

Consuming Spaces in the Global Era:
Distinctions between Consumer Spaces in Seoul

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Abstract

The urbanization process of **marginalized locals** can be observed within the globalization process of capital. Seoul's consumer spaces in the global era have diversified in a complicated pattern. When the changing logic of consumer spaces is examined closely, it can be described as a process of decentralization of and distinctions within spaces. The re-centralization and specialization of spaces constitute a factor that deepens the distinction of **cultural capital** within diversified consumer spaces. How the enormous consumer space of Seoul becomes distinct on the basis of cultural tastes will be reviewed through a detailed analysis of two different consumer spaces, Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun.

A comparison of Apgujeong-dong with Dongdaemun as consumer spaces has three cultural implications. First, Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun are defined here not as mere individual consumer spaces, but as symbolic spaces possessing different living standards and lifestyles. Second, the comparison deals with the economic base of customers of these consumer spaces, along with their related lifestyles and cultural tastes. Distinctions within consumer spaces expose disparities between consumption standards by class. Third, a spatial analysis is needed to understand what regional significance Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun hold in this age of global consumerism.

Keywords: globalization, urban space, consumer spaces, distinction, cultural taste and lifestyle, spatial practice

Urban Space in the Global Era: A Review of Theory

Of the various definitions (interpretations?) of globalization,¹ hybridization is the concept that perhaps most aptly explains the cultural context of urban space.

Globalization is a process of hybridization that unfolds as a multidimensional process in multiple realms of existence (Pieterse 1996, 45). Globalization gives rise to urbanization as a mixed form of pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production (as in rural cities in Latin America, for example), meeting places for different organizational modes such as free enterprise zones and foreign banking institutions, postcolonial villages in international cities where a number of ethnic groups are blended, and the super-spatiality of capital offered by state-of-the-art information technologies (Pieterse 1996, 51). Urban space is thus multilayered by nature, a space where premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity coexist.

Third-world metropolises in the global era are formed in the process of an uneven compression of time and space. Despite their local characteristics, third-world metropolises dissolve stiff barriers between center and region, Western and non-Western, tradition and modernity--while creating hybridized and heterogeneous spaces. Globalization has helped metropolises in the regions (아니면 periphery?) grow into “decentralized centers.” And as Appadurai noted, local metropolises, as the spatial appropriation of so-called “glocalization,” give rise to cultural landscapes in which capital, technology, media, and ethnicity are dislocated.²

Marginalized urban spaces, therefore, possess new locality. Noting that seeing localization as the dominating logic of globalization eliminates the sense and place of localization and overlooks the cultural variations of non-Western regions, Featherstone stresses that localization, besides being absorbed and assimilated by the image and

¹ Roland Robertson (1995) defined globalization as a series of processes under which the entire world is structured specifically; Anthony Giddens (1990), formulating it neutrally as the intensification of global social relations binding far-away regions into one; Tomlinson (1994) as an extension of cultural imperialism; Fredrick Jameson (1992) as a cultural space created by post-capitalism; and David Harvey (1989) as a postmodern condition marked by the compression and flexible accumulation of space and time.

² Appadurai explains globalization by classifying such cultural landscapes into ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, financescape and ideoscape (1996, 61-70).

merchandise of metropolises' mass consumer culture, can assume the strategy of giving rise to new heterogeneity (1996, 62). Life in glocal cities does not produce homogeneous and single cultures, but rather heterogeneous and hybridized ones (Mulder 2002, 28). Glocal cities exist not in the context of one place or region, but in that of multiple localities. They are diasporic places where many cultures are interrelated with one another (Mulder 2002, 9). Mulder defines such urban characteristics as "translocality," and the multilayered change of urbanity in the global era as "transurbanism" (Mulder 2002, 24). Appadurai defines such locality not as a spatial concept, but as the structure of feeling, and explains that locality as a structure of feeling delimits geographical concepts of region. Abandoning the concept of locality as a given place, he first pays attention to what the pattern of a region's social life intends, projects, and programs. Secondly, freeing himself from ideas about the physical scope of locality or globability, he attempts to despatialize things local. Third, he attempts to view locality from the perspective of imaginative power as a social practice (Appadurai 2001, 33).

"Translocality" and "transurbanism" taking place in a marginal urban space cannot, of course, be defined only as the creation of postcolonial space that is escaping from Western domination. As Wallerstein (1993, 96) points out, globalization can be nothing but a variation of world system and a logic of Western capitalistic globalization designed to control local spaces. Arif Dirlik criticizes that globalization is the globalization of capitalism, and is a logic designed to rationalize dominating the locals for capital accumulation through such concepts as the "new international division of labor," the "trans-nationalization of production," and "transnational corporations" (1997, 92). Ashcroft interprets globalization as a process in which individual and local community lives are affected by economic and cultural power operating globally (2000, 111).

In conclusion, the urbanization process of marginalized locals can be seen in accordance with the process of globalizing capital. In this regard, David Harvey views urbanization under capitalism as a means of pursuing, processing, and absorbing economic surpluses (1989, 53). Edward Soja thinks that globalization contributes to perceiving the significance of the localization process of cities, a new international division of labor, transnational civic consciousness, and local power (2000, 196). He

stresses that the birth of metropolises in the postmodern era arises from the emergence of heterogeneous urban spaces due to the globalization of capital.

But there can be little doubt that the globalization of labor is playing as significant a part as the globalization of capital in shaping and defining the contemporary post-metropolis. In such post-metropolitan regions as Los Angeles and New York, London and Paris, the influx of global capital and labor, as well as fashions, music, cuisines, architectural styles, political attitudes, and life-sustaining, economic strategies from all over the world, is not only creating highly differentiated capital investment and labor market ~~and-but~~ also the most economically, politically, and culturally heterogeneous cityscapes that have ever existed (Soja 2000, 196).

The Dual Urbanization of Seoul: “Decentralization” and “Distinction”

Given the mutual relations between globalization and urban spaces, is it possible to see Seoul as a city undergoing such changes of hybridization? Though Seoul's growth background is different from other third-world metropolises, due to its highly compressed growth it wholly preserves the general features of hybridized growth that characterize them. In some respects, Seoul can be regarded as a typical case of hybridization. Seoul boasts of high-rise buildings and state-of-the-art information communications technologies, but is a rogue city where many of the side effects from compressed growth become manifest. Seoul is called both the most comfortable and the most uncomfortable city to live in because it still has many contradictions that have to be addressed in the wake of its rapid growth.

With a population of 10 million, Seoul is a textbook case of third-world “glocalization,” in which modernity interacts with postmodernity, random development with culture conservation, and space dissolution with space reconstruction. Seoul has developed as a representative third-world growth city, with skyscrapers equipped with advanced facilities, residential-commercial compounds that have been dubbed “dream palaces,” and large shopping malls.³ In this city, domestic companies compete fiercely

³ E-Mart, Korea's mammoth discount store chain, accounts for 30 percent of the country's market, the largest share among discount chains. Korea is the only third-world country in which Wal-Mart, the largest discount logistical business in the world, has failed.

with multinational corporations, super-speed information networks exchange information in real time, and famous foreign brands have become a part of everyday life. On the other hand, it is burdened with the adverse byproducts of developmental dictatorship, including overpopulation, real estate speculation, ~~both~~—noise and environmental pollution, as well as spatial discrimination. Having grown into a mammoth metropolis over three-odd decades, Seoul has experienced a “compressed process” of time and space **in the absence of spatial justice**, which as a result has polarized downtown space and brought about dual urbanization.

As another city exists in a city, the border between downtown and the suburbs, the upper and lower classes, and exploiting and exploited space becomes more and more distinct. This nature of asymmetry may be defined as the “dual urbanization of space.” Mike Davis interprets the 1970s mammoth Los Angeles redevelopment project as the exploiting process of dual urbanization. He explains how the redevelopment project discarded its original intentions to moderate unbalanced growth by area, became a place of investment by vested interest in the downtown area, and turned into a field of international financial speculation. A plan to construct large-scale public housing estates in Bunker Hill near Los Angeles' public agencies district was aborted by the people who held privileged rights over the downtown areas. The Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team stadium was constructed in a notorious slum area called Saves Lane. A series of changes that converted **undeveloped** areas of Los Angeles into an excessively heated real estate region and an important pan-Pacific economy financial center, coupled with a sharp rise in migrations from third-world countries, have exposed the most primitive forms of urban exploitation, says Davis. Indeed, the development of a city always contains conditions that can deepen inequalities existing within a particular space (Davis 1992, 154-180).

Seoul too was unable to avoid dual urbanization and the contradictions that arise between external growth and internal exploitation resulting from downtown redevelopment projects. The duality of Seoul's huge urban space can be understood from roughly three perspectives. First, development and redevelopment continuously repeat themselves in Seoul. Ceaseless renovations are carried out in the city's **city** centers of Jongno, Chungmuro, Namdaemun, and Mapo, where modern underdeveloped spaces are intermingled with postmodern complex spaces. The duality of downtown

spaces is structured into exposed development areas lined along streets and redevelopment areas enclosed in alleys. The downtown redevelopment policy destroys modernistic spaces like alleys for the purpose of expanding postmodernistic ones. Exploitation of such spaces is revealed in an extreme form in the process of renovating traditional slum areas such as Bongcheon-dong, Gireum-dong, and Sanggye-dong. Bongcheon-dong and its vicinity, the widest unlicensed slum area in Korea, have been mostly converted into high-rise apartment complexes for the middle class. Such new housing spaces are a distinct contrast with the slum areas that have not yet been cleared.

Moreover, though it appears to be a singly administered space, Seoul is diversely divided in terms of function. Seoul rapidly expanded during the development boom of the 1970s. Having reached its limit, however, the capital experienced internally compressed growth from the latter half of the 1980s. As spaces are functionally divided in Seoul, distinct “cities within a city” have emerged. Sanggye-dong and its vicinity, developed prior to and following the 1988 Seoul Olympics, have been converted into a typical housing district for the middle class. Apgujeong-dong and its vicinity, the origin of real estate speculation in the 1970s, is a housing district for the upper class. Guro-dong has changed into a housing district for low-income workers, Noryangjin into a district of private educational institutes for college applicants, and Donam-dong and Hwayangni into a subculture area for teens. Such distinctions between spaces strengthened their respective independence, and in the latter half of the 1990s began to secure internal systems capable of supporting shopping, entertainment, leisure, and educational activities within individual residential areas. The recent “New Town Development Policy”⁴ announced by the Seoul metropolitan government is also an attempt to effect an internal differentiation between Seoul's urban spaces.

Finally, Seoul is a dual space containing both distinctions and contradictions. Seoul can be divided into consumer spaces like Apgujeong-dong, production spaces like Guro-dong, and housing spaces like Sanggye-dong. Apgujeong-dong as an upscale consumer space is distinguished from other downscale residential ones, and the Guro

⁴ The Seoul City government announced the “New Town Development Policy” in 2003, aimed at eliminating the imbalance between Gangnam (south of the river) and Gangbuk (north of the river). The policy called for developing three pilot areas of Eunpyeong-dong, Gireum-dong, and Wangsimni, and 12 expanded areas including Cheonho-dong, Itaewon, and Noryangjin-dong in a manner matching the unique characteristics of each area.

industrial estate area, recently transformed into a new digital industrial estate of Internet and IT, is distinguished from Seongsu-dong and its vicinity, which remains a traditional manufacturing production area. Large-scale middle-class residential areas like Sanggye-dong are distinguished from Jamsil and Dogok-dong and their vicinities, which are upscale housing areas now riding atop a redevelopment boom. In this way, spaces in Seoul are differentiated by class-based as well as functional differences.

The spatial aspect showing Seoul's dual nature most eloquently is perhaps the spatial distinction⁵ accompanying the emergence of a postmodern consumer culture. Postmodernization of consumer spaces outwardly appears to collapse barriers between production and consumer spaces, as well as those between upscale and mass consumer ones. Inwardly, however, distinctions among consumer subjects have become more apparent. Of course, the postmodernization of consumer spaces has differentiated independent and various consumer subspace downtown as well as in the suburbs. As large-scale shopping malls, discount stores, and entertainment spaces that include multiplex cinemas are built in the suburbs, consumer spaces in Seoul are becoming more homogenized. Suburban citizens of Seoul are now able to consume in areas where they live without having to go to downtown commercial centers.

Despite the decentralization of consumer spaces, however, it can hardly be said that distinctions among consumer subjects has dissolved. Decentralization of consumer spaces has arisen not from the dissolution of class inequalities or distinction in living areas but from the expanded reproduction of consumer capital. The geographic border of consumer spaces in Seoul, though diversified by area, is still reproduced by class, gender, and generational distinctions. The Gwanghwamun area, where government agencies are clustered, and the Jongmyo Shrine area in Jongno, where retirees in their 60s and 70s congregate, are equally located in downtown area, but are conspicuously distinct in terms of generation and class. The new Dongdaemun shopping mall space, a venue of mainly intermediate and cheap fashion brands, constitutes a consumer space, but is distinct from Apgujeong-dong and Cheongdam-dong consumer spaces crowded

⁵ The concept of "distinction" the author refers to here is borrowed entirely from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Lifestyles or cultural tastes preferred by the masses, says Bourdieu, are distinguished not by innate differences but by class differences (Bourdieu 1995, 127). Distinctions in cultural tastes, in other words, contain class distinctions.

with top-grade foreign brands.

“Decentralization of consumer spaces” and “distinctions in consumer spaces” are two sets of spatial logic that define a dual urbanization of Seoul as a third-world metropolis. They **form the multilayered textures of consumer space and explain the bisecting of consumer trends or cultural tastes.** The decentralization of consumer spaces in Seoul, for example, gives rise to re-centralization, and distinctions in consumer spaces accelerate distinctions in cultural tastes. The decentralization of consumer spaces takes place mainly through space renovation and absorption of adjacent spaces. Such cases are found especially in the process of renovating slum areas in the suburbs. Tracing the moving route of teenagers' subculture spaces shows how decentralization of consumer spaces is re-centralized. Teens who formed a subculture space in Garibong-dong, a traditional industrial complex area, for example, moved to the adjacent Cheolsan area that was developed as a consumer commercial area. Teenagers who hung out in Donam-dong and its vicinity until the mid-1990s relocated themselves to Dongdaemun shopping malls that specialize in intermediate and cheap clothes, while those who frequented Hwayangni and its vicinity have moved to the Jamsil and Sincheon area, a new teenager consumer space (Lee 2002, 319).

In conclusion, Seoul's consumer spaces in the global era appear to have been diversified in a very complicated pattern. When the changing logic of consumer spaces is examined closely, however, they can be summarized as decentralization of and distinctions in spaces. The re-centralization and specialization of spaces constitute a factor that deepens the distinction of culture capital within diversified consumer spaces. How the enormous consumer space of Seoul becomes distinct depending on cultural tastes will be reviewed next through a detailed analysis of these two different consumer spaces.

Space Consumption and Distinction in Cultural Tastes: Comparison of the Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun Shopping Malls

Space consumption has two meanings. One is that of consuming commodity and leisure in specific consumer spaces such as large shopping malls, theme parks, and fast food

chain stores. Space in this context represents the domain of particular consumer spaces, distinguished from other kinds. In the narrow sense, it designates specific consumer spaces such as department stores, game spaces, amusement spots and fashion stores. In a wider perspective, however, it defines a consumer space in a symbolic sense, distinct from housing and production spaces. Discourses on “consumer spaces” in Korea prompted by expanded consumer capitalism in the 1990s generally start from such a definition, i.e. a topic of a “consumption space.”

The second meaning of space consumption has an inclusive context distinguished from an act of consuming merchandise. It implies not an act of buying a particular piece of merchandise or enjoying a type of entertainment, but of consuming a certain space. ~~Strictly speaking, the first meaning of “space consumption” examined above represents not the consumption of space itself, but that of commodities kept found within a given space. The second meaning of sSpace consumption, in other words, however, means not only purchasing goods at a department store or drinking liquor and singing songs at karaoke bars, but also embraces the entire form of appropriating a space in which one exists.~~ It means reading a magazine, walking within a space to buy goods, and consuming the images and signs presented by a particular space.

(압구정동과 동대문을 함께 묶어서 사진 기입)

Comparison of Apgujeong-dong with Dongdaemun as consumer spaces helps to analyze how “the space of consumption” and “space consumption” are interrelated. ~~It also helps to analyze how people who consume commodity-commodities within a space differ from people-those who consume the space of commodity.~~ In a post-consumer society in which consumer spaces become increasingly distinct from one another, space consumption has taken on a larger role in individual acts of consumption than commodity consumption. What is the significance of comparing Apgujeong-dong, an upscale consumer space in Seoul, with Dongdaemun, a recent clothing consumer space? Before making a detailed comparison, it is necessary to consider the following three cultural implications.

First, Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun are defined here not as mere individual

consumer spaces, but as symbolic spaces showing different living standards and lifestyles. Seoul's division by the Hangang river into north (Gangbuk) and south (Gangnam) of the river is both geographical and economic. Gangnam and Gangbuk are symbolic spaces connoting economic and class divisions. In this sense, this comparison of Apgujeong-dong, the representative consumer space in Gangnam, with Dongdaemun, a new consumer space of Gangbuk, is purely symbolic.

Second, despite the existence of various implications defining the spaces of Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun, this article will deal mainly with the economic base of customers of those consumer spaces, and their lifestyles and cultural tastes, which are differentiated by such economic base. Distinction in consumer spaces exposes ~~not only~~ more than disparity (편차는 것 같아요) in consumption standards by class, ~~including. The disparity involves those of~~ merchandise purchased by consumers, cultural habitus⁶ imprinted in the act of purchasing commodities, and the symbolic capital displayed by cultural tastes. Understanding the differences in symbolic capital inherent in consumer spaces means understanding the emergence of and changes in cultural "fields"⁷ of consumer spaces. Consumer space as a cultural field ~~has~~ carries a principle of rejecting actors ~~having with~~ different cultural habits in order to maintain itself. The field of consumer culture called Apgujeong-dong, in other words, has its inherent cultural habits produced by the field, and possesses its own rules for the birth and evolution of the field.

Third, spatial analysis is needed to see what local significance Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun carry in the phase of global consumerism. Apgujeong-dong and

⁶ "Habitus" is an important concept French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu uses in defining subjects. It represents a system of internalized and embodied disposition in particular actions of individuals. But "habitus" as individuals' dispositions is distinguished from systematic morality or the conscience referred to in ethics. It is similar to the *ethos* used to indicate the entity in which disposition on ethical levels and practical principles are systematized objectively. The concept of habitus is distinguished from that of habitude. Habitue is unconsciously repetitive, mechanic, automatic, and reproductive rather than productive. In this respect, habitus is very generative (Bourdieu 1994a, 160).

⁷ The concept of "field" discussed in this article is also borrowed from Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, a field appears as "a structured space of positions." A field has its own general rules, which Bourdieu defines as the "rules of a field's appropriation and exclusion." In all fields, there are struggles between newcomers attempting to break the bars to the right of common access, and those in control, who safeguard their monopoly and exclude competition (Bourdieu 1994b, 129).

Dongdaemun follow established spatial customs in the change of Seoul's spatial landscapes on the one hand, while entertaining new missions demanded by space and undergoing the process of spatial evolution and transformation on the other. A review of the geographical contexts that Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun have in a global consumption culture enables one to see the dynamics of the Seoul metropolis's consumer spaces. The geocultural and geopolitical implications of the spatial distinction between Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun will now be presented.

The Distinction between Gangnam and Gangbuk

A discourse on Apgujeong-dong, the symbolic consumer space of Gangnam (South of the Hangang river), involves two issues. First, an index symbolizing the benefits from an urban development policy undertaken under programming by dictatorial regimes in the 1970s, and second, an icon of surplus consumer culture that began to emerge in the 1990s. The two issues of "developmental dictatorship" and consumer culture are related. The former is the economic base of the latter, and the latter functions as a mechanism expanding and reproducing the logic of the former. The formation of Apgujeong-dong in the 1990s resulted from a cultural distortion of a speculation boom led by developmental dictatorship, and dominant relationships of developmental dictatorship were expanded and reproduced through the consumer spaces of the upper class. An upper-class consumer space, Apgujeong-dong is closely tied to the reproduction process of vested interests derived from Korea's developmental dictatorship power.

This feature of Apgujeong-dong was inherent in the way it first gained its name. "Apgujeong" is derived from "Apgu," the penname of Han Myeong-hoe who was a top official in early Joseon. "Apgu" literally means "friendship with gulls." A man of influence, Han Myeong-hoe built a pavilion on a southern estuary of the Hangang river, for the purpose of spending the rest of his life peacefully upon retirement. The name of Apgujeong-dong, which originates from that pavilion, is from the start a term for a man of power. Noticeably, Apgujeong-dong protrudes into the Hangang river, which resembles an animal's excretive organ. This matches with the fact that Apgujeong-dong functioned as an excretion outlet of consumption desires in the 1990s.

As an **index** of distorted power, Apgujeong-dong is inseparable from the

ideology of the “Gangnam mythology.” Until the 1970s, Apgujeong-dong was one of the most neglected parts of Seoul. When the “basic program for Seoul” was announced in 1966, however, the area emerged as one of Seoul's three major nuclei. Anticipating-In anticipation of a possible war following the 1968 North Korean commando assault on the presidential residence, a plan was drafted to move the capital's population center from the north to the south of the Hangang river. In the course of implementing the plan, the Gangnam area around Apgujeong-dong became a new population center. In fact, the policy was used as an excuse for wealth accumulation by the ruling class who benefited from Park Chung-hee’s authoritarian rule. Political and economic relationships of interests operated behind the development of Apgujeong-dong as displayed in real estate speculations by men in power, preferential parceling out of apartments, and large business monopoly of development projects backed by political power.

On account of the Gangnam development policy, the land value of the area soared beyond imagination. Supposing that land prices in Gangnam were estimated at 100 theoretical units in 1963, they shot up to 2,000~5,000 units in 1970. Between 1963 and 1979, land prices were multiplied by between 800 to 1,300 times (Cho M. 2004, 29). Owing to the opening of the Seoul-Busan highway and mammoth development projects by Hyundai Construction—a legendary entity in Korea's industrial modernization—Gangnam became a scene of development and a speculation boom reminiscent of America's gold rush (Kim 2004, 14). Through the monopolistic and discriminatingly concentrated support policy of the ruling class designed to boost land value, Gangnam became “an independent republic” in Seoul. The most representative policy was the relocation of the judiciary and the move of famous private high schools in Gangbuk to this area. With court buildings built and well-known private high schools moved to Gangnam since the 1980s, the area has become the space of the new ruling class, monopolizing money, power, and academic cliques. Gangnam residents began to be recognized as wealthy and having vested interests in Korean society, and those acting in the name of these vested interests have begun to imagine Gangnam as an independent and exclusive space.⁸ As the noted Korean sociologist, Cho Myung-rae, points out, as

⁸ The Gangnam area commands a conspicuously larger share of power elites controlling the country. Residents in the Gangnam area consist of 61.3 percent of the nation's lawyers, 56.4 percent of the doctors, 54 percent of the entrepreneurs, 52.8 percent of financial businesses,

an area of the new upper class, Gangnam reproduces itself through self-multiplying real estate prices, an educational bloc dubbed “school zone number 8,” and a regional sense of solidarity (Jo MR 2004, 36-39).

Those with military power, who had propelled rapid growth in the 1970s-1980s, along with the newly rising bourgeoisie who had conspired with them, chose Gangnam as the field for reproduction of their economic capital. It was their children who chose Gangnam as the field for the reproduction of a newly-gained cultural capital. With the massive emergence of consumer culture in the 1990s, Apgujeong-dong began to be indicated as a place abnormally overabundant with global consumption culture. Apgujeong-dong’s Rodeo Street—named after Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills—lined with foreign brand name shops filled with high-priced goods, many cafés with exotic interiors, and high-quality fusion restaurants, etc. was regarded as a hedonistic pleasure-seeking place of the children of new bourgeoisie as well as a cultural zone with a high propensity for multinational consumption.

Apgujeong-dong was a text that both the media covering consumer culture phenomena and the ~~culture-cultural~~ research ~~criticizing-critical of consumer discourses~~ in the early 1990s could not pass up as a point of social critique. The area has been discussed in several ways. ~~To name a few~~ For example, Apgujeong-dong is a “problematic space” in-for understanding the nature of capitalism in Korean society and fathoming the structure of its desires (Kang 1992, 13-31); a body culture mecca where female bodies are commercialized (Kim 1992, 77-89); and a dystopia of contradictions in which Korean society’s political and cultural contradictions unreservedly rear their ugly heads.⁹ From the perspective of an urban space of the globalized third world, however, Apgujeong-dong is a Westernized postmodern space rather than a result of Korea’s deformed accumulation of speculative capital. A foreign culture researcher has

50.2 percent of the civil servants, and 36.2 percent of the journalists. The percentages are extremely high, given that the Gangnam population accounts for 16 percent of Seoul population (Jo M. 2004, 34).

⁹ The following critique of Apgujeong-dong, by Professor Do Jeong-il, borders on vituperation. “If that place is a utopia, it is a utopia you want to escape from, a country you don’t want to go to, and a heaven of vomiting you want to send back. It contains all things that we dread, we failed to do, and we don’t want to have. It is not a liberated district but a prison camp of desires” (Do 1992, 101).

noted in his ethnography that groups and networks jostling in Rodeo Street of Apgujeong-dong display the flexibility of Korean society arising from an accumulation of postmodern capital, thus making Rodeo Street a consumption site with its own autogeny that cannot be ~~simply-solely~~ blamed on Western over-consumerism (Shields 1998, 26). As a place where new Western consumption patterns and new lifestyles emerge, Apgujeong-dong in the 1990s was regarded as a globalized space in which rigid Korean capitalism was softened and youth with a strong will to express themselves experienced their cultural desires (Jo H. 1992, 35-39).

Apgujeong-dong's significance can be defined within the local community of "Gangnam." Interestingly, Gangnam is a concept existing not as a geographical entity but as an ideologically imagined *signifiant* (signifier). Gangnam defines the area south of the Hangang river, but today is used as a term designating a bloc composed of Banpo-dong, Seocho-dong, Apgujeong-dong, Sinsa-dong, Cheongdam-dong, and Daechi-dong. In the term of "Gangnam" is an inherent logic of distinction that excludes a larger portion of the Gangnam region composed of the low-income districts such as Noryangjin, Bongcheon-dong, and Sillim-dong.

(압구정동 사진 기입)

Incorporated into the imaginary community of Gangnam, Apgujeong-dong as a consumer space is explained through exaggerated and exclusive discourses. The media's attempt to connect the so-called "orange tribe,"¹⁰ suspected of morally degraded consumer frenzy, with the Apgujeong-dong consumer space, for example, betrays the intent to generalize Apgujeong-dong as a *signifiant* of an imaginary community of Gangnam. Apgujeong-dong comprises an imaginary community linked with the Hyundai apartment complex in Apgujeong-dong, which was once one of the most expensive residential complexes in the country, and the Galleria Department Store,

¹⁰ A term designating young consumption aristocratic class, the "orange tribe" represents a new generation that drives sports cars, prefers posh fashion brands, and frequents nightclubs. The "orange tribe" is subsequently replaced by the "kangaroo tribe" who economically rely on their parents, the "Cheongdam tribe" who frequent Cheongdam-dong where top-class foreign commodities are displayed, and the "salmon tribe," young people who returned home after living luxurious lives while studying abroad.

a postmodern shopping mall. Joined later by Cheongdam-dong, where shops sell such famous foreign fashion brands as Prada, Gucci, Jilsander, and Bally, and where renowned entertainment programming firms are clustered, the Apgujeong-dong consumption area expanded to Dogok-dong, home to the “Tower Palace,” the highest-class compound residential and commercial building, reminiscent of a military fortress. Rodeo Street in Apgujeong-dong, famous for imported sports cars, top-class foreign brands, exotic entertainment spaces, and high-class apparel and accessories, is a compressed space of the imaginary community of Gangnam, and also a space that ceaselessly expands the imagination about Gangnam.

(동대문 사진 기입)

By contrast, the Dongdaemun shopping town is a consumption space devoid of an imaginary community. If Apgujeong-dong negates a geographical entity and attempts to distinguish itself from other areas through the ceaseless interpellation of an “imaginary community,” Dongdaemun represents the opening of and communication with a free space without geographical exclusivity. The openness of Dongdaemun, of course, does not negate its status as a geographical entity, for Dongdaemun has its own geographical history. Unlike the geographical entity of Apgujeong-dong, however, Dongdaemun does not represent the entire Gangbuk area north of the river. While Apgujeong-dong is unreservedly used as a term representing the geographical nature of Gangnam, Dongdaemun represents only one of the diverse identities of Gangbuk.

Dongdaemun represents the consumption space of Gangbuk and is clearly comparable with Apgujeong-dong. While in Apgujeong-dong foreign brand fashion stores sell dresses for millions of won and are decorated with posh interiors, Dongdaemun’s clothes have no brand names, are priced in the medium or lower levels, and cost between 30,000-40,000 won (approximately US\$30-40) a unit. In Dongdaemun, small shops of 10-13 square meters are jammed together like cells in a beehive. Most consumers in Apgujeong-dong are young people who live in the area, but Dongdaemun customers come from across Seoul and its surrounding areas. As a newly developed downtown shopping space, Dongdaemun commands much higher real estate prices than in the past, but is still far below those of Apgujeong-dong.

It would certainly be an oversimplification to simply define Dongdaemun as a representative consumer space of Gangbuk and Apgujeong-dong as that of Gangnam. In particular, it might be unreasonable to see Dongdaemun as the representative consumer space in the Gangbuk region. Those with real power and wealth live not in Apgujeong-dong but in Pyeongchang-dong or Seongbuk-dong, both north of the river. Gangbuk has many representative consumer spaces other than Dongdaemun, including Jongno and Sinchon. Nevertheless, Dongdaemun represents the Gangbuk consumer space to the extent that, as a space of lower- and middle-class consumption, it is suitable for symbolic comparison with Apgujeong-dong. How can Dongdaemun be defined as a comparable concept?

Dongdaemun was traditionally an area of intermediate and cheap apparel estates. Dongdaemun and Cheonggyecheon were places where low-wage apparel workers worked under extremely poor conditions. Cheap and medium-priced clothes produced in Cheonggyecheon apparel factories found their way to the Dongdaemun clothing market for consumption. The Pyeonghwa market in Cheonggyecheon, where young women produced clothing while struggling under harsh conditions, was the birthplace of Korea's trade union movement, and functioned as the oldest clothing market for the lower-income class in Seoul. Apparel factories and clothing markets in Dongdaemun and Cheonggyecheon constituted a space where low-wage laborers and low-income consumers lived together until the mid-1990s, when a large group of young fashion designers hit the market.

Dongdaemun, Cheonggyecheon, and their vicinities have been renovated since the late 1990s. With mammoth shopping towns like Doota and Migliore, the area has been converted into an apparel consumer space preferred by the middle strata of the society. Though it has changed into a new consumer space under the downtown redevelopment program, the Dongdaemun shopping town is undoubtedly a space still conspicuously distinguished from the Apgujeong-dong consumer space in terms of class. Such class distinction arises not so much from capital itself as from cultural tastes and habitus.

Cultural Tastes and Lifestyles

It is cultural codes that clearly distinguish Gangnam and Gangbuk styles. Though dictated mainly by teenagers, they can be defined as “revival” and “hip-hop,” respectively. Apgujeong-dong teenagers generally wear baggy hip-hop clothes and accessories, and dye their hair in primary colors. Through piercing they attempt to break established ideas about taste. By contrast, teenagers from low-income families in Gangbuk, like Garibong-dong and Mia-dong, wear tighter clothes. Teenagers call it the “revival” style, once fashionable among teen gangsters. They would engage in group fighting, wearing tight school uniforms. Sometimes their apparel identified them with their particular group. One of our teen interviewees in Apgujeong-dong said the following: “‘Hip-hop’ kids rarely mix with ‘revival’ teens. The ‘revival’ style can be seen in Gangbuk, a style that is not easily spotted in Gangnam.” What are the differences between the two groups?¹¹

The “revival” style preferred by teenagers from poor families expresses their social grievances. This is why “revival” clothes that cling to the body look wild compared with “hip-hop” clothes. “Hip-hop” clothes are preferred by teenagers from wealthy families, and are a strong fashion statement—“style for style’s sake.” They imitate clothing worn by African-Americans not because they admire what they perceive to be their gangster culture, but entirely because of their desire to identify themselves with the brands and fashion of that clothing. Our teen interviewees in Garibong-dong said the following: “Gangnam people live better than we Gangbuk people do. We normally don't mingle with them. Personally, I've not met anyone from the south. Our styles are also very different. I've never chatted with anyone from Gangnam, nor have I ever been there”; “The farthest I've ever gone has been to are Sadang-dong and Sinchon. I've never been to Apgujeong-dong and Bangbae-dong. I don't like the “hip-hop” style so much.” Dongdaemun style cannot simply be defined as revival and Apgujeong-dong style as hip-hop. “Revival” and “hip-hop” are *signifiants* symbolically representing the two different spaces. More important is the kind of consumer spaces “revival” and “hip-hop” styles produce and what cultural tastes they

¹¹ I have broadly researched the style of youth subcultures in Korea since 1996, especially the differences of style between upper class youth and lower class one. These comments above based on the ethnography of comparison between Garibong-dong and Apgujeong-dong in 2001 from fall to winter. For more details,

reproduce.

Sure, a women's monthly, recently publicized the outcome of a poll of women 25 years old or older living in Gangnam and Gangbuk on their modes of consumption. (*Hankook Ilbo*, 4 May 2004). When asked what occupies the biggest share of their monthly expenses, Gangnam respondents listed items in the order of clothing (33 percent), eating out (26 percent), and entertainment (21 percent). Gangbuk respondents listed eating out (29 percent), cosmetics (25 percent), and cultural life (23 percent). Results showed that Gangnam residents spend more on fashion and entertainment, while their Gangbuk counterparts more on cosmetics and cultural life. One question directly challenged the Gangnam culture formed on the back of economic power. When asked what famous brands they own, most Gangnam respondents answered they own about one well-known foreign brand. In contrast, 68 percent of Gangbuk respondents gave negative replies. When asked whether they had traveled abroad, 78 percent of Gangnam respondents gave affirmative replies, approximately two times as much as their Gangbuk counterparts (39 percent) (*Jugan donga*, May 2003). A poll of 591 high-school students living in Gangnam and Gangbuk in 2001 asked the students where they often travel during their vacation. 12.4 percent of the Gangnam students said they travel abroad with families, 7.6 times more than the Gangbuk respondents (1.6 percent). When asked where they prefer to celebrate their birthdays, 27.6 percent of Gangnam respondents responded that they frequented posh family restaurants, 5.1 times more than their Gangbuk respondents (5.4 percent). By contrast, 18 percent of Gangbuk respondents said they preferred snack shops, 5.5 times more than the Gangnam respondents (3.3 percent) (*Hankook Ilbo*, 15 April 2001).

The above polls reveal clear class distinctions in lifestyles between Gangnam and Gangbuk. Such class differences, however, are determined not so much by economic assets as by cultural tastes. Differences in cultural tastes, according to Bourdieu, are not formed arbitrarily by the individual choice of culture, but within a set of social relationships structuring individuals (Bourdieu 1995, 102). Namely, individual cultural tastes depend on the degree of their acquired schooling capital, class, and cultural capital. Bourdieu analyzed how differently are revealed one's refined tastes and

see Lee (2002).

cultural capabilities, which are displayed by the nature of his cultural merchandise consumed and methods of consumption in individual fields such as painting, music, clothing, furniture, and cuisine. He concluded that there is a close relationship between various cultural practices, schooling capital, and one's class of birth. **While an individual's aesthetic and cultural tastes can bring together people of identical conditions, it also distinguishes them from those who are not** (Bourdieu 1995, 102)

To borrow Bourdieu's theory, Dongdaemun and Apgujeong-dong are distinguished through cultural tastes. Consumers frequenting Dongdaemun are sensitive to fashion. Teenagers in the Dongdaemun shopping mall prefer primary-color fashion exemplified by the popular singer Yi Hyo-ri, who gained sensational popularity last year based on her sexually-charged performances. Yi's sporty glamour, mimicking the fashion of the American singer Jennifer Lopez fashion, is conveyed through tight training attire and original colors like green and pink. Children of low-income families who desire to duplicate Yi Hyo-ri's fashion try to transcend their class conditions through exaggerated expressions of style. Yi Hyo-ri's sexy but shallow image represents a cultural taste that teenage girls from the lower class desire to imitate. Accordingly, children of the lower-income class flocking into Dongdaemun shopping town generally tend to express their identities excessively while preferring styles fashionable among the masses.

However, some youth in their twenties and thirties from Apgujeong-dong and Cheongdam-dong do not prefer the excessive styles fashionable among the masses. They prefer the graceful, aristocratic, refined style of the Bobos—bourgeois bohemians—which they alone understand and recognize. While clothes sold in Dongdaemun and the tastes of consumers are varied, styles found in Apgujeong-dong appear consistent. Common sentiments and cultural tastes exist in Apgujeong-dong, as well as a sense of cultural superiority and authority unconsciously emanating from that imaginary community. The cultural sense of superiority and authority is a neo-conservative and neo-aristocratic disposition expressed by the new upper class. This disposition functions to stabilize the cultural tastes of the young generation in Apgujeong-dong. Neo-conservative styles, different from existing conservative styles, tend to be graceful but possess aspects that are a departure from stylistic convention. By contrast with existing conservative styles, these styles lean towards a different degree of

skin exposure, selection of colors, and exceptional design. But their styles have something in common with neo-aristocratic styles in that they are premised on a gracefulness based on economic capability. In sum, Apgujeong-dong youth prefer such neo-conservative styles, which correspond to the high-class styles of Yuppies engaged in professional occupations, as well as the bohemian styles of the Bobos.

Consumer Spaces in Global Era: Hybridization or Distinction?

The discussion has so far compared Apgujeong-dong with Dongdaemun. The stronger the cultural nature of the global-local dimension becomes, however, the weaker the clear-cut confrontation between the two consumer spaces. As global spaces take root locally, consumer spaces overlap, intersect, and give rise to hybridized styles. In a global era in which consumer spaces overlap in a complex manner, the clear-cut confrontation between American and Korean lifestyles is meaningless. Likewise, the more Seoul's downtown areas evolve into global environments, clear-cut confrontations between the Dongdaemun and Apgujeong-dong consumer spaces will dissolve. All regions can become centers; all centers can turn into regions.

Such decentralization and hybridization trends have been observed in the past few years. Apgujeong-dong, which stood in the forefront of consumer culture in the 1990s, has recently begun to lose its influence. Apgujeong-dong's Rodeo Street, which looked exotic and unusual several years ago, has been duplicated elsewhere in Seoul and is no longer unique. More sophisticated styles than that of Apgujeong-dong have appeared elsewhere, and the cultural aristocracy of the neo-upper class formed around Apgujeong-dong is moving to Cheongdam-dong. Upscale fashion brands, foreign cars, hair shops, and body shops, once monopolized by Apgujeong-dong, are being expanded to other consumer spaces in Seoul.

Traditionally underdeveloped areas such as Dongdaemun, Cheonggyecheon, and their vicinities, on the other hand, are renewing themselves with a global image. Riding the "New Town" government plan to redevelop the downtown areas north of the Hangang river, Dongdaemun and its vicinity are being reborn as mammoth shopping towns. Thus, the Dongdaemun space has become a hybridized space in which the traditional slum area has now been crowded with petty apparel factories, mingling in

close quarters with a global mammoth shopping mall. Foreign tourists who used to enjoy shopping in Itaewon have mostly moved to the more refined Dongdaemun shopping town. Dongdaemun is no longer an area housing apparel workers and small-scale merchants; it has become a global consumer space frequented by teenagers, foreign workers, overseas tourists, and young middle-class consumers.

Consumer spaces do not stay forever stagnant, but change and transform themselves. The consumer space of Seoul gives rise to multidimensional voices that can no longer be defined as monotonous, and can no longer be distinguished from one another as defined in the past. It is doubtful whether Korea's consumer spaces can any longer be simply bisected into Gangnam and Gangbuk. Thanks to the downtown redevelopment program, low-income areas that used to be classified as slums have been transformed into middle-class residential areas, crowded with expansive department stores and discount chain stores.

But distinctions between consumer spaces, represented by Apgujeong-dong and Dongdaemun, nevertheless display their power. Gangnam accounts for nearly 30 percent of the total consumption of aggregate sales at large-scale shopping malls and various leisure facilities in Seoul. Though consumption by region has been standardized, the top high-class consumption pattern is still centered around Gangnam. A quarter of the entire sales at a shopping mall in Apgujeong-dong were paid for by its top 5 percent customers. Though it is not a consumer space problem, 40 percent of the entrance quorum of the top three universities in Korea is filled by students residing in the Gangnam region. Office rental and apartment price in Gangnam is three times higher than the national average. Seoul consumer spaces in the global era are in fact being hybridized and pluralized, but space distinctions of Gangnam and Gangbuk are still reproduced. What sorts of social problems result from such distinctions and what spatial practices can be devised to overcome such distinctions?

The Spatial Practices of Consumption: Learning from Everyday Life

The coexistence of consumer spaces' decentralization and distinctions proves that class inequalities in Korean society are worsening, rather than being resolved. The control

logic of neo-liberalism justified the polarization of social classes like the society ruled by the “80/20 principle”. Capital globalization increased the plurality of marginal sites but reinforced those of the city’s privileged core areas. It is for this reason that the minority class feels a strong sense of deprivation in comparison to the majority. The consumption of space can be understood in such a context. Because the relative sense of deprivation Dongdaemun consumers feel against their Apgujeong-dong counterparts arises not only from acts of consumption but also from other social activities and relationships surrounding consuming behavior.

If so, are the economic inequalities found in the consumption patterns of individuals reflected in inequalities in cultural tastes? Is consumption merely a mirror of production? Is Apgujeong-dong a blessed space of the chosen few, while Dongdaemun an unfortunate space of the unrefined majority of the public? Critical references analyzing consumer spaces and subjects' lifestyles in Dongdaemun and Apgujeong-dong have thus far concentrated on exposing clear-cut distinctions between the two, and discussed distinctions in cultural tastes stemming from differences in the economic bases of consumer spaces. These distinctions, however, do not directly define the cultural significance of ~~consuming~~ consumption behaviors. The discourse on consumption inequalities should not be considered to be a criticism against consuming behaviors and cultural tastes. Distinctions within consumer spaces and lifestyles have distinguished Apgujeong-dong from Dongdaemun. But criticism of consumerism or a transformation of Dongdaemun into Apgujeong-dong cannot be proposed as an alternative to overcoming these distinctions.

Critical ~~d~~Discourses on consumer spaces have so far fixed on certain negative perceptions about consumption behavior. As a result, such criticisms—that the monopolistic nature of new consumer spaces unilaterally defines subjects' consumption patterns or accelerates the standardization of individuals' lifestyles and passive reactions—formed the mainstream. Consumptioning behaviors as subjects' positive ~~space-appropriation of space~~, however, require a new interpretation of the relationship between spaces and consumption. This means analyzing methods by which subjects relate themselves to the entire space in their everyday life.

Consumer spaces are produced in individuals' process of everyday life. Of course, not all consumer spaces are equally open to all people. Department stores are

public areas where all people can purchase and consume merchandise. But depending on which spatial field goods are stored in, class status and the tastes of subjects who enter the spatial field are restricted. Though consuming life in everyday life (the everyday consumption of life?) is differentiated by the features of its spatial field, the hierarchical order of that space does not determine the hierarchical order of the consumption act. This means that differences between the values of commodities existing in a particular space do not directly determine the differences between the values of purchasing activities. In short, the value of consuming behaviors is not determined by the space. ~~And Nor does the social arrangement of spaces does not unilaterally determine subjects' selective consumption process. Rather, the latter is independent from the former, and the activeness of the latter does sometimes contradicts the former. (Rather, the latter is independent from the former, which is sometimes contradicted by the activeness of the latter.)~~

Buying goods in a traditional market is economically distinct from purchasing merchandise at a posh shopping mall, but the two lifestyles do not reveal distinctions in the degree of satisfaction or value consumers find in the act of consumption. Consumption in a traditional market contains its own unique spatial practice and produces a unique meaning. As Mikhail Bakhtin noted, a market is a polyphonic place where diverse heterogeneous voices coexist (Bakhtin 1984). This is true of Dongdaemun as a consumer space. Unique language and communication method exist in Dongdaemun, which has different spatial practices from Apgujeong-dong. In Dongdaemun, multinational and global cultural images are exchanged and transacted, and the diverse voices of customers compete with one another. Spatial practices not only overcome spatial distinctions, but also maximize the desire to autonomously consume features of that space.

The consumer space of Dongdaemun is evidently a space operated by the logic of capital. This article does not intend to negate the logic of capital operating in consumer spaces; instead it emphasizes the need to expand individuals' autonomous (꺤뵡뵡) spatial practices under the conditions of each space. English media researcher John Fiske cites the act of consumption in supermarkets, saying that spatial practices may differ depending on how individuals consume, and that the meaning of a space may differ depending on how individuals understand that space. He defines the

process in which buyers select purchase information on what goods are available, how commodities are arranged, and where they can find them as “setting.” The process of choosing catalogues of merchandise constitutes a “setting.” In this meaning of the term, setting is produced by the buyers' cognitive processes and plays an important part in producing those processes. This concept refers to the practices of consumption that combine the physical concreteness of contexts with the mental processes through which the contexts are experienced. Setting is formed within the diverse arenas that are products of the social order. Supermarkets are arenas filled with commodities and information produced by the political economy of capitalism, within which buyers set up a field of activities unique to their own consumptive styles. Setting is a form in which fields of activities are repetitively experienced and individually ordered and edited (Fiske 1992, 154-173). Note also Michel de Certeau's approach to spatial practices, which attempt to change the everyday life of subjects by renewing the method of controlling particular spaces. For Certeau, spaces are “practiced places,” which are produced by the creativeness of subjects using the sources of places. Certeau stresses that continuously making one's own voice and self-enunciation in everyday life is in itself a spatial practice that can change a controlling place into an autonomous one (Certeau 1984, 91-115).

An attempt to delve into distinctions between Dongdaemun and Apgujeong-dong does not intend to take the unequal structure of space and consumption existing between the two for granted. It aims at programming new consumption and spatial practices. Spatial exploitation in Seoul is not confined to Apgujeong-dong. More serious exploitation takes place in downtown areas like Dongdaemun. Spatial practices of consumption are determined by the way consumers make their spaces into autonomous and positive spaces. Now is the time to learn the spatial practice from ordinary life, be it in Apgujeong-dong or Dongdaemun, in a manner befitting the global era slogan: "Think globally and act locally."

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