as not to burden the people in the workshops, just as Gellner and Hirsch (2001) point out that access must be constantly negotiated throughout fieldwork, rather than being taken for granted once it has been initially obtained (2001: 5).

Inside the sewing workshops, I spent most of my time flipping sewn clothes, cutting threads, finding thread to match the fabric, buying thread when it ran short, sewing brand labels to laundry information labels, going on errands, and listening to my research participants while they were working. During this long period of time, the atmospheres in the workshops were not rigid and formal as 'workplaces', but, rather, were informal and friendly, during which workers chatted together, asked after one another, talked about some memories and anecdotes from the past, and showed me how to sew clothes. As time went by, I spent time practising sewing to make some clothes with remnants of cloth, and as I began to work at

their pace, I could more closely look at, acquire, and experience their embodied skills and daily lives.

I normally had my lunch and dinner with the sewing and cutting practitioners, when they were the most active during their daily routines. Jong-im usually cooked and had meals at her home with her husband (and adult daughters when they were at home), while Sook-ja usually had lunch and dinner with her husband and adult son at her workshop. In Young-joo's workshop, lunch and dinner were regularly delivered by a local restaurant, whereas workers at Byung-choon's workshop normally went to another nearby local restaurant. Apart from the routinely set meals, I also went along with the workers to experience an indoor Korean barbecue and many other 'better' restaurants for dinner when they were tired of the food of the appointed restaurant, which provided the cheapest price for their daily meals. Over the time of dining with my research participants, this ritual played a role as a sort of 'hanging out' (Rodgers 2004) method, allowing me to permeate their daily lives and enjoy time together in their informal social settings. As such, I spent my time with sewing people, observing their daily conversations, how they worked, and how they spent their breaks.

Events outside of the workshops included: a meeting with an official at the Seoul Metropolitan Government; displays and the deinstallation at the Sewing History Museum; a pop-up event for sewing people organised by the museum, local flea markets to give a hand to Jong-im and the urban regeneration cooperative; a workshop and a survey at the local cooperative; an opening reception at a branch of another local cooperative; an event organised by the community service centre on Parents' Day; an interview of one of my research participants from a public organisation; one-day classes given by one of my research participants; installations of Christmas trees in the neighbourhood, and so forth. Sometimes, I followed my research participants to observe their daily activities and walked around the neighbourhood with them as a form of 'mobile method' (Büscher, Urry, and Witchger 2011), listening to the stories of the neighbourhood and their neighbours. When there were no special local events, I also roamed around the area to capture different landscapes and record traces of the neighbourhood. My spontaneous visits were to the Dongdaemun Market, wholesale clothing markets, retail markets, the Sewing History

Museum, the observatory café on the top of the museum, other new cafés, newly constructed community centres, fortress parks, and every corner of alleys in the neighbourhood.

In summary, the obtained data reflects my close observation of the sewing workshops, as well as informal conversations, semi-structured interviews, and mobile qualitative methods, e.g., following a participant's daily journey in the industrial sewing area. To further complement these collected materials, I have also referenced archival materials related to Changsin-dong's history and current circumstances. Moreover, in order to grasp non-verbal elements and atmospheric environments, I employed a range of visual and auditory supplements, such as photography, mapping, drawing, and filming over the course of my fieldwork. Thus, I have striven to collect both verbal and non-verbal data, which, in general, cannot be analysed through precise statistics from a macro point of view.

Identification of Research Participants and Data Protection

Based upon my research participants' generous permission, which enabled me to publicly reveal their everyday lives, I use their real names rather than pseudonyms, so as to not treat them as mere research subjects for 'scientific' studies. In some cases, when I quote fleeting conversations between my research participants and their friends, I refer to the friends as 'someone's friends'. For temporary workers, I also call them 'sewing practitioners' or 'guest workers'. Otherwise, I use the first names of my research participants in light of the subjectification of the individuals. Because all my research participants are specialised in sewing or cutting and patterning, I call them 'practitioners', as professional technicians, not seamstresses or tailors, which are gender-based terms. Sometimes, in order to avoid repetition, I call them workers as well.

The Korean language has very strict rules in terms of hierarchies between two interlocutors. Accordingly, an appellation always follows first or family names, especially when referring to someone who is older than the narrator. However, as there are few linguistic hierarchies in English, and as most anthropologists call their research participants by their first names, I have applied the English version of identifying someone without titles and honorifics in

my anthropological writing. This is possible based on written/oral consent and trust by my research participants, since they magnanimously delegated all terms and information I intend to include in my work. Meanwhile, as I have explored social, economic, and political entanglements in the sewing community, each person demonstrated different economic and political perspectives. Over the entire course of the project, I strove to take a neutral position as an academic researcher and sometimes expressed sympathy towards their thoughts to show respect and maintain existing bonds.

In terms of data protection, in order not to lose or expose fieldwork notes, memos, contact details, personal information, and recorded conversations on my smartphone, I have striven to secure my personal bags, secured my smartphone with the highest security (i.e., fingerprints, face recognition, iris recognition, and PIN), by keeping those items in safe places (e.g., private drawer, locked laptop) and frequently backing up information. The personal data was primarily recorded in my field notes (both physical notes and Samsung Notes App on the smartphone), and formal interviews were recorded via a voice recorder. Sometimes, if a participant felt uncomfortable with note-taking (not maintaining eye contact) via my physical notes, because sometimes, it made them feel like they were being interviewed by a journalist, I used my smartphone for note-taking, which was less uncomfortable for them by virtue of its ubiquity. Afterwards, the collected data was transcribed, translated, and saved as digital copies on my laptop and hard drive, secured with encryption. I did most of the translation work whenever I temporarily halted my fieldwork for a month or so.

Representation

In anthropology, representational limitations remain, along with extensive discussion on the text and the visual. Although tremendous efforts to achieve rich ethnographic descriptions persist, from Geertzian hermeneutics to Clifford's (1986) proposal of cultural interpretive, dialogical, and poetic writing techniques, logo-centric representation is still insufficient to reify and represent intricate realities on the ground. This is attributable to a question that arose regarding how anthropologists can describe and represent multifarious cultural phenomena exclusively via text-based description, without visual techniques. As

Banks and Morphy (1997) claim that 'the visual is such an important component of human cultural, cognitive and perceptual processes, that it can be relevant to all areas of anthropology' (1997: 2-3), broader visual methods may be beneficial in mediating between readers and anthropologists' visual perceptions, which may be perceived as basic during research. In this manner, since 'the creative tensions found "between" said and unsaid, abstract and concrete, theory and practice, image and imagination' (Stoller 2008: 101), I have striven to employ various visual methods to capture as many of the ethnographic scenes as possible, including both human and non-human subjects. With regard to the use of captions in each figure, I have included descriptions of all the figures in the text in chapters in order to maintain the academic style. On the linking pages between chapters, however, I have deliberately left out informative details for the photographs to provide readers a bit of break, as well as to convey atmospheric scenes on the ground in a more poetic and indirect way to preserve the 'unspoken' meaning of the visual. The atmospheric images can help readers to see, assume, envision, and feel the field site without distracting, text-based information. Instead, I have captioned the visuals with numbers, such as Image 1 and Image 2, which are fully explained in the glossary.

Still, because my research interests encompass the broad aspects of the social, industrial, and political complexities of this sewing community, my analysis relies heavily on a text-based anthropological portrayal. Yet, I seek to go beyond a lengthy, theory-based prose style, instead producing more vivid descriptions, such as dialogues, lyrical writing, and monologues. In so doing, I have endeavoured to incorporate individuals' own voices into this paper by using dialogues and direct quotes, just as Lazar intends that the use of direct quotations seeks to bring polyvocality to the study (Lazar 2017: 18).

Furthermore, in recent years, not only in the field of anthropology, but also in social sciences as a whole, personal accounts, especially in ethnographic writing, along with the recognition of phenomenology – namely, the presence of the researcher him/herself – came to be accepted. Until the 1970s, ethnographic pursuit tended to keep a certain distance from subjects, so as to be completely 'scientific'. To be 'objective', Dentan (1970) insists that the ethnographer should 'fade into the background' (1970: 92), maintaining a detached distance from native people so that the subjects behave as naturally as they normally do.

However, in the late twentieth century, anthropologists began to identify the inevitable influence of the ethnographer's existence in the field, as well as his/her reflexivity and subjectivity in the research. According to Holy (1984), the researcher's presence naturally affects the observed situation during fieldwork, and as a result, the research itself cannot be completely free of distortion (1984: 26). The social world cannot be perfectly objective because social meanings are always relational and reliant.

Moreover, the act of observing is already goal-directed, based on the active choices of the ethnographer rather than passive exposure, since anthropologists' perceptions and statements pass through their own unique lenses (Holy 1984). In this respect, the ethnographer's interpretation is significant in producing, conveying, and 'dismantling' (Martinez 2022: 214) the observed data through his/her active and selective point of view in analysing particular phenomena in accordance with the research interest. Because anthropology is a study about, of, and within a culture through intense direct observation, representation is a vital component in the delivery of observed data. This reflexive-authorial attitude has challenged inflexible, 'scientific' texts through the application of ethnographic observations from which the ethnographer becomes progressively indistinguishable. Moreover, Martinez (2004) argues that exposing positionality may be of help to readers in construing the anthropologist's interpretation for themselves in order to make sense of the material gathered during fieldwork and draw relevant inferences (2004: 16).

1.3. Positionality

As personal biography has become more important in social sciences (Goodman 2020: 29-31), I adopt a method of revealing my reflexivity and discussing socio-cultural phenomena based on my own experiences in the field, rather than seeking to take a 'scientific' stance. I am a female researcher in my mid-thirties, and have lived in Seoul for more than 30 years. Because I majored in Korean painting and double-majored in clothing and textiles for my bachelor's, I learned how to draw clothing patterns, handle sewing machines, and make clothes. Even though my sewing skills were not as professional as my research participants'

techniques, my artistic background and sewing techniques helped to lower the barriers towards me among my research participants. Indeed, my understanding of sewing-related vocabulary learned from my dual major in clothing and textiles helped me follow my research participants' daily use of garment-related jargon, which mostly originated from Japanese terms.

By coincidence, my maternal grandparents lived in a neighbourhood near Changsin-dong when I was young, and my mother lived in Changsin-dong for a while, when she was young, and graduated from primary school there. I did not commence my research with the grand ambition of finding my mother's roots; rather, urban regeneration compelled me towards the neighbourhood, as previously mentioned. Yet, it is also true that my mother's background was helpful when I strove to begin conversations and establish closer rapport with my research participants. As a method of getting closer to research participants, I usually strove to find something in common, and I was able to build a stronger bond with residents of Changsin-dong by sharing my mother's age and her experience in the neighbourhood as a child, which often matched their experiences.

The biggest advantage for a native anthropologist is, of course, the use of local language. At the same time, shared social, historical, geographic, economic, and political backgrounds worked beneficially. Even though my recruitment did not start with my personal network, there should be a combination of benefits as a native (female) ethnographer when breaking through my research participants' boundaries and entering the places in which they live and work. In Changsin-dong, while garment cutters are usually men, most of the sewing practitioners are women, so the fact that I am a female researcher may have made them relatively comfortable. Yet, although I strove to absorb their perspective as much as I could, there still might have been an invisible gap stemming from different backgrounds and generations.

According to Goodman (2020), right-wing commentators tend to place emphasis on economic success and high levels of social stability, whereas left-wing commentators tend to focus on workers' rights in the anthropology of Japan (2020: 31). From this point of view,

my political stance may seem leftist, as I am aiming to give voice to the sewing practitioners based on their own accounts. Much like Kondo's (1990) acknowledgement that the 'personal' and the 'political' are inseparable (1990: 24), I admit that my position as a native anthropologist and as a citizen of the country may affect my way of seeing the local circumstances in the community throughout the study. However, again, I have relentlessly striven to take a neutral stance as much as possible, since this research aims to unpack political manoeuvres and governmental intervention (in Chapter 5).

On the other hand, my background as a native anthropologist may be a double-edged sword. No matter how fluent I am in the local language, experiencing no problems when communicating with my research participants, translating and interpreting their words into another language is a completely separate endeavour. Since my research participants work in a family-like atmosphere at their workshops, they routinely have very casual conversations, including ambiguous and cultural expressions. As most anthropologists have experienced, it took a long time to fully convey the cultural implications in the translation and interpretation process, and there are still many vague translations that are not sufficient in representing their intended meanings.

Moreover, because I am so localised, the constraint of delocalising my language is also one of the biggest drawbacks. The limitations in delocalising should include not only the language itself, but also the manner in which I view all of the scenes and phenomena I captured. Historical comprehension, an understanding of economic conditions, and local knowledge of society and culture as a whole may have served as a great constraint to observing them from a blank canvas over the course of my fieldwork. This is because the culturally programmed perception of the ethnographer might affect (unintentional and unconscious) bias, distancing the ethnographer from completely 'cleared' views.

According to Bille (2017), unarticulated and invisible aspects of social life can be unveiled through long-term observations by the ethnographer (2017: 40). This is because although research participants' awareness of the ethnographer might influence them to engage in unnatural patterns of behaviour or topics of quotidian conversation, this phenomenon may

be relieved by the long-term presence of the researcher. In the same vein, my points of view at the six-month mark of fieldwork, at the one-year mark, and at a year and a half gradually changed. Just as my research participants gradually treated me more comfortably, I could construe, feel, and even read their thoughts more deeply as time went by. As I gradually acquired sewing skills, I tried to work at their pace, eat together, and act naturally in order to assume a view as close to their eye level as possible. Nonetheless, because I did not 'live' with my research participants, there should be another gap between being a researcher from the outside and being a local in the field.

Finally, the pandemic has greatly reduced the scope of my research. Less than a few months into the study, COVID-19 broke out. As previously mentioned, many of the interviews I planned, such as public officials working at the Seoul Metropolitan Government, those in charge of Changsin-dong at the Jongno-gu Office, and social entrepreneurs working locally, were cancelled. Additionally, my exploration of a larger number of workshops, especially sewing workers at small subcontracted industrial-residential units and foreign workers at last-touch workshops, who may be among the most marginalised in the neighbourhood, was significantly diminished. In Changsin-dong, the number of small workshops that receive subcontracting work from larger workshops is greater than larger workshops that distribute the workload, and in the meanwhile, there may be a form of social exclusion within this subcontracting system. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, I was able to gain access to only one case as a subcontractor, namely, Jong-im's industrial-residential unit, among the four different sewing workshops I observed. Still, I wanted to touch upon issues surrounding the social exclusion of subcontractors and foreign workers, so this may be the most regrettable limitation of this research, as well as an opportunity for future research.

1.4. Thesis Outline

Attempts to understand urban space have been developed through a wide variety of approaches in the fields of social sciences. In recent studies in anthropology, it has been

increasingly argued that space should be construed with socially, culturally, economically and politically intertwined relationships. According to Hirsch (1995), the two concepts of foreground actuality and background potentiality of landscape explain a process of mutual implication, which cannot be idealised as a certain concrete form of the representational feature of the landscape. Rather, he asserts that 'there is no 'absolute' landscape: the salience and relationship between place and space, inside and outside, and image and representation are dependent on the cultural and historical context' (Hirsch 1995: 23). This point of view provides relational context through a differentiated range of identities of space created by social relations. In this respect, a wider continuum of varying and ever-changing relationships and dynamics yields a particular context and spatiotemporal specificity. In conjunction with the relational and contextual milieu, this research centres on day-to-day, two-sided attributes in small-scale sewing workshops in contemporary Seoul.

In order to encompass myriad complexities in an urban neighbourhood, I have divided this thesis into three major discussion chapters to separately and more comprehensively address the social, industrial, and political realms of Changsin-dong. Before delving into my ethnographic findings and relevant anthropological discussions, I begin with the daily cycle of sewing workshops in the neighbourhood, and explain why I came to establish my field site in Changsin-dong, along with my research questions. In the second section of Chapter 1, I explain the methodology used in the data-collection phase of this research, as well as the anthropological representation I have adopted in the post-fieldwork phase. I then divulge my positionality, which may influence the entire course of this study, and provide breakdowns of the thesis and relevant anthropological literature that will follow in later this section.

In Chapter 2, the overview of the field site continues. To gain a holistic understanding of the Changsin-dong community, I begin by outlining the historical, topographical, and socio-economic characteristics of the neighbourhood, followed by specificities of the garment-related market in Dongdaemun, as well as the background of Changsin-dong's sewing industry at large. From these macro understandings of the field site, I will then move to a micro understanding of my research participants in terms of their brief histories and generational traits, which may in turn reveal the baby boomers' *generational resilience*

towards social and economic challenges. Portions of the ethnographic chapters (Chapters 3 to 5) will then be introduced, which are divided into The Social Neighbourhood, The Industrial Threat, and The Political Threat.

Chapter 3 is centrally concerned with the social components that make up the community. It addresses the idiosyncratic close-knit community, the sociality of sharing, and tensions and surveillance among the locals. I begin by introducing the web-like subcontracting system that contributed to the formation of the interdependent local network. Following the review of the 'close-knit' community matrix, my theoretical motivations for the study will continue, including the exploration of a sharing culture in the 'rural-like' urban community in conjunction with their daily practices of gift-giving. Subsequently, practices of food sharing and commensality will be examined in relation to the Korean collective ethos *jeong*. I then explore the dual-sided sociality of the community, since this 'harmonious' community can be seen as 'neighbour cousins' (*ie-ut sa-chon* 이웃 사촌) as the local term stipulates, whereas there simultaneously exists non-verbal, non-human, and invisible surveillance among the 'friendly' neighbours. I then move on to discover subtle tensions, daily frictions, and constant negotiations occurring in and among the sewing workshops. In this chapter, I will elucidate the peculiarities of the social neighbourhood at the local level.

Chapter 4 illustrates the industrial threat in terms of the structural constraints of the dying local sewing sector as well as individual reactions and choices related to the decline at both the collective and individual level. First, I will address the general circumstances surrounding the manufacturing industry, especially in big cities, as well as contemporary garment-manufacturing sectors at the global level. I will then focus on my field site, and analyse manifold factors of the structural characteristics of the sewing industry in Changsin-dong that influence sewing workers to become somewhat 'passive'. In comparison to their 'passive' inclinations, I explicate heterogenous embodiment, individual agency, and social navigation, which may ultimately lead to 'active' choices in the residents' daily lives, or even 'selective' retirement at the individual level. Before ending this industrial section, I explore the feasible and suitable governmental support the neighbourhood needs, as well as its limitations in revitalising the industry itself.

Chapter 5 examines urban regeneration and political entanglements within Changsin-dong at both the regional and state levels. At the beginning of the chapter, I address international trends being incorporated into the urban regeneration scheme from redevelopment in urban spaces. From this macro point of view, I again move on to the specifics of Changsin-dong's case to determine what urban regeneration has left behind in the neighbourhood. I then structure the anthropological framework supporting infrastructural fetishism, criticising bureaucratism and politics intertwined throughout the course of urban planning. This attempt to challenge the limitations of urban regeneration links to the concept of governmentality and the instrumentality of community. Following the theoretical discussions, I also address issues surrounding social entrepreneurs in the neighbourhood and the (inevitable or unintentional) phenomenon of social exclusion among locals. In the last section of this chapter, local circumstances in the unstable real estate market and lessons from Changsin-dong will be addressed.

The contents of the three different aspects of Chapters 3 to 5 may be segmented, but at the same time, they are also closely related to one another. This is because the ambivalence per se – namely, both trivial and significant dynamics – represents this community. To conclude this research, I will summarise the entire discussion and broach limitations I have encountered, with suggestions for future research. Finally, theoretical and practical contributions of this research will be presented. Before investigating the Changsin-dong neighbourhood in detail, I will review the extant literature in the social, industrial, and political spheres, which is germane to my ethnographic findings.

When it comes to theoretical framework, the anthropology of Korea, especially urban anthropology, is still thin, whereas the anthropology of Japan is abundant (perhaps stemming from Orientalist interests since Ruth Benedict's (1946) influential publication *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*). Because of the historical and cultural relationship between Japan and Korea (both because of Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945 and the longer cultural connections between the two countries), I have incorporated more examples from Japan than any other country because I believe they best help with making implicit comparisons with my Korean case study.

1.5. Literature Review

Growing up as a Korean, I have learned from my parents that a small gift – such as a pack of drinks and a cup of coffee that are not too burdensome, worth between £5 and £10 – can represent one's politeness when meeting someone or visiting someone's home, just like a housewarming gift. This gift-giving practice was of help when I needed to obtain access to sewing workshops, and become closer to my research participants. As most anthropologists have experienced, I struggled to gain access in the initial stage of my fieldwork. When I was introduced to sewing practitioners, they looked rather uncomfortable with the presence of the researcher in their workplaces because they regarded that being observed would encumber them in their mundane working spaces, in which each individual constantly works against the clock to meet daily deadlines. A few days later, when I brought coffee and some drinks for the workshop owners and sewing workers, their attitudes completely changed. The workshop owner, who told me not to talk to her because she would be interrupted by conversations with the ethnographer, smiled brightly and even thanked me for such small gifts. A cup of coffee brought levity to the heavy and indifferent atmosphere and laid the foundation in building strong rapport. Having laid the paramount stepping-stone to developing the relationship, it intrigued me to observe the practices of (mostly small-scale) gift-giving in the workers' everyday lives, and I began to examine how the variety of gifts and the sociality of sharing play roles in constructing, reconstructing, and maintaining social relations in the neighbourhood.

Ever since Malinowski's (1922) famous identification of the role of the Kula Ring as a form of the ceremonial exchange of gifts in Trobriand society, explorations of the laws of gift-giving have continued in anthropology. According to the Maussian development of gift theory, because the material purposes of the contracts of giving and exchanging possess a special intrinsic power, this causes a certain form of expectation between the giver and recipient. These exchanges involve ostensibly 'free' gifts, but in fact, the gifts are obligatory, serving to strengthen social relations and mutual ties between individuals. Mauss further claims that the obligatory form is expressed 'in a mythical and imaginary way or, one might say, symbolic and collective' (2002: 42). In so doing, Mauss stresses the inalienable features and supernatural powers of the gift, introducing the concept of *hau*,

namely, the spirit of the gift that binds its transactors. However, Sahlins (1972) challenges Mauss' focus on the spiritual significance of *hau,* which overlooks its economic impact. Instead, Sahlins proposes the principle of reciprocity and divides it into three components in accordance with the intimacy of social ties: *generalised reciprocity, balanced reciprocity,* and *negative reciprocity*.

Generalised reciprocity involves a prolonged exchange of material, labour, and mental support from one party to the other, although it does not accurately calculate how much exchange is taking place. *Balanced reciprocity* refers to exchanges over a relatively short period of time with the expectation of reciprocity in a relatively short time period, while *negative reciprocity* includes to an inhumane exchange method that strives to receive a thing without repaying the counterpart, even if it harms the other's interests. Motivated by Sahlins' analysis of the different degrees of generosity, I have developed my own classification of different patterns of gift-giving in Changsin-dong according to the degree of purpose and expectation of compensation: *cash exchange, courteous gifting,* and *generous giving.* A sort of micro-finance gathering (*gye-mo-im* 계모임) based upon both social and monetary values can be exemplified as a form of *cash exchange*. Daily practices of sharing 'small gifts' (*jak-eun sun-mool* 작은 선물), such as toilet paper, packs of instant coffee, packs of mulberry juice, and New Year's and Thanksgiving gifts, will be demonstrated as *courteous gifting*. When it comes to *generous giving*, handing out facemasks to random passers-by during the pandemic and giving a small drink to a delivery man will be instantiated in Chapter 3.

Indeed, there have long been debates on the radical opposition between the capitalist economy and the gift economy in the field of anthropology. According to Mauss, while a capitalist society is one that collects things to accumulate more wealth, a gift society is one that collects things to acquire prestige and create and maintain social relationships through gift exchange. Following this, Gregory (1982) contrasts these two spheres of commodity exchange and gift exchange as follows: '[c]ommodity exchange is an exchange of alienable objects between people who are in a state of reciprocal independence that establishes a quantitative relationship between the objects exchanged', whereas '[g]ift exchange is an exchange of inalienable objects between people who are in a state of reciprocal dependence

that establishes a qualitative relationship between the transactors' (1982: 106). Yet, Appadurai (1986) asserts that this drastic polarity between gifts and commodities is the result of Western ideologies of 'pure gift', as well as the romanticisation of gift relations in non-Western societies (see also Carrier 1995: 157). The capitalist notion of a commodity stems from Marx's emphasis on production and reproduction, which values human labour (Graeber 2001: 31). Apart from this Marxist view of the capitalist economy, Appadurai (1986) argues that every society entails a certain kind of exchange, and commoditisation is not necessarily a capitalist phenomenon, but is, rather, related to the entire trajectory from production to exchange, distribution, and consumption. Here, however, Appadurai deems all exchanges as merely about *things* that do not serve to build, maintain, or serve social relationships (Graeber 2001: 32).

In Rupp's (2003) research on the gifting culture in Japan, she contends that gifts and commodities are not separate, but rather are inextricable. When gifting an object, the price label of the object showing the exact price is visible, thereby allowing the recipient to choose an appropriate form of return gift.

> According to American and European conceptions… [t]he gift stands in opposition to the commodity, which circulates in the world of commercial transactions, where value is calculated on the basis of price, and objects are not exchanged to create relationships between people but rather to turn a profit… [In Japan, by contrast,] monetary and quasi-monetary signs are important for giving: they are apprehended as specific quantities that are auspicious because they align with a greater cosmic process. (Rupp 2003: 179, 197)

Rupp suggests moving beyond the binary distinction between gift and commodity societies to encompass complex details and variations in the gift exchange by focusing on the social relationship between the giver and the recipient, which can be linked to a material embodiment of social and cosmic order. Along with the interchangeable attribute in gift-giving in Japan, individuals' propensities and practices of gifting vary depending on gender, family background, class, occupation, region, religion, education, and personality, all of which play a role in strengthening relationships, gratitude, and hierarchy (ibid.).

Similarly, Brumann (2000) indicates that cash gifts tend to be deemed the medium of profit-oriented market exchange, associated with impersonality and instrumentality in Western

countries. Yet, in Japanese society, the monetary gift offers a continuous grading system for measuring the value of almost any good or service, conveying unambiguous messages, since they are easily comparable to previous experiences or services (Brumann 2000: 238). In this respect, although money may predominantly seem a mere means to an end in asocial, self-interested transactions, because of its representative mechanism of transparent and precise measurement, it can be used for more equal and symmetric exchanges in both social and personal spheres in many contexts, which will be addressed in my proposal for *cash exchange*.

In fact, such troublesome or burdensome gift-giving has become a classic discussion in anthropology, and recent studies have paid close attention to more day-to-day and complicated relations. For instance, souvenirs and various unused gifts cannot be easily thrown away and often wind up in storage for years because of the relationship with the donor, who must be treated with respect (Daniels 2010: 158-176). This semi-permanent and inalienable nature of the gift is often seen around us, and if it is not a favourable or needed gift, its value may become lower than that of the money paid to buy it, or may even be considered useless. For most conscientious people, the uselessness of gifts makes the recipient feel remorseful, and this will be discussed in relation to *courteous gifting*, which is more ambiguous, less transparent, and may be more subtly political than *cash exchange*. According to Bourdieu (1997b), the most unnecessary exchange relationships are likely to create a continuing dependency between transactors, which is ultimately political.

> The purely speculative and typically scholastic question of whether generosity and disinterestedness are possible should give way to the political question of the means that have to be implemented in order to create universes in which, as in gift economies, people have an interest in disinterestedness and generosity. (Bourdieu 1997b: 240)

In Yan's (1996) research, *guanxi* is a distinctive political networking practice in Chinese societies, representing the complex social phenomenon of the cultivation of personal and social networks. This *guanxi* network encircles a given individual and, at the same time, invisibly reinforces the requirement to voluntarily fulfil their obligations in gift exchange along a clear line between the village community and the outside world. Otherwise, unsatisfactorily fulfilled gift-giving might lead one to lose the trust of the village community and eventually become isolated.

Nonetheless, as Yan (1996) points out, '[f]ew studies touched upon the emotional world of ordinary people and the role that gifts play in expressing emotions' while '[m]ost studies are preoccupied with discovering either the economic rationality or religious beliefs of the local people' (1996: 220). In this sense, countless studies have focused on the spirit of the gift, its inalienable nature, the law of reciprocity, equivalent return, and obligation, whereas emotional accounts of gift-giving, such as excitement, affection, and care, tend to be excluded. Indeed, the discussion of reciprocity and related obligation in gift-giving has been enormously and dominantly stressed when generalising social and ritual patterns and thereby has become a sort of cliché in anthropology. Hence, personal emotions and sentiments are generally overlooked.

Just as gifts play a very important role in forming and maintaining relationships, along with their sociability and personal affection in rural Chinese villages, the sociality of sharing permeates everyday life in Changsin-dong, a rural-like urban community. I will address small-scale gift exchanges between neighbours, which are carried out to a less burdensome extent. Since the sewing workers have worked in the same sector and lived in the same neighbourhood for a long time, day-to-day gifts serve as expressions of a sense of care, akin to the Korean community sentiment *jeong*, which refers to collective consciousness, cultural ethics, sense of affection, concern about neighbours, and willingness to help one another. Much like Yan's research, in which research participants in the village share everyday gifts and food to cement social networks, Changsin-dong sewing practitioners share not only small-scale gifts, but also food. Here, commensality is another critical sharing practice in maintaining and enhancing social ties in their everyday lives. As Lazar (2017) indicates, friendly sociability through social gatherings and commensality is salient to how unionists maintain their collectiveness in order to continually reaffirm their collective purpose and sense of collective identity.

The act of giving food has already been acknowledged by Munn (1986) as the act of creating solidarity and obligation in accordance with gender principles, and in so doing, food serves as a medium in the transformative process. Watson and Klein (2016) further assert that food exemplifies the continuation and renewal of social ties, and they go into greater detail in their analysis of food to discuss its functions in relation to commensality,

identity, locality, ethics, and security, since food-related practices are reflections of social changes in the complexities of daily life. Consistent with this approach, Chee-Beng (2015) elucidates the practices of sharing and eating food together as communicative actions that are significant in social relations. This act of giving and sharing food can be related to my proposal of *generous giving*. Just as Schrift (1997) leaves open the possibility and the hope of moving closer to an ethic of generosity (1997: 20), I will advocate for Smith and Davidson's (2014) concept of the paradox of generosity to elaborate on the joy of sharing expressed in Korean community sentiment as *jeong*. In briefly examining the concept of *jeong*, Ko (2010) defines it as a sense of care, attachment, and affection, as well as an accumulated social bond that is naturally created and experienced over the relationship, including frequent encounters with both human and non-human elements. However, if *jeong* is too strongly emphasised in building personal connections, people might lose their universal morality and objectivity, which could eventually lead to another type of social exclusion, the sacrifice of the other party, as well as to a lack of demarcation between the self and others (Ko 2010, 2014).

Changsin-dong's web-like interdependent community not only builds local networks and retains its sociability, but also leads to tensions and local surveillance, which includes non-human and non-verbal techniques. This may be relevant to Daniels' (2010) analysis of Japanese homes, in which Japanese women frequently observe how their female neighbours handle household chores, such as garbage disposal and laundry, to discern whether they are completing their responsibilities at home and caring for their families (2010: 78-79). Such non-verbal and non-human elements serve as the media of local surveillance, and through these actions, tensions and conflicts are also triggered. Likewise, within the symbiotic, organic local network in Changsin-dong, daily struggles, surveillance, tensions, frictions, and negotiations are always pertinent. This ambivalence among locals, especially between contractors and subcontractors, between sewing workshops and designers, between employers and employees, and even between family members, was captured over the course of my fieldwork. Kondo (1990) similarly identifies the inevitable power relation-ships at the Satō factory in Japan that require viewing people as multiple selves in their own lives, full of contradictions, ambiguity, and tensions (1990: 224). Just as company trips affect different senses among employers and employees, 'they can never escape to a

romantic place beyond power' (Kondo 1990: 224). Meanwhile, the deployments of meaning and action yield a multiplicity of effects, some of which are paradoxical (Kondo 1990: 225). This sort of power relationship is also represented in Changsin-dong within the subcontracting system in the local sewing industry.

The Changsin-dong neighbourhood consists of hillsides around a valley floor, in which most structures are two- to four-storey buildings with small workshops, households, and industrial-residential units atop the hill. This topographical feature naturally segregates between the lower neighbourhood (*ah-laet-dong-ne* 아랫동네) and the upper neighbourhood (*wit-dong-ne* 윗동네), namely, the mainstream and the non-mainstream, respectively. Bestor (1989) also identifies the webs of local social life, where locals are interlinked to one another through their participation in local organisations, as well as informal social, economic, and political ties in a residential and commercial district in Tokyo. From his ethnographic analysis, Bestor investigates how the social fabric, internal dynamics, and patterns of social life shape the community, in which the neighbourhood itself operates as an important social arena for the locals. They spend more time in the community because their occupations – e.g., small-scale, self-employed merchants, factory owners, and craftspeople – tend to keep them close to their homes, increasing the likelihood that they can become involved in community affairs. Consequently, even though self-employed merchants and artisans are generally deemed a relatively lower social class, they can continue the commanding role of shaping the characteristics of urban life in Japan.

By a similar token, sewing and cutting practitioners in semi-residential, semi-industrial Changsin-dong, adjacent to the core of the garment industry in South Korea, from a long-established local network, which sometimes engenders dominant power and tensions between them. This can be found in Brandt's (1971) ethnographic study in a Korean fishing and farming village, in which envy, frictions, and malintegration are embedded in the village life. Still, it is unavoidably true that the sewing people strive not only to make more money, but also to invest and spend it in order to support relationships and the community at large. Hence, beyond mere financial interests, the sewing neighbours, who are in relationships involving economic cycles, formulate social relationships that may be necessary in the future, through sharing food, labour, small-scale items, and information in these

relationships. Thus, this social neighbourhood entails contradictory multiplicities, such as rural and urban, interconnected and (somewhat) burdensome, and symbiotic and competitive social traits.

In Chapter 4, I will examine the structural working environment in Changsin-dong's sewing workshops, especially with regard to why they come to be 'passive' and 'insensitive' to new challenges from a macro point of view. At the same time, this study aims to identify how each active agent plays a role in coping with daily struggles, social changes, and fluid forms of the industry from a microscopic perspective. In order to dismantle this industrial milieu, I first explore the correlations between factories and cities from historical, economic, and sociological points of view. Lee (2012a) chronologically outlines the factory system, which first appeared in Britain in the late 18th century, and has continued to be the most typical form of production to this day, identifying factories as the foundation of civilisation, representing the hallmark of modern society. In *Principles of Economics*, Marshall (1890) specifically examines the premises of industrial organisation, labour, and the concentration of specialised industries (1890: 200-261). He asserts that *localisation* is fulfilled by particular localities, aggregated small businesses with skilled labour as well as geographical proximity. Therefore, localised industry represents its *specialisation* of the industry. Following this, I incorporate Glaeser's (2011) overview of the vicissitudes of the city, which he argues are directly connected to the growth and decline of the industry. He epitomises several manufacturing cities, such as Liverpool, Manchester, Detroit, and the like, which have encountered downturns in industries and related labour populations. Indeed, this form of shrinkage of the garment industry has been occurring in numerous regions throughout the world.

For instance, Macleod (2002) looks at a fishing community in the Canary Islands and its relationships with the processes surrounding globalisation, as well as the way in which the locals adapt to their shifting socio-economic environment, demonstrating their active roles in cultivating their own lives and the development of their community. The expansion of tourism in related services and jobs is one of the more significant effects of the phenomenon leading to many more available jobs besides fishing, especially for the younger generation, and options and opportunities available to the community are continuously changing due

to global dynamics. Here, Macleod (2002) believes that the growth of tourism has given locals the chance to actively interact with people from other cultures and has created new chances for employment and alternative ideas and attitudes. Accordingly, the community is actually prospering in terms of wealth and jobs.

> … the indigenous individuals, foreign settlers and tourists involved are all active agents in the globalisation process... [S]ome elements of the local culture are certainly disappearing. [I]n contrast, other elements have been strengthened by global processes. (Macleod 2002: 53)

It is fair to evaluate a culture in terms of continuous change, expansion, contraction, additions, and the creation of new connections, rather than as a bounded entity, specifically when examining individual human agency in the global process (Macleod 2002). Nonetheless, it may be worrisome to optimistically conceive socio-economic changes, and to naturally romanticise tourism in his paper. In one sense, tourism may bring about a boost to the economy and widen interactions with the outside world. In another sensethere should be more complicated tensions and subtle anxieties among locals who experience their job loss and social changes throughout the transition, at the same time.

Schulman and Leiter (1991) explore the past and future of the textile industry in the Southern US, which has undergone loss of jobs to regions that offer lower labour costs. They suggest a framework outlining the ongoing tensions between contested puzzles and continuing paradoxes, which portray the disparity between scholarly, theoretical discussions and the social reality that may defy or be neglected by intellectual debates, categorisation, and explanation (1991: 5). Hodges and Frank (2013) endeavour to seize more dynamic and diverse voices in textile manufacturing communities in the Southern US through multiple methods, including in-depth interviews and analyses of both public data and archival material.

Hodges and Frank (2013) scrutinise the economic and social ramifications of job loss, especially with regard to how local communities have responded to industrial changes and their social implications, which have been insufficiently documented in academia. Certainly, this serves as invaluable documentation of contemporary responses to the threatened industry. However, by focusing on the changing, shrinking circumstances, this

research also overlooks certain tensions and conflicts between the residents, different opinions, and inherent political orientations. If a longer ethnographic observation had been conducted over the course of their study, more realistic problems and issues could have been explored. In addition, describing the community as a 'Big Happy Family' leads to fragmentary images of their unity and a longing for the past, overlooking the subtle relationships underlying this community. Additionally, in aiming to document local responses to the declining phenomenon of the industry and the prospect of tourism, this research remains limited and is lacking a theoretical framework. Therefore, I have striven to more closely examine the response to the declining industry and everyday lives in Changsin-dong, in order to ultimately analyse the internal and external factors of the economic downturn, the systemic and structural limitations of the industry, and the daily dynamics and individual agency employed to react to, adapt to, and *navigate* through socio-economic changes.

The cause of Changsin-dong's sewing industry being pushed out of the global labour market competition may be primarily the rigid system of the sewing sector, rendering individuals somewhat passively inclined to do new, challenging work, which may be seen by outliers as 'little innovation' in the local industry. The structural constraints of their rigid system can also be ascribed to Changsin-dong's high dependency on the Dongdaemun garment market, which leads to a domino effect in the declining industry. This overly localised network backfires, because locals rarely interact with other clients and customers from the outside. The non-branded, relatively cheap, variable quality, and rapid turnover trend in the Dongdaemun market has shaped the sewing workers' habits of producing comparably lower quality work, and this tendency has been aggravated due to the ageing of the workforce. The scarcity of handover to the next generation is another alarming factor in their economic depression.

Nevertheless, it is true that about 1,000 sewing workshops are still in operation, representing the highest density of sewing workshops in the country. In the remaining workshops, which may seem unified and homogeneous, each type of work, each way of working, and each way of rejecting difficult work vary. I found that these workshops do not simply sit on the side lines in the declining industry and watch what is happening to

them, but, rather, choose, modify, and adapt their own ways, at their respective levels, to respond to perpetual socio-economic transitions. Accordingly, I do not seek to define my research participants as 'passive, alienated workers'. Even though it seems that they are stuck in a rigid and conservative system, in practice, these sewing practitioners work through constant choices at every moment of every day. Thus, I will discuss structure and agency in conjunction with the analysis of the rigid system in the industry, as well as daily dynamics within the workshops.

Midway through Chapter 4, I address the phenomenological recognition of embodiment, which may explain microscopic, miscellaneous, and varied skills of individuals, even in their 'passive', 'mundane', and 'repetitive' daily routines in sewing workshops. According to Tilley (1994), lifeworlds are constructed by heterogeneous social actors and constitute particular environmental settings, highlighting 'who is experiencing and how' (1994:11). Here, Ingold's (2000) identification of the embodied experience, which represents existence in the world, may prove relevant to the argument that the landscape possesses bodily activities and experiences. Ingold characterises temporality of place as a 'chunk' of lived experience, because tasks are constitutive acts of dwelling, and an agent in an environment always carries out a 'task', in relation to his concept of taskscape as 'an array of related activities' (2000: 195). The embodied taskscape, then, is an eventful potency of places full of activities, and thereby, a landscape becomes a heterogeneous condensation or crystallization of relational activity (Ingold 2000: 333). Through the agent living in it, the landscape becomes a part of the agent, and the agent becomes a part of the landscape, and therefore the taskscape exists not merely as an activity, but also as interactivity, which reveals individuals' heterogenous embodied skills within a particular spatio-temporal environment in sewing workshops.

With respect to human agency, Bestor (2004) finds that the Tsukiji Fish Market, the largest fish market in Japan, is deeply immersed in complex social institutions, retained by cultural logics. These logics are in turn produced in part through the everyday operations of market institutions. Hence, just as structure enables and constrains agency, agency enacts structure, and the marketplace socially generates itself in a never-ending cycle (Bestor 2004: 309). Here, I take in Giddens' (1979, 1984) acknowledgement of the dialectic relationship

between structure and agency, since the concepts of agency and structure are implied, each in the other. According to Giddens, structure is an embroiled form in both the conditions and consequences of agency, and agency and embodied experience are uniquely shaped, derived from both conscious and unconscious plots, much like sewing practitioners move and utilise their bodies with their own habitual and embodied praxis. Therefore, the constitutions of agents and structures are not discrete sets but, rather, represent the *dialectic of control* in social systems (Giddens 1984: 16) in continuous social relations and interactions over time and space. Yet, Archer (2003) contends that Giddens' argument still places structure first from a structuralist stance, and suggests the greater salience of agency over structure.

> Agents possess properties and powers distinct from those pertaining to social forms. Among them feature all those predicates, such as thinking, deliberating, believing, intending, loving and so forth, which are applicable to people, but never to social structures or cultural systems. (Archer 2003: 2)

As Archer insists, the idea that the human power of reflexivity has causal effectiveness is the fundamental explanation of how structures affect agents, because human reflexivity is pivotal in the process of mediation.

Nevertheless, Akram (2012) criticises Archer's views on agency because Archer privileges reflexivity, which may underestimate the autonomy and independence of structure and agency in the dialectic (2012: 47). According to Ortner (2006), agency never exists in its own right, but is always a part of the process of structuration, constructing and reconstructing larger social and cultural formations. This is because the social and cultural forces of historical involvement are much more complex than what can be learned from proving the intentions of actors. She further argues that agency is almost always unevenly distributed, as some people *have* it while others do not, or have less, much like Constable's (1997) description of Filipino maids who are sometimes physically assaulted, trapped in their rooms, or abused. In this manner, Ortner (2006) contends that the concept of agency stems from a sort of Western individualism (2006: 134). According to Lacsamana (1998), however, Constable (1997) takes an overly post-modernist stance, which emphasises the agency associated with the relocation of Filipino maids to Hong Kong, neglecting the social and economic contexts that actually reinforce the migration of Filipino women. Thus, in

this study, I will examine the social and economic contexts – in other words, the structural environment – from a macro perspective, while simultaneously taking a micro perspective that unveils the day-to-day lives of sewing workers and their miscellaneous choices.

In fact, in the long-standing debate surrounding structure and agency, it is not easy to determine which comes first. Therefore, I would like to release this intense dispute and, rather, yield more empirical insights from ethnographic observation. Vigh (2007) demystifies the notion of social navigation in connection with individual choices in warfare in Guinea-Bissau, which is represented as making the best decisions in the use of political turmoil to ultimately enhance their lives for a prosperous future, even by risking their own lives. In a later paper, Vigh (2009) further expounds on social navigation as a concept that allows us to understand the ways in which people act, move, and shape their social flux and change, with social formations moving and changing over time. 'We act, adjust and attune our strategies and tactics in relation to the way we experience and imagine and anticipate the movement and influence of social forces' (Vigh 2009: 420). Assuming this identification of social navigation, I aim to explore everyday dynamics in Changsin-dong's sewing sector, which is clearly under threat, examining how individuals react to, adjust to, and navigate through the transitioning socio-economic fabrics. Rather than passively vanishing from or inevitably being pushed out of competition in the global labour market, individuals constantly make their own choices, even within the 'static' structural environment, by rejecting some vexatious orders, making changes even in a trivial form – e.g., producing facemasks when all orders were halted – and selectively returning to their hometown for the 'post-garment' life (see also Shakya 2018: 133).

When scrutinising my research participants' responses to the diminishing industry, I found that their generational backgrounds may play paramount roles in acknowledging and accepting their occupational threats. As I address sewing practitioners' demographic features (from the late fifties to the mid-sixties) in Chapter 2, this generation, so-called baby boomers in Korea, experienced both severe economic hardship in their childhood and rapid economic growth in their adulthood. This demonstrates that baby boomers are the very generation that has led the expansion and development of the national economy in South Korea. Because they have memories of extreme poverty in the post-war era and know and

understand how they overcame their tribulation, the current economic downturn may be comparatively bearable and acceptable to them. Here, I adapt Breaden and Goodman's (2020) notion of *inbuilt resilience* and suggest *generational resilience* to explain sewing practitioners' seemingly passive and conservative attitudes, which may actually be active. This can be linked to Bestor's (1989) argument that small-scale, self-employed merchants need to be regarded as dynamic agents in contemporary patterns of social stratification and conflict in Japan, rather than stagnant, inert observers. In this pre-industrial, country-like community, Changsin-dong sewing practitioners exhibit 'the survival of the past' (Bestor 1989: 258) as active agents throughout the transition, namely, through fierce competition. This is also related to the following statement from Martinez (2007), 'all modern societies attempt to construct their identity by maintaining that important continuities with the past are being upheld' (2007: 13).

In addition to the examination of the local specificities of Changsin-dong's social and idiosyncratic industrial milieus in Chapters 3 and 4, I will look at the political complexities surrounding urban regeneration in Chapter 5. To construe social, economic, and political relations intertwined in urban space, I first incorporate Tilley's (1994) emphasis of 'who is experiencing and how' (1994: 11) in explaining heterogeneous social actors and variable landscapes. Accordingly, a 'site' is always active and experiences an incomplete incarnation of events as a fluctuating, non-representational form. Following this, Brumann, Dimmer, and Schulz (2012) also claim dialectical, reflexive, and relational relationships with surrounding social processes and spatial frames, which cannot solely be explained by what is there. Here, over the creation of space in Japan, they identify the bottom-up, experimental strategies by policy-makers, urban planners, and residents in certain opportunities amidst urban weakening (Brumann et al. 2012). Yet, in that volume, Brumann (2012) identifies the trial of a new building code in Kyoto in 2007, which remains representative of the conventional political patterns and top-down orientation. This embeddedness of the political, bureaucratic, and asymmetrical power in redevelopment in Japan can be linked to the remaining power relationships surrounding Changsin-dong's urban planning and regeneration.

In Changsin-dong, the Seoul Metropolitan Government's project to improve the lives of residents started out as 'redevelopment', focusing on the possible construction of large, high-rise housing blocks, which resulted in the opening of the ward to intense land speculation. In tandem with the change of government in the city in 2011, the local authority switched the redevelopment scheme to urban regeneration to preserve the older buildings and maintain the social cohesion of the existing, working-class community. For a better understanding of the international trends in urban planning, I review Roberts, Skyes, and Granger's (2017) outline of the global entry into urban regeneration to date. As Roberts (2017) contends, urban space has become more complicated and more competitive and continues to change rapidly. As a result, methods of urban regeneration – namely, bottom-up, integrated, and comprehensive vision and action to resolve urban problems and improve the economic, physical, social, and environmental condition of an area – are prerequisites for a balanced development scheme. Similarly, Barosio, Eynard, Marietta, Marra, Melis, and Tabasso (2016) show the evolution and objectives of urban regeneration. Here again, the empowerment of inhabitants through a bottom-up approach is emphasised to achieve successful urban regeneration as a replacement for universalism.

In company with the global trend of adopting urban regeneration, the local government in Seoul commenced urban regeneration in Changsin-dong in 2014. Following this, numerous researchers, organisations, and social enterprises came to settle in the neighbourhood, but in 2016, after the official termination of the business period of the project, they began to leave the neighbourhood due to the limited funding from the local government. Moreover, government intervention pivoted from neoliberal redevelopment to progressive regeneration, but regeneration lost momentum with the election of a conservative city government in 2021. Accordingly, Chapter 5 focuses on a discussion of those projects constituting more recent attempts at regeneration and critically assesses the government's role through discussions of 'infrastructural fetishism' (see Larkin 2013: 333), bureaucratism, governmentality, and social exclusion, as well as the vagaries of the real estate market.

In recent anthropological studies, the pursuit of visibility and political maneuverers have been widely contested with regard to the realm of infrastructure, usually in urban spaces. From the more substantial literature, I specifically incorporate ethnographic recognition of

unfulfilled urban planning and infrastructure: redevelopment and related bureaucracy during the twentieth century in Japan (Sorensen 2002); violent construction using political power under the guise of 'revitalisation' in China (Chu 2014); infrastructuralism in post-war reconstruction in Vietnam (Schwenkel 2015); visual politics in the construction of a highway in Albania (Dalakoglou 2010); techno-politics over water supply in India (Anand 2011); and superficial Aboriginal housing hardware failures in Australia (Lea and Pholeros 2010). These cases all challenge the tendency to fetishise infrastructure and its façade, neglecting its functions and content, in connection with inherent political tactics to showcase the 'outcome', as well as bureaucratic constraints on monitoring the establishment and operation of the infrastructure, which may be related to tech-politics and governmentality. This *infrastructural fetishism* can be precisely applied to Changsin-dong's case, with plenty of ensuing hindrances to truly accomplishing bottom-up regeneration as the initial goal. In particular, the representative outcome of urban regeneration is the construction of new community centres, especially a sewing history museum, while the newly built facilities remain less serviceable. Here, I will rely on the frameworks of beautification, touristification, and infrastructural politics to explore the constraints in urban regeneration.

Ji-yoon Kim (2015) specifies that Changsin-dong's regeneration emphasises 'post-political' discourse by encouraging residents' participation, framing it as a 'good policy' although it has not achieved industrial regeneration, which would lead to direct improvements in the quality of life of locals. In particular, Kim (2015) criticises the Seoul Metropolitan Government's strategy to make the neighbourhood a tourist destination under the banner of urban regeneration, which is not sufficient to overcome the industrial and economic dilemma of the local sewing sector. In fact, the programme of beautification and touristification is an idea drawn from a political and administrative perspective at the governmental level, because it began with the idea of the mayor, which is still bound to top-down governance, even though urban regeneration stirs up residents' participation. Hak-sung Jung and Sook-jin Kim (2020a) also examine the decline of the abandoned mining area in Gangwon-do in eastern Korea, deeming governance a mechanism of power immersed in intricate political discourse surrounding regional development schemes. In another study, Jung and Kim (2020b) similarly explore the urban regeneration of Sewoon Arcade in Seoul,

which was implemented through a plan by (former) Mayor Park, similar to that of Changsin-dong, discerning governmentality within/throughout urban regeneration. They insist that urban regeneration aims to build voluntary, autonomous cooperation by residents beyond neoliberal, developmental spatial strategies, but this establishment of 'cooperative governance' actually (indirectly) makes the object of the project (i.e., the residents of the 'targeted' site) the 'active' subject involved in the project. They further assert that governmentality may function as a device to 'autonomously' resolve regional problems within the community, not to reach out to the authorities (Jung and Kim 2020b). Here, Joo-hyung Park (2013) contests the Seoul Metropolitan Government's community revitalisation project, which may not be post-political but, rather, more structured and extensively political in another form of a neoliberalist plan.

Park (2013) compares Seoul City's community revitalisation to the Saemaeul Movement, which can be translated to the new village movement. The 1970s' Saemaeul Movement calls for 'autonomous involvement' and 'participation of communities', but in fact, it was mapped out and instilled by the government. As Park (2013) insists, the recent programme of community revitalisation in Seoul romanticises the community to uplift residents' engagement in community affairs, which is seemingly bottom-up but is actually top-down as a form of the instrumentality of community, much like Rose's (1996) declaration of 'government through the community' (1996: 332). Despite the emphasis on community-based, bottom-up approaches to overcome the drawbacks of capitalist developmentalism, hierarchical power relationships between governmental administrations and local co-operatives are densely entangled in urban regeneration. In other words, governmentality operates as an invisible, indirect, and neoliberalist form of governance by allowing local communities to develop their own self-reliance to identify and solve problems within the community. As a result, community involvement actually works as an 'apparatus of governmentality' (Foucault 2008) through 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault 1982) injected into society. In this manner, I have applied such political manoeuvres to Changsin-dong's case, which may be omnipresent in everyday life and wind up as a form of the instrumentality of community just as Foucault (1980) claims that between the nets of power, there is no space for complete freedom. This can be easily observed in Korea due to the paradox of democracy, which needs support from the majority to make politics feasible and

may often use visible, tempting, and 'rational' strategies to win. Therefore, the bipolar system of *politics for politics* in Korea easily leads to an invisible form of governmentality.

On the other hand, Lazar (2017) takes into account Foucault's notion of 'technologies of the self' (1988: 18) in relation to understanding agency, freedom, resistance, and motivation by dealing with operations of conduct, thoughts, and the way of being. Accordingly, agency may be saliently recognised in studies of self-cultivation in social and political milieus. When it comes to power and agency, Kondo (1990) claims that constant mediation and coexistence between power and agency can help to formulate individuals in a particular social and political setting.

> Rather than relying on notions of a whole subject who can authentically resist power, on a notion of power as simply repressive, and therefore on the assumption that there exists a place beyond power; rather than seeing resistance as a mechanism of social reproduction within a closed system; and rather than subscribing to a view of social action as divisible into neatly separable categories, I would argue for a more complex view of power and human agency. (Kondo 1990: 224)

This sort of acceptance of agency might be related to my arguments regarding agency and social navigation in Chapter 4, but the concept of power in governmentality at the state level seems contradictory in Chapter 5. Here, I wanted to reveal this contradictory and simultaneously dialectical relationship between structure and agency. At the micro level, agency is always extant, even in trivial or 'less active' choices in everyday life, and at the same time, structure is always present in a given environment, especially at the macro level, in relation to governmentality. Because social life is interwoven with politics, the swing of the pendulum between structure and agency is continual and mutual. Rather than prioritising one in order to view the two as divergent entities, I would postulate the dialectics. In Chapter 5, by challenging the superficial, short-sighted administration of bureaucracy and existing top-down processes in urban regeneration, I seek to find the ideals, realities, and lessons from urban regeneration in Changsin-dong.

In summary, Changsin-dong is a socio-culturally long-established, economically inter-dependent, and politically muddled neighbourhood. I have striven to address its sociality, daily dynamics, and complexities at the individual, regional, state, and global levels. By

identifying the characteristics of the sewing community, I seek to understand its interlinked local network, the social bonds maintained through the practices of sharing, and non-verbal surveillance, along with subtle tensions between neighbours. This may in turn reveal how the community plays a role in sustaining the local economy as well as isolating the community from the outside. In this sunset industry, I shall demonstrate how the industrial system has influenced individuals' working environments and their propensities from a macro view, as well as how individuals react to, adapt to, and overcome this dying and transitioning industry from a micro view. Finally, I will focus on the intricate interests, political entanglements, and pragmatic constraints of urban regeneration, which may bring about governmentality and the instrumentality of community. As this neighbourhood already exhibits the contrasting properties of a semi-industrial and semi-household locality, the area demonstrates never-ending ironies. Accordingly, I sought to establish a niche area in urban studies to unpack the two-sided contradictions inherent in this close-knit community, namely: pre-industrial versus post-industrial; harmonious versus combative; welcoming versus exclusive; independent versus interdependent; vertical versus horizontal; declining versus surviving; loss versus continuity; laborious versus content; and structure versus agency.



Image 3

2. Overview of the Ethnographic Field Site

2.1. Historical, Topographical, and Socio-Economic Contexts in Changsin-dong

Changsin-dong, that is, the Changsin district, is one of four hundred districts in Seoul. Changsin-dong[2] is under the Jongno-gu jurisdiction, which is one of 25 boroughs in Seoul, located in the middle of the Northern part of the city (Figure 2.1). Historically, the Jongno-gu borough has served as a central location for politics, economics, and culture for more than 600 years, as it consists of royal palaces, a number of cultural heritage sites, primary public organisations, such as the Blue House, the governmental complex of Seoul, national embassies, and so forth.

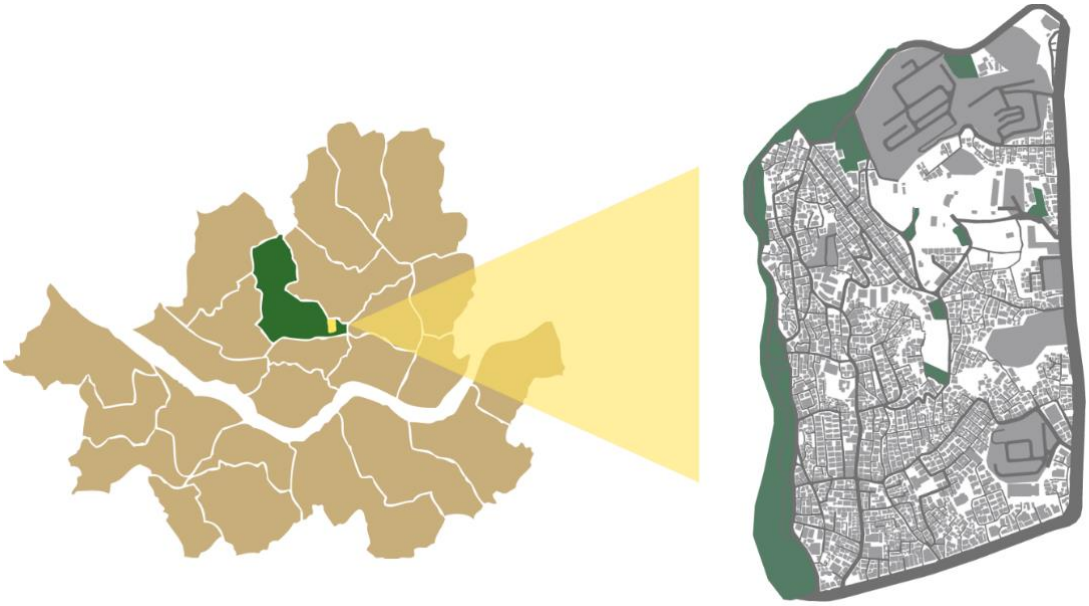


Figure 2.1. The beige separations on the map at left show 25 boroughs in Seoul, and the green section among them represents Jongno-gu. The map at right depicts the field site in the Changsin-dong neighbourhood, which is the yellow section in the map at left, located in Jongno-gu. Map by the author.

[2] In Korea, there is a three-tier administrative division of cities: City, *si*, borough, *gu*, and district, *dong*.

Looking at the brief history of Changsin-dong, it began to appear in history along with King Taejo's transfer of the capital to Hanyang, the area surrounding Jongno in Seoul at present, in the early Joseon Dynasty in the 1390s. Changsin-dong was located next to the Hanyang ramparts, which were built by connecting four gates to the east, west, north, and south. Changsin-dong, located next to the Dongdaemun Gate, which means the East Gate of Hanyang fortress (Figure 2.2), was a scenic village outside the capital in which there were several villas for high-ranking dignitaries in the Joseon Dynasty (Seoul City 2019: 14).



Figure 2.2. The current state of the preserved Hanyang Fortress Wall in Changsin-dong.

Naksan in Changsin-dong, a mountain which began to be called 'Camel Mountain' (i.e., *Nak-ta-san* in Korean) because the ridge resembles a camel's back, particularly contributed to the scenic view of Changsin-dong. Yet, it was used as a quarry to procure stones for major government buildings, such as the Japanese Government-General of Korea, in the Japanese colonial era (Seoul City 2019: 18). The cut mountain, which was once used as a quarry, can be seen as a trace of colonial history arising from this quarrying process (Figure 2.3). As the quarrying work by the Japanese imperialists began, huts and shanty houses started to emerge around the quarry site.



Figure 2.3. The townscape of Changsin-dong. The cliff-like mountain in the middle right of the picture is now Nak-san, which used to be a quarry.

From the 1910s onwards, the cottage industry began to develop as the manufacturing sector in Seoul, which was full of small businesses during the Japanese colonial age (Lee 2012b: 14). As the influx of people into Seoul increased in the 1930s, a large number of new houses for commoners were built in Changsin-dong. Along with the concentration of lay-people, the number of mansions for the newly emerging wealthy also began to increase in this neighbourhood, because the newly rich at the time exhibited a tendency to build large-scale mansions outside the castle rather than in the fortress, in which the royal family and aristocrats lived (Seoul City 2019: 19). However, most of these mansions in Changsin-dong were destroyed during the Korean War, and after the war, the Changsin-dong area came to be a residential area for low-income workers who flocked to the city since it was close to large markets and the city centre.

In the 1960s, as the wholesale clothing market began to develop, and as Cheonggye Stream was culverted, small sewing workshops began to spread rapidly to the second and third floors of the buildings of clothing markets around Cheonggye Stream in the Dongdaemun area. In particular, along with the emergence of the Pyoung-hwa Market, which was established in 1961, and the Seoul Intercity Bus Station, which was established in 1971 (now the JW Marriott Hotel), Dongdaemun's clothing market experienced rapid growth by

virtue of the advantage of distribution and logistics transportation linked nationwide (Seoul City 2019: 21). At that time, garment-manufacturing businesses in Dongdaemun were combined with shops on the ground floor and sewing and cutting workshops on the first and second floor in the same building, handling all production processes. Meanwhile, the labour movement was triggered into action in the 1970s, and the government cracked down on Dongdaemun's garment manufacturing workshops under the guise of 'improving the working environment'. Consequently, small factories around Cheonggye Stream in the Dongdaemun area began to disperse into small houses in Changsin-dong, and the current industrial-residential units in Changsin-dong were born in earnest.

During the 1980s, urban renewal projects were carried out in many districts of Seoul, and small-scale housing renewal also came to be implemented in Changsin-dong. Then, in the 1990s, multi-family houses and row houses were built in large quantities, finally becoming a mixture of apartments, low-rise commercial buildings, and small houses in Changsin-dong (Seoul City 2019: 22-23). Changsin-dong, which has undergone such historical, environmental, and social changes, currently comprises an area of 0.6 ㎢, with a total of 24,642 people living in 10,960 households (Seoul City 2015: 13-25). According to a report by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, as of 2014, the distribution chart by age was 14,369 people in their 40s or older, accounting for nearly 60% (Seoul City 2015: 13, 42). This demographic attribute, in which the percentage of the population in their 40s and older accounts for more than half of this neighbourhood, can be linked to the ageing of Changsin-dong's sewing industry, which is one of the factors that adds gravitas to the decline of the industry.

Changsin-dong's locational advantage in the centre of Seoul and the convenience of transportation, which currently features an intersection of three different underground lines, has led to the development of the surrounding area as a great point of commerce, domestic trade, and residential space. Nevertheless, this area also has geographical disadvantages despite its locational merits because of its rocky and hilly topography, narrow and steep streets, alleys, and stairs, which are common on various levels, both high and low (Figure 2.4). This has led to challenges when enlarging roads, constructing deeper basement for higher buildings, and allowing for parking adjacent to residences. As a means of efficient

transport on the inclined and narrow alleys, motorbikes are commonly used in this area. Some administrative reports and academic studies have expressed concerns about the risk of road accidents, which are primarily attributable to the overuse of motorbikes (see Jongno-gu Office 2012, Kim 2016). However, according to Soon-sun, one of my research participants, road accidents are rare in Changsin-dong, because residents are very familiar with road conditions and motorcycles do not accelerate on the narrow alleys. Rather, during rainy and snowy seasons, pedestrians, especially elderly residents, confront difficulties when leaving their homes.



Figure 2.4. Narrow and steep alleys, streets, and stairs in Changsin-dong.

In addition to the topography of Changsin-dong, when it comes to architectural characteristics, 80% of the structures are low-rise residential buildings, as the yellow sections in Figure 2.5 illustrate (Jongno-gu Office 2012: 27). The prevalent low-rise houses are usually regarded as ‘old’ and ‘less developed’ architectural forms, based on the administrative criteria defined by the governmental scheme, which encourages the construction of

high-rise buildings to meet the high demand of housing due to overpopulation in Seoul.[3] According to Seoul City (2015), around 80% of buildings in Changsin-dong are more than 20 years old, and are denoted as faulty deteriorated buildings (2015: 26). This is because the life span of most construction in modern times in Korea means that buildings become ramshackle in a mere 30 years or so, much like Japanese housing (see Brumann 2012: 64).

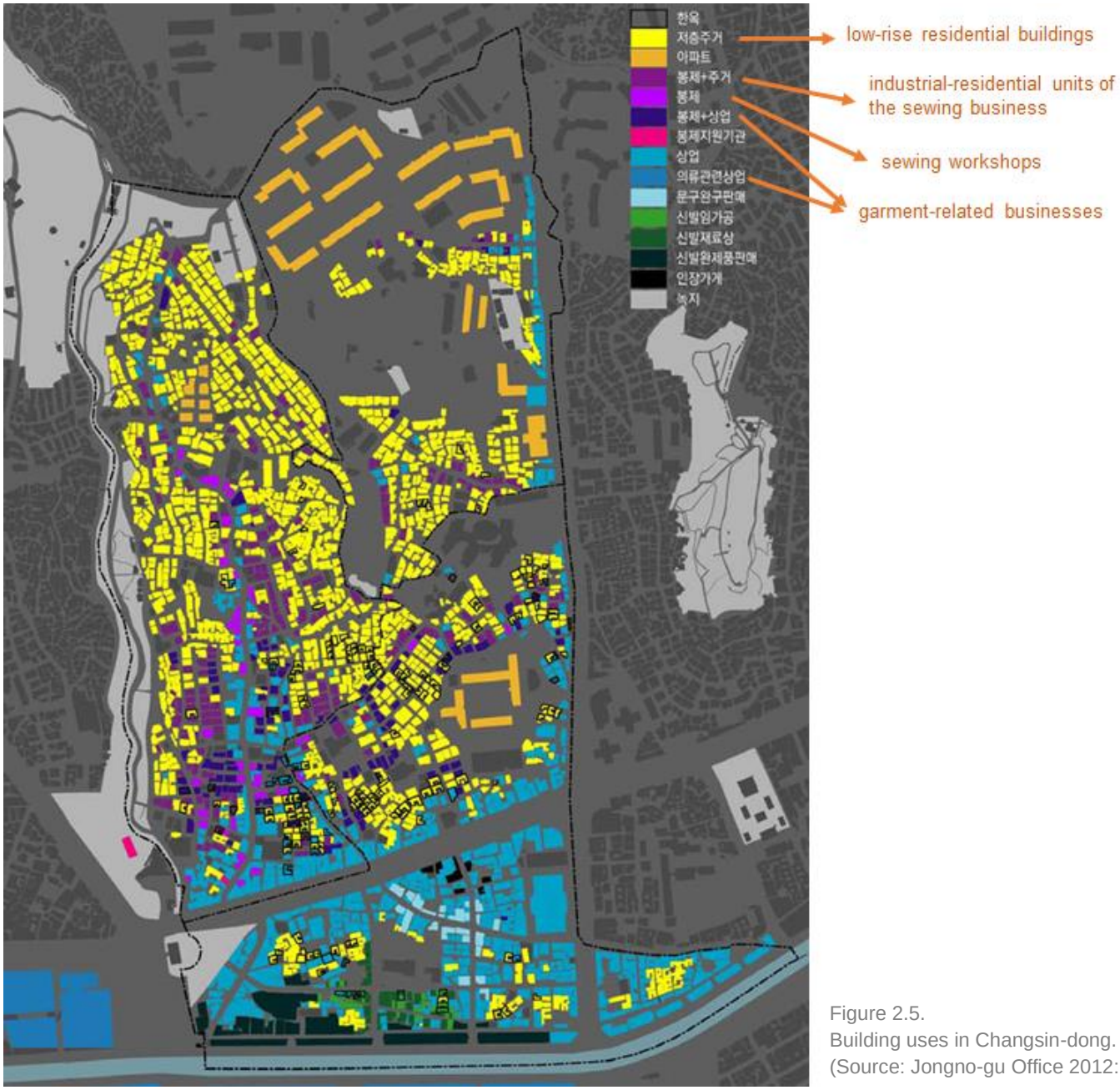


Figure 2.5.
Building uses in Changsin-dong.
(Source: Jongno-gu Office 2012: 27)

[3] The population of Seoul is just under ten million, and this means that one fifth of the population of Korea lives in Seoul. (Source: http://english.seoul.go.kr/seoul-views/meaning-of-seoul/4-population/)

As the dark purple sections in Figure 2.5 denote, industrial-residential units related to the sewing business is easily found in Changsin-dong. According to Won (2015), a number of those low-rise industrial-residential units in Changsin-dong are not officially registered as industrial buildings, and working environments are substandard. This is because most prior literature has reported that Changsin-dong residents (i.e., the sewing workers) do not have offices that are separate from their emotional sanctuaries (i.e., homes), and this lack of work-life balance negatively impacts their living conditions (see Kim 2016). As such, the geographical and architectural features of Changsin-dong, not only the hilly topography but also widespread low-rise industrial-residential units, are normally deemed poor dwelling conditions: a so-called poor hillside village (*dal-dong-nae* 달동네) (Jung et al. 2019: 225).

On the one hand, Seoul can be seen as a developed (or overdeveloped) high-tech city packed with skyscrapers, especially in the southern part of Seoul. Along with the economic development plan predominantly promoted by the governmental scheme beginning in the 1970s, high-rise structures, such as apartment complexes and larger scale department stores, have largely been constructed in Seoul to supply housing as well as workplaces for its dense population. This has led to small, low-rise buildings and industrial-residential units in Korea to be generally considered as less urbanised and less-developed forms, as a cottage industry has commonly remained in rural areas, but not in urban areas.

On the other hand, compared to this 'developed' image of Seoul, Changsin-dong usually seem poor because of its geographical and architectural features as well as conventional working conditions. The average size of the thousands of sewing workshops that spread throughout the area is 61.7 m², which is much smaller than Seoul's overall average of 117.9 m² (Seoul City 2015: 41), and this fosters the notion that overall, the Changsin district is impoverished.[4] This negative view of Changsin-dong may stem from administrative, policy-making, engineering, and urban planning perspectives that have emphasised more physically visible and economic factors, based on quantitative criteria, to achieve 'better' conditions related to Changsin-dong's working and living environments. These assumptions and the reliance on quantitative criteria, lead to the prejudice that the residents' quality

[4] Because of high rents in Seoul, space is generally linked to the economic capacity of the occupier.

of life is low. From these administrative and urban planning points of view, it has been argued that physical, economic, and social revitalisation is needed in Changsin-dong.

Accordingly, an urban regeneration project was implemented in 2014, led by the Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, as well as by the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Over the duration of the project, a great number of local communities and various cooperatives, civic organisations, and social enterprises came to be established. This flow and the rise of attention increased the expectation that community-based regeneration would be fulfilled. However, based upon my observations during my 18-month fieldwork, just after the end of the regeneration project, my research participants did not feel that Changsin-dong was fully regenerated. This recent urban regeneration project by Seoul City was still constrained in improving the lives of Changsin-dong residents with regard to both physical and social well-being, and remained a short-term, inadequate benchmark that merely followed the Western trend of social regeneration. In the meantime, residents' and sewing practitioners' underlying needs have not been (or have limitedly been) met. Surrounding this urban regeneration issue, a multitude of factors and complexities limit urban regeneration in achieving 'truly bottom-up' and 'community-based' objectives, which will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 5.

In short, the peculiar locality of Changsin-dong rests not only in the development of the sewing industry, with the convenience of transportation, but also in its social, cultural, and political embeddedness. From its official start as a scenic spot, next to the Hanyang Fortress Wall during the Joseon Dynasty, to its use as a quarry site with huts surrounding the mountain during the Japanese colonial era, to the period when houses were destroyed during the Korean War and homes for low-income workers were created, taking us to the present, the cultural matrix of Changsin-dong has been intertwined in its topographical and historical contexts. Along with the bustling townscape created by the concentration of low-income, working-class people, as well as the expansion of the Dongdaemun wholesale clothing market, Changsin-dong's sewing industry has become an existing urban manufacturing community in Seoul. Changsin-dong is the residential base for the workers of the Dongdaemun clothing industry, and it also plays the role of a subcontracting production base by taking advantage of its accessibility to the Dongdaemun market.

Changsin-dong sewing workshops finish their day by producing and delivering sewing products manufactured from morning until late at night, in order to supply products to the busy dawn wholesale markets of Dongdaemun. Likewise, Changsin-dong has been transformed into an existing sewing village through the vicissitudes of history, and the life of working-class sewing people has remained in its present form in this urban neighbourhood.

2.2. Dongdaemun's Fashion Market and Changsin-dong's Sewing Industry

Looking at the background of the Dongdaemun clothing market, it came to be popular in the garment manufacturing business beginning in the 1950s, as the fashion industry emerged following the Korean War by altering and re-stitching American military uniforms into fashion items for lay-people (Park 2014: 37). To minimise the carrying and delivery charges between each of the processing sectors in fashion manufacturing, from design companies to retail stores, garment-related businesses have been densely developed in the Dongdaemun area. Just as a home-producing form of the Japanese sewing industry led the Japanese to rapid economic growth beginning in the 1950s, the Korean sewing industry also performed as a leader in the domestic manufacturing industry in the 1970s.

Despite strong economic growth across Korea during this period, however, poor working conditions and physical environments in the sewing workshops began to emerge as a significant social problem. As the Dong-A Daily News (7 February 1977) indicates, more than 5,000 seamstresses suffered under heavy labour conditions for 14 to 18 hours a day in airless workshops in Pyeong-hwa Market just like an underground shelter. As the substandard working conditions were brought to light, necessary improvements in the working environment rose to be an increasingly important issue around the Dongdaemun area. Against this backdrop, one young activist, Jeon Tae-il, participated in a labour union through a night school after work, and at the age of 22 he committed suicide by self-immolation, claiming that 'We (i.e., sewing workers) are not machines', which triggered

the labour movement in Korea against the unilateral industrial development promoted by Park Chung-hee's dictatorial regime. Subsequently, the need for better working environments in Changsin-dong's sewing workshops in the Dongdaemun area came to be continuously championed. One famous Korean song, which was motivated by the working environment in the Pyeong-hwa Market, alludes to the severe working conditions back then:

Red blooms, yellow blooms fully covering flower beds
빨간 꽃 노란 꽃 꽃 밭 가득 피어도
White butterflies, colourful butterflies, floating over fences
하얀 나비 꽃 나비 담장 위에 날아도
Warm spring breezes blowing and blowing
따스한 봄바람이 불고 또 불어도
Spinning sewing machines keep a-running and running
미싱은 잘도 도네 돌아가네
White clouds, fleecy clouds, soft baby clouds
흰 구름 솜구름 탐스러운 애기 구름
Light shirts, short skirts over the hot summer
짧은 셔츠 짧은 치마 뜨거운 여름
Salty sweat, beads of sweat dripping and dripping
소금 땀 비지 땀 흐르고 또 흘러도
Spinning sewing machines keep a-running and running
미싱은 잘도 도네 돌아가네

– Lyrics from the song, Four Seasons (사계),[5]
by Song Seekers (노래를 찾는 사람들) in 1989

Following the labour movement, necessary improvements of Changsin-dong's working conditions began to be considered by the public, the local government, many academics, activists, and the workers themselves. Indeed, attitudes towards working conditions in the sewing industry were incrementally changing since the late 1970s. In conjunction with the development of the wholesale clothing sector in Dongdaemun, a number of modernised

[5] The cited translation and the original song are available on https://www.vingle.net/posts/2169945

fashion shopping malls emerged in the 1990s, and they actively attracted general consumers and foreign merchants to Dongdaemun, creating a boom in the 24-hour fashion market (Kim 2015: 135). However, while the competitive construction of large shopping malls may have outwardly grown the Dongdaemun clothing market as a 'developed' urban space centred on consumption, it is still true that it did not significantly affect the working environment of the sewing workshops in Changsin-dong.



Figure 2.6. The grey high-rise buildings in the upper left corner of the picture are Dongdaemun shopping centres, and the small, low-rise buildings in the foreground are located in the Changsin-dong area.

Because planning, design, distribution, and sales, which are more visible to the outside and high value-added divisions in the value chain, are carried out in the Dongdaemun area, and because only the garment-manufacturing jobs are performed in Changsin-dong, this structure limits improvements in Changsin-dong's working environment on its own. The proportion of these sewing workshops in Changsin-dong that exclusively offer manufacturing in accordance with the designer's demands is 85.5%, whereas they rarely produce their own brand of clothing (Korean Apparel Industry Association 2013a: 20). As such,

Changsin-dong serves as a manufacturing base, supporting the huge and 'modernised' Dongdaemun market behind it as skilled workers, who have worked as sewing practitioners for more than 30 to 40 years, are concentrated in this neighbourhood. Yet, the clothing they produce is based on low-cost production methods, which is relatively lower quality, so they are accustomed to the mass production system. Hence, this mass production method plays a major role in the risk to the sewing workers' positions in Changsin-dong in the contemporary global clothing market, where post-Fordism, namely, Small Batch Production, is rising.

From an optimistic view, Changsin-dong's one-day production system, featuring fast production systems, which immediately react to consumers, may represent a potential avenue for the future Korean fashion industry (Jang and Yang 2015). This is because compared to a larger scale of sewing factories in other countries, Changsin-dong sewing workshops offer one-day production in cooperation with the 24-hour Dongdaemun fashion cluster. This is because, in Changsin-dong sewing workshops, after receiving a designer's order in the early morning, the patterning job can be immediately started, and when the fabric is delivered to the sewing workshop, cutting and sewing works can be carried out right away. Then, after the process of finishing touches conducted over night, the products are sent to the wholesale market and ready to be sold. In other words, in case of a speedy process, one design of clothes can be produced within a day in Changsin-dong and lead to sales in the Dongdaemun market.

Nonetheless, since the post-Fordism method requires very sophisticated, high-quality work, which is unfamiliar to Changsin-dong's sewing practitioners, they may encounter a situation where they have to discard the methods they have maintained for more than 30 years and cater to the tastes of new customers. Considering that most workers are in their 50s and 60s, it is not easy for them to set aside existing methods. Thus, they passively accept the dwindling industry in their own way, try to find compromises, and choose retirement to return to their country homes to farm. The rigid system of the industry and individual reactions will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Moreover, despite the economic boom from the late 1980s to the 1990s,[6] following the IMF crisis,[7] the relatively higher wages for Korean workers, compared to other Asian countries, led to the emigration of sewing factories and related businesses to China and Southeast Asian countries (Choi 2016). As a result, after the IMF crisis, since the 2000s there have been shifting agendas in Changsin-dong, from seeking better working conditions to pursuing a larger volume of work. In stark contrast to the past few decades, the primary concern for sewing practitioners has been the low demand for work and disappearing jobs. In light of this problem, concerns regarding heavy and intense workloads and working conditions have not been seriously considered by sewing practitioners at this moment.

Shin (2015) claims that the competitive foreign outsourcing production system affects wages, which remain out of sync with the inflation rate because demand in the entire Dongdaemun markets continues to diminish (2015: 28-29). All of the participants of my study constantly expressed concerns about the uncertainty of the market.

> The economic slump is very serious this year. Even during the IMF crisis, it was not really bad in Changsin-dong sewing workshops. At that time, we were very busy, but now… there is no work. It's so serious… [I] need to work, but [there is] no work.
>
> – Dong-gue, a sewing practitioner working with her husband in her industrial-residential unit

> I have worked for many decades, but this [Korean domestic economic slump] is the worst this year. Hmm… I don't think the manufacturing sector has never been as bad as this.
>
> – Soon-sun, a patterning and cutting practitioner at Eve-rang

In this respect, recent governmental enactment of reduced working hours (a maximum of 52 hours per week) has no meaning to Changsin-dong sewing practitioners because they actually want more work, regardless of hours. Rather, the reduction of working time creates other social problems, such as management difficulties when hiring an employee in a small-

[6] From the 1980s to 1990s, Korea experienced an economic boom, by virtue of the Seoul Olympics in 1988. Korea was the world's second-largest manufacturer and exporter of clothing after Italy (Choi 2016: 351).

[7] There was a serious financial crisis in Korea in the late 1990s. Due to severe foreign exchange shortage, Korean government was bailed out by the IMF in November 1997, and this resulted in privatisation of public firms by foreign capital, Korean corporate restructuring, massive job losses, both corporate and personal bankruptcies, and so on.

scale business, especially where a 24-hour production system is needed (Chosun Biz, 27 June 2018). Participants of my study have demonstrated difficulties in abiding by the fixed working time, even though they sometimes said that reductions in business hours are needed on a larger scale throughout Korea. It is true that they work 9 am - 9 pm shifts or even longer during peak seasons, but this must be reconsidered, according to their idiosyncratic working environment and needs for more work, rather than the exclusive pursuit of 'balanced' working hours.

Since sewing workers have performed as social capital who led both economic growth and democratic movement, they tend to be defined as a group representing the working class. Since Jeon Tae-il's self-immolation at Cheonggye Stream area in Dongdaemun triggered the labour movement across Korea, which served as a democratisation movement and resistance to the dictatorship in the 1970s, they are considered as the typical working class at the vanguard of the labour movement. In this respect, not only countless socio-political research but also online posts, exhibitions, documentary films have been introduced to the public depicting the past and present of those who conducted the labour movement and still experiencing the trauma that they suffered during that period (see Sewing Sisters 2020, film by Lee and Kim).

Nonetheless, it may be an excessive leap to say that the labour movement was carried out by all the sewing workers back then. My research participants were rather afraid of the movement because they had to financially support their family by constantly working at sewing workshops. Indeed, most young sewing workers had to make money for their parents and siblings at that time, so their livelihoods were threatened during the labour movement and thereby moved into Changsin-dong to continue to work. Then, from Marx's point of view, their passive stance not to get involved in the movement but to continue to work can be merely seen as the *class in itself*. Those who directly and actively participated in the resistance and suffered from the oppression of the government are only the *class for itself* (see Borland 2008: 134). However, in this contemporary circumstance in the 2020s, the form of labour movement has changed its character from the democratisation movement in the 1970s. As Ho-keun Song and Hyung-geun Yoo (2010) indicate, the decline of class consciousness of working class may be related along with economic affluence in advanced

capitalist societies, especially when becoming the middle class from the working class, their incorporation into consumerism, the end of ideology, and the demise of revolutionary unionism.

Instead, the recent labour movement in South Korea, which has achieved democratisation relatively quickly, shows a more complex form due to more diversified interests of individuals, so my research participants show their class consciousness through voting. They usually oppose the right wing, which has policies favourable to the capitalist class, and support the left, which pursues directions that incline to the working class. However, even among these left-wing supporters, political opinions are also divided. While some enthusiastically support the progressive party, others say that the leftist is eager to play politics for politics rather than effectively implement policies that actually benefit their lives. Here, I try to challenge the politics at large, beyond a particular political colour, especially regarding urban planning and real estate policies that have sharp political interests in the last ethnographic chapter (Chapter 5). As such, in this research, I have striven to find out how 'the working class' actually lead their lives and how they dealt with their day-to-day struggles from a microscopic anthropological view, rather than mainstream politico-philosophical and sociological approaches on inequality between classes, records of the working population, and so forth.

In addition to the working conditions in Changsin-dong, most of the sewing products are manufactured in the neighbourhood, and the produced outcomes are directly consumed at Dongdaemun wholesale markets. Interestingly, there are two types of wholesale markets of clothing in the Dongdaemun market: Day Market (*nat-si-jang*) and Night Market (*bam-si-jang*). More intriguingly, regardless of the general expectations of 'Day' and 'Night', the wholesale markets called Day Markets are usually open from 12 am to 12 pm, while the other wholesale markets called Night Markets are usually open from 8 pm to 6 am. Thus, the manufactured items that have been finished must be delivered by 11 pm to the Day Market and by 7 pm to the Night Market for inspection before their opening hours.

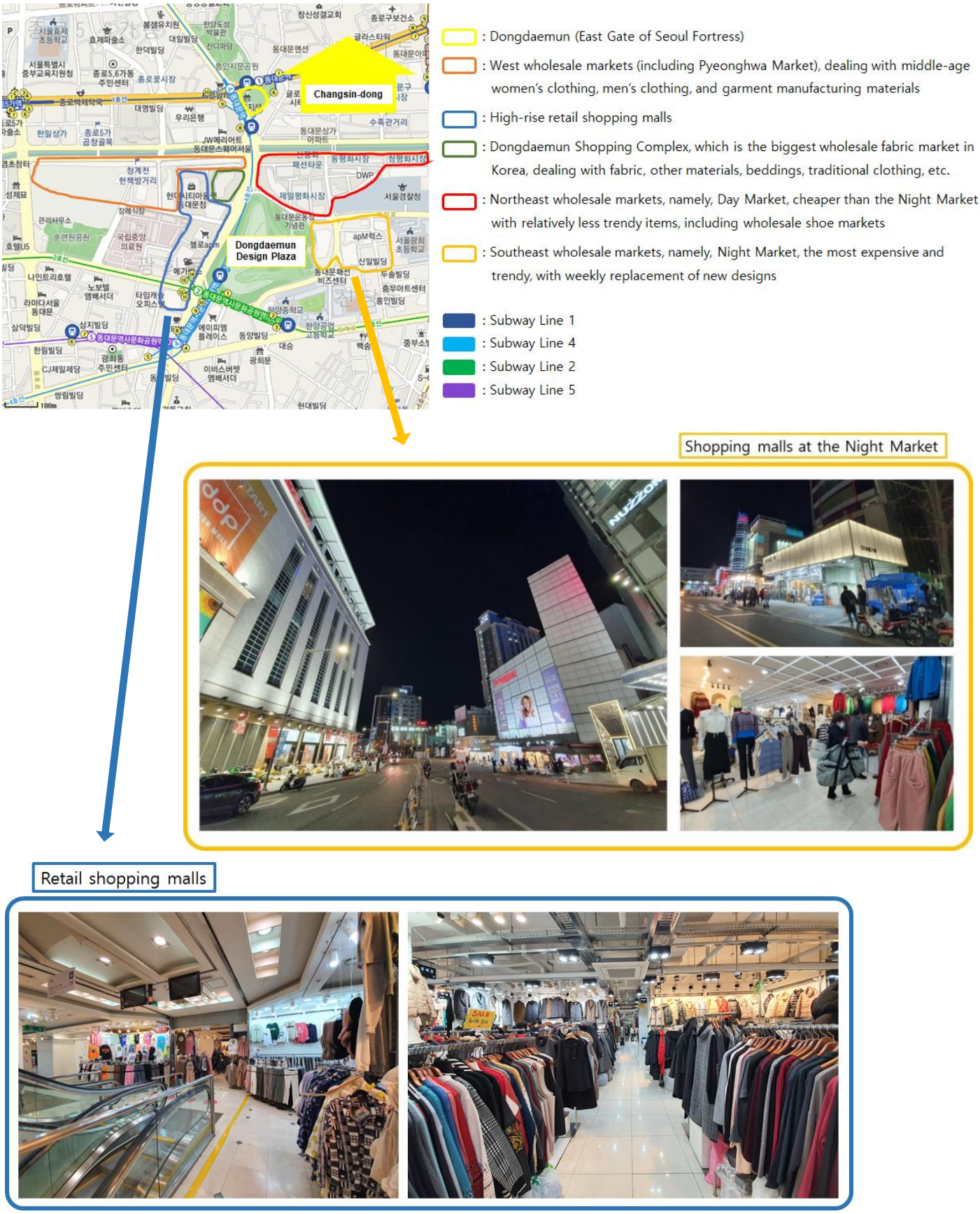


Figure 2.7. Map of clothing markets in the Dongdaemun area.

The reason these wholesale markets open late at night is so that people in other regions are able to arrive at the wholesale markets after closing their retail stores. Items that have been inspected are then displayed on store shelves or stored in warehouses of the wholesale markets. As such, the vitality of the wholesale markets begins at a time when almost everyone else is sleeping through the night. Merchants roam around the wholesale markets to select items, but because they usually deal regularly with certain stores, typically, they go to the stores to simply buy new products. (The wholesale markets in Dongdaemun, where people deal brightly throughout the dawn, have been losing their vitality in recent years due to the economic downturn, and this will be further discussed in Chapter 4.) Such selected products are distributed throughout the country, such as Dongdaemun retail shopping malls, online shops, and retail shops in other regions.

As Figure 2.7 shows, Changsin-dong has formed a complex network through the agglomeration of small sewing-related workshops, and it can be seen as a *localised* and *specialised* industry (Marshall 1890: 222, 224), featuring small-scale production methods pursuing adjustable operating principles. Changsin-dong's sewing industry cluster shows various forms of flexible specialisation, including verbal contracts, low costs for long-term transactions, abundant skilled labour, and information exchange using informal networks. The neighbourhood consists of over 1,000 sewing workshops, and among them, 142 larger 'main' workshops outsource sewing jobs to small workshops, namely, the rest of sub-contractors (Won 2017: 143). In other words, 142 larger workshops and their sub-contractors, around 900 small workshops, operate sewing businesses while maintaining relationships through verbal contracts and informal networks. Likewise, the local network, which maintains contracts in consideration of such informal familiarity and reputation in the neighbourhood, generates accumulated profits through job searches using social capital, abundant labour, and trust between the workshops. This form of a local network in the garment-manufacturing value chain will be covered in greater detail in Chapter 3. Now, I will move on to brief biographies of my research participants and their generational backgrounds for offering a better understanding of the overall context of the field as well as the individuals.

2.3. Histories and Generational Backgrounds of Research Participants

During my eighteen months of fieldwork, I spent the greatest amount of time with the couple Sook-ja and Soon-sun, striving to observe their everyday lives in the sewing workshop. Sook-ja is an older sister of Jong-im, with whom I established the deepest rapport over my MPhil research. Sook-ja was born in Jinan, Jeollabuk-do, Southwest Korea, in 1956, and after graduating from primary school, she moved to Seoul to make money. In 1970, when she moved to Seoul, it was a mere month after Jeon Tae-il's self-immolation protest related to the labour movement, and Sook-ja experienced a brutal circumstance when she began working as a mop girl at a sewing workshop near the Pyeong-hwa Market. After a sort of apprenticeship for one and a half years, she started working as a sewing assistant, when she was 19 years old. Then, her mother set up a sewing business at their home, so Sook-ja and her sisters worked at home until they got married. In the 1980s, Sook-ja and Soon-sun met each another through a mutual friend, when she was 30, and they began to work together after their marriage. Soon-sun was born in Jeollanam-do, the southernmost part of Southwest Korea, in 1954 and moved to Seoul after graduating from middle school. In the early 1970s, he entered the sewing sector as an apprentice in the Pyeong-hwa Market, and he has been working as a tailor for more than 40 years.

A few years after their marriage, Sook-ja and Soon-sun (Mrs. Kim[8] and Mr. Hong) started a business in the Namdaemun (i.e., the South Gate of Seoul Fortress) Market, designing, sewing, and selling children's clothing under the name Eve-rang (이브랑), which is a Koreanised pronunciation by Sook-ja's friend, referring to the French phrase 'to dress'. Sook-ja and Soon-sun worked in the children's wear manufacturing sector for 18 years, and after closing their children's clothing business, they moved to Changsin-dong in 1993 to primarily produce women's trousers. Since then, they have been working in the women's clothing sector for almost 30 years in the same workshop in Changsin-dong. Until 10 years ago, 5 to 6 employees and the couple worked together as a larger scale business than it is

[8] In Korea, women do not take the husband's family name upon marriage, but children are given it.

today. Due to the recent economic downturn in the sewing industry in Korea, the couple and their adult son Ji-pyo, who is in his thirties, now work together without other employees. These days, they work with about five design companies and subcontract with three to five workshops to distribute the workload and thereby meet the design companies' demands in time.



Figure 2.8. Sook-ja and Ji-pyo, working at Eve-rang, which is on the lower floor (i.e., basement) of the building.

Jong-im, the younger sister of Sook-ja, was born in 1961 in Jinan, Southwest Korea. Because Jong-im wanted to be called by her stage name, 'Dong-gue', an abbreviation of *Dongdaemun Gue Yeo-ja* (동대문 그 여자), which stands for 'the woman of Dongdaemun', I shall refer to her as Dong-gue for the rest of the chapters as she prefers. Just as her older sisters started sewing at their home when they were young, Dong-gue naturally learned sewing by looking at how her sisters work at home. After graduating from high school, and she has been working as a sewing practitioner for almost 40 years. She met her husband, Soo-man, at a hiking club, and when they got married, they started working together in their home. Dong-gue renovated her home to use space with two different purposes, working and living, which can be categorised as an industrial-residential unit. The rigid discreteness between the working and living spaces in her household is based not only on

the spatial demarcation, but also on their verbal naming of the ‘factory’ (*gong-jang*) area and the ‘home’ (*jib* 집). The couple work in the ‘factory’ and usually spends time there, whereas the two adult daughters typically spend their time in their own rooms (Figure 2.10).



Figure 2.9. The couple working at the ‘factory’ area in Dong-gue’s home (i.e., the industrial-residential unit).

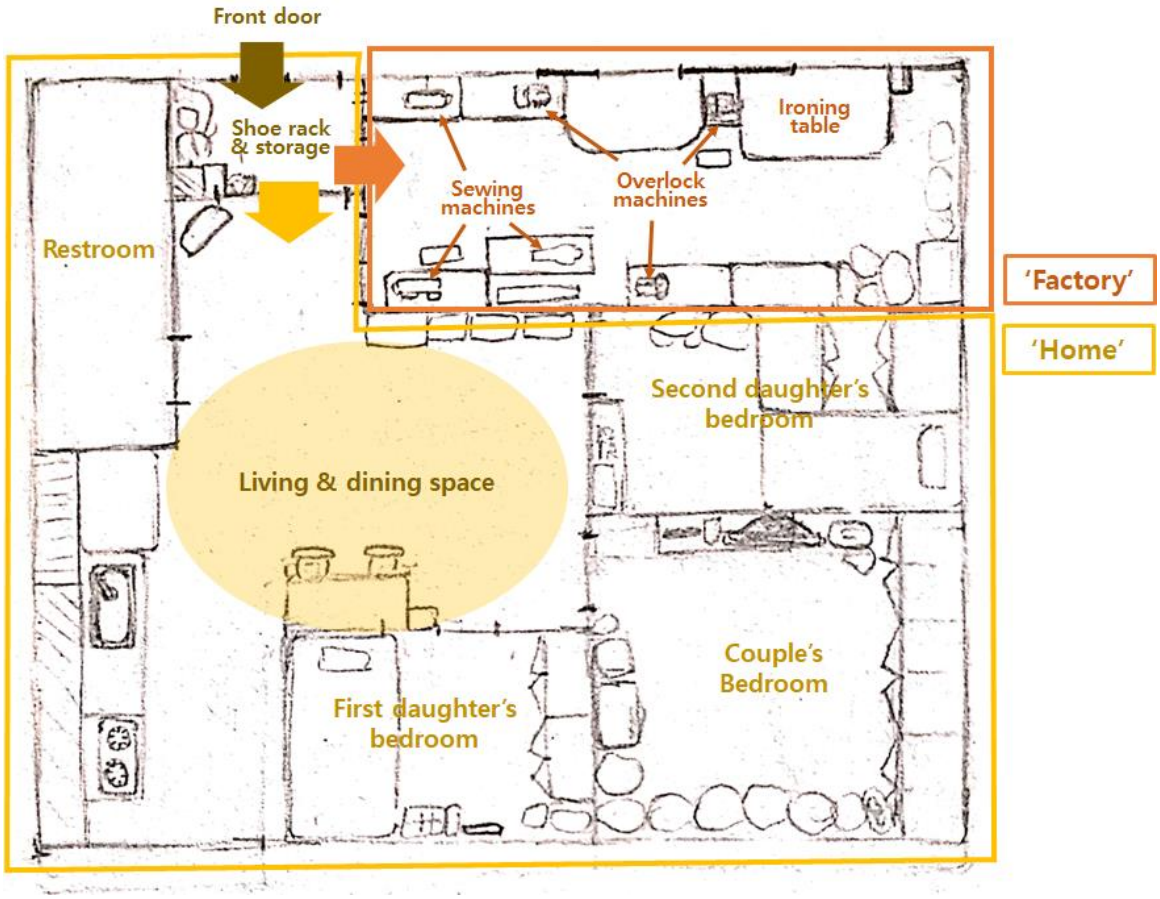


Figure 2.10. The demarcation and configuration of Dong-gue’s industrial-residential unit. Map by the author.

Dong-gue was introduced to a larger workshop by Soon-sun, her brother-in-law, and works as a subcontractor for the workshop of Soon-sun's friend. Dong-gue is one of the most active sewing practitioners in community events and trying creative things, such as designing and creating her own clothing, selling these products in flea markets and online, planning and organising many social events, teaching sewing skills to tourists and younger generations, and so forth, which will be repeatedly addressed in subsequent chapters. In addition to these two workshops, run by Sook-ja and Dong-gue, the other two workshops I observed are Naeng-guel Fashion and Soojin Apparel, run by Young-joo and Byung-choon, respectively.

Young-joo was born in Namwon-si, Jeollabuk-do, in 1962 and began to learn sewing techniques in Ulsan, Southeast Korea, from the age of 16, and then moved to Seoul at the age of 19 working in the sewing sector in earnest. After marriage, she worked as an insurance planner for a while, but except for that period, she has continuously worked as a sewing practitioner. Young-joo used to work as a temporary worker at a sewing workshop (i.e., generally, sewing workers are called 'guest workers' (*gaek-gong* 객공) as they work like a freelancer on a piece-rate basis[9]) in the early days. Byung-choon, who was the owner of the sewing workshop where Young-joo worked, helped Young-joo to set up her own sewing business. Accordingly, Young-joo successfully set up her own business, hiring several independent sewing workers and a garment cutter, under the name of Naeng-guel Fashion, which means the shape of steamy puffs of white smoke that rise from a chimney during home cooking, in a dialect of a Southwestern region.

At Naeng-guel Fashion, the workspace is more like a formal factory when compared to Sook-ja's workshop and Dong-gue's industrial-residential unit, as Young-joo and independent workers are not family members but co-workers. In the workshop, a male worker is in charge of patterning and cutting jobs, called the section chief (*sil-jang-nim*),

[9] Sewing workshops in Changsin-dong primarily consist of piece-rate work rather than the salary system because they have no certain duration of a full-time contract. Rather, they are paid depending on the amount of work they produce, namely, the number of pieces of clothing, so most sewing workers work on a piece-rate basis. Because the work is very fluid, sewing workers commonly move around other sewing workshops in the neighbourhood, while garment cutters are normally employed on a salaried basis, making them relatively less flexible.

and three to five workers work as sewing practitioners, namely, ‘guest workers’. Naeng-guel Fashion works with about five to seven different design companies that usually sell female clothes, such as dresses, blouses, jackets, etc., and sometimes, a men’s clothing company orders some sewing work to Young-joo’s workshop.

Once Young-joo receives orders from a designer from a design company over the phone, Young-joo and the chief tailor, Joong-wan, discuss and negotiate the design of the clothing, and the tailor then begins patterning the design and cutting the fabrics so that the cut pieces of fabric can be allocated to the individual sewing practitioners. Sewing workers in Naeng-guel Fashion usually take care of the orders in the workplace, and sometimes when they are short-handed, Young-joo distributes their workloads to small subcontractors nearby. As most guest workers in Changsin-dong shift their workplaces very easily and flexibly, the number of sewing workers changed a lot (the change was also very frequent, occurring weekly or even daily) over the course of my fieldwork.



Figure 2.11. Young-joo working in her seat at left, and a couple working a sewing unit at Naeng-guel Fashion. The garment cutting area is behind the sewing area.

Lastly, Soojin Apparel is the largest of the four sewing workshops I observed. It is run by the couple Sook-ran and Byung-choon, and Soojin is the name of the adult daughter of the couple. Including Sook-ran and Byung-choon, about 20 people work together at a factory-like workshop. Tae-sam and Young-kook are hired on a monthly, salaried basis, and representative sewing workers are Sook-ran, Jeong-mi, Jeong-soon, Gyeong-deok, and Sang-yong. Other guest workers change their workplaces frequently, and the couple Gyeong-deok and Sang-yong recently moved out to set up their own sewing workshop. The number of sewing workers at Soojin Apparel stands at about 15 people during off-peak seasons and at more than 30 during peak seasons. The workspace is located in a three-storey building, and the workers occupy the basement and the first floor (the second floor in Korea), with the ground floor being used by a neighbouring grocery shop. On the two different levels, the sewing space is used by around 20 sewing workers on the first floor, and 2 to 5 garment cutters work in the cutting space on the underground floor. At Soojin Apparel, when work is very busy, a couple of part-time assistant garment cutters or a delivery man are also hired to deliver cut pieces of cloth and enable the business to accommodate the extra orders.



Figure 2.12. The sewing area at Soojin Apparel.



Figure 2.13. The garment cutting area at Soojin Apparel on the lower ground floor (i.e., basement) of the building.

In the operation of the workshop, the husband, Byung-choon, is in charge of overall management, accounting, and maintenance, whereas the wife, Sook-ran, manages all order-related work, the creation of sample pieces, and all of the practical details related to sewing. Soojin Apparel works with large online shops and subcontracts with smaller workshops depending on the demands of each season. In everyday life, most sewing practitioners seem to spend almost all of their hours in the workshop, just as in Nepal's case of the garment shop floors (see Shakya 2018). Sewing workers, who spend a long time in one place in workshops, chat with other sewing workers neighbouring them, giggle while listening to the radio that is on all day, and talk to other friends or family members over the phone using earphones while working.

Much like factory owners in Nepal arrive at the office in the morning, stay until dinner time, and go out for late night drinks with their garment industry buddies (see Shakya 2018), sewing and cutting practitioners in Changsin-dong also hang out with sewing people who work in other workshops after work (especially on days when work is finished early). On Saturdays, they usually work from 9 am to 6 pm, and even after work, they also go out with people from other sewing workshops. On Sundays, they usually engage in religious

activities, do housework, or have a gathering in the neighbourhood, and here, the scope of their social activities is mainly in Changsin-dong, and even people from other neighbourhoods used to live in Changsin-dong or engage in sewing-related businesses. In addition, sewing-related conversations continue in private spheres when eating or drinking, even on out-of-factory occasions. This is because they have spent most of their lives as sewing-related workers in the Dongdaemun garment manufacturing sector, so their work has become life, and life has become their work. Likewise, their boundaries between work and life are vague, and they do want to work more rather than have a 'balanced' life. Some outliers may deem that the sewing workers only seek a means of sustaining a living, as they are 'the working class', but in fact, since what they have done for a long time has become themselves, work itself becomes a form of a companion that gives them psychological stability. Therefore, work is not a mere stressful factor or livelihood for them but, rather, a life per se. As such, they are not merely 'workers', but self-employed freelancers who earn as much as they work, and they confirm their existence while working, beyond the exclusive matter of livelihood.

Life in harmony with sewing work may have become more solid, especially as most of them are in their late fifties and mid-sixties, not only because they have worked so long, but also because they have gradually entered a period of retirement. Their retirement is more flexible compared to office jobs if they can work in physically healthy conditions, so it depends on their own choices. In particular, as the average birth year of my research participants is about 1959, they are called baby boomers in South Korea. The historical and economic backgrounds of this baby boom generation may be an indispensable factor in making their resilience stronger in the declining sewing industry.

The baby boom generation in Korea is usually defined as the 'population group born between 1955 and 1963 who have shared a specific socio-economic period in the changes and development of Korean society' (You 2019: 185). This was the time when many babies were born just after the Korean War, especially when the government systematically encouraged childbirth to make up for the decline in the population caused by the war. In terms of life journeys, most baby boomers went to primary, middle, and high school in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and most of them began to work in the mid-1970s and early

80s (Phang 2011: 7), whereas most sewing people in Changsin-dong had to be responsible for their families' livelihoods from a young age in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is no exaggeration that their economic hardship originated from the colonial period of Japanese Imperialism, as well as the devastated environment after the Korean War, so it may be meaningful to take a very brief look at the history of Korea after the 1940s.

The Republic of Korea was liberated from Japan's 35-year colonial rule when World War II ended in 1945. Soon, however, divided governments were established in 1948 under two different ideologies and systems, namely, democratic capitalism and communist socialism, and the intensified conflict of ideology resulted in the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Along with the confiscation of land and food during the Japanese colonial era, the three-year Korean War impoverished people's lives. Sook-ja states:

> In the old days, we used to make porridge with bean sprouts and kimchi. We didn't have much rice because it was so valuable… When there was rice in autumn, the Japanese took it all. If people had rice, they hid it in between briquettes, but if an informer reported it to the Japanese, it was all taken away. If the Japanese were going to inspect, people put rice in an iron pot while cooking soup [to save it]. That's the rice soup. That's how people lived. These days, people don't finish eating and throw it away, but there was little to eat back then. It was really serious when the war broke out. We usually steamed sweet potatoes for a meal… There was really nothing to eat in the past.

During the post-war period, the time when the baby boomers were young, criticism of the government of the South began to escalate due to the severe financial hardship and unstable leadership, and as a result of the massive revolution in 1960, the first president of the Republic of Korea, Rhee Syng-man, resigned from the presidency. Then, the government was replaced by the democratic party of South Korea, which gave weight to the National Assembly, but soon thereafter, in 1961, there was a military coup led by Park Chung-hee. Park Chung-hee's dictatorship suppressed and controlled the democratic movement under the name of high industrialisation, quantitative economic growth, and anti-communist ideology. Consequently, in the late 1960s, rapid economic growth was achieved through government-led development policies. In the 1970s, the Saemaeul Movement, which had the mottos of 'Living Well', 'Knowing Is Power', and 'Make the Impossible Possible',

began to unfold across the country as a form of a grassroots community development movement, which was actually instilled by the government.

Particularly, the lack of proper education of the parents' generation of the baby boom generation, who underwent the Japanese colonial era and the Korean War, aroused the enthusiasm of education for the baby boomers, and this led to a driving force in the creation of high-quality manpower and accomplished the massive modernisation in Korea. In order to overcome poverty and fill the national treasury, women were exported as nurses, and men were exported as miners, mainly to Germany, to earn foreign currency. Based on the collected foreign currency, the government fostered export-led heavy industries such as steel, shipbuilding, and electronics, surpassing North Korea's economic level. In line with this rich labour force and a social atmosphere to develop the national economy, teenaged boys and girls started to work throughout day and night at wig factories and sewing factories in Seoul to send money and thereby financially aid their parents in raising younger siblings in rural areas. My research participants repeatedly articulate how hard their lives were in their earlier times in sewing factories.

> Sook-ja: When I was doing swamper's jobs [decades ago], I used to use a seamstress' sewing machine secretly when she went to the toilet. Back then, sewing machines were all old, so they broke down easily. Then, I got told off [by the sewing worker]. Because the machines were all second-hand from Japan, they broke so easily. That's how I learned sewing. People had to learn it by themselves. Otherwise, we couldn't improve our skills.

> Soon-sun: Can you guess how cramped the attic [in sewing workshops] was? It was so cramped that people could barely get in with their backs bent. People couldn't stretch their backs in the attic. It was almost barbaric. I can say it was so savage.

> Sook-ja: You know what? In the old days, we used to fetch water in Changsin-dong. As people worked like that and fetched water, how could we wash properly? When I moved to Seoul from the countryside, I thought the [living] conditions would be better, but I didn't know I would live such a hard life.

> Soon-sun: So, there is a song, Seoul Night. I thought it would be better for the country boy to go up to Seoul, but it turned out that I had to live a harder life. But everyone did live like that.

Sook-ja: At that time, there was no factory that gave some food to their workers. I used to bring a lunch box for lunch, and then I didn't eat anything after that all evening. Before I went out for work in the morning, I had a little breakfast and had a lunch box and then ate nothing. I was extremely hungry when I got home at around 10 or 11 pm. If the briquettes were still alive, when I got home at night, I had a small meal for late dinner. Otherwise, I couldn't eat anything all night. That is why my second sister almost died by being addicted to briquette gas flowing into the room when she fell asleep after the intense work while trying to cook with briquettes… But that's only a few decades ago. People nowadays don't know how hard it was back then. It wasn't long after the war, as our parents' generation was the war generation.

Dong-gue also reminisces:

When I was young, at the end of the year, carols were reverberating outside, and the crowd was gathering in Myeong-dong (one of the most crowded streets in Seoul), but we were working inside. Although we had no money, my sisters and I just went out. We just walked to Myeong-dong, wandered about the streets, and just came back... My heart was pounding even though we had a couple of hot dogs only, which were 500 won (around £0.30) each. Likewise, we just went out, even though we didn't have much money. I had no idea why people (i.e., owners of sewing workshops) paid wages that late.

In the meantime, the dictatorial coercion, which exclusively focused on economic development, ignited the democratic movement, much like the labour movement triggered by Jeon Tae-il in Dongdaemun, and oppression and retaliation of the liberal movement also increased. Under Park Chung-hee's regime, there was a lot of economic development, but also growing calls for greater democracy. In 1979, however, President Park was assassinated by one of his closest aides. Despite initial appearances that the dictatorship had been overthrown, another coup d'état mere months later led to Chun Doo-hwan taking power. He committed the massacre of the people in the process of suppressing the growing pro-democracy movement, and many human rights abuses were perpetrated.

A terrifying and unstable social atmosphere continued behind the people's efforts to achieve 'remarkable' economic growth from the 1960s to the 1980s. In 1987, when stories of torture of college students participating in the pro-democracy movement and deaths by tear gas over the protest were released by the press, a massive pro-democracy movement took place throughout the country. Subsequently, Chun Doo-hwan's regime was replaced

by Roh Tae-woo in 1988. Later that year, the successful hosting of the 1988 Seoul Olympics served as an opportunity to showcase Korea's tremendous economic growth to the world. Then, with the development of high-tech industries, South Korea enjoyed an economic boom, the authoritarian political culture was gradually alleviated, and the democratisation of society began to find stability, little by little. In the late 1990s, the entire country suffered from the IMF economic crisis, albeit with a sense of unity of the people – for example, individual households strove to overcome the economic crisis by contributing to the gold-collecting campaign (*gum mo-eu-gi un-dong* 금 모으기 운동) through selling baby rings, which were the most representative gifts at the first birthday party back then, and the campaign helped the nation pay off its debt – South Korea met the rapid economic recovery, called the Miracle of the Han River (*han-gang-ui gi-juk* 한강의 기적).

In short, Korea is one of only a few countries that achieved both economic growth and democratisation in a short period of time after the war, which may represent the Korean concept of authentic subjectivity (*ju-che-sung* 주체성) (Kim 2014). The generation of baby boomers are the very people who have experienced the extremely turbulent socio-economic changes. According to Phang (2011), the baby boomers may have benefitted from the expansion of economic and social resources and job opportunities from the rapid growth of the economy, especially by virtue of the development of the construction and high-tech industries in the early 1990s (2011: 8). However, while they were on the upward social mobility trend, competition within the generation to secure higher economic and social status could have been severe at the same time, because the population of the same generation was large. As such, the baby boomers did not directly experience the Japanese colonial era and the Korean War, but they were born in the very next generation and experienced the devastated country and economic hardships during their childhoods, which is consistent with my research participants' repetitive articulation that 'We lacked food when I was young.'

Those who experienced 'the era of challenging to eat and live' (*muk-go sal-gi him-duen si-dae* 먹고 살기 힘든 시대) can be seen as the generation who has directly made these big socio-economic changes, such as massive democratisation movements against the

inhumane repression by dictatorships and high economic growth. In the 1980s, when the baby boomers began their professional working lives in earnest, they underwent the expansion of the country, abundant opportunities, and economic stability, which is contrasted to the 'difficult times' in their childhoods, and they faced severe competition within the same generation at the same time. In recent years, in the late 2010s and early 2020s, despite their industrious efforts in the earlier half of life, the latter half of their lives has continued with reduced opportunities and involuntary being walked off of the job market due to economic stagnation and the transference of the labour market. Research on such baby boomers and their happiness and life satisfaction has been conducted from various views, and especially through an approach in the fields of labour and social welfare in Korea, which may help us gain a better understanding of my research participants.

Chung and Lee (2012) demonstrate that the life satisfaction of the baby boomers was higher in 2008 than in 1998, and as a result of their evaluation, the relevant factors are leisure activity, residential environment, family relationship, wages, and job stability. In particular, variables such as working environment and potential of individual development, which were not meaningful to their satisfaction in 1998, became significant in 2008. This analysis is also evident in a study conducted by Sang-kyung Kahng (2012), arguing that the life satisfaction of the baby boomers is the lowest compared to the pre-baby boomers, who experienced the war, and the post-baby boomers, who grew up in the developed economy. Although their satisfaction is relatively low in their 50s, this study points out that life satisfaction has changed to a U shape as age increases (see Blanchflower and Oswald 2004), which indicates that the baby boomers' life satisfaction has improved again in recent years, namely, 10 years after the study was published in 2012. In other words, their satisfaction gradually decreases from early adulthood to middle age and then incrementally increases after middle age.

In another study, individual-level factors influencing the life satisfaction of baby boomers are gender, socio-economic class consciousness, subjective health status, an expectation of national welfare after retirement, the number of social activities with close friends, participation in cultural activities, contribution to community service, and job security (You

2019: 186). What is noteworthy here is that their employment has an influence on life satisfaction, just as the employed group shows higher life satisfaction than the unemployed group. Namely, working increases psychological stability and life satisfaction when compared with not working, and intriguingly, employment itself is more important than income level (You 2019). Moreover, the result of the study indicates that the number of social activities with close friends and the degree of participation in community service affect the satisfaction of this generation, which can be linked to the assumption that life satisfaction of the Changsin-dong sewing people can be high because they interact with their neighbours for a long time and serve for the neighbourhood in their daily lives. Therefore, the 'grim' era when they worked hard from morning to dawn does not continue; and, rather, they feel stable and content by interacting with neighbours and getting involved in many community gatherings, even if they work from 9 am to 11 pm.

Taken together, the tempestuous social and economic changes that the sewing people experienced in their youth have built up a surmountable inner strength, no matter what difficulties they face at the present time. Based on the historical and economic backgrounds of the baby boomer generation, I shall describe their generational resistance as the power to withstand and contentedly accept the declining sewing industry, which may also play a crucial role in sharing culture in their everyday lives. Along with this *generational resilience*, the fact that they continue to work per se is a prop for them to confirm their existence and be satisfied with the present in their sixties. This concept of *generational resilience* I propose will be linked to the ethnographic finding on the local industry and individuals' reactions in Chapter 4.



Image 4

3

The Social Neighbourhood



Image 5

3. The ‘Country-Like’ Urban Community

Fifteen motorcycle couriers come and go to produce one item of clothing. This means that there are a number of industries related to the sewing sector, such as (garment) material manufacturing and textiles. If the sewing industry collapses, all related industries will collapse.

– Personnel of Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative,

Quotation on display at the Iumpium Sewing History Museum

3.1. The Interdependent Local Network and the Web-Like Subcontracting System

The Korean government’s pride in ‘the 5G era’, which cultivates the country’s state-of-the-art technology, has caused Seoul to change day by day, and high-rise apartment complexes are continuously under construction to accommodate Seoul’s population of 10 million. Conversely, unlike Seoul and its skyscrapers, Changsin-dong has reserved a relatively large number of small, 1970s buildings and alleys, a decision attributable to topographic conditions and various political and economic circumstances. Although they look like typical, small houses scattered throughout the neighbourhood, these modest homes contain sewing workshops in their residential spaces, playing their roles in respective positions and supporting the sewing industry as a component of the local value chain. Small sewing workshop units are densely packed in the neighbourhood, and they are organically linked to one another through interdependent relationships in the regional garment manufacturing industry, much like spider webs. Therefore, the web-like local value chain can be seen as one of the most representative local specificities of the neighbourhood.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the formation of Changsin-dong sewing workshops commenced in the 1970s, when people working at large sewing factories in the Dongdaemun Pyeong-hwa Market entered into Changsin-dong’s residential area due to

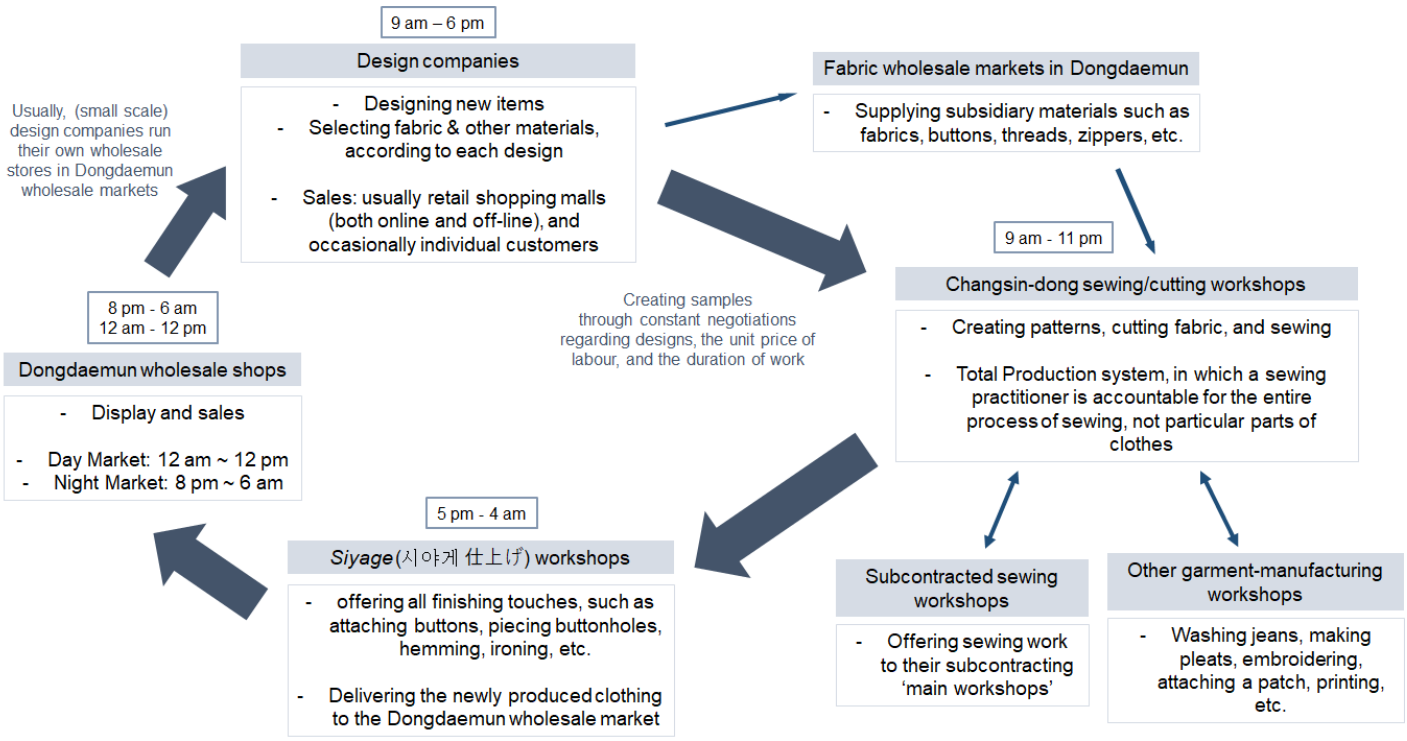
government regulations, along with the labour movement in the Dongdaemun area. Accordingly, Changsin-dong became a sort of sewing village in earnest as individuals and couples settled as workers in small houses in the residential area, forming cottage industries. The small workshop units that came to be developed, in conjunction with the prosperity of the Dongdaemun garment market, were gradually built up into professional, factory-like systems. One by one, small workshops began to emerge, and some of the workshops expanded their businesses in the form of a *gong-jang* to create businesses that operate the workplace with between 2 to 30 people. Likewise, Changsin-dong's industrial sewing pattern is not in the form of a large, factory-like system that we usually think of when considering textile or garment-manufacturing mills, but, rather, takes the form of a larger number of small-scale workshops, which characterise it as a mixture of domestic and urban manufacturing sectors, which may resemble the artisanal guilds of pre-industrial societies.

In the lower neighbourhood, which is relatively well paved and accessible, there are larger buildings containing individual sewing workshops on the underground floor (i.e., basement), 1st, and top floors (2nd and 3rd floors in Korea), with most stores and restaurants located on the ground floor. Because these workshops in the lower neighbourhood contain relatively spacious workplaces, they usually deal not only with sewing, but also with garment cutting, since garment cutting work requires a large desk to place the fabric on for cutting. In this way, the topographical features have dictated that the lower neighbourhood is dominated by relatively larger buildings, consisting of local shops, restaurants, and 'main' sewing/cutting workshops, as they need more space to cut, which command higher rents than the upper neighbourhood. On the other hand, since it is difficult to construct three or four-storey buildings in the upper neighbourhood, which is rather steep for walking up and down, many old, small-scale houses remain as they have always been, while some houses have been renovated in accordance with the limited height and size of the plot. Consequently, smaller sewing workshops in small houses are usually located in the upper neighbourhood because of the higher slope, the spatial constraints, and the corresponding lower rent. Because it is difficult to house a large cutting table in a small workshop space, those who live in the upper neighbourhood work in small-scale units of sewing practitioners – normally comprising one or two people. In other words, larger, 'main' workshops have been formed in the lower neighbourhood on the more accessible terrain,

which has contributed to the greater inflow of designers, and less constrained spaces, whereas smaller-scale units still work in smaller houses in the upper neighbourhood.

The larger workshops are called 'main factories' (*main-gong-jang*, *bon-gong-jang*, *bon-chung*, or *won-chung*), which means ordering or, namely, contracting workshops, while their subcontractors, whose work is performed at small houses in the upper neighbourhood, are literally called subcontracted factories (*ha-chung-gong-jang*). Because the main workshops directly interact with designers from outside (i.e., Dongdaemun wholesale markets), make the sample clothing, and cut the fabric in a larger cutting space, it is natural that larger workshops in the lower neighbourhood allocate quantities of sewing work to individual sewing practitioners and smaller subcontracted workshops when the garment-cutting jobs are completed and ready to be delivered.

< Figure 3.1. The working cycle and 24-hour production system in Changsin-dong sewing workshops and the Dongdaemun Market>



The process of manufacturing clothing in Changsin-dong has a circular order: (1) design work is done by a design company; (2) patterns of the design are created by a tailor at a main sewing workshop; (3) a sample piece is made at the sewing workshop; (4) the design and patterns are modified according to the negotiations between a designer and a tailor; (5) the design is confirmed by the design company; (6) fabric and materials are ordered by the design company and are sent to a main workshop; (7) the cloth is cut according to the design of the item to make at dozens or thousands of pieces of clothing; (8) the cut pieces of cloth are sewn; (9) finishing work with final touches, such as attaching buttons, washing, hemming, and ironing, is conducted; and (10) the completed clothing is delivered to go on sale (Figure 3.1). In this cycle, main workshops distribute the daily workload to their sewing workers and subcontractors to complete the sewing job with the cut cloth, and when the subcontractors finish the work provided them, they send motorcycle couriers back to the main workshop or send the finished clothes straight to a last-touch workshop (*si-ya-ge* 시야게).[10]

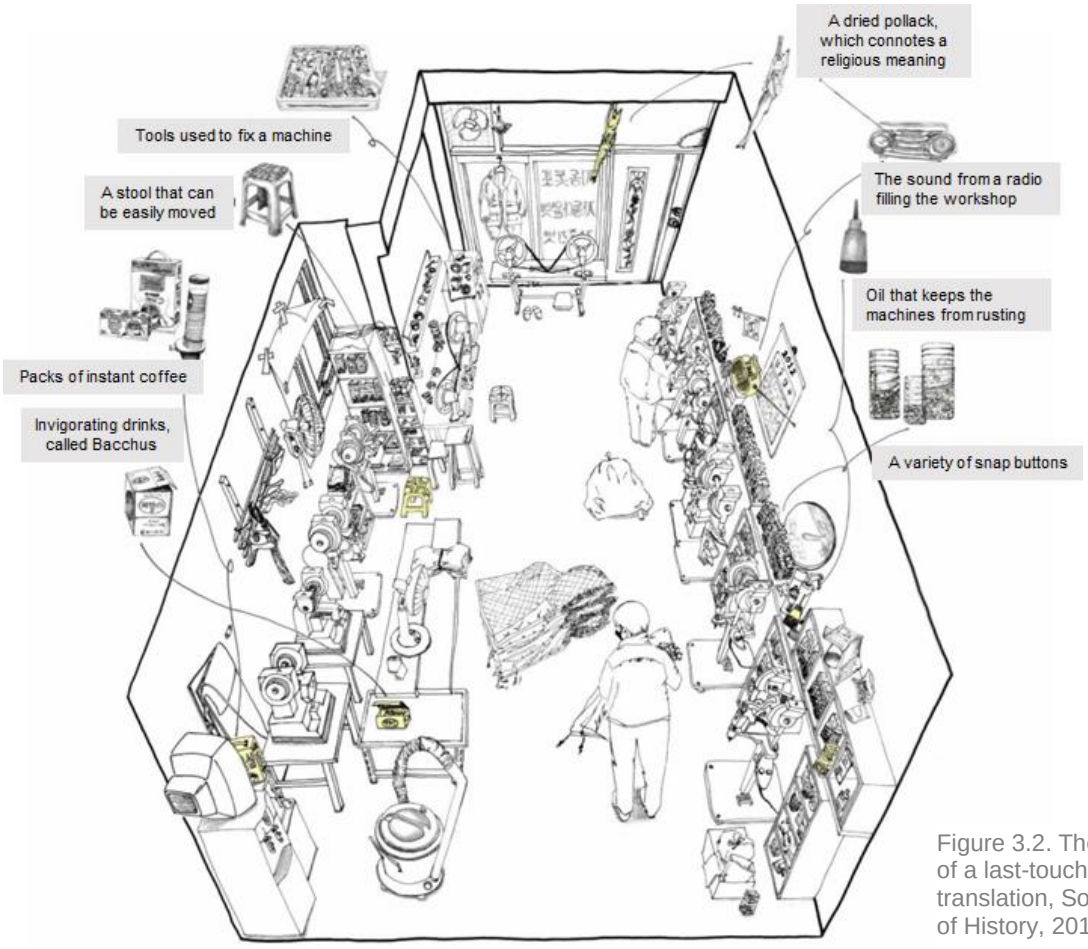
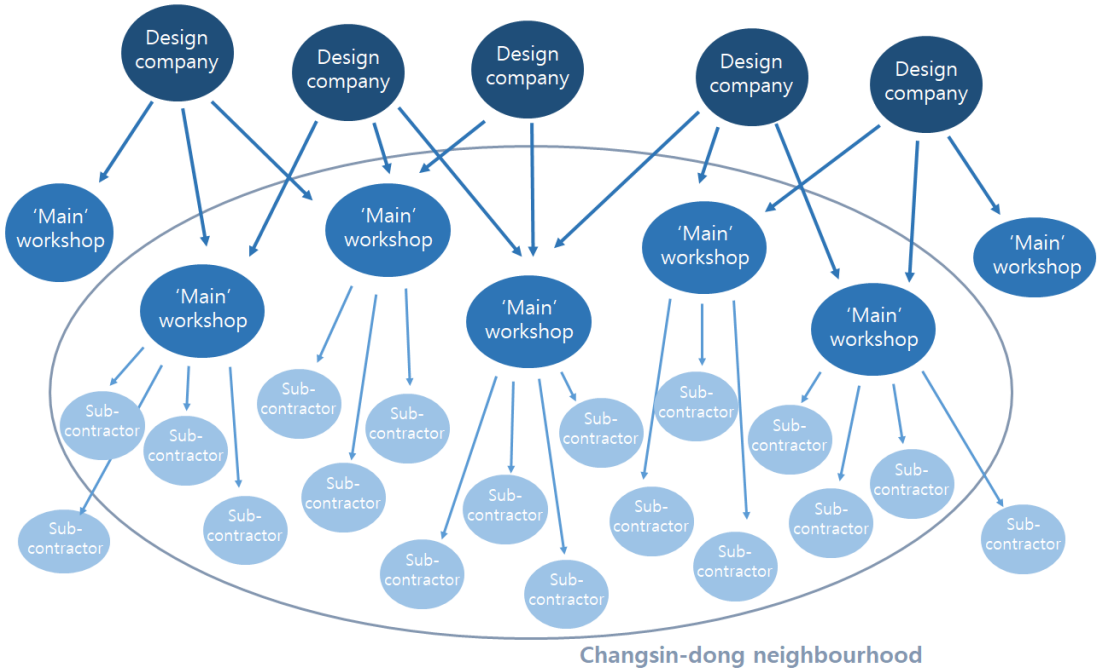


Figure 3.2. The spatial configuration of a last-touch workshop. (My translation, Source: Seoul Museum of History, 2011: 445)

[10] *Siyage* (시야게) means to end, complete, wrap something up, and finish up final touches, originating from the Japanese term 仕上げ.

Those who established the larger businesses spearheaded the more systemic structure in Changsin-dong, and some workers who learned sewing and management practices from the owners of larger workshops set up their own workshops nearby. Thus, the newly settled small workshops have continued their businesses by receiving subcontract work from the larger workshops, and the larger workshops have sustained their businesses within the subcontracting cycle. In this way, Changsin-dong sewing workshops grew exponentially from a few to the tens, hundreds, and thousands, and they have been closely connected through multiple subcontracting systems. The larger workshops have played central roles in forming the web-like subcontracting system, in which larger workshop A subcontracts with workshop B, and B subcontracts with another workshop C, to accommodate the workload. In doing so, smaller workshops rely upon the larger workshops at which they previously worked. This is because it is unlikely that small and newly settled sewing workshops will make large or consistent deals with design companies, and provide patterning and cutting work.

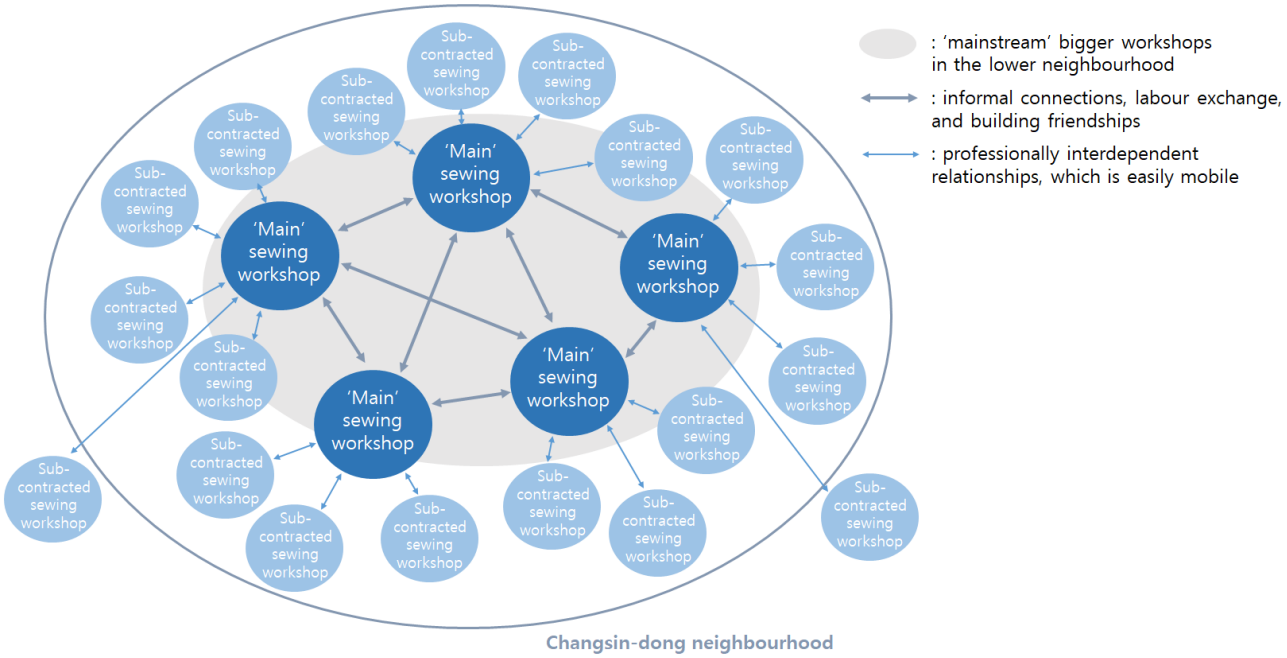
< Figure 3.3. The subcontracting system in Changsin-dong >



At the same time, however, as previously mentioned, since they have adopted the Total Production system, in which individual sewing practitioners are responsible for the entire process of sewing, each workshop operates independently, under the condition that they complete the tasks assigned them flawlessly. In this respect, hundreds and thousands of sewing workshops evolved from the larger workshops to realise the form of small, independent workplaces. Therefore, individual small workshops are not only physically and spatially separated from larger workshops, but also fluidly related to one another given their interdependence in terms of sewing and cutting work. Their invisible, intangible, and organic relationships are linked by motorcycle couriers, who deliver piles of cut fabrics and clothes from larger workshops to subcontracted workshops. Within this urban manufacturing community, where thousands of sewing workshops are huddled together, both interdependent and independent relationships feature in the local subcontracting value chain. Meanwhile, because the small workshops need to receive orders from the larger workshops, vertical relationships are formulated. Simultaneously, as the larger workshops need to meet the deadline and requirements of design companies, relationships between contractors and subcontractors in the value chain are simultaneously hierarchical and horizontal in nature.

Because there are thousands of sewing workshops in this neighbourhood, it is relatively easy to find another alternative, not only for contractors (i.e., main workshops), but also for subcontractors. For example, in Samsung's case, it is characterised by a pyramid-type subcontracting system, with countless subcontractors under one giant corporation, while in Changsin-dong's case, there are numerous small Samsungs with comparably fewer tiered subcontractors. Thus, it can be more flexible and fluid to contract with another substitute workshop, since there are a large number of both contractors (i.e., the small Samsungs) and subcontractors in the supply line. In other words, Changsin-dong's industrial network is not in the form of a pyramid under the powerful dominance of giant Samsung. Rather, they have striven to work together and maintain mutual relationships between contractors and subcontractors, and as a result, a horizontal atmosphere is naturally created within web-like intertwined relationships, while the vertical relationship obviously still exists within the subcontracting system.

< Figure 3.4. Web-like interdependent relationships >



As Figure 3.4 illustrates, it holds true that such tight nets have been overseen by a few local mainstays. The Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative, founded by a small number of members of the '647 group', became the central community of the local sewing sector in Changsin-dong. During its heyday, this local cooperative had more than 300 members, and it plays a key role in maintaining relationships by sharing in various issues, benefits, and friendships among union members. Soon-sun explains how the Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative came to be established in 2013.

> This area is called 647 Street as the street address is 'Changsin-dong 647'. Before, jeans used to be manufactured a lot in this area. Youngjin-sa, a neighbouring sewing workshop [the president of the Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative runs the business], and [some other workshops] over there, used to receive bunches of fabric rolls each day like a decade ago. The fabrics were delivered by trucks. We made a lot of money back then. Thirteen [workshop owners] on this street made the '647 Gathering', and nine of us gathered and made a plan to have lunch or something. Then, the local sewing cooperative came to be founded… That's how gatherings work, as other ones do.

Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative's role varies widely, and its efforts to create an economically sustainable cycle following the COVID-19 outbreak can be exemplified. The

cooperative executed a major deal with the local government, namely, to create cotton masks, and distributed each process and a certain quantity facemask to be manufactured to many workshops in the neighbourhood. Sook-ja elaborates:

> The sewing union (i.e. Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative) sells big garbage bags for remnant pieces of fabrics, threads (only black and white colours), packs of instant coffee, and rolls of patterning paper, and it also offers fax services and other administrative works to its members. About last summer, the Seoul Metropolitan Government ordered the cooperative [to make] 100,000 masks, and the president of the cooperative distributed the order to many sewing and cutting workshops. The involved workshops separately worked on patterning, cutting, sewing, and packaging. The net profit of the order was 100 million won (around £65,000). The president and executives of the cooperative shared the profit, and it has been used for a cooperative employee's salary, and for operational fees. The local cooperate used to play a significant role in maintaining social bonds among sewing workshops as the largest and the most popular group of local people, which used to have more than 300 members just a few years ago. However, as many of the members have closed their workshops in recent years, the local cooperative's membership has been reduced to around 100. Even in 2020, because of COVID-19, all the monthly meetings, casual gatherings, and annual events have been cancelled, and there has been no membership fee since the pandemic hit the world. New attempts to make facemasks were not actively accepted by many workshops at first, because they had only made women's clothing for decades. Yet it soon turned out to be a decent deal for them. A lot of people did that order. Filter cutters, mask sewers, and so many workshops did it. Everyone said they wouldn't do it at first, but later they wanted to do it because it brought them money.

As the garment cooperative distributed a certain amount of work to many other workshops, neighbouring workshops sometimes share their work with one another. When a lot of work comes in a sewing workshop all at once, in particular, the short-handed workshop sometimes shares the work with close (and reliable) workshops, or sometimes hires part-time sewing practitioners through the local network. For example, when Sook-ja's workshop was idle in the off-peak season, Soon-sun's (Sook-ja's husband) friend transferred some quantities of his order to Sook-ja's workshop. Sook-ja further states:

> Since we have no work, I'm doing another workshop's work, which is short-handed now. I'm so glad that many people look for us here and there and gave us some orders from busy workshops if we say we are idle. That's why we have to establish social bonds [with neighbouring workshops]. It's very appreciated for helping each other when we are busy and for sharing orders when we are free. This is because we've built up a good bond.

Such a pattern of sharing work may be relevant to the law of reciprocity. According to Sook-ja, her husband has never said 'No' to neighbours, and his favours are transformed into others' favours in the end. For instance, when the owner of a workshop found work difficult, he visited Sook-ja's workshop to ask for better ways to make a better quality of trousers. Then, Soon-sun lent his patterns of similar trousers to the neighbour, and the neighbour finally resolved the problem. Since then, the neighbour kept thinking about Soon-sun's help, and he helped Soon-sun when the financial circumstance of the couple's workshop was not good. This kind of reciprocity of grateful memories makes for closer bonds. Sook-ja further explains:

> My husband doesn't sever a relationship once he has made it. He just goes out [for local gatherings]. A few days back, my husband said 'We have little work these days' to a man who is the owner of a neighbouring sewing workshop, and he introduced a designer who works with the sewing workshop. This [way of maintaining business] goes along with the bonds.

As such, the sewing people in Changsin-dong bond with one other and exchange work and labour. Furthermore, when designers try new designs or introduce other designers to Changsin-dong, sewing practitioners introduce the designers to other suitable workshops within their web-like community.

Delving deeper, however, it should be meaningful to reconsider whether this 'organic' form of the network works equally well for all of the workshops in the neighbourhood. Although the hierarchical relationships between larger and smaller workshops seem horizontal, given their belief that 'We are all friends' who have worked in the same sector for decades, it is undoubtedly true that each position in a workshop has different interests and different levels of motivation for work. Larger workshops understandably want perfect outcomes from their subcontractors, while subcontractors are somewhat forced to produce results that sometimes do not meet demands – when they work quickly and feverishly, for instance. Furthermore, in conjunction with the separation between the lower and upper neighbourhoods, the division between the 'mainstream' and the 'non-mainstream' is also stark. The owners of larger workshops who are the executive members of the sewing cooperative naturally become mainstream in the neighbourhood, whereas their subcontractors in the upper neighbourhood remain non-mainstream, which will be revisited in the last section of this chapter.

3.2. The Sociality of Sharing: *Cash Exchange, Courteous Gifting,* and *Generous Giving*

Looking at the discussion on gift exchange, anthropological theories have been largely expanded since Mauss' influential interpretations of the gift. The reason why Mauss' gift economy has shown great resonance in the field of anthropology is that he recognises the law of the gift, which may have been in existence since Archaic societies, well before the emergence of the capitalist economy, that imposed social norms, collective morality, and obligations of giving, receiving, and reciprocating. Mauss points out that gift-giving is not a mere pursuit of economic benefits but, rather, a form of exchange that exists everywhere in the opposite direction of the capitalist economy. In terms of material benefits, it might be profitable for the gift giver to receive a return immediately without a specific interval, and from the recipient's point of view, it is certainly profitable to possess the given item without a corresponding return. In the gift economy, however, the giver and recipient focus on bonding and renewing relationships through the constant cycle of gift-giving and reciprocating, rather than on material benefits. Accordingly, Mauss argues that unlike commercial exchanges made in quantitative relations, gift exchange is made in qualitative relationships, not only with the goods, but also through the perception that close relationships are formed between two parties with imposed obligations. Here, it seems that gift-giving functions as a disinterested form to the giver, but in fact, with 'the gift that seals the transaction' (Mauss 2002: 33), an obligatory contract of sorts is also created throughout the programme.

Marshall Sahlins (1972) classifies reciprocity into three types in accordance with the intimacy of social ties: *generalised reciprocity, balanced reciprocity,* and *negative reciprocity*. *Generalised reciprocity* refers to an exchange (or the provision) of material, labour, and mental support to the other party that takes place devotionally and over a relatively long period of time, while it does not accurately calculate the exchange in the relationships, such as parents and children or teachers and students. Yet, even if this arrangement does not have to be repaid immediately, it is a principle that the benefits received should be reciprocated at some point. *Balanced reciprocity* includes exchanges over a relatively short period of time, such as similar amounts of wedding-congratulatory

money, with the expectation that after a relatively short time both families will equally benefit. *Negative reciprocity* refers to an inhumane exchange method that strives to receive a thing without repaying the counterpart, even if it harms the other's interests, such as bribes given to an official who demands them for a service that should have been provided free, as part of the official's job. Here, as applied to Changsin-dong, because I will primarily touch upon small-scale gifts in everyday life, *negative reciprocity* is not extremely relevant, and instead, the patterns of gift-giving can be divided into *generalised* and *balanced reciprocity* that maintain social relations. However, such classification ignores the sincere and intricate emotional aspects shared between people. Therefore, in addition to the obvious laws of reciprocity, I would like to point out the act of *sharing* in a less burdensome form that may stem from one's self-satisfaction.

As the differentiated exchange that constantly occurs in complex human relationships, from family to neighbours, colleagues, friends, acquaintances, and even others, the complexity and ambiguity of such gift-giving lead to the interpretation of various meanings and roles surrounding the word 'gift'. In order to explain the imbricated acts of sharing, gifting, and exchanging in accordance with Changsin-dong's idiosyncratic day-to-day practices, I have classified them into three categories, depending on the meaning of the gift, the degree of purity, and the scale of reciprocity: *cash exchange* and *courteous gifting*, with characteristics similar to limited reciprocity, as well as *generous giving*, with less limited and less conditional features. The first principle I would like to categorise is *cash exchange*, with examples of the rotating savings and credit association, cash gifts for celebrations and condolences, donations for local event, and membership fees for social clubs. This practice of *cash exchange* is characterised by the exchange of the apparent amount of money, which is delivered directly and clearly. As a result, there is an obligation to reciprocate the exact amount, as accurate and symmetric returns are expected. Sometimes, it is conventionally accepted, but otherwise, it sometimes becomes more of a heavy responsibility than the 'sincere' offering it should be. Of course, under the condition of properly reciprocating, the relationship remains intact, while an uneven return may cause the relationship to falter and lead to serious legal issues in some extreme cases. Following this, *cash exchange* is more closely related to individual morality compared to other ambiguous sharing practices.

Second, when it comes to *courteous gifting,* the form of exchange may be more subtle and complicated than *cash exchange*. *Courteous gifting* is linked to the practice of a more ambiguous form of gift-giving that often causes a certain amount of pressure on recipients, as contemporary anthropologists have widely noted. Based on my observation, however, it is not a mere 'conditional' gift. Rather, it can serve as a medium for expressing appreciation, celebration, or an apology, as well as a representation of politeness, hospitality, kindness, affection, and a sense of caring. In some cases, it can be used when asking for a favour, or continuing or renewing relationships. Here, the boundary between gifts and corruption can be blurred, as it is unclear whether or not this is appropriate. Again, my research will cover small-scale gift-giving, such as packs of instant coffee and toilet paper, rather than large-scale gifts that might even be against the law.

Last, but not least, I will examine practices of *generous giving* in relation to voluntary behaviours of sharing masks, carnations, clothes, and food, as well as unconditional forms of donation to local kindergartens and schools. In *generous giving*, there is no need for reciprocity, in which social responsibility for the old and the weak and the joy of sharing coexist, and, rather, individuals' personhood can also be represented, depending on the degree of generosity. Despite an asymmetric return or no return at all, it is almost unconditional, disinterested, and pure, through which individuals gain pleasure and a sense of reward. Consequently, *generous giving* does not burden recipients, and does not require reciprocity, while *courteous gifting* imposes a moderate burden and expects a certain service for a return, even in an asymmetric form, in a more purposeful form of gift exchange.

Cash Exchange

A *cash exchange* is an act of giving cash gifts (sometimes in envelopes in certain events), hoping that the giver will equivalently receive the same gift someday, in both forms by which people take the practice for granted and feel burdened. Sometimes, the given obligation may not be a large burden because this *cash exchange* custom is prevalent and largely occurs in a number of social settings in Korea, but sometimes, it burdens individuals because of subtle circumstances between the giver and the receiver. In Korea, for instance, relatives, friends, and colleagues of the hosts at weddings and funerals contribute a certain amount of money – from 30,000 won (around £20) to 300,000 won (around £200) –

depending on how close the relationship is. In general, the giver writes down his/her name and affiliation (because there are many people with the same name in Korea, usually made up of three syllables) in the lower left of the envelope with a felt pen for visibility, and puts the envelope in a box at the entrance of a funeral or wedding hall. When the events are over, the accumulated envelopes are turned over to the families involved. Families list the names and amounts of money the givers provide, in order to check who has attended and how much the visitors have paid. Then, the equivalent amount of money shall be reciprocated by the receiver at the giver's wedding or funeral. Meanwhile, relationships often disintegrate if the receiver does not reciprocate properly, and when a person is pushed to cash-giving in ambiguous relationships, the person feels a greater burden because their return is not guaranteed.

One can find a globally ubiquitous culture that operates similarly to gifts and tributes required at weddings and funerals. The difference in the form of gifts may vary slightly from society to society, but the meaning of contributing something to the recipient for two of the biggest events in life, weddings and funerals, may be similar. Briefly examining recent anthropological research on gifts and material culture, Toulson (2013) asserts that attaching meaning to material gifts requires substantial social work to elucidate the meanings of it in the exchange. She specifically proposes intricate meanings behind colour embedded in the exchange of red envelopes at Singaporean Chinese funerals and the red envelope given to corpse-handlers, coffin-carriers, and gravediggers at a funeral, which differs from the conventional uses of white for the shroud and of mourning wreaths as symbols of death. She reveals that the red envelope is given to the workers as a gift, but it actually comes with obligations, as well as 'transfer revelatory of unexpected power struggles' (Toulson 2013: 157). Moreover, in her research, she states that a red envelope is usually given to a child at the Lunar New Year to display the generosity and benevolence of an elder to a child, while white envelopes are given by guests at funerals.

In other Northeast Asian countries, envelopes containing notes often appear in life-cycle or annual events such as the Lunar New Year, graduations, weddings, and funerals (see Brumann 2000, Rupp 2003, Toulson 2013), and money is preferred in these ceremonial events by virtue of its non-ambiguous exchange value. Similarly, in this research, I shall

primarily focus on the symmetric return and social obligation created by the practice of *cash exchange* within the domain of Changsin-dong. Interestingly, as social gatherings have often been restricted since the COVID-19 outbreak, it has transformed into a culture that does not consider it awkward to send the appropriate amount of money directly to the recipient via messengers or bank accounts, unlike in the past, when other friends delivered envelopes to the events on behalf of absent people. Far from Toulson's focus on the materiality of the envelope and its meaning and embedded obligation, I will examine the law of returning the exact amount of money received from the donor at a former life-cycle event, criteria for setting the precise amount, such as 50,000 won (around £30), 100,000 won (around £60), or 300,000 won (around £200), and diversified and simplified methods of gift-giving in concert with social and economic changes.

In the case of the Garment Sewing Cooperative, when some family affairs occur, especially matters involving celebrations and condolences, the executive secretary of the cooperative informs the members of the notice. The members may then attend the weddings or funerals, or may simply deliver the cash gift, depending on how close the giver and the receiver are. Likewise, various events and gatherings related to *cash exchange* often reveal the numerical value of social exchange. Another example of *cash exchange* is *gye-mo-im* (micro social-banking gathering), which is a form of micro-finance, arranged not only for the continuity of the relationships, but also for financial purposes, muck like rotating savings and credit associations that exist in other Asian, African, and Latin American countries (see Geertz 1962, Ardener and Burman 1995). All group members settle social and financial transactions for the same purpose, which allows access to accumulated funds that individuals contribute through a monthly fee they can afford. In other words, this regular and relatively affordable contribution to the group helps individual members take a large sum at once that individuals are unlikely to get from sewing work. Such micro social-banking gatherings involve friends who are congenial, and based on the social trust among the members, each member contributes a set amount of money every month. In Soon-sun's group, eleven members contribute 200,000 won (around £130) every month, they use 200,000 won for food, and one member, in turn, takes the accumulated 2,000,000 won (around £1,300). As the order progresses in this way, Soon-sun can take the 2,000,000 won accumulated amount about once a year.

Such a practice of collecting money together and giving the entire amount to one person every cycle is based on strong trust, which is possible because they are old friends who have lived in the same neighbourhood for a long time. This is because they have seen one another for a long period of time and have survived harsh economic crises together, so it is relatively likely that any individual would break trust by running away with the entire amount. The old, horizontal relationships between people in a similar circumstance (*bi-seut-han cheo-ji* 비슷한 처지) allow them to feel related to one another for decades. In addition to this micro-social banking group, most community gatherings require membership fees. Interestingly, my research participants are willing to maintain the bond in spite of needing to pay separate fees for each group in which they are involved. The more groups they belong to, the more monthly fees they have to pay. Nonetheless, they do not often try to reduce such (relatively small-scale) expenditures because the members' contribution is a large share of the money, especially at children's weddings or parents' funerals of the members.

Moreover, this *cash exchange* can be found not only in small groups of individuals, but also in relationships between organisations. As for the Sewing People's Annual Night, organised by the Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative, this annual event strengthens the bonds of the local community through mingling, dining together, ticket-buying, and exchanging donations. By ticket-buying, members of the cooperative can invite their family, friends, and workers in their sewing workshops. Furthermore, affiliated organisations, such as local banks and other cooperatives, also donate a certain amount of money for the event. To show that the group has a decent local network, signs of sponsorship are printed on the main banner of the event. When the affiliated organisations hold an event, in turn, the sewing cooperative also donates the same amount of money in turn. Sook-ja simply explains:

> It's a sort of labour exchange. If the local bank (i.e., the Korean Federation of Community Credit Cooperatives) donates a certain amount of money, we (i.e., Seoul Garment Sewing Co-op) also should do the same thing when the bank holds an event.

This donation exchange represents the reciprocity of the equivalent amount of donations among neighbouring organisations, as well as the continuity of the collective local network at large.

Exchanging cash gifts in Korea is not merely an asocial and impersonal practice that is generally regarded in Western societies, but is, rather, closer to a social and mutual agreement in particular settings. According to Brumann (2000), in Western countries, cash gifts tend to be deemed the medium of profit-oriented market exchange, and a second choice in gift-giving practices, associated with impersonality and instrumentality. Yet, as he indicates, monetary gifts offer 'a continuous measuring system of values that can be applied to almost all goods and services. The messages sent by cash gifts are unambiguous, since these are easily comparable to what one has or received before' (Brumann 2000: 238). Following this, although money may predominantly seem a mere means in asocial and self-interested transactions, with its representative attribute of transparent and precise measurement, it can be used for more equal and symmetric exchanges in both social and personal spheres in many contexts. Based on my observations, many people often welcome cash gifts more than other material gifts, since cash is more likely to be used in a broader range of activities and accords the recipient the authority to buy what is pragmatically needed.

In certain social settings in Korea, cash gifts may not be welcomed as birthday gifts because they seem to lack the 'sincerity' of taking greater care to buy what the recipient needs. However, as the press has recently shown that cash is the number one gift people want to give and receive on Parents' Day (Maeil Business Newspaper, 3 May 2021), cash gifts are a very large part of Korean society, and are often mentioned as the easiest – namely, risk-free and reasonable – gifts. This is because it can be more practically used, although it lacks the 'special' meaning given by a specifically chosen material gift. Instead, my research participants often give meaning to cash gifts. For example, when Soon-sun received *gyet-don* (the money from the rotating savings and credit association), Sook-ja purchased what the couple needed (e.g., new sewing machine, air conditioner for mother-in-law in country home, etc.) and added meaning to them, such as 'I bought this with *gyet-don'.* In a similar vein, when a son or daughter gives pin money (*yong-don*) to parents on Parents' Day, it becomes an opportunity for parents to buy what they have wanted with the money, and the act of buying a thing is directly done by the parents, but they refer it as a gift from their children. In other words, even though their children did not go to the department store to buy a thing as a gift, parents refer to the thing as 'bought by my children'. Of course, this can also be related to social class. For example, those who are in the upper class may not feel special or slighted when they are gifted with a few hundred pounds in cash. Therefore,

this cash gift culture – a relatively small unit of cash gift and cash exchange in a rotating savings and credit association – is generally found in exchanges in the middle class or working class, and within intimate and close relationships (especially in older generations).

In general, at certain life-cycle events in Korea, such as weddings, funerals, the Lunar New Year's Day, and baby's first birthday parties, cash gifts are the most common form of contributing to celebrations and condolences, so there is no need to show sincerity in choosing other gifts. Of course, however, cash is not always without problems. For example, a gift recipient may feel disappointed if the donor gives less than expected, and sometimes, in the process of sharing the cash among family members, collected from the large life-cycle family events, there may be tensions and conflicts between them. At the same time, when a recipient receives a greater-than-expected cash gift from an unexpected friend, it may trigger pressure to construct or reconstruct the relationship with gratitude and a sense of burden. In short, in these intertwined relationships, sewing people maintain, strengthen, and sometimes lose ties at both the individual and local levels through the apparent exchange of cash gifts. Whether the cash gift reflects sincerity or is merely a formality, the fact is that it maintains the relationship by fulfilling its prescribed obligations, both normatively and culturally. Such a circular form of *cash exchange* continues to occur in their daily lives, with socially agreed canons, commitment, trust, and the formality of giving and reciprocating.

Courteous Gifting

Now, let me move on to the practices of *courteous gifting*, which seems a little more complex, ambiguous, and at times asymmetric when compared to *cash exchange*. Hence, it is meaningful to examine how distinct the gift's purpose is, its implications, and the role the gift plays in the relationship. Once again, what I am trying to focus on is not a large range of corruption or bribery, but a smaller scope of gift-giving activities in everyday life in the Changsin-dong, namely, a working-class community. Therefore, rather than purposefully intended, the gift is often meant to maintain a relationship by showing courtesy at a reasonable level. It is not just about gratitude, apology, and celebration, but also about a means of expressing a sense of care, hospitality, kindness, and a sense of attachment, *jeong*. In so doing, a certain obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate an

equivalent gift or another form of return has been placed on both the giver and the recipient. Bestor (2004: 308) also recognises that 'one must intuitively engage in exchange that is embedded in social context and know that assessments of advantage and reciprocity can be simultaneously calculated in financial, cultural, and moral currencies.' Still, in general, because 'appropriate' forms of gift-giving and receiving take place at certain intervals, each party touches the counterpart's heart, builds bonds, and maintains social relationships.

For example, when Young-joo moved to a larger workshop, her friends and neighbouring sewing workshop people visited her new workshop in their daily hours to celebrate with her. Most people who visited her workshop were rarely empty-handed. Rather, they celebrated her move to a larger workshop by gifting a pack of drinks or a pack of toilet paper. In particular, toilet paper is one of the most popular gifts in Korea as a housewarming gift to celebrate someone's move-in/out, because it has a metaphor that 'it works well' and 'everything rolls out well' (*jal pul-li-da* 잘 풀리다), as people unravel the toilet paper when using it. Young-joo and her husband's friends gave bunches of toilet paper to wish 'everything will work out well in the new place', and piles of toilet paper received from neighbouring workshop owners, neighbours, and friends have been stored on the balcony in her new workshop (Figure 3.5). Interestingly, at the same time, the guests looked at how much work Young-joo had, and what kind of design she dealt with while visiting her new workshop to celebrate her with toilet paper gifts. In other words, the relationship contains both affectionate and competitive forms, as a number of anthropologists have argued that the relationship cannot be 100% pure. In this way, local surveillance between the hosts and guests, competition, jealousy, and judging one another's situations definitely coexist with the pleasant feelings towards a friend's business. The act of gifting a pack of toilet paper has a complex meaning of maintaining the relationship, celebrating her move, and even investigating a friend's workshop under the pretext of the visit.



Figure 3.5. Packs of toilet paper piled on the balcony at Naeng-guel Fashion.

When Young-joo visited Byung-choon's workshop on another day, moreover, she also brought a pack of toilet paper as a gift. Thinking about her *jeong* (a sense of attachment) with Byung-choon in the old days, the help she received from him, and when she needs to ask Byung-choon a favour, Young-joo also intends to represent her courtesy and thanks to her neighbour. In another context (even in Korea), a group of more privileged people might see some visitors as weird if they brought toilet paper to their offices or their homes, because toilet paper might seem too trivial to be a 'sincere gift'. By contrast, the pack of toilet paper can be accepted within the bounds of a 'small care' (*jak-eun sung-ui* 작은 성의) for the recipient on informal occasions with close friends, family, or people in the working class. Accordingly, the type and scale of the gift may be linked to social class and the sociality of the group involved.

In terms of gifting and reciprocity, Changsin-dong people also maintain their social ties by buying something from a reliable friend. Just as Sewing Union People show their loyalty towards the cooperative by ticket-selling for the annual night, friends and neighbours exchange forms of buying and selling (*sa-go pal-gi*) through the act of buying crops harvested from one another's country houses in order to 'give' extra profits to one another. More specifically, Soon-sun and Sook-ja harvest mulberries and mulberry juice in their countryside farm every year in late June. They sell the harvested crops and mulberry juice to the people around them, and the sewing cooperative promotes their items on behalf of the couple. Byung-choon and Young-joo usually buy a box of mulberry juice each year because the quality of the mulberry juice is much more reliable than anything commercially available, and because this act of buying can represent their friendship with Soon-sun and Sook-ja as a couple. When people order a certain number of boxes of juice, Soon-sun packs the boxes (60 packs in total) and adds two more packs to each box free of charge. Even the design company work-ing with Sook-ja and Soon-sun also orders a couple of boxes of mulberry juice every year, not only to enjoy the juice, but also to express their attachment and maintain emotional ties with sew-ing workshops.



Figure 3.6. Packs of mulberry juice harvested from and made at Soon-sun and Sook-ja's country home.

Another day, in turn, another member of the local cooperative visited Sook-ja and Soon-sun's workshop, bringing a box of apples to sell. To keep faith with the friend, Soon-sun also bought the friend's item, even though he does not enjoy eating apples. Then, Sook-ja shared the rest of the apples with a couple of neighbours. Sook-ja states:

> They bought ours (i.e., a box of mulberry juice) last time, so we should buy them this time, right? We can't just turn blind eyes and not buy theirs this time. We just buy each other's things and just live [along with our friends] like that.

Through the daily practice of exchanging small things, the sociality of sharing permeates everyday life in Changsin-dong. My research participants give something to each other, do not forget to pay it back, ask for help or help each other, and buy some non-sewing-related items when friends are selling them. Thus, gifted things are not simple and plural, but they play their part in the world of people, connecting them, creating potential problems, and recreating the relationship in interwoven forms. This act of exchange and reciprocity plays both positive and negative roles in the complicated relationship between both parties, and it places burdens on the parties, with the hope of receiving something of corresponding value from the giver, or with the obligation of reciprocating something of corresponding value from the receiver. This subtle and mutual relationship maintains the web-like interdependent community in Changsin-dong at large.

Daniels (2010: 174) describes the circulation and consumption of gifts in Japan's material culture by developing Mauss' theory of gift-giving, especially regarding the inalienable connection between the giver and the gift. Daniels identifies human hierarchy as a critical factor in the gift exchange, especially in producing and reproducing social and economic order in urban Japan. Because Japanese society is often characterised as formal and hierarchical, social status and prestige are primarily grounded and associated with gifting practices in Japan. She specifically examines upward gifting in stratified relationships in Japan, and points out the reinforced financial and social pressures surrounding asymmetrical gift-giving, with an example of the gift-giving culture in which office workers give gifts to superiors for a future employment benefit, such as a promotion in the workplace. In addition to this upward gifting practice in the workplace, downward gifting has also been observed in Changsin-dong's sewing workshops.

In Korea, during the Lunar New Year and Chuseok, or Korea's Thanksgiving Day, which are the two biggest holidays in Korea, the practice of gift exchange is most commonly observed. In Changsin-dong's case, Soojin Apparel, run by Byung-choon, has about 20 to 30 sewing and cutting practitioners, and, as previously mentioned, all of the workers have both lunch and dinner from Monday through Friday, as well as lunch on Saturdays, at a particular restaurant. Their monthly meal costs exceed 5 million won (around £3200), so it may be lucrative for a small local restaurant, which accommodates about 30 people, if they

continue to serve all of the meals for several sewing workshops. A few days before the Lunar New Year's Day, a woman working at the restaurant bought two packs of instant coffee as a Lunar New Year's gift for Byung-choon to make a good impression. The two packs of instant coffee cost around 20,000 won (around £13), which may not be a big gift, but they create social bonds between the donor and the recipient or give the recipient a subtle responsibility to reciprocate, which can be in a form that differs from what they received, namely, continuing to go to the restaurant. In this way, gifts are frequently exchanged in the neighbourhood, with a small-scale burden. When receiving the New Year's gift, Byung-choon reacts:

> If I don't get this kind [of gift] at all, I don't have to [return anything], which should be more comfortable for me. But I have to return something if I get it. It costs a lot of money to buy things like this. But well, what can I do? I just reciprocate with something.

As such, gift exchanges on Lunar New Year's Day and Chuseok are conventionally accepted,[11] and individuals take for granted their awareness of the meaning of these gifts, such as making a good impression and strengthening the relationship.

In addition to the upward gifting practice (see Daniels 2010), asymmetric reciprocity in downward gifting can be found in many social settings (see Rupp 2003). As Lunar New Year's Day and Chuseok are the most acceptable and conventional settings to give and receive gifts, during the Lunar New Year and on Chuseok, normally companies give gifts to their employees – usually, things to eat or daily supplies, such as a gift-wrapped fruit box, a gift-wrapped set of necessities, a set of canned tuna or ham, and the like. In Changsin-dong, designers give a small gift to owners of sewing workshops, and employers give a gift to their full-time employees. Usually, as in the case of a pack of coffee used to attract Byung-choon to keep going to a local restaurant, holiday gifts are not directly linked to a material form of exchange. They are usually given to represent connectedness, a sense of belonging, and encouragement in downward gifting.

[11] Historically, on holidays, kith and kin in a small town used to gather to have a feast together, which originated from the custom of bringing each farmed grains and vegetables, women preparing food together with the ingredients, and the sharing the leftover food after the convivial commensality. In modern times, the customs of local commensality have almost disappeared, while the tradition of family units' gathering, preparing food, dining together, and gift-giving remains intact, although the family unit has also become smaller.

Eun-young, a designer who has worked with Sook-ja for more than eight years, gives Sook-ja a reasonable scale of gifts, such as boxes of apples and sweet potatoes, for a holiday gift. Because food gifts have high demand during the Lunar New Year's Day and Chuseok holidays, the prices of fruits and meat rise during the holiday season. Despite the increased price of food, designer Eun-young, who gave boxes of apples and sweet potatoes as holiday gifts, expresses her gratitude as 'thanks for working with me so far' and a request for the workshop to 'handle our order well'. Given Eun-young's sense of care, Sook-ja becomes more affectionate to the designer and tries to work more carefully. Sook-ja thanks Eun-young, but she does not actually pay her back in a material form. Rather, reciprocity comes in a corresponding form to cooperate and get along with the designer and pay more attention to the sewing work to ensure better quality.

The case of a local restaurant's gift-giving to Byung-choon is in the same vein, as the restaurant presented packs of instant coffee with no expectation of a material return from Byung-choon. In Byung-choon's position, the intent is not to repay the equivalent material value of the coffee, but to recognise the effort and sincerity of the restaurant's gifting, and he is instead expected to reciprocate with more visits to the restaurant to ensure its stable income. This uneven material exchange can also be seen in the form of downward gifting practices between employers and employees. At Naeng-guel Fashion, as another example, Young-joo, the employer, presented Joong-wan, the employed chief tailor, a cloth-stacked food gift on Lunar New Year's Day, but Joong-wan did not give Young-joo any other return gift. For employees, New Year's Day and Chuseok gifts are like a bonus or welfare, which they can receive twice a year, and they are then expected to pay the gift back in the non-material form of working harder.

Additionally, this gift-giving culture is easily influenced by the economy of the time. My observations from 2018 (for my MPhil research) to 2021 revealed that holiday gifts were clearly simplified, primarily due to COVID-19. In particular, during times of severe economic recession and social instability, the frequency of gift-giving and the size of gifts are reduced. The gifts offered by the sewing cooperative to its members were simplified, from sets of necessities to a much cheaper pack of anchovies, and demands at local fruit

stores and butcher shops significantly decreased. Sook-ja worryingly comments about this reduced gift-giving brought about by the unstable economy.

> I went to a butcher's shop earlier today, and the butcher said there should be a lot of advance orders of the beef rib set for holiday gifts, but there are not that many orders this time. Normally, they used to earn between 7 million and 8 million won (around £5,000) during this holiday season, but this year, so many buyers cancelled the orders, which may be due to the low demand [because of the stagnant economy]. He was very worried.

Dong-gue also mentions the simplified culture of gift-giving, but unlike Sook-ja, Dong-gue views it rather optimistically.

> Chuseok gifts got simpler this year. But it's good. When buying a box of pears, how much garbage (i.e., packaging) does it contain? That's why I don't give presents on holidays... Coronavirus has simplified everything. And I think I could take a break too. I wouldn't have been able to rest like that in some cases, but, as there is no work, I was able to take a break this year.

The scope and frequency of the gift are easily influenced by socio-economic circumstances, and the changing form of gift-giving in turn affects the local economy. Although the scope of the gifts has also recently become smaller and narrower, it has certainly remained in accordance with the given environment, just as a local restaurant gifted packs of instant coffee to Byung-choon, and just as a designer gave food gifts to the sewing workshop she had worked with as a holiday gift. On the one hand, the packs of instant coffee sent to Byung-choon, with the restaurant's intention of maintaining the contract, take the form of upward giving. On the other hand, the designer's gift-giving to Sook-ja and Young-joo's gift-giving to her full-time employee can be seen as downward giving in their vertical relationships. The designer, who places orders with Sook-ja, and the employer, who provides a job, offer gifts to maintain stable relationships, soften up some tensions and daily frictions, and encourage workers. Such forms of exchange continue over time, and strong partnerships, cooperation, contracts, loyalties, friendships, and sometimes surveillance also continue. As such, *courteous gifting* is interwoven with various interests, backgrounds, socio-economic circumstances, socially agreed-upon conventions, gifting etiquettes, and purposes of givers based upon their intricate relationships with recipients.

Generous Giving

In a close relationship, sewing people spend time chatting during informal visits to each other's workshops without notice, and during those casual visits, they usually do not bring a gift. However, when they ask for something, one usually brings a box of drinks to start the conversation. Then, the visitor says, 'It's nothing' (see Bourdieu 1997a: 191), and the recipient (i.e., usually the workshop owner) responds, 'You don't have to bring something.' When receiving a courteous gift, people tend to respond with a proper answer, since the formality of gift-giving is somewhat predictable, and it is also considered polite to reciprocate the giver's sense of care in a linguistic form. On the other hand, recipients respond by showing more surprising expressions when receiving a 'free gift' with no burden of a return gift. When people get something for free without any conditions, they sometimes ask several times if they can really get it for free or show pleasant feelings with a smile like an innocent child. Here, much like Sahlins' (1972) indication of generosity as one of the three crucial variables in determining the general nature of gift exchange, I also point out the critical role of generosity and the giver's emotional motivation behind gift-giving, which has tended to be downgraded or regarded as an 'outdated' notion of the gift in recent discourse in the field of anthropology.

In relation to generosity when giving a free gift, I will exemplify the daily practices of *generous giving*. Mauss argues (1990) that the gift is always followed by the obligation to reciprocate, and that it is logically impossible to conceive a gift without self-interested value, as he believes that no one would be generous enough to treat guests who did not bring a gift. At the end of his book, however, Mauss idealistically suggests a return to archaic society, namely, the gift economy, which would be seen as a more *generous* society.

> … we can and must return to archaic society and to elements in it. We shall find in these reasons for life and action that are still prevalent in certain societies and numerous social classes: the joy of public giving; the pleasure in generous expenditure on the arts, in hospitality, and in the private and public festival. (Mauss 2002: 88-9)

As Mauss admits the possibility of the gift economy, I believe that the gift economy may coexist with the capitalist economy in modern societies. In Changsin-dong's case, where rural-like characteristics still prevail in urban spaces, and where pre-industrial and post-industrial features are blended, the gift economy may be compatible with capitalist contexts,

much like Yan's (1996) observations in a Chinses village. Here, in addition to the (small-scale) giving and taking practices of *cash exchange* and *courteous gifting*, which are easily swayed by economic circumstances in society, the form of *generous giving* may reveal the blurred boundaries between the capitalist and gift economies. Now, I would suggest a less sanctifying threshold of generosity in day-to-day and trivial cases.

According to Smith and Davidson (2014), generosity is not a random behaviour, but is instead a mature form of personal, moral orientation to life and ultimately an expression of love, even if it appears to be a collectively exercised manifestation of responsibility, duty, and justice. As human beings intrinsically have a variety of interests, desires, and dis-positions, the potential for generosity may vary in different ways, depending on a varied set of factors. Hence, generosity is not directly linked to income. Rather, a generous tendency is associated with personal agency. In so doing, it is undeniable that generous activities, such as community service, extend and enhance social ties among participants. As a result, it may be used to build social relationships, but nonetheless, it is based upon love, which social scientists tend not to describe.

> … love is so central and important in human personal and social life. Love may not seem like a very "scientific" term, but that does not diminish its importance in human life… Love creates the conditions for real life, growth, learning, and thriving. (Smith and Davidson 2014: 97)

This is not intended to emphasise the 'true mercy' of Christian doctrine in gift-giving to gain superiority or favour with the recipient. Complete purity or the lack of a self-interested purpose may not actually be possible. However, in a more relaxed way, the generosity of individuals, as well as the compassion and love that comes with caring and worrying about their neighbours, are certainly something that anthropologists should not forget. In other words, moving beyond the classic anthropological approach of analysing and generalising the culture of gifts as a structural system for maintaining complex and intricate social relationships, I will touch upon two sides of gifts, including the burdensome, calculating, and political aspects, as well as emotional sentiments, with the sense of care and degree of generosity of the giver.

In Changsin-dong's case, various activities are carried out to serve the community and maintain social networks. Of course, when local people first joined a local society, there might have been wishes or individual interests to establish strong relationships in the society as a form of networking. However, as they have been involved in multiple societies in the community based on the already constructed network, they have come to care about community interests while naturally maintaining their relationships and enjoying their interactions with friends. Since they have lived in the neighbourhood for a long time and have more financial sustainability and spare time than before, they have become more affectionate towards the neighbourhood and offer community services for those whom they seek to provide care. Sae-ma-eul Women's Association, for instance, makes food at local events (about twice a year) and uses the profits collected through direct dealings and bazaars for underprivileged people in the neighbourhood (Seoul City 2019: 52). It would be physically demanding to gather together on a Sunday, which is the only full day off in a week, to make food and share it with the elderly in the neighbourhood, but in fact, it can be a way of finding their own presence by fulfilling their social responsibilities through the act of sharing *jeong* and food. As such, it is true that the culture of gift-giving among neighbours, even with small gifts, may be more simplified than in the past, but at the same time, their efforts to express their love for neighbours and to fulfil their social responsibilities as 'grown-ups' (*eou-reun* 어른) are ongoing.

The joy of sharing shown by Dong-gue was actually phenomenal. When the COVID-19 outbreak triggered panic-buying of facemasks globally, Dong-gue bought fabric to produce facemasks at her own expense and shared them with her friends and neighbours for free. To date, she has consistently donated more than 5,000 facemasks she has made, and still, she has updated the quality of the masks and produced them in her spare time. Dong-gue elaborates:

> I didn't have much fun doing this sewing work before, but it's good to be making facemasks this time. As everyone needs facemasks, it's good to make and share them. So, I make them whenever I have no other work. I just come here to sew them when thinking of something depressing. Whenever something depressing comes to my head, I just come here to make them… when a man asked me if I had any (thinner ones) for summer, I just started making thinner masks right away [to share (or sell) them with others]. I have given out so many masks to my neighbours, but I couldn't see a person wearing them in the beginning. But then, when I was walking on the

> street the other day, someone said, “Thank you! I’m wearing them well!” while wearing the mask [I made]. It was great then.

Parents’ Day provides an extraordinary example of Dong-gue distributing masks and carnations[12] to the elderly in the neighbourhood. On Parents’ Day, the 8th of May, a ceremony for seniors was held at the Changsin-dong community centre. After the event, Dong-gue organised a pop-up stand to share cotton masks and carnations with the elderly in the neighbourhood. She handed out 500 masks she had made and 150 stems of artificial carnations she bought at her own expense. According to Dong-gue, because there are many elderly people living alone in Changsin-dong, there may not be many families who take care of them, especially on Parents’ Day, so she pleasantly served to give the flowers and masks on this special day. She expresses her joy of sharing:

> It’s Parents’ Day, but if we don’t pin the flowers, we would feel empty. That is why I bought these [artificial flowers] for the elderly. I’m thankful that everyone takes [the masks and the flowers] with good cheer. It makes me feel good, so I always carry around 10 pieces [of facemasks] in my bag, and hand them out to the elderly in my neighbourhood.

Such a practice of volitional sharing could be a very unusual case in Changsin-dong as well, since not all Changsin-dong people shared masks with one another, which could come from Dong-gue’s outstanding personhood. In addition to the celebration of Parents’ Day, as she mentioned, when Dong-gue sees an elderly person or someone who seems to be alienated in the neighbourhood, she takes out one or two masks she has packed in her pocket and gifts them.

Dong-gue also has donated thousands of small-sized masks to local kindergartens and schools. She produces facemasks when she has time, and she feels rewarded when she sees that the number of people wearing the masks she has made is incrementally growing, and also when people express their thanks to her for the unconditional gift:

[12] Carnations are usually presented to parents, grandparents, and teachers on Parents’ Day and Teachers’ Day in Korea, with special status as a symbol of love, admiration, and gratitude.

One day, an old man was drunk and flabby on the bench there, so I gave a mask to him and told him that “If you’re lying like this here, tourists don’t like it. I’ll give you a mask, so promise me you won’t drink.” Then, the man, who wouldn’t have replied to me, said thanks to me.







Figure 3.7. Dong-gue giving out handmade facemasks and artificial flowers to the elderly on Parents’ Day in 2020 and 2021.

Dong-gue looks into the safety of her neighbours, and demonstrates a lot of dedication to the district. Her unconditional sharing represents her enjoyment, her pride, and her strong social responsibility, as well as her sense of reward, self-satisfaction, and daily routine. On another day, Dong-gue bought some fresh food, such as bean sprouts and tofu, to share with old ladies sitting on a small gazebo near her house.

> There used to be five or six old ladies on the gazebo up there, but I can only see two or three these days. I was worried about the others who might have passed away… I used to give something bought at the market to them. But one day, a lady said, "Will you take responsibility if we get indigestion after having what you bought for us?" After hearing that, I couldn't buy food that much. So, these days, I just buy something fine to digest, like bean sprouts and tofu, which are like 1,000 won (under £1) for a packet. If I see the elderly sitting on my way down to the market,[13] I buy some more food to share. No one dislikes bean sprouts or tofu... I guess every sister in my family is like this too. All my sisters can't bear it if we don't share anything. Haha.

Motivated by Dong-gue's active daily practice of sharing, I began to look at the implications of *generous giving*. Of course, her own personhood, which endeavours to fulfil her social responsibilities, cannot be ignored, and this might be a sort of socially reinforced and culturally embodied morality coming from Confucian society that prioritises the community. However, as Dong-gue mentioned, her older sisters, Sook-Ja and Young-ja, also have no qualms about sharing something with others, and they actually enjoy it. This may stem from their peculiar personhood, the atmosphere in their family, or the characteristics of sociality in Changsin-dong itself. Compared to Dong-gue, Sook-ja may be less active, but she also makes facemasks and trousers in her spare time and unconditionally presents them to people around her. Both Dong-gue and Sook-ja feel pleased and rewarded by the fact that they themselves can be of help to others. Through the practice of unconditional sharing, they seek enjoyment in their daily lives, and thereby, such practices play a critical role in maintaining their mental well-being, just as Smith and Davidson (2014) contend. When Sook-ja heard at a local hair salon that her sister, Dong-gue, shared cotton masks with their neighbours, Sook-ja was proud of her and said:

[13] As Dong-gue lives in the middle of the neighbourhood, she usually says that she goes 'down' to the local market or the main street, which is located in the lower neighbourhood.

> You know, it feels good when trying to give or share something with others. I feel like I owe people if I get something from them. But when I give something to people, I feel happy. It's very pleasing.

Just like the phenomenon of people who experienced difficult times practicing social contribution more, as they know how hardship is tough for the have-nots, the sewing practitioners can sympathise with the difficult situation of the underprivileged (i.e., mainly the elderly living alone in the neighbourhood and kids), and they try to help those, even if just a little, who are in a more difficult situation than the sewing workers. As those who are affluent are not always generous, people who are the 'working class' are not solely interested in economic benefits, and are not stingy about sharing something unconditionally with others. Rather, it may be a form of confirmation of their own presence by proving to themselves that they can handle such (small-scale) sharing and afford that much.

> Soon-sun: We used to work all night those days, didn't we? We lived like that hard.
> Dong-gue: We used to have such a hard time. It was so intense.
> Sook-ja: Because we have had such a tough life, we feel heartbroken when seeing some people living hard. This is because we know how tough life is.

To date, as repeatedly mentioned, most anthropological discussions on gift-giving practices have emphasised the sense of obligation and political implications of a gift. Consequently, it has been largely argued that a gift, even under the name of a 'pure gift', is not simply given with a 'pure' intention but, rather, carries with it a highly calculated and self-interested purpose. This can be found even in the form of donations, which are characterised as ethical norms, and are encouraged among individuals in modern societies when it comes to some cases in which donors use the donation as a means to enjoy the institutional benefits of tax deductions, beyond that of the donations itself. This irony cannot be overlooked when large corporations establish donation foundations for the purpose of not only to improve its image of fulfilling social and ethical responsibilities, but also for the economic benefits related to tax savings.

Nonetheless, I strive to move away from such a pessimistic stance. From what I have observed in Changsin-dong, the pattern of behaviour that Dong-gue exhibited in sharing facemasks with her elderly neighbours may represent the intention to create and recreate social ethics based on socially shared moral perceptions or a collective expectation to be

returned through a form of appreciation by beneficiaries. In Dong-gue's case, it would be more plausible that such an act comes from feelings such as compassion and attachment, as well as from self-satisfaction to serve as a responsible *eou-reun* in the community, with no expectations for recognition or payback from the recipients. This can be an ethical act that one can practice in the community, starting not only with one's own moral standards, but also with sympathy for others who are socially weaker, which, again, may derive from Confucianism. The level of this ethical act varies significantly from individual to individual, depending on the degree to which joy is obtained through sharing, the degree to which compassion is raised for others, and the characteristics of beneficiaries. Thus, I would point out that this sort of behaviour may be closer to an individual's agency than to a collective habitus in Bourdieu's analysis.

Moreover, such compassion for family, friends, and others, as well as emotionally turbulent feelings towards others, can be closely related to *jeong*, especially with regard to Korean sociality, which values community. From daily practices, such as giving away a seat to a pregnant woman or an elderly person on public transportation, or sharing a drink with a delivery person or a water purifier inspector, even if no reciprocity is promised, to special events, such as giving out facemasks to elderly neighbours, these choices are made for the community – with no expectations for return or rewards. To some extent, it is true that when Dong-gue was hailed by others at an unexpected place regarding her sharing event, and when she encountered a passer-by wearing a facemask that she had made, she demonstrated that she felt more rewarded. However, her original intention was not exclusively this psychological compensation. Rather, it may be linked to her characteristic to fulfil her strong social responsibility, as well as the sociality of sharing, which can be, again, applicable to *jeong*.

Each individual chooses, practices, and navigates acts of giving, finding their own path in life through everyday practices of sharing, realising social responsibility according to their own personhood and degree of *jeong*, fulfilling self-satisfaction, and experiencing pride in the fact that they have no debt to others. In Changsin-dong, small gifts (under 50,000 won, about £30) serve as ice breakers to melt people's hearts and establish good rapport and the representation of willingness to maintain the relationship. Even though the practice of gift-

giving comes with the inevitable nature of political implications, individuals' genuine sense of care about neighbours and old friends is relevant at the same time. As the case of the *gye-mo-im* (rotating savings and credit association) case indicates, based on their established relationships and mutual trust, some groups even collect money together and give all of it to one person, with no doubt that the money might be taken by one member in an act of betrayal. In some cases, people experience joy and feel rewarded and self-satisfied by sharing something unconditionally. I have striven not to romanticise the practice of gift-giving in this rural-like urban community. What I want to stress is that we need to encompass a bit more altruistic or generous forms of gifts, moving beyond the recent anthropological interest in moral gifts and social obligations that anthropologists have exclusively stressed.

Although one would never conceive that all choices are 100% pure and innocent, there is still a lack of explanation when questioning the generosity of donors. It cannot be said that all forms of gifts are the same simply because a particular group employs greater schemes for gain under the guise of gift-giving in certain circumstances. Therefore, the assumption that all acts of gift-giving include a cunning plan, and that obligations between the donor and the receiver, may be somewhat exaggerated, which might stem from the academic arrogance to 'analyse' social 'patterns' and implicit 'meanings'. Thus, there is a risk of viewing 'pure generosity' in black and white logic as unreasonable. At least within the scope of anthropology, there is a need for a more comprehensive interpretation of the complex relationship between giving and individual agency, within diverse social and economic contexts. Even if Dong-gue, Sook-ja, and many other sewing people enjoy public giving for their own mental well-being, it cannot be said that their practices of giving are completely self-interested. Rather, the practice of giving may begin with an emotional disturbance that stems from the heart, a form of love of the community and neighbours.

In addition, the behaviour of individuals giving gifts is also uniquely expressed in each circumstance, time, and place, just as the degree of *jeong*, which may represent an individual's own personhood, varies depending on the counterpart and particular situation. There are immeasurable numbers of daily practices of gift-giving in Korean society, just as 'social roads in Japan are paved with gifts' (Brumman 2000: 224). Traditions and customs,

moral values and norms, social agreement and responsibilities, and capitalist competition and seductive marketing from business companies are deeply embedded in both daily life and life's events.

3.3. Commensality and Community Sentiment *Jeong*

According to Mauss, gift-giving functions as one of the more powerful ways of forming social relationships, because gifts always contain part of the donor's soul. As 'it follows that to make a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself' (Mauss 2002: 16), the inalienable object constantly circulates over the gift exchange. However, Daniels (2009) reveals that in urban Japan, consumable gifts are selected in order to reduce the burden of recipients, to keep and store the gifts for the long term. If the gift successfully plays a role as the representation of gratitude, royalty, reliance, and a positive impression of the donor, it is practical when the gifts are shared with family members or people around the recipient. This is because recipients tend to strive not to throw away gifts, which may stem from a sense of responsibility to keep them.

> … the propensity for not throwing things away is more affected by a feeling of duty than emotional attachment. The duty people felt towards objects is grounded in an awareness of the interrelatedness of human and non-human entities. In other words, things offer their service to people who, in return, should be thankful and treat objects respectfully. (Daniels 2009: 396)

As Daniels (2009) states, even if the recipients do not like less practical gifts, they hesitate to dispose of the unwanted gifts, and thereby, edible, consumable, functional gifts, such as washing powder, cleaning products, towels, and food, are often described as more favourable gifts, since the material forms of those gifts can be quickly and easily consumed.

Daniels (2010) further identifies gift-giving's social potential in food, explaining that its ephemeral properties maintain and regenerate the relationship because food can be used up relatively quickly, which can ease the burden of storage.

> It is a fact that, as food perishes, no one can be expected to keep it for long, and its potential for being shared makes it the perfect gift for the regular renewal and continuation of social relationships... the ephemeral quality of food is not associated with the negative value of depletion but with the generative value of renewal. (Daniels 2010: 170)

This may be linked to the characteristics of houses in urban Japan, where the physical size of housing is relatively small in accordance with the percentage of the population. As a result, gifting an unnecessary item may burden the recipient with devoting storage space for it. More specifically, food is one of the most popular gifts because it is easily consumed with no trace at home, and because the ephemeral quality of food allows the recipient to share with others, normally with family members, thereby continuing and renewing social relationships.

Watson and Klein (2016) also contend that food manifests the strength of kinship and the warmth of social bonding. In their work, food is analysed using its roles of commensality, identity, locality, ethics, and security, since food practices, such as cooking and sharing, reflect social changes in everyday complexities. In this respect, food is introduced as an essential property to be distributed and shared with other social members, and it often appears in anthropological research in connection with gifts. In fact, Daniels (2010) argues that food and other stock were ceaselessly shared with neighbours in informal social networks in an urban community before the Second World War, but these social activities have become less intimate given the sporadic contact with neighbours in more recent history. Yet, these networking practices still exist in rural areas of Japan.

In Seoul's case, this act of food sharing among neighbours may not be very common in many other residential or commercial districts as well, since an individualist social atmosphere is prevalent in urban areas. Nevertheless, in Changsin-dong, a rural-like urban community, not only materials, but also food, can be used as a means of strengthening relationships by sustaining and encouraging workers, such as the fruit boxes given by designers and the purchase of packs of mulberry juice, as previously mentioned. Along with the nature of food, which can be used up relatively quickly, it is worth recognising the importance and implications of food in Korea at large.

For linguistic aspects in Korean, when talking about livelihood, *eating* comes first, not merely *living*, as it indicates 'the matters of eating and living' (*meok-go sa-neun il*). In the same vein, meal-related languages are largely used in day-to-day conversations in Korean contexts. 'Let's have a meal' in Korean is another meal-related common formality in greetings, which expresses 'We are close enough to eat together someday' rather than making a specific plan to dine together, just as 'Let's have a coffee (or drink) sometime' in Western societies. This may originate from Korea's historical background, which is often called 'The days we couldn't eat enough', as a direct translation of the tough times during the periods of Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War. Given these historical and cultural backgrounds, the importance of eating pervades Korean society. The most common greeting I have heard from research participants was 'Have you eaten?' and 'Have dinner together before you go', as mentioned above. Since my MPhil research, they have often suggested having a meal together and sharing some fruits, snacks, and drinks. In so doing, eating together and sharing some food may demonstrate their favour, hospitality, social obligation, close relationships, sense of care, and *jeong*.

Commensality, which refers to the act of eating together, articulates a particular sociality, since everyday commensality includes the practice of sharing food, conversation, and non-verbal senses of togetherness exchanging body language between those who are involved. Hence, the study of commensality came to be an important anthropological discussion in the practices of sharing and eating food, as it has been acknowledged as a 'communicative act which has the significance of social relations' (Chee-Beng 2015: 13). Yet, at the same time, much as gift-giving practices not only construct social ties but also burden participants, commensality creates and simultaneously reinforces social relations (see Bourdieu 1984). When having and sharing food in a particular social setting, all habitual behaviours can be watched by other participants, just as Foucault's notion of bio-politics, because it contains rules of hierarchy, solidarity, boundary-making, and symbolic expression (Chee-Beng 2015). Such an inevitable inclusion and exclusion mechanism may express the symbolic capital of a group of people and cultivate and enhance social bonds, while also reinforcing participation in a certain occasion and marginalising other people who are not invited.

> … whereas daily meals may form around a relatively stable core of participants, special commensal occasions encompass persons who do not usually eat or drink together. On such

> occasions, widening the social circle inevitably brings with it a variety of other effects. (Kerner and Chou 2015: 3)

As an example of the Sewing People's Annual Night, Dong-gue does not usually attend the event if she has to pay her own expense for a ticket (30,000 won, about £20). She believes that she does not really obtain some benefit from the event because it is centred by the mainstream workshops for networking, whereas she is involved in another local co-operative. But if she is invited by someone free of charge, she attends to enjoy a decent buffet dinner.

Still, it is an undoubted fact that commensality practice is also compatible with renewing and continuing social relationships and solidarities, as when around two to three hundred sewing people gather together at the Sewing People's Annual Night. Looking at the sewing people's quotidian life, finishing lunch and dinner within 30 minutes, and starting work right away, it might seem that sewing workers do not value lunch and dinner much in their workplace, similar to many other office workers in modern societies. When looking deeper into their everyday lives, however, it is frequently observed that they discuss what to eat that day or the upcoming weekend, share their know-how in making kimchi, and continue their work while having seasonal fruits harvested from their country homes. Through these daily conversations and sharing activities, they maintain social ties and refresh themselves while working all day long sitting at their set place. All sewing workshops are equipped with household refrigerators, which are divided into fridge and freezer sections (at Soojin Apparel, which occupies two floors of the building, one refrigerator is placed on each floor), and various drinks, fruits, side dishes, and kimchi are stored therein. Intriguingly, most of my research participants possess a kimchi refrigerator at home, which is separate from general domestic refrigerators, and this reveals how foods play a salient role, as well as how they value the food in their daily lives.

Much like other office workers, the sewing and garment-cutting workers sometimes have a small feast-like dinner together (*hoe-sik* 회식) for social bonding. In general, a representative menu in the culture of eating out among co-workers in Korea is Korean-style indoor barbecue. Because the entire country was devastated after the Korean War, Korea experienced a shortage of food, such as white rice and meat, until reaching the ranks of

Asian Tigers through rapid development. Therefore, older generations who went through that period of time still show a tendency to have a positive perception of meat. Prices of meat vary widely from chicken to pork to beef, depending on the supply and the quality. In particular, the highest-graded beef domestically produced is often considered the highest rank among the types of gifts exchanged during the holidays, just like the higher status of Japanese *wagyu.* Accordingly, high-quality beef usually appears on special days when having important guests, and pork and chicken are more commonly found in everyday dining.

Since chicken is affordable and is recognised as a healthy food, it is largely consumed on the hottest days, both nationally in Korea and locally in Changsin-dong. For instance, on Bok Days, the hottest three days of summer in Korea, my research participants usually have something considered good for rejuvenating and increasing stamina, such as chicken. On the first day of the hottest season, *cho-bok* (초복, 初伏),[14] workers at Naeng-guel Fashion had traditional Korean chicken stew for lunch. Young-joo also invited a designer, who placed orders at Naeng-guel Fashion, to have the chicken stew together. Likewise, sharing food creates an opportunity to create a more relaxed atmosphere in a formal relationship, thereby softening up and strengthening the relationship. As 'to eat' (*muk-da*) and 'rice' (*bob*) frequently appear in greetings and daily conversations in Changsin-dong, my research participants build a sense of affection, namely, *jeong,* through gifting and sharing food as a morale-boosting medium. Therefore, employees reciprocate the generosity of their employers through emotional and social aspects in the invisible and intangible sphere, ultimately for better quality work, rather than a return that is equivalent to the food provided. The donors who offer food do not expect a perfectly symmetrical return either, as it is a tool for improving emotional ties and relieving various tensions, and this convivial atmosphere varies according to seasonal eating practices.

As for the popular Korean style pork barbeque, because it takes longer than usual to grill, informal conversations and jokes are exchanged among co-workers of the workshops while

[14] There are three *bok* days, which means the three hottest days in summer based on the lunar calendar. During *bok* days, people usually have traditional Korean chicken stew, called *sam-gye-tang* (삼계탕), as a convivial eating practice to arouse their appetite and fortify themselves against the hot weather.

grilling and watching it together. More specifically, pork belly is the most commonly consumed form of indoor barbecue, and usually people grill it themselves at a table, which is designed to hold charcoal in the middle in a self-grilling system that causes people to participate in the processes of both preparing and eating the food. The grilled meat is often eaten in the form of *ssam*, which means a wrap in vegetables such as lettuce and sesame leaves, and this also can be seen as a common practice in which to participate, touch, and enjoy food together. In addition to the indoor barbecue and *ssam*, when rice balls are ordered for a side dish, one person wears disposable gloves and mixes the rice to form it into small balls to be easily eaten by others. Duck stew, which is considered much more precious than chicken, it is not served as a fully cooked form from the kitchen. Rather, the roughly cooked duck is served and further boiled on the portable gas stove in the centre of the table for about 10 minutes, while people sit around and have a conversation until the food is ready. Then, all of the participants enjoy the stew from the common pot, just like a Chinese hot pot. Through the process, people prepare, watch, and share the food together and thereby strengthen social ties by enjoying a longer period of time to talk and have a meal.

The role of commensality in strengthening social bonds was often observed when an employer encouraged his/her employees by creating an informal, comfortable, and family-like atmosphere in dining with a more special meal than the usual, rather than simply offering a meal for employees. One day, Byung-choon, the owner of Soojin Apparel, bought packs of ready-to-cook, stir-fried spicy pork at a local butcher shop for dinner. He states:

> Because the restaurant food is boring, and because the weather is very hot, I have no appetite lately. So, I just wanted to share it [with the sewing and cutting practitioners at my workshop], as meat raises people's appetite.

He washed utensils in the men's restroom, began to make the spicy stir-fried pork in two large pots, and seasoned them by adding red pepper powder. Around 6 pm, sewing practitioners began to gather in the cutting area and placed rice, soup, spoons, chopsticks, and side dishes. Because there were few chairs, women stood around the table, and men sat on the table. While eating together, they shared the meat Byung-choon had made, side dishes, and drinks. Maybe because of the meat and alcohol, the overall atmosphere was convivial, with jokes and funny stories shared.



Figure 3.8. Sewing and cutting practitioners sharing dishes for dinner in the cutting space at Soojin Apparel.



Figure 3.9. Cooking utensils organised in the area in front of the restroom at Soojin Apparel.

The sewing people show considerable affection for food, and this may be linked to the fact that food culture has developed the most in Jeolla-do, a Southwest region with fertile soil and warm weather in Korea, as most of the sewing people in Changsin-dong are from Jeolla-do. During busy times, Sook-ja prepares all three meals from morning to evening at her workshop for her husband and son. According to Sook-ja, she usually cooks with affection, thinking that it is food eaten by her family. Under the motto of 'Let's eat properly even for a meal', she said, 'I am not interested in anything else. I am only thinking about what to eat. What to eat each day is my biggest concern,' by talking about the joy of eating (*muk-neun jae-mi* 먹는 재미). Of course, when she felt tired or annoyed by something (or her family), she sometimes made a declaration that she would skip cooking and serving a meal, but in general, she enjoys cooking and sharing it with others beyond her own joy of eating. In so doing, Sook-ja always suggested that I could visit her workshop to have a meal together when I was in the neighbourhood:

> Whenever you come to this neighbourhood, come over and eat together. Because we always cook, it is no pressure on us. We have all meals here every day. We don't dislike [it] when someone comes and eats with us because we are just [the] three of us. Just come comfortably.

Sook-ja's generosity may also be related to her hospitality and the concept of *generous giving* addressed earlier. When a delivery man comes, she often gives him a drink in a small bottle, or when her friend or her husband's friend visits, she gives him a cup of instant coffee or mulberry juice, depending on the intimacy or importance of the relationship. Such an act of giving a drink to visitors can be seen as an act of *generous giving*, with the feeling of compassion and support for the delivery man, and without expectation of other returns. At the same time, again, giving different kinds of drinks or snacks to her friends might not be 'completely pure' because it is based on complex relationships with others related to herself and her family. Then, it might be relevant to the concept of hospitality, much like Munn's (1986) claim that the act of giving food is the criterion for producing a positive value, which is regarded as the basic form of generosity, and that the act of giving food creates solidarity and obligation, in accordance with gender principles in the transformative process. Similarly, Bille (2017) views local hospitality practices as central to Bedouin culture, in relation to morality, social responsibility, which can be linked to Korean community sentiment, *jeong,* in Changsin-dong. It can be exemplified not only in Sook-ja's case, but also in the cases of Joong-wan, Byung-choon, Sang-yong, and many other

research participants offering a cup of instant coffee whenever I visited their workshops. Much like Chee-Beng's (2015) indication of the expression of hospitality, care and love, and the value of relationships in commensality, my research participants non-verbally articulate their sense of care and hospitality through sharing and enjoying food together.

Koreans often call this sense of hospitality and care for others *jeong* (情), which is similar to the English expressions a sense of attachment, community sentiment, and emotional bonding, and can be Romanised as *Cheong, Jung* or *Qing*. According to Mi-suk Ko (2010), *jeong* is a sentiment of care, attachment, and affection for one another, as well as an accumulated social bond that is naturally created and experienced over a lengthy period of time and frequent encounters with people, objects, animals, and environments related to various elements, such as human relations, virtues, mindsets, actions, and so forth. Along with the altruistic and Confucian spirit, having *jeong* has long been pursued in Korean society as an ideal value for human beings. No matter how intellectually good people may be, if they have no *jeong* with others, they tend to be considered inhuman. On the other hand, *jeong* has been recognised as an aftermath of the old era, which represents the fundamental factors of collectivism and family egoism problems, corruption, and irrationality (Ko 2010: 132). This is because if *jeong* is attached to the subject in a positive way, it can be an important emotional medium to maintain society at large. Yet, at the same time, if it too much weighs on personal connections, people may lose their objectivity and universal morality, which may eventually result in another form of social exclusion.

Ko (2014) further explains that the concept of *jeong* contains the ideal and ethical values pursued by Korean society, but it is disappearing due to the fact that *jeong* may be considered less rational and objective in the current era. This is also because in the process of placing importance on a relationship, or attachment or thoughtful consideration for others, there may be cases in which self-sacrifice or sacrifice of the other party results, with no proper separation between the self and others (ibid.). Following this, it is true that the *jeong* culture is disappearing these days because of individualism, much like most other urban communities have experienced narrower local networks (see Daniels 2009). Just as community sentiments are fading in urban spaces, my research participants often worry that community sentiment is vanishing entirely. Sook-ja articulates:

> Before time, even though there was little food, we shared even a bean[15]… But now, people are impersonal. People lost *jeong*… People are losing community sentiments these days. Don't you think it looks good when a person has a humane touch? People don't have touches of humanity these days.

Likewise, my research participants often mention the fading form of *jeong,* which may be due to the spread of individualism, namely, a lack of affection towards others, like passing by neighbours without greeting them, or not knowing one another's names compared to old times. In a conversation between Young-joo and her friend, she also expressed regret over the disappearance of this affection towards neighbours, illustrating nostalgia for the past, when people easily shared even small things with others. A friend of Young-soo says:

> In the past, when I was on my way after work, there were a lot of options [to have supper or drinks with sewing friends] here and there. Everyone easily treated others [well] back then, but now, it's really rare. Nowadays, people [would] rather try to freeload. Haha.

While commuting to Changsin-dong by the subway during my fieldwork, I frequently observed that the younger generation naturally gave their seats to the elderly or pregnant women, who are usually regarded as 'the old and the weak' (*no-yak-ja* 노약자). Such fleeting moments of accepting social promises and responsibilities could be seen as traces of *jeong* that have survived this transitional period. On the other hand, when it comes to the opposite phenomenon, some people pretend not to see that person or pretend to sleep and do not give away their seats when a person seems vaguely old or weak, and this could also be seen as the current state of the present era of disappearing humanity. In any case, yielding one's seat may stem from a sense of duty, affection, or social responsibility emanating from the eyes of others, but it still survives under the name of the virtue of concession (*yang-bo-ui mi-deok* 양보의 미덕).

Of course, the dense population in Seoul, which comprises one-fifth of Korea's population, gave birth to the construction of large apartment complexes and thereby the desolate townscape. As a result, just like many other cities, people are indifferent towards their

[15] The Korean saying 'sharing even a bean' (*kong han jjok-do na-nueo muk-nuen-da* 콩 한 쪽도 나눠 먹는다) demonstrates the importance of sharing in company with the value of food, even with a small portion. The connotated meaning is similar to the English phrase 'sharing is caring'.

neighbours and do not even know their names. Older generations often reminisce about the past, lamenting the disappearance of greetings among neighbours in Seoul, and such an individualistic tendency in urban spaces has not escaped Changsin-dong. Compared to a few decades ago, when the sewing people were more friendly and informal, with a more unconditional form of sharing with neighbours, this friendliness is growing dimmer, and the size of group gatherings is decreasing. It is also true that competition is intensifying under the weight of increasingly harsh socio-economic changes, and there is a growing tendency to be afraid to step forward when something happens to neighbours in an unreliable (*mit-eul soo up-neun*) atmosphere.

Nonetheless, when Dong-gue shared some food with elderly ladies in a gazebo and one of them questioned her free gifts, asking if Dong-gue would take responsibility when they got indigestion after eating the food Dong-gue had shared, she did not stop sharing food and instead replaced the items with other, more digestible foods. *Jeong* does not merely disappear, but rather, it certainly exists culturally, normatively, and habitually in Koreans' daily lives. As people in Changsin-dong connect with one another and socialise through gifting, both forms of vanishing and existing *jeong* were captured in a number of cases. Although the scope of gifting and sharing *jeong* has narrowed, Koreans still give gifts, practice unconditional sharing, and make cash transactions based on trust. In this way, *jeong*, trust, and interdependence are still a big part of their daily lives, and the degree of *jeong* is relational, as intergenerational differences are always interwoven in a society.

So far, I have examined how the daily practice of gift-giving pervades the Changsin-dong sewing industrial community and urban Korea at large. The act of handing over a seat to strangers in public transportation under the name of 'concession', and that of sharing food and facemasks with elderly passers-by in the name of *jeong,* is a community sentiment that is existing and simultaneously disappearing from urban space, since it has been contested in relation to the controversial existence of Confucianism. This complicated and contradictory sociality of sharing, with both generous and self-interested hallmarks, is closely related to how individuals construct, reconstruct, and continue social relationships in a particular society. In particular, the rural-like Changsin-dong community illustrates the role of the gift economy beyond materialistic interest within the capitalist sewing industry.

Depending on the purpose of the gift and the degree of reciprocity, I have divided the diverse forms of gift-giving practices into three principles: (1) *cash exchange,* which is obligatory and requires symmetric return; (2) *courteous gifting,* which is purposeful and conditional to some extent, but does not require symmetric and material return; and (3) *generous giving,* which is unconditional with no expectation of return. These practices of giving and reciprocating contribute to the sociality of sharing in the Changsin-dong community, and the gift-giving practice is either a pleasant experience or a burden based on its complexity and ambiguity, because each person has a different depth of *jeong* depending on his/her counterpart. Under the practices of sharing, giving, and reciprocating, common interest, a sense of attachment, and a sense of care for others can be expressed through unarticulated material things, beyond verbal interactions. In so doing, these practices sometimes provoke tensions and frictions, and thereby worsen relationships if there is no proper return.

Many anthropological studies have illustrated the limitations of 'pure gift' in reality by introducing cases of gift-giving that result in the obligation of reciprocity and the reluctance to throw a gift away. However, the joy of sharing and self-satisfaction derived from giving unconditional gifts (like donations) cannot be neglected in our trivial daily lives. This unconditional *generous giving* is not simply troublesome gift-giving, but is, rather, a means of fulfilling individuals' pride, social responsibility, altruistic mind, gifting etiquette, mental well-being, and sense of reward of the donor that might be inculcated by Confucian social atmospheres. As Sook-ja and Dong-gue gain enjoyment and self-satisfaction through unconditional, disinterested giving, they sit in front of the sewing machine again to make trousers and facemasks for such sharing when they are not busy with their work. It may not be a mere sense of self-satisfaction fulfilled by the act of helping, but a form of confirming that they are of help to someone, and thereby feel their own presence through it. This is because people feel empty and inactive when they lose their own roles, even in a small setting, believing 'I am not useful'. This act of finding their presence by doing what they can in their respective place may be seen as conditional for oneself to gain self-satisfaction, even though it does not take a conditional form for others. Yet, the point is, no matter whether they are generous or self-interested, I seek to reveal that the law of exchange and the sociality of sharing, which were active in the past, or in the rural era, remain in this urban industrial community. Although many participants in my research see that the

community sentiment *jeong* and sociality of 'sharing' (*na-noom* 나눔) are disappearing these days, donating, giving, and sharing food still work as mediums in strengthening neighbourhood bonds and supporting the local network.

In addition, although they may be less 'pure' forms than the practice of *generous giving*, both *courteous gifting* and *cash exchange*, which are somewhat purposeful and more complex, play significant roles in the continuity and renewal of relationships. As many contemporary anthropological studies have shown, it is important to be aware of the burden of reciprocity and the reluctance of removal. Just as Daniels' (2010) research participants preferred easily used-up things, such as food, I also observed the responses in my research participants, who favoured consumables such as toilet paper and food gifts. Meanwhile, it also has been seen that the form and size of the gift were easily adjusted depending on socio-economic conditions, as they have a variable nature in accordance with social, economic, and temporal circumstances. This has been demonstrated by a significant decrease in the number of gifts presented on Lunar New Year's Day and Chuseok was captured due to the continued economic downturn and COVID-19, which in turn influenced the local economy. Thus, the practice of gift-giving should be considered comprehensively, with subtle relationships between individuals as well as socio-economic conditions of the time. Therefore, their practices of gift-giving are deeply ingrained in everyday life, and constantly occur somewhere in-between affection and competition, in-between social and monetary values, intertwined with both gifts and capitalist economies. Indeed, just as practices of courteous gifting still expect reciprocal obligations or another type of return, like high-quality sewing work for a design company, and being a patron at a local restaurant, gift-giving represents subtle and complex relationships in the community. Furthermore, much like many neighbouring workshop owners visited Young-joo's new place to celebrate her move-in and see her business, unarticulated surveillance also coexists among locals. This interdependent sociality, therefore, serves in a positive way to sustain their locality and economy and in a negative way to compete with one another in the sewing community.

3.4. ‘Neighbour Cousins’ versus Local Surveillance

This neighbourhood reeks of the humane, literally.

– Young-joo

In the earlier sections in this chapter, I have discussed how Changsin-dong’s sewing and cutting workers have independent, yet interdependent relationships and how they maintain a close-knit network, especially through gift-giving practices. Sometimes, they form relationships while taking care of their own benefits, and sometimes, they practice unconditional sharing. Through such sharing practices, different interests again arise, and as a result of such interests, they may be wary of one another. No matter whether it is a superficially intimate, yet hostile relationship, or a genuinely concerning relationship, it is clear that their sociality is based on a more closely connected network when compared to the intimacy found in many other urban communities. Although the sewing people live under different roofs, they have been associated with one another along a fence called Changsin-dong’s sewing industry, tying them together in both advantageous and dis-advantageous ways at the same time. Since they have been in this relationship for more than half of their lives, this neighbourhood represents a friendly and somewhat closed framework, rather than the stark and cold atmospheres of cities in general.

In this modern era, as networks are divided into broader categories, such as work, interests, and education beyond the scope of family units, it is common in Changsin-dong to interact with neighbours in the same socio-economic sector rather than in kinship relationships. In Korea, there is a saying that a close neighbour is better than a distant cousin, and, in a similar vein, the phrase *ie-ut sa-chon* (neighbour cousins), which means close neighbours like cousins, was frequently captured during the course of my fieldwork. In this rural-like urban community, neighbours in such a small village-like district who are closely connected are the epitome of neighbour cousins. In the context of relationships that become estranged between relatives and instead remain closer among neighbours, Sook-ja calls her neighbours ‘neighbour cousins’.

> Relatives don't often meet if all older generations passed away. When my mother was alive, families and relatives used to meet on birthdays, memorial days, and holidays, but now, as she died, and as we have no older generation, we really don't meet each other. So, I understand why people are called *ie-ut sa-chon*.

Yet, as we have so far dealt with contradictory social relationships in the community, the phrase *ie-ut sa-chon* indeed implies ambivalence as well.

Interestingly, kinship terminology is often used casually at work to create a family-like social (and temporal) setting, and to ensure smooth negotiations. The most frequently used term is the title, such as sister (*un-ni*, which is usually used by females), brother (*op-pa*, which normally is used by a female when calling an older brother or an older male friend in the same generation), uncle (*sam-chon*), and aunt (*ie-mo*), not only in Changsin-dong sewing work-shops, but also in the entire Dongdaemun market.[16] When roaming around markets in the Dongdaemun area, terms such as 'sister' and 'uncle' are normally used even between strangers, when expressing intimacy and treating an interlocutor in a friendly manner in order to cut prices, ask about requirements, and smoothly negotiate. In other words, kinship terminology is used as a tool for asking specific demands, which may not be perfectly equal to each individual. As such, within the sewing workshops, family-like atmospheres, daily fictions, and complexities that are simultaneously symmetric and unequal are intermingled across the market.

Being closer than their cousins, the neighbours know more about one another than their respective families, and hence, there are minor disagreements and invisible competition, like frequent, minor family troubles. Besides, rumours move rapidly, as it is a close and small society. Such seemingly unexposed competitiveness and rapid rumours have produced a social atmosphere in which they are good at watching and checking one another, and such invisible competition and subtle checks can be observed even in playful conversations between 'good neighbours', namely, *ie-ut sa-chon*. When Young-joo bumped

[16] The use of these kinship terms in non-kinship contexts, in fact, is somewhat common across Korea, especially when a person intends to call an interlocutor to intimately elevate him/her. The Korean language has a very strict hierarchical linguistic system, so it is a form of social norm that people call another person by a higher title if the title is unclear when seeing new persons. In formal cases, people often use 'teacher' (*sun-saeng-nim* 선생님), whereas such kinship terminology is usually used as a sign of intimacy or familiarity.

into Tae-sam, the chief garment-cutter of a neighbouring workshop, on the street, exchanges involving work and watching each other could both be seen in conversations carried by playful greetings.

> Young-joo: Does your workshop have a lot of work these days? Introduce me to a [design] company. I'm dying these days. What's wrong with us this year?
>
> Tae-sam: I know. I'll give [some orders] to you if we have plenty of them. I actually asked fabric [wholesale] stores to be introduced to some larger [design] companies, since sales staff [of wholesale stores] know a lot of design companies. We're having a hard time, too.
>
> Young-joo: Yeah. The fabric wholesale stores know each other a lot. Anyway, if there's anything left, please drop it off to me.
>
> Tae-sam: Alright, I got it.

As this conversation indicates, it is common to ask about each other's work in curious and envious forms in a sense. The phrase 'Does your workshop have a lot of work these days?' is one of the most common greetings among sewing practitioners, as they continuously check on each other's business circumstances.

In this manner, their web-like 'organic' relationships serve as powerful local surveillance. There are a lot of practices of caring, identifying, checking, and even watching daily situations among the neighbours, and there are some extraordinary ways that my research participants care, assume, and judge day-to-day conditions of their neighbouring workshops. When my research participants pass by other workshops or look out the window, non-human and non-verbal aspects are salient mediums in terms of local surveillance, especially regarding the quantity of work. Because sewing and cutting practitioners spend most of their time working in their workshop spaces, they have few chances to talk face to face. During the brief periods when they are off work, take short breaks to smoke, take about 30-minute lunches and dinners, or take time to do personal work before and after lunch or dinner, they look around the neighbourhood, not only through daily conversations, but also through non-human and non-verbal mediums.

More specifically, when they walk along the street, they see piles of garbage bags lying in front of a workshop and measure how much cloth the workshop cut that day. A huge number of garbage bags, which can be overlooked or considered messy by outsiders, is a measure of unspoken evaluation among them, and to some extent, the more garbage bags a workshop disposes of, the more jealous sewing workers of other workshops become, just as one of the most frequent questions I have heard during my fieldwork was 'Is the [neighbouring] workshop busy these days?'



Figure 3.10. Garbage bags filled with cut cloth in front of Soojin Apparel.

Such kind of non-verbal, non-human measuring of others' circumstances sometimes bring about misunderstandings between neighbours, which may intensify tensions among them. The sensory, non-human observation can be exemplified in the conversation between Soon-sun and Sook-ja on the street.

> Soon-sun: Look at this. It's all closed, as all the lights are off. The couple [working at a neighbouring workshop] hasn't been here for weeks because they haven't had any work. There's no work here either (pointing to another two-storey building with the lights off).
>
> Sook-ja: There should be a lot of motorcycles here. Motorcycles typically are lined up at this time, but it's empty now. That's how little work there is.



Figure 3.11. Rolls of fabric on the way for delivery via motorcycle courier.

Not only the amount of garbage bags, but also how many motorcycles are passing by, how many rolls of fabric the motorcycles are carrying, and at which workshop the motorcycles stop can be used to judge the current status of other workshops. The recent situations of one another, as identified by various mediums, are sometimes told as a joke when people meet each other on the street by chance. One day, while making coffee, Young-joo opened the window and looked outside and talked about a motorcycle passing by her workshop. ‘Oh, where are all those fabrics going? Which workshop is it?’ Looking at the motorcycle through the window, she tracked where it went and where it was ordered from. Soon, she figured out the workshop where the motorcycle stopped. ‘Oh, the owner of that workshop told me that they weren’t working. But [they were actually busy!]’ Joong-wan, the chief tailor at Naeng-guel Fashion, added to Young-joo’s observation. ‘I guess they were doing it with craftsmanship. That’s why clothes they made are very neat, [and that is why they have lots of work.]’

Such local surveillance and invisible competition may be possible because of the physical feature of Changsin-dong’s alleyway, which is filled with workshops on both sides of the long alley, as well as the characteristics of the main street, which is busy with pedestrians

and motorcycles, rather than cars. For example, in the countless number of apartment complexes located in Seoul, and even in areas where small houses are concentrated, most residents rarely pass through one particular street. The scope of the ‘main street’ has expanded in modern times, primarily due to the construction of other roads, and their importance is gradually fading. However, on the main street of Changsin-dong, which is the most accessible street across Changsin-dong and busy with pedestrians and motorcycles because of its narrowness, people can see from the bottom to the top of the street at a glance, so it is easy to discern where a motorcycle stops and how much cloth it carries.

Despite their static and less mobile daily routines, and despite being of an age when one does not use a smartphone very often, word of a series of events and even minor rumours in the neighbourhood, spread quickly and act as a form of local surveillance. There are times when there is not much work, and on these occasions, they visit one another’s workshops to catch up in person and share some updates. It is very often said by my research participants that ‘We all know what’s going on in this neighbourhood. There’s nothing we don’t know.’ This can be found in Brandt’s (1971) description of conflicts and malintegration in a Korean fishing and farming village, in which ‘[d]istrust, envy, and conflict are plentiful, although… they seemed a less deeply rooted part of individual personality than in the other societies where I have lived (1971: 185).’ In the meanwhile, the community ethic and the collective orientation of the village presuppose acquiescence to settled agreements and conformity to cooperative norms and thereby sometimes isolate ‘individualistic’ goals (Brandt 1971). Similarly, Changsin-dong is very closely connected through work in the respective sewing spaces, and people come to know one another, with frequent checks of whether the lights are on, whether steam from the irons is coming out, and even the sounds of conversation from other sewing workshops, to see what is going on in their neighbouring workshops and whether there is much work for them.



Figure 3.12. ‘647 Street’, from which people can see all buildings, from top to bottom.

Much like Daniels' (2010) case in Japanese homes, in which Japanese women tend to judge if female neighbours are fulfilling their roles at home and taking good care of their families, largely seen through hanging out laundry and disposing of garbage, in Changsin-dong, neighbours view one another's recent states and updates through piles of trash bags, motorcycles loaded with cloth, lights, and steam from their workshops. Specifically, these non-human and non-verbal elements are often captured in the winter, when workshops close their doors and windows. Because people often work with windows (or doors) open in the spring and summer, they can directly see their neighbours working and easily start conversations with them. In winter, by contrast, all entrance doors and windows are closed while working, and people rely more heavily on non-verbal aspects, such as steam from the irons, which can serve to identify how many people worked in a workshop on a given day, as well as how much work they had. Such non-verbal and non-human elements are critical in neighbourhood surveillance, and they may be differently examined depending on temporal factors. Therefore, through tight nets, led by a few local mainstays, sewing-related workers rely on, compete with, watch each other, and create synergy effects through both organic and rival relationships.

3.5. Tensions, Frictions, and Negotiations in Sewing Workshops

As mentioned in the first section in this chapter, mainstream gatherings, like the 647 Gathering, are primarily composed of executives of the Seoul Garment Sewing Co-operative in the lower neighbourhood, and people mingle in the form of several small groups in the union. Even within the union, which is called Sewing Union People (*bong-jae jo-hap sa-ram-deul*), those who are not active in the cooperative often seem to be separate from others. Because the president of the local cooperative plays a role as a local mainstay, people surrounding the president may hear and receive updates about various news items relatively quickly, whereas those who are not close to him may be relatively alienated. For example, according to the people in the lower neighbourhood, the upper neighbourhood people are not interested in local affairs and only care about their jobs because of their economic challenges. In fact, useful information, like government projects

and subsidies, is often not delivered to those who are in the upper neighbourhood, and consequently, the people in the upper neighbourhood do not even know how many subsidies are provided by the local government.

In a park at the top of the neighbourhood, moreover, where various local events were held to revitalise the region – led by the Seoul Metropolitan Government or local organisations – local events exhibit significantly lower participation by people in the lower neighbourhood. People in the lower neighbourhood find it hard to attend the events in the park because they work from Monday morning to Saturday afternoon, and because they are also not interested in events held in the upper neighbourhood. When I ask my research participants about local events, they normally say, 'I don't go all the way up [to] the upper neighbourhood. It's too steep there.' Or, 'I heard there was something happening there, but I didn't have much time to go.' I have observed four different sewing workshops using snowball sampling methods, and three of them are in the lower neighbourhood and are actively related to the sewing union as executives of the local cooperative, while the only other one is a subcontractor located in between the upper and lower neighbourhoods. Particularly considering what Dong-gue said (who lives in the middle point of the neighbourhood), there is invisible but evident segregation between the lower and the upper neighbourhoods. Dong-gue elaborates:

> I don't think people here have that much sense of community than is seen. Fast news and updates are only for people like my brother-in-law, Soon-sun. The people who belong to the sewing union are kind of active people in this neighbourhood, while others who are not involved in the cooperative have no idea about local affairs at all. Even I myself hardly hear about some benefits and governmental subsidies going around this neighbourhood. Also, maybe they're not that interested in local affairs either, so they don't tell people. That's why people who don't get involved in the sewing cooperative have no idea about local news and various benefits. When those active people hear something, it would be good to share it with [their subcontractors] related to them, like "Oh, this is going to happen this time." But they only share the updates and information with the neighbouring workshops [in the lower neighbourhood, too], or they don't even [apply for governmental support]. That is why I don't think people here have much sense of community, and care about the importance of the community as a whole… These things are the limitations of the sewing people, who are self-made. People like us who have their own techniques, who don't ask others for help, and who only lead a life by themselves for a living tend to have much pride. That is why people tend not to ask [for] others' help... I suppose that

> most self-made people who live on their own as technicians are like that… Though, there is [a positive aspect] regarding the community as well. Since people know each other and everyone knows everyone, there must be things like letting a person off or condoning something like cigarettes disposed of on the street.

The subtle distinction between the mainstream and the non-mainstream while working in the same district may create a structure that appears easy to relate with a low threshold but is difficult to closely examine especially for the people in the upper neighbourhood, much like a glass wall, which seemingly looks transparent without barriers but is actually hard to cross. Sharing information within a narrow range of small mainstream groups may lead to a sense of alienation for the upper neighbourhood, or a lack of opportunities to realise benefits. If this phenomenon persists, sewing workshops in the upper neighbourhood might be difficult to sustain when the scope of the local economy shrinks due to economic decline. Economic conditions that are difficult for even larger workshops to withstand, especially the deepened economic crisis in recent years, bring structural and social problems that sewing workshops in the upper neighbourhood, already marginalised in the community, will find difficult to survive on their own.

Of course, that does not mean that the people in the lower neighbourhood intentionally alienate or ignore the upper neighbourhood people. The president of the sewing union and the mainstream lower neighbourhood people are not able to take care of everyone. Yet, enhancing social ties through selling and buying within the cooperative inevitably excludes those who are not involved in the cooperative, just as Yan (1996) depicts the implicit role of the gift in creating and continuing *guanxi* in Chinese society. Further, it is also true that the systematic characteristic of subcontracting may cause people in the upper neighbourhood to recognise and follow the lower neighbourhood people, since they are subcontracted with the lower neighbourhood people. The subcontracted people have to complete their work according to their main workshops' schedules; otherwise, they may lose their jobs. (Still, constructing a new relationship should be an annoying and stressful matter, even though there are tons of alternative workshops, making it relatively easy to find another main workshop to work with.) It is also true that the logic of unintended and invisible power clearly exists within the subcontracting system, and that it is somewhat far-fetched to consider one another in an unconditionally comfortable manner, like a *family*. In practice,

there are numerous forms of tension within the subcontracting system in everyday life, just as Bestor (1989) argues that politics are always intermingled throughout the social life of a neighbourhood.

For example, Dong-gue is a very active participant in various events in the neighbourhood, but she cannot easily and freely leave her home from morning to afternoon. This is because work comes in without notice in the morning, at lunch, or even late in the evening, due to the 24-hour production cycle in Changsin-dong. In this rapid production system, which produces clothes in one day, it is generally accepted that a design company orders a certain quantity of an item from a sewing workshop (normally in the morning) by immediately sending the fabric from the Dongdaemun Fabric Wholesale Market once the design has been confirmed by the owner of the design company. Therefore, little work is scheduled a few days in advance, and the main sewing workshops rarely tell subcontractors the exact schedule of work beforehand, as they even do not know the exact timing in terms of when a design company is going to order. This is because it is very common for some items scheduled for production to be cancelled, and for other items that were not planned to be suddenly added on to an order, according to this very flexible, changeable, and fashion-conscious market.

Based on orders received by design companies in the morning, garment cutters in larger workshops cut the fabric, and owners of the main workshops allocate the cut pieces to several subcontractors. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate the daily schedule. Because of this very flexible and unpredictable market, Dong-gue, who works as a subcontractor, usually remains in her house to wait for daily work, and when she has another plan, she prefers areas within a short distance of home. When her husband receives a call from their main workshop regarding the daily order while she is out, Dong-gue immediately returns home to complete the work and meet the larger workshop's schedule. She complains:

> It would be great if they let me know [the schedule] in advance. I always wait for work. If I go out for a while, the work always comes in, and I have to come back home right away to work. What can I do? We just suit them.

Although Dong-gue's brother-in-law introduced Dong-gue to his friend, the owner of a larger workshop, which seemingly sounds like Dong-gue and the larger workshop are

equals, in fact, within the subcontracting system, unavoidable power relationships are created in their everyday lives. Since the rapid production system has features that make it easier for the larger workshops to change their subcontractors if they are not satisfied, the subcontractors are compelled to meet the schedule and the requisite quality. This is primarily attributable to the numerous supplies of substitutional sewing workshops in Changsin-dong.

On the other hand, interestingly, the larger workshops do not simply overpower subcontractors. When a subcontractor makes a mistake, often the main workshop reworks the poorly sewn part instead of complaining to the subcontractor and asking them to repair the pieces of clothing. For example, Sook-ja often rips off the poorly sewn part and reworks it to make it right. Even though she is not always satisfied with the work of one of her subcontractors, she needs to keep them because she has to rely on the subcontractors when she suddenly gets a lot of work and becomes short-handed. One day, Sook-ja complained when she noticed crooked stitches on the pockets of trousers sewn by one of her subcontractors.

> No, it was supposed to be straight and tidy, but the subcontractor did it in a mess like this. Fortunately, the design company passed it, but still, it's very uncomfortable for me to release such clothes because I don't work like that, unprofessional. It has to be in a straight line, but they didn't sew it right. So, I can't give them work without any concerns. How can I give them work if they make such a mess? But when I'm short-handed, I'm in a disadvantageous position, so I try to gently ask them to work together.

Soon after, Sook-ja was introduced to another 'decent' (*guen-chan-eun*) workshop, which has 'neat' (*ggal-ggeum-ha*) and 'meticulous' (*ggom-ggom-han*) sewing techniques, and seeing their sewing skills, she wanted to work with them more. Even when she does not receive much work from design companies, she often gives a certain portion of work to her subcontractors, rather than working by herself, in order to provide a sense of economic and psychological stability to them. By handing out even a little work to her subcontractors, she seeks to maintain the relationship to keep them for busy seasons. In so doing, through this act of allocating a certain amount of work, Sook-ja hopes to prevent her subcontractors from coming dependent on other workshops. This is because small sewing workshops can (relatively) easily find another main workshop to work with, since there are plenty of

substitutional larger workshops. Therefore, it is not always the case that main workshops dominate or overpower their subcontractors. Rather, they strive to work out the order amicably to meet their deadlines with certain degrees of tensions, frictions, and negotiations. Joong-wan, the chief tailor at Naeng-guel Fashion, states:

> I am not that educated, but I think the most important thing in our lives is to live happily. We don't need to live a fidgety life, struggling with trivial matters. When we take issue with others, we would always regret it if we argued too vigorously. No matter how we react [to the counterpart], there isn't much difference. [Keeping my own thoughts] is not that important. Even when conflicting with someone at work, it would make us feel awkward and uncomfortable with each other. Others also should have something they don't like about me, but they also bear it, I think. Since we are inside of the same fence, we just don't express [displeasure much].

When it comes to mistakes by subcontractors, the main workshops sometimes send back poorly sewn pieces to subcontractors to fix their mistakes, but in some cases, much like Sook-ja's, the main workshops fix them because of ambiguous and intricate situations that might appear as if they are being too harsh or picky. (There are generally more mistakes from subcontractors than main workshops, because the main workshops complete sample work with designers, so they know the exact process and the correct way of working, while subcontractors only work referring to finished sample clothes.) As such, they depend upon each other, and at the same time, they walk on eggshells with a certain degree of tension while working together. In fact, these kinds of tensions were frequently observed not only in relationships between main and subcontracted workshops, but also in relationships between sewing workshops and designers, between employers and employees, between family members, and between sewing people and other local residents.

The tension between designers and sewing workshops is plainly evident, as there are conflicts between designers' demands to make the design fancier and the labour cheaper, and sewing workshops' demands to make the working period longer and the labour pricier. One day, a designer of a men's clothing brand brought a sample of a trench coat to Naeng-guel Fashion and tried to discuss the unit price of labour and duration of cutting and sewing.

> Young-joo: You brought a beautiful outfit! But this is a difficult one to do the binding work on each seam. There are even buttons on the lining's inner side of each button. It requires a lot of work by hand, so the cost of labour should be high.

Designer: Can it be 20,000 won (around £13) each? For 80 pieces?

Young-joo: 20,000 won? That's ridiculously cheap. If we don't pay much attention to it, it easily gets scratches. And we do prefer sewing the lining and upper together, but it needs separate binding jobs on every seam, not sewing them together [it's too complicated to sew], so you have to give us 40,000 won (around £26) each.

Eventually, Young-joo turned down the designer's excessive demands to make quality clothes with extremely cheap labour.

After the negotiations broke down, the designer left to find another sewing workshop, and Young-joo complained once the designer left her workshop.

> No, they are insane, aren't they? They want 20,000 won for that quality coat. What do they think we're doing? Such a bully. My daughter looked it up and found that it was an expensive brand… The retail price is several hundred thousand won (over £100) [for each item]. But they are suggesting us 20,000 won (around £13) to make that kind of brand jacket even though they are selling it at such a high price. It doesn't make sense they are paying like 20,000 won for an item. The owner of the company is from the Marine Corps, apparently. That's why he is pushing his designers that way. That's why two designers quit there lately.

At the same time, Young-joo lamented the fact that she had to unavoidably receive unfair orders these days.

On another day, a designer from a different design company, one of the main clients of Naeng-guel Fashion, came to negotiate the unit price as well. Joong-wan proposed a design change to make the work easier, but the designer wanted to keep the design and decrease the cost of labour. From the designer's point of view, because the price of the fabric had recently increased, the unit price of the fabric rose, so the sewing cost should be lowered to the minimum. Joong-wan indicated that he was upset because the designer only cared about the price of the fabric, not the sewing and cutting workers' wages.

Joong-wan: Why don't you think about our cutting and sewing workers' situations? You just think that the fabric got pricier, not the cost of our work [which should be higher too]. Frankly speaking, I'm offering it with the lowest labour cost already.

Designer: No way, we finished talking about it last time, but you say it again. Isn't it better to have an additional order as the design gets prettier? Don't you think so?

Jung-wan: It's hard in reality.

Designer: Last time it was reordered. Shall I take this design out [to another sewing workshop] then?

In this way, the sewing market has become more competitive, and the price of labour in the sewing industry in Changsin-dong has remained the same as it was a decade ago. This is primarily due to the small batch production method, with many varieties and the inflow of cheap labour into the global market.

Until 10 years ago, there were many sewing jobs with relatively larger quantities and fewer designs, but recently, the number of designs has increased, with less than 100 pieces each. All of my research participants complain about it (less than 100 pieces for an item). Sook-ja states:

> I can't do those shorts [which are too complicated to sew with only a few quantities]. I am too busy to deal with them at the moment. The designer asked me for a discount for labour by saying that she would order large quantities, but she actually orders seven pieces or 10 pieces for an item. What can we do with such a small quantity of work? We are not a customising workshop.

Much like Sook-ja, Sook-ran also sent orders back to the client design company to hand over the work to another sewing workshop. Too many designs are too complicated to sew and require greater attention, as each design calls for different shapes and details. Likewise, sewing and cutting practitioners tend to prefer simple and familiar designs with large quantities, and these sewing people's preferences may have influenced their daily 'passive', 'inactive' attitudes towards something new, which will be discussed in greater detail later in the next chapter.

In addition to design and labour, the tension between designers and sewing workshops permeates their day-to-day work. This is exemplified by an anecdote arising from a mis-understanding regarding the size of fabric per piece of an item. This is called 'marking' (*ma-king* 마킹), and it is the placement of certain design patterns with a minimum loss of fabric. There was a misunderstanding because the specifications of the fabric were different from what the sewing workshop said and what the designer heard. The designer ordered rolls of fabric to fit 94 pieces of an item, but when Ji-pyo, the first son of Soon-sun and Sook-ja, counted the fabric before cutting, there were only 82 pieces in total. The incident

resulted in a bitter dispute between the sewing workshop and the designer, who attempted to further cut the labour cost, but it ended as Sook-ja refused it in a single stroke. Ji-pyo seems to accept some of these minor conflicts and the phenomenon of reacting sensitively to one another:

> I think people came to change and react in such a way to each other in order to survive in the market. Everyone seems to be more sensitive than ever because there is little work these days. I know it just by looking at garbage bags out there. When looking at the workshop in front of ours, there used to be more than 20 garbage bags in a day. That meant that the workshop used to cut more than a thousand pieces a day. But there are less than 10 garbage bags these days. That [big] workshop doesn't have that much work, so others' situations should be worse.

Excessive competition in the sewing labour market causes greater burdens and instability for individuals, which also creates more frequent friction. Once again, as Ji-pyo indicates, sewing workshops constantly clash with designers in attempting to reach agreement, and when a negotiation breaks down, designers turn contracts over to other sewing workshops in the neighbourhood. Consequently, the sewing people in Changsin-dong are competing to survive in the global labour market while constantly competing with one another and maintaining symbiotic relationships with neighbouring workshops at the same time.

On a more optimistic note surrounding the relationship between sewing workshops and designers, their relationships are not always sensitive and fragile. After a designer presented a customised birthday cake to Young-joo, Young-joo became very close with the designer, thinking of the designer as her daughter. The designer also came to share her personal concerns with Young-joo and sometimes invites Young-joo to her new house. The designer often has dinner at Young-joo's workshop and is acquainted with other sewing practitioners. Sook-ja also gets along well with a designer who has worked with her for more than seven years. The designer sends a box of sweet potatoes or a box of fruits as a gift for each holiday to maintain a good rapport with Sook-ja. Likewise, the practice of gift exchange plays a very important role in strengthening social bonds in their daily lives, but at the same time, as the word 'exchange' implies, there is clearly a burden on reciprocity, even in a different form, beyond monetary and economic scopes, as demonstrated in the discussion on gift-giving practices.

In addition to daily friction and negotiations between sewing workshops and designers, tensions between employers and employees are also unavoidable, as it can be found in almost every form of business. Soojin Apparel is the largest workshop I have observed, and is one of the largest workshops in the Changsin-dong neighbourhood. Usually, 20 to 30 people, including sewing and cutting practitioners, work in two different spaces. Because there are many people, the overall atmosphere is more formal than family-like, so conflicts between employers and employees were observed the most. Sook-ran works as a sewing practitioner and manages the workshop at the same time, as the married couple Sook-ran and Byung-choon are the owners of the workshop. Since Sook-ran knows precisely about the inconveniences faced when sewing, she monitors the cutting space on the lower ground floor to make sure the cutting work is done more efficiently and neatly.

For example, when attaching stiffeners on pockets or waistbands, it was decided to be a job for garment cutters because sewing workers were busy with other tasks at Soojin Apparel, which might include sewing workers' work in other workshops. These kinds of specific work arrangements vary slightly from one workshop to another, so there are ambiguities and related trivial frictions. In Soojin Apparel, garment cutters think that Sook-ran's request to do this work is unfair to them, as they are also busy. On the other hand, from Sook-ran's perspective, she needs to take care of the entire workshop, so she cannot satisfy all individual tastes. Sometimes, she explodes with rage she has accumulated when the garment cutters mistakenly cut the fabric.

> He cut thin fabric for the waistband. Phew, the waistband and the inside of the pocket of this design should be a fleece, but he just did it with thinner fabric because he misunderstood. That's why the total number of pieces of the item has dropped dramatically. I have to let them know every time they cut. They have to pay more attention and work out their own problems by themselves.

Sook-ran's husband, Byung-choon, is in charge of maintaining and repairing the entire workshop, while barely participating in practical matters involving sewing and cutting. He judges the situation from an overall management standpoint. One day, when they encountered the severe economic recession caused by COVID-19, Byung-choon decided

to reduce the cost of his workers' meals in order to cut operational costs to sustain the business. He demystifies:

> Our workshop offers everything. It's nothing if I earn well, but [it turned into a problem]. The total cost of meals is around 5 million won (around £3,200) a month. Not long ago, I used to pay for all the meals for the employees (around 25 to 30 workers). It didn't matter when I earned well, but as the business doesn't go well and goes into the red, I have to think that the expenditure on meals should be cut off because it's too much. When a sewing worker comes to work, it is unconditionally 5,000 won (around £3) if [he/she] has a meal. [But they usually have both lunch and dinner.] So, I made a rule that I would pay for a meal a day. It would be better if they skip the meal when work is not that busy, but some of them do not skip the meal at all. That is why I thought it wouldn't work. Then, I suggested that I would pay the half no matter they eat one or two meals a day, and they should pay another half. But soon, [as the situation got worse], I declared that I wouldn't pay for their meals any longer. Instead, I said that it would be okay if they quit. I am in deficit anyway, so I have no choice. When they come to work for sewing, they unconditionally make money [even when it is a smaller amount of money]. But for me, it's different. The cost of materials and entire maintenance, including meals, is quite high, like 40 to 50 million won (around £32,000). I received 100 million won (around £64,200) in loans last year, but I lost it all in a year… So, this year, I talked about our reality [to the workers]. They understood in the end because the economy is in very bad shape these days.

Like Byung-choon and his employees' consensus, the sewing people reach agreements, such as reducing food costs, and there are always minor conflicts and negotiations in everyday life according to different positions. What is clear, however, is that if trivial conflicts persist, the worker often moves to another workshop in Changsin-dong, which is often decided and executed in one day. This form of frequent changes of workplace illustrates how the entire sewing industry in Changsin-dong has dynamic fluidity within this neighbourhood.

Finally, I would like to look at frictions between the sewing people and other residents, which are primarily attributable to different interests in redevelopment-related issues. Like most parts of the world where redevelopment issues arise, local residents, especially landlords, aim to proceed with redevelopment to renovate old houses and raise housing prices. By contrast, tenants, like sewing people, want to freeze the monthly rent of their workshops to minimise spending to the hilt. If redevelopment is carried out in Changsin-dong, the sewing workshops must be moved out immediately, but sewing people do not

want their base to be shaken because they have already been settled for a long time, and have established their social and economic foundations in the neighbourhood. However, Seoul City and regional developers tend to overlook the complexities of real life, and instead promote Changsin-dong as a 'successful' case study of 'community-based' re-generation, while this political showcase is now contested by the rightist local government. Insufficient and superficial understanding of the neighbourhood have resulted in a lack of the proper role of a mediator between the lower and upper neighbourhoods, and between sewing people and other residents. These intertwined complexities and competing interests will be revisited in Chapter 5, which addresses the politics surrounding the neighbourhood.

In this section, I have explored tensions between the lower and the upper neighbourhoods, which are linked to relationships between larger, mainstream workshops and small, non-mainstream workshops, as well as daily frictions and negotiations between sewing work-shops and designers, and between employers and employees. Behind the scenes of the community, much like the discreteness between the lower and upper neighbourhoods, there are structural limitations that are not perfectly fair due to invisible glass walls between people and subcontracting systems. At the same time, just as Sook-ja passed over the mistakes from her subcontractor and reworked a poorly sewn piece, they often collide and conciliate in the form of a simultaneous tug-of-war and cooperation in order to attune and continue their socio-economic relationships. In so doing, each individual and the collective navigates to seek a better way in the light of daily struggles, constant negotiations, and endless endeavours to maintain symbiotic relationships. Their efforts to construct, reconstruct, and maintain relationships appear not only in a verbal form, but also in non-verbal and material forms. The gift economy, which is often seen in rural communities in particular, demonstrates that their relationship plays a pivotal role in social responsibilities, obligations, trust, and networking – beyond simple monetary relationships, in the industrial urban neighbourhood.

Much as many anthropologists deem Japan a 'vertical society' (see Brumann 2000), Korea can be seen as vertical, as the language itself has a strict hierarchical system. Changsin-dong's subcontracting industrial scheme also represents invisible vertical relationships among the locals, especially between the lower and upper neighbourhoods. In addition to

an analysis of the internal political and disproportionate relationships that anthropologists have pointed out, I have also explored the horizontal, interdependent, and mutual relationships that heavily support them. Since relationships cannot simply be vertical and, at the same time, purely horizontal, I have sought to examine ambivalent social relationships, that are ultimately mutual and dialectic, as well as the two sides of sociality within this community.

It is worth emphasising that the Korean cultural concept of *jeong* is not merely the positive sentiment of individuals. According to Kang (2010), thick *jeong* can be formulated depending on how strong the relationship has been cultivated through myriad intersections of trust, expectations, and disappointments.

> Our life and space are… the milieu of body, mental space of expectation, frustration, care, and indifference, and temporal space that requires us to practice patience with each other. Therefore, 'sharing a space' (*han gong-gan-eul na-noon-da*) does not simply mean that one space is bodily and physically occupied together but connotes 'sharing life' (*sarm-eul na-noon-da*). *Jeong* is built up while sharing life. (Kang 2010: 40, my translation)

Following this statement, it is natural that people, like Changsin-dong neighbours, feel more attached when they have lived, eaten, and suffered together through thick and thin. With the *jeong* accumulated through the good and bad times they have endured together, Changsin-dong sewing people care for one another, continue ambivalent relationships, and even envy each other while maintaining their society at large. Such two-sided and contradictory relationships remain relevant in their daily lives, in which individuals give gifts, share food, and share *jeong* within the scope of their unique capabilities. In this way, individuals navigate their own paths and make choices in a better direction in collective social settings, and this social navigation at every moment also pervades, even in the fading light of the industrial environment. In addition to this social component of their complicated and subtle sociality, I will now move on to the industrial component of their declining industry and the daily dynamics within its rigid industrial structure.



Image 6

4

The Industrial Threat



Image 7

4. Is the Changsin-dong Sewing Sector Simply Disappearing?

4.1. Factories and Cities

The 20th century was an era in which huge factories supported societies. According to Young-seok Lee (2012a), factories are the soil of modern civilisation, and the social relations surrounding factory production represent the characteristics of modern society. When countries achieved industrialisation, factories served as the fundamental power in formulating the structure of society. Marshall (1890) describes localisation as the phenomenon of aggregated small businesses of the same kind, such as the 19th century's cotton textile district in Lancashire in the UK. Localisation represents the specialisation effect of industry by concentrating the same industry or related supporting industries in one district, and it is created under a special economic atmosphere, namely, the joint use of skilled labour and abundant machinery by virtue of geographical proximity and industry specialisation. He defines this geographical mechanism of industrial clusters related to this spatial proximity and concentrated locality as the localised industry (Marshall 1890).

> [T]he economic use of expensive machinery can sometimes be attained in a very high degree in a district in which there is a large aggregate production of the same kind, even though no individual capital employed in the trade be very large. For subsidiary industries devoting themselves each to one small branch of the process of production, and working it for a great many of their neighbours, are able to keep in constant use machinery of the most highly specialized character, and to make it pay its expenses, though its original cost may have been high, and its rate of depreciation very rapid… [I]n all but the earliest stages of economic development a localized industry gains a great advantage from the fact that it offers a constant market for skill. Employers are apt to resort to any place where they are likely to find a good choice of workers with the special skill which they require; while men seeking employment naturally go to places where there are many employers who need such skill as theirs and where therefore it is likely to find a good market. (Marshall 1890: 225)

The studies on localised industrial districts, especially in large cities, were largely addressed in the field of economics in the 19th century, and when the industrial districts that once flourished at that time began on paths of decline, they came to be explored by historians as sunset industries and declining districts. Because the benefits of building huge factories in busy cities have decreased since transportation technology dramatically developed in the mid-20th century, many manufacturing cities, including Liverpool, Manchester, and Detroit, began to experience socio-economic downturns. In the case of Liverpool, because it was a large port connecting England and other countries, fabric manufactured in large textile factories in Manchester used to be transported through Liverpool. Since the 1930s, however, when labour-saving technologies like container transport emerged, roughly half the population of Liverpool has left, and lower transportation costs have forced manufacturing industries to move to other regions with less expensive operating costs (Glaeser 2011: 52).

In another example, Boston's shipbuilding industry, which grew significantly during the first half of the 19th century by virtue of trade with China, also collapsed following the advent of steamboats. In the 1950s, manufacturing sectors in large cities began to shrink as other regions became more accessible to the global market, and as the locational benefits of ports and railroads became less important. New York's clothing industry began to diminish between the late 1960s and 1970s, and more than 300,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector (see Glaeser 2011). It is true that the movement of the manufacturing industry from large cities to other regions with low labour and maintenance costs creates an opportunity to supply cheaper products to the public. Yet, it has proved to be a fatal challenge for metropolitan industrial cities, and some of them were sacrificed while others transitioned into different sectors along with the flow of technological advancement.

In the 20th century, the Ford Motor Company famously achieved a revolutionary system of mass production under a strategy of standardisation, concentration, and centralisation through assembly lines. Given the characteristics of the Ford system based on vertical integration and spatial centralisation, Detroit had long been settled as the centre of the world's automobile industry. Nonetheless, in conjunction with the oil shock in the 1970s, large quantities of Japanese cars such as Toyota, Honda, and Nissan, which were more reasonable and energy-efficient than American producers in the beginning, began to enter

the United States, and these competitors harmed the prosperity of Detroit. As the demand for American cars declined, the population of workers in turn gradually diminished, and economists and historians actively sought alternative systems of production in factories, cities, and localised industrial districts. According to Glaeser (2011), even though the large and vertically integrated Fordism system was productive in the short term, it did not create dynamic competition and new ideas for the city's long-term success. Consequently, with the advent of the post-Fordism era of diversity and global competition, Detroit, which pursued large-scale management methods of mass production, descended into a 'Broken City'. In July 2013, Detroit eventually experienced the humiliation of filing for bankruptcy due to continued population declines, crime, and poverty, and it was designated America's most miserable city that year (Forbes, 21 February 2013).

On the other hand, New York's manufacturing industry also experienced a dwindling phase, but by virtue of the diversity of new trends in industry and culture, New York has transformed into a period of recovery. The revival of New York may be primarily related not only to being served as a cultural and tourist centre, but also to the explosive spread of entrepreneurship in the financial services sector (Glaeser 2011). Certainly, the entrepreneurship fostered by small businesses in New York's clothing industry played a role in this transition, as did the growth of the financial industry at the end of the 20th century, which was stimulated by innovation, namely, the ability to quantify the exchange of risks and rewards (ibid.). Likewise, large factories in advanced industrial countries have begun to transform into differentiated conformations, and the majority point of view is that the accumulation of capital in the manufacturing industry is over (see Lee 2012a). As Uzun (2020) explains, 'the labour-intensive industries moved out of the cities and the technology-intensive service sectors started to be located in the city centers' (Uzun 2020: 228). As a result, the management departments of today's large transnational companies are often located far from huge production factories and shop floors, effectively downsizing and specialising.

Interestingly, Detroit, once called a 'Broken City', has begun to regain vitality through urban regeneration efforts in recent years. The shadow of the manufacturing industry has almost disappeared, and in this space, hotels and service industries, reverted through the

‘up-cycling’ revitalisation process, have attracted a growing number of tourists (Maeil Business News, 20 March 2018). As the scenery of the city, once bleak with crime and poverty, began to be revitalised, Detroit’s cheap housing attracted more residents. Ford also announced plans to build a research institute for autonomous vehicles in Detroit with 2,500 Ford employees. Inspired by Detroit’s experience of urban regeneration, the Seoul Metropolitan Government was about to finalise some plans to create jobs through an industry-university collaboration between the sewing sector in Changsin-dong and a nearby university. Nevertheless, this was instead a short-term, episodic programme because of pragmatic limitations. The limitations of governmental support projects in Changsin-dong in relation to urban regeneration will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

4.2. Today’s Garment-Manufacturing Industry

Since the British Industrial Revolution emerged as a paramount era in economic history, in-depth research has been conducted on the initial factory system, especially on textile factories. In the field of anthropology and sociology, the garment-manufacturing industry has been crucial to classic analyses of industrialisation, modernisation, capitalism, as well as of social class, gender issues, and labour. According to Schulman and Leiter (1991), ‘textiles are central to an understanding of Western development and to the analysis of many contemporary developing societies in which the textile industry serves as the base for a transition from agrarian to industrial economies.’ In this manner, as Schulman and Leiter (1991) recognise the significance of the transformation of the clothing industry, it will be worth analysing the socio-economic changes and consequences, as well as contested puzzles and continuing paradoxes between scholarly frameworks and social realities in the southern textile industry in the US.

In fact, the transference of industrial specialisation in Western cities to cheaper regions and countries has been extensively examined by economic historians from a macroscopic point of view. Among these countless quantitative analyses of the dying manufacturing industry, Moreira (2007) claims that China’s labour abundance, with a labour force of 640 million,

inarguably demonstrates its comparative advantage in labour-intensive sectors, along with the markedly lower labour price when compared with pay levels throughout most of Latin America and Caribbean regions. From this macro perspective, Moreira worryingly views the formidable challenge of the Chinese expansion in the world manufacturing markets, which stems from heavy government intervention in the markets, adapting Asian Tigers' (e.g., Japan, Korea, Malaysia) policies and adjusting them into their socialist economy with the highly interventionist state. China's 'unlimited supply of labour' and rapid productivity growth jeopardise regional Latin American and Caribbean manufacturers (Moreira 2007: 355). Consequently, well-designed policies and strong institutions, with an improved environment for endowments for the growth of industrialisation and human capital, for example, are prerequisites to overcome this challenge.

Through sociological and historical analyses, Leiter, Schulman, and Zingraff (1991) strive to look at the past and the uncertain future of the textile industry in the Southern US, primarily by examining industrialisation, modernisation, and the development of capitalism, as well as the socioeconomic consequences of these transformations at various levels, including individual workers, the community, and society. In the volume, *Hanging by a Thread: Social Change in Southern Textiles*, again, Schulman and Leiter (1991) identify industrial threats in the Southern US due to low quality of work, mainly caused by lower wages as a result of the employment of multiple family members. Although the labour surplus leads to lower wages in the villages, foreign labour exhibits far greater competitiveness in the global garment-manufacturing market. As a result, the mills began to change the production lines and automate their systems to enhance productivity. Hence, a smaller human labour force is needed in the textile mills in the Southern US.

In Schulman and Leiter's (1991) volume, Zingraff further demonstrates that technological backwardness may be the main reason for the extinction of Southern textile mills because production for maximum quantity over maximum flexibility has constrained the upward trend in the industry in spite of the growth of low wages. Yet, at the same time, Zingraff (1991) admits that in the paradoxical global competition, there are always losers and winners in each time period. Just as Hodges and Frank (2013) indicate, the labour market in the manufacturing sector moves to the country or region that provides the best price,

much like the pattern transferring from England to the Northeastern US, to the Southern US, to India and China, to Vietnam and Cambodia, and then to countries in Africa. As 'it will continue to leave behind economic gaps that must be filled by something else' (Hodges and Frank 2013, 55), socio-economic hardships and growing pains in the Southern textile mill communities are inevitable in the sensitively changing global economy (Zingraff 1991).

In the case of Japan, the national statistics reveal that the number of workers in the labour-intensive garment-manufacturing sector fell from a peak of 600,000 in the 1980s to half, 300,000 in 2003 (Kim 2011: 348). As of 2003, the proportion of imports of apparel products was 90%, of which 90% depended on imports from China. Meanwhile, the Japanese clothing industry likely developed similarly in cities and their outskirts in many other countries, and this has had a profound impact on the Korean garment manufacturing industry. Accordingly, evolving trends and changing circumstances of Japan and Korea are akin to one another. As a result, it would be meaningful to explore the Japanese case in detail in order to interpret the circumstances of the garment manufacturing industry in Korea.

Briefly looking at the historical trajectory of the Japanese apparel industry, it began as a cottage industry in the 1950s and developed into a domestic factory system. Along with the rapid growth of period, a mass-production-oriented textile and clothing industry began to evolve for exports to the US in the 1960s (Kim 2011: 349). In particular, due to the strengthening of export competitiveness, industrial sewing machines were advanced, and mechanical industry policies were implemented. In the 1970s, the CAD programme was introduced in the tailoring industry, and state-of-the-art sewing machines with motors were developed, which led to the heyday of the Japanese apparel industry. At that time, the boom in Japan's sewing industry also affected Korea, and the Japanese factory system began to be introduced to Korea in earnest to meet enormous demands for exports because of Korea's relatively cheaper labour. From the 1980s onwards, as the growth of the Japanese clothing manufacturing industry stabilised, it faced a crisis due to high wages in Japan, and this resulted in the relocation of sewing factories to low-wage regions in rural areas. In the 1990s, which is often called the 'Lost Decade', referring to a prolonged recession after the

collapse of the bubble economy, Japan's national economic depression also struck a blow to the clothing industry (Kim 2011).

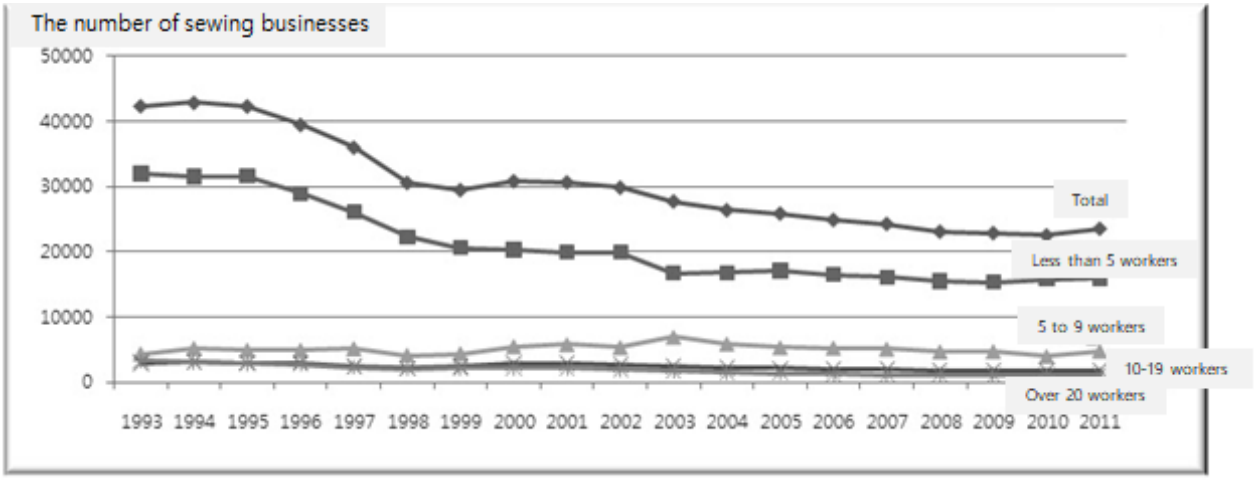
In the apparel industry, as the differentiated characteristics between competitive products were eliminated, customers tended to push for low prices or larger amounts, and consequently, price competition became fiercer. In line with this, Korea's garment manufacturing industry also grew rapidly until the late 1980s but has declined since the 1990s due to intensifying competition with cheap labour markets in other countries and worsening domestic production conditions (Choi 2012), as shown in Table 4.1.

<Table 4.1. Index of domestic sewing industry in South Korea>

Year	The number of sewing workshops	The number of sewing workers
1993	37,904	337,436
2001	27,170	134,206
2010	22,470	141,465

(Edited by the author. Source: Choi 2012: 46)

<Figure 4.1. Changing trends in the number of businesses as a function of the size of the garment manufacturing workshops from 1993 to 2011>



(Source: A Survey on Domestic Clothing Manufacturing and Development of Support Policy, Korean Apparel Industry Association 2013b: 1)

As Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 illustrate, the garment manufacturing industry in South Korea, and specifically small sewing workshops with less than five workers, which are the largest proportion of garment manufacturers (Figure 4.1), has experienced a rapid downturn beginning in the early 1990s. Following this trend, Changsin-dong did not circumvent the economic recession in the domestic clothing manufacturing industry. Much like many cases of shifts in production to other countries which offer cheaper production costs, ageing, robotics, and cheaper labour in other countries were major factors in shrinking Changsin-dong's sewing sector. Now, moving on from the quantitative macroscopic point of view to examine economic, historical, and sociological perspectives, I would like to delve deeper into sewing people's daily lives from an anthropological approach.

4.3. Passiveness in the Manufacturing System: Dilemmas in Changsin-dong's Sewing Workshops

As previously mentioned, the sewing industry is one of the representative industries that reveals various socio-economic issues. The biggest problem in Changsin-dong's sewing industry is shrinking demand, and the factors behind this phenomenon are multiple: cheaper labour in other East Asian countries, such as China and Vietnam; the rigid industrial system, the reluctance of workers to adapt to new challenges; the mass production of lower quality goods with fast sewing techniques; the ageing of the workforce and a lack of handover to the next generation; a heavy reliance on the localised network and local value chain; and the COVID-19 outbreak. Among those factors, I will particularly address the overly localised network, the ageing workforce coupled with intergenerational immobility in family business succession, and structural elements in working patterns that can be linked to sewing people's passiveness in embracing new challenges.

First, as has been repeatedly mentioned, Changsin-dong's close-knit community is one of their idiosyncratic hallmarks in the urban space, and it is undoubtedly true that Changsin-dong's symbiotic local network and its correlation with the Dongdaemun fashion market have underpinned their economic sustainability. Nonetheless, their strong ties backfire in

increasing their competitiveness at the same time. This strong community now has become a disadvantage that hinders their economic development in the form of ‘dying together’. To be specific, orders and workers are recruited, almost exclusively from within the local network, along with the subcontracting system between neighbours and maintenance of the contractual relationship.



Figure 4.2. The recruitment and job-hunting bulletin board posted on a wall on the street in the Changsin-dong neighbourhood.

Sewing people’s solid networks have made them feel it unnecessary to interact with other designers or clients from outside of the Dongdaemun market, and the fact that they have been working within these self-sufficient systems for more than 30 years makes them even more detached from the outside world. Since Changsin-dong is adjacent to the Dong-daemun Fashion Market – a 5 to 15 minutes’ walk – it is relatively easy to interact with designers and other garment-manufacturing workshops, without the need of sales advertisements. This has made Changsin-dong sewing workshops interdependent upon one another, rather than self-promoting to designers or outliers, so it is rare for them to enter the sales market to actively promote themselves because they have not needed to for a long while. Due to these geographical and physical factors of industrial structure, they have adapted to the way that they are confined in their workshops to meet the demands of designers, who come to the sewing workshops in Changsin-dong to discuss details of each design and to place certain orders in person.

Their dependence on Dongdaemun worked well in their economy when Dongdaemun was a booming commercial district, but as Dongdaemun's vitality has declined, the number of places that need Changsin-dong's labour has also decreased. This is because Changsin-dong did not have to pursue innovation for competition, as they endured the 1990s' national financial crisis exclusively relying on the demands of Dongdaemun. This interdependent system in the local value chain in the Dongdaemun area cuts off opportunities to communicate and collaborate with other companies or designers from outside, just as Detroit heavily relied on Ford's own mass production system at the exclusion of other companies. In other words, their close-knit local network has backfired on their survival and could lead to their extinction, since they usually seek new sewing workers in the neighbourhood, exchange labour with neighbouring workshops, and exclusively care for the competition within the neighbourhood. Consequently, the strong community comes back to haunt them, making the region isolated from the outside. Namely, their togetherness makes them simultaneously closer and more alienated.

A number of sewing practitioners have been working in the same business for a few decades, being stuck in a workplace with few external activities. As the Dongdaemun market collapsed, Changsin-dong, which served as the manufacturing basis for the Dongdaemun market, also collapsed, like dominoes. Kwan-jae, the director at Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative, explains their heavy reliance on Dongdaemun garment market:

> The characteristic here in Changsin-dong is that it's closely related to the system of the Dongdaemun wholesale market, as most sewing workshops deal with the work from the Dongdaemun market. The reason people can't digest other work from the outside is just because they have never done such things. If the Dongdaemun market disappears, then [Changsin-dong] will shrink.

The long-lasting economic downswing in Korea, which caused the slump in the domestic clothing market, has a definite impact on Changsin-dong's economic circumstances.

In addition to the stagnant domestic economy, the market is very easily swayed by social and political trends, especially with the close connection between the Dongdaemun clothing market and China. As China's economy grows, a growing number of Chinese merchants used to visit Dongdaemun's wholesale market to see and pick up items in person and place

large orders. However, the aftermath of the political conflict between Korea and China due to the deployment of THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) in the 2010s came to affect Dongdaemun's economy, as well as Changsin-dong's economy. Moreover, when Chinese political and economic sanctions against Korea were about to be eased, most overseas orders were cut off due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and as a result, a number of wholesale and retail stores in Dongdaemun came to close. Recently, there have been plenty of empty shops in Dongdaemun, and even in some retail shopping malls, the number of empty shops far exceeds that of shops in operation (Figure 4.3). These external factors further jeopardise Changsin-dong.



Figure 4.3. Empty retail shops in one of Dongdaemun's clothing malls.

The heavy reliance on the localised industry in Changsin-dong may be relevant to Hodges and Frank's (2013) qualitative study on the textile mill villages in the Southern US, conducted via a qualitative methodology to examine the contemporary circumstances and individuals' reactions to/within the shrinking industry. According to their interviews, these textile mill communities also experienced an industrial decline due to competitive imports offered at lower prices that domestic manufacturing could not match, even though there were various efforts to establish trade legislation and increase capital investment in

equipment (Hodges and Frank 2013). Accordingly, more than 800 textile manufacturing mills closed between 1975 and 1985, along with some rises in corporate mergers (even with competitors to stay afloat), bankruptcies, and layoffs, and these downturns and changes have transformed the nature of the industry itself (ibid.: 42).

Just as Schulman and Leiter (1991) point out that numerous mills are scattered throughout the south of the United States, Hodges and Frank (2013) also stress that textile mills play critical roles in continuing the sense of community in the villages. According to the interviews Hodges and Frank conducted in the mill communities, the continued decline in the rich labour force in the Southern United States also results in the diminishment of the neighbourhoods' life and sense of community. Because the textile mills in the villages were the central industry that supported the communities at large, and because workers lived in or near the neighbourhood and spent most of their lives in their mills, the mill was the community, and the community was the mill. As the mills closed, the sense of community that the mills provided disappeared, leaving them with feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. In addition to the workers at the mills, nearby restaurants and shops that were related to the mills are experiencing economic losses, and emotional grief is prevalent in the villages.

> Along with the disappearance of the mill is the potential for the disappearance of its village… When the company that was the center of the community is no longer there, the impact is deep and potentially long-lasting… [T]extile products companies have historically done more than just provide jobs and homes for local residents, they also provided support for the community as a whole… Now many of them are dealing with the daily challenges of being jobless in a state. (Hodges and Frank 2013: 44, 49, 53)

Such form of community as a whole and togetherness in the same industrial sector is similar to Changsin-dong, where small sewing workshops are concentrated within the close-knit community, which has supported the localised industry for the last few decades. Although Changsin-dong's sewing people do not work together in one big factory like the villages in the south of the US, there remains a heavy reliance among neighbours, who have constantly been interacting and competing with one another in the neighbourhood throughout both good and bad times, and who are now diminished together.

In the Southern US, these textile mill villages are being renovated to become tourist destinations. The residents and former workers in the villages seem to welcome the touristification of the villages and look forward to this change. This sort of attempt to touristify the blighted industrial district may be an easy way to revitalise the dying industry, including not only London's very famous Tate Modern, but also, for example, Joyang Textile in Ganghwa Island, South Korea, in which a large textile factory was altered to become a large-scale café and a local attraction. However, it is necessary to reconsider whether these touristifying strategies provide a great benefit to residents and workers at the sewing factories in urban spaces. In particular, touristifying some devastated industrial facilities in rural areas may be positively recognised by locals, because it can directly affect the livelihood of local people. By contrast, if the entire area becomes a tourist destination in the very centre of the capital city, just like Changsin-dong, gentrification will eventually be inevitable. It may be a profitable business from macroeconomic and governmental policy-making points of view, but touristification may reinforce the idea that workers and residents should be kicked out of the neighbourhood in the centre of the city because the city centre is in high demand from various stakeholders. This dilemma of touristification in the city will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.

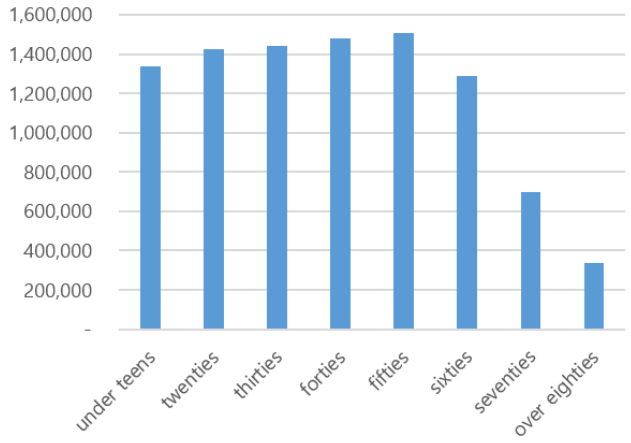
In addition to an overly localised network, ageing and intergenerational immobility are also critical factors in the dying industry. My research participants' largest concern about the limitation of Changsin-dong is that the sewing industry is no longer led by the younger generation. Kwan-jae articulates the problem of a lack of handover to the next generation in Changsin-dong sewing workshops:

> If a workshop can continue its work with online shopping malls, it should survive, but the problem is that there's no one to learn [sewing]. Everyone talks about it. That's the biggest problem. There's no one to learn to sew. Then the number of sewing workshops will be almost gone in 20 years, and only a small number of sewing workshops will remain and deal with only sampling works with overseas production… That's why it's more about manpower than work itself.

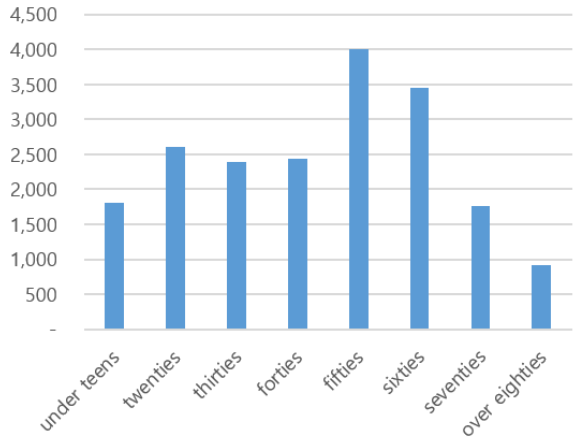
It is no exaggeration to say that the ageing of Changsin-dong's sewing industry is the most critical aspect in slowing down and disrupting its development. The youngest generation in Changsin-dong's sewing sector is in their 40s, and even that does not account for a large proportion; the majority of the sewing workers are in their late 50s to early 60s. The industry

may progress and advance without walking on the path of decline only if generations continue, but if it is not passed down to the younger generation, the industry will inescapably become extinct.

<Figure 4.4. Population by age in Seoul in 2021>



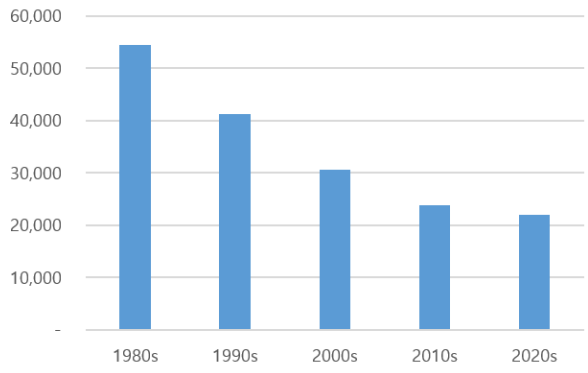
<Figure 4.5. Population by age in Changsin-dong in 2021>



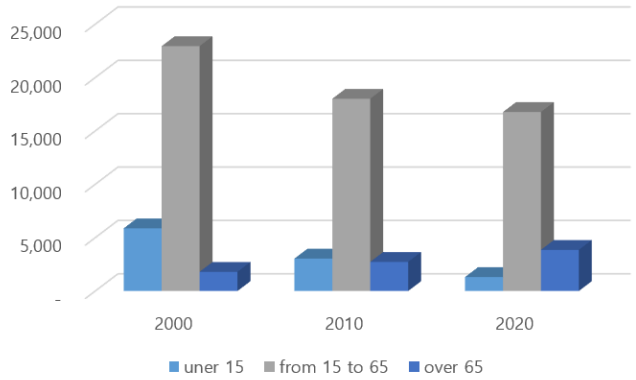
(Edited by the author. Source: Korean Statistical Information Service website (https://kosis.kr/), Statistics Korea)

I have reorganised the demographic data collected by the national statistical office in Korea to specifically analyse the demographics of Changsin-dong (the sum of all Changsin 1-, 2-, and 3-dongs). As shown in Figures 4.4 and 4.5, the proportion of the population over fifty in Changsin-dong is significantly larger than that in Seoul as a whole. Additionally, Figure 4.6 illustrates that the population of Changsin-dong has significantly dwindled from 50,000 to 20,000 over the past five decades, and Figure 4.7 explains the decrease in the population of teenagers and those under 65 years of age, while the population of residents who are 65 or older has increased. The average age shown in this figure is 33.36 years in the 2000s, 39.63 years in the 2010s, and 46.06 years in the 2020s, which aptly demonstrates the ageing phenomenon in Changsin-dong (KSIS website).

<Figure 4.6. Declines in population in Changsin-dong>



<Figure 4.7. Changes in population by age in Changsin-dong>



(Edited by the author. Source: Korean Statistical Information Service website (https://kosis.kr/), Statistics Korea)

There are a growing number of online retailers, whereas most of the sewing work is done abroad, or is left to sewing practitioners in their 60s in Changsin-dong. According to Kui-sung, the representative of the sewing cooperative, while there are a number of young designers, few of them know how to sew or wish to learn sewing as a full-time job:

> Young people only sell clothes online, and few people make them. So, sewing should be taught at more academies or anywhere to provide a way for young people to invest in sewing with pride. If you make 10 clothes from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, then those 10 sheets should be the way to make a living. Therefore, we need institutions or organisations that can train young people. However, as the Dongdaemun wholesale market is moving online, 10 pieces of clothes are far from enough. That's why it doesn't work.

Ji-pyo, the first son of Sook-ja and Soon-sun, also sees that ageing is troublesome and will eventually lead to the demise of Changsin-dong's sewing industry. He states:

> I think this neighbourhood will disappear in the end. As people become sapped of their strength, in terms of the rest of the sewing workers' physical conditions, the sewing practitioners are gradually disappearing. There are some people who want to learn sewing at academies, but they don't work as sewing workers.

This is why there are many cases where sewing workshops close their businesses as their health deteriorates or they naturally stop working as they age.

One of the biggest reasons for the unlikely succession from the aging workforce to the next generation in the sewing industry may be the different socio-economic circumstances between the generations. As mentioned in the section on the overview of the field site in Chapter 2, most of the sewing people in Changsin-dong are baby boomers, who experienced poverty during the post-Japanese colonial and post-Korean War era, and who led the great economic growth with the strong South Korean work ethic. That is why this baby boom generation has less fear about 'working hard', and members often state that their working environment became 'much better than before' when they worked 'desperately' to escape poverty. Accordingly, because the sewing workers have to make a living from an early age, they have a relatively low level of education. On the other hand, 48% of their children's generation are college educated for those who are in their 30s, and 70% for those in their 20s (Phang 2011: 7). This high level of education among post-baby boomers has brought about a tendency to avoid labour-intensive work in recent years. The higher education levels of the younger generation can also be seen as the enthusiasm for education that the parents, the baby boomers, pursue for their children, thereby finding better jobs and living conditions, away from labour-intensive industries.

The general desire of parents to hand down a better environment to their children is also illustrated by Hodges and Frank's (2013) observation of mill villages in the southern United State.

> Indeed, it is ironic that the companies of this study in some ways helped to bring about the shift away from domestic manufacturing by supporting the higher education pursuits of the workers' children, ensuring that the chain of inexpensive labor would eventually be broken. (Hodges and Frank 2013: 54)

In Changsin-dong's case, it is also uncommon for the children of those in the sewing industry in Changsin-dong to continue their family business because of the sewing workers' desire for their children to live 'a better life', rather than encouraging and training them in order to pass down the industry to the next generation. Ji-pyo is planning to set up his own patterning workshop by learning his parents' skills, but it is very unusual to succeed to the family business in Changsin-dong, just like Sook-ja strongly opposed her son's plan to learn the garment-manufacturing work at first. Because her son's studies to get into the civil service sector were unsuccessful, and because he was over 30, it seemed difficult to find

another job in a completely different field. Accordingly, Ji-pyo decided to continue his parents' business, but still, Sook-ja disapproves and wants him to do something 'less difficult' than the 'tough' labour-intensive job.

Byung-choon, on the contrary, hopes that his youngest daughter inherits his business, and intends to hand over all of his networks and contracts he has made to date to his daughter, as his factory is one of the largest workshops in Changsin-dong, and thereby his daughter can take advantage of his comparatively stable income. Yet, the daughter Soo-jin actually wants to work in the field by utilising her major in engineering with a different life goal. Such parents' desire to raise their children in a better environment, rather than in the labour-intensive field, can be compared to Nepal's family-based garment-manufacturing sector, in which most family members and relatives work in the same sector. In Changsin-dong, 'family business' usually means cases in which spouses work together as a unit, and it is rarely seen that their children jump into sewing work to begin their livelihoods.

Furthermore, amid growing competition in Changsin-dong, it is practically impossible for young novices to enter the sewing sector because sewing workshops exclusively prefer experienced workers, especially those with 'neat' sewing skills. Even those who have worked for more than 30 years are losing their jobs these days, so hiring new young people and taking charge of training them represent too much of a risk and burden for sewing workshops. Joong-wan, the chief tailor at Naeng-guel Fashion, indicates why novices were welcome in sewing workshops in the early days:

> People tend not to hire novices nowadays, but in earlier days snipping ends of seams was a big help. More hands were needed. [Sewing workshops] used to hire novices a lot with a little pay back then. That is why there are a lot of people in this sector who are less educated as they started working when they were young.

In the past, many teenagers were hired and trained as industrial workers, namely, 'social capital' in the 1980s, while in the 21st century, as most teenagers enter universities, education levels rise, which is linked to the rise in social expectations for young people and their parents. Hence, in the labour-intensive sewing industry, young people themselves do not want to learn sewing, and at the same time, sewing workshops are also not happy to embrace young novices. Consequently, there are many young designers in their 20s and

30s, while it is hard to find young sewing workers. Likewise, the transition to the younger generation is yet another difficult task for Changsin-dong.

Finally, the sewing working environment also causes conditions to stagnate. For instance, most of my research participants complain that their wages remain at the same level as 10 years ago. Regardless of the inflation rate, their wages, namely, the piece rate, are trapped at the same rate as a decade ago, and since their workloads gradually go down because of the transference of labour to cheaper countries, it has become difficult to make as much money as they did 10 years ago. If they increase their piece rates, their clients may turn to other regions or countries offering lower prices, so they cannot arbitrarily increase their compensation on their own because the mutually settled labour costs are more competitive in the global labour market. This reluctant tendency to raise their wages became fixed as their 'standard' wage level, and they naturally came to be passive in making a change. Since their wage levels are not high, the quality of their work is also difficult to improve, and even their techniques tend to regress. The reason why they cannot raise the piece rate may be because they do not want to lose their competitiveness in the global labour market, but at the same time, there are internal aspects that make it somewhat difficult to reach a consensus among the sewing workshops.

In fact, there was an attempt to increase the overall labour costs at the local level, led by the sewing cooperative, but it did not work out in the end. Then, neighbouring workshops came to watch each other and were sometimes reinforced to show loyalty to their neighbours and fit in with the small society living together. One day, when a designer claimed a lower price for labour, Young-joo tried to increase their rate, but the designer refused it. Young-joo actually wanted to turn down the order, but she received it in the end. Young-joo states:

> I know we should reject those kinds of orders, but as we don't have much work, we just take it because I have to operate this workshop. I know I should have turned down their orders, but other (neighbouring) workshops also take them. Everyone asks for work, so people bite the bullet and back down on the designers' demands since there is no work.

The only solution to increase their competitiveness is to improve the quality of sewing jobs, but it also has limitations, as they are too familiar with the cheaper mass-production system, not the higher quality of sewing for luxurious items.

The working pattern that the sewing practitioners have continuously adopted in the mass production system are also one of the main factors that diminish their competitiveness. Although small-volume production may be an avenue through which the sewing workers can survive, it is somewhat different from the way they have worked for decades. It is not financially beneficial to deal with small quantities, even with higher prices, since they are accustomed to sewing in the quick production system with lower quality, not the higher quality demanded in recent years. In this way, they often reject the quality work, give up adapting to it and, in extreme cases, quit work. This kind of passive attitude towards something new may stem from Changsin-dong's part-time system – based on a piece rate rather than a salary system, as mentioned in Chapter 2 – which allows individuals to independently work to produce an allocated portion of pieces, much like freelancers who earn as much money as they work.

In the independent Total Production system, as opposed to the assembly-line, each sewing practitioner is in charge of the entire process of sewing, and it seems that this provides more independent and horizontal relationships among sewing workers. As there are many small, unconstrained workshops concentrated in one location, it appears possible to produce small quantities of multiple varieties in this post-Fordism era. Ironically, however, they have been mass-producing non-branded, cheap quality clothes in the Dongdaemun fashion market with its fast-turnover trend for decades, so the habitually familiar 'fast-sewing' techniques are not easily remedied. Because relatively few errors are found in the assembly line, where each unit sews a particular part, and because the labour force in Line Production is much cheaper than in Total Production, bulk orders are taken away by Chinese and Vietnamese large assembly-line factories.

When it comes to small-scale orders, much higher quality is required because of higher labour costs, which is also difficult for Changsin-dong's sewing workers to achieve the demanded quality. Thus, their *habitual* (see Bourdieu 1984) working methods adapted to

non-branded mass production may be another factor that weakens the industry. Kui-sung elaborates on this dilemma:

> The sewing in this country is unavoidably pushed out by Southeast Asia and China. Look at how China is progressing. Even a few years ago, international delivery from China was slow and required a large number of goods, but now, as little as hundreds of pieces come within a few days. The quality of sewing in Korea? We can't keep up. Changsin-dong individuals have good techniques, but we have to make clothes very quickly here, so the products are inevitably rough. Regarding products from big companies, they have the production line system, where a particular unit of people sews an allocated part of clothing in sequential operations on a monthly payment basis. There, each person just needs to sew only a specific part of clothing, so the quality of sewing can be neat. Even there are people who deal with only cutting the threads. So, the products should be neat from sewing to the last touches when each item is packed in a polybag. However, [such production line system] doesn't work in Changsin-dong [because the size of the workshop is very small, and we've got used to this independent system.] That is why Changsin-dong cannot change. We have to work very quickly [to meet designers' requirements], so the quality here should be rough. So Changsin-dong's sewing people have no choice but to do so. Even me, I have to make ends meet first, so I'm just letting slide [the lower quality]. In large companies, there are workers in charge of inspecting the final products, but we have no one to inspect. As we've worked like this for decades, we just got accustomed to it.

Along with their exclusive reliance on the local network, as well as accustomed propensities to rapid sewing production with lower quality techniques, their industrial constitutions have made them more passive willing to stick with their already set rigid structure, thereby exhibiting reluctance to adapt to new challenges. When receiving orders to produce facemasks, for instance, they demonstrate their inertia in avoiding something new. Even though they were confronting their job losses due to reduced demand across the clothing market since the COVID-19 outbreak which temporarily halted imports and exports with China, they were rather 'passive' and 'conservative' with new attempts at mask production.

During the pandemic, when the manufacturing of masks was ordered from Seoul City and Jongno-gu Office to Changsin-dong sewing workshops, most workshops initially responded in a lukewarm manner. Such responses prevailed: 'We don't deal with such a thing' or 'How do we make such a small thing?' Yet, as the normal sewing work fell off and there was more free time, one or two workshops began to make facemasks, and more workshops came to produce masks. Later, a growing number of workshops came to seek

work producing facemasks and said that the mask production was actually easy and financially beneficial. Likewise, it was frequently observed that new things were usually considered as ‘unfamiliar’ and ‘difficult’. In so doing, although it would be natural to seek a higher labour cost, they often reject some orders that seem too complicated in order to make the work process faster for better productivity of other items. Such choices of rejecting, giving up, and quitting a job will be addressed in more detail in the next section.

In summary, the overly localised structural factors in Changsin-dong can be seen as obsolete, collapsing, and in danger of disappearing, which means that workshops have stuck to the mass production system, not the customised one. Not only given the ageing of Changsin-dong and the labour force lost to the Chinese and Vietnamese markets, but also given the decline of the entire Dongdaemun wholesale market, the social and economic foundation of Changsin-dong has been shaken. Additionally, the habitual tendency of insensitivity towards change and an unwillingness to make new attempts, far from innovation and creation, fundamentally stem from the structure.

In the sewing industry, as most manufacturing sectors will be similar, the most important requisites are accuracy and speed, requiring individuals to complete tasks without errors in a rigidly organised system with no individual tastes or creative attempts. Most sewing practitioners in Changsin-dong have been working from an early age, and they have ‘received’ (*bat-da*) work from design companies in a submissive manner for decades, suppressing active individual propensities in the system. Consequently, their ‘static’ and ‘submissive’ form of manufacturing has led them to become somewhat conservative in making new attempts or changes in their everyday lives. The characteristic of manufacturing, which produces particular goods uniformly to meet the tastes of consumers or clients, results in a prevailing attitude that they are merely docile recipients who receive certain orders from the owner, not active individuals who continuously develop their own work. Such a point of view, which considers the industry as a whole, may derive from the structural functionalist stance largely developed in social sciences in the 20th century.

In order to understand the entire constitution of society, structural functionalist anthropologists tended to analyse and determine how each element serves, behaves, and operates in a set structure, with the premise of the collective over the individual (see Radcliffe-Brown 1948). This stance was once widely adopted in anthropology to reveal societal differences, cultural practices, norms, and linguistic systems through 'scientific' investigations. Yet, it cannot explain idiosyncratic social phenomena and diverse individual voices, since the exclusive examination of customs, social modalities, and cultural practices of a specific society cannot account for individuals' heterogeneous behaviours. Because 'agency is not something that is simply "out there" in the world' (Dove et al. 2008: 243), it is socially constructed and deeply imbricated. In this manner, I will now explore Changsin-dong sewing workers' activeness and their agency, striving to move beyond the binary between structure and agency.

Within their constrained socio-economic structure, it is true that Changsin-dong sewing practitioners are insensitive and even resistant to change, and they are unfamiliar with the techniques of sewing very complicated and sophisticated designs because of their accustomed working environment. Within this industrial constitution, it is certain that the geographical advantage of being adjacent to the Dongdaemun market and the regional specificity of Changsin-dong − namely, their strong ties and togetherness – also make them shrink together in a dying industry. Accordingly, from economic and historical approaches, most people may easily think that sewing people merely work like machines and then disappear with the industry. Nevertheless, when taking a closer look at their daily lives, their activeness obviously exists in various forms of their subjectivity, their choice of moments, their own techniques built up with uniquely embodied skills, their efforts to survive and develop through their own know-how, and their decisions to selectively opt out of the global competition.

4.4. Activeness in Daily Dynamics: Embodiment, Agency, and Social Navigation

In sewing workshops, human agency and differentiated embodied experience can be captured in manifold circumstances. When observed microscopically, miscellaneous embodied skills are manifested, even in their 'passive', 'mundane', and 'repetitive' routines. They often say that each fabric, from very thin summer fabrics to thick winter fabrics, has (even slightly) different degrees of stretch, depending on each colour, each roll, and each season, even with the same material. Tae-sam, the chief garment cutter at Soojin Apparel, explains how each pattern varies from size to size, from design to design, and by each design company:

> Do you know why Grading is difficult? Grading is to extend the standard size from Small to Medium and Large with one pattern. It's not simply increasing a few centimetres of computer-like accuracy. We need to extend a few centimetres here and different centimetres there. It's also different when you increase [the standard pattern of Small size] to Medium and to Large. And also, it's different from one design company to another that requires different sizes. Even with the same pattern of a particular design company, it's different when the materiality of the fabric changes. For example, a design company is popular with this design of these trousers, so they make them in spring, summer, autumn, and winter with different colours and with different thicknesses. So, we need to adjust all the variations. Besides, each roll of the fabric, which is nominally the same, is sometimes different.

Sook-ran adds how each work is complicated by design:

> Even a design company supplies one fit of clothing to a client and another fit of the same clothing to another client. It's really complicated. Even if it's the same design, the fit is different for each fabric, and even if it's the same fabric, it's different for each colour [because of different chemicals are used when dyeing the fabric]. Each fabric differently stretches. Each design has dozens of variations.

The deviation in each fabric is particularly common in the types of jeans that are washed with certain chemicals. Therefore, even with the same design, sample clothes are usually adjusted and reworked, and the sampling process is repeated several times according to each production time. Sook-ja elaborates:

> It looks like we're just doing it, but it's all technique-based… Well, even if our job seems easy, there's a lot of sensitive things… [Producing trousers] is so intricate. Jeans are really difficult. Each fabric has different elasticity. Even with the same design, the colour and the fit completely change depending on how it is washed. That is why we do the sample work several times every time. It looks easy to make, but [we need to be] really delicate.

In a similar vein, Joong-wan explains how sophisticated patterning work is:

> In the beginning, I was arrogant… I looked down on this work because people were not educated much. I thought it would be easy. However, when I faced this work and looked deeper and deeper, it was not easy… When I worked with chief tailors, one person [drew patterns] like this, but the other person did it in another way. I was very confused. I learned from this person to work in this way while the other one gave me a scolding and said "Why did you do it like this?" It's very complicated.

As such, the workers may seem passive, and their lives may seem to be repetitious, but each design and each material require different patterns, and different methods and skills are used when drawing patterns of the design according to fabrics and colours, when altering the size, and also when sewing. Here, looking at their way of cutting and sewing from a microscopic point of view, each individual performs a given task differently, with individually acquired know-how, as well as embodied bodily movement.

When it comes to sewing industry workers' working positions and bodily movement, Stoilova, Tzvetkova, and Stefanova (2015) argue that the work is monotonous, not heterogeneous:

> The seamstresses – operators of sewing machines and manual operators – work in compulsory sitting positions, with their bodies tilted forward; the work is monotonous, with unvaried and repetitive work movements, mainly from second and third class (fingers, wrists and forearms) (Stoilova et al. 2015: 1008).

Indeed, this positioning can easily be found in sewing-related literature that has sought some 'solutions' to make working environments and the psychological climate in the sewing industry 'better' in accordance with sociological and policy-making perspectives. From these perspectives, sewing workers tend to be regarded as 'poor', due to their repetitive and monotonous – namely, 'boring' – working patterns. However, while viewing bodies in sewing workshops at the very micro level during my fieldwork, individuals' different body praxes were captured, rather than the mainstream discussions that have

centred on the early writings of the Marxian view of ‘workers’ as mechanic appurtenances in production operations.

Even though sewing practitioners use the same models of machines for the same design and fabrication of clothes, each individual uses each machine differently to understand, learn, and work. As they adapt to their environments, workers’ individual, subjective, and singularised relationships with their sewing machines uniquely evolve and are not mere replications in producing plural commodities. In other words, the bodily engagement with the material creates and recreates embodied relationships between an agent and the material as a form of embodied practice, not simply as the homogenous and repetitive work imposed by the outside (i.e., design companies). Because of the characteristics of sewing work, individual sewing and cutting practitioners must develop their own effective and efficient methods that are suited to their physical conditions, including, for example, the power of feet to tread on the pedal of a sewing machine, as well as physical adjustments based upon individual sewing machines’ (slightly) different configurations. Intentionally, and even unintentionally, workers use their bodies in effective ways they have discovered, and these unique methods become their own know-how when cutting and sewing fabrics.

For example, Young-joo utilises the power of her entire body, moving her upper body back and forth in Nang-guel Fashion. She uses her whole body when she concentrates on the task, rather than focusing on the specific materiality of each fabric, which can be controlled by different needles and functions of sewing machines. ‘I always put all of my efforts into sewing meticulously and perfectly. We always have back pain, though I feel rewarded when the clothes are perfectly done.’ On the other hand, Dong-gue does not usually move her upper body. Rather, she uses her fingers, much like playing the piano, when she sews a long waistband and softly applies pressure to the sewing machine pedal when she sews a sophisticated fabric. Dong-gue explains how she uses her fingers to adjust to depend on the characteristics of each fabric:

> It is very important to employ fingers and feet to control the sewing machine. And we need to deliberately manipulate the power to the pedal depending on the materiality of the clothes. When sewing something very flimsy, like silk, it has to be handled with very soft power from

the feet and fingers like this, because they (i.e., the fabrics) are very sensitive. We use these fingers as technicians.

While Dong-gue pays greater attention to the materiality of fabrics, Young-joo sees each stitch as more important. Likewise, individuals' different levels of know-how are incorporated by heterogeneous perception as a form of embodied knowledge, even for those in the same context, and with similar backgrounds.

As another example, when it comes to cutting practitioners, Soon-sun often works while sitting on the cutting desk in Eve-rang, whereas Joong-wan has never sat on his cutting desk in Naeng-guel Fashion (Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8. (a) Soon-sun and his son, Ji-pyo, preparing to cut fabric. (b) Joong-wan (wearing a grey shirt in the image), at Naeng-guel Fashion, preparing to cut fabric, and Nam-taek (wearing a navy jacket), the husband of Young-joo, helping the tailor.

This is not only due to different uses of different equipment. Also attributable to habitual postures is the fact that individual workers have uniquely found diversified (and comfortable) embodiment. Because (structural) functionalist anthropology seeks to reveal social relationships and collective behaviours, it often overlooks these miscellaneous embodied relationships in everyday life. As such, attention to the different bodily positions of each individual and diverse ways of embodied adjustment to the given environment offers more detailed insight into the dynamics within sewing workshops. Workers employ their bodies, machines, and locales with regard to their own perceptions, know-how, and habitual bodily praxes. For instance, Sook-ja sews each piece of a pocket on the front and

the back of trousers first and then sews the front and the back pieces together. By contrast, Dong-gue sews all of the pockets of trousers first and attaches them to the sewed trousers. Whenever the design changes, such as small details and a design of waistband, Dong-gue discusses the process with her husband, who works with her, to develop a better way of sewing optimised for them.

In addition to the diverse ways of bodily movement and individuals' varied know-how, all sewing and cutting practitioners have striven to reduce lines of movement while working so that they effectively use space and time to complete each task as quickly as possible. Because they work against the clock every day, they find for themselves the most efficient ways to minimise time to complete a task, as well as to maximise the quality of their products. More specifically, in Dong-gue's sewing workshop, where a couple works together in their industrial-residential unit, the couple throw clothing materials, fabrics, and sewing tools to each other, rather than walking across the workshop, in order to reduce their movement and to effectively use their relatively small workshop space. Employing their feet to push a bunch of cloth was also often observed. As such, individuals adjust their bodies within a locale in their own ways. They continuously devise ways to sew faster and more accurately every day, and thereby their ways of sewing differ for each individual. Just as Tilley claims, space becomes a medium *for* and outcome *of* an action, not a container (Tilley 1994: 23), which can be related to human agency. Those lifeworlds, constructed by heterogeneous social actors, constitute particular environmental settings, and thereby space becomes detotalised with no universal essence.

As Giddens (1979) highlights power when explaining agency, it is meaningful to examine agents as members of society, both historically and with respect to their spatial locations, with their own power and their own conduct in the fleeting moments of everyday life.

> The reasons actors supply discursively for their conduct in the course of practical queries, in the context of daily social life, stand in a relation of some tension to the rationalisation of action as actually embodied within the stream of conduct of the agent… power is intrinsically related to human agency. (Giddens 1979: 57, 92)

In this respect, while agency usually has a huge influence on the 'intentionality' of the agent, it does not always represent certain goals consciously held in mind over the course of the

related activities. Moreover, since all humans have a capacity for agency, the agency may vary in different times and spaces, in accordance with each spatiotemporal dimension (Giddens 1984, Ortner 2006). As a result, agency and embodied experience are uniquely shaped, and they can emanate from both conscious and unconscious plots, just as sewing practitioners move and use their bodies with their own habitual and embodied praxes, the unconscious drive for quality and their power mould peculiar agency (Giddens 1984).

When it comes to the consciousness and intentionality in agency, this can be relevant to Changsin-dong sewing workers' active choice, including the option of rejection, in their day-to-day lives. It is true that there were few attempts by most of my research participants to challenge the 'difficult' new designs that young designers brought or do new things, such as posting sewing clips on YouTube, for example. At the beginning of the fieldwork, I thought sewing practitioners would feel bored or tired of their repetitive work patterns, which result in repetitive routines in general. I personally expected that they would be happy to start work on something new, namely, an interesting design, as I myself felt that repetitive tasks were dull. This is because doing certain repetitive tasks in this pluralised modern society seems to be the mind-set of a group of people who have no choice, are alienated, or get stuck in a rut. Nevertheless, does it make sense that their work is merely unified, and that they simply produce garments much like machines? Do they simply perform at the request of designers? Are they then merely passive? From a mainstream point of view, yes. New challenges and the creation and pursuit of difficult designs were difficult to see. However, as repeatedly stressed, they execute certain agency with their own power within the spatial and temporal matrices of their everyday lives. Furthermore, as briefly mentioned earlier, they constantly conflict and collaborate with designers. In so doing, in fact, they rather prefer repetitive and simple work and even say that it is fun (*jae-mi-it-nuen* 재미있는).

Indeed, sewing people actually prefer repetitive work because every minute and second is directly related to money, and because repetitive tasks are more productive, money-making work. Jung-mi states:

All things yield to money. Haha. It may seem boring to do [repetitive work] with one design, but it makes money. It's hard to make lots of money if we do something complicated and new. It's better to do something familiar. Because it makes money, it's fun.

- Jung-mi, a sewing practitioner in Soojin Apparel

Sook-ja also does not usually venture out to do something new and to sew something complicated. Rather, she prefers working on things that are familiar to her, as she (relatively) regularly receives orders from design companies which have outsourced work to Sook-ja's workshop for nearly a decade. Because Soon-sun meticulously performs the patterning and cutting job, and because Sook-ja is a neat sewing practitioner, their workshop has relatively constant orders, so they do not need to deal with new and complicated designs. Generally, they may be not active in pursuing new changes or challenges, taking a passive stance, but in a different light, they wilfully choose familiar and *efficient* work, because work productivity is closely related to their living.

According to Archer, agents strategically strive to seek better ways 'to get the most out of propitious circumstances, which may mean adopting a more ambitious goal, so that a good outcome is turned into a better one' (2003: 6), since human-beings possess 'freedom in determining their own courses of action' (2003: 7). In this manner, sewing practitioners deliberately refuse new designs and instead wait for familiar ones, even when the number of orders may give them decent incomes. As familiar work can be done much faster, they can make more clothes in a day, and as a result, they earn more money. Yet, at the same time, it is not a simple pursuit of making more money. Even though some orders may bring decent income, they deliberately refuse the work if the requirements and designs are unfamiliar (or less suitable) to them. One day, Sook-ran, the female owner of Soojin Apparel, told Kyoung-deok, a sewing practitioner, that she refused an order from a design company.

Sook-ran: I told [the designer at the design company] that it would be better to seek another sewing workshop. [They asked for] only a few quantities with too many designs… So, I told him to grab another workshop.

Kyoung-deok: Yeah, we can't meet their demands. There are too many designs. How can we sew [all the pieces of different designs] in a day?

Likewise, regular and repetitive work tends to be prioritised, and jobs of less than 20 or even 100 pieces tend to be intentionally rejected depending on each deal and requirement from design companies.

Although sewing practitioners usually receive orders from designers with piece rates, as Young-joo complains above, they do prefer what they feel comfortable doing and purposefully refuse some orders, even if they make little money. In other words, from a structural and macroscopic approach, it is likely deemed that they always submissively receive orders for their livelihoods, even if they do not want some work, especially less profitable work. However, in observing their daily lives, they actually choose to work at the level they can handle. Even if the tricky work is economically beneficial to their finances, they do not pursue it when they are uncomfortable with the designer, or when the demands of clients are not bearable.

The act of rejecting something new, therefore, can be an act of judging and choosing based on their own standards, not a mere passive acceptance of repetitive tasks and performing set tasks much like machines. It is not a fixed environment in which they have no choice but to select repetitive tasks. Rather, they intentionally choose repetitive tasks to increase productivity and to keep their own working styles. Therefore, each individual is not a passive recipient but is, rather, an active decision-maker in accordance with their own standards and circumstances. With such decisions, their routines in the workplace are somewhat repetitive, but instead, they intend to ultimately improve the quality of their lives in their personal sphere. According to Ortner (2006), the intentionality in agency can include a variety of aims, even somewhat ambiguous goals, ideals, wants, needs, and desires, ranging from deeply buried unconscious aims to rather conscious ones, such as plots, plans, and schemes. My research participants intentionally choose their work, negotiate with designers, reject designers' excessive demands, discover trivial differences among cloths, adjust their way of working to each job, use their bodies heterogeneously, and constantly develop their own ways of sewing and cutting. Ultimately, they constantly choose, coordinate, and struggle every day for better productivity and efficiency, rather than simply repeating a set routine.

Returning to Giddens (1979), he argues that a theory of action was generally scarce in the field of social science because of institutional analysis, which focuses on power and social changes that were easily found in functionalism, structural functionalism, structuralism, social determinism, and orthodox Marxism. In the sociological and philosophical literature, it is easily seen that action and structure are treated as antinomies. These schools tended to overlook human conduct, and in particular, for Durkheim, the society is external to its members, since each agent is born into an already constituted society in the form of association between people, and thereby, the society is separate from individual agents (Giddens 1979: 50). However, Giddens recognises structure as an embroiled form in both conditions and consequences of agency, so a mere attempt to view structure and agency as two competing entities cannot encompass peculiar social phenomena since they are contingently associated.

> Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution… [W]e cannot grasp the significance of such practical knowledge if we interpret it separately from human consciousness and agency, or what I shall call the reflexive monitoring of conduct that is central to human activity… [T]he notions of action and structure *presuppose one another*, but that recognition of this dependence, which is a dialectical relation, necessitates a reworking both of a series of concepts linked to each of these terms, and of the terms themselves. (Giddens 1979: 5, 25, 53)

With such recognition of the dialectic relationships between structure and agency, Giddens further elucidates that the constitution of agents and structures are not discrete sets but, rather, indicate a duality of phenomena. Because continuous social relations and inter-actions occur over time and space, both autonomy and dependence between agents and collectivities continue in the *dialectic of control* in social systems (Giddens 1984: 16). At the same time, agents can influence the collective, and one can also be affected by the other, so the correlation between the actor and the structure continues in a dependent form. Here, Giddens takes the notion of 'ontological duality', as structure and agency are inter-dependent and related to one another, whereas Archer suggests a morphogenetic approach based on 'ontological dualism', in light of the fact that structure and agency are independent entities, with separate causal powers (Akram 2012).

In Giddens' argument, institutional realities are reproduced or changed in a consistent manner, because individual behaviours are always patterned by structure, even though the

agents cannot be aware of the structural contexts that can influence their actions. By contrast, Archer contends that social realities exist independently from the individual, since '"structure" and "agency" constitute two distinctive and irreducible properties and powers, and that human reflexive deliberations play a crucial role in mediating between them' (Archer 2003: 14). As such, Archer develops her concept of agency, arguing that personal identity prevails over group identity, because 'agents can only know themselves and their circumstances under their own descriptions, which are ever fallible' (Archer 2003: 15).

> We give a shape to our lives, which constitutes our internal personal integrity, and this pattern is recognisable by others as our concrete singularity. Without this rich inner life of reflection upon reality, which is the generative mechanism of our most important personal emergent property, our unique identity and way of being in the world. (Archer 2000: 10)

Likewise, Archer asserts that structure and agency are irreducibly independent, as agents have autonomous powers to affect social outcomes with their own personal identity and reflexivity, which represent the core media by which to negotiate social structure.

On the other hand, King (2010) analyses Archer's view on agency in relation to the notion of reflexivity, to which Archer designates significance as one of the 'most distinctive human properties and power' (Archer 2000: 2).

> For Archer, humans are distinctive because implicit in their doings are conscious intention and, in the course of their activities from birth onwards, they begin to develop self-consciousness; they become reflexive. As they engage in practice, humans develop emotions and a personal identity. This personal identity is not forced on them from outside, however. It is an emergent property of individual human action. (King 2010: 257)

Meanwhile, Akram (2012) worryingly sees that Archer overly simplifies agential social interaction that cannot explain the various course of its interaction with social structures, such as patterns of negotiating with the social institution, being moulded by social structures, and absorbing through habit or unconscious internalisation. According to Akram (2012), although reflexivity is a salient aspect in mediating between agency and structure, the notion of the unconscious and habit must be included in explaining agency. Accordingly, he introduces Bourdieu's concept of habitus to offer an enhanced understanding of the unconscious and habitual behaviours.

In my opinion, both Giddens' adoption of the dialectic relationship between structure and agency and Archer's approach to taking individual agent's autonomous subjectivity into account have greatly contributed to the realm of social theory. Yet, although Giddens strives to encompass the power of agency in social structure, he develops this concept within his structuration theory, which still weighs structure over agency. Against this structuralist stance, by contrast, Archer proposes acknowledging the independent relationship between structure and agency in company with the notion of reflexivity mediating these two. Still, however, Archer's argument also exclusively leans towards agency over structure, which neglects subtle, unintentional, and unconscious interactions between them, as well as habitually incorporated agency. These gaps in both arguments may stem from the tendency in academia for most social theorists to set out their logic in an extremely conceptual and theoretical way. Therefore, I strive to examine the diversified social phenomena in the Changsin-dong sewing community, using empirical, anthropological data to explain both structure and agency beyond the lopsided views.

From a macro point of view, residents of the Changsin-dong sewing community underwent certain socialisation processes in childhood, acquired the language they use, adapted to society, and lived as a part of the society in the massive sewing industry. However, in practice, just as Sook-ja and Dong-gue, who grew up in the same social environment as their sisters, stick to completely different postures and ways of sewing, individual sewing practitioners manifest their own power, embodiment, intentionality, and agency. Taken together, developing Giddens' notion of the dialectical relationship between structure and agency, as well as Archer's commitment to raising agency in the centre, I would argue that structure and agency interconnect as individuals adjust, negotiate, and constantly navigate structured social settings. I would not choose one between structure and agency but, rather, explore their interactions within specific temporal and spatial contexts. Furthermore, while both Giddens and Archer posit that 'the arena of reflexive self-expression is the sphere of leisure and consumption, not work and class' (King 2010: 257), I will take sewing workers' working sphere as a fundamental basis for their social life, since the boundaries between their work lives and their personal lives are blurred.

Changsin-dong's industrial structure and individuals' reactions constitute dialectic relationships between them. On the one hand, the rigid system makes people more passive, and their passiveness results in a stagnant economy. On the other hand, they certainly represent their own activeness within their daily dynamics. They choose, decide, and accept the given circumstances in both passive and active forms through ceaseless decision-making and negotiation in day-to-day life. Conservative and static forms of negotiation that passively accept the disappearing industry and fear changes, as well as active forms of negotiation within the given environment, happen simultaneously. Indeed, there are far more submissive and conservative attitudes in the rigid system of manufacturing, so it may be no exaggeration to say that to some extent, such a passive attitude has contributed to the recent decline of the sewing industry in Changsin-dong. Yet, it is also revealed that their own productivity, which is evidently present, and a series of efforts support the Changsin-dong sewing industry in continuing to remain to date. Their tight-knit network allows them to coexist and, at the same time, disconnect from transactions with the outside world in a somewhat clannish form, for example. All factors demonstrate contradictions and double-sided impacts. Within the dialectic relations between structure and agency, however, they keep their place in their respective positions, adapting to subtle but diverse variations and trying new things within their range in their repetitive daily lives. Thus, they are struggling every day in the transitioning and disappearing industry, exercising passiveness in the long-lasting rigid structure, and also making constant choices and actively pioneering for their future through their own agency.

In fact, since my research participants have been making money in this occupational structure for a long time, their passiveness in such a system cannot be changed in a moment. However, even though they tend to prefer and choose 'easier' work, they still care about the quality of work they have accepted and try to negotiate the quantity and the unit price with designers. As all of my research participants agreed, those sewing workshops with better skills to meet sophisticated demands have survived so far. Recognising this trend, they can make a livelihood by accepting new challenges, just as many sewing workshops made money by producing facemasks in the midst of a shortage of masks over the pandemic. Although most sewing workshops tended to refuse the mask-producing work in the beginning, eventually, in the summer, when ordinary orders were scarce because of the off-

peak period and the virus, they joined the endeavour one by one, and the involved workshops and the sewing cooperative gained a surplus.

Regarding facemask production, Dong-gue also utilised her sewing skills, which turned into a profitable business as well as an opportunity to voluntarily give to neighbours. Before many other workshops got involved in the mask production ordered by Seoul City, Dong-gue had already proposed producing cotton masks for the Jongno-gu Office. Because Korea and all other countries experienced a shortage of facemasks at that time, Dong-gue made a deal with the Jongno-gu Office very quickly. She zealously worked from morning to very late at night to meet the extreme demand as soon as possible, and as a result, she was able to make satisfactory profits. But her efforts were not merely to seek money. Soon after she released the given order, she sat back in front of her sewing machine to make more face-masks in order to donate the cotton masks to her neighbours, kindergartens, local schools, and community centres, as introduced in Chapter 3. A few weeks later, people began to know her by word of mouth and placed orders to her for masks.

While making masks for a new order, Dong-gue upgraded the fabric to thin linen for summer, which is of better quality, and developed a design in which people could insert a medical filter sheet until she was satisfied with it.

> Last time, when 150 pieces were supposed to be delivered to the kindergarten, I just remade them all because I was not satisfied with them. At that time, I had done reversing them all, and only the stitching job. But I just went out to buy fabric to make something cute because the masks were to be given to kids. So, I started all over again. I made the new ones all day long and sent them [to the kindergarten] in a hurry. The kids really liked the new fabric. They were cheering, clapping, and saying that “it’s so cute!” Their reviews were very good.

Likewise, Dong-gue continues to develop designs and better ways to sew, and if she is not satisfied with certain outcomes, she makes complete modifications and revisions. She actively takes part in new attempts, not seeking to resign herself to changes, and rather than simply pursuing money, she does things that help the neighbourhood, which makes her happy. Her independent decision and activeness determine her identity and personhood, and with her activeness, the daily practice of sharing is one of the motivations for her work, and sometimes it returns new orders.

Unquestionably, Dong-gue is one of the most proactive sewing practitioners in the neighbourhood. As she actively embraces changes, her challenges turn into various opportunities. These days, she deals not only with daily orders received from the main workshop with which she has worked, but also with numerous activities related to sewing. She sells her items on the Internet and at flea markets, provides sewing sessions at several organisations, exhibits her works in a local museum and local events, offers ideas to a local cooperative, Changsin-Sungin Urban Regeneration Cooperative, in which she is deeply involved, and the like. Namely, she works as a subcontractor in the Changsin-dong system of the sewing industry, and simultaneously, she receives many commissions from individual customers and clients from outside beyond the sphere of the Dongdaemun fashion market. Her activeness naturally makes her promote herself as her own sewing business, and such external work requests sometimes lead to other jobs.



Figure 4.9. Dong-gue's various sewing-related activities.

As Dong-gue handles a range of new trials for her business, various kinds of sewing-related businesses all come to her in the neighbourhood. One day, a ceramic-making cooperative, which previously ordered tote bags from Dong-gue, proposed a doll-making class to her. As soon as accepted the class, Dong-gue designed the fabric dolls, began making them immediately, and experimented to find easy ways to sew them. Recently, she has been exhibiting her work at an observatory café located at the top of Changsin-dong, operated by the Urban Regeneration Cooperative (Figure 4.10). As she exhibits her products, such as stuffed dolls, Christmas ornaments, collages with buttons, light shades, traditional folding screens made of cloth, etc., she ceaselessly strives to make improvements, and thereby, her pieces of sewing work continue to be displayed in several places in the neighbourhood.

> When I was young… [I] just followed my mother to the Dongdaemun Express Bus Station in Seoul and first set foot in Changsin-dong about 50 years ago. Living and dying in Changsin-dong... In this neighbourhood where my children also have grown up, I am doing art that anyone can do and spreading my talents… It seems that dreams do come true. To be a writer was my dream, but now I'm achieving my dream as a sewing artist as I am becoming a talented one.
>
> - Quotations by Dong-gue displayed at the observatory café



Figure 4.10. Dong-gue's recent work made with fabric, the reinterpretation of a traditional folding screen, *Irworobongdo* (일월오봉도), which used to be placed behind the king's royal throne of during the Joseon Dynasty. The landscape depicts the sun and moon, as well as five mountain peaks, fine trees, and water, which symbolise royal authority (the king and queen) with a wish for the peace of the people (Source: National Palace Museum of Korea Website).

Dong-gue said that she might be rather different from other sewing practitioners because she is fond of trying and making something new, whereas many other sewing practitioners concentrate on given tasks.

> People really don't change. Other people may think I'm weird, saying like, "Why is she doing that kind of thing?" Because they have been doing this sewing work for decades, they don't think about doing anything else. I think I enjoy this kind of thing, trying and making something new. It's fun. I think I would have done something like this one day, even if I did not keep working on the sewing things, right? I am just like this. Since I've been doing these kinds of new things, when people get enquiries [about things sewing-related works] in this neighbourhood, they usually come to me.

In addition to Dong-gue proactive ventures, other sewing workshops' efforts to adopt new technology or to learn up-to-date techniques in a new community centre create new opportunities for survival in the declining industry. Indeed, there are plenty of attempts to overcome socio-economic challenges: proposing some ideas for local events or projects to the local government or the community office; making a deal with the local government for subsidies; establishing a local community centre, such as Changsin-dong Design Smart Centre, which contains high tech equipment; learning cutting-edge techniques at the community centre; and buying new equipment to enhance productivity, for example.

To be specific, Byung-choon bought a Marker, a machine for marking design patterns on paper for cutting, which can be used to move patterns freely on the computer to minimise the loss of fabric, as a sort of investment. He explains why he decided to introduce the new machine in his workshop.

> Now we have to accept this [kind of up-to-date technology]. If you save [design] patterns on the computer, you can find them and print them out at once. I had been trying to put this in our workshop for years, but as it's still easier [for garment cutters] to use hands, I had postponed using it. But I finally got it… because it'll be more convenient in the long term if we just get used to using it. We have to go like this. Once we save all these patterns on the computer, we don't need all these paper patterns any longer. Once we put the name of the patterns on the computer, we can find them right away. How convenient. People use this a lot in this neighbourhood, too. But workshops need to be big [to accommodate it]. We have to go like this eventually.



Figure 4.11. Tae-sam instructing Soo-jin and Sook-ran how to use the Marker.

In addition to Byung-choon's investment in the new equipment, there are also attempts and industrious development that sometimes turn into a big hit. The case of the owner of a fabric manufacturing workshop, one of Soojin Apparel's partners, serves as an example. Over a time of great recession, he created a new fabric with continual attempts and development, and as a result, he gained success with a new material fabric.

> My factory is the origin of this fleece fabric. I myself made this fabric by attaching these two sheets together. I developed it about 4 years ago, and it was a huge hit because our client wholesale market hit the jackpot, which is a big wholesale store in the Cheong-pyeong-hwa Market. There was no fleece fabric made with two sheets attached. Look at this elasticity. It's no joke. The tissue of this fabric is very fine, and it makes the fabric more solid and warm. Since it was a huge hit, other fabric stores copied it. (He mentions a local competitor by name.) There was no such thing at that store too. [The store] copied mine.[17] But other stores' fabrics are not this tight and fine… There are no other stores to make it like this. I've developed a lot. The trend in the fabric industry doesn't last long. But from what I can see, this is going to last a few more years because there's nothing like this as winter fabric. It is light and warm with great elasticity. If another factory perfectly copies it just like it is, I may develop another one. Well, there is nothing I can do. I just need to develop another one.

As such, my research participants may seem 'passive' and 'inert' in a way, but they also make their best choices in their own ways at every moment in their daily lives. Just as

[17] Because Dongdaemun wholesale and retail shops are all non-branded and have a fast turnover rate, it is common to copy other shops' designs. The designs are usually made with references to the branded clothing, and this is why, in order to keep up with the prevailing fashion, Changsin-dong sewing workshops are adapted to one-day production. These may be different concepts of creativity and shared knowledge in terms of original design and copyright.

Byung-choon brought in high-tech equipment as an investment for higher productivity, even if it takes a little time and effort, every moment of choice sometimes changes their mundane lives into an active form. It does not occur often and is not very common, but as Dong-gue began to interact with outliers, their particular choices also created new jobs and opportunities within the disappearing sewing industry. From a macro perspective, Changsin-dong's sewing community may inevitably disappear, but in that declining industry, individuals struggle with their respective efforts to *navigate* their destinations. Here, in connection with their agency, this can be further linked to the concept of social navigation.

Vigh (2007) delineates this concept of social navigation as the manner in which agents 'navigate networks and events as they move within fluctuating social structures' (Vigh 2007: 13). When it comes to his ethnography in Guinea-Bissau, decades of corruption, exclusion by ethnicity, and economic downswing have resulted in the emergence of a rebellion, primarily consisting of unemployed and frustrated young people, which resulted in Bissau youth being under social confinement, with little inter-generational mobility, and with scarce life chances and social awareness. West African armed groups, from pro-government militias to rebel groups and vigilante groups, are likely to change their motivations, loyalty, and scope of operations over time, so the armed groups are not only manifold, but also highly volatile. When the young men decided to join particular groups, it was not just an ideological choice but, rather, an endeavour to secure a decent life for themselves and their families. Even the Aguentas, who were usually young Guineans from Bissau and urban areas, found themselves on the losing side. Here, Vigh (2007) demystifies his interlocutors' choices and social navigation as a form of effort to escape their economic hardships and social moratorium. Their choices reflect the agents' interpretation of society, which is largely linked to the country's political networks and ethnicity, and which is specifically related to patrimonial political constitutions and the distribution of authority and resources. This is because ethnicity can be an avenue to enter specific political networks, serving as a platform for the allocation of the requirement of obligation and distribution of resources (ibid.). Following this, Vigh determines that the youth seek to navigate war as an event in striving to make the best decisions in political conflicts to ultimately enhance their lives, such as creating a better living situation, securing a job, and opening up more chances in life for a prosperous future.

Building on Ingold's argument, 'for its inhabitants, journeying along their respective ways of life, the world itself *has no surface*' (Ingold 2000: 241), Vigh explains that social navigation includes the repositioning of shifting terrains and circumstances.

> As we seek to move within a turbulent and unstable socio-political environment, we are at the same time being moved by currents, shifts and tides, requiring that we constantly have to attune our action and trajectory to the movement of the environment we move through. Social navigation may thus involve detours, unwilling displacement, losing our way and, not least, redrawing trajectories and tactics. Social navigation in this perspective is the tactical movement of agents within a moving element. (Vigh 2007: 14)

In particular, based on his observations in Guinea-Bissau, social navigation is also coordinated with the immediate configuration of the social environment and its imagined reconstruction, as young soldiers should deal with the immediacy of finding their bearings in a tempestuous and chaotic situation, simultaneously with drawing possible lines of flight into the future. In so doing, again, the young soldiers understand the changes in the socio-political milieu, and find the best ways to direct their lives in an advantageous direction, which sometimes draws them to a disadvantageous path with the losing party in the war. Undoubtedly, by navigating the path ahead of agents, they strategically demarcate social and political spheres and facilitate the entry into the demarcations, which may lead to enlarging their social relationships and networks in order to see available socio-political lines of movement and strategies, and also to seek the best alternatives for their physical and social needs (ibid.). Likewise, mobilising may involve tactical choices, although these do not always prove to be advantageous, just as Brandt (1971) also recognises the existence of agency of youths in a Korean village who desire to leave the village in the pursuit of personal goals (1971: 184-213), individuals navigate the social terrain in their own way.

Much like young Guinean soldiers joining the military for social, economic, and political gain as a form of investment for a better future, my research participants make the best choices in their daily lives and navigate their journeys. Sewing practitioners' preference for repetitive, larger quantity, and simpler work stems from both socio-economic structure and individual agency. First, their spirit of challenge and creativeness has been suppressed within the sewing industry's system, in which the more clothes they sew of better quality, the longer they can survive. On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that with an individual's

agency, each individual constantly seeks easier ways to sew, develops better ways to finish sewing neatly, and intentionally refuses less profitable and less productive work. Even the acts of socialising with people in the neighbourhood in order to return home faster in case of a sudden delivery of a daily order, as well as staying at home to wait for work all day long, represent a trivial but active form of waiting. Even in a radical post-modernist stance, doing nothing is also what they actively choose to do. Doing nothing is not a dead form of an inanimate entity but, rather, an active choice, which might seem somewhat passive.

Furthermore, in their daily lives, they do not always walk through financially difficult times. Although it is temporary, just as orders of a lot of facemasks came into Changsin-dong during the pandemic, opportunities can arise in this sunset industry. It seems that they were losing all their work to China, but during the pandemic, intriguingly, some domestic demands which were often ordered from Chinese sewing factories returned to Changsin-dong with smaller quantities, since transactions with China were cut off. In this way, some sewing workshops have actually survived with the power label of 'Made in Korea', with a relatively better reputation, gradually transforming into a form of small-volume production with multiple varieties, rather than the large volume of orders that were rampant in their 1990's heyday. Sook-ja states:

> When it comes to Chinese goods, the stock is huge. Even if it's cheap, they are often in stock that is huge. We can make a little bit here as soon as the order comes, while the order should be at least a thousand pieces in China. So, when designers need smaller quantities and quicker outcomes, they come here.

Even though it is an industry that is tilted to extinction from a macroscopic view, in everyday micro life, dynamics always exist and change over time while individuals navigate through the dynamic socio-economic changes. Additionally, the sewing people's choices are not always about pursuing what is economically profitable, but about refusing some work so that they can work more comfortably. Accordingly, these choices are not always directly related to their livelihood, and this stance that livelihood is not all they seek is demonstrated when they talk about their retirement.

4.5. Inevitable Job Loss? Or, Selective Retirement?

According to many studies and statistics, the sewing jobs are already lost, and the number of sewing workshops is significantly reduced in Changsin-dong. It is estimated that the number of sewing workshops, which used to stand at more than 2,000 a decade ago, has now decreased to around 1,000. In this context, numerous academic studies and administrative reports believe that the sewing workers have been kicked out of global competition and gradually alienated. To some extent, it is clear that their work has decreased considerably. However, looking at their general attitudes towards life, they do not bother to find more work to seek money. Regarding each person's intention, choice, and agency, they actually take socio-economic changes on the chin, being complacent. Sometimes, of course, they are worried about this diminishing industry and complain about the lower number of orders, but when they have no work, they actually enjoy their lives more than ever. Young-joo states:

> We are at the stage to lay down many things. When there was low demand, I used to get many calls seeking employment, but there is no call at all nowadays. Yet, even if there is no work everywhere, no one is in a hurry, as we've already brought up our kids.

As such, sewing people have represented adaptive and pliable attitudes to given circumstances from an optimistic point of view.

Instead, when sewing practitioners have a lot of work, they work late in the evening and come into the workshop to work on weekends. But this labourious working style, which may seem unbalanced, is not needed to survive, but is just a life that gives them pleasure. Sook-ja demonstrates:

> Not long ago, someone asked, 'Aren't you tired of working?' Well, I'm just glad that I am (physically) well. I'm just living as it goes. I'm just living like this and sharing something with people around me. Everyone says that it's getting harder and harder every year. But if I were to also think like that, I would [also plunge into] the never-ending [pessimism]… But I just go along with it. What else can I do? Satisfaction has no limits... It used to be so difficult in the old days. There was nothing to eat in the past, and there were no school supplies. I lived in a country valley and had no idea why we had to study. When my mom told me to look after my younger sisters in the countryside, I just did it. Nowadays, there are so many [opportunities]. We can eat

> anything we want. Life got much better these days. So, it's okay if we are just content with [what we have].

Young-joo similarly explains:

> I work even on Sunday when I have something to finish by Tuesday. Well, I have nothing to do [during the weekend], so it's better to earn more. It's just good to have something to do.

Not only Sook-ja and Young-joo, but most of my research participants are in their late 50s and 60s, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Their age is similar to the average age of the sewing people in Changsin-dong, and it reflects the fact that the Changsin-dong sewing industry is ageing.

Yet, at the same time, their age may be appropriate for coming to terms with the declining industry. The past, which was much harder than now, may be the driving force behind their acceptance and adaptation to the present situation. Being nearer to retirement age may have affected their attitude of letting things flow, both passively and naturally. Thus, the sewing industry is not merely ageing and thereby disappearing. Rather, it can be seen as sewing practitioners' *selective retirement*. As Soon-sun enters the age of 67, he often talks about his retirement. Sook-ja explains. 'Soon-sun (i.e. her husband) said we would rather go to the country home to live, so I don't worry much about my old age.' She further explains that even though she is old enough to retire, she works not just for money, but also to identify her presence.

> I need to be in front of the sewing machine to confirm my own presence. There's nothing else I can do. This is the only thing I've learned so far. People have to do what they're good at. It's better to do things that I know how to do at this age.

Likewise, research participants express happiness and relief when they work long hours and hardly complain about the huge workload. Longer working hours and larger quantitative tasks are even welcomed. All my research participants mention that they experience psychological stability and comfort when they work more, even though it is somewhat physically demanding. Dong-gue states:

> It's very much what we do, working until late at night when it's [extremely] busy… The workplace itself gives me psychological comfort. When I need to work, with no definite idea or care, I just work. And it's stable. The working time itself is enjoyable.

Because my research participants are skilled practitioners who are able to meet a range of demands and tastes in customising clothes within a one-day production cycle, they show pride in their jobs.

> We [perhaps] are blue-collar workers within the 3D sector,[18] but it is also important to our self-esteem to make the clothes perfect because we are in charge of clothing, which is one of the essentials of food, clothing, and shelter… The Line Production system produces the outcomes by small separate processes. But here, in Changsin-dong, the Total Production system is prevalent. Individual sewing practitioners produce clothes over the entire process. It is the very characteristic of Changsin-dong sewing workshops that one sewing practitioner makes the whole garment, from beginning to end. The productivity and technique of Changsin-dong practitioners are more sophisticated than those who do Line Production. Before, people would say this is a 3D occupation, but these days, when we say that we make clothes, people are surprised… [especially when] I teach others how to alter clothes for community service on weekends.
>
> – Young-ja, a guest worker at Naeng-guel Fashion

> If you see [and know] these sewing practitioners [well], they are incredible. From a very young age to an [older] age, from very early in the morning to late at night, from the stars falling to the stars rising, [they] continuously work. Since perfect clothing is born from their hands by using this fabric [as a sort of raw material] to sell and disseminate throughout Korea, they are proud of themselves.
>
> – Nam-taek, husband of Young-joo

Sewing practitioners make their own decisions to work, even on weekends, and when they have little work, they spend their days in contentment. Sometimes, they worry if they have too little work, but it is not a huge concern for them, as they no longer need to make big money, especially for nurturing, since most of their children are now independent, and even the mature children may now financially support them. Furthermore, the sewing workers may seem marginalised, alienated, and 'poor' blue-collar workers. In fact, however, since they have been working for decades on cash, now they mostly own their homes, so they just need money for the cost of running the factory, not for something requiring a substantial

[18] The term 3D occupation means dirty, dangerous, and demanding work, a term that originated in Japan and was further developed in America.

amount of money. Of course, the more money, the better, but they simply try to be satisfied with their livelihoods, even if it is not a big aggregate, because they are making decent incomes compared to their friends in other office jobs. While the work has significantly decreased compared to 10 years ago, they now live in markedly more abundance, compared to 30 years ago – when there was not enough food to fill their hunger, and when they worked all night in a cramped room, such as the Pyeong-hwa Market. In this manner, by comparing themselves with others who are in their 60s, sewing practitioners feel grateful that they can work with their own techniques and try to live with satisfaction.

When it comes to my research participants' endeavours to cope with their threatened socio-economic life, the baby boomers have continued their *generational resilience* to socio-economic threats in their working and living spheres, as briefly outlined in Chapter 2. My coining of the term *generational resilience* is motivated by Breaden and Goodman's concept of *inbuilt resilience*, which helps family-run universities better cope with various changes in their operational environment by relying upon *their own strength* (Breaden and Goodman 2020). In a similar vein, the Korean baby boomers have also developed resilience through their past experiences, enduring socio-economic hardships throughout their childhood and achieving a stable financial status on their own. The economic hardship in their childhood, when there was little food, induced them to plunge into making money when they were teenagers, so compared to this difficult time, they can be satisfied with their present way of life through their acquired resilience. They are satisfied with their standard of living and comfort, rather than feeling dissatisfied with their 'inequality'. Therefore, it can be seen that they have evolved into a self-made class stemming from the 'blue-collar working class', which is usually regarded as an 'alienate' class. Rather, the Korean baby boomers I have observed tend to be content with the much richer present, recalling their past situation, which was very tough.

Again, sewing people's social navigation leads to their social and psychological comfort, not to economic pursuits. Just as pointed out by Vigh (2007), young Guinean soldiers may take a stake in future possibilities, such as securing a job after the war, taking the chance to study abroad for those who have obtained a second school diploma, and migration, rather than exclusively seeking immediate economic gains. While they do not actually acquire

actual huge money, the young soldiers are engaged in mobilising and finding their own ways to escape from the social moratorium through tactically manipulating social and political configurations and reconfigurations to their advantage.

> [R]ather than acting solely through an economic imperative, my informants seek to guide their lives through a difficult present terrain, while at the same time plotting and actualising social trajectories that can bring their lives adequately into the future. (Vigh 2007: 127-128)

As they mobilise and simultaneously risk their lives, it would be meaningful to examine visible and invisible social mobilisation, as well as possibilities within their imbricated flow of dynamics.

The so-called 'honourable' death is the end of an agent's struggle to fight for something, rather than being 'passive' in warfare and then simply becoming a 'victim'. As mentioned above, the labour market in the manufacturing sector continuously moves to a location providing the best price, and 'it will continue to leave behind economic gaps that must be filled by something else' (Hodges and Frank 2013: 55). Will we then see individual workers in this fading industry as simply victims of the market, along with its pattern of never-ending labour transference? Or, will it be said that they fought to the end in their respective positions and died an honourable death in the destructive competition?

In *Death of an Industry,* Shakya (2018) explains that the trajectory of the Nepali garment manufacturing sector also came to be a slow demise. Yet, she simultaneously focuses on theorising the industrial collapse and its afterlife, beyond the graveyard of the industry of the past century. Just as one of her research participants, Chhote, began to invest in stocks while keeping calm and enjoying life with family and friends in 'post-garment' life (Shakya 2018: 133), sewing practitioners in Changsin-dong also started to return to farming for their second life, become more immersed in religion, and using their sewing skills to perform other tasks. The matter of how successful their resilience works in the dying industry varies, but they certainly wrestle to cope with the economic decline and fight to the end in their respective dynamics as active agents, rather than succumbing as mere victims, even if they are seemingly passive.

The Changsin-dong sewing practitioners are living somewhere in between a compromise and a struggle with the declining industry, between the persistence of a sort of conservative craftsmanship producing quality clothes and the negotiations to meet the demands of designers, between working hard to maintain their livelihood (and existence) and enjoying post-garment life after their selective retirement. Paradoxically, even though the agency of individual sewing practitioners actively serves their everyday life, it is also true that their own agency faces limitations in certain institutional and political settings. Despite individuals' activeness, social navigation, and direct and indirect political activities through voting, there are still practical limitations within a particular framework of the state. Therefore, this thesis will seek to acknowledge the contradictory reality that involves not only individuals' idiosyncratic embodiment, agency, and social navigation, but also the governmentality of the state, which (invisibly and indirectly) governs individuals' behavioural patterns. These issues will be further explored in the next chapter.

4.6. Governmental Support and Its Limitations

In the first section of this chapter, I have examined paradigm shifts in sewing markets, namely, the shift from mass production to diversified small-quantity production, as well as the transference of the labour market, which represent the obvious factors that diminish Changsin-dong's sewing industry. In addition to these factors, an overly localised and interdependent local network, the phenomenon of the younger generation's avoidance of sewing jobs, and ageing sewing workshops, as well as the long-established part-time Total Production system and the rigid working environment of producing clothes flawlessly are the critical limitations that make individuals more passive and insensitive to new challenges in the Changsin-dong sewing industry. In particular, the slump in the domestic clothing market in Korea, especially the Dongdaemun wholesale market, threatened by global competitive labour, is the corollary of the declining sewing industry in Changsin-dong. The heavy reliance on the Dongdaemun market compels Changsin-dong sewing practitioners to exclusively meet the demands of Dongdaemun design companies rather than trying to focus

on innovation. In this manner, Kwan-jae insists that govern-mental support is a prerequisite to the re-vitalisation of the shrinking industry:

> Changsin-dong and Dongdaemun are inseparable. That's why the Dongdaemun wholesale market needs to be activated in order for Changsin-dong workshops to be activated. The plans to revitalise the market should be designed by both the Dongdaemun clothing market and Seoul City. If the Dongdaemun market is reinvigorated, Changsin-dong sewing workshops should be reinvigorated, too. Yet, conversely, if the Dongdaemun market disappears, Changsin-dong will also shrink.

As such, rejuvenating this stranded industry is closely dependent on the role of the government.

Although the stance of economic policies may vary depending on political orientation, many experts point out that raising the downward curve of the domestic manufacturing industry is not sufficient for the endeavours in the private sector alone, much like free-trade policies were responsible for some of the decline in the industry. According to Moreira (2007), for policy agendas to reinvigorate the garment manufacturing sector in Latin America to be feasible, it is necessary to diversify the layers of manufacturing, beyond focusing on 'mundane' and labour-intensive tasks and products. Moreover, Moreira contends that it is necessary to buckle down and reduce time and costs in the distribution process by utilising regional geographical specificity and advantages to increase related exports, particularly given the proximity to the US market, and to also promote productivity growth while reducing labour costs.

In the case of Japanese garment manufacturing, according to the national industrial statistics, the sewing industry in Japan has the 22nd lowest wage among 22 industries, and the average age of workers in this industry is over 50, in line with the ageing phenomenon in this sector (Kim 2011: 355). According to Geum-hwa Kim (2011), the Japanese govern-ment has encouraged changes in production methods over the past few decades, from the form of small-scale production (as a sort of cottage industry) to craftsmanship, to mass production, to automated production, and to customised production, as counter-measures against the decline in the number of consumers in conjunction with a long-term population decline in the clothing industry. Starting with Toyota's introduction of customised cars in

the auto-mobile sector, customisation technology has been favoured in manufacturing industries since order-made items fit consumer tastes, and accordingly, automated garment production plants are domestically located in Japan so as to flexibly respond to consumer demands (ibid.). Moreover, the mediating institutions between the government and industry play an important role, especially in cooperation with educational institutions, apparel companies, and local governments, pursuing innovations and changes, such as various R&D research, human resource cultivation, the adoption of automated equipment, and the input of talent in the IT industry to the automated garment-manufacturing field.

Returning to the South Korean government's efforts to cultivate human resources in the sewing sector, the government invested 2 billion won (around £1,300,000) in state funds, adding a sewing technology R&D project to the Daegu Textile Industry Promotion Project in the late 2000s, and announcing a plan to strengthen links between the clothing and distribution industries (Choi 2012). In 2008, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy and the Korea Institute of Industrial Economics and Trade funded multiple organisations to conduct a survey of sewing workshops nationwide (see Korean Apparel Industry Association 2013b). Based on the accumulated data, they proposed to build an apartment-type sewing complex in Dongdaemun to provide an optimal environment and expand the supply chain of production personnel through procurement of advanced common facilities and materials (see Choi 2012). These development-related issues will be examined in a more in-depth manner in the following chapter.

The Korean governmental policies induced unregistered small businesses, which represented 68% of all sewing businesses, to register for the workplace in order to support their national insurance and improve the workplace environment (Choi 2012: 47). Nonetheless, according to my research participants, workshop owners, who are required to provide the national insurance to workers, are actually not happy with the official business registration. Small-scale sewing workshops were able to apply for the simplified business registration for small businesses, which Sook-ja also took, but it also ended up as a short-term measure with tax benefits, incurred due to the fact that the form of registered business does not conform with reality. Consequently, Ji-pyo took his time to cancel the simplified business registration, and then officially registered the business as a normal registration

under his own name. Jung (2021) points out that as a result of the investigation into Changsin-dong, owners and workers at small businesses in Changsin-dong need support for meetings with professional counsellors to solve various practical issues, such as taxes, labour, accounting, and management. Most workshop owners have dealt with taxes by leaving the issue to their accountants, but this is because they do not have sufficient information about taxes and management to reduce the cost (Jung 2021). Thus, the government needs to increase the opportunities to obtain tax benefits, and to provide richer information on pragmatic matters.

It is true that various education programmes have been offered free of charge, funded by local governments. In practice, however, due to the lack of awareness of the necessity of employee education in sewing workshops, the application rate for the training programmes was low, and the training sessions, including special equipment education, came to be abolished, and some trainees are receiving sewing education as simple hobbies (see Choi 2012). Moreover, as previously mentioned, sewing workshops do not prefer to hire the trainees educated from the training programmes, since the short-term programmes make it difficult to acquire skills that are used on the ground, and thereby, the trainees cannot get involved in sewing jobs immediately in the field. Because sewing techniques are difficult to master over a short period of time, and because garment manufacturing requires very sophisticated embodied skills, it is expected that the current training programmes will not be able to seamlessly place trainees in the field. Here, Sun-yoon Choi (2012) suggests a differentiated plan to provide subsidies for sewing workshops so that trainees can work as apprentices with fewer burdens on economic productivity. In this way, an institutional system should be established to reduce unnecessary spending on the free programmes for trainees who are interested in sewing, as well as to foster lowered entry barriers for beginner workers, even in small numbers, so that sewing workshops can accommodate beginners.

In another case of governmental subsidised initiatives, Ji-pyo applied for a government-funded project that provides computer-friendly services to sewing practitioners, free of charge via CAD programme and new equipment that allows sizing design patterns up and down. In the end, however, Ji-pyo did not meet all of the conditions due to unrealistic restrictions. Specifically, even though it was a tempting service for sewing workers, few

sewing workshops had the right to participate in the project because it was restricted to officially registered workshops. As a result, unregistered workshops were not able to take part in these opportunities, and even registered workshops hesitated to show their design patterns due to mutual agreements with designers not to share designs. Likewise, despite various governmental policies and schemes, the disparity between the realities in the field and official policies has yet to narrow, and institutional improvements must be made in more concrete ways. There are still numerous constraints to establishing satisfactory foundations, and these are primarily attributable to political interventions and bureaucratism, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

In Hodges and Frank's (2013) analysis of the declining mill villages in the Southern US, the federal government and the state also introduced subsidy programmes to assist displaced workers due to manufacturing job loss after NAFTA, but the workers did not deem the state level of support as sufficient, especially when it came to saving the neighbourhoods. Accordingly, some considered that tourism might reactivate the villages, for example by renovating vacant mills and converting them into museums. The southern textile industry in the US is being replaced by tourism, led by city and country councils, converting the old and disappearing industrial zones into tourist sites, which may be one of the most feasible remedies pursued by government.

> Although such a strategy may deliberately capitalize on the nostalgia many feel for the rural community of the past, and in turn, belie the current poverty and joblessness of these former textile towns, it nevertheless has an appeal that may be marketable in ways designed to help rather than take advantage of community residents. (Hodges and Frank 2013: 54)

As Hodges and Frank point out, tourism may not replace the number of jobs that manufacturing once provided to support these communities, but it certainly attracts people to spend money in the neighbourhoods. Such a strategy of turning a devastated industrial area into a tourist destination is very easily adopted in many countries, and success stories are often introduced to others.

In Shimizusawa, Japan, which once had a mining industry, there have been ongoing efforts to revitalise an old industrial area, based on the mining heritage of the community, initially driven by the community. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Zhang, Liu, and Su

(2021) also assert that old industrial districts encounter various social problems, such as economic decline and an ageing population. The industrial districts are, in fact, often regarded as outdated and passive places, with views underestimating inhabitants' (i.e., workers') subjectivity in the political and cultural discourse in modern times. Zhang, Liu, and Su (2021) exemplify the 798 Art District in Beijing in China and the Pier-2 Art Centre in Kaohsiung in Taiwan as cases in which most of the participants in the seemingly bottom-up schemes in the industrial restoration are actually outsiders, not residents. By challenging this superficially bottom-up measure, Shimizusawa planned to implement two ten-year plans of heritage utilisation for regional revitalisation, chiefly through heritage tourism.

In the initial stage of Shimizusawa's plan, the principal aim was to get to know people to help them understand the meaning of renewable memory, landscape, and resources to ultimately achieve economic and cultural revival. Then, on the basis of the initial programme, the aim was the comprehensive integration of heritage uses with urban construction, as well as practical activities, such as cooperation between education departments and the public, to encourage senior citizens to participate in heritage revival activities, which led to the smooth development and expansion of the revitalisation project. The foremost factors for the successful revival may be the two long-term ten-year plans to fulfil the steady promotion of the use of the mining heritage, while effectively preserving the landscape, as well as cooperation between facility uses, the hydroelectric power plant, and the childhood education centre focusing on education, which have over time assisted in the elimination of funding support from the local government (Zhang et al. 2021).

As a result, the Shimizusawa Eco-Museum was brought to life as another physical space plan to reflect local cultural specificities, with strategies of collections, preservation, exhibition, research, and education. There was plenty of cooperation with multiple organisations, such as research institutions, that helped to concretise the idea of urban construction. The Sapporo International Art Festival, which trained the residents to become tour guides and narrators, also contributed to the renewal of this industrial town, breaking away from the image of a 'hollow town' (Zhang et al. 2021). Specifically, both the tangible coal mine heritage and the intangible coal mine culture, directly related to collective memory, have played a significant role in planning urban construction through material

planning, as well as innovating economic and cultural specificities within the community. The broad participation of the community, including NPO personnel and residents – from children to the elderly, including artists – has been realised in implementing industrial heritage renewal and regional revitalisation, along with established mutual respect between the participants (ibid.). Taken together, by solving the survival dilemma within the community – namely, excavating, cultivating, and inheriting both tangible and intangible values of the mining heritage – community members and residents have benefited from the results of industrial heritage regeneration.

Nonetheless, this industrial revival might be romanticised as 'a sustainable development of old industrial towns', while the complexities and difficulties over the projects are inadequately addressed. The long-term revitalisation should benefit the residents, but there may also be social exclusion within the community, competing interests from various stakeholders, disagreement among the participants, and the like. Therefore, a more ethnographic point of view may describe and include more realistic complexities in the urban space, which has ongoing conflicts among diverse stakeholders. Moreover, Shimizusawa is in a rural area, and the era of its mining industry was over; hence the industrial landscapes were almost abandoned, which may be simpler to renovate and transform the mining town into a museum town. By contrast, Changsin-dong's sewing workshops are still in operation, and are in a very busy urban district, which makes urban planning much more intricate, and this is another critical dissimilarity between Changsin-dong's case and Detroit's case, namely, the nearly abandoned industry and city.

Recognising the need for governmental support in activating Changsin-dong's local economy, Seoul City, Jongno-gu Office, and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Korean government, began to pay attention to Changsin-dong in the 2010s. Not surprisingly, urban regeneration was also implemented in Changsin-dong in order to revive the neighbourhood, and a tactical plan to touristify the neighbourhood was adopted. However, the urban regeneration scheme was planned only for a two-year period, although it was supposed to have been long-term. This short-term regeneration scheme may be closely linked to frequent changes of the party in power in Seoul. Again, touristifying the old industrial district in rural areas may be welcomed by the residents, but in urban areas,

it will prove more complicated, with higher demands and more intricately interwoven interests. Accordingly, there has been growing criticism of the governmental project in Changsin-dong, and this leads us to the next chapter.



Image 8

5

The Political Threat



Image 9

5. The Fading Light of Urban Regeneration

When construing lifeworlds and particular environmental settings, Tilley (1994) stresses 'who is experiencing and how' (1994:11). Similarly, Brumann, Dimmer, and Schulz (2012) contend that space is not only a given container in which human social and symbolic interaction unravels but is also substantially influenced by such interaction. While space reflects physical, social, and economic variables with constant interactions, political power pervades the lifeworld in urban space. Thus, in this chapter, I will explore various issues of urban development in Changsin-dong from multiple angles to better examine the layers behind the scenes. I will specifically focus on urban regeneration in Changsin-dong, which has recently received significant attention as the leading area of urban regeneration in Seoul. The urban regeneration of Seoul, benchmarking urban regeneration cases in the UK and Western countries presented in the 1990s, was implemented with the aim of area-based and community-based regeneration to prevent the excessive construction of high-rise buildings. Citizens, who felt scepticism and fatigue from indiscriminate redevelopment, came to have expectations for urban regeneration, and younger social entrepreneurs who shaped ideas for the environmental issues, regional identities, and creative programmes for residents began to settle in Changsin-dong. However, due to the end of the official business period of urban regeneration and the sudden change of power in Seoul City, the progressive government's urban regeneration came to an end, and young people began to leave Changsin-dong one by one. Therefore, tensions are currently rising socially and politically in this neighbourhood, and the real estate market is becoming more unstable. Thus, in order to find out why Changsin-dong's urban regeneration, which was once wishful and splendid, was bound to face limitations, I seek to understand intertwined contexts, beyond a fragmentary understanding of urban space.

To understand the complexities surrounding urban regeneration, I will first look at the background of how urban regeneration was driven in the global sphere and how it was adopted in Changsin-dong in chronological order. Then, I will examine why criticisms of Changsin-dong's urban regeneration has brought about in relation to the construction and

operation of the Sewing History Museum, which is identified as a representative result of urban regeneration as well as a waste of tax money, simultaneously. The critical views on urban regeneration's focus on visibility and construction will be dealt with in relation to anthropological literature on *infrastructural fetishism* (see Larkin 2013: 333) revealing that infrastructure remains only visible, not functional. In addition to the lopsided pursuit of visibility in urban planning, urban regeneration may foster greater reliance on the political intervention of the local government, even though it was introduced to overcome the limitations of capitalist developmentalism and presented as a bottom-up, post-political, and community-based paradigm.

Unlike these efforts and the associated trials of such bottom-up techniques, in fact, the public offering project was designed by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and then applied to the Changsin-dong community. Consequently, hierarchical power relationships between administrations and local cooperatives have remained over the entire course of the project. The avoidance of responsibility over jurisdiction, document-oriented quantitative assessment guidelines that still persist to public institutions, and public relations efforts to promote continuing electoral success were cited as the main reasons for limits in achieving the bottom-up mission of urban regeneration. Thus, I will contest political manoeuvres, namely, 'government through community' (Rose 1996: 332) that can be ended up the instrumentality of community.

Furthermore, even though efforts to revitalise the community in Changsin-dong provided a foothold for the influx of many social entrepreneurs, the newly settled social enterprises incrementally lost their sustainability and eventually left Changsin-dong, when the time period and budget execution of urban regeneration terminated. As social enterprises tended to depend upon the government-led execution of funding, the mayor's four-year term and the change of the local government may be closely linked to short-term community revitalisation and urban regeneration that ultimately resulted in superficial outcomes. Meanwhile, the 'unchosen' groups of people – e.g., residents who are not related to the sewing sector, sewing people who are not officially registered, and migrant workers – have been socially excluded, and conflicts among diverse stakeholders have intensified. Moreover, the real estate market in Changsin-dong has been violently shaken as a result of

‘policies for politics’ and ‘vote-seeking’ pursuits, which have led to real estate speculation, causing members of the sewing community to turn their backs on issues related to urban regeneration. Taken together, I will look at why Changsin-dong’s community revitalisation has remained limited and what consequences the community has encountered to date. By examining these multi-layered social, economic, and political contexts, I strive to identify the limitations of urban regeneration in Changsin-dong and further explore the lessons provided by this community.

5.1. From Urban Redevelopment to Urban Regeneration in the Global Sphere

Because Korea experienced rapid economic growth in the late 20th century, Seoul City strove to establish a direction for active urban renewal by improving urban space, with the 1988 Seoul Olympics serving as momentum, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Yet, it was eventually acknowledged that the urban renewal paradigm, which was largely adopted in urban areas in Korea, caused enormous social problems, including insufficient limits to property speculation, environmental contamination, traffic congestion, community disruption, social exclusion, and gentrification. In fact, this excessive developmentalism has also become a problem in other Northeast Asian countries. Chu (2014) describes the urban redevelopment process in China as violent construction, with political power under the guise of ‘revitalisation’, explaining further that in the process of redevelopment, ‘it sits murkily between ruination and renovation’ (Chu 2014: 352).

In *Urban Spaces in Japan: Cultural and Social Perspectives,* Brumann, Dimmer, and Schulz (2012) also discuss the political, bureaucratic, and asymmetrical power embedded in Japan’s redevelopment. Particularly, Brumann pinpoints the 1990s’ townscape troubles in Kyoto with regard to high-rise development and promotion of the *manshon* industry. In the initial stage of urban planning, the bureaucrats’ drafts were usually adopted, rather than basing such decisions on input from citizens, and subsequently, in the process of planning and implementing urban redevelopment, collusion between administrative organisations

and developers often limits the active participation of citizens and affects their daily lives through brute suppression. Over the course of the development process, then, treacherous methods and uneven power relationships were easily established. This is because the information power, legal response capability, and political strategies of construction companies are at levels that are too high for individuals to deal with.

> If neighbours do not comply, many developers will then try to drive wedges into the neighbours' solidarity, for instance, by going from door to door and spreading bad rumours about protest leaders or secretly buying the cooperation of key individuals… In all this, developers have an edge over the protesting neighbours since they are big corporations with nationwide experience in applying such measures whereas most neighbours are beginners. (Brumann 2012: 59-60)

Sorensen (2002) also critically views Japan's redevelopment status during the twentieth century and finds that the bureaucracy and urban developers tended to neglect growing public concern regarding urban development-related issues, and continued to seek growth-oriented public policies during the period in question. Ignorance of the public sector among policy makers meant that the majority of the population was sacrificed for economic growth in relation to large-scale, state-built housing. Specifically, when it comes to the distribution of the benefits and costs of development, the benefits of development – e.g., increasing land values – went to landowners and developers, whereas most of the expenses were left to the residents or taxpayers to pay (Sorensen 2002: 342). Meanwhile, the conservative party in Japan raised financial support from major land development and construction companies, and the construction of high-rise buildings was used as a fundamental cornerstone of capital procurement to increase its electoral strength. The construction lobby had a strong influence on the politics of right-wing groups, and in view of this, high-rise apartments continued to be promoted for construction. This is because these large-scale projects are much simpler to process and execute a governmental budget. By contrast, small-scale government projects that have a real impact on residents' quality of life are more complicated to implement, and the visible effect is scarce in light of the money invested. This developmentalism is used as a political means, and socio-economic trade has resulted in an acceleration of the inflation of land prices in urban spaces in Japan (Sorensen 2002).

Indeed, this one-sided, top-down urban redevelopment, which has affected Northeast Asia since the 1980s, was not only a social problem among Asian countries. Throughout Europe and the United States, the desire for urban development dates back to the 1930s, and it increased proportionally as the need for urban redevelopment surged following urban environmental degradation, especially since the post-World War II period. During this time, which was called the 'era of the bulldozer', the focus of urban development was on clearing slums, rebuilding areas ravaged by war, and rehabilitating neighbourhoods (Barosio et al. 2016: 369). Between the 1970s and the 1980s, the revitalisation of city centres received attention in connection to their economic development, and a government-led development approach was maintained with urban renewal aims. However, various social problems surrounding the government's unilateral urban development continued to be disclosed, and changes and improvements in the paradigm of urban redevelopment began to emerge. From the 1980s onwards, the shifting role of governments began to take form, and regeneration interventions started to take place, along with physical, social and economic actions in the UK and the United States.

Compared to top-down, government-led urban development, bottom-up, community-based, area-specific, and more integrated approaches came to be recognised by academics, experts, and civil sectors. The transposition to urban regeneration started to be suggested as an alternative to government-led and entrepreneurial redevelopment by large construction companies, with an emphasis on citizen participation in urban regeneration schemes throughout the policy-making process and the implementation of the entire project. It was designed to prevent excessive development of high-rise complexes without considering regional culture in order to achieve community- and area-based revitalisation, with preservation of local specificities. The paradigm shift from urban redevelopment to urban re-generation is explained in great detail in *Urban Regeneration: A Handbook,* and I have excerpted some parts of the table as below.

< Table 5.1. The evolution of urban regeneration >

Policy type (period)	**Redevelopment (1980s)**	**Regeneration (1990s)**	**Regeneration in recession (2000s)**
Major strategy and Orientation	Many major schemes of development and redevelopment; flagship projects; out of town projects	A more comprehensive form of policy and practice; more emphasis on integrated policy and interventions	Restrictions on all activities with some easing in areas of growth
Key actors and stakeholders	Emphasis on private sector and special agencies; growth of partnerships	Partnership the dominant approach with a growing number of government agencies	More emphasis on private sector funding and voluntary effort
Spatial level of activity	In the early 1980s, focus on site; later emphasis on local level	Reintroduction of strategic perspective; growth of regional activity and interventions	More localist initially with developing sub-regional activity
Economic focus	Private sector dominant with selective public funds	Greater balance between public, private and voluntary funding	Private sector dominant with selective government funding
Social content	Community self-help with very selective state support	Emphasis on the role of community	Emphasis on local initiatives and encouragement of third sector
Physical emphasis	Major schemes of replacement and new development; 'flagship schemes'	Initially more modest than 1980s and then increasing scale; heritage emphasised	Generally smaller scale schemes, but larger projects returning
Environmental approach	Growth of concern for wider approach to environment	Introduction of broader idea of environment in context of sustainable development	General acceptance of sustainable development model

(Source: Roberts, Skyes, and Granger, 2017: 19-20)

In the handbook, moreover, Roberts introduces urban regeneration with the basis for its initial definition:

> ... comprehensive and integrated vision and action which seeks to resolve urban problems and bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change or offers opportunities for improvement. (Roberts 2017: 18)

Likewise, improvement not only in physical and economic conditions, but also in social circumstances, came to be the central idea behind the new model of urban planning, with prominence accorded the integration of policies and actions in various department-related fields. Following this, the key success factors of urban regeneration are the empowerment of inhabitants of neighbourhoods and the replacement of universalism through strategies, approaches, methods, and actions characterised by a participatory, bottom-up approach (Barosio et al. 2016).

Additionally, Roberts (2017) argues that urban regeneration should reflect reality since the danger always exists that 'the logic of strategy may be deflected or damaged by the complexity inherent in an ever-changing urban situation' (2017: 26). As urban space has become more complicated, competitive and continues to rapidly change as we move further into the 21st century, urban regeneration has been introduced, adopted, and evolved as methods, ideology, and practice to form a balanced development scheme that moves beyond the past ideas of physical reclamation. This need for an integrated and comprehensive approach to urban regeneration may be correlated with the recognition of the fluidity, spatio-temporality, and relational variability of urban space in contemporary anthropology. This growing awareness of the need for urban regeneration has been presented across the globe, and the transition of the community-based, autonomous urban development paradigm has had a significant impact on Korea as well.

5.2. Changsin-dong's Urban Regeneration

As mentioned above, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has been moving at a rapid pace to achieve economic growth and an adequate housing supply since the 1970s. As a result, Seoul experienced rapid expansion in terms of urbanisation within two decades. In particular, the conservative party,[19] which continued in power in Seoul from 2002 to 2011

[19] South Korea's political polarisation has been intensified, and this has been the case especially since the military dictatorship collapsed in the 1980s.

(and from 2021 to the present), focused on increasing the supply of housing in the city by accelerating urbanisation and improving the residential environment within a relatively short period of time. More specifically, the former Mayor Lee Myung-bak inaugurated the 'New Town Project' as a form of urban renewal in 2002, with the goals of shoring up real estate supply and balancing regional disparities.[20] In conjunction with the newly settled New Town project, Seoul's urban renewal expanded its scope. By virtue of the freshly constructed luxurious apartment complexes, the real estate market in Seoul became more vibrant, and the New Town project became a more systematic and major means of the large-scale housing supply in urban areas. In company with the craze of the New Town project, Changsin-dong was also designated as one of the third New Town candidates in Seoul in 2005, and all old houses in Changsin-dong were supposed to be entirely cleaned up, and high-rise residential complexes were planned for construction through unilateral urban renewal planning.

However, the advent of the global financial crisis in 2008 not only cast a shadow over the domestic economy in Korea, but also dealt a serious blow to the real estate market (Du 2013: 35). There was rising criticism that the initial purpose and direction of urban development were tarnished and distorted due to the intervention of speculators who accelerated instability in the real estate market and the governmental pursuit of economic interests (ibid.: 36). Furthermore, much like China and Japan, the construction of a large-scale apartment complex, and the extensive physical renewal of shanties and deteriorating buildings in developing areas began to be condemned for causing various social problems that cannot be solved by housing supply alone. Accordingly, the controversy over urban development in Changsin-dong came to the surface, and the Seoul Metropolitan Government's attempts to implement the New Town project in Changsin-dong fell through in the face of residents' strong opposition to the redevelopment policy in 2007, when an agreement with the residents failed to be reached on this project. As the conflict between

[20] The Han River flows East-West through the centre of Seoul, and the northern and southern parts are often called *Gang-buk* and *Gang-nam* in Korean, which mean the north and the south of the river, respectively. *Gang-nam*, where major financial institutions and parliamentary shrines are located, rapidly developed in the 1980s, and thereby its housing prices soared, while *Gang-buk*, the north of the river, in which Changsin-dong is located, was the historical centre of Joseon-dynasty palaces and has a relatively larger number of old buildings. These regional features have widened the gap between the *Gang-buk* and *Gang-nam* regions in Seoul.

the administration seeking to promote the New Town project and the residents opposing it escalated, the residents' actions became more pronounced. In particular, in April 2010, when the renewal promotion plan was decided upon and announced, residents formed emergency committees against the New Town project, and carried out more organised activities (Seoul City 2019: 27).

In fact, delving deeper into the New Town project, the biggest confrontation was between the supporting party and the opposing party: residents of the upper neighbourhood who had lived in their houses or in small industrial-residential units, and landowners in the lower neighbourhood who rented out three- or four-storey buildings to sewing workshops, respectively. This is because landowners prefer to rent out single-family houses or multi-family houses to small-scale sewing workshops, which have brought higher and more regular rent while maintaining their current architectural form, rather than acquiring the right to sell newly built apartments through the redevelopment (Kim 2015: 139). Kui-sung, the president of Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative, elaborates on the conflicting views on the redevelopment project:

> The reason why the New Town project didn't work was that the building owners were against it. The reason why the building owners opposed it was that the monthly rent from a building was usually more than 5 million won (around £3,100). Changsin-dong is the only district in Seoul where people can buy a building with about a billion won (around £630,000). So, when a building is up for sale, [people relatively easily take it], and it can be rented out straight to sewing workshops. There is no vacancy because sewing people need a workshop space with a small investment. So, the rental follows one after another [with few vacancies]. If there are vacant buildings, the owners of buildings might not oppose the redevelopment, but this would take a few decades. After I die, there will be a vacancy. Then, it will be developed. But there's no vacancy right now. Although the [garment manufacturing] market is not working out well these days, still, Changsin-dong is the most important place for merchants in the market.

In the upper neighbourhood, where many sewing practitioners lived and worked in small industrial-residential units, residents mostly advocated for physical redevelopment to renew their houses, while landowners in the lower neighbourhood opposed the redevelopment because the buildings had good rent revenue. This confrontation exists even now, when urban regeneration is over, and it is no exaggeration to say that the conflict has intensified. This is because even though urban regeneration was carried out as an alternative

to the large-scale New Town redevelopment project, there were no noticeable changes in residents' lives over the seven years after the commencement of urban regeneration. As of 2022, the topic of urban development has come back again, and this will later be addressed in more detail.

Additionally, those in the upper neighbourhood, who were in favour of redevelopment, lacked an understanding of their share of building expenses for redevelopment. When they faced a situation where they had to pay hundreds of millions of won (millions of pounds) in the early stages of redevelopment promotion, they did not have the money, and subsequently, they came to relinquish the redevelopment. Kui-sung further explains:

> What I always say is that for the development, you should have at least a few hundred million won (a few hundred thousand pounds). That way, you won't be kicked out. But there are a lot of people who don't know very much about this. It's like, for example, if you have a 100-square-meter flat, [you have to pay the share of building expense according to its size]. Otherwise, you won't be allocated an equivalent size of the flat when it's developed. But there are a lot of people who don't know that. That's why native people are expelled [after redevelopment]. So, when it comes to public redevelopment with the government's intervention, it may be fine. But with a private construction company, locals will be kicked out completely. Then, rich people come and buy the apartment and resell it.

The unaffordable share of building costs placed the New Town project in jeopardy, and conflicts between the lower and the upper neighbourhoods regarding the New Town project left deep scars among residents, often rendering even decades-old, family-like neighbours uncomfortable when facing one another (Seoul City 2019: 29). In 2011, however, with the election of the progressive party, when Mayor Park Won-soon took office, there was a dramatic change in the political stance on urban planning in Seoul, and the possibility of new changes in Changsin-dong also began to be realised.

Recognising problems of the New Town project, Mayor Park announced the Seoul Metropolitan Government's plan representing a policy to overcome the limitations of urban redevelopment paradigms in 2012 (Seoul City 2019). Finally, in October 2013, the New Town project in Changsin-dong, which had been dragging out for nearly a decade since 2005, was called off. Here, according to a research report by Seoul City (2019), it was proclaimed that the continued efforts and 'strong opposition from the residents' to protect

the district resulted in the revocation of New Town (2019: 27-30). Yet, it may be a fact that building owners, the opposing party of the New Town project, who were also called 'the squeaky wheel' by the counterparts, had a greater influence on the decision-making process. In other words, the Changsin-dong's New Town project was thwarted by insufficient community discussion among the municipal authorities, developers, and residents.

Through such processes, the excessive and conflict-ridden redevelopment method foundered, and new alternatives advanced following the election of the new mayor. In particular, the enactment of the Special Act on the Promotion and Support of Urban Regeneration, which took effect in December 2013, provided a major turning point for institutionalisation to solve many pending issues facing urban renewal projects (Du 2013). Following Seoul City's first adoption of urban regeneration in Korea, Changsin-dong was designated as a leading area for urban regeneration in Seoul in 2014. In order to overcome the limitations of urban redevelopment methods, the developmentalist and entrepreneurialist stance of the previous local government was denounced. In this way, urban regeneration was regarded as a 'good' solution, presenting a vision of phased revitalisation and preservation of regional specificities with a social and cultural approach. Urban regeneration was able to obtain policy rationality as a replacement of physical renewal approaches in light of the criticism of all-out urban redevelopment policies (Jung and Kim 2020b), along with international trends, especially with benchmarking of Western countries. Likewise, Seoul's urban regeneration has taken on post-political rhetoric, especially as a symbolic policy that demonstrates the city's new urban discourse through a drastic contract to the keynotes of previous redevelopment (ibid.).

Since the inception of urban regeneration in Changsin-dong, local revitalisation had been concretised through resident presentations, forums, and urban regeneration management councils. The Urban Regeneration Support Centre was established in Changsin-dong as a government-affiliated organisation under the Seoul Metropolitan Government, and countless revitalisation-related programmes were carried out from 2015 to 2017. As of 2015, more than 20 local cooperatives, NPOs, NGOs, local experts, and social enterprises were actively involved in local issues. Typical projects carried out over urban regeneration include the construction of the Iumpium Sewing History Museum, fostering a specialised

sewing street, touristifying quarry sites, activating youth facilities and public libraries, establishing residents' common facilities, ensuring the maintenance of roads and streetlights, and installing CCTV cameras. Furthermore, sewing workshops in Changsin-dong and students at Hansung University's fashion department, which is adjacent to Changsin-dong, conducted a regional win-win cooperative project through a public offering that laid the foundation for organic cooperation between private, government, industrial, and academic institutions. Through the execution of an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the Seoul Metropolitan Government and Hansung University, students were expected to build a human network and understand the field of the fashion market in the Dongdaemun fashion town beyond the realm of the university (Jung et al. 2019). Simultaneously, Changsin-dong sewing workshops were expected to update their sense of design according to the knowledge and trends of the younger generation in order to spur the local economy and create jobs.

Nevertheless, doubts have been raised by most of my research participants during my fieldwork regarding whether the repair and renovation of local infrastructure, the construction of community centres, and the episodic industry-academic cooperative project have had a significant impact on revitalising the local economy, as well as improving the quality of life in Changsin-dong. Moreover, the results and symbolic significance of such urban regeneration have already been covered in many press releases, research projects, and especially in Seoul's reports, and while there are countless positive reviews on urban regeneration in Changsin-dong, only a few evaluations point out its limitations. Among the few critical reviews on Changsin-dong's urban regeneration, I will specifically advocate Ji-yoon Kim's article on '"The Sewing Village" Changsin-dong: Dissonance between Urban Regeneration and Industrial Revitalisation' (my translation).

Kim (2015) points out that in spite of Seoul City's promotion of Changsin-dong as a leading urban regeneration area by virtue of the voluntary participation of residents, in practice, most residents have merely faced another type of urban development plan, without a sufficient understanding of what urban regeneration is, or the differences between New Town development and urban regeneration. In Kim's research, many residents often state in interviews that Changsin-dong was selected as the leading urban regeneration area 'after

Mayor Park Won-soon visited' (Kim 2015:147). This was at the beginning of urban regeneration, when the area had already received attention from Seoul City and the Jongno-gu Office, before the residents' demands were raised. In other words, the 2010 urban planning scheme – which aimed at community-based urban regeneration and challenged the 'entrepreneurial city' that was the mainstay of the conservative camp in the early 2000s – began with Mayor Park's interest, rather than residents' actual needs. Specifically, Kim (2015) argues that the attention from the Seoul Metropolitan Government towards Changsin-dong is primarily attributable to the impact of the new architecture of the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP). The DDP can be seen as one of the typical urban branding strategies to transform Seoul into a global city because its design was entrusted to a world-renowned architect, Zaha Hadid, and it was focused more intently on creating an urban landscape than its contents.

In the case of urban regeneration in Manchester in the UK, for instance, prevailing self-praise rhetoric claims it has been reborn as a centre of the cultural industry through an entrepreneurial economic development plan using sport. Se-yong Jang (2018) criticises this entrepreneurial urban planning, arguing that local governments and business communities collude to lead urban growth and operate growth mechanisms as a product of a small number of elites' control. When the unemployment rate reached 9.1% in the late 1990s, the Manchester government implemented the New Deal to carry out the workfare policy, but as problems of unemployment, inequality, and social exclusion intensified, it came to gain a hypocritical image (Jang 2018: 77-79). In the 2000s, manufacturing workers were less than one-fifth of the total employment population, while four-fifths were engaged in the service sector, and the flexibility in post-industrial Manchester, emphasising competition and change, was expressed as an increase in temporary employment. Despite ostensible indicators of its success, this policy has deepened social polarisation. The employment structure has seemingly reduced the unemployment rate due to the increase in temporary female labour, accompanied by the expansion of the service industry, but it brought about the worsening of employment quality and job security, which resulted in the image of a city with two faces (Jang 2018: 80-84).

The urban landscape-focused approach exclusively emphasises visibility, while the usefulness and maintenance of newly built buildings were not seriously considered. This can be attributed to administrative, document-based, irresponsible bureaucratic backgrounds and activities, which are eventually linked to a means of maintaining political success. Here, the political intervention and territorialisation in the process of governance have naturally led to certain groups being shunned, with a lopsided focus on 'targeted' or 'agreed-upon' groups. The social exclusion meant that the unchosen majority of residents were left indifferent to urban regeneration, and the selected groups also left Changsin-dong when the capital flow of urban regeneration was cut off after the official termination of the regeneration effort, which did not bring direct benefits to their areas of life, namely, their livelihood. In addition, the interests of various groups, fuelled by the introduction of the 'new' paradigm of urban regeneration, began to destabilise the real estate market in Changsin-dong, causing such phenomena as increases in monthly rent of sewing workshops and real estate speculation from the outside.

5.3. Infrastructural Fetishism, Bureaucratism, and Politics

Among the vast criticisms of Changsin-dong's urban regeneration, the construction of the Iumpium Sewing History Museum is particularly exemplary. In fact, as mentioned above, the construction of the sewing history museum began with the idea of Mayor Park, after he visited the neighbourhood and provided a briefing on the urban regeneration plan.

> Mayor Park particularly ordered, 'We need to establish a sewing museum to foster the Changsin-dong area as a tourist destination and to consider ways to promote regional economic revitalisation in connection with surrounding local cultures'… The Seoul Metropolitan Government expects to utilise the sewing museum as a cultural and tourist resource to serve as a focal point to support the local economy as well as the development of the sewing industry, beyond the clothing manufacturing-related agglomerated area. (Economy Herald, 3 August 2015, my translation)

As the statement indicates above, the Iumpium Sewing History Museum presented the sewing industry in Changsin-dong as a representative result of urban regeneration, and was

expected to serve as a promotional tool to increase the inflow of outsiders. Of course, research and visualisation of the sewing industry were implemented to establish the museum, and it is true that the newly constructed, elaborate museum has lowered the entry barrier to Changsin-dong, which is crowded with motorcycles carrying rolls of fabric.

'Wow, it's beautiful! I like it!' Young visitors elicited pleasant emotions when visiting the rooftop café of the museum, as the museum strove to attract younger generations through a game-like programme designed by Seoul City, especially before the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the overall number of visitors was very low, and it was often observed that docents of the museum were idle at the exhibition space. It also has a negative reputation among locals, as various members of the Seoul Garment Sewing Coop. complained. 'I don't know what this museum does.' 'It's located at a dead end. There is no car park. This is a waste of taxpayers' money.' 'It's not useful to local residents and sewing workers. It failed.' On the other hand, unlike other sewing practitioners, Dong-gue expresses a somewhat optimistic view:

> My brother-in-law (i.e., Soon-sun) said, "What the history museum gave us was the increased rent and factory taxes only." I agree that they can dislike it. But I don't think like that... Since there's only one sewing history museum in this country, we should take pride in it.

As Dong-gue states, it is true that it should also be meaningful for sewing people to feel proud of the existence of the sewing history museum, and to have the opportunity to interact with young people there. However, it remains an undisputed fact that the history museum itself does not currently serve as a form of direct aid to sewing people or residents.

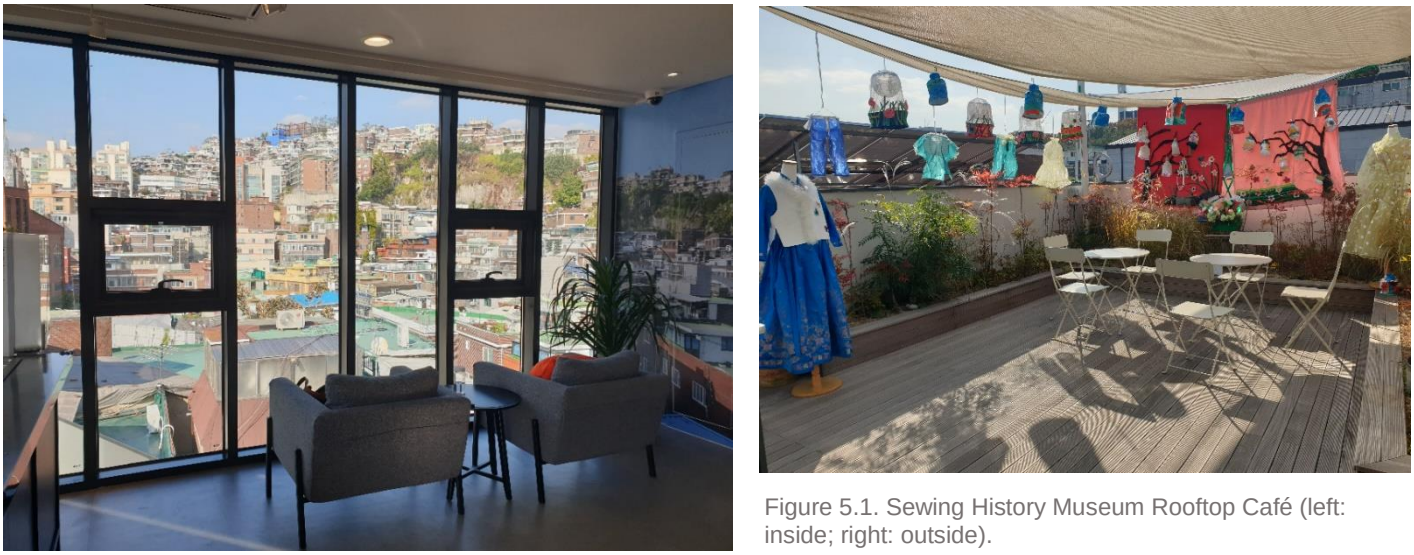


Figure 5.1. Sewing History Museum Rooftop Café (left: inside; right: outside).

The vision of urban regeneration – which sought the social and economic regeneration of Changsin-dong, where small houses, low-rise sewing workshops, narrow alleys, steep stairs, and uphill roads are sprawled out – did not result in a significant change for locals. The grand commencement of urban regeneration resulted in unsatisfactory outcomes, and the sewing history museum, with 7 billion won (about £500,000) invested, became a space with few visitors, without providing economic benefits to local residents. Because it is located at the end of an alley, not on the main street, it is difficult to attract passers-by, and COVID-19 worsened this situation. Even the café on the rooftop, designed as a community space for local residents, was rarely used by residents and was eventually replaced by an exhibition space. Kui-sung states:

> People said that the museum spent 7 billion out of 20 billion of urban regeneration's budget, but no one knows where 7 billion went. It is the government's tax. The annual budget for the museum is 900 million won (around £570,000). It's all tax in this country. It makes me outraged. In order not to do such things, the government should hold a lot of meetings and conferences. Public servants just check when the documents come in, and when they feel fine with the document, they just get through it.

In other words, document-oriented work by civil servants has often been cited as the reason for failures in government spending. In the sewing history museum's case, furthermore, there has been criticism of the shape of the scissors employed on the signboard installed on the upper wall of the entrance of the museum. Embarrassingly, the scissor-shaped design of the sign adopted by the museum was a type of scissors used at a barbershop, not in the sewing sector (Figure 5.2). In other words, the signboard designed with the shape of scissors used in other industries was installed to introduce and promote the sewing industry, and this was not even recognised by officials in charge until the museum began operations. As such, the Iumpium Sewing History Museum simply represents the history of the sewing industry, and efforts to interact with the sewing people of Changsin-dong and develop some measure of symbiosis fell short of locals' expectations. This negative view of the museum is rampant among the sewing people, much like the opinion of Kwan-jae, the director at Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative. For Kwan-jae, who worked at the local cooperative for eight years, it remains a question of how urban regeneration directly affected the sewing industry.



Figure 5.2. The signage at the entrance to the Sewing History Museum.



Figure 5.3. Garment-cutting scissors and hand scissors used by sewing and cutting practitioners.

According to Kwan-jae, encouraging sewing people's self-esteem and operating the space as a community centre are the only things the museum offers to directly benefit the sewing industry as a means of community revitalisation, which remain limited in scope. Because sewing people work from 9 am to 9 pm, it is practically impossible to use the facility within the allotted 9 am to 6 pm time frame, which represents the operating hours of the museum. Therefore, the construction of the museum became a project without a direct link to the improvement of the situation in the sewing industry.

The officials' superficial policies and armchair arguments are frequently highlighted, and such comments can be found in a few previous papers condemning impractical urban planning. According to Ji-yoon Kim (2015), in conjunction with the growing criticism of the museum, Seoul City planned to change the name of the facility to 'Sewing Support Anchor Facility' in order to create a space for sewing people. However, in an interview with a public servant who is in charge of the project, the public servant states as following: 'It has not been decided yet what will be in it. We don't know. It will be decided after hearing what the sewing people want' (Kim 2015: 149). Kim asserts that municipal authorities simply focus on the physical construction of the building, and the function and contents are considered afterwards, just as the exterior of Dongdaemun Design Plaza was splendidly designed, while its contents were not determined in the initial stages. In addition, many media outlets have pointed out that most of the budget (80 billion won, i.e., around 50 million pounds, including 20 billion won of official government grants and 60 billion won

of external grants) was used to construct buildings and facilities, such as building public libraries and parking lots (31.8 billion won, i.e., around 20 million pounds), restoring old sewage pipes (23.8 billion won, i.e., more than 15 million pounds), and creating community facilities (8.1 billion won, i.e., around 5 million pounds) (Hankyoreh, 15 February 2021). Yet, most of the newly built facilities are used by the Seoul Metropolitan Government as a means of public relations, not by locals.

Along with Seoul City's pursuit of beautification, touristification, and infrastructure fetishism, Changsin-dong's urban regeneration had focused on 'specious' visibility, such as redesigning signs and replacing the streetlights, rather than renovating smaller old houses and buildings. By fostering Changsin-dong as a cleaner environment and planting an image as a 'successful' urban regeneration case to outsiders, especially tourists and younger generations, Changsin-dong was likely to become a tourist spot and acquire the political legitimacy of the local government. In particular, the reason it was able to strengthen this purpose to beautify the neighbourhood was that Changsin-dong was an 'appropriate' area to be selected as urban regeneration's leading zone, where there is a high possibility of 'decent' regeneration projects through the use of the following local specificities: the manufacturing industry, which is uncommon in Seoul; various historical features that may serve as a tourist resource, including scenic townscape providing a view of Seoul from high ground; and already settled artists and social entrepreneurs who can be employed to promote Changsin-dong as a 'rare' close-knit urban community. Following this, I will now explore recent anthropological studies on beautification of urban space and utopic infrastructuralim, as well as why the administrative system remains limited, specifically examining public servants' cursory propensities, document-oriented evaluation systems, financing that must be spent within a given fiscal year, and political interventions and associated manoeuvres.

I will first look at Schwenkel's (2015) work on Vietnamese infrastructuralism in postwar reconstruction and its fallout. In her article, Schwenkel indicates that urban planners showcased urban infrastructure in Vinh City as a spectacular socialist achievement, and this utopic infrastructuralism proved difficult to sustain and eventually resulted in profound shortages of resources, namely, water. With East German-engineered systems for housing

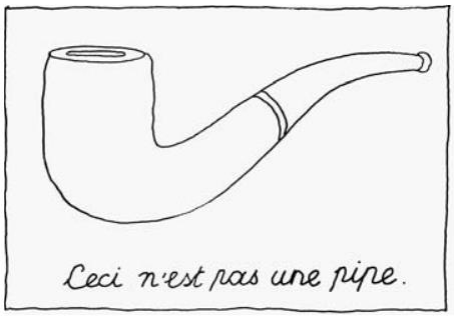
reconstruction, governing actors celebrated the socialist housing as a glorious icon. High-rise social housing was to represent the hope of recovery and development, 'flaunted as ideal, modern, and desirable, with "high technical and aesthetic qualities" and "convenient amenities" for workers and their families' (Schwenkel 2015: 527). Water supply in homes was expected to improve quality of life, especially for women, who would no longer be required to haul water from public wells. Nonetheless, after residents moved in, the flow of water quickly came to be an end, and taps in the apartments ran dry. Consequently, men and children, for example, bathed outdoors, and women joined in communal practices to wash clothes or dishes.

> [T]he unseen hardware and absent materiality of cities suddenly become visible, exposed, and awkwardly present in our everyday lives… visual technopolitics that promised a better world, is now an abject sign of future uncertainty with the looming prospect of demolition. (Schwenkel 2015: 522, 531)

In an urban setting in socialist Vietnam, water became a problematic materiality beyond its intended use and meaning, which was assured by the bureaucratic apparatus of governing actors as a part of the state's care in a system of centralised distribution, underscoring the state's incompetence in adequately providing public services to its citizens. The scarcity of water revealed existing social hierarchies between the governing and the governed, and it also generated associated social practices. Interestingly, such communal practices as to gather water from, or do house chores at, the public well continues to supplement household reserves and reduce monthly expenditures, even when relatively more reliable water supplies are available in their homes. The lack of the promised resource enables new forms of solidarity and a collective ethos of maintenance and repair to disenchanted residents. Thus, as the infrastructure remains only visible, water becomes an ethical matter and a point of state intervention that generated possibilities for new social, political, collective, and everyday practices in response to the state's failure to meet residents' basic needs. Furthermore, adapting a European (i.e., East German-engineered) system and a spectacular design for the state's public relations has turned out to be a failure, which may be linked to Changsin-dong's benchmarking of Western discourse in urban regeneration and its outward promotion of the new buildings.

Dalakoglou (2010) similarly pinpoints such visual technopolitics in Albania, in which miles of empty roads were constructed as part of the Kakavijë-Gjirokastër highway, despite the fact that the socialist state had largely restricted ownership of cars. Dalakoglou presents the politico-economic framework by analysing the dimension of narratives and the spatial poetics of daily use of the road, which demonstrate not only a spatial phenomenon, but also social and political entanglements. Given the uselessness of the road, the feelings of desire, pride, and frustration, as well as associated practices and narratives, were unpacked beyond the macropolitical and macroeconomic implications of road-related activities (Dalakoglou 2010). The infrastructuralism created various relationships, emotions, practices, politics, and poetics among individuals, which can be found in individual agency. In this way, the road infrastructure is not a mere physical system for vehicles, but is, rather, a complicatedly intertwined and correlated network (see Latour 2005), and this is linked to Larkin's (2013) view on infrastructure as 'an amalgam of technical, administrative, and financial techniques' (2013: 330). Here, in terms of political elements, Larkin (2013) critically asserts that the aesthetic dimension of infrastructure often prevails over its technical usage because visibility is a requisite to continue its political power.

The effect of power in visibility is also elaborated by Anand (2011) using an ethnographic example of water supply in Mumbai. From his fieldwork, Anand indicates that infrastructural interruptions in neoliberal economies have emerged as a means of political manoeuvring, since 'pressure can be mobilized by using pumps or politicians, and access to the technologies of pressure is mediated as much by capital as by social connections' (2011: 543). Because residents are foremost in securing the electoral success of political parties, urban space tends to be used to bring the services of the state to its citizens in a highly visible manner. Hence, the relationships between residents and the governmental apparatus are complex. This political manoeuvring in the lopsided pursuit of visibility in establishing urban space is also criticised by Lea and Pholeros (2010) as exemplifying the contentious politics of indigenous housing in Australia. At the beginning of their article, they presented a figure, 'This Is Not a Pipe', motivated by surrealist René Magritte, to satirise the policy of visual display in Aboriginal housing, with Magritte's statement, 'a thing which is present can be invisible, hidden by what it shows' (quoted by Gablik 1976:



12, recited in Lea and Pholeros 2010: 188). Therefore, 'seeing' becomes 'believing' over the process of construction and maintenance of the indigenous houses.

Figure 5.4. Image by Paul Pholeros. (Lea and Pholeros 2010: 187)

In Aboriginal housing in Australia, in order to offer new 'affordable' houses, the construction only focuses on the façades, which look like adequate houses, especially when newly constructed or refurbished. However, the cheap construction, repair matters, impractical settings, and maintenance issues quickly turned into major problems, such as partly completed steel sheds, houses with minimum utilities, and insufficient water supplies, washing facilities and sewage infrastructure, and so forth. Since '[t]he supply and maintenance of affordable housing and infrastructure remains one of the most vexed issues confronting indigenous public policy' (Lea and Pholeros 2010: 188), the aesthetic logic of discourses embedded in the indigenous housing renders it futile.

> In the laissez-faire administrative fiefdoms that often "govern" indigenous communities, being insensitive to the letter of standards, guidelines, and certification requirements is a tactic of organizational survival, while being punctilious about who is hired and the quality of what they deliver represents the path of most conflict. (Lea and Pholeros 2010: 196)



Figure 5.5. Image by Paul Pholeros. (Lea and Pholeros 2010: 205)

Accordingly, the hardware failures in concretising the housing stem from a poor initial plan, cheap construction, inadequate material choice, insuf-

ficient maintenance, as well as the tactics of or-ganisational survival and superficial effort at the administrative and governmental levels. In ad-dition, Lea and Pholeros raise questions about document-oriented administration and the ensur-ing evasion of culpability to avoid various types of paperwork snowballing. Much like Larkin's statement 'Pipes turn out to be documents' (Larkin 2013: 335), questionnaires based on quantitative methods 'not only create the look of action in policy defence, but also rely on the cursory glance for their completion' (Lea and Pholeros 2010: 197). This irresponsible, hurry-up-and-finish administration resulted in Aboriginal housing's perfunctory output, and it is especially prevalent when the financing must be quickly spent in the fiscal year within a set scope.

Returning to the case in Changsin-dong, subterranean works in urban regeneration that were used to showcase the visibility of the touristified and beautified 'old and alienated' manufacturing community can be linked to the above cases. The document-oriented administration based on the quantitative evaluation system also brought about vain and impractical facilities. It is no exaggeration to say that the political showcase to promote the achievement of a particular project is highly purposeful in obtaining a lot of electoral support in the quadrennial elections and ultimately maintaining power. When it comes to distinctive discourse in urban planning, the progressive party seeks to increase the number of community centres to enhance the community, whereas the conservative party is more likely to emphasise the economy, with the aim of attracting vast investment to large-scale regional redevelopment. Because Korea is politically polarised, political competition between the two parties is rampant in its treatment of local businesses as a tool for voting beyond political philosophy and advancing the discourse of each party.

Even though the four-year election system and bipolar political characteristics in Korea have the advantage of maintaining a critical, self-reflective, and relatively transparent system, there is also the risk of being used as a vote-seeking means for politics in governmental projects. This is why the sudden change of power in Seoul City in 2021[21]

[21] The former mayor of the progressive party, Park Won-soon, who had been in power since 2011, suddenly ended his life after being embroiled in a sexual harassment scandal. As a result, all of the city's projects experienced a rough passage due to the absence of a final decision maker whose position had not been properly filled.

has had a profound effect on urban regeneration, and even on the survival of a local cooperative called the Changsin-Sungin Regeneration Coop. (CRC), which was launched and has been in charge of follow-up work on urban regeneration after the official termination of urban regeneration in 2017. Just as Larkin (2013) asserts that 'visibility was necessary to continually renew its political effect' (2013: 336), the Seoul Metropolitan Government also routinely uses visibility to maintain its political legitimacy and continuity, since the mayor is the leader of a municipality and, at the same time, a politician who belongs to a particular political party.

In doing so, because real estate and development-related issues are selected as one of the presidential pledges with an announcement of a specifically targeted figure, projects are unilaterally carried out according to a set schedule, regardless of changes in local circumstances (Lee 2020). The more the local authority's objectives are specifically presented, the more difficult it becomes to flexibly respond to various issues. Since public officials and politicians (in both parties) become obsessed with their performance and numerical targets, the driving force to carry out the project according to the characteristics of the region and various social phenomena becomes weakened. In the end, the specific target leads to a vicious cycle that makes the structure of the public project more and more dependent on governmental resources. Much like the largely unusable and controversial infra-structure mentioned above, newly constructed buildings remain less serviceable than the initial expectation regarding their usage, in company with limitations in maintenance, scarce attractive contents to locals, and a lack of interest and activities among residents.

Furthermore, the Jongno-gu Office, which is under the jurisdiction of the Seoul Metropolitan Government, ought to serve as a bridge between Changsin-dong and Seoul City. However, as the Jongno-gu Office does not directly belong to the Seoul Metropolitan Government and has its own budget management system, a less cooperative form of communication between those two administrative organisations can be often observed. Although Jongno-gu is obviously a part of Seoul, they are officially separate institutions, so there are efforts not to actively accept the demands of one another and not to create conflicts between the two. Because the Seoul Metropolitan Government is directly affiliated with the mayor, it is easily influenced by every word uttered by the mayor,

whereas the Jongno-gu Office tends to seemingly fit the variable directions of Seoul City's policy stance in accordance with the mayor's political party. When it comes to urban regeneration, since the project was led by the Seoul City Office and not by the Jongno-gu Office, Jongno-gu does not necessarily welcome the project and often seems to avoid administrative culpabilities.

The uncooperative attitude of civil servants from the Jongno-gu Office is demystified through complaints by Kyoung-ju, an executive (working-level) director of the Changsin-Sungin Regeneration Coop.

> I couldn't get any support from the Jongno-gu Office while other district offices offer us some projects. They are not interested in urban regeneration... Seriously, the civil servants at the Jongno-gu Office don't think that urban regeneration is their business, saying that "Urban regeneration is a project of Seoul, not ours."

As such, a jurisdictional dispute between each public apparatus, the tendency of evasion of responsibility, fierce competition between two political parties, and the inevitable vertical relationship in the budgeting of public projects have remained a part of Seoul's bureaucratic system. The vertical relationship is one of the reasons why public servants treat urban regeneration as one of the 'budget-providing duties', not a 'subject of service' for Changsin-dong.

The power relationships between the local cooperative and the local government are constantly identified as obstacles to productive communication and efficient budget execution. As public institutions must go through legal procedures to secure and execute budgets, they are likely to react rigidly to certain issues. Moreover, projects are often stalled well beyond the period initially suggested in the planning stage, due to delays in budget execution for various reasons. As Wang-geun Lee (2020) pinpoints, for example, when state funds are secured at the end of the year, the local council applies for the allocation of local expenses and receives approval in the next year, resulting in a time difference between the approval of budget execution and the specific process of a project. This frequent delay in budget execution caused participants to grow tired of financial issues, and the plans eventually fizzle out. In this way, despite the form of 'cooperative', it was often observed that local cooperatives tend to passively accept the guidance of the Seoul Metropolitan

Government or the Jongno-gu Office. The events throughout the establishment of a new community centre, the Seoul Fashion Smart Center: Changsin Solution Anchor, can be exemplified.

Kwan-jae also complains about government officials' abuse of power, poor handover, and cursory proceedings. When applying for the public project of establishing the Seoul Fashion Smart Center on behalf of the sewing cooperative, for instance, he referred to a former case when planning and proposing a public project, but his proposal was rejected due to the differing standards of each public official in charge. The nature of the transfer of civil servants after a few years of a term, which is usually on a two-year cycle, represents a system under which a project cannot be steadily carried out for more than a few years. The frequent replacement of personnel, along with the public officials' rotation system, also leads to a lack of expertise and a weakening of the sense of responsibility, which is a serious constraint in increasing the project's advantages. Regeneration projects take a long time for those who are in charge to understand the work, because it requires cooperation between departments and is intricately intertwined with various stakeholders, such as local residents, landowners, tenants, construction companies, investors, developers, real estate agents, local artists, local activists, and migrants. When the public official in charge becomes familiar with the work, the project is likely to lose its ambitious direction. Because the transfer of work between former officials and new officials in charge is not smooth, the existing problems are repeated, and relevant data is not comprehensively filed (Lee 2020).

Additionally, Kwan-jae included the full budget in the proposal for the project, while a competitor proposed a lower price. As a result, the other organisation made a deal with the local government. This is because public offering projects are assessed on a quantitative basis, Kwan-jae's proposal gained a lower grade than the competitor because of the higher budget, regardless of the quality and contents. In the end, fortunately, Seoul City acknowledged the fact that the sewing cooperative best understood Changsin-dong's sewing industry, so the sewing cooperative eventually entered into a contract with Seoul City to establish the community centre. Even after the contract was negotiated, however, when a higher-ranking official does not pass the budget without negotiations with the local cooperative, the money needs to be returned to Seoul City. Consequently, in the operation

of the community centre, the local cooperative is still struggling with civil servants' armchair arguments and idealistic demands.

The hierarchical relationships in the public sector and each organisation constrain the establishment of a truly bottom-up system and create boundaries at the very beginning of the goal setting, in the initial business planning phase, which are directly tied to the governmental sector and the mayor's interests. In this process, there is unavoidably a pre-conceived notion of the 'targeted site' judging from the perspectives of the administration and the governmental apparatus, which is far from reality on the ground. As Dong-gue notes:

> The government officials had this preconception of "Oh, it's such a poor area [where] people will like urban regeneration and will cooperate when the money comes" but it's not like that. That's why urban regeneration was difficult here.

Such unilateral attitudes and policies, which fail to reflect reality, stemming from bureaucratic presumption result in superficial consequences of urban regeneration, and it is not a fundamental remedy to *regenerate* urban spaces. Rather, Changsin-dong should 'fit' Seoul City's implicit and tacit policy stance when proceeding with urban regeneration, not fulfilling a horizontal and supportive partnership.

Limitations of *bottom-up* urban regeneration are multiple in the rigid administrative, institutional, and political structure: civil servants' attitudes in shirking their responsibility – particularly the jurisdictional disputes between the Seoul City and Jongno-gu Offices; a lack of handover between public officials over their two-year shifts; the quantity-based assessment in the homogenous system; the inevitable power relationship between local cooperatives and governmental apparatuses because of financial independence granted the local organisation; and politicians' use of urban development for their political advance-ment, which my research participants have often mentioned. COVID-19 might be one of the key external factors affecting the operation of the community centres and local cooperatives, but the frequent replacement of the officer in charge, impractical solutions based on documentation without an in-depth understanding of the situation at the site, and inherent hierarchical power relationships have vastly influenced the management of local organisations. Additionally, just as politicians always come to the sewing people's annual night to engage in self-promotion without an invitation, which happens more frequently

during the election season, political interest and usage of Changsin-dong neighbourhood by politicians are embedded not only urban regeneration-related issues, but also in day-to-day life.



Figure 5.6. Politicians greeting visitors at the Sewing People's Annual Night event.

Because politicians are called out for their use of Changsin-dong in their political journeys, political entanglements are intricately intertwined with many issues, such as the real estate market and the flow of capital, beyond simple differences between the progressive and the conservative parties. Below, Kui-sung explains why Changsin-dong is a strong area for politics in general:

> Jongno-gu is divided into the East and the West, and the west side is rich, whereas the east, in which Chang-dong is located, is poor. That's how it's classified. Instead, there is a large population here in the eastern part [of Jongno-gu], as a lot of sewing businesses have been settled in this neighbourhood. I heard a while ago that politicians don't want this area to be developed because working people usually choose one party and just follow it. But rich people, who are much more educated, don't advocate for only one party and change their minds according to each issue. Sewing people here only know one thing. So, which politician would want a change here?

Likewise, political manoeuvres underlie everyday life in both visible and invisible forms, much like Foucault's argument that power shares the externalities of society itself, and there is no room for complete freedom between the nets of power (Foucault 1980). Therefore, political entanglements and reactions to them have rendered urban space a social, political, and economic phenomenon, well beyond the mere physical development in an urban space.

In this research, I do not simply intend to contest the political orientation and each discourse of the progressive or the conservative party. It is, rather, an attempt to challenge the ways of 'demonstrating' for the survival of politics and the series of devices employed to gain political power beyond urban planning paradigms and political directions in the form of *politics for politics*, which is still prevalent in Korean society. No matter what political ideology each political party pursues, much like we have seen both in socialism in Vietnam and in the laissez-faire administrative fiefdom in Australia, the political showcase always follows the political projects. Just as Brumann (2012) indicates that the established political patterns and top-down orientations in Kyoto municipality in Japan have not been completely removed, despite its new building code regulations in 2007, Changsin-dong's urban regeneration also has been limited in bringing about a broad debate with the residents from varied sectors.

Insufficient discussions with various stakeholders, including residents, in Changsin-dong – which may be primarily due to the swift work to overthrow the former right-wing administration's urban redevelopment and to frame the regeneration pursued by the left wing in Seoul – was one of the crucial factors that created noise in the urban regeneration process. The various stakeholders here include tenants who operate larger sewing workshops in the lower neighbourhood, landowners who rent out low-rise buildings, residents who live in small detached houses in the upper neighbourhood, sewing practitioners who operate small residential-industrial units by adjusting their homes, merchants in the local market, social entrepreneurs who entered into the neighbourhood dreaming of urban regeneration, and various communities including, local cooperatives, migrant workers (i.e., part-time workers dealing with the most labour-intensive jobs in small sewing workshops), for instance. Yet, among the various stakeholders, some may easily their needs whereas some may find forms of social exclusion in urban regeneration, and this will be addressed in greater detail in a later section. In the next section, we will analyse the logic and subtle complexity of the governing system itself in relation to the notion of govern-mentality, beyond the binary between conservatives and liberals.

5.4. Governmentality and the Instrumentality of Community

Since Foucault's concept of governmentality has already been widely addressed in numerous fields of academia, in this section, I would like to delve into this notion of governmentality that penetrates urban regeneration in Changsin-dong, rather than deeply digging into this philosophical concept per se. Looking at the approach to governmentality in the realm of geography, I shall particularly examine Jung and Kim's (2020a) article titled 'The Decline of Industrial Area and Its Politics of Development through the Lens of Governmentality: The Abandoned Mine Areas in the Southern Gangwon Province'.

Jung and Kim (2020a) argue that governmentality encompasses the certain autonomy that is formed by rationality, guiding the way of individual or collective mentality and activity as a result of such governmentalisation. Namely, it can be defined as 'the form of power operation that encompasses complex and sophisticated tactics, techniques, discourse, and rationality that lead the individual or the collective to act' (Jung and Kim 2020a: 436, my translation). In this way, governmentality is omnipresent in both mentality and activity of individuals, not only in the governing form but also in 'an organically interconnected society' (Rose 1996: 333).

> … discipline regulates everything. Discipline allows nothing to escape. Not only does it not allow things to run their course, its principle is that things, the smallest things, must not be abandoned to themselves. (Foucault 2007: 45)

Accordingly, the government functions as 'the internal logic of an administrative apparatus' (Foucault 2008: 93) in the 'system of correlation' (Collier 2011: 62), beyond its conventional matter of regulating the relationship between the state and society. As the agglomeration of the population and the environment began to be considered an objectivity of new governance, a particular social and spatial domain began to operate with an aim for its own 'normal state' (Jung and Kim 2020a: 429).

For Foucault, in a modern society in which the nation's territory cannot be expanded or reduced, the subjects of state governance, intervention, and regulation have begun to return to society's population and individuals. In such a process of governance, the regulation of

milieu shifted to preserving safety and vitality within society, which may be brought about by various uncertainties such as disease, unemployment, accidents, damage, and so forth (Jung and Kim 2020b). Through such territorialised social relationships, governmentality indirectly provides an opportunity to the general public to achieve their autonomy to govern by territorialising a specific locality. In so doing, such territorialised social relationships empower them with ethics of social ties and responsibility. That is, individuals in social relationships are object to governmentality, and are empowered as subjects of it at the same time. Here, certain knowledge, discourse, and rationality can be mutually and complementarily formed, penetrating urban socio-spatial power relationships. From this point of view, governmentality can be linked to the territorialisation of local communities as both objects and subjects of governance (ibid.).

In particular, governmentality mediating between territorialised urban space and developmental politics can be understood to represent the ways in which the various actors who make up the city and connected to one another, as well as the changes and effects that have occurred within the 'apparatus of governmentality' (Foucault 2008: 70), rather than governing of the entire state space. Accordingly, the notion of governmentality allows us to see urban regeneration as a governmentalisation programme, defining urban regeneration as one of the strategies or methodologies of neoliberal urban development through the traditional analytic axis of power, such as state, law, and citizenship (Jung and Kim 2020b). The emphasis here is on the process of urban regeneration, which works as an apparatus in the operation of various discourses, laws, institutions, norms, and practices, and forms an autonomous body that internalises governmentality. Here, behind urban regeneration's focus on local autonomy, sustainability, and community life, somewhat insidious and sophisticated strategy of governmentality is implicit, working to create an 'autonomous' community without direct government intervention by reorganising the subject of regeneration into the realm of autonomy and responsibility.

> [I]t seems as if we are seeing the emergence of a range of rationalities and techniques that seek to govern without governing society to govern through regulated choices made by discrete and autonomous actors in the context of their particular commitments to families and communities. (Rose 1996: 328)

Although I have emphasised individuals' agency and social navigation in everyday life in the former chapter, massive power relations still remain, especially regarding the matter of urban planning and politics. Paradoxically, when agency is produced and reproduced by social actors in terms of urban regeneration, their resistant acts trigger another form of political intervention and capital investment, because the particular area looks *alive*. Then, their resistance agency stimulates diverse interest among academics, politicians, real estate agents, developers, entrepreneurs, etc., and in so doing, agency takes root *within* power relationships, with political manoeuvres at the state level.

> In one field of meaning, "agency" is about intentionality and the pursuit of (culturally defined) projects. In the other field of meaning, agency is about power, about acting within relations of social inequality, asymmetry, and force. (Ortner 2006: 139)

Ji-yoon Kim (2015) asserts that urban regeneration in Changsin-dong is framed as a 'good policy' that invigorates the local economy through gradual phases led by residents and emphasises only 'good' purposes by contrasting the large-scale demolition method of the redevelopment paradigm of the former government. The state-led, top-down policy in the New Town project led to many 'harmful' consequences, and to replace it, the 'post-political' discourse of urban regeneration was advanced. However, even though liberal governmentality discourse focuses on a post-political institution, eventually an invisible form of politics persists. In particular, the manufacturing industry ecosystem in Changsin-dong, which operates as 'self-sustaining' without government intervention, meets the requirements to maximise the policy effect of urban regeneration as 'a place where locality, community, and backwardness coexist' (Jung and Kim 2020b: 539, my translation). That is, it is an area equipped with suitability and its own self-sustaining system actually works as an *apparatus of governmentality* with an already regulated system.

More specifically, urban regeneration relies on the services of local governance through community revitalisation, with a focus on bringing residents, who have been objects to politics, directly into the process of urban development. To 'effectively' bring the residents, urban regeneration experts enter into the targeted region to reproduce the opinions and interests of local residents as official issues of an urban regeneration policy, and to establish participatory governance among stakeholders within the region by using specific strategies such as education, forums, workshops, community councils, and cooperative establish-

ments. Here, according to Jung and Kim (2020b), the direction of governmentality seems to create social relationships void of complaints about the governmental project, without government managerial intervention. Precisely, complaints are *autonomously* resolved within society and do not reach the government (Jung and Kim 2020b: 542). With the establishment of a follow-up organisation of urban regeneration, such as the CRC, for instance, the area is reinforced for sustainability, even after the official completion of the project. Thus, by transferring communities to being the agents of regional development, management, audit, and culpability, the responsibility of local survival lies within the community. Ultimately, local communities came to be granted official responsibility in nominal terms for 'self-sustaining' urban regeneration.

In fact, such interest in the rejuvenation of local communities in urban spaces was derived from the Community Revitalisation Programme that Mayor Park introduced following his inauguration in 2011. As mentioned in the report by Seoul City (2019), the support fund for the Community Revitalisation Programme attracted participants who did not have much time and money to participate, and through small group meetings and activities, communities were encouraged to resolve local issues and specific needs. Yet, the direction of regeneration through these communities can be identified as a tool for instrumentalising communities, created by disparate practices and discourses to manage the city. Following this, Joo-hyung Park (2013) demonstrates the need to critically examine the trajectories and outlines of political tactics permeating urban space.

Park (2013) claims that the direction of Seoul City's Community Revitalisation Programme may be leaning towards greater structural and broader neoliberal political manoeuvres, not emancipatory politics that resist neoliberal urbanisation. According to him, the Seoul Metropolitan Government's public offering for community revitalisation is often regarded as an ideal nostalgia that we should return to, and it is often recognised as a space of 'hope' where the social can actually be realised. Accordingly, self-sustaining communities are romanticised as 'the only solution to restoring the devastation of urban life that is being destroyed by neo-liberal globalisation' and as 'absolute goodness' that can never be easily criticised (Park 2013: 6, my translation). Park (2013) raises a critical point regarding the overall movement to excessively idealise and romanticise the community against such a

policy stance towards Seoul City's community revitalisation. Because it is much easier and more efficient to manage the city's population as a unit of communities rather than as individuals, the community was an appropriate form of administrative management by the state.

Meanwhile, state power has come to use the 'voluntary' activities of the community and the energy of autonomy to the extent that community revitalisation is effectively commanded to align well with the goals and interests pursued by the state. This is 'the mechanism by which neo-liberal governmentality operates, with an incredibly contradictory proposition that proves that being free is being governed' (Park 2013: 15, my translation). As such, neo-liberal governmentality, which strives to use the community as a tool, contrives the most appropriate political techniques through trial, failure, and amendment, and in so doing, it deems the governed as a 'presentative' subject placed under the views of those in power, not merely a suppressed object. Outcomes, then, are often distributed and promoted as 'successful cases' or benchmark models.

> An individual becomes subjectivated not as a sole individual, but as an individual belonging to a community. Thus, the individual is now required to behave morally. An individual is required to have a humanist affection towards his/her surrounding environment, neighbours, and community, as well as a strong sense of responsibility simultaneously... As a "voluntary subject" … the matters of failure and conflict must be overcome by warm affection and cooperation between neighbours, voluntary ethos, and a spirit of sacrifice. (Park 2013: 17, my translation)

The community, which is both an object and a subject of governmentality, has been instilled with moral ethics and responsibility to sacrifice for its neighbours and resolve local problems independently, along with the endearing frames of the 'horizontal', 'autonomous', 'democratic', and 'post-political'.

In terms of Seoul City's community revitalisation, which took shape in 2012 with an aim towards incubating more than 3,000 community activists in 1,000 areas in Seoul, the revitalisation was based on the process of residents' drawing up a proposal. The applications were assessed by Seoul City, and those who were accepted were granted 1 million to 6 million won (about £620 to £3700) (Hankyoreh, 11 September 2012). Yet, briefly reviewing an interview with community activists after the business period, there

were disappointments surrounding the few opportunities for the public sector to speak out, while there were many government-led opportunities to advertise outcomes of the project. Moreover, a community activist confessed that the intermediate support body, which was supposed to mediate negotiations between the public and the government, tended to merely focus on creating a business proposal to make a deal and meeting the deadlines of public offerings. In addition, the Seongmisan Village in Mapo-gu borough, which was introduced as a representative model for revitalising the community as a sustainable community with residents' initiatives and public support, recently experienced a crisis of community dissolution, since 17 households returned to a rural area from the 'revitalised' urban community. Here, Gimm and Shin (2016) indicate that this is a new phase of urbanisation in which the value and atmosphere that the community has created are the triggers for a form of gentrification.

Even more, Seoul's new Mayor, Oh Se-hoon, who recently regained the power of the right-wing in Seoul, said he would conduct an investigation to verify the budget expenditures of the former government of Seoul City (ChosunMedia, 6 July 2021). According to the growing criticism by the right-leaning political circles, the former Mayor Park's spending 26.7 billion won (about 17 million pounds) on labour costs over the past 10 years is a waste of tax monies. These critical views of Mayor Park's community revitalisation programme may be part of the political propaganda of the right-wing party, and along with Seoul City's recent devolution to the right, the heyday of urban regeneration has been continuously tarnished and contested by the political tactics of the opposition.

Of course, I do not intend to denounce Mayor Park's political philosophy and social impact, such as preserving the environment, protecting the socially underprivileged and marginalised, respecting diversity, and strengthening the community. Nonetheless, it is true that the community revitalisation programme was approached as a form of competition and contest, based on governmental-led funding, which is certainly a paradox when considering the statements of Mayor Park that the community's demands should be derived from community members, and that 'local communities should take the lead in creating governance, supported by the city behind the scenes' (Hankyoreh, 11 September 2012, my translation). As a result of Mayor Park's proclamation of the community revitalisation

missions, communities rushing in to seeking subsidies sprang up like mushrooms after a rainstorm. Of course, there are communities that certainly need public funds, and have clear goals and interests, such as childcare and education, that match the purpose of the public offering. However, it is still a distinct limitation of the government-led project that all of those increased numbers of communities were eventually scattered to the winds when official funding was cut off. The jeopardy of community survival due to the lack of funding and shrinking self-reliance has been frequently observed in Changsin-dong, which may be relevant to CRC's (Changsin-Sungin Regeneration Coop.) case.

Along with its role as a self-sustaining company, the Urban Regeneration Support Center, which was established to implement, monitor, and deal with all regeneration-related issues in Changsin-dong, changed in 2017 to a form of local cooperative (CRC) to alleviate practical constraints on the ground, with an expectation of greater participation of residents. However, in recent years, insufficient funds led the CRC to raise funds through other governmental projects in other districts, not in Changsin-dong. As a result, the working-level staff at CRC soon came to deal with paperwork for other projects from other districts, not on affairs in Changsin-dong. Likewise, even the newly established cooperative, with the goal of 'autonomy' and 'self-reliance', setting it apart from urban regeneration, has been highly dependent on the Seoul Metropolitan Government due to funding issues. Of course, the working-level staff have striven to survive with funds from outside of Changsin-dong, but unlike its organisation name, Changsin-Sungin Regeneration Coop., the staff must focus on projects far from urban regeneration in Changsin-dong. Indeed, it is not easy to make profits on its own because it was established as an affiliated institution of urban regeneration, not with a specific business model, from the beginning. Recently, CRC has been trying to make a profit by selling local items or coffee at cafés serving as community centres or at the sewing history museum, but this is far from enough money to keep the organisation sustainable, and it became a struggle to run the community facilities.

The crisis of CRC's survival and the potential abolition given its limited funding represent a true danger, especially when coupled with the sudden death of Mayor Park. This demonstrates the Seoul Metropolitan Government's transfer of responsibility to local communities, and it disproves the idea that a group's persistence is highly dependent on the

Seoul Metropolitan Government, and in particular, the mayor, much like this statement of Kyoung-ju, an executive director of CRC: ‘Mayor Park’s absence is the greatest factor [to threaten CRC’s survival].’ Now, I will move on to such limitations and complexities of community survival in more depth.

5.5. Social Entrepreneurs and Social Exclusion

Within the framework of ‘community-based’ regeneration, Seoul City had emphasised and taken great pride in the influx of young social entrepreneurs, long-established communities, and activities of local cooperatives in Changsin-dong. The community gatherings and activities triggered by the above-mentioned community revitalisation were focused on activating local communities in light of their common interests related to daily life. The Seoul City report (2019) highlights the fact that most local activities had been led by the younger generation, with their various ideas, methods, and informational power, who can easily utilise public offering projects. They were at an age when they could flexibly respond to changes, but this also constrained their long-term community activities because they faced livelihood and career management challenges.

Kim (2015) indicates that most of the young social entrepreneurs entering into Changsin-dong between 2010 and 2014, when community revitalisation was to be implemented just before urban regeneration, were attracted to the advertised cultural and economic value of Changsin-dong and the sewing industry. They had settled in Changsin-dong as new residents or activists, but some of them were affiliated with public institutions or bigger companies, or were supported by community revitalisation projects, both directly and indirectly, in conjunction with urban regeneration projects (Kim 2015). Hence, the completion of community revitalisation and urban regeneration, as well as the associated reductions and termination of funding, had a significant impact on the sustainability of local activities. Subsequently, many social enterprises and community groups that gathered in Changsin-dong as a result of urban regeneration have left in recent years.

Dong-gue, who is one of the most active persons in urban regeneration among the sewing people, expresses her disappointment about urban regeneration and the newly settled community groups:

> It is not clear what is sustainable. If urban regeneration is [directly] related to how we work for a living, it could be sustainable. But these [sewing workers] are people who make ends meet, so they have no time to be a part of it. Seoul City also said that urban regeneration would change the neighbourhood, but it was only carried out for three years as a short-term business. People from the outside came in like an inward flood, and then they just left like an ebb tide. In the very beginning, I also loved that young people were coming in. But now they're all gone. If [urban regeneration] lasted for something like 10 years, it would permeate the neighbourhood well.

As Dong-gue points out, urban regeneration aimed at moving beyond the existing top-down development paradigm and establishing a bottom-up, community-based, long-term strategy, but in the end, it stalled in its efforts to increase the relevant communities in the neighbourhood during a mere three-year period. Eventually, due to a shorter-than-expected project period, many organisations and young entrepreneurs who chased trendy urban regeneration and the flow of money have left to follow other subsidies in other districts. Kyoung-ju, the working-level director at CRC, strives to find the reason why the young people have left so quickly:

> Until 2017, we had a lot of administrative projects with enough justification, so there were a lot of communities. It can be said that the time was the heyday of urban regeneration. Through various regeneration projects, I think we have done everything that the communities wanted to do. We've tried almost everything we could do, but I think it was a situation where the fundamental needs of the residents were not fulfilled.

Because the entire sewing industry across Korea is on the decline, there are practical difficulties in developing a profit system that can consistently stand on its own feet in this ageing industrial sewing area.

Furthermore, with regard to the industrial ecosystem in Changsin-dong, the job environment that pushes individuals to sew without a moment's delay also presents conflicts between already firmly established communities and new communities, different directions of each community, and poor public participation. As Kyoung-ju mentions, 'Since there were some conflicts between the communities, community activities de-

creased', these conflicts created a structure that was hard to endure for young social entrepreneurs. Dong-gue further explains:

> In my opinion, in order for urban regeneration to succeed, [the government, the residents, and newly incoming communities] all should belong to one side. It should be like that, but the existing residents' association has remained as strong as it is, while the new [urban regeneration cooperative] works separately. Even some old residents take attitudes like, "Oh, I've been living in this neighbourhood for decades, and I've been doing volunteer work, so you guys (i.e., the new urban regeneration cooperative or other newly settled communities) come to me and explain the project." That is why local cooperation is difficult and complicated, since the old association is not disbanded.

Much like Bestor's (1989) observation of a middle-class urban community in Japan, in which old settlers maintain political power in organising local events, and thereby naturally exclude newcomers, Changsin-dong has also experienced incompatible relationships between old and new communities.

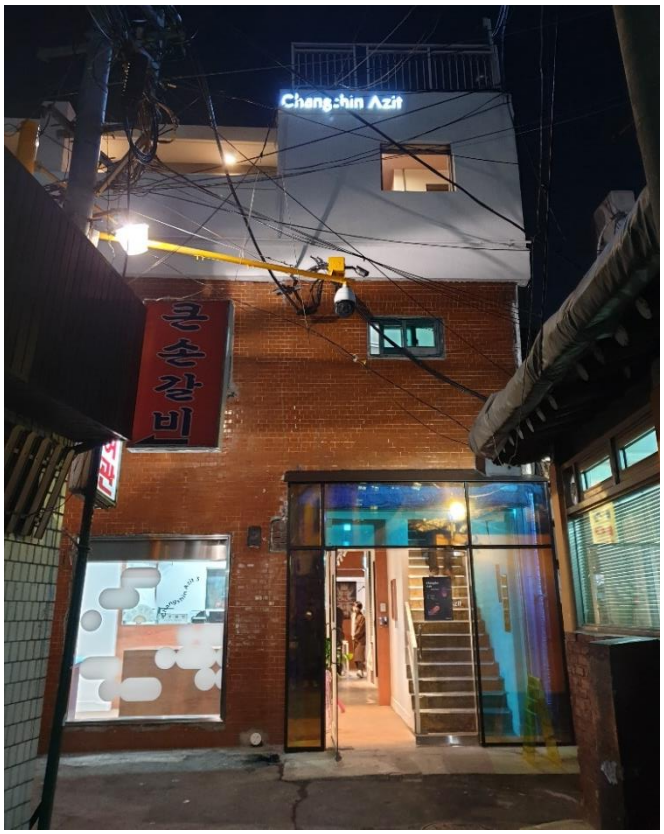
For instance, a social enterprise called Zero Space set its motto of 'Zero-Waste' to utilise remnants thrown away by sewing workshops, and sold clothes and cushions made with the remnants. Until the mid-2010s, it seemed to be a promising social enterprise as a cornerstone of rejuvenating the local economy, with much attention accorded the younger generation. However, the cost of purchasing new fabrics was much cheaper than the labour force to create other items with pieces of remnants one by one, and so to accommodate the higher labour costs, their items had to be priced higher than general products in Changsin-dong. Consequently, the items by Zero Space were pushed out of the market on price grounds in Changsin-dong, and now, the young social enterprise continues the business with its own eco-friendly branding by developing items that are far from typical in Changsin-dong.

As another example, Urban Hybrid, another social enterprise, started its business in Changsin-dong as a real estate developer that provides co-working spaces in 2013. Urban Hybrid purchased a building in Changsin-dong, and the building was reborn with youthful sensibility, with its sophisticated interior attracting many young people's attention. The third branch of the co-working space opened in the neighbourhood in 2019 in an effort to

bring in young designers, dreaming of collaboration between young designers and Changsin-dong's sewing practitioners.

As of 2021, however, most spaces in the buildings ended up sitting idle, perhaps because of the impact of COVID-19 or the overall economic downturn, but also primarily because of the relatively high rent for each co-working space and the differing demands between young designers and Changsin-dong's sewing practitioners. Fundamentally, their business model has faced limitations because it is difficult to meet young designers' demands, which require high quality with small quantity of each item, whereas Changsin-dong sewing workers have been geared to decades of mass production with relatively lower quality, in order to suit the low market price in the Dongdaemun wholesale market. In other words, the designs required by young designers were very complicated and were thereby 'stressful' for sewing practitioners to execute, but the total labour cost is not as high as sewing practitioners normally make, even though the unit price suggested by young designers is (slightly) higher than the piece rate. Due to these distinct differences, and because of the Changsin-dong sewing sector's cheap market ecosystem and young designers' unique tastes, very few teams continue to collaborate, and most spaces stand empty or are occupied by other designers who are not working with Changsin-dong's sewing practitioners. Accordingly, the young social entrepreneurs came to give attention to other 'profitable' districts in Seoul, and the number of people in their 20s and 30s have once again decreased in Changsin-dong. Again, much like Brumann's (2012) indication that not all of the residents welcome the newcomers in Kyoto's case, Changsin-dong has also experienced tensions and frictions between the old-time locals and the new settlers.







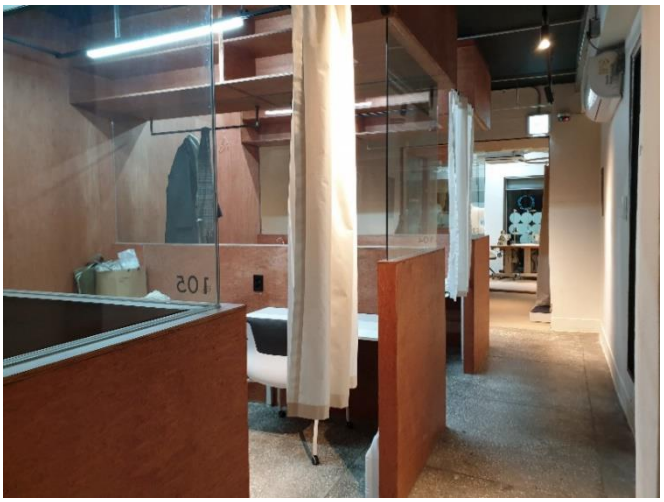


Figure 5.7. The opening ceremony of the third branch of Changsin Azit (top left: the co-working space; top right: the outside of the building; bottom left: visitors to the reception in the co-dining space on the top floor; bottom right: separate studio spaces for each designer).

In addition, while certain groups were ‘chosen’ to receive financial support based upon the focus and strategy of urban regeneration, there are naturally ‘unchosen’ areas in the neighbourhood. Similar to Granger’s (2017) finding, individuals who did not participate in urban regeneration were naturally estranged from the public offering project, with weakening informational power, and they did not directly experience the light of urban regeneration.

> [C]ommunity and voluntary effort provide a strong foundation for achieving social and community regeneration. In practice, however, this can be a double-edged sword. Many [urban regeneration] practitioners refer to the difficulty of involving groups in local regeneration and paradoxically, the process of social exclusion further disenfranchises the most excluded groups by virtue of service exclusion and civic disengagement. (Granger 2017: 108)

Such social exclusion is largely attributable to the wide scope of urban regeneration. In fact, the original title of the regeneration project was Changsin-Sungin Urban Regeneration, as the name CRC represents, which included not only the Changsin district, but also the neighbourhood immediately next to it, called Sungin-dong. Changsin-dong is divided into three zones, and Sungin-dong is divided into two. Among them, Changsin 1-, 2-, 3-dong and Sungin 1-dong were selected as the target site of urban regeneration, and the total area of 1.03 km^2 came to be called 'Changsin-Sungin'. This zoning, indeed, was designated during the New Town project for urban redevelopment and continued to take the designation over urban regeneration because of the complicated process of zoning in public offering projects.

The Seoul Metropolitan Government recognised that residents in Changsin 1-, 2-, 3-dong and Sungin 1-dong regarded each other as 'different' neighbourhoods because they were already divided into territorial zones based on their topography (Seoul City 2019). Given the large scope of the project, of course, the eyeshot of urban regeneration could not reach all areas, and the problem of social exclusion may naturally emerge. Specifically, when public offering projects are provided in relation to urban regeneration, certain communities benefited from the support, while 'general' residents often did not even have the opportunity to seek support. According to Kim (2015), because Changsin-dong has been traditionally identified as a 'sewing town', a certain part of urban regeneration was exclusively focused on the sewing sector. As a result, other residents who are not related to the sewing job have complained that the contents and budget of urban regeneration programs are biased (Kim 2015: 143, my translation). As mentioned in the second section in this chapter, owners of small houses in the upper neighbourhood needed to have their old houses renovated, and they had voted for the New Town project, but when the project went up in smoke, urban regeneration was not an adequate alternative to New Town for them. As urban regeneration only constructed or repaired public infrastructures, such as sewage,

CCTV, streetlights, and community centres, it offered no direct benefit to their quality of life.

When it comes to the sewing sector, even the sewing people in Changsin-dong have demonstrated that they do not welcome urban regeneration. According to my research participants, urban regeneration built the sewing history museum, but has not really *regenerated* the sewing industry. More specifically, a conflict was provoked during the process of application to create an organisation of residents (i.e., residents' council) who wanted to actively participate in urban regeneration programmes (Kim 2015: 143-144). In the beginning, the largest number of participants was in Changsin 2-dong, which has the largest number of sewing workers, with the loose conditions that all 'residents' can participate in the council. Yet, as the criteria began to be subdivided, voting rights became limited to 'owners and tenants of buildings and land' (ibid.). Consequently, even though sewing practitioners could 'participate' in the residents' council, they did not actually have the right to vote, especially those who did not have business registrations, and commuters who have operated sewing workshops in Changsin-dong for decades. Following this trend, voting rights naturally increased the influence of building owners and tenants in the lower neighbourhood throughout urban regeneration.

Naturally, foreign workers who make a living by providing the most labour-intensive work in the Changsin-dong sewing industry are unable to intervene among the native sewing people. In the case of illegal status, and because of the limited legal rights to participate in urban regeneration and community revitalisation, migrant workers could not be found in urban regeneration, and urban regeneration has become the business of only the people involved. In other words, Changsin-dong's regeneration was not customised for the sewing sector and was not a form of regeneration that had an overall impact on the quality of the residents' lives, regardless of its objectives of achieving the community-based constitution and regenerating the existing sewing town. For these reasons, some have indicated that urban regeneration should have split the project into very small sizes with tailored strategies – for example, different plans for sewing workshops and for other residential areas.

In the meanwhile, a contradictory phenomenon in which artists produce and reproduce a new symbolic space, and social activists, including some residents, resist urban regeneration, caused this to become an area of interest to outliers and triggered a motive for capital investment (Jang 2018). As artistic attempts, urban architecture, and cultural landscapes in many urban regeneration areas celebrate the rebirth of the city, it came in turn to stimulate capital investment.

5.6. Unstable Real Estate Market

In addition to infrastructure fetishism, bureaucratic incompetence, pie-in-the-sky policies, governmentality, the instrumentality of community, and social exclusion, capitalist real estate speculation in Changsin-dong is also intensifying conflicts among residents and exhausting them. In Korea in general, the most basic and essential accumulation of wealth among properties is the ownership of a house or building. The premise of 'I have an apartment in Seoul' may imply personal wealth of at least hundreds of millions of won (a few hundred thousand pounds, and this varies among neighbourhoods and districts).' In particular, the recent surge in inflation in the saturated real estate market in Seoul has heightened social anxiety, and caused people to panic-buy houses. As the threshold of the real estate market rises, redevelopment is being planned to demolish and renovate old buildings and apartments in the creation of large apartment complexes to increase supply. Therefore, speculative tendencies are increasing in anticipation of rising housing prices in the next few years, with about 500 million won (about £300,000) of investment for the approximately one billion won of recovery in Changsin-dong, for example.

Some experts have argued that the bubble in the real estate market in Seoul may stem from the government's excessive tax collection in recent years, and the government also acknowledged the failure of government intervention in real estate policies. In company with growing criticism, urban regeneration pursued by the (former) leftist government has been contested by the right, and the redevelopment paradigm once resisted by the

opposition in Changsin-dong is emerging again. Kyoung-ju worryingly explains the speculative real estate phenomenon:

> I suppose everyone thinks how much money would be returned when we redevelop it. Without thinking about the money that goes into redevelopment, they only think about the profit. That is why external investors gather together to implement private redevelopment, thinking that it will work because the right wing is now in power. It's like this: They believe that if they invest 100,000 won or 1 million won now, they may get back hundreds of millions.

As mentioned earlier, this speculative real estate phenomenon has been around since the designation of the New Town project in Changsin-dong. Dong-gue elaborates:

> When the New Town project, a top-down development, was about to go on in this neighbourhood, the rich bought houses here, and the real estate market is just being tied up now [because the project was cancelled]. So now, there are real estate agents, who introduced the houses to the rich people, who come and say that urban regeneration is useless, and [the district should be] rebuilt like an apartment new town by redevelopment… The agents and reporters roam around the places that urban regeneration missed and broadcast it on air. And they organised interest groups to convince the head of the borough and members of the National Assembly. That's what they are doing… You know the way down [from the top of the hill], coming down the stairs, don't you? There are many houses renovated as guest houses, but now many of them are empty. Seriously, I was surprised to see them when constructing the exterior of the house. When I went up one day, a house was demolished, and in another week, it's finished to make façades even with a terrace outside… There's a lot of land speculation here, in both upper and lower areas. The people have a lot of money, don't they? They bought houses here, but there is no one to rent the houses. The people altered the houses and spent money on it, but the rental doesn't work out well. Then, the landlords and the agents got together and formed a group. So, well, [they are arguing] like, "Let's do public redevelopment and let's build a house here." You know what? [Even though] the urban regeneration is over, with the title of "urban regeneration [district]", [Changsin-dong] became a target for every broadcast. But CRC is not in a position to shake off the name of urban regeneration because it is supported by Seoul City with its title… It's a dilemma.

As Dong-gue explained in detail, because of the shadow of urban regeneration, a dilemma remains in Changsin-dong, in which new attempts of other urban planning schemes, such as public redevelopment, cannot be easily processed due to the modifier of urban regeneration that overthrew New Town redevelopment. Therefore, the ownership system in

the real estate market in Seoul came to be a powerful mechanism to obtain effective capital for major investments, and it has substantially swayed Changsin-dong in recent days.

Additionally, the unstoppable rise in rents in the lower neighbourhood stirred up the low participation of sewing practitioners in urban regeneration. Urban regeneration prevented reckless development, but at the same time, paradoxically, it created an opportunity for building owners to raise rents. With the new urban development paradigm of urban regeneration, Changsin-dong began to draw the attention of the media and the public, and the demand for accessible buildings in the lower neighbourhood naturally increased, which has allowed building owners to adjust real estate prices at will. As a result, sewing workshops came to suffer from rising rents and turn their backs on urban regeneration. Kui-sung explains:

> In the beginning, I used to get along well with the urban regeneration team. At that time, the rent for a workshop was about 800,000 (about £500) won to 900,000 won (about £600), but six months later, since urban regeneration started, I got a lot of calls from members of the cooperative (i.e., Seoul Garment Sewing Cooperative). They said that the workshops' rents suddenly went up after urban regeneration came in. It went up a lot now to 1,200,000 (about £800) won from 800,000 won. So, it went up about 30 percent.

As rents of sewing workshops rose, sewing people came to dislike urban regeneration, and they became less interested in and did not participate in events related to it.

> Urban regeneration? It's not related to us... It has nothing to benefit sewing workshops. Urban regeneration is just for fixing things in the neighbourhood. Unless it supports our workshops, [people won't be into it]. We also have a lot of support from other organisations. Urban regeneration provides sports facilities, builds gazebos for the elderly, maintains roads, and makes streets better. It is far from our lives.
>
> – Byung-choon, Owner of Soojin Apparel

When it comes to the tendency of sewing people's indifference towards urban regeneration, Kyoung-ju speaks about the dilemma at the working-level aspect of urban regeneration. According to him, the limited participation of residents and the 'direct' improvement of the quality of life in Changsin-dong made it hard to satisfy everyone.

> [The sewing workers] are not interested in urban regeneration at all. There's no time to be interested in it for them. There are relatively few active participants. Everyone's busy with their livelihood indeed. Unless there's something hanging right in front of their houses, participation is usually lukewarm. Maybe I should have split up 20 billion won (about £13,000,000) for each household. Ha ha. It seems that people don't like meanings, and they want problems and things to be promptly solved at once. So, I think there was a request to solve some problems in that way. In fact, however, it doesn't work in this postmodern society. If you don't do anything to resolve your problems, there's a limit to what others can do for you. People often say that 'Oh, shouldn't it be like this?' But then, why do experts exist? It is not that simple.

Likewise, the instability of the real estate market has revealed not only the real estate speculation phenomenon, but also the social phenomenon behind it. Sewing people became more distrustful of urban regeneration, and the public controversy among residents and even the general public surrounding urban re-generation and redevelopment has been ignited.

Moreover, due to the sudden replacement of the Seoul mayor, the foundation of urban regeneration began to shake violently. Obviously, Changsin-dong has experienced physical and economic declines, including the ageing of buildings and infrastructure, since designation as a target of the New Town project. This is because the improvement and reconstruction of all houses and buildings were suspended due to restricted construction activities during the periods of planning of New Town and implementation of urban regeneration. Accordingly, because of the impeded physical repair of local infrastructure, it is true that buildings, roads, lights, and the sewerage system in Changsin-dong need to be inspected and renovated for safer and better-quality environments. It is also a fact that the local businesses and communities have shrunk with the decrease in the number of residents, and at the same time, the sewing industry, which is the foundational industry of the region, has been gradually losing its competitiveness due to high competition with overseas production and the ageing of the workforce. However, although public controversy over urban regeneration has been intensified, and despite the fact that Changsin-dong is losing the vitality of its neighbourhoods, the excessive supply of housing through reckless redevelopment cannot be a resolution to tackle those local problems.

Brumann (2012) demonstrates that the land supply in central Kyoto was gradually refilled by many bankruptcies, particularly in the kimono wholesale business, which brought comparatively large and centrally located plots in the market (2012: 56). Similarly, the redevelopment of Changsin-dong is likely to expel the sewing industry, the sewing-related small workshops, and other local identities. Additionally, high-rise architecture blocks views of the surrounding area, and it can also disfigure the current scenery of the low buildings in the area and the urban landscape that blends with the historic Hanyang Fortress. Thus, pragmatic alternatives are needed to complement urban regeneration and urban redevelopment.

5.7. Learning from Changsin-dong

So far, I have explored paradigm shifts from urban redevelopment to urban regeneration, changes in keynotes of public policies, limitations of urban regeneration, and social, economic, and political complexities surrounding Changsin-dong's urban regeneration. Social problems include deepening conflicts between various stakeholders and between neighbours over urban development, divergent goals among local communities, and the social exclusion of unchosen groups. In terms of economic phenomena, continuing instability in the real estate market, real estate speculation, and rising rents imposed upon sewing workshops have been observed. Politically, urban regeneration's focus on building construction because of its visibility, significantly less utilisation of those buildings, the establishment of community centres under the name of 'community revitalisation', civil servants' avoidance of responsibility, document-based bureaucracy, and the asymmetric power relationships between local governmental apparatuses and local cooperatives, especially due to top-down budget execution, and omnipresent governmentality have also been documented.

One of the factors I have highlighted is the disparity between residents' dissatisfaction with the construction of the sewing history museum and bureaucrats and politicians' infrastructure fetishism. Since the museum was built with an aim towards local touristi-

fication and beautification, based on my ethnographic observations and informal interviews, a number of my research participants dislike the construction of the sewing museum, which is used as a means of public relations and not as a necessary space to help residents in their daily lives. The museum was actually expected to serve as a medium for promoting the sewing industry and inducing inflow from the outside, but it is limited to attracting the attention of passers-by, as it is located at the end of an alley, not on the main street of Changsin-dong. This has led to many impediments in reviving the local economy by minimising the decline of the sewing industry, which is the biggest concern and the fundamental problem for Changsin-dong sewing workshops. Consequently, it was constrained to play the role of *regeneration* in the economic downturn in the sewing neighbourhood. Although the basic motto of urban regeneration is 'for the residents' and 'by the residents', its implementation resulted in the opposite outcome, and thereby urban regeneration came to be stigmatised as a waste of tax monies and an unnecessary and largely unusable space for residents and sewing people.

Ji-yoon Kim (2015) specifically insists that the Seoul Metropolitan Government's urban regeneration represents the Dongdaemun market as a global hub for fashion design and tourism resources through links between Changsin-dong's sewing industry and the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), rather than the actual activation of the sewing industry itself. Alongside DDP as a landmark symbol of fashion, the urban manufacturing sector of the sewing industry and the spatial narrative in Changsin-dong, which represents 'old-fashioned' architecture and the 'patina' in Seoul are favourable to tourism according to the municipal authority. As a result, landscape beautification for the purpose of showing it to outsiders prevails over practical benefits to residents. It is argued that creating a sewing town as a cultural reproduction aiming at museumification is based on the urban planning gaze, not on an industrial framework of rejuvenating the urban manufacturing sector (Kim 2015: 152). In other words, it is emphasised that local regeneration should serve as a spatial base for socio-economic activities in the daily lives of local residents. Thus, in the centre of the vanishing sewing industry, in the peculiar neighbourhood once called *dal-dong-nae* (a poor hillside village), effective regeneration must mitigate the weakening of the industry and devise practical remedies that can fundamentally solve the problems while preserving the regional specificities of Changsin-dong with concrete, small-scale, and long-term solutions to meet varied needs. This points to the need for various types of customised,

small-scale programmes that maximise the ability to meet individuals' demands by reducing invisible gaps in the neighbourhood, especially between the upper and the lower neighbourhoods.

According to Kyoung-ju, it would be ideal if self-maintenance renewals, namely, autonomous home repairs, are individually implemented in small units of the district. If the renewal is carried out separately in accordance with each unit's features, the small scale of each plan can more closely match the needs of each area. Ideally, Kyoung-ju believes that the small-scale, self-maintenance projects, tailored to each unit's requirements, should be conducted from the lower to the upper neighbourhoods to secure wider roads and larger car parks. In addition, phased renewal is ideal for revitalising the newly constructed community facilities so that they can be served as spaces for diverse communities in each unit on each alley. Kyoung-ju also indicates that the residents' poor participation is one of the most regrettable parts of urban regeneration, but the small-scale repair projects may satisfy the residents since they directly benefit the quality of life of locals over the long term. Yet, it is worth noting that CRC has tried autonomous housing repairs in Changsin-dong in recent years, but many of the buildings fall short of Seoul City's criteria – e.g., buildings that were illegally converted to expand the space, which actually need repair and renovation works. Accordingly, only a few houses were able to successfully carry out the housing repair with government subsidies. This once again indicates that more practical criteria should be re-established by the government to suit local circumstances.

The far-fetched governmental criteria may demonstrate that many studies and established policies in Korea tend to rely on quantitative results focusing on economic indices (see Park 2005). Of course, since Seoul has 25 autonomous boroughs, including Jongno-gu, and Jongno-gu has 87 jurisdictional districts, Changsin-dong cannot be exclusively spotlighted. At the least, however, the micro-practices of policy makers are needed in the planning stage. Furthermore, despite lengthy discussions on urban regeneration, the initial policy direction is often confused, and institutional support programmes tasked with devising specific measures represent limitations, since the Special Act on Urban Regeneration had to reflect the numerous needs of many stakeholders (Du 2013). In other words, as Sung-kyu Du (2013) points out, the legal nature of urban regeneration projects is ambiguous because both the

legal nature and the scope of urban regeneration are vague. More directly, regional specificity should be reflected in regional and field-specific differentiations on a case-by-case and site-by-site basis, beyond the universal application of policy methods. For example, Jin-hee Lee (2020) suggests that the district unit plan can be utilised as a means of specifying spatial plans, such as land use, buildings, and landscapes when managing regional spatial use at a more detailed level. The occupancy of large-scale franchises may be restricted by designating the district unit plan to regulate the type of business, building-to-land ratio, floor area ratio, maximum height of buildings, and so forth. Hence, it can prevent the relentless influx of scale investment and thereby minimise gentrification.

Moreover, there is a need for a specialised organisation that is responsible from beginning to end, not a small number of staff systems that circulate in the short term as they are now. For this, an institutional framework should be established to set up a professional organisation dedicated to the project, which consists of various experts in related fields, such as administration, finance, urban planning, law, public relations, and communication (Park 2020). Additionally, in order to manage and operate high-quality urban regeneration for an extended period of time, it is necessary to consider adapting a tax payment generated within the regeneration site during the project so that it can be used as a source of tax revenue. Then, at the local governmental level, it is necessary to continuously monitor regional and social changes and strive to optimally respond based on the cooperation and agreement with related stakeholders when problems begin to arise. As Jin-hee Lee (2020) indicates, in Korea, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport and the Korea Appraisal Board have conducted detailed monitoring of urban regeneration sites in three stages (project application, selection, and launch). However, the use of monitoring results and follow-up measures is insufficient when problems occur.

Meanwhile, as we have repeatedly addressed in earlier sections, it is no exaggeration to say that political inherence also plays a major role in the limited scope of urban regeneration. Seoul City’s community revitalisation and urban regeneration through the revitalised community began with a drastic contrast to all aspects of urban redevelopment, introducing urban regeneration as the only alternative to urban redevelopment in a full-scale manner. As a result, all of the steps of the ten-year-old redevelopment policy were effectively flipped

with urban regeneration, and this unnatural inversion of policy process led to poor handover between civil servants, which was exacerbated by their tendency to evade administrative responsibility due to the easily changeable policy framework, depending on the local authority. This meant that the newly constructed community centres, including the sewing history museum, which were expected to play a role in connecting the outside to sewing workshops and between neighbours, failed to reflect reality and to achieve efficiency in budget execution. These bureaucratic conventions and political interventions represent those factors that proved insufficient in meeting community-based, bottom-up goals, which was the initial purpose and objectivity of urban regeneration.

The tendency to radically subvert urban planning schemes has been continued by the current right-wing Mayor of Seoul, Oh Se-hoon, since his election in 2021, and urban regeneration is more fiercely condemned by the right, while physical urban development plans again began to float to the surface. This political convention is not merely confined to a particular politician or the Seoul Metropolitan government, but also to political battles between the left and right wings, which can be easily captured when a new government begins. In order to achieve each party's political rationality, both the left and the right have shown infrastructural fetishism – just as the former Seoul Mayor from the conservative party, Mr Lee, established the Cheonggyecheon Museum to politically showcase the Cheonggye Stream Restoration Project, but the museum has also remained idle, regardless of its initial objective in the beginning – and it has revealed the limitation of bureaucratism in the governmental apparatus.

Over the entire course of urban planning stages, governmentality is omnipresent and engages in the discourse, norms, practices, and mentality of the collective and the individual in everyday life. In particular, the government's sophisticated manoeuvres stimulate individuals' community sensitivity towards urban regeneration by encouraging local community activities to solve local issues and agendas without state intervention. Following this, the individual is reinforced to obtain official responsibility and attachment to the community and to act within 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault 1982). Therefore, I have striven to demonstrate that governmentality through communities, namely, the phenomenon of communities being instrumentalised through urban regeneration, might

overlook the realities, tensions, and complexities within and among communities. Of course, it is clear that communities gathered with the common interests of individuals in increasingly complex and heterogeneous urban spaces play the most important role in the entire process of urban development. Still, in order to maintain community independence and sustainability, more detailed and differentiated programmes are required to boost the strength of resident autonomy beyond the government's covert politics. As Sorensen (2002) states, 'City planning at the local level is inherently a political process that requires the balancing of conflicting needs and demands' (2002: 352).

As Du (2013) indicates, urban regeneration projects may actually lose their initial motivation and meaning if sufficient institutional devices are not in place for resident participation, which allow residents' curiosity about urban regeneration projects to be transformed into interest and participation. This is because in urban regeneration, economic benefits, which are salient for individual residents' satisfaction, are unlikely to be visible or are only slightly tangible after a considerable amount of time has passed. In the case of urban redevelopment, by contrast, profits from the sale of large new supplies and increases in the asset values of houses as a result of the replacement of new housing naturally encourage residents to participate in the project (Du 2013). Because the direct merits or economic fruits of urban regeneration are difficult to visualise, it is not easy to motivate residents to participate or continue their interest in urban regeneration from the early stage. Thus, again, continuous monitoring and mutual cooperation are prerequisites to encourage resident participation in the long term, beyond the form of spending a one-dimensional governmental funding grant.

Korea's urban regeneration has yet to move beyond existing development projects, trapped in the dichotomy between agreement and disagreement with redevelopment, and between dismantling and preservation of urban manufacturing. In area-based urban regeneration, given the fact that 'space' is formed through interactions between various subjects is often overlooked, the purpose of regeneration is to revitalise the space itself, not to provide a better life to the subjects using the space (Kwon 2020). In this manner, it is important to be aware that communities are not static entities (Granger 2017). Since individuals can belong to different communities, the sizes, forms, and features of communities can change over

time, as individuals' circumstances are ever-changing. Further, social exclusion, whether outside of or within the community, also needs to be identified and alleviated.

> Many regeneration practitioners must first identify the most excluded groups in a given community and then devise a plan to mobilise their involvement in the design of local plans, which will help them in the future. Without this, regeneration efforts run the risk of further disenfranchising the most marginalised in a community by simply allowing the process to be dominated by the most organised and connected groups. (Granger 2017: 108)

In the same vein, local communities need to be active in delivering changes to address the unique circumstances of individuals. When it comes to the importance of the local community, Dong-gue elaborates that she has benefited from optimistic lessons derived from the urban regeneration process. Even though the light of urban regeneration is fading, and even though most of the community activities fizzled out in the end, community conservation efforts, as well as the experience of being involved in local communities, remain meaningful to her.

> If too much redevelopment, like the New Town project, was done [in Changsin-dong], we would have to just raze the neighbourhood. Compared to that, there was no reason for me to dislike urban regeneration because those involved were telling us that they would conserve [the neighbourhood] as it is and just clean it up. People dislike urban regeneration because it doesn't have any tangible results or anything in sight, but I disagree with this because I can see the change. It's been a bit cleaner than before, and even the houses that were left in such a hideous way were renovated into a youth centre, so that was nice. The construction was a little delayed, but it was okay, since I will live here for a long time... If New Town or something (i.e., physical redevelopment project) was ongoing, locals would have to leave and someone with money would come in here. When I heard that my sister (Young-ja) is going to move away, I was so sad. So, I realised, "Oh, this is how things go." As we get older, people here have to be with neighbouring friends because people often see each other when they live close to one another… Now that urban regeneration is over, all the people who came in [to Changsin-dong] for business have left, but if Changsin-dong was completely changed during the five or six years with none of the old features remaining, it would have been worse. It would have been more unbearable… And now all the people who came in here doing business have left, but at least, we learned all the way how communities should be formed and why they should remain through urban regeneration. Before that, I wasn't really interested in the word community itself… I didn't care about the community and thought that community thing is just for good people to do with their hearts. But while I was taking part in urban regeneration, I just got to know Changsin Village

> Net,[22] and when those involved came and asked how my neighbourhood would change, I came to autonomously think about what was okay and what was not okay. So, I started to think about it myself, like "the neighbourhood should not change that way", and since then, I became attached to the neighbourhood more. While taking part in [urban regeneration], I got to know a lot of people, and I was very active back then. That's my honest heart. It's not about whether it was good or not.

From a microscopic perspective, urban regeneration may have brought small changes to individuals. Even though many people have left, and residents experienced a multitude of conflicts, it is true that it has given locals an opportunity to broaden their horizons regarding the urban development paradigm, and to recognise the importance of community, which may be relevant to individuals' social navigation. Meanwhile, the negotiations, agreement, and cooperation of many communities and local support centres are crucial. Recently, regional support centres (i.e., Committee for the Promotion of the Changsin Living Commercial Area and Seoul Fashion Smart Center: Changsin Smart Anchor) were established under the supervision of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. In order for this newly established organisation to survive in the neighbourhood, Seoul City's smooth cooperation, as well as close, mutual, and constant communication with existing local communities, are still the critical challenge in Changsin-dong.

Just as there is no overnight revolution, there is no single perfect solution to satisfy the many stakeholders. Roberts, Sykes, and Granger state:

> There is no single prescribed form of urban regeneration practice and no single theoretical explanation that can be used to analyse all urban problem situations and develop appropriate solutions… [I]t is essential to view the process of urban regeneration as a long-term cycle of activity; there are no "quick fixes", "one-size-fits-all approaches" or permanent solutions here. Each generation faces its own particular set of problems, has its own priorities and works in ways which reflect these priorities and the availability of resources. (Roberts et al. 2017: 3, 6)

Taken together, comprehensive, customised, area-based, and long-term measures are repeatedly emphasised throughout this chapter. Because of the peculiarity of regional complexities, various problems, contradictions, and dilemmas are not easy to unravel all at

[22] Changsin Village Net held regular meetings among local participants. The meetings are no longer held because of low turnout.

once. In conjunction with divergent interests, the irresponsibility and frequent replacement of public servants in charge, and the immense shadows cast by capital and politics, residents may be exploited and sometimes used as a means of advancing public relations. Due to Korea's polarised politics, political enmity and competition among political parties have resulted in the political showcasing of urban planning, the instability of urban development-related regulations, social uncertainties, and the absence of smooth handovers between public servants. Recently, many media outlets have strongly criticised Changsin-dong's urban regeneration based upon their political colours. Propaganda for political use is treacherous, but it is also a problem when the government introduces it as a 'successful case' for the purposes of political demonstration, while leaving new buildings empty without practical measures. As Thrift (2007) indicates that the content of landscapes are variable because human experience is not stable, urban space and its complexities are plural, situational, and relational. Thus, continuous updates must be made to reflect fluid and ever-changing social, economic, political, and environmental contexts, as well as variations in urban communities.


진라면
진라면
서울풍물시장
Lake Seoul Folk Flea Market
부 동 산
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010-5307-7161
GATE
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Image 10

6. Conclusion

6.1. Revisiting Daily Dynamics in Changsin-dong

This thesis presents an ethnographic study of the Changsin-dong neighbourhood in Seoul, South Korea, focusing specifically on the myriad sewing workshops that operate in the area, which launched the country's export drive beginning in the 1960s. The main form of garment manufacturing in Changsin-dong is not Line Production, but Total Production of entire garments in household and small-scale workshops. In this research, I have explored social, industrial, and political entanglements occurring in sewing people's day-to-day lives in a rural-like community in the centre of Seoul. A range of theoretical and empirical approaches are employed to document and analyse everyday life in these workshops.

Sewing practitioners have been in the same occupational group in the Changsin-dong neighbourhood for decades, knowing each other very well and sharing workloads, gifts, and food with one another to enhance their social ties. Much as each household shares work and food harvested from their own farmland with their neighbours in a rural farming community, the Changsin-dong community also maintains and reproduces its social bonds through daily practices of sharing in various gatherings, local events, and everyday life. These two 'urban' and 'country-like' (*si-gol-got-eun*) patterns may seem incompatible within the typical industrial community in this urban space, where the sewing practitioners competitively work (and live). However, in the contradictions the community represents, I observe the behind-the-scenes realities within their daily dynamics. Behind this 'close-knit', country-like community, capitalistic interests, conflicts between the mainstream and the non-mainstream, and invisible surveillance among locals, as well as trust-based micro social-banking gathering and unconditional sharing practices coexist. Likewise, there is always ambivalence in this sewing community, in which people simultaneously compete with and care for one another in both organic and rival relationships.

In addition, the close relationships between neighbours (i.e., sewing workshops) have contributed to maintaining their economies while establishing the localisation of the sewing industry in the district. At the same time, it is also true that their overly localised system, which relies exclusively on their internal networks, has resulted in a form of estrangement from the outside world. Their internal network, the conventional working environment – namely, the production of large quantities of relatively low-quality clothing with a fast turnover – may render them unable to abandon their existing working habits, instead becoming satisfied with socialisation within the community without self-promotion to the outside, thereby lagging behind the global competition. Yet again, consistent with a microscopic perspective, their 'passive' attitude also reveals an 'active' choice to survive in a sunset industry, or even to retire, laying to rest financial pursuits as they enter their 'golden ages' (*hwang-gum-gi* 황금기) as well as their *generational resilience*.

Along with its economic threats, Changsin-dong has emerged as one of the most notable areas in Seoul related to urban development issues due to problems such as rising real estate values and housing shortage in the city. Under the names 'community alive' and 'existing urban manufacturing area to be regenerated', Changsin-dong was designated as a leading area for urban regeneration in Seoul, and urban regeneration was implemented in 2014. Consequently, urban regeneration has now become an indispensable moniker for Changsin-dong, and conflicts related to various interests and political interference have arisen. Following this, I have explored how urban regeneration was fuelled and its standing to date in order to reveal the political issues surrounding urban regeneration, especially regarding political interventions and asymmetric power relationships over the course of the project. As the government of Seoul City flipped from the progressive party to the conservative party in 2021, the radical movement to urban redevelopment from urban regeneration may be feasible in the next few years. The recent shift of power in local government may be seen as a criticism of the former progressive government's urban regeneration efforts, and urban regeneration is now losing its light.

In Chapter 3, I examined the close-knit sewing community, which is rooted in the interdependencies of the local value chain and the sociality of sharing. Small-scale sewing workshops are densely packed in the neighbourhood, and they are fluidly related to one

another in a web-like, symbiotic matrix. Their invisible, intangible, and 'organic' relationships may be linked to the system of subcontracting between larger and smaller workshops, as well as in a sense of care and effort to continue the relationships. More specifically, they maintain and improve social ties and sometimes reinforce unspoken responsibility to individuals when it comes to the act of gift-giving. For example, when an owner of a local restaurant wanted to keep a workshop as a patron, she gifted packs of instant coffee, which is popularly consumed in the neighbourhood, and when visiting a friend's new workshop, a visitor brought a pack of toilet paper, with wishes that everything 'rolls out well' (*jal pul-li-da*) at the new workshop. In this manner, I have discussed these forms of renewal and continuity in the relationships surrounding the daily practices of sharing and small-scale gift-giving. In particular, among various forms of gift-giving, I have classified them into three different patterns depending on the degree of purpose and expectation of compensation: *cash exchange, courteous gifting,* and *generous giving.* With respect to the sociality of sharing, I have advocated for Smith and Davidson's (2014) concept of the paradox of generosity to elaborate on the joy of sharing in relation to the Korean community sentiment, expressed as *jeong,* as well as commensality.

Nonetheless, Changsin-dong's web-like interdependent community creates not only local economic sustainability, but also tensions, frictions, and surveillance among neighbours. Because this community has been closely maintained for a lengthy period of time, community members often check one another to see if other workshops make more money. This act of examining one another's situations includes not only direct conversations, but also non-human and non-verbal techniques of local surveillance, such as checking the number of trash bags filled with cut fabrics and listening to the noise from motorcycles. Tensions between employees and employers, between designers and sewing workshops, between contractors and subcontractors, and even between family members are always intertwined in their everyday lives. Therefore, I have sought to unveil their daily struggles, negotiations, and local surveillance in the subcontracting system, namely, the web-like local value chain, in the 'close-knit' neighbourhood.

In Chapter 4, I have touched upon multiple factors concerning threats and dilemmas in the industry, in which the close-knit local community plays both beneficial and detrimental

roles in the local economy. Since Changsin-dong has been supporting the Korean fashion industry at large, shrinkages in the clothing manufacturing industry in Korea, as well as domestic economic stagnancy in Korea, have led to an unavoidable economic downturn in the neighbourhood in recent years. As the Dongdaemun market continues to empty out, the workload in Changsin-dong has been greatly reduced, and this weakening of the local economy is worsening due to the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, the number of Changsin-dong's sewing workshops dwindled to half its previous volume, especially compared to their heyday in the early 1990s. Here, I have analysed why Changsin-dong's sewing industry is being pushed out of global labour market competition, which may be attributable to cheaper labour in other East Asian countries, the rigid system of the sewing sector, which renders individuals somewhat passive towards challenging new work, the mass production of lower quality goods using rapid sewing techniques, the ageing of the workforce with the lack of handover to the next generation, and a heavy reliance on the localised network and local value chain. Thus, I have examined the structural working environment, especially with regard to why residents are forced to be passive and insensitive to change, as well as to why they avoid new challenges in relation to their working structure.

On the other hand, the thousands of remaining workshops have actually survived in spite of the fierce competition. In the remaining workshops, which may seem homogeneous, each type of work, each way of working, and each way of rejecting difficult work are idiosyncratic. I found that these workshops do not simply sit on the sidelines of the declining industry and watch what is happening to them, but instead choose, modify, and adapt their own ways of responding to the perpetual socio-economic changes at their respective levels. Even though it seems that they are trapped in a rigid and conservative system, in practice, these sewing practitioners actually work through constant choices at every moment of every day, which can be linked to agency and the concept of social navigation (Vigh 2007, 2009). In so doing, I have further opened discussions on structure and agency, incorporating arguments by Giddens (1979, 1984), Archer (2003), Ortner (2006), King (2010), and Akram (2012). I have striven to advocate for the dialectical relationships between structure and agency rather than taking a biased stance on one of them. Along with the analysis of the rigid system in the industry as well as the individuals' subjective agency in the industry under threat, which may seem contradictory and

incompetent, I hope that this study provides a broadened view examining why this community came to be jeopardised, and simultaneously, how they have survived to date.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I looked at the complexities and politics surrounding urban regeneration from multiple angles. As Changsin-dong had indeed received significant attention with the commencement of urban regeneration, numerous researchers, organisations, and social enterprises began to settle in the neighbourhood at the beginning of urban regeneration. However, most of the young social entrepreneurs, many organisations, and academics who flocked into Changsin-dong began to leave after the official termination of the business period of urban regeneration in 2016. This is because newly settled social enterprises, which used to shed more light on urban regeneration in Changsin-dong, gradually lost their sustainability and eventually left Changsin-dong when various government subsidies were cut off, and also because of their failure to assimilate with the long-established local community, which accelerated their demise. In the end, the area of the 'well-established community' came to encounter the limitations of urban regeneration, which relies on community autonomy. Following this, I have addressed why urban regeneration, which was largely promoted to activate local communities, eventually resulted in the newly established communities' inability to survive, as well as why such a hopeful urban regeneration effort has been deemed unsatisfactory among the locals.

Despite the emphasis on community-based, bottom-up approaches to overcome the drawbacks of capitalist developmentalism, hierarchical power relationships between governmental administrations and local cooperatives still remain in urban regeneration. Thus, it can be seen that governance of the state is transformed into 'government through the community' (Rose 1996), with the objective of 'community-based' urban regeneration. In other words, governmentality (Foucault 1979) achieves post-political emancipation politics, resulting in an invisible and indirect form of governance by allowing local communities to develop their own self-reliance to identify and solve problems within the community rather than reaching out to the state level. Here, I have pointed out that these forms of politics are omnipresent in everyday lives and critically examined the complexities and limitations of urban regeneration that might culminate in the form of the instrumentality of community.

Raising the notion of governmentality in this paper seems to prioritise it and deny agency, but in fact, I aim to propose constant paradoxes in the never-ending, mutual dialectics of the two. Embodiment, agency, and social navigation in their daily lives will disclose the dynamics of individuals in the sunset industry. Regarding governmentality, I explain it in relation to urban planning at regional and state levels, not the individual level. Rather than a one-sided argument that simply sees governmentality in our everyday lives, I endeavour to move beyond the dichotomy between agency and structure.

In terms of the limitations of urban regeneration in Changsin-dong, I have captured multiple factors: a shorter-than-expected project period; budgeting focused on building construction; the bureaucratic attitudes of public officials in the administrative process; insufficient handover of public officials, especially due to the sudden change of power in Seoul; poor resident participation; and asymmetric power between governmental apparatuses and local cooperatives. Among these, the representative outcome of urban regeneration is the construction of new community centres, especially a sewing history museum, which has faced growing criticism from locals. My research participants indicate that the newly built facilities remain less serviceable and are a waste of tax money, with limited potential to improve the quality of life. Here, I have brought the frameworks of beautification and infrastructural fetishism (see Schwenkel 2015, Larkin 2013, Anand 2011, Lea and Pholeros 2010) into the urban space to explore the constraints in the construction of local infrastructure. By challenging the superficial administration of bureaucracy and the existing top-down processes in urban regeneration, I have sought to find the ideals, realities of, and lessons from Changsin-dong's urban regeneration.

In summary, Changsin-dong is a socio-culturally long-established, economically inter-dependent, and politically imbricated neighbourhood. I have striven to address its sociality, micro dynamics, and subtleties at the individual, local, and state levels. By identifying the characteristics of the sewing community, this research aims to unpack the daily struggles, dilemmas, negotiations, and contradictions in the urban sewing community, which has survived but has also isolated itself; the industry that is simultaneously declining and transitioning; and urban regeneration, which once looked bright but is now fading.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research

As repeatedly mentioned, COVID-19 has played a crucial role in preventing me from expanding the scope of my research. As well as the limitations of access to the greater number of sewing workshops stemming from the COVID-19 outbreak, the physical constraints that I could not observe in the entire neighbourhood simultaneously, can be a critical limitation of this study to encompass more diverse perspectives. This may be because a fieldworker alone is bound to accomplish all that needs to be done in urban environments due to their size and complexities (Foster and Kemper 2002: 141). I also acknowledge the limited access to additional personal spheres of individuals, which I planned in the initial stage of this research, just as Miller (2008: 555) acknowledges that household-based fieldwork may be limited in gaining access to private spaces.

Moreover, my efforts to address the economic and political aspects of the urban space, not bringing mainstream theories of social anthropology, may introduce another double-edged sword. Because I had to select certain contents of the field during the stage of establishing my research interest, the anthropological and sociological aspects that I did not fully cover, such as gender, labour, and class issues, may be identified by readers as a research gap. Issues pertaining to religion, marriage, and kinship are not as evident as gender and labour in the day-to-day lives of the residents of Changsin-dong, but this is also one of the research components I had to decide to set aside. Therefore, although research on gender and labour has already been extensively examined in sociology and politics, it may be feasible for future research in anthropology that captures the characteristics of the sewing community regarding gender and labour, in comparison with a political, sociological, and historical analysis in the contemporary context.

With regard to future research, further directions for exploring the everyday lives of sewing practitioners in Changsin-dong can also be expanded from the individual level to include the local and the global level, using mobile methods by investigating all of the material-centric traces over the global value chain (see Brandt 2002): for instance, routes from a fabric manufacturing firm in China, via sewing workshops, via Dongdaemun clothing wholesale markets, to Western retail stores, as well as the labour-centric race over the

global competition, and threats in Japan by Korea, in Korea by China, and in China by Vietnam. These may well represent another fascinating opportunity to examine the transference of the material and labour at international levels to better discern interwoven and conflicting views.

6.3. Contributions to the Field of Anthropology

Toulson (2015) points out that attempts to take urban contexts seriously as fieldwork sites have only recently been seen in anthropology, even though half of the world's population lives in cities today, and this figure is predicted to grow to two-thirds in five decades (2015: 28). Consistent with this awareness of the growing need for urban ethnography, I strive to capture less visible, ambivalent, and ongoing realities in a manufacturing sector of a city. The sewing industry has experienced a series of inner problems that each city, the manufacturing sector, and urban communities undergo, such as a disappearing sense of community, intricate tensions among locals, intergenerational disparities, social exclusion, the dying manufacturing industry, job insecurity, ageing, and the power relationships surrounding urban development. Although Dongdaemun's 24-hour cycle, which spans from morning to dawn, has the meritorious ability to sensitively react to domestic demands for a fast turnover, cheaper labour in other countries continues to threaten sewing jobs in Changsin-dong. Accordingly, the urban manufacturing industry has been studied in various fields in academia, with to the goal of analysing and resolving 'social problems' that we may easily encounter across the city. Here, the decline in the number of sewing businesses has been largely investigated in the fields of economics, history, social policy, sociology, geography, and urban planning, but anthropological perspectives that deal with existing, changing, contemporary, and microscopic phenomena within the disappearing industry remain scarce.

Frankly speaking, I was also one of the academics who became interested in the adoption of urban regeneration in the Changsin-dong neighbourhood. Yet, the more I progressed in my ethnographic research, the more I was able focus on individuals within a smaller scope.

Although the COVID-19 outbreak has significantly reduced my access to broader areas, I was able to spend quality time in sewing workshops with my research participants, with whom I had already established close relationships, allowing me to visit their workshops as normal during the pandemic. By narrowing the radius of my research, I gained more in-depth data from a microscopic point of view. Since subtle tensions between locals and bilateral contradictions behind the scenes may not be expressed in numbers and are hard to capture from a macro perspective, my contribution to academia at large may be the fulfilment of a more realistic and holistic understanding of the Changsin-dong neighbourhood and the voices of individuals in the industry.

According to Gmelch and Zenner (2002), gaining access is generally more difficult in cities than in villages. Because urbanites tend to spend more time indoors, they are less observable and approachable to the fieldworker and are mostly employees, which limits both time and access to their workplaces.

> Unlike rural anthropologists who may accompany their informants to their gardens or fields, go on a hunt, or sit while they are making crafts or repairing equipment, urban anthropologists often cannot interview their informants in their workplace without interfering. Hence, in urban societies potential informants may be unavailable for much of each day. (Gmelch and Zenner 2002: 128)

In this manner, acquiring access to a working space, which is directly related to the livelihood of my research participants, is one of the most notable achievements of this thesis. The full access to sewing workshops allowed me to seize contradictory disjuncture in a dynamic, busy working space in an urban community under threat. In so doing, as my research touches upon broad realms of social, industrial, and political complexities, I have striven to incorporate a widened range of literature in sociology, economics, history, and geography, as well as regional archival data on the ground.

When structuring my theoretical framework, I have endeavoured to go beyond a binary stance, especially to grasp ambivalent ironies and never-ending contradictions. For example, when discussing gift exchange in the social component, based upon Mauss' well-known theoretical framework of the gift, I have included recent anthropological discussions on both the burdensome and political attributes of gift exchange, as well as unconditional gifts.

In contemporary anthropology, Mauss argues that the practices of gift exchange imply the purpose of maintaining social bonds, whereas 'pure' gifts may not actually exist in capitalist societies. However, as my fieldwork reveals, generosity should not be overlooked in gift-'giving'. When Dong-gue gave out facemasks to random passers-by (when the world experienced a shortage of masks during the pandemic), a lingering question remained: Could this act of giving be 100% pure in connection with molarity and self-satisfaction to fulfil social responsibilities? Still, the practice of *sharing* certainly represents the degree of generosity of individuals, beyond the normative gifts. Accordingly, I hope that my proposal delineating the distinctions between three different forms of gift-giving, *cash exchange*, *courteous gifting*, and *generous giving*, may compel anthropologists to acknowledge generosity with regard to the gift theory. At the same time, indeed, persistent tensions and invisible local surveillance have been demonstrated. As the nature of social life entails political fabric, the Changsin-dong neighbourhood exhibits both harmonious and competitive social traits.

In Chapter 4, regarding the discussion on agency and structure in the industrial component, in order to maintain a neutral voice as much as possible, I have stressed the dialectical relationship between them, rather than prioritising one over the other. In the 'disappearing' sector, one should not neglect the reactions of individuals, which may differ based on body praxis heterogeneously expressed by each agent, even under the same environmental conditions, and social navigation that agents continuously navigate through their own direction. Individuals, affected by the specificity of time and space within a given environment, also determine, behave, and (unconsciously) express specific actions, and this results in daily dynamics in all specific spatiotemporal milieus. Then, as agency and social navigation sway the structure, the relationship between agency and structure is constantly created, renewed, and maintained. My consideration of this form of a dialectical relationship may be of help to readers in recognising that Changsin-dong's sewing community actually has survived severe competition in this contemporary moment, during which it may seem as if the community is merely dying out. As such, I have sought to encompass various, complicated intricacies within the Changsin-dong community from multiple perspectives. By specifically engaging with a historical understanding, this research will also provide a better understanding of my research participants: namely, the particular

generation of the baby boomers who may have *generational resilience*, contentedly accepting industrial threats to their livelihoods.

In addition, I have also discussed the concept of governmentality, which may seem irreconcilable with agency when challenging seemingly bottom-up urban regeneration in Changsin-dong. Some might insist that governmentality and agency may be incompatible, but as long as individuals and states always coexist, it may be an academic leap if we choose only one, just as Foucault also admits the presence of agency. Moreover, within Changsin-dong, two schemes – urban regeneration and urban redevelopment – are ceaselessly at odds, which may be the primary reason for the slowdown in the development of the neighbourhood, by taking up only one scheme and overthrowing the other. Due to the characteristics of Changsin-dong's topography, simply clearing up the entire neighbourhood and creating a new apartment complex is likely to result in outdated, reckless development. Yet, exclusively focusing on revitalising the community by building community centres while preserving the neighbourhood also has limitations in enhancing the quality of life of residents. Therefore, this research suggests a resolution that incorporates both development and regeneration by setting up small units in the district and renovating houses according to the particular demands of the units, such as installing ventilation facilities in sewing workshops, renovating toilets, or renovating entire homes. Most of all, long-term economic regeneration, rather than one-dimensional policies at the government level, should be implemented to create conditions in which the sewing people can survive in the urban space, and amidst fierce global competition.

Because this research examines extensive realms of social, industrial, and political surroundings, another noteworthy outcome of my research is to address sociological and economic contents from an anthropological point of view. Throughout the research, I have identified two faces within the community that coincide. This is why my thesis does not have one grand theory that penetrates the entire body of research. Rather, in order to elucidate the complexities I observed, I have incorporated diverse theories not only in anthropology, but also in sociology, economics, geography, urban planning, and history. Within the field of anthropology, the anthropology of work receives less attention than other topics in 'mainstream' anthropology, because the economic and political implications

of urban spaces are usually covered in politics, sociology, economics, social policy, urban planning, and history. This is not only because of the academic boundaries, but also because it may not be easy to conduct long-term ethnographic participant observations in work-places that are busy every minute of the day, from morning to evening. Nonetheless, I have striven to overcome these physical and practical constraints and approach the daily lives of sewing 'workers', which may be meaningful in interpreting, reinterpreting, and document-ing the industrial decline, related social problems, and individual agency in challenging situations, which may yield unorthodox findings. I hope my research can be used as a qualitative study that fills the lacunae in countless quantitative studies on the Changsin-dong neighbourhood (and many other dying communities), much like grains of sand fill the gaps between stones.



Image 11

Appendix 1. Images

Image 1.	A sewing workshop located in a space that looks like an unauthorised building. The exterior looks old and shabby, but there is vibrant life inside. Much like this workshop, many sewing workshops often open their doors while working if the weather allows. From the drain on the right, steam from iron heat emanates.	i
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Appendix 2. Korean Vocabulary

ah-laet-dong-ne	아랫동네	the lower neighbourhood
bam-si-jang	밤시장	Night Market
bat-da	받다	to receive
bi-seut-han cheo-ji	비슷한 처지	in a similar circumstance
bob	밥	rice
bon-chung	본청	main factory (i.e., workshop)
bong-jae jo-hap sa-ram-deul	봉제 조합 사람들	Sewing Union People
Bong-jae Ma-eul	봉제마을	Sewing Town
bon-gong-jang	본공장	main factory (i.e., workshop)
cho-bok	초복	the first day of the hottest season
dal-dong-nae	달동네	poor hillside village
Dongdaemun Gue Yeo-ja	동대문 그 여자	the woman of Dongdaemun
eou-reun	어른	grown-up
gaek-gong	객공	guest worker
Gang-buk	강북	the north of Han River
Gang-nam	강남	the south of Han River
ggal-ggeum-han	깔끔한	neat
ggom-ggom-han	꼼꼼한	meticulous
gong-jang	공장	factory
guen-chan-eun	괜찮은	decent
gum mo-eu-gi un-dong	금 모으기 운동	the gold-collecting campaign
gye-mo-im	계모임	rotating savings and credit gathering
gyet-don	곗돈	the money from the rotating savings and credit gathering
ha-chung-gong-jang	하청공장	subcontracted factories
han gong-gan-eul na-noon-da	한 공간을 나눈다	sharing a space
han-gang-ui gi-juk	한강의 기적	Miracle of the Han River
hwang-gum-gi	황금기	golden ages
ie-mo	이모	aunt

ie-ut sa-chon	이웃 사촌	neighbour cousins
Irworobongdo	일월오봉도	The title of a traditional folding screen, which used to be placed behind the king's royal throne of the Joseon Dynasty
jae-mi-it-nuen	재미있는	fun
jak-eun sung-ui	작은 성의	small care
jak-eun sun-mool	작은 선물	small gift
jal pul-li-da	잘 풀리다	everything rolls out well
jeong	정	a sense of attachment, community sentiments, or a sense of care for others
jib	집	home
ju-che-sung	주체성	authentic subjectivity
kong han jjok-do na-nueo muk-nuen-da	콩 한 쪽도 나눠 먹는다	sharing even a bean
mae-in gong-jang	메인 공장	Main factory (i.e., workshop)
ma-king	마킹	Marking equipment
meok-go sa-neun il	먹고 사는 일	the matters of eating and living
mit-eul soo up-neun	믿을 수 없는	unreliable
muk-da	먹다	to eat
muk-go sal-gi him-duen si-dae	먹고 살기 힘든 시대	the era of challenging to eat and live
muk-neun jae-mi	먹는 재미	the joy of eating
Nak-ta-san	낙타산	Camel Mountain
na-noom	나눔	sharing
nat-si-jang	낮시장	Day Market
no-hoo-bul-ryang gun-chuk-mul	노후불량 건축물	faulty deteriorated buildings
no-yak-ja	노약자	the old and the weak
op-pa	오빠	older brother (used by females)
sa-go pal-gi	사고 팔기	buying and selling
sam-chon	삼촌	uncle
sam-gye-tang	삼계탕	traditional Korean chicken stew
sarm-eul na-noon-da	삶을 나눈다	sharing life
si-gol-got-eun	시골같은	rural-like
sil-jang-nim	실장님	section chief

si-ya-ge	시야게	last-touch workshop
ssam	쌈	a wrap in vegetables
sun-saeng-nim	선생님	teacher
un-ni	언니	older sister (used by females)
wit-dong-ne	윗동네	the upper neighbourhood
won-chung	원청	main factory (i.e., workshop)
yang-bo-ui mi-deok	양보의 미덕	the virtue of concession
yong-don	용돈	pin money

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