

CAPITAL OF YOUTH CULTURE



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

**DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINABLE, EMPOWERMENT, BOTTOM-UP,
GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION, PROMOTION, YOUTH, CREATIVE
INDUSTRIES, GROWTH**



1. Gwanak-gu and culture

Gwanak-gu, located in the southwestern part of Seoul Metropolitan Area, has a population of about 500,000 people. Despite attracting young people and having a youth population ratio of 41%, policies for them have not been enough and they only stay for a short period of time. Also, various issues, such as youth poverty, low employment rates, lonely deaths, and mental problems, have emerged.

Park Jun-hee, mayor of Gwanak-gu, presented the “The Best Inclusive City” vision and made a public commitment to establish the “Republic of Korea’s Capital of Youth Culture” based on innovation, inclusion, and governance. There is the 1st Framework Plan for Youth (2021–2025) and the Framework Plan for Local Culture Promotion at the South Korean government level, the Happy Youth Project (2025 Master Plan for Seoul Youth) at the Seoul government level, and the District Pledge Action Plan by Gwanak-gu at the local municipality level.

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The goal of this project is to make young people who have been alienated actively participate in the local community and public policy-making process to promote their cultural rights. More specifically, it aims to:

- i) Lay a foundation for young artists to work and for young people to enjoy cultural life freely.
- ii) Reflect the regional characteristics and activate youth participation in policy-making as the group targeted by policies.
- iii) Create cultural spaces for the youth to use freely, as well as base spaces for young artists, offering cultural programs, practice rooms, rest spaces, and meeting places for them.



THIS PROJECT AIMS TO ACTIVELY INVOLVE ALIENATED YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND IN THE PUBLIC POLICY-MAKING PROCESS TO PROMOTE THEIR CULTURAL RIGHTS.

2.2. Project development

First of all, Gwanak-gu established an organisation to take charge of youth cultural policies. It established the “Youth Policy Division”, preemptively set up the “Youth Culture Bureau”, enacted the “Ordinance to Cultivate and Support Youth Culture and Arts”, expanded and reorganised the Division of Culture, Tourism, and Sports, and started the operation of the “Gwanak Foundation for Arts and Culture”.

Gwanak-gu has operated an advisory committee that deliberates youth policies since 2018. Youths and relevant experts participated in this committee with a total of 23 regular meetings (2021-2023).

Since 2021, 1699 people participated in 13 forums and debates where stakeholders could participate in the policy process to discover and implement many agendas. Besides, Gwanak-gu has operated a public-private organization, the Youth Network Project. This organisation is composed of divisions for jobs, arts and culture, living stability, and social participation. From 2022 to 2023, 94 meetings were held with a total of 13 proposed projects. Three of them will be carried forward: support for youth employment consulting, support for young artists' exhibitions, and expansion of youth check-ups.

Creating specific spaces:

- 1) Gwanak Youth Center: a base space for youth activities with a total floor area of 1,528.86m². It hosts spaces for young artists: a media room, practice room, auditorium, and co-working office. Also, 12 projects, including a youth empowerment project, were conducted in 2023.



- 2) *Byeolbit Naerinceon Stream & S1472*: a former stream often avoided by residents due to dirt and floods has been transformed into an eco-friendly, pedestrian-friendly space for the arts and culture. With a free busking zone and Cultural Platform *S1472*, the stream has been reborn as an attractive space that holds cultural events all the year round. The *S1472* was designed with modern techniques using container boxes, as a space for performances, exhibitions, creation, and community for young artists. This space has become very famous nationwide, holding the "*Gang Gam-chan Festival*" and the global street dance festival, "*Groove in Gwanak*".
- 3) The youth cultural space *Sillim3Room*: with an area of 329.26m², includes spaces to rest, cowork, and office work. It is reported as the most-used space the youth among youth centres in Seoul, and it runs customised programs for young people, such as comprehensive counselling for youth policies, social networking, and culture and arts. Gwanak-gu will expand *Sillim3Room* as recently users have rapidly increased.
- 4) The Youth Culture Zone is not promoted with the local government's budget; business owners receive subsidies to provide cultural programs to citizens. From 2021 to date, a total of 35 places are run with the program, which operated 364 times.

Youth-centered cultural events have been held and supported citywide in Gwanak-gu. For instance, the youth arts club's busking to strengthen young artists' capabilities; arts clubs, such as dance, vocal, and traditional musical instrument performances, or the "Youth Imagination Week". Also, a Youth Promotion Committee was organised to plan and operate youth festivals. Gwanak-gu also supports artistic content creation activities for young people in collaboration with the Gwanak Foundation for Arts and Culture, such as the program 'Be The Star', discovering new artists taking advantage of the region where many young artists reside, and 'Looking for Gwan-hee', a support project for the step-by-step growth of local artists.

THIS PROJECT CREATED SPECIFIC SPACES SUCH AS THE GWANAK YOUTH CENTRE, THE *BYEOLBIT NAERINCHEON STREAM & S1472*, THE YOUTH CULTURAL SPACE *SILLIM3ROOM* AND THE YOUTH CULTURE ZONE.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

Although this project's main target was young people and artists, its influence was nationwide, on multilevel groups around the country.

Around 130 000 people have used the youth cultural spaces; about 2200 young people have passively participated in local community policies, and there were around 170 000 participants in cultural programs, such as festivals and arts performances. The satisfaction of the festival "Gwanak Youth Festival" was about 63% in 2022, but as a result of reorganising it into a youth-led festival, it significantly improved to 95.1% in 2023.

This project has attracted young artists and tourists to the Byeolbit Naerincheon Stream and the surrounding area through festivals, events, and street performances, making the surrounding business area to become more active. Moreover, according to a survey of commercial leases in Seoul in 2022, Gwanak-gu recorded the highest monthly sales per unit area among 25 cities in Seoul, and it had the second-largest population of young artists in the country.

Gwanak-gu had the effect of improving the city's brand awareness in Korea, increasing the city's attractiveness and evolving into a dynamic and vital cultural city, where many young people reside and the arts and culture are active, with emerging new businesses and an example for other cities in this regard.

Unlike in the past, nowadays many young people participate in policy and enhance the value of representative democracy. The effectiveness of the policy was increased by embracing youth opinions and reflecting them in policies, as well as changing their role from beneficiaries to policy leaders.

3.2. Evaluation

The main performance indicators of this project are the number of young artists registered, sales of business area, policy monitoring and satisfaction, and external evaluation.

The resident participatory evaluation team frequently inspects the implementation status according to the pledge implementation plan, and project performance is diagnosed and given feedback through the pledge project promotion report meetings half yearly. Besides, Gwanak-gu annually conducts public opinion polls to reflect residents' satisfaction and opinions on the "Creation of the Youth Hub" in policy.

The city also participates in the Manifesto Best Practice Contest for local governments in the country annually, where the city policies are evaluated and its policy implementation capabilities are strengthened by benchmarking other practices.



3.3. Key factors

Mayor Park Jun-hee declared his ambition to achieve a “youth hub” and “cultural renaissance” and began to change the system first with powerful leadership.

Since Korea’s fiscal decentralization is weak, and the basic government finance is very limited, Gwanak-gu has been making efforts to secure external funding for youth culture.

Also, Gwanak-gu drew a sustainable project inviting interested parties to participate actively in the process of solving problems and reflecting on their needs.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY WAS INCREASED BY EMBRACING YOUTH OPINIONS AND REFLECTING THEM IN POLICIES, AS WELL AS CHANGING THEIR ROLE FROM BENEFICIARIES TO POLICY LEADERS.

3.4. Continuity

In order to continue this project, the city operates a system for young people to propose necessary agendas and participate in the policy-making process, for instance through the Youth Policy Committee and Youth Network, which raised the autonomy of this project.

The city commits youth cultural projects to the Gwanak Foundation for Arts and Culture, reflecting opinions of the youth to increase the expertise and sustainability of the project.

Gwanak-gu guarantees the sustainability of the youth cultural hub project by establishing a pledge project action plan, including a five-year (2022–2026) investment plan, linked to the “mid-term local financial plans (2024–2028),” to secure stable investment funding for the project.

4. Further information

Gwanak-gu was the winner of the sixth UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award (November 2023 – March 2024). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June 2024, and requested that the Committee on Culture also promoted this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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