

# Comparative Study of Neighborhood Community Reconstruction in Seoul and Beijing: *An Action-Theoretical Approach*

Sang-Jin HAN, Young-Hee SHIM, and Jung-su KIM

## Abstract

*This paper compares the Seongmisan community in Seoul and the Qinghe Y community in Beijing from an action-theoretical perspective. For this, we distinguish leaders and residents as two actor groups, and consider how they become engaged in neighborhood community reconstruction in terms of push and pull factors. Push refers to “because of” forces such as frustration and anxiety, whereas pull refers to “in order to” forces like ideology and dreams for a better life. The most important finding of this study is that the path-dependent development of community reconstruction in Seoul and Beijing can be explained by the role of leadership and the interaction between leaders and residents. Seongmisan community has been led by a distinctive group from the “386 generation” who are deeply engaged in people-oriented activities. In contrast, the Qinghe Y community has been led by a group of expert sociologists from Tsinghua University. This paper also shows what concrete outcomes have been produced through community reconstruction in each case, and how the leading group and community residents have interacted to bring about change. Based on analysis of these findings, the two cases are compared with respect to their relative strengths and weaknesses. In this paper we also assess the significance of the comparative case study methodology as adopted for this study.*

**Keywords:** community reconstruction, social governance, action-theoretical perspective, comparative case study, Seongmisan community in Seoul, Qinghe Y community in Beijing

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## Introduction

This paper attempts to compare the two cases of neighborhood community reconstruction underway in Seoul and Beijing from an action-theoretical perspective based on in-depth interviews and other textual and survey data. At the beginning of this paper, three conceptual clarifications need to be stressed. First, we regard the two cases of the Seongmisan community in Seoul and the Qinghe Y community in Beijing as instances of social governance experiments. The meanings of social governance are fluid, complex, and multi-faceted in application. Recently, Han Sang-Jin has shown that social governance is distinguished from state governance by the following six characteristics: first, “social governance emerges when a society faces serious challenges which the bureaucratic system as the state alone can no longer adequately solve;” second, it requires “the participation of civil society members together with state actors;” third, the interaction “encourages initiative from the bottom;” fourth, the main issues of discussion are defined “by the members of a community;” fifth, social governance presupposes “an active role of such consultative organizations as a residents’ committee;” and sixth, “social governance involves diverse patterns and types, depending on the combination of its two essential functions, that is, the supply of services and the role of representation” (Han 2018a, 14; 2018b). Based on this definition of social governance, we investigate the grassroots social change in governance through a comparative study of neighborhood community reconstruction in Seoul and Beijing.

Second, this paper takes an action-theoretical approach to the study of social governance experiments. The action-theoretical approach differs from a typical comparative focus on policy. Though policy is important, the action-theoretical approach pays attention to such variables as the pulling energy (“in-order-to motives”) of actions (such as goals, ideology, aspirations, and dreams) as well as push factors (“because motives”) like frustration, deprivation, anxiety, and despair. The variables also include the role of leadership, the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers, the enabling and constraining factors of action, and the strategies and tactics of intervention, etc.

Needless to say, sociology has developed a long tradition of this approach as can be seen from Marx's theory of social classes as collective actors, Weber's typology of human action based on rational grounds, Parsons' theory of social action, and innumerable studies of revolution and popular movements. In line with this tradition, this paper draws attention to the role of the human subject in social change. We do not deny the existence of the so-called "objective and structural factors" which work behind the actor, but we insist that these factors are to be properly placed as pertinent variables within an action-theoretical framework. An example is that the objective reality of risk society can be linked to action theory in terms of the perception of risks and dangers, whether explicit or implicit.

Third, this paper is based on the judgment that community reconstruction deserves special attention in East Asia. We do not accept the universal trend of individualization as it has unfolded in Western countries. On the contrary, East Asia differs from the West in terms of fundamental value orientations. In this regard, Shim Young-Hee and Han Sang-Jin (2010, 2013) have previously shown that individualization in the East is not just a means of development, as it is in the West, but a "community-oriented" individualization (2010, 2013). From this starting point, Shim (2018) has attempted to further develop the thesis of the concomitant change of individual and community through a review of the empirical consequences of individualization on community life (2018). In particular, the consequences of enforced individualization provide citizens with the driving energy for neighborhood community reconstruction. This paper is an attempt to deepen the thesis of concomitant change through a comparative study of social governance.

We clarify first why and how we have selected the Seongmisan community in Seoul and the Qinghe Y community in Beijing for this comparative case study. This is followed by an explanation of our methodological considerations. Together with some issues related to the conceptual scheme of analysis, we offer reasons why and how we want to link the action-theoretical approach to this comparative case study. We then examine the push and pull factors identified, paying particular attention to the role of leadership and the reciprocal relation between leaders and followers. The patterns of interaction among the concerned stake holders are documented using biographical

interview data<sup>1</sup> and other documents we have collected. Finally, in comparing the two cases in Seoul and Beijing, we attempt to draw out their commonalities and differences.

### Why Seongmisan and Qinghe Y?

Since 2013, when the Chinese government officially announced the policy shift towards social governance (The 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China 2013), a great number of neighborhood community (*shequ*) reconstructions have been taking place throughout the country. As Li, Zheng, and Wang (2018) show, there are multiple models of governance in different regions which differ depending on the main actors. Considerable diversities and multiplicities have developed within a short span of time. Likewise, in Korea, neighborhood (*maeul*) community reconstruction is also spreading rapidly, particularly in Seoul, supported by city government policies (City of Seoul 2013).

In this historical context and among the available cases, we have selected the Seongmisan community in Seoul and the Qinghe Y community in Beijing for the following reasons. First, both cases represent highly active and representative cases, serving as trademarks for the two metropolitan capital cities. The Seongmisan community is renowned not only in Korea but also internationally, as exemplified by Erik Right who called it a case of a “real utopia” after visiting the community (Lee 2014). It gives significant implications for the future of Korea. Likewise, the Qinghe experiment has also received a great deal of attention in China because it is neither government-centered, as in the past, nor market-oriented, a newly emerging

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1. We conducted in-depth interviews from 2016 to 2017 with people related to the two communities. A total of eleven people (five from Seongmisan community and six from Qinghe Y community) responded to the interview request, and an extra interview was conducted with a Seoul city official via email. For the Qinghe Y community in Beijing, we participated in community meetings where we could observe and analyze the contents of the meetings. Also, inner-circle meeting minutes were provided to us by the community authorities. For more information, refer to Appendix.

radical trend, but rather appears to be a kind of middle way approach, which is characteristically suggestive for China, though it is too early to tell what its future holds (Li and Wang 2016).

Qinghe is located to the north of Tsinghua University, Beijing, and covers an area of about 10 square kilometers. With 28 communities in the Haidian District of Beijing, there is a population of about 200,000 people, including 100,000 residents without *hukou* (residential registrations). “Qinghe Y community” refers to a small community in this area under the jurisdiction of Qinghe local administration (Liu, Tan, and Cheng 2017). The *shequ* in China, a residential community, is the basic unit of city administration, similar to *dong* in Korea, but smaller in size.

The Seongmisan community is located around Seongmisan mountain (about 66 meters above sea level), in Mapo-gu, a north-western district of Seoul. The community covers several *dongs* (the lowest unit of city administration) such as Seongsan-dong, Mangwon-dong, Hapjeong-dong, and Seogyo-dong. It is not an administrative unit, however, but rather a sort of network organization. Consequently, not all the residents in the region are members of the community. As of today, about 1,000 to 1,500 households are estimated to be part of the Seongmisan community network, while the region is home to an estimated 100,000 people in total.

The second reason for selecting these two communities is that both cases share the common background characteristics of risk society. The risk-prevention imperative is explicitly formulated in the city policies of social governance in Seoul and Beijing. The need for a new governance system has risen in China as the *danwei* (unit) system (the traditional residential governance system) collapsed as a consequence of the national policy of reform and opening which began in 1978 (Han, Shim, and Park 2017). The question emerged, therefore, of how to manage the actual and potential risks coming from this collapse and facilitate the recovery of the stability and health of community. Theoretically, such organizations as sub-district offices, property management companies, and residents’ committees<sup>2</sup> are supposed

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2. Sub-district offices, property management companies, and residents’ committees refer to the Chinese terms 街道办事处, 物业管理公司, and 居民委员会.

to play the role of representing the government, market, and society, respectively. In reality, however, it is residents' committees which often play the role of transmitting, promoting, and implementing the order of the government to residents, rather than playing the role of citizenship from the bottom (Li, Zheng, and Wang 2018). The Qinghe Y experiment was intended as an attempt to change this situation.

In Seoul, the Seongmisan community reconstruction was initiated by parents who were disappointed with the existing childcare services provided by local government, and as a response to a perceived risk of their children lagging behind others, they formed their own cooperative childcare system with an independent financial basis. As a result, the first cooperative childcare center opened in 1994 and other cooperative activities such as local after-school clubs, a local resident cooperative for safe food, and other cooperatives to build community culture followed. The identity of the community was strengthened by implementing various education programs, sports competitions, and cultural festivals, and so on led by local residents. This shows a bottom-up response to risk society.

Third, despite the common background of risk society, the developmental trajectories in Seoul and Beijing are markedly different. The Seoul experience is more bottom-up than top-down, and the principle of participation and cooperation functions well. In contrast, the Beijing experience is overall closer to top-down, yet also distinctively middle-grounded since it is located in between authoritarian and participatory methods. Thus, this comparative case study is meant to be a search for an answer to the question of why social governance experiments in Seoul and Beijing move in different directions although they share common characteristics of risk society.

Fourth, we chose the two cases taking into consideration the role of leadership as a potential explanatory variable for these different trajectories. With this strategy, we want to pay close attention to the action-theoretical variables which include the push and pull drive of action, the reciprocal interaction between leader and residents, the strategies and tactics of intervention, and the outcomes of this governance cooperation.

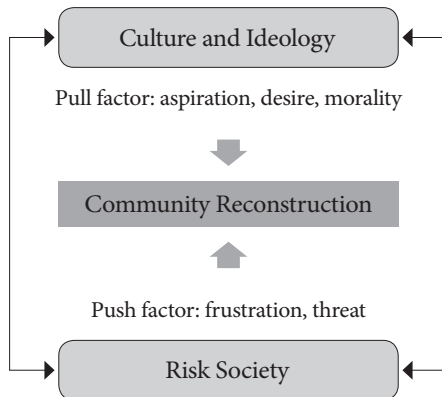
## **Methodological Focal Points of Comparative Study**

In social science, it is said that comparison play a similar role to experimentations in the natural sciences. This study, however, has no intention to claim a causal explanation in its strict sense. Rather, our aim is to reveal a path-dependent development of social governance experiments in Seoul and Beijing by treating their common systemic characteristics as controlled variables and inter-systemic difference as an explanatory variable (Przeworski and Teune 1970, 33; George and Bennett 2005, 151). As Giovanni Sarori points out, “sufficiently similar” cases that are similar but not identical are used for comparison (Faure 1994). According to John Stuart Mill, each case in a comparative case study highlights the specificity of its space and time context, and thus is used for a qualitative study. The causal relations then depends on the context of time and space. Different relationships and combinations may end up resulting in a similar result. Therefore, causal relationships must be seen as complex and circumstantial (An 2006).

Though the aim of our study is modest, nevertheless, a comparative study must clarify its methodological framework (Engeli and Allison 2014; Landman 2000; Rihoux and Grimm 2006). We want to suggest two points in this regard. One relates to what Przeworski and Teune (1970, 33–34) called a “most similar systems design” and the other relates to a “most different systems design.” Our study follows the former, in that we claim the two cases share common characteristics of risk society, followed by the reasoning that, nevertheless, the two cases follow different trajectories of social governance, and this path-dependent difference can be attributed to the influence of the action-theoretical variables. At the same time, our study takes the “most different systems design” approach because the units of comparison we choose are individual actors and groups, which are lower than systemic variables.

To translate methodological points of comparison into social-scientific language which are more easily understandable, it may be useful to pay attention to Przeworski who has raised a sharp critique of macro-historical comparative sociology, arguing that its assumption is “too deterministic to orient the activities of political actors” (1991, 96). This approach, he argues,

tends to associate social change with democratic transformation and the rise of fascism with such initial conditions as agrarian class structure. Przeworski deplores that “in this formulation the outcome is uniquely determined by conditions, and history goes without anyone ever doing anything” (1991, 96). Yet he also admits that “the objective conditions do delimit the possibilities inherent in a given historical situation and, therefore, they are crucial” (1986, 48). He insists, however, that these conditions should not be treated as “determinants” in the rigorous sense. Determinants must be conceptualized within the practical field in which social actors and institutions are enmeshed in their specific causal relationships.



**Figure 1.** Action-theoretical Model

Source: Han (2017a, 202).

In line with this reasoning, we take the conceptual model of analysis suggested in Figure 1, by redefining such objective conditions as risk society and culture in terms of action-theoretical variables. In this regard, our judgment is that community reconstruction can be studied in terms of driving forces of action, empirically identifiable as push and pull factors. Push drives usually work behind the actors as “because-of motives” forcing them to exit. Examples may include experienced or anticipated fear, anxiety, despair, frustration, deprivation, isolation, or catastrophe. Pull drives usually work in front of the actors as “in-order-to motives” leading them towards a better future. The



pull energy is not simply negative, like anger and frustration, but includes hope, aspiration, desire, ideology, and morality. In the case of neighborhood community reconstruction, push factors refer to the background negative experience that drives residents to exit. In contrast, pull factors refer to the enabling energy that residents share to promote their common interests. From this perspective we want to examine the role of leadership and the interaction between leader and residents at the different stages of neighborhood community reconstruction.

### **Push and Pull Drives for Social Governance**

It is crucial to this action-theoretical comparative study how to grasp and link the push and pull factors to explain the concrete outcomes of social governance. The push factors working behind the actors are not as frequently and clearly expressed linguistically as in the case of the pull factors. In China, for instance, community life after the reforms can be said to be full of anxiety, since individuals are left to be responsible for their own lives. Therefore in-depth interviews are a good way to understand the push factors.

In the case of Seoul, the most obvious push factor is related to a perceived risk associated with education. The key issue here is the gap between public early education policy and citizens' expectations (Han 2018a; Shim 2017). Because parents were exceptionally sensitive to the issue of education, the early Seongmisan community movement was started by this particular frustration. Coparenting emerged as an alternative to the existing childcare services and education. Parents attempted to gather and solve these problems by themselves. As a result, coparenting created bonds among the parents. Such bonds continued and eventually developed into the formation of a resident cooperative association.

Another push factor is related to the contamination of food stuffs. Parents wanted to provide safe food to their children. This prompted the residents to establish and use their own local cooperative association, the value of which was gradually realized. In other words, the Seongmisan community was meant to be a space of social governance in which residents

participate to solve the everyday life problems and anxieties they face.

Still another drive was concern about environmental deterioration stemming from the local government plan to construct a water-supply reservoir at the top of Seongmisan mountain. The residents were worried that the mountain where their children enjoyed playing every day would be destroyed. The movement against the construction led to an explosive growth in the movement of the local community, which served as a new turning point for bottom-up social governance. Here, the anticipated risk of environmental destruction was effectively linked to a strong conviction regarding the value of Seongmisan mountain as the ecological basis of community life. The following observation shows vividly how this ecological pull factor worked:

Seongmisan mountain is a place the children go every day on a sunny day. Children choose some secret places and give them names they only know. This mountain is a place where children's dreams and memories are kept alive. For this reason, the mountain should not be destroyed. If it is destroyed, a precious container storing our children's dreams and memories will disappear forever. Furthermore, Seongmisan mountain is not only a place for children's dreams and hopes, but also an important and symbolic place that means it is different from any other place. (Hae-gi, speaking in an emergency meeting at the Dotori After-School Club. Yoo [2010, 47])

Thus, the residents began to organize to confront the local government to save the mountain. At first, the number of the participants was small, but as dialogue went on between leaders and followers and among residents themselves, the participants increased and led a successful movement.

In the case of Qinghe Y community in Beijing, community reconstruction was not driven by bottom-up energies as in Seoul. Many issues originating from the rapid growth of Beijing were latent or became only implicitly expressed. Of course, some issues like the complaints of migrant workers have broken to the surface when workers demanded citizenship. Many issues, however, became interlocked behind the surface. Despite this, the collected interview data do show a few push factors. One is related to the lack of common space within the

neighborhood in which residents can meet each other freely, exchange views, and get the services and consultations they need.

Another push factor is linked to the negative consequences of the top-down methods of decision making and administration. This caused the mismatch between the administrative system of the community and the real needs of local residents for representation participation. Due to the top-down characteristics of the Chinese political system, the subdistrict government and neighborhood committees have mainly carried out the tasks assigned by upper-level governments. Neighborhood committees are supposed to be an autonomous organization by and for the residents but, in reality, they are compelled to execute the government's directives instead. They are too busy doing this to fulfill the intrinsic functions of reflecting residents' will and organizing their participation (see Li, Zheng, and Wang 2018).

There was no (residents') organization. . . . I did not think the residents were important, because they lacked public strength. Why would we hold a meeting? The members of the residents' council have not been well distinguished from the Property Management Company (another agent of community governance). We had to create an organization and put institutional pressure. . . . (Interview with L, a member of the residents' council).

In this context, the research team led by Professor Li Qiang at Tsinghua University began to intervene in the Qinghe Y community in 2014. The objective was to bring back society to local governance, by channeling the residents' pull energy into implementing such ideas as holding elections, establishing procedural rules, and articulating discussion topics. However, because the capacity of the residents in Qinghe Y community was still relatively low and insufficient, the research team had to make a special effort to increase the self-governing capacity of the community by establishing an independent organization called the "Resident Council." They called these activities the New Qinghe Experiment (NQE). They introduced the election system, institutionalized village council, held meetings, and helped the residents find ways to reflect their collective will. The Resident Council

was formed in this way and played an active role in carrying out this social governance experiment.

## The Main Characteristics of Leadership

### *The Case of Seoul*

The Seongmisan experiment was led by people from the generation of Koreans often termed the “386 generation.”<sup>3</sup> They were deeply engaged in the democratization and reform movements during their college years. They supported the rights of workers and the urban poor who had been discriminated against in the rapid process of economic development. They were anti-authoritarian while committing themselves to the welfare of the grassroots. They openly acknowledged their debt to the poor for the reason that their success had been made possible structurally by their sacrifices. They often volunteered in community service roles in various places, like rural areas, urban poor districts, and the industrial sector (Han 1991, 2003, 2015). They formed the progressive segment of the middle class in Korea.

It is assumed that 386 generation were closely related to the Seongmisan community in Korea. Recently, however, a survey was conducted which differentiated this generation into four subgroups: the “progressive ideological group” (group A), the “life-oriented progressive group” (group B), the “community-oriented group” (group C), and the “postideological privatized group” (group D) (Han 2017c; Kim and Yoo 2017; Chu 2017).<sup>4</sup>

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3. This refers to those who were born in the 1960s and went to college during the 1980s. When the term was first coined, the generation were mostly in their thirties, they are now in their fifties.

4. The sample for the survey was made up of graduates from Seoul National University who attended Han Sang-Jin's classes during the 1980s. The distribution of the four sub-groups turned out to be as follows: The progressive ideological group with less interest in community service (group A) occupied 44.6%, while the life-oriented progressive group interested in community service (group B) was about 24.2%, the community-oriented group with no interest in political activities (group C) occupied 11.5%, and the post-ideological privatized group with no interest in politics or community service (group D) was about 19.7% (Han 2017c).

It is possible to say that, among the four groups, it is those from groups B and C who have led the Seongmisan reconstruction movement. The answer of interviewee P to the question “Who were the parents who settled co-parenting in the early days of the Seongmisan community?” shows this clearly:

I would say it was the 386 generation. They were the students who protested during the 1980s, then got married, gave birth, and worried about their children’s education; eventually they started coparenting. They were a political generation a little bit more awakened later. (Interview with P, a resident of Seongmisan community)

Groups B and C possess a value orientation sensitive to such life issues as education, childcare, and urban ecological environments. In fact, most of the initial active members of the co-parenting cooperative were women in their thirties, with occupations such as college lecturers, newspaper reporters, broadcasting station writers, and publishing staff (Wui et al. 2013). The community reconstruction movement shows that women were more interested in children’s education. Many of the initial members shared their memories of student demonstrations while nurturing the ethical and moral values of care together with sensitivity to the flourishing of community. The following quote is an example.

I was an activist when I was in college. I was sentenced to a year and half in prison for soliciting a demonstration on campus in 1983 and came out in 1984.... Since then I was involved in various mass activities. Through these activities, I realized that being part of political movements is also a kind of “life.” Everyone has taste, preference, and aptitude whether it is a student movement, labor movement, social movement or whatever. For me, I was best fit for the mask dance activities. Through this I conjecture that I am best fit to breathe among the people and together with people. That might have been the root of my long life in Seongmisan. (Yoo 2010, 32–34)

The quality of leadership has turned out to be crucially important for transmitting the daily experiences of dissatisfaction into organizing social

activity. The residents began to participate because their everyday life issues were on the agenda. If the leader group just shouted ideology, they would not have gotten the residents' participation in the way they did. In particular, the following qualities of leadership deserves careful attention.

First, inclusive leadership is an important condition for the residents to experience an organizational power. Residents were worried about the destruction of Seongmisan mountain, their regional asset, but it was the leader group who clearly explained the risks involved, together with the prospects for the future of the community. They played an active role in mobilizing and organizing a movement to prevent the construction of the reservoir. They provided a window for residents to voice their opinions. Furthermore, they organized public hearings, publicity campaigns, and cultural festivals to solicit participation by the residents.

Second, the ability of leaders to draw consensus among the residents contributed significantly to raising the identity and self-pride of the residents as members of the community. For some, this was not just a simple anti-construction movement, but also an ecological and communal movement. In this process, a virtuous circle was formed, which helped many residents to become the key members of the movement.

There was an expert among the residents who was opposing the development. He studied the matters personally, went to the public hearing, and argued professionally about the project. He said "It is not good to build the reservoir here as planned; the project doesn't have to be carried out as planned." When he asked, "Isn't this right?" the Mapo District Officer replied "Yes, it is true." So he became the star among us. . . . (Interview with J, an active participant in Seongmisan community)

It is another side of leadership that respects the freedom of choice for individual to participate or not. The leaders did not force any option for collective unity. They were very "communal" in cooperation, but they were also very "individualistic" in respecting the free choice of the individual (Shim 2017). Such interaction based on trust and respect for individual choice makes the Seongmisan neighborhood community fitting for the age

of individualization. “They never impose or force their own opinions on other people” (Wui 2011, 56).

### *The Case of Beijing*

In the case of Qinghe Y experiment, it is necessary to draw attention to the role of the sociology professors and researchers at Tsinghua University who carried out the “intervention-based” community reconstruction. As publicly engaged sociologists, they played the crucial role of designing and implementing a model of social governance. An interesting fact is that this is not the first time this has been done. During the 1930s, for instance, Tsinghua University was a center of sociological research and many prominent scholars were deeply engaged in academic field research of rural reconstruction and took on advocacy roles in social reform as well.

Regardless of the division among themselves concerning theoretical orientation and methodology, sociologists in China shared a strong commitment to social reform. In fact, to them, social reform justified the existence and stimulated the growth of the discipline. Thus, besides publishing their research, almost all of the leading Chinese sociologists played extensive roles in social activism. Many assumed administrative or advisory positions in the government relevant to their specialty, and occasionally some were invited to lecture to officials, thereby influencing policymaking at the top. Others were deeply engaged in the Rural Reconstruction and Mass Education Movements, thereby promoting social reform from the bottom. (Yan 2006, 10–11)

A good example of such a scholar was Wu Jingchao (1901–1968) who served as professor at Tsinghua University and plotted a detailed analysis on the combination of economic planning and market mechanism which he called the “new economy.” Fei Xiaotong (1910–2005), Wu Wenzao (1901–1985), and Liang Shuming (1893–1988) can also be seen as a good model of “public sociology” in the sense of Burawoy (2005) with dedication for social reform.

Originating from this tradition, the department of sociology at Tsinghua University exhibits two equally significant orientations. One is

politically oriented academic engagement with the rights of the working class, in particular the full citizenship of urban migrant workers. The main figures representing this trend are Shen Yuan and Sun Liping who have attempted “to combine critical social theory and the research on the real problems of Chinese society” such as urban migrant workers and disintegration of communities (Merle, n.d.). Sun conducted research on the transition from the work unit system to the reconstruction of community, with the aim of showing how a total society becomes a post-total society (Burawoy 2012). Shen is more revealing. He distinguished two types of sociological intervention, strong and weak. The sociological mission for him was to establish “public sociology” in China (Lachappelle 2016) and “help resist (against) the pressure from the state and the market, on the one hand, and assist society to emerge and grow, on the other” (Shen 2008, 399).

Another group of sociologists is led by Li Qiang, who founded the sociology department at Tsinghua University. This team includes Zheng Lu, Chen Yulin, Ge Tianren, and Wang Hao, and they have conducted extensive research on urban transformation, risk society, class structures, and information society in China. Their orientation is more pragmatic than political and thus requires extensive empirical research to decipher the concrete problems as well as their solutions. Particularly frequent research topics include urban problems, developmental risks, digital divide, and social inequalities embedded into the class structure. The NQE project team is made up of these reform-oriented pragmatic researchers. They practiced dialogue with local residents to transmit their knowledge and thereby create the space for practical learning. They organized direct elections in the Qinghe Y community and helped the elected members of the Resident Council to strengthen their power by providing the needed manuals for education and instruction on how to evaluate their own performance.

So far, the success of the NQE project owes much to the relationship between the project members and the local residents. Their dedication and enthusiasm made the residents trust them. The team motivated residents to participate in the community reconstruction processes in the first place. In so doing, Qinghe community became a model for sociological intervention by experts. We should remember, however, that when the Qinghe



experiment started, the residents remained relatively passive. They assumed that the team came just for an academic purpose and therefore would leave when the study was over. When asked what their impressions were when they arrived in the community, a member of the Residents' Council replied:

I did not see them positively . . . [When NQE started] they told me that they study sociology. So I thought they would stay here for a while and leave after the study is done. . . . I thought so since the students have to graduate, they would leave the community once they did some research or write some papers. But actually, it was very good to have them here. . . . They were completely blended in. (Interview with L, a member of the Residents' Council)

They always gave us good opinions and good ideas. So we trust this project team very much. (Interview with C, a member of the Residents' Council)

Similar changes occurred among the members of the project team. As the duration of experiment exceeded two years, the devotion of the team won-over the residents' hearts and formed a new relationship with the residents. As the residents began to fully trust the project team, the latter also shared a bond built between them. As NQE member M said, "The project is no longer just an academic study. Our members now have a stronger sense of contribution towards reconstructing the community."

### **The Mobilization of Energy and Its Outcomes**

This comparative study which combines the push and pull drives of action together with the role of leadership has significance in that it can show how social governance experiments produce concrete outcomes. The nature of the outcomes shape the horizon of shared memory, identity, pride, solidarity and expectations for the future. In Seoul, the collective efforts to protect green spaces from anti-ecological destruction was done according to the purpose. In the case of Beijing, this came with the triangle land development

in Qinghe Y community. Therefore we examine the stories involved in these events.

In Seoul, the scope of community reconstruction was long limited to those who used the Mapo Durae cooperative. The real interaction between residents and the leader group began with the antireservoir construction movement. The reservoir construction plan was announced in July, 2001, together with a plan for an apartment complex. The reservoir was meant to be a water tank-like facility for the stable supply of tap water. The construction plan was originally made in 1997, to enable the removal of outdated water pipe lines while supplying stable tap water to the growing population. By 2001, however, the population of the region was declining while the old water pipes had already been replaced. This meant there was no longer any obvious reason for additional construction. But the residents did not know that. At first, they were suspicious and cautious. In this context, the real purpose of the construction was revealed when the university foundation which owned private land near the mountain suddenly began asking the residents for their consent to what they called the “District Unit Plan.” It now became clear that the aim of the construction was, in fact, to enable the building of an apartment complex on the mountain. In August 2001, the residents organized the “Citizens Solidarity to Protect Seongmisan Mountain” campaign and soon obtained support from several civil society groups such as the Korea Federation of Environmental Movement Seoul and the National Union of Public Employees of Mapo District.

On the dawn of January 29, 2003, the waterworks business headquarters suddenly started to cut down the trees at the top of the mountain. The incident enraged the local residents, and the opposition movement became more aggressive. On the following day, the residents went into a 24-hour sit-in demonstration on the summit of the mountain, despite the cold weather.<sup>5</sup> To support this sit-in, various cultural activities and residents’ rallies were

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5. The 24-hour sit-in demonstration on the top of Seongmisan mountain was decided at the community meeting on January 29, 2001, the day of the abrupt logging and lasted for 120 days despite the cold weather. Three groups took turns; at nights, a group of three men stood sentry, in the morning, they were replaced by a group of the elderly, and during the day, a group of women (Yoo 2010, 60).

held every Saturday at the top of the mountain. Protest calls were made to the Mayor of Seoul, the Chief of Mapo District Office, and the Mapo District Congressman, and protesters held a candlelight vigil around the local subway station every Saturday. In addition, a second campaign to collect residents' signatures was held and several administrative petitions were submitted to Mapo District Office calling for the suspension of construction. Meanwhile, some of the residents were reported to the judiciary. In the beginning, the opposition movement was mainly carried out around Mapo District Office and the Seongmisan mountain area, but as the opposition movement became more and more serious, residents' meetings and press conferences were held in front of Seoul City Hall. Following these efforts, the Mapo District Office held a special public hearing on May 17, 2003. At this hearing, the waterworks headquarters did not provide accurate answers to the residents about the purpose of constructing the reservoir. The district office conducted a public poll for two days and announced that 93 percent of the residents voted for keeping the green space to protect the environment (Yoo 2010, 81). As a result, the Waterworks Project Headquarters of Seoul had to suspend construction and the movement against the reservoir construction was successfully completed on October 16, 2003.

This story clearly reveals a bottom-up trajectory of a social governance experiment in Seoul. Various strategies and tactics were used in this case, petition campaigns, cultural festivals, public hearings, and physical confrontation. In particular, a series of physical clashes caused by unexpected logging without residents' consent became a decisive turning point for the community unity. As a result, more than 600 residents participated in a tree planting event for restoration after the surprise logging (Wui et al. 2013, 62). In this process, the leader group won the support and sympathy of the residents and civil society groups as well.

In Beijing, an equivalent story can be found in the "triangle land redevelopment project." As a vacant space located at the entrance of the southern part of the Qinghe Y community, this land of about 400 square meters was designated as a green area with no facilities. It was, in fact, considered a useless place because nobody cared about its value and maintenance. However, change began to take place when some residents

came up with the idea of using the land as a public space for various activities. In February 2015, the Residents' Council accepted this idea and began to formally discuss how to use the land. As the "triangle land redevelopment project" became the agenda of the meeting, the NQE team asked the School of Architecture at Tsinghua University to assist with a design for this land. The residents also participated in the designing process and expressed their opinions. In addition, a referendum and resident assembly, as well as the Residents' Council meetings were held. Over all, the residents showed great interest and thus this project became a big issue in the community. The triangle land design was continually revised through consultation with the residents, and the final design was adopted with their consent.

The actual process of construction, however, did not go so smoothly. Construction work started in October 2016, more than a year after the plans had been decided. It was then delayed further, until spring 2017, due to the cold weather. When spring came, design had to be changed for safety reasons, and these required modifications of cost and construction process. Eventually, the construction resumed and was completed with a successful outcome in early 2018.

The Residents' Council members asked me why the construction was postponed. So I responded that there are 28 communities in the Qinghe area, not just ours. . . . And maybe the leaders of the Qinghe area have many important things to take care of besides us . . . the delay is probably caused from supporting other communities. I also passed on what the leaders of the Qinghe area said, that the plan is not postponed, and they are always thinking about the Qinghe Y community project, mentioning that the plan will start next year. . . . (Interview with Z, chairman of the Residents' Council)

The above statement reveals that the residents raised many questions, asking why the construction had been delayed, what the intention of the local government was, and why the Residents' Council played no role in this regard.

The first thing I did after becoming a Residents' Council member was the triangle land redevelopment. [To figure out what is the most urgent problem of our community,] we continuously held meetings, and there was a big meeting that included not just the village council members but also representatives from the Party and apartment complex representatives. . . . A few dozen people gathered in four groups. And then we shared a pen and wrote down what was the most urgent on a big sheet of paper. The triangle land was the first thing that needed to be solved. (Interview with L, a member of Residents' Council)

Though there were ups and downs in the process of construction, the project was completed as the first output of a social governance experiment. The facilities constructed on the land are now used for children's play space, community sports facilities, and shelter with shady seats. The NQE team intervened as the project moved from the selection of the triangle land to the remodeling agenda. In particular when the construction was held up, they tried to connect the local residents with the upper bodies of government in Beijing. On the other hand, the residents could have felt a sense of community power in situations such as when they participated in meetings, raised their opinions, and chose one of the designs suggested. It seems that they are generally satisfied with the result.

## **Concluding Remarks**

This paper has drawn explicit focus to such action-theoretical variables as the driving forces of action, the role of leadership, and the interaction between leaders and residents. This study is based on two methodological considerations. First, we consciously chose, as an explanatory variable, the role of actors; a lower unit of comparative analysis than systemic variables. The assumption here is that there are conspicuous systemic differences between South Korea and China. The political, economic, and ideological systems are very different. The composition of social forces and civil society is also different. For this reason, we have taken an action-theoretical perspective rather than introducing any systemic variable into comparison.

This means that the path-dependent differences in social governance in Seoul and Beijing can be attributed to the function of the action-theoretical variables examined.<sup>6</sup>

Second, this study recognizes not only systemic differences but also the objective similarities of the two countries. Despite abundant systemic differences, the two countries share the common structure of risk society. Seeking ways to prevent and manage the high-consequential risks citizens face is an unavoidable common task. However, the social governance experiments in Seoul and Beijing seem to have evolved in the different directions. Thus, this paper was an attempt to explain why and how Seoul and Beijing went in different directions although the objective conditions of a risk society have something in common. This cannot be fully explained by systemic differences. This sort of structural explanation is too simple, mechanistic, and deterministic. Rather, this paper attempted to reveal the equally significant yet diverging pathways of evolution in social governance regimes in Seoul and Beijing.

To put it broadly, neighborhood community reconstruction needs to be understood within the historical context of modernization. Korea underwent rapid industrialization since the 1960s and had become an affluent society by the 1990s. However, this rapid, compressed development brought about serious side-effects and Korea became a risk society. The perception of risks already rose a great deal in the late 1990s, as the negative consequences of neoliberal market competition and individualization, family disorganization, the breakdown of neighborhood community, fragmented relationships, and loneliness and isolation pervaded as social phenomena (Han 1998, 2017a, 2017b).<sup>7</sup> The community reconstruction movement emerged from this historical context.

China has also faced the issues of risk society along the development

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6. Our methodological claim is that the systemic constraints of the Chinese political system are built into the way in which the Qinghe Y model of social governance unfolded. Likewise, the Seongmisan trajectory of community reconstruction can be explained in a similar way.

7. The special issue of *Korea Journal* 38.1 (Spring 1998) "Korea, a Risk Society" is a good example.

path it has taken. Since the establishment of New China in 1949, the basic organization of the management of urban life was the *danwei* which worked like a business organization. Its members participated in production activities as well as the distribution of public resources through the *danwei*. As a sort of minor organization for the government, the *danwei* played the role of a substitutionary agency of the state for communicating with individuals (Jang and Kim 2015). As the *danwei* were later dismantled by the policies of reform and opening, the Chinese government sought a new means of social management to replace the *danwei* and to countermeasure the risks of a rapidly changing society.

For residents who had long lived as part of such a unit, however, it was not easy to become an agent of community governance. Certainly, it would take time for residents' committees to function as self-governing agencies. One may say that such committees function more as a medium of presenting the decisions made by the government rather than the other way around. So what would happen if we could guide to self-governance for those have become accustomed to top-down management? To answer this question, the NQE project started to figure out a third way, characterized by expert intervention into a top-down model of governance.

To conclude, this study has shown how different the leader groups were in the two cases of community reconstruction examined. In the case of Seoul, specific subgroups of student generation in the 1980s, who reached adulthood participating in the democratic movement, were deeply involved in the Seongmisan community reconstruction. In the case of Beijing, external elite groups came to the community and played a mediating role between the government and the residents. Consequently, each of the two leader groups used different strategies and tactics to accomplish the goal of social governance. In Seoul, the leader group led to a struggle against the government by forming a broad alliance, not only with the residents but also with other civil society organizations. In Beijing, the leader group maintained a more pragmatic and step-by-step approach to facilitate the dialogue between residents and the local government.

Despite these differences, in both cases the leader groups were successful in building trust from the residents through enthusiasm and hard work.

Without trust, the leader group could not have solved problems as they did. In the communication and decision-making process, it was important to encourage and unite the community. In this process, residents began to share community identity beyond problem solving. In particular, the contribution by the Tsinghua NQE team to the formation of trust and cooperation between the residents and the local government cannot be emphasized enough, given the rule by the Communist Party in China. This shows that the leader group has played a crucially important role in the process of community reconstruction in both Seoul and Beijing.

Appendix.

In-depth Interviewees in Seoul and Beijing (from October 2016 to May 2017)

Location	Interviewee
Seoul, South Korea	P: resident of Seongmisan community
	N: resident of Seongmisan community (now Seongsan-1-dong Residents' Association)
	W: active participant in the Seongmisan mountain protection campaign (now secretary for political affairs to the Mayor of Seoul)
	S: active participant in the Seongmisan mountain protection campaign (now a member of the Seoul Social Cooperation Innovation Committee)
	J: active participant in the Seongmisan mountain protection campaign (president of the NGO People's House located in Mapo District)
	G: public servant at Seongsan-1-dong Community Service Center (email interview)
Beijing, China	Z: chairman of Residents' Committee of Qinghe Y Community
	L: member of the Villager Council in Qinghe Y Community
	C: member of the Villager Council in Qinghe Y Community
	X: social worker in Qinghe Y Community
	M: NQE Project team member
	T: NQE Project team member



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