

Article

Evolution of the Saemaeul undong as an Open System Organization

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Introduction

The Republic of Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world until the 1960s. In 1997, it became a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). A decade later, in 2009, Korea became the 24th member of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, turning to a donor of official aid from a recipient country. The fact that the world's poorest country until the 1960s joined the ranks of developed countries after only four decades is a remarkable success story that is unprecedented in the world.

Saemaeul undong in Korea is the background that brought about these achievements. It has greatly contributed to the improvement of rural poverty and rural development by increasing farm household income and improving infrastructure facilities and living environments in rural areas. The Saemaeul undong, presented as an alternative for self-reliance in domestic rural areas and resolution of rural problems, is now at the level that the international community pays attention to the achievements and significance of Saemaeul undong and benchmarks them as a successful local community development model in developing countries. The international community believes that the Saemaeul undong played an important role in Korea's development, based on the "Saemaeul spirit" of diligence, self-help, and cooperation. UNESCO evaluated the Saemaeul undong records, which became the driving force for Korea's rapid national development, as valuable assets, and in 2013 registered the Saemaeul undong records of the 1970s as a World Heritage Site. Saemaeul undong's records have proven their special usefulness in international education and exchange projects for overcoming hunger, eradicating poverty, rural development, and improving the status of women (Joo and Lee 2021).

With Korea joining the OECD Development Assistance Committee, the Saemaeul undong began to seek new directions as a means of international development cooperation. In response to the new surrounding environment, the promotion system of the Saemaeul undong is also trying to transform into a new form of public-private-academic and domestic-overseas cooperation involving central governments, local governments, government agencies, NGOs, and education institutions such as research centers and universities. In terms of continuity, the Saemaeul undong has been carried out in a diversity of configurations in the flow for more than five decades not only in Korea but also in other countries around the world. This shows that the Saemaeul undong, as

an organization, is open to the environment. It has been continuously absorbing information and signals from the environment, using it to benefit its purpose and getting back with new approaches to deal with new challenges.

Although the Saemaeul undong has been conducted in various forms since 1970, research and discussion of it has been concentrated mainly on the 1970s. Therefore, this study aims to examine the evolution of the Saemaeul undong by applying the open systems approach and following the process of changes in its promotion and organizational system as well as project contents from a time-series perspective. It is expected that this research will contribute to the formation of the theoretical basis of Saemaeul undong and be able to provide implications for the development of a system of public-private-academic cooperation within the global Saemaeul undong.

Theoretical and Literature review

Recently, discussions on Saemaeul undong have been actively conducted, but research on Saemaeul undong is still incomplete. Since its inception, most of the research and discussion of the Saemaeul undong has been focused on the 1970s. Among scholars, there are some, especially in Korea, who negatively evaluate the Saemaeul undong as a remnant of the Yusin dictatorship and as a mobilization force, which President Park ChungHee used to maintain the power (Hong, Park, and Yang 2022; Eom 2011, 19–22). Nevertheless, the majority of the research tends to evaluate Saemaeul undong from a positive perspective.

Studies that examine projects using the frameworks of international development have increased in frequency since Korea joined the OECD/DAC in 2009. A rise in positivistic research, such as case studies and performance evaluations, has also been observed as more data have been gathered following the implementation of various ODA projects. This positivistic approach supports the idea that Korea's development experiences, as intangible assets, can help eradicate poverty and promote community development in developing nations. A considerable portion of the literature discussed Saemaeul undong's influence on people's mindset, which is an important aspect of development cooperation and should be employed as a major approach when implementing Saemaeul projects (Lim and Lim 2013; Yi 2016). In the negative argument, some show a skeptical attitude toward the possibility of transferring Saemaeul

undong itself (Lee 2017), claiming that today's global environment has greatly changed since the 1970s. Others point out that the Korean government aggressively promotes the Saemaeul undong for political purposes (Doucette and Müller 2016).

Notably, there are not many research efforts made to categorize the Saemaeul undong in detail by classifying the development stages of Saemaeul undong by age and overall flow from the perspective of sustainability. When examining previous studies focusing on this approach, there were not many studies that chronologically classified the Saemaeul undong based on theoretical grounds and contents. In particular, there are not many cases in which Saemaeul undong has been expanded in time to the 2010s with the characteristics of each era being studied, and even when some characteristics of Saemaeul undong have been described, the criteria for classifying the period are different, setting a limit to practical comparison. Among recent studies, Lee and Lee (2016) carried out research to examine the changes in the project contents of Saemaeul undong in the process of change in the promotion system of Saemaeul undong for each era. The study also examined the changes in Saemaeul undong's project contents from the village unit in Korea to the village unit in developing countries geographically and spatially. A study by Jeong Rag Lee, Jeong-Ju Lee, Jun-ho Park, and Chang-Deog Huh (2018), analyzed the development process of the Saemaeul project through the relevant content searched for as a keyword in newspaper articles from 1970 to 2009. The study categorized the Saemaeul projects by examining the classification criteria for the projects suggested by institutions and researchers to logically reconstruct them and improve their utility at the present time.

The systems theory approach is the idea that an organization is an open social system that must engage with its environment in order to survive. Katz and Kahn (1966, 303–61) were the first to introduce the open systems approach by adapting general systems theory to organizational behavior. Organizational behavior here is defined by juxtaposing the repetitive cycles of input, throughput, output, and feedback between an organization and its external environment.

The systems theory approach can be viewed as an external standard that measures the effectiveness of an organization based on its long-term growth and sustainability. An effective organization can be characterized by a stable state, also called homeostasis—that is, the ability of an open system to maintain

the constancy of its internal state and characteristics through coordinated responses aimed at maintaining dynamic equilibrium and avoiding the static connotations of equilibrium (Buckley 1967, 14). Thus, an organization can be considered effective if it is able to maintain homeostasis, which also implies development and not just survival. More specifically, Pfeffer and Salanczyk (1978, 11) defined effectiveness in terms of how well an organization satisfies the interests of the numerous groups and organizations that are interested in its activities. To maintain homeostasis, an organization that exists in a dynamic environment must be an open system. An ever-changing dynamic environment creates a lot of uncertainty about what an organization must do to survive and grow. Therefore, an open organization constantly monitors its environment to collect information about environmental deviations. Such information can be considered both as input and as a form of feedback. As noted by Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006, 181), open systems use information to respond to environmental changes in order to formulate decisions or responses to these changes (throughput), which in turn affects the structure and processes of the organization. An organization's activities and messages serve as its output after it adjusts to environmental changes. If the actions prove ineffectual, the procedure is repeated until a workable solution is identified. Organizations that were unable to adapt to environmental changes eventually vanished.

Applying the open systems approach involves analyzing how Saemaeul undong interacts with and adapts to external factors, such as political, economic, social, and cultural influences, considering the organization as dynamic and responsive to changes in its environment (Figure 1). Saemaeul undong is considered dynamic and responsive to changes in its environment open system, which undergoes the continuous process of *Transformation* (decisions affecting the structure and the processes) in response to changes in *Environment* (all the external factors, such as domestic and international political, economic, social, and cultural influences). Saemaeul undong's projects, campaigns, and activities serve as its *Output* after it adjusts to environmental changes. *Feedback-Evaluation* is seen as information concerning the progress and efficiency of the current and previous projects as well as communication with stakeholders represented by the local communities, government and government agencies, academic institutions, international organizations, and media and public opinion. Information including demand and needs and resources such as capital and human resources can be considered as *Input*.

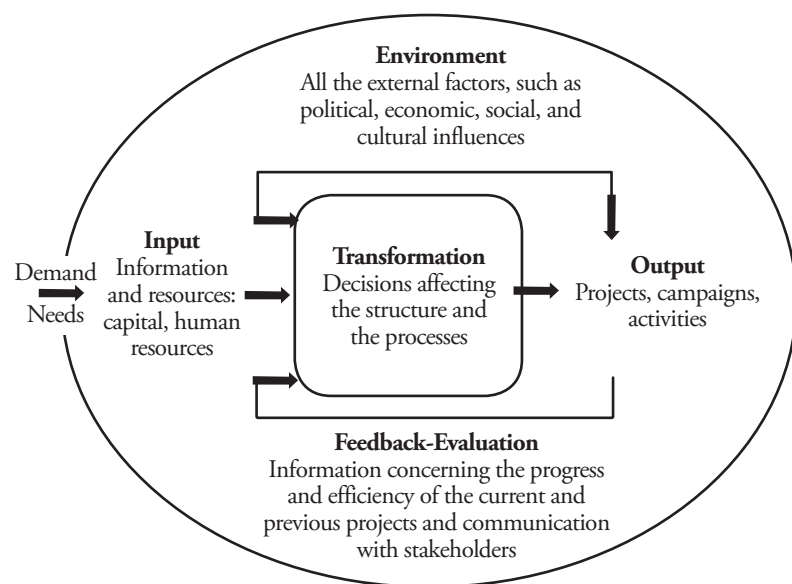


Figure 1. Research Analysis Framework

Source: Modified from Katz and Kahn 1966

The historical evolution process of the Saemaetul undong and data related to the characteristics and contents of each era of the Saemaetul undong will be systematically classified on an approximately ten-year basis from 1970 to the present. Combining these two approaches, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the development process of Saemaetul undong by examining its historical evolution over time while considering its interactions with the broader socio-economic and political context, as well as its adaptation to external influences. Given the focus on understanding the development process and applying the open systems approach, qualitative methods are well-suited for capturing the nuanced interactions, perceptions, and contextual factors involved. The study will analyze documents related to Saemaetul undong, such as historical records, organizational reports, theses, newspapers, and related articles. Document analysis will help in understanding the evolution of Saemaetul undong, policy changes over time, and how organizational structure and strategies have adapted.

Based on the above framework, the development process of Saemaetul undong from the 1970s to the present will be reviewed in the third section, describing how cause-and-effect relationships appear in each period and how the organization changed, developed, and survived in the process. Discussion of

the findings will be presented in the fourth section.

Analysis of the Developmental Process of the Saemaetul undong by Age Applying the Open Systems Approach

Initiated by the late President Park Chung Hee on April 22, 1970, Saemaetul undong has undergone dramatic changes since its inception. Originally as a government plan to modernize rural villages in Korea, it has evolved into a volunteer-only non-governmental movement and is now a successful community development model supported by government agencies and local governments through cooperation projects around the world.

Overview of the Saemaetul undong of 1970s

Foundation and groundwork stage (1971–1973)

Feedback-Input. Learning from efforts to eradicate poverty during the 1960s, the Korean government realized that for long-term sustainable reforms and development in rural communities, changes in the beliefs and attitudes of rural people were necessary. Such a change in consciousness was impossible only with the will and efforts of a small number of people or some specific group and was possible only with the participation of the entire nation.

Transformation. As such, the Saemaetul undong, as a pan-national movement, was born out of the need for a change in people's consciousness and behavior. The initial goals of igniting the Saemaetul spirit along with implementation projects for improving basic living conditions were set.

Output. The environmental improvement project started by distributing over 355 bags of cement to all 34,655 villages across the country during the agricultural off-season from November 1970 to March of the following year (4 bags per household, equivalent to 4,000 won at the time). Support was provided under the condition that villages would conduct development projects by means of mutual cooperation (Moon 2010).

Feedback-Input. Saemaetul undong started with an environment improvement and mental development project that brought up results even exceeding initial objectives. According to So and Kim (2011), the Saemaetul

undong performance cost approximately KRW 12.2 billion, but the government only provided 4.1 billion won. In 1972, 22,700 villages, which accounted for 65% of all villages in the country, were able to repair and widen the road around the village. Most of the projects exceeded their objectives in terms of bettering living conditions. Additionally, the Saemaeul undong helped balance regional development more broadly (Eom 2011).

Transformation. Such positive feedback resulted in a re-design of the Saemaeul undong support system and the development of an organizational assistance network to make it more systematic. It was decided to classify villages according to their level of development and to provide differential support as well as education and training for the selected leaders.

Output. The government first put in place a system of selective support in 1972—a government-led discriminating strategy of providing exclusive support to self-helping villages. Saemaeul undong's success in the first year of the project was assessed in order to give exceptional communities extra funding and incentives for their second-year projects. A ranking system also was implemented and according to the level of development and participation of residents, 34,665 villages across the country were classified into basic villages (undeveloped), self-help villages (developing), and self-reliant villages (developed). This strategy was designed to disseminate development initiatives from exemplary villages to nearby villages with the intention of gradually eradicating self-help and basic villages (Kim and Jung 2014).

Additionally in 1973, the government approved the arrangement for Saemaeul undong's assistance. The local level assistance network for Saemaeul was developed. The government also established a new bureau with the sole purpose of observing the advancement of Saemaeul projects in each local office (Baek, Kim, and Lee 2012). Another government incentive was the creation of the "Saemaeul undong Leaders Training Facility," an educational system for Saemaeul local leaders (Moon 2010).

When the tangible results of the Saemaeul undong appeared to some extent, the government established the first long-term development plan in 1973 to systematically promote it from a longer-term perspective. It was planned to foster and develop all 34,665 villages nationwide into self-reliant villages to increase farm household income by 3.3 times from 418,000 won in 1972 to 1.4 million won in 1981, in particular. According to the long-term development plan, the years 1971 to 1973 were designated as the "stage

of foundation and groundwork," 1974 to 1976 as the "stage of self-efficiency and development," and 1977 to 1981 as the "stage of accomplishment of self-reliance" (Chung 2008).

Feedback-Evaluation. As noted by Jwa (2018), by implementing an economic discrimination strategy, the Saemaeul undong was able to foster a spirit of self-help, which turned the program into a process driven by the community and encouraged the voluntary participation of all communities. Through the development process system of environment improvement, production base creation, and income increase, it was clear that self-help and cooperation of residents could ultimately bring about favorable results for each person. Farm households' income was 79% of urban working-class households' average annual incomes in 1971, but it increased to 83% in 1972, 87% in 1973, and 104% in 1974, exceeding that of urban working-class households' income. This phenomenon continued until 1977 (Eom 2011).

Self-help development stage (1974–1976)

Environment-Input. The Saemaeul undong of the 1970s was developed mainly in rural villages in 1971. After 1972, the Saemaeul undong project was implemented to include fishing villages and after 1974, it was time to emphasize the expansion of the base of the Saemaeul undong to include not only fishing villages but also the suburbs according to the characteristics of the economic location.

Transformation. The goals of Saemaeul undong at this stage were to expand the base of general participation, align standard living conditions, and expand production bases. Spread to cities, workplaces, and factories was designed through the implementation of education for social leaders and the promotion of 3 major movements and 4 major policies

Output. Since 1974, urban Saemaeul undong, along with income increase and Saemaeul education, have been selected as the three key tasks and Saemaeul undong has spread to various fields, including cities, workplaces, factories, and schools. Since 1974, the first day of every month has been designated as the Saemaeul Day and three major order movements have been promoted: spiritual order, behavioral order, and environmental order. Centering on neighborhood associations held nationwide, activities such as helping neighbors, cleaning the environment, saving money, collecting trash, improving dietary life,

family planning, consumer protection, and volunteer activities were carried out. With the founding of the Saemaeul undong Central Council for Private Organizations in 1976, promotion organizations were established by public institutions, businesses, and vocational groups. Participation in campaigns for regional development such as environmental cleanup, energy saving, friendliness, and service quality improvement, creation of a cheerful working atmosphere, helping rural workers, helping the less fortunate, establishing order on the streets, and keeping one's turn in line were carried out.

Environment-Input. Schools became the center of the local community and operated the permanent Saemaeul Schools. Through the curriculum, a movement was developed to help students acquire the Saemaeul spirit. At the universities, professors of natural science formed a Saemaeul technology volunteer group and gave field guidance on income-enhancing technology. Each university established a Saemaeul Research Center to develop theories on the Saemaeul undong (Saemaeul undong Archives).

Accomplishment of self-reliance stage (1977–1981)

Transformation. At this stage, the tasks were set to complete the formation of the income base and expand the sources of income for farm households. These goals were to be achieved by facilitating the regionalization of Saemaeul projects, promoting social and environmental projects such as housing improvement, and establishing a civilian-led Saemaeul implementation system.

Output. Since 1977, as the Factory Saemaeul undong was promoted centering on the manufacturing industry, the Saemaeul spirit of diligence, self-help, and cooperation have spread to the manufacturing sector. Workers' efforts to save energy and reduce costs were promoted, while management's social responsibility and employee welfare were emphasized.

Feedback-Evaluation. The long-term goal to increase farm household income from 418,000 won in 1972 to 1.4 million won by 1981 reached the target in 1977 and by the end of 1979, 99.7% of the villages had become self-reliant villages. Among them, 12,692 villages, or 37% of villages with household income of over 2 million won, appeared, which achieved the goal two years earlier (Chung 2009).

Overview of the Saemaeul undong of 1980s

Environment-Input. The Saemaeul undong had a temporary stagnation in the 1980s as it went through political, social, and economic changes. However, according to the public opinion that it should continue to be inherited and developed as a national movement, on December 1, 1980, the Saemaeul undong Central Headquarters was established as a non-profit association. This marked an important turning point in the transformation of the Saemaeul undong from a government-driven to the private-led system.

Transformation. It was equipped with a five-tier organization system, including central, city, county(*eup*), *myeon*, and village (*dong*). So-called member organizations such as the Saemaeul Leaders Federation, Saemaeul Women's Association Central Association, Workplace Saemaeul undong Central Council, Factory Saemaeul undong Promotion Headquarters, Saemaeul Library Association, Saemaeul Credit Cooperative Federation, Saemaeul Education Research Institute were established to develop various projects (National Archives of Korea a).

Output. In the 1980s, Saemaeul undong selected the creation of a sound social climate, economic development, and environmental maintenance as key tasks to induce national participation in the movement. The characteristics of the Saemaeul undong in the 1980s were mainly focused on mental movements to awaken people's consciousness, such as solving various social problems caused by the side effects of rapid economic growth. Representative projects include improving dietary life, saving consumption, collecting recycled items, making reading a habit, frugality, savings, and Saemaeul spirit education. In relation to key tasks and practical projects, the Saemaeul undong in the 1980s introduced new index management from the existing village levels of basic, self-help, and self-reliance and upgraded excellent villages to self-reliant, self-supporting, and welfare villages. The setting of new village class goals through welfare villages that have appeared since the 1980s is also related to changes in the theoretical background of Saemaeul undong that reflect the values of the times (Lee and Lee 2016).

Environment-Input. However, despite these changes, the government's influence on organizations and businesses remained as strong as in the past. As a result, the promotion of the Saemaeul undong maintained the form of semi-governmental (semi-private) even though it was externally led by the private

sector. The Saemaeul undong encountered societal criticism in the early 1980s because it was employed to further the political objective of the Fifth Republic (Yoon 2016). In other words, the Saemaeul undong came under the stinging light of politicization by carrying out the role and function of supporting the national indicators of the 5th Republic, such as the indigenization of democracy, the construction of a welfare society, the realization of a just society, and the realization of educational innovation and cultural development.

In particular, the Saemaeul undong in the mid-to-late 1980s was restricted in its activities due to the abolition of government support and the decline in the status of Saemaeul leaders amid the trend of social democratization. As social criticism of the Saemaeul undong increased, the activity of leaders and members of the Saemaeul groups shrank. The organization of the Saemaeul undong also failed to secure organizational independence and autonomy by relying on government contributions and subsidies for finance.

Transformation. With Korea hosting the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics, the Saemaeul undong sought new possibilities and could prepare a turning point in setting a new developing direction. The hosting of the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics had a great influence on the Saemaeul undong's priority tasks in the 1980s.

Output. The Saemaeul undong sought new possibilities and developed a wide range of volunteer activities to create a social atmosphere of kindness, cleanliness, and order in urban areas, contributing to the successful hosting of events.

Feedback-Input. Through these volunteer activities, Saemaeul undong prepared a turning point in setting a new movement direction. In the late 1980s, in order not to lose the original identity of the Saemaeul undong in terms of the nature, project direction, and promotion system of a private-led organization, continuous efforts were made to equip it with an autonomous management system that maintains political neutrality.

Transformation. In this process, the Saemaeul undong Central Headquarters attempted a private-led developmental transformation. By exposing various problems in operation, it changed its name to the Saemaeul undong Central Association in 1989, undergoing reorganization and adjustment.

Output. Accordingly, the project contents of Saemaeul undong also tend to emphasize the spiritual aspect rather than the projects that require financial resources (Lee and Lee 2016).

Overview of the Saemaeul undong of 1990s

Environment-Input. In 1991, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established and the local self-government system was implemented through the election of members of the metropolitan and local councils. In the early 1990s, as democracy and openness grew in popularity, social instability was brought on by excessive selfishness and the desire to protect one's own interests at the expense of others, evasion of laws, disorder, and overconsumption. The word "Korean disease," which collectively refers to opportunism, distorted enthusiasm for education, overspending, *hantangjuui*¹, and impatience, quickly became popular. In addition, a new term, the so-called 3D phenomenon, has been created due to the trend of workers avoiding difficult, dirty, and dangerous work (Gumi City Portal).

Transformation. At the same time, efforts were made to resolve social criticism and negative images through the enactment of the Code of Ethics for Saemaeul Leaders in 1990. The Saemaeul undong was developed under the idea of "Building a Community Where People Live Together" which means it is not just me alone but my neighbors and all of us should live together. Ultimately, the goal is to create a community where people can enjoy not only material prosperity but also spiritual prosperity at the same time. The basic spirit of the Saemaeul undong in the 1990s was expanded to "honesty based on diligence, responsibility based on self-help, and consideration based on cooperation."

Output. In this situation, Saemaeul undong focused on creating a sound social climate, economic stability, and improving the living environment. In order to create a sound social climate, the People's Consciousness Reform Movement, the creation of a working ethic, the Moral Recovery Movement, and the Neighbor Love Sharing Movement were implemented. The scope of the project has been expanded to include the public awareness reform movement, environmental preservation movement, farming and fishing village improvement movement, and neighbor love movement to create a healthy society (National Archives of Korea b).

Environment-Input. Until the early to mid-1990s, the Saemaeul undong

¹ This means an attitude of making a big fortune or achieving a success at one stroke.

was still mired in stagnation. In 1994, the Civilian Government established the Social Promotion Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs to take charge of social promotion. The Saemaeul undong was further reinforced and expanded into the New Order and New Life Movement. In May 1995, the four major local elections were held to simultaneously select the heads of local governments (metropolitan, local) and local council members (metropolitan, basic), thus reopening the era of complete public self-government and continuing to this day (Choi 2011). Thus, from the 1990s, the Saemaeul undong was placed in an environment where it was forced to completely break away from the government's administrative system and develop anew as a purely private group movement.

Transformation. As a result, Saemaeul undong decided to reorganize front-line local unit organizations and promote organizational autonomy in line with the implementation of the local autonomy system in 1995. In February 1996, along with the revision of the articles of incorporation, the organizational system was reorganized, including the incorporation of cities and counties and district associations, as well as the Saemaeul Education and Training Institute.

Output. Through this, the Saemaeul undong in the 1990s was able to actively promote community projects. Signs of this change began to be seen in the mid-to-late 1990s. In the midst of the economic crisis caused by the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, Saemaeul undong promoted the "Saemaeul undong to Revive the Economy" campaigns such as "National Savings Campaign to Revitalize the Economy," "10 Million Signatures Campaign to Revitalize the Economy," and "Gold Collecting Campaign" (National Archives of Korea b).

Feedback-Input. Through these activities, it was possible to raise public awareness of the Saemaeul undong and to lead the social re-examination and re-evaluation of the Saemaeul undong.

Transformation. The Saemaeul undong attempted continuous change efforts to respond to the changing environment of the times, such as globalization and localization.

Output. Since 1997, large-scale regional revitalization projects have been carried out in response to the era of globalization and localization (Lee et al. 2018). In 1998, the civilian government established the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs and made the Private Cooperation Division in charge of the Saemaeul undong. Furthermore, the "second Saemaeul undong" was declared.

Environment. By the end of 1990s, the spread of Saemaeul undong to underdeveloped and socialist countries was initiated, and a new direction of movement was established and implemented.

Overview of the Saemaeul undong of 2000s

Transformation. Entering the new millennium Saemaeul undong developed strategies in response to changing environment. Such strategies included reinforcement of organizational capabilities by establishing a role and identity in accordance with the era; reinforcement of private sector cooperation by improving social public interest; and reinforcement of international cooperation projects by international promotion of Saemaeul undong.

On April 19, 2000, Saemaeul undong Central Association changed its name to Korea Saemaeul undong Center and promoted the "second Saemaeul undong" in earnest. Since then, the priority tasks have focused on the advancement of civic consciousness, realizing a welfare community, revitalizing the region, and international/unification cooperation. The existing goal and ideology of "living well" was expanded to a new vision and ideology of "building a community where people live together."

Output. In the face of the 2002 World Cup, 10 action tasks in the areas of order, kindness, cleanliness, and public morality were pursued, concentrating on street cleanliness and urban aesthetics. In 2003, the campaign to fix houses for neighbors in need and to make *kimchi* by giving up 1 million *kimchi* was promoted (Gumi City Portal). In 2004, efforts were made to solve various problems of Korean society in the 21st century under the slogan of "Creating a New Village,² New Spirit, and New Country" where "New Village" means a diligent and new mind, "New Spirit" means moral development, and "New Country" means community harmony and social integration.

Environment. In regards with the international promotion of Saemaeul undong, at the 57th General Assembly held in 2000, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) was presented as a rural development model that successfully lifted poverty in countries within the region.

2 When translating the "Saemaeul" from Korean to English, it can be understood as a "new village" or a "new community."

Transformation. It was decided to adopt a plan to alleviate poverty by grafting and adopting Korea's Saemaeul undong as a successful model.

Output. From 2002 to 2005, comprehensive rural development pilot projects were promoted in Cambodia, Laos, and Nepal to escape poverty. In 2002 it became a member of the UN Economic and Social Council as an NGO (registered status) and the spread of Saemaeul undong to underdeveloped countries and socialist countries such as the Philippines, Congo, Indonesia, China, and Vietnam began in earnest.

Feedback. Thanks to these efforts, Saemaeul undong has grown into a proud "global brand" of Korea. Meanwhile, the Unification Saemaeul undong, such as the sending of unification handcarts, supporting North Korean defectors, and providing disaster relief in North Korea (Jeong 2014), contributed to the restoration of ethnic homogeneity and improvement of inter-Korean relations.

Environment-Input. The severity of environmental problems caused by global warming and the destruction of nature contributed to the decision of the government to adopt a low-carbon green growth as a new growth paradigm for the Korean economy in 2008.

Transformation. In response to this, Green Saemaeul undong was promoted in 2009.

Output. In order to create an eco-friendly environment, a wide range of natural environment conservation projects were implemented, contributing greatly to restoring the ecological environment damaged by developmentalism in the 1970s. As a part of Green Saemaeul undong, the Green Korea Movement promotes saving water and reducing electricity consumption by unplugging outlets in daily life. The purpose of this movement was green living, and as major practical campaigns to create a low-carbon green society, green living practice campaigns, river conservation campaigns, and global warming prevention campaigns were promoted (Cho 2013).

Environment-Input. Since the 2000s, in addition to international organizations, many developing countries in South-East Asia, Africa and South America started to show interest in Saemaeul undong. In 2009, Korea became a member of the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), turning a donor of official aid from a recipient country and the international community started to pay closer attention to the fact that Saemaeul undong can be a practical means to

achieve the Millennium Development Goals proposed by the United Nations.

Transformation. The Saemaeul undong in the 2000s diversified its activities through the changing elements of the international environment, and the contents of its projects also appeared in a diversified form. At this time, the foundation for the Global Saemaeul undong was laid through the international demand for the Saemaeul undong and the diversification of the promotion system. The system has progressed from the private sector-led system through the Saemaeul undong Central Association to the private-public cooperative system that cooperates with the central and local governments and government agencies (Lee et al. 2018), like the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) actively supporting the Saemaeul undong public aid pilot projects in developing countries.

Overview of the Saemaeul undong of 2010s–Present

In 2010, the Saemaeul undong Center celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Saemaeul undong. On the way of keeping the basic spirit and promoting changes according to the times, the "SMU New Saemaeul undong," was established as a new national movement so that young people can sympathize with and participate in it widely. New Saemaeul undong connected the 3C spirit of change, challenge, and creativity to the old Saemaeul undong spirit of diligence, self-help, and cooperation in order to contribute to the image of Korea as a first-class advanced country. SMU New Saemaeul undong consists of the "Green Korea Movement" to practice the green life movement, "Smart Korea Movement" to enhance the national dignity, "Happy Korea Movement" for a livable community, and the "Global Korea" for globalization of Saemaeul undong (Cho 2013). In accordance with its national status as one of the world's 10th largest economies and G20 countries, Korea now has an obligation of passing on its experience of overcoming poverty to underdeveloped and developing countries around the world.

Output. As a Green Saemaeul undong, the Green Korea Movement promotes major practical campaigns to create a low-carbon green society, green living practice campaigns, river conservation campaigns, and global warming prevention campaigns. The Smart Korea Movement is a movement initiated by Saemaeul undong to raise the dignity of the nation. It is named after the first initials of Smile (citizens with a smile), Manner (citizens with good

manners), Admiration (citizens with admiration for each other), Responsibility (citizens who fulfill their responsibilities and duties), and Together (citizens who live together). Currently, Korea has achieved a lot of economic growth, the quality of life has greatly improved, but the phenomenon of polarization between the rich and the poor is increasingly appearing. Accordingly, the Saemaetul undong Center spreads social integration and community spirit through the Happy Korea Movement to create a community that is pleasant to live in and to establish a donation culture in Korean society. Major practical campaigns include the “One Family Hands-On Campaign” for difficult families, multicultural family settlement support campaigns, safety protection activities, settlement of donation culture, and urban-rural exchange projects. The Saemaetul undong pilot village was selected and the international Saemaetul undong started in earnest. The Korean government signed an MOU with the World Food Program (WFP) the same year and decided to support the people in the world’s disaster areas and those suffering from starvation through Korea’s Saemaetul undong method. UNDP and OECD signed a cooperation agreement with the Korean government and decided to adopt Korea’s Saemaetul undong as a cooperative model for poverty alleviation and rural development in developing countries in 2014 (OECD 2016).

Environment-Feedback. At the National Saemaetul Leaders Conference in 2013, the Saemaetul spirit of diligence, self-help, and cooperation was newly interpreted. Diligence is newly defined as a pioneering spirit based on challenge and integrity, self-help as a spirit of ownership based on autonomy and responsibility, and cooperation as a community spirit based on harmony and coexistence. The virtues of sharing, serving (volunteering), and caring complimented to the existing Saemaetul spirit in order to lead the vitality and integration of the local communities as well as to raise public awareness of globalization.

The Global Saemaetul undong has become more concrete through the active participation of government agencies and related ministries since 2010. After 2011, the Korean government decided to promote Saemaetul undong as a national ODA project in order to meet the international demand for Saemaetul undong, which international organizations and developing countries are interested in introducing. The 18th International Development Cooperation Committee established a comprehensive Global Saemaetul undong implementation plan. In addition to making efforts to share the practice of

Saemaetul undong with the world by more concretely implementing the Global Saemaetul undong and Saemaetul ODA projects, it was decided to put efforts to build an international organizational system and to establish solidarity with international organizations and international financial institutions (CIDC 2014). However, too many organizations have conducted too many projects separately, causing segmented and sporadic implementation and impeding synergy.

At the UN General Assembly in 2015, the Saemaetul ODA project, which combined empirical knowledge from the promotion of Saemaetul undong with international development cooperation projects, was presented. In 2016, through an in-depth analysis of Korea’s Saemaetul undong, the OECD proposed Saemaetul undong as a rural development model for developing countries (Seo and Lee 2022).

Transformation-Output. In 2016, the Saemaetul undong Center launched a non-governmental international organization called the Saemaetul undong Global League (SGL), and 46 countries are participating in this organization (Korea Saemaetul undong Center). According to the Ministry of Interior and Safety, more than 10,000 people from 74 countries were invited for 11 years from 2009 to 2021 to receive training and to be nurtured as Saemaetul leaders. The government has supported 80 pilot village development projects in 20 countries, including Asia (40 villages in 9 countries), Africa (31 villages in 8 countries), and Central and South America (8 villages in 2 countries), contributing greatly to strengthening self-reliance capacity, improving village environment, and increasing income (MOIS 2022).

Since 2010, the main actors operating the current Saemaetul undong system have been diversified into public-private-academic, such as Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Korea Saemaetul undong Center, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Cheongdo-gun, Gumi City, Global Saemaetul Forum, and Global Saemaetul Network. In this process of globalization of the Saemaetul undong, the active participation and efforts of academia, especially universities, are required to promote research on the development of the Saemaetul undong and to train Saemaetul leaders-to-be who will spread and practice the Saemaetul undong in the international community. Since the mid-2000s, as Saemaetul undong ODA projects started to develop, research on the globalization of the Saemaetul undong has accelerated. Studies that examine projects using the frameworks of international development have increased in frequency

since Korea joined the OECD/DAC in 2010. Additionally, as data have been collected following the implementation of various ODA projects, studies like case studies and performance analyses have been growing. In addition, the academic process of Saemaeul studies (Saemaeulology³), which appeared after 2010, has developed in the form of disseminating the Saemaeul studies, centering on developing countries, so that the practical (project) sector and the theoretical sector of the Saemaeul undong are organically combined with each other (Lee, Lee, and Kim 2014).

Discussion of Findings

The research methodology of the study involved both the time-series perspective and the application of the open systems approach to examine the development process of Saemaeul undong according to time series. The changes and development of the Saemaeul undong introduced through analysis of differences by period show the transition of the Saemaeul undong from a government-led initiative to a purely private group movement, then transformation to a recent private-public joint initiative, and evolution into a collaborative private-public-academic endeavor. This section will highlight the resulting achievements and limitations of the transformation.

The Transition of Saemaeul undong from a Government-led to a Private Initiative

The Saemaeul undong experienced a brief period of stagnation in the 1980s as the nation saw political, social, and economic upheavals. With the founding of the Saemaeul undong Central Headquarters in 1980, the promotion system of the organization made an effort to transition from a public to a private one.

The government's power over the organization and projects hasn't diminished, though, notwithstanding these adjustments. In order to preserve the original Saemaeul spirit, constant efforts were undertaken to provide the organization with an independent management system that upholds political neutrality in the late 1980s. Its name was changed to the Saemaeul undong Central Association in 1989 after revealing a number of operational issues, and it underwent reorganization and adjustment to preserve homeostasis.

The transition of Saemaeul undong from a government-led initiative to a private initiative with the establishment of the Saemaeul undong Central Headquarters as a non-profit association in the 1980s brought about both achievements and limitations. As for achievements, with the establishment of the Saemaeul undong Central Headquarters as a non-profit association, there was room for more innovation and flexibility in program design and implementation. As a non-profit association, the Saemaeul undong Central Headquarters (Saemaeul undong Central Association after 1989) received opportunities to access funding from a variety of sources beyond government allocations. This diversification of funding sources increased financial stability and reduced dependence on government resources, enabling the expansion and sustainability of Saemaeul undong activities. As for limitations, moving away from a government-led approach has resulted in reduced support and oversight from government agencies. Without sufficient government backing, Saemaeul undong initiatives have faced challenges in accessing essential resources. Without centralized coordination and strategic planning, there may have been inefficiencies and overlaps in project implementation, limiting the overall impact and effectiveness of the movement. Overall, while the transition to a private initiative in the 1980s brought about innovation and diversification of funding sources, it also posed challenges related to government support, coordination, and scalability. Presumably for this reason, Saemaeul undong projects in the 1990s were mostly focused on people's consciousness reform.

The Transition of Saemaeul undong to a Private-public Initiative

Many developing nations in South-East Asia, Africa, and South America began to express interest in Saemaeul undong in the 2000s, in addition to international organizations. The worldwide demand for Saemaeul undong and the diversity of the promotion method established the groundwork for

³ Yeungnam University has continued its efforts to academicize the Saemaeul undong, such as the establishment of the Korea Saemaeul Society, the formation of the Global Saemaeul Forum, and the establishment of the Park Chung Hee Saemaeul Institute, after Professor Oe Chool Choi (currently the President of Yeungnam University) raised the need for academicization of Saemaeul undong in 2007. Since 2022, *Journal of Saemaeulology* has been indexed in Korea Citation Index (<https://spe.yu.ac.kr/pr/yunews/yu-news-room.do?mode=view&articleNo=4730666&article.offset=0&articleLimit=10>).

the Global Saemaeul undong. The system has evolved from being headed by the private sector to becoming a public-private partnership that works with governments at all levels, as well as government agencies. The “second Saemaeul undong” was formally launched on April 19, 2000, when Saemaeul undong Central Association re-branded itself as Korea Saemaeul undong Center. The transition of Saemaeul undong from a private-led initiative to a private-public initiative with the establishment of the Korea Saemaeul undong Center in the 2000s brought about both achievements and limitations. Concerning achievements, by transitioning to a private-public initiative, Saemaeul undong gained increased institutional support from the government. The establishment of the Korea Saemaeul undong Center provided a formalized structure for collaboration between the private sector and government agencies, facilitating coordinated efforts and resource mobilization. Government support including financial assistance, technical expertise, and policy incentives, enabled Saemaeul undong to scale up its activities. Integrating Saemaeul undong initiatives into government policies and programs promoted coherence and alignment with broader national development goals. This integration facilitated the mainstreaming of Saemaeul undong principles and practices across various sectors and levels of governance, enhancing their impact and sustainability. Concerning the limitations, on the other hand, reliance on government support may have made Saemaeul undong vulnerable to fluctuations in political priorities, budget allocations, and policy changes. Increased involvement of government agencies may have diminished grassroots participation and community ownership in Saemaeul undong initiatives inside Korea. Overall, while the transition to a private-public initiative in the 2000s brought opportunities for enhanced institutional support, expanded funding, and synergy of expertise, it also posed challenges related to political influence, dependency on government support, and erosion of grassroots participation.

The Transformation of Saemaeul undong to a Private-public-academic Joint Initiative

In response to the global demand for Saemaeul undong, which developing nations and international organizations are interested in introducing, the Korean government has been promoting the Saemaeul undong as a national ODA project since 2011. Since 2010, government agencies and allied ministries

have actively participated in the Global Saemaeul undong, making it more tangible. The main stakeholders running the present Saemaeul undong system have expanded to include public, corporate, and academic entities. In order to support research on the evolution of the Saemaeul undong and to train Saemaeul leaders from recipient countries, academia—especially universities—had to actively participate in and work toward the process of globalization of the Saemaeul undong.

The transition of Saemaeul undong from a public-private partnership to a collaborative private-public-academic endeavor signifies a change in focus towards a multi-stakeholder and cooperative approach. This change has both achievements and limitations. In terms of achievements, collaboration between the private sector, government, and academic institutions brings together diverse resources, expertise, and perspectives. The integration of academic insights and empirical evidence enhances the effectiveness of Saemaeul undong initiatives and contributes to evidence-based policymaking. Public-private-academic partnerships can contribute to the long-term sustainability of Saemaeul undong projects by leveraging government support, private sector resources, and academic research to address complex socio-economic challenges in a holistic manner. In terms of limitations, however, involvement of multiple stakeholders can introduce complexity and coordination challenges, particularly in decision-making processes as the interests of each stakeholder group who may not always align, thereby leading to tensions and compromises that could undermine the integrity and effectiveness of Saemaeul undong initiatives. Collaboration with the private sector and government may risk co-opting Saemaeul undong initiatives for political or commercial interests, potentially diluting its original community-driven ethos and objectives. Overall, while the transition to a private-public-academic joint initiative may offer opportunities for enhanced resources, expertise, and sustainability, it also presents challenges related to coordination, power dynamics, and maintaining the integrity of community-driven development approaches. Effective governance mechanisms, transparency, and inclusive participation are essential to mitigate these limitations and maximize the benefits of collaboration in advancing Saemaeul undong's goals.

Conclusion

The open systems suggested by the system theory undergoes a dynamic process that performs the functions of input, conversion, output, and feedback in interaction with the environment (Katz and Kahn 1966). The Saemaeul undong seen through this systems approach shows itself as an effective open system organization, based on its long-term growth and sustainability. Proceeding with the changes in operating and promotion systems, it was able to maintain the constancy of its internal state and characteristics through coordinated responses aimed at maintaining dynamic equilibrium. Through decades the spirit of diligence, self-help, and cooperation, as well as a noble aim of making a community a better place to live happily together, has remained its identical characteristic.

An ever-changing dynamic environment creates a lot of uncertainty about what an organization must do to survive and grow. Since the 1970s, the Saemaeul undong as an open organization has been constantly monitoring its environment to collect information about environmental deviations and formulate decisions or responses to these deviations, which in turn affected its structure and processes. It can be seen that the changes in the promotion system of Saemaeul undong in the 1970s, 1990s, and 2010s are factors that determine not only the goal setting of Saemaeul undong but also the form and content of the projects. After going through the public-private cooperation system in the 1970s, the operation was transferred to a full-scale private system in the 1990s. Since 2010, however, the Global Saemaeul undong and efforts to academicize Saemaeul undong have been actively progressed both domestically and internationally through public-private-academic cooperation. In other words, the goals and value indicators, the project type, and the content of the Saemaeul undong were determined by the degree of participation of the government, private sector, and academia in the promotion system.

Thus, the development or evolution of the Saemaeul undong is driven by repetitive cycles of input, throughput, output, and feedback in which changes to a new promotion system are sought through diagnosis and evaluation of project performance and environmental deviations (Choi 2015). This makes the promotion system of Saemaeul undong an important variable that can change the development process of Saemaeul undong in various ways. The currently changed domestic and international environment requires cooperative

participation among various actors in the Saemaeul undong promotion system. The conclusion that follows is that further academic research is required in order to find a more advanced promotion system centering on these factors.

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Abstract

Saemaeul undong is regarded as one of the leading forces behind Korea's economic progress and modernization by resolving economic and social problems in rural society, overcoming national crises, and instilling confidence in the people. Since the 1970s, Saemaeul undong has been studied and discussed in numerous contexts. However, not many research efforts have been made to specifically classify the overall flow and development stages of Saemaeul undong by age from the perspective of sustainability. By applying the open systems approach, research on the evolution of the Saemaeul undong was conducted. The Saemaeul undong seen through this systems approach shows itself as an effective open system organization. The study results show that Saemaeul undong's evolution is driven by an iterative cycle of input, throughput, output, and feedback. Within this process, the goals and value indicators, project type, and content of Saemaeul undong were determined by the degree of involvement in the promotion system by the government, private sector, and academia. Following the findings, the promotion system of Saemaeul undong is an important variable that has a key influence on the development process of Saemaeul undong. The study concludes that continuous academic research is needed to analyze changes in the international environment and propose new parameters for the promotion system of Saemaeul undong.

Key words: Saemaeul undong, Global Saemaeul undong, systems theory approach, open system organization, promotion system