

GAMCHEON CULTURE VILLAGE PROJECT



COMMUNITY CULTURAL REGENERATION ARTS
ATTRACTIVENESS PUBLIC SPACE WELL-BEING
PLANNING HERITAGE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

1. Context

Busan is a port city located in the South of South Korea. Being one of the few areas that remained under the control of South Korea during the Korean war, Busan welcomed at that time a large number of refugees flocking to the city, founding many villages as they arrived. Gamcheon Village, one of such refugee shelters located in Gamcheon-dong, still bears visible traces of historical turbulences of contemporary Korea: established without any urban planning, the village had no proper water supply or sewerage system, and most houses were smaller than 33 sq. meters, and built without a toilet.



After a peak of 30 000 inhabitants in the 1980s, the village population dropped to 8 000 in the 2010s. As young people left and no population influx happened, the village retained a high proportion of elderly (26%), and the number of abandoned houses increased. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) compiled by the Busan Metropolitan Government, Gamcheon-dong was ranked second in terms of deterioration, among 205 Dongs (sub-municipal unit) of Busan. Data shows that it performed poorly in the seven index categories of income, employment, health, education, housing, living environment, and crime.

“SANBOK ROADS”, WHICH MEANS MOUNTAIN ROADS IN KOREAN, ALSO REFERS TO THE CITY’S PAST HISTORY, WHEN MANY WAR REFUGEES HAD TO SETTLE DOWN ON HARD-TO-REACH SLOPES, BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT AFFORD A HOUSE ON FLATLANDS.

2. Busan, Saha-gu and culture

The goal of Busan cultural policies is to “build an environment where all citizens enjoy culture in everyday life”. In this sense, the city government has been carrying out a number of actions: first, create cultural content to facilitate urban regeneration and support the creative economy; second, support citizens publicly to foster their voluntary participation in cultural activities; and third, develop various kinds of cultural content to boost local tourism.

In this regard, the city government has been pursuing the “Sanbok Road Renaissance Project”, which aims to create a unique cityscape by optimizing local cultural resources available in the neighbourhoods crossed by sanbok roads, believing that those roads defined the regional cultural identity of Busan, whereas previous urban regeneration policies focused essentially on land redevelopment.



Gamcheon Culture Village is a successful outcome of the Sanbok Road Renaissance Project. To alleviate the degeneration of the area, Saha Municipal District, or Saha-gu, where Gamcheon is located, tried to overcome this challenge by implementing an urban renewal program to make the best use of the village's unique townscape, and to restore the historical authenticity, heritage and values of the mountain village.

3. Goals and project implementation

1.1. Main aim and specific goals

The general aim of this project is to make Gamcheon Village "a sustainable village where life, arts and culture coexist." Saha-gu also aspires to share and transfer the successful outcomes of the Project domestically and internationally.

Specific goals include:

- Reviving the village and establishing a sustainable community using arts and culture;
- Creating a village where arts, culture, and life coexist.

1.2. Development of the project

Main actions carried out

The Gamcheon Culture Village Project consists in the urban regeneration, by means of art and culture, of a hillside slum at serious risk of perishing. Since its launch in 2009, various arts and cultural projects have been carried out by local residents and artists to improve the physical living environment of the village, including:

- 66 pieces of artwork were installed by residents throughout the neighbourhood via seven community projects;
- 17 art galleries were created by remodelling dilapidated or deserted houses by renowned architects;



- an outdoor event venue was created for cultural performances, exhibitions, and village festivals;
- various educational programs were provided for residents;
- the brand identity of Gamcheon was developed by establishing a village museum, and publishing a village newspaper.

THIS PROJECT WAS IMPLEMENTED THROUGH A JOINT PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE RESIDENTS OF GAMCHEON VILLAGE, LOCAL ARTISTS AND CULTURE PROFESSIONALS, THE DISTRICT GOVERNMENT OF SAHA-GU, THE KOREAN GOVERNEMENT AND BUSAN CITY GOVERNMENT.

Some of these projects are described below:

- **2009/2017: Dreaming of Machu Picchu in Busan Project**

In cooperation with local residents and artists, Saha-gu won an initial USD 93 400 bid for launching a national project to paint murals and install 10 art installations in the neighbourhood. The so-called Maeulmisul Art Project was sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

In 2012, 10 additional art works were installed in abandoned house, and in 2016, 12 new pieces were added, included sculptures modelled after real residents of the village. Finally, in 2017, 10 more artworks were installed, reaching a total budget of USD 485 453.

- **2010: “Miro Miro” Alleyway Project and other community art projects**



In 2010, six more galleries and nine artworks were installed in the neighbourhood, including alley paintings and installations, for a budget of USD 214 700.

- **2014: Gamnae Townscape Project : creation of four workshops for local artists (USD 746 800)**

In addition to the above-mentioned physical cultural installations, intangible cultural content was developed to further promote the Gamcheon Culture Village Project, including the development of a brand identity for Gamcheon; festivals and cultural events; educational programs tailored to the needs of residents; and art exhibitions. Overall, USD 280 100 were allocated to develop intangible content.

The project was implemented thanks to four different types of stakeholders engaged in a cooperation partnership:

- The Residents Association of Gamcheon Culture Village, which consists of 120 voluntary residents, was incorporated in the partnership in March 2013 to suggest ideas, provide feedback and actively participate in the implementation of the Project, including running the village shops.
- Local artists and experts from the arts and cultural fields participated through expressing artistic talent and skills; sharing professional know-how and knowledge; and providing advice based on expertise.
- The district government of Saha-gu created the Creative City Planning Bureau, exclusively dedicated to the project. The bureau is comprised of 19 staff members that provide administrative assistance for residents and artists.
- The Korean central government is also involved through cabinet-level divisions that have been supporting Gamcheon: the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. The city government of Busan also provided support via the Busan Urban Regeneration Centre, which played an important role in policy consultation, funding, and formal evaluation.

Two main obstacles were encountered during the planning and implementation of the GCV Project:



- Securing stable sources of funding: Urban regeneration is a long-term process which requires constant efforts and stable funding, and it remains today very difficult to secure stable sources of funding other than competition awards.
- Public indifference: Most of Gamcheon inhabitants were indifferent or sceptical about the GCV Project in the beginning, but they got more engaged following educational training programs and communication campaigns led by the central government.

To finance this initiative, whose budget reached USD 2 800 600, Saha-gu received funds from Busan Metropolitan Government and some private sector partners, as well as rewards from various competitions, sponsored mainly by the central government.

4. Impacts

1.1. Direct impacts

Impacts on the local government

The Saha-gu government joined forces with residents and local artists to develop a democratic governance system and communication channels in accordance with the premise that culture is the crucial driving force behind sustainable development. The project caught attention at the national and international levels, and was selected several times as a best practice in urban renewal policy.

Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

Along with the offering of educational programs, the increased number of cultural events significantly enhanced the residents' sense of pride in the community and improved their cultural capacity. Additionally, Gamcheon's annual village festival attracts foreign visitors and stimulate local creativity, benefitting local artists, retail traders, and the tourism industry.



Impact on the territory and population

Following the implementation of the GCV Project, the spatial transformation of public spaces increased the city's competitiveness and enhanced fellowship and solidarity among the project's stakeholders. The transformation also contributed to the sustainable development of the village by environment-friendly means, to the protection of tangible and intangible regional cultural heritages, and to its transformation into a popular tourist destination, attracting two million visitors a year. The number of travellers in the west of Busan, which used to be less visited than its eastern counterpart, has increased. In this regard, the GCV Project contributed to the rebalancing of the tourism industry in Busan, bringing in a positive city-level change.

The improved physical living environment and the revived local economy contributed to a decrease of crime rate. Once the residents noticed these improvements, they started to participate more willingly in the GCV project.

THE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION HOST MEETINGS TWICE A MONTH TO GATHER PUBLIC OPINION AND NON-SCHEDULED MEETINGS WHENEVER THE NEED ARISES. FEEDBACKS FROM PERSONAL SUGGESTIONS AND POST-PROJECT SURVEYS ARE CHANNELLED TO SAHA-GU OFFICE.

1.2. Evaluation

An advisory committee, consisting of residents and experts, draws recommendation on the feasibility of individual action plans and evaluates those plans' cost-effectiveness.

Moreover, the Korea Manifesto Centre makes yearly assessment of the project's transparency and feasibility. Busan Metropolitan Government also makes a comprehensive evaluation on urban regeneration projects conducted within the city, including the GCV Project.



In addition, the project received numerous awards and certifications:

- Korea UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development Official Project
- Educating Cities' Award by the International Association of Educating Cities
- Good Practice recognized by Dubai International Award for Best Practices
- UN-HABITAT Asian Townscape Awards
- Metropolis Awards
- Presidential Prize, the Good Place Award presented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
- Excellence in Regional Cultural Brand Award received from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

1.3. Key factors

A key success factor has been the active participation of local residents, through cooperation between citizens, artists and the district government, who jointly developed creative ideas to change the paradigm of space use.

1.4. Continuity

To secure the policy continuity, Saha-gu developed urban planning policies tailored to meet the needs of Gamcheon, and established an administrative framework, the Action Plan to Promote Urban Regeneration, to drive Gamcheon sustainable development. The Ministry of SMEs and Startups designated the village as a Special Area of Urban regeneration, ensuring the continuity and sustainability of the GCV Project.

Since 2015, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport has been carrying out the Saetteul Maeul Initiative, a nation-wide scheme to revitalize urban slums. Gamcheon was one of the first

villages selected to pursue the initiative, and received USD 186 700 in government funding to run cultural and economic programs. In addition, the ministry is currently carrying out the Urban Renewal New Deal Program wherein Gamcheon was selected as a trial area to set up arts and cultural infrastructure.

5. Further information

Saha-gu was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 – May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by Oh JaeMun, Assistant Director, Busan Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea

Contact: tomoojm@korea.kr

Website: www.saha.go.kr/portalEn/contents.do?mId=0100000000