A study of Saemaul Undong in South Korea:

Making self, memory and development

by

Da Un Jeong

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother, ***Jeong Suk Choi***. Without her selfless care and love, I would not have come this far in my long academic journey let alone survive this tough world. I have unbound love and respect for her.

In the memory of my loving father, and his spirit of unwavering hope and love of life.

I miss you dad. You know I'm a daddy's girl – as always.

I love you.

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Glossary

abŏnim	father-in-law
bakayaro	Japanese insulting word, meaning idiot or fool
chaebol	conglomerate
ch'inilp'a	derogatory term describing ethnic Koreans who are pro-Japan faction
chuseok	Korean Thanksgiving Day
ganadara	Korean alphabet
geunro bogukdae	forced volunteer corps
halmŏni	grandmother
hamyŏn toenda	I can do it
hangeul	Korean script
hiragana, katakana	Japanese alphabet
hob	traditional Korean unit of measuring rice; 1 hob equals 180ml
hyupdong	cooperation
ilmin	one nation
jige	traditional Korean carrying frame in the shape of the letter A

jip	house
makgeolli	korean rice wine
maul	village
nongak	Korean traditional community band music
nongmin	farmer or landless peasant class
nongshim	farmer's heart
poritkogae	Spring hunger
pyung	Korean unit of measuring land. 1 pyung equals 3.31 m^2
Saemaul undong	New Village Movement
sanup yeokgun	pillars or workers of industry
saram	human
solsŏnsubŏm	leading by example
ssuk	mugwort
Tongil	a name of rice variety, meaning reunification
yahak	night school
yangban	the landed aristocratic class
yeot	Korean sweet taffy

Abbreviation

ADB	Asia Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BIG	Basic Income Grant
CDD	Community Driven Development
CDP	Communities Development programme
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICA	International Cooperation Administration
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
ISNC	Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities
KBS	Korean Broadcasting System
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
KSP	Knowledge Sharing Programme
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MS	Mahila Samakhya
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NRD	New Rural Development

NRM	National Reconstruction Movement
NSLC	National Saemaul Leaders Conference
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD	Rural Enlightenment Movement
ROK	Republic of Korea
RRC	Rural Revitalisation Campaign
SCNR	Supreme Council of National Reconstruction
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGF	Saemaul Undong New Rural Globalisation Foundation
SGL	Saemaul Undong Global League
SMU	Saemaul Undong
SNNPR	Ethiopian Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region
SWA	Saemaul Women's Association
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USOM	United States Operations Mission
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Note on transliteration and translation

All translations of Korean conversations and texts are my own. Acknowledging the inherent interpretative nature of translation, I recognise that various nuances and shades of meaning may be captured differently by different translators. Hence, alongside the translated passages, I have supplemented footnotes containing the original Korean expressions for reference by native speakers.

I use the McCune-Reischauer system for rendering written Korean into English. For very common terms and places (e.g., Seoul; Pyongyang) with established nonstandard romanisations, I defer to the established convention.

Korean names presented in the text are romanised according to the McCune-Reischauer system and written surname first and given name second. For well-known figures with a non-standard but extremely common romanisation of their name (e.g., Park Chung Hee; Moon Jae-in), I defer to the established convention, but a standard romanisation are given in parentheses the first time the name appears in running text. E.g. Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi)

Abstract

Saemaul Undong (New Village Movement) was South Korea's state-led rural development project, launched in 1970, under Park Chung Hee's authoritarian regime. Studies of Saemaul Undong have been deeply polarised, especially along ideological lines, either praising the movement for empowering rural communities, or dismissing it as a tool of political propaganda. While Saemaul Undong has received global attention as a development model in the last two decades, the literature on Saemaul is still limited to judging its success or failure alone.

Drawing on a Foucauldian analytic of governmentality and memory-work method, this thesis reveals how Saemaul Undong was not simply imposed by the South Korean state, but also embraced and implemented by rural communities. Taking a triangulated approach of complementing an analysis of state archive materials with participants' life histories and cultural repertoires of the media, this study explores the experiences, memories and emotions of rural villagers in their engagement with Saemaul Undong and its 'technologies of the self'.

It finds that Saemaul Undong, using visual guidelines and discourses of nation building and ideal citizenship, created a space for the constitution of new types of selves and new ways of relating to the selves, in the long shadow of war, famine and colonialism. This thesis contributes to the fields of development, social movements and state-building in the global South by revealing how power and governance in state-led development projects are played out at the micro level of the self.

Keywords: Saemaul Undong, South Korea, state-led development, authoritarian government, governmentality, subjectivity, memory, life-history

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

As soon as Moon Jae-in (Mun Chaein) came into power, as President of South Korea, in May 2017, he embarked on the *draining the swamp* of the previous Lee Myung-bak (I Myŏngpak) and Park Geun-hye (Pak Kŭnhye) administrations.[1] As a major left-wing politician, Moon had promised his voters during his election campaign, that when elected, he would get rid of the remnants of the two previous right-wing conservative presidents. Included in the *swamp* was Saemaul Undong (Saemaŭl undong) – South Korea's rural development programme of the 1970s introduced under former president Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi). *Saemaul Undong* (SMU) was a major achievement of Park Chung Hee, who remains a contentious figure in Korean history. [2] On the one hand, he ruled an authoritarian regime from 1961 to 1979 and on the other, spearheaded South Korea's astonishing economic growth during the same period. Park's daughter, Park Geun-hye, was elected as the President of the Republic of Korea (ROK) in 2013 and stayed in power until March 2017, when her rule was cut short by impeachment by the National Assembly. During Park Geun-hye's rule, SMU experienced a major revival as South Korea's development model for the globe. The Park administration took the South Korean government's existing official development assistance (ODA) projects that support modernisation of rural farming in developing countries and re-named them as the *Saemaul ODA*. Saemaul ODA programme included projects like the Smart Saemaul Development Project targeting 620,000 residents in 420 villages in 7 countries, including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Nepal, Rwanda, and Uganda. [3] The budget for Saemaul ODA in 2015

[1] https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2023/08/113_332209.html
[2] In this thesis, Saemaul Undong will be referred as Saemaul Undong, SMU and Saemaul interchangeably.
[3] https://www.ajunews.com/view/20150927092001982

totalled KRW 54.7 billion, more than doubling over four years compared to 2011 (KRW 25.3 billion), making it Park Geun-hye administration's main development cooperation project. [4]

After Moon Jae-in was elected, Saemaul Undong's status quickly went downhill. The Moon administration cut a major portion of Saemaul Undong budget and ordered the removal of the name, *Saemaul* from all the projects of Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). It also reported to the National Assembly that all elements related to SMU would be removed from existing projects and no new projects would be pursued from 2018.[5] The opposition party strongly condemned this move, criticising the Moon administration for erasing and sabotaging Saemaul Undong. Right-wing politicians and commentators called Saemaul Undong as 'representative brand product in Korea, with a spirit of creating something out of nothing' and claimed that the Moon Jae-in administration would not be able to last in Korea if it continues viewing Saemaul Undong as a *swamp* that needs to be drained.[6]

Then an interesting incident happened. During the ASEAN Summits in November 2017, President Moon Jae-in met with the heads of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) states. The leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar, thanked President Moon for the South Korean government's support for Saemaul Undong projects in their countries.[7] After the trip to ASEAN summits, Moon Jae-in ordered his administration to create conditions for the continued promotion of Saemaul Undong. Moon added, 'If there are any

[4] Saemaul ODA had already been on the development aid agenda of numerous South Korean government ministries and local governments since 2000s but its scale increased significantly under Park Geun-hye administration.https://pida.or.kr/pium/?q=YToxOntzOjEyOiJrZXl3b3JkX3R5cGUiO3M6MzoiYWxsIjt9&bmode=view&idx=501373&t=board&category=61X582TN4e

[5] https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2017/11/24/2017112400204.html

[6] The-then opposition party to the Moon administration, the Liberty Korea Party (in Korean, chayuhan'guktang[Liberty Korea Party]), was founded by many of Park Geun-hye supporters. https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20171114078400001

[7] The South Korean government had provided an aid about USD 12 million to Myanmar for building village infrastructure. https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/22191763#home

meaningful achievements in the previous government projects, then expand them'.[8] The government submitted the budget for Saemaul Undong to the National Assembly without reducing it and the Saemaul budget was easily passed without any objection from the ruling Democratic Party during the review of the National Assembly.

1.1.1 Saemaul Undong

Saemaul Undong, or the New Village Movement was introduced in the early 1970s in South Korea, under Park Chung Hee. Initially aimed at eradicating rural poverty, SMU was introduced at a time when Korea was just starting to experience economic development from the fruits of its industrialisation policy. Park Chung Hee had taken control of the Korean state in May 1961 when he led a successful military coup with his fellow military conspirators and overthrew the Chang Myŏn administration. Park's military junta, called the Supreme Council of National Reconstruction (SCNR), ruled the country under Extraordinary Measures law from 1961 to 1963. With external pressures (mainly from the United States government), the 1963 presidential election was held and Park Chung Hee won a close victory over the opposition candidate, Yun Po-sŏn. Two more presidential elections were held in 1967 and 1971 and again, Park won in both elections[9]. This marked the onset of a three-decade era of military dominance and authoritarian governance in South Korea. From the 1960s to 1970s, Park's rule came to be increasingly characterised as authoritarian marked by centralised power, suppression of political opposition, limited civil liberties, and a focus on economic development at the expense of democratic principles (Seth, 2019). In 1972, Park enacted the *Yushin* (meaning, revitalisation) constitution which allowed him to rule almost indefinitely as the President. He was now able to rule the country by decree, bypassing democratic processes.

[8] https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2017/11/15/2017111500325.html

[9] The 1963 and 1967 elections were arguably fair elections and the opposition candidate, Yun Po-sŏn, even won 45% and 40% of total votes respectively. For the history of Park's rule between 1961 and 1979, see Cumings 2005 and Seth 2019.

Under Park, the Korean state soon pursued vigorous industrialisation efforts in an attempt to break away from the abject poverty the country was trapped in. By late 1950s, after enduring 36 years of the Japanese colonial rule and exploitation and three years of the Korean War with North Korea, the Korean economy was at its lowest ever. In 1955, Korea was one of the poorest nations in the world with its gross domestic product (GDP) per capita sitting at only $643. In 1957, Korea's per capita income was almost identical to that of Ghana, which was the richest nation in sub-Saharan Africa (Werlin, 1991). The sixties were a decade of major breakthrough for Korea's economy, which coincided with the growing income gap between industrialised urban and rural areas, thereby inciting the need to address this problem. From his early days of rule, Park Chung Hee was committed to Korea's economic development. He rolled out the first (1962-1966) and second (1967-1971) five-year economic development plans, which focused heavily on the industrialisation of the economy (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Such efforts proved to be fruitful in urban areas where most manufacturing and industrial activities were concentrated.

The increasing income gap between industrialised urban and rural areas posed a threat to Park Chung Hee government. Urban wage levels continued to increase and much of the younger labour force opted to leave rural villages (*maul*) and migrate to the cities. Income levels in rural households, on the other hand, were growing very slowly. With poor agricultural output and backward infrastructure, rural poverty persisted. In the 1967 presidential election, Park's opposition candidate, Yun Po-sŏn, obtained 40% of total votes with its majority coming from the rural areas. The results showed that Park Chung Hee's popularity among rural peasants was waning. The Park government felt the pressing need to close rural-urban wage gap and to gain the confidence of rural peasants, leading to the launch of Saemaul Undong (S. M. Han, 2004).

Overall, Saemaul programmes were implemented in two ways, for material and nonmaterial improvement. For achieving material improvements, Saemaul primarily focused on expanding agricultural output such as rice yield, building rural basic infrastructure and improving irrigation as well as increasing rural household income (Asian Development Bank, 2012). As suggested in its name Saemaul, which literally means *new village*, the movement[10] put emphasis on modernisation and a transition from an old to a new lifestyle. The modernisation effort entailed paving roads, replacing the traditional thatched roof to tin or tile coverings, modernising kitchens and toilets, and the introduction of electrification and telecommunication system in rural villages. Villages were encouraged to become small enterprises in their own right. As business units, village development committees entered into contracts with the local governments for public works or ventured into innovative farming businesses. These business ventures, otherwise usually taken up by private companies, contributed greatly to a significant increase in rural household incomes (Asian Development Bank, 2012; D. H. Han, 2012).

Non-material improvement, on the other hand, meant bringing changes to villagers' mentality and work ethic. Saemaul placed equal (or perhaps more) emphasis on the *modernisation* of people's mindsets and values. For Park, as he openly stated, the importance of the villagers' mental development was greater than economic development. Therefore, Saemaul focused on doing away the old, traditional values that were deemed obstacles to development and instead inculcated a modern mentality in villagers' minds. The new mentality was characterised as the three Saemaul spirits of diligence, self-help and cooperation. The Saemaul values, coupled with a 'can-do' spirit, were deeply instilled in the villagers under the

[10] While I acknowledge that Saemaul Undong was a government-sponsored development programme, I use the term *movement* nominally to refer to Saemaul Undong throughout this thesis because the direct translation of Saemaul Undong is *New Village Movement*. The Park administration presumably named the programme *undong* (movement) to emphasise that people's participation in this programme was voluntary and not coerced.

guidance of Saemaul leaders (both male and female volunteers who were recruited from the villages). This was done through education sessions, training camps and songs. All participants, from Saemaul leaders to ordinary villagers, were targeted for leadership and mental training through which they were encouraged to transform into responsible, active, constructive agents of development with *appropriate* behaviours and virtues (more about this training in chapter 5). Saemaul leaders likened Saemaul Undong to *Mentality Reform Movement* or *Spiritual Movement*, as they believed that it helped them transform themselves into better human beings, who were now able to herald prosperity to their homes and communities (D. H. Han, 2012).

Saemaul leaders were elected from ordinary rural villagers. In each village, one male and one female were selected. These leaders, often young (aged between 36 and 45) and moderately educated (elementary to secondary school level), played a pivotal role in running Saemaul Undong. The work of the Samuel leaders included planning and executing projects; chairing village development committees; making various decisions; encouraging villagers' participation in projects; campaigning for thrifty behaviour, and abstaining from alcohol, smoking, and gambling; introducing and transmitting modern agricultural technology to community members; and liaising with and reporting to local administrative officers and technical assistants. The Saemaul leaders' strong commitment and hard work was recognised by the state, and the leaders enjoyed much authority and social stature. President Park would invite Saemaul leaders to Monthly Economic Trend Briefing held at the Blue House (presidential office and residence) and present them with medals and gifts.

At this point, it is important to note that Saemaul Undong was implemented by an authoritarian state. Park sought to implement community development in rural villages by means of political influence and authoritarian rule (Asian Development Bank, 2012). So, from 1970 to 1979, the state directed and implemented the Saemaul movement for almost a decade.

Since the military junta led by Park Chung Hee took control of Korea in 1961, Korea increasingly became an authoritarian state, supressing political opposition, labour rights and civil liberties like freedom of speech. In 1972, Park enacted the Yushin constitution and dissolved the National Assembly. This move eliminated any legislative check on his authority. The Yushin constitution allowed him to rule by decree, bypassing democratic processes. At a single command of Park, emergency decrees could be issued. In other words, Park Chung Hee was given near absolute power by the time Saemaul Undong was about to go into its full swing. This authoritarian nature of Park's rule fuels the biggest debate in Saemaul Undong literature today: Were Saemaul participants forced to participate, or did they have freedom to exercise their agency in the movement? The existing research and my findings demonstrate that some of the mobilising tactics of Saemaul Undong may have been coercive. For instance, my findings of Saemaul Remodelling Project in chapter 4 show how rural villagers felt pressured to replace their old house roofs with coloured, slate roofs to enhance their village's performance for bureaucratic assessment. Most of the roof replacement costs were borne by rural villagers themselves, with minimal government subsidy and some resorting to loans for coverage. One of my participants, a former Saemaul official in the village of *Dohwa*, recounted paying for slate roofs through three-year instalments for the same reason. At the same time, a number of interview records and studies by scholars point that a great number of peasants volunteered in the movement's projects with great enthusiasm as in the case of fervent Saemaul leaders. I return to this authoritarian aspect of the Korean state and point at its implications in the conclusion.

1.1.2 Saemaul Undong today

Five decades on from 1970, Saemaul Undong is still going strong. It is regarded by international organisations such as the World Bank and the United Nations agencies as a rural development model for struggling nations in the global South (Doucette & Müller, 2016). In 2013, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) registered the archives of Saemaul Undong as Memory of the World, explaining their motivation, 'the Korean model for the successful collaborative transformation of rural communities, under the banner *Diligence, Self-help, Cooperation*, that was conducted from 1970 to 1979, set a milestone in poverty reduction. The movement laid the foundation for Korea to grow into a major economy from one of the world's poorest countries. Saemaul Undong marked the first step in this remarkable journey.'[11] In 2014, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the global Saemaul initiative towards Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities (ISNC) project.[12] A total of six countries (Bolivia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Rwanda, Uganda and Viet Nam) were selected to roll out the ISNC model. The project viewed Saemaul Undong as an exemplary model for community development, a vehicle for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also helped that both heads of United Nations (UN) and the World Bank were South Korean during this period. Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Kim Yong, former president of the World Bank, during their time in office introduced Saemaul Undong as a model that could help alleviate famine and increase income in rural areas of developing countries. Under the regime of President Lee Myung-bak between 2008 and 2013, the Korean government intensified the effort to export Saemaul to developing countries such as Uganda, Tanzania as part of their knowledge sharing programme (KSP). The

[11]https://www.unescoicdh.org/eng/sub.php?menukey=289&mod=view&no=40919&page=4&scode=00000005&listCnt=10&code1=00000003

[12]https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Implementation%20Guidance%20WEB%20Nov.pdf

highlight of Saemaul's revival began in 2013, when Park Geun-hye, the daughter of the former President Park Chung Hee, was elected as president until 2017 when she was forced to step down through impeachment. In 2014 alone, the Korean government planned to spend about $23 million on promoting Saemaul as a development model in African and Asian countries. In the same year, the UN launched a four-year project to assess Saemaul's merits (Economist, 2014).

Domestically, Saemaul Undong has a contested history and is a divisive topic in South Korea (Burghart, 2023). Left-leaning scholars and commentators associate Saemaul Undong with the harsh pounding of civil society under the dictatorship of Park Chung Hee. The other side of the political spectrum praises the movement for having laid the foundation for Korea's economic development (see also chapter 2). Despite the tensions around its legacy and public memory, Saemaul Undong remains a significant asset for the South Korean government, both domestically and internationally (as the opening of this chapter has showed). Korea Saemaul Undong Centre is one of the largest civil society organisations in Korea. It started as a government programme when the Ministry of Home affairs launched it in 1972. Following the death of President Park Chung Hee, Saemaul Undong Centre became a civil society organisation. Its activities are now largely volunteer projects, such as taking care of the underprivileged, campaigning for families to have one more child, and promoting eco-friendly lifestyle and environment. One of Korea Saemaul Undong Centre's core mandate is to establish Saemaul Undong as a global development model. Its Global Saemaul Undong programme launches Saemaul model villages in developing countries[13] and undertakes living condition improvement projects (such as village road widening, improvement of drinking water, irrigation, and drainage system), rural income increasing projects (construction of agricultural

[13] As of December 2023, there are 44 Saemaul model villages in 10 countries (Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Timor Leste, Cambodia, Burundi, Uganda,Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Honduras, Dominican Republic).

infrastructure, introduction of special crops) and mindset change projects (training of Saemaul leaders). As of May 2021, the Korea Saemaul Undong Centre[14] has 1.96 million members under 18 city/province chapters, 228 city/gun/gu chapters, and 2,496 eup/myeon/dong organisations.[15] With every regime change in South Korea, Saemaul Undong becomes a malleable mould into which every President's political philosophy and vision are fit into. Every succeeding President translates Saemaul Undong's ethos and spirits in the shape of their own political philosophies and policies, regardless of their political alliance – left or right. This is evident in the National Saemaul Leaders Conference (NSLC) speeches. The NSLC is attended by the President every year, in which they deliver a congratulatory speech. In 2019, President Moon appealed that Saemaul Undong should become 'a living movement, not a movement of the past' and welcomed the movement's 'historic transformation into a movement for life, peace, and respect through sufficient internal consultations and democratic procedures'.[16] He also declared that his government would continue to share Korea's development experiences with developing countries through the spread of Saemaul Undong. It is thought that Moon expected Saemaul Undong to contribute to his own policy principles of *inclusive growth* and the New Southern Policy.[17] President Yoon Seok Yul, in his congratulatory speech at the NSLC in 2022, also stated that Saemaul Undong's quest for restoration of community spirit exactly matched his political vision and the movement's spread to the rest of the world will see its spirits of diligence, self-help, and cooperation match his philosophy of freedom and solidarity.[18]

[14] Korea Saemaul Undong Centre is situated in Seongnam-si, a satellite city of Seoul, located southeast from Korea's capital.
[15] https://www.saemaul.or.kr/home/?mode=instrument_table&tap=2
[16] http://webarchives.pa.go.kr/19th/www.president.go.kr/articles/7481
[17] Launched in 2017, Moon's 'New Southern Policy' is a diplomatic initiative to strengthen relations with Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) countries and India. The policy is aimed at expanding cooperation in trade and investment through a focus on three pillars of peace, mutual benefits, and people-to-people exchanges. See https://www.futurekorea.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=124662
[18] https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/1062526.html

Saemaul Undong is thus a great geopolitical asset for the South Korean state. The inclusion of Saemaul Undong in the government's ODA programmes for developing countries and the resulting *Global Saemaul Undong* enables Korea to maintain its political and diplomatic influence on the developing countries who aspire to replicate Korea's economic success. Most recently, in its bid to host the 2030 World Expo, the South Korean government is mobilising every available resource to win the hearts of the international community. Business leaders of Korean global conglomerates, *chaebol*, meet with heads of states and ambassadors to win their support. The South Korean government also turned to Saemaul Undong in its quest to win. In July 2023, Korea Saemaul Undong Centre, in conjunction with Busan Metropolitan City and the Ministry of Interior and Safety, hosted the Global Saemaul Undong Ministerial Meeting. It was the first high-level meeting of 30 Saemaul Undong Global League (SGL) partner countries.[19] The purpose of the meeting was to prompt the governments of developing countries to expand their interest and practical participation in Saemaul Undong, and also, importantly, to form a consensus to host 2030 Busan World Expo. The 3 days-and-2-nights event was packed with ministerial meetings, special exhibition, seminar 1 and 2, field trip and Busan city tour, official luncheon, dinner, and publicity briefing for 2030 Busan World Expo. In his congratulatory speech, President Yoon said, 'Saemaul Undong has always been part of the prosperity and growth of the Republic of Korea. We will further strengthen the solidarity and cooperation of the international community for the spread of Saemaul Undong,' adding, 'we ask for your interest in attracting 2030 World Expo to Busan, where this ministerial meeting is being held.'[20]

[19] There are a total of 46 Saemaul Undong Global League countries: Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Korea, Laos, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Senegal, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Philippines, East Timor, Uganda, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Zambia, Zimbabwe. The Global Saemaul Undong Ministerial Meeting 2023 was attended by 30 member countries. See https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25175567

[20] https://www.donga.com/news/Society/article/all/20230705/120097782/1

1.2 Research questions and rationale

1.2.1 Projects of the self in South Korea: pre-Saemaul Undong

Whether one likes it or not, Saemaul Undong is with us today. As I show in the next chapter, some wish to have it erased from public memory and, for some, it is treasured as a great memory for a lifetime. It is both forgotten, even erased, and recalled. The seeds of this study are in this question that I had: despite all the contestations, what makes Saemaul Undong leave such a strong imprint today? It is not common for any development intervention programme to have such a long-lasting impact and presence, let alone relevance, domestically and internationally. This thesis explores how a development intervention shapes and affects the subjectivities of its participants and beneficiaries.

As explained earlier, Saemaul Undong is known for its attention to the self; one could consider it a project of the self and self-making, as this thesis shows. This focus on making and governing of the self, however, was not a radically new idea in South Korea, even prior to Saemaul Undong. There is a longer history of discussion and projects, both from above and below, that turned ordinary Korean peasants' attention to the self. I explain in the next chapter how the Korean state, through Saemaul Undong, created a space for the constitution of new types of selves, new ways of relating to the selves, new values and dispositions, in the shadow of trauma of war and colonialism. Throughout the 20th century in South Korea, the discourse of *self-help* was used by different groups and governing regimes who had distinct goals and visions, ranging from Christians proselytising to consolidating colonial government's control over rural communities. Despite the groups' dissimilarity in the desired end results, they all turned to the individual self as a key solution and driver for achieving their goals, emphasising self-help and self-reliance, privatisation, self-responsibilisation and inculcating capitalist

values. This great attention to the self has set a foundation for Saemaul Undong and shaped its techniques of governmentality.

The origin of the discourse of self-help in Korea can be traced back to 1906 when Samuel Smiles' book, *Self-Help* (1859) was first introduced in *Choyangbo*, one of Korea's earliest magazines. A number of magazines and newspapers followed suit and discussed the concept of self-help in their articles (Ryu, 2016). In late 19th century Korea, the late Han Empire's power dwindled amidst the fierce rivalry between China and Japan over control of the empire.[21] By 1910, the empire was annexed by Japan and the Japanese colonial regime began its rule, bringing reforms to Korea's economic, educational, and governmental institutions (Seth, 2019). This spurred a chain of independence movements organised by intellectuals, students, civil organisations, Christian and other religious groups. Centring these independence movements was the skill cultivation theory (*Shillyŏkyangsŏngnon*). The theory, rooted in social Darwinism, called on Korean individuals to advance in literacy, knowledge in modern technologies, economic prosperity, cultural faculties, and good character to prepare themselves for a modernised and stronger independent nation from the Japanese (Park, 1999; H. Song, 2018; Tikhonov, 2016; Yang, 2008). Social Darwinism is based on the logic that individuals and groups that are *better*, become stronger in society and dominate the weak, leading to *the survival of the fittest*. The theory of social Darwinism was taken up by emergent groups of young Korean intellectuals to understand the sorry state of their nation amidst the wave of imperialism in early 1900s. The theory of skill cultivation also emphasised the reformation of people's mentality and their lifestyles in addition to tangible skills such as literacy, entrepreneurship and good health (H. Song, 2018; Yang, 2008).

[21] King *Kojong* of Chosŏn dynasty renamed the country *Taehanjeguk* (the Great Han Empire) and declared himself emperor in 1897.

The self-help project of the skill cultivation theory was sustained by the vigorous writings of intellectuals like Dosan An Chang Ho (Tosan Anch'angho) in major newspapers and magazines of the time, serving as the textual authority that sought to act as the mode of truth about the world order (Rimke, 2000). Strong emphasis was placed on the morality and character building of Korean citizens. They criticised the Confucian influence from the *Chosŏn* dynasty, saying that the Confucian values have caused diseases of weakness whereby the Chosŏn people tend to focus on caring for the immediate family only and neglect the greater society and the greater cause. The significance and the relevance of the skill cultivation theory is in its influence on major development interventions in Korean modern history, including Saemaul Undong. The project of self-help and improvement of the self, as techniques of governmentality, came to be embodied in the subsequent development interventions that were later launched by different authorities.

This focus on improving the self influenced the subsequent movement called, the Rural Enlightenment Movement (*Nongch'on'gyemongundong* in Korean, henceforth referred as the REM) of the 1920s. Organised by students and intellectuals from religious groups, the REM aimed at empowering the personal capacity of rural peasants through the eradication of illiteracy, reforming their lifestyle and traditional rites, and improving agricultural production.

In late 1932 Government-General Korea[22] introduced a rural development policy called the Rural Revitalisation Campaign (RRC) under the banner of *Charyŏkkaengsaeng* (meaning, self-help or self-strengthening). Charyŏkkaengsaeng was a concept made popular in the motherland Japan during the Revitalising National Mental Campaign in 1923 (H. J. Choi, 2012). Independence movements and colonial powers alike advocated for attention to the self.

[22] The Japanese colonial government in Korea was called Government-General Korea.

Self-help remained an important catchphrase even after Korea's independence from Japan. From the late 1950s, Korea saw the return of development projects based on the concept of self-help, namely the local Communities Development programme (CDP) and the National Reconstruction Movement (NRM). By late 1950s, Korea had become independent from Japanese colonial rule, after Japan was defeated in the pacific war. She had also just come out of the trauma of the civil war with North Korea. The Korean war, often known as the first proxy war between the U.S and the Soviet Union, was particularly destructive, causing 2.5 million deaths. Much of Korea's territory was bombed and destroyed beyond repair. It was the second deadliest war in the twentieth century, after the World War 2. In post-war Korea, the U.S government and military exerted a huge influence over rebuilding the South Korean state and its development (Heo, 2004). The U.S. authorities in charge of relief programmes wanted to introduce a development intervention that would cement South Korea as an anti-Communist state and a symbol of liberty and democracy (Heo, 2004). In September 1958, Ms. Lucy W. Adams, the Chief of Community Development Division United States Operations Mission (USOM)/Korea recommended that the South Korean government take up the local Communities Development Programme. The CDP was a programme widely adopted at the time, in the international development community by international organisations like the United Nations and International Cooperation Administration (ICA). Behind the implementation of CDP was the American intention to control over third world countries (Heo, 2003). At the core of the CDP was the belief that helping people to help themselves will bring improvement of their economic and social conditions and eventually contribute to national development.

On 16 May 1961, Park Chung Hee and his fellow military men led a coup and succeeded in overturning the Chang administration. Park's new military regime proclaimed to root out the previous government's corruption and bring reforms to the country. It launched the National

Reconstruction Movement (NRM) 'for creating a welfare state where the whole nation unites under the ideology of democracy, improves the communities with the spirit of self-help and self-reliance, and consolidate a new lifestyle' (Seo & Park, 2013: 346). Thanks to the CDP which had previously established a nationwide network of administrative bodies from cities to villages, the NRM's promotion society and its chapters nationwide rolled out education programme to all Korean citizens (Seo & Park, 2013). Previously, the state's control of the rural communities was limited to taxation, military conscription, and collection of grain.

The NRM provided the state with an opportunity to extend its influence over rural communities to the everyday life of rural peasants. However, the NRM's focus on lifestyle improvement and spiritual enlightenment made it possible for the state to exercise power on rural peasants' private lives in an everyday setting (Heo, 2003). By the early 1970s, most of the Korean peasants were already familiar with the discourse of self-help and the notion of self-fashioning in their private and public lives. In the next chapter, I explain more fully how as a project of governmentality, Saemaul Undong created a space for the constitution of new types of selves, new types of relating to the selves, in the shadow of trauma of war and colonialism.

Until today, the kinds of questions raised in Saemaul Undong studies, as I detail in the next chapter, were limited to ones such as, 'was it good?' or 'was it bad?'. Such simplified inquiry into the movement leads to a simplified understanding of it, while missing out its details, tensions, processes, consequences and impact at various scales. In more recent literature on Saemaul Undong and its revival in global development, the questions are also simple, 'will this work in another country?' or 'is it a neo-liberal programme?' The problem with oversimplified narratives about Saemaul Undong is that they overlook complexities. By doing so, they leave out the possibility of unravelling the intricate power dynamics of such interventions. They are also unable to map out how various actors engage with development

discourse and how they identify themselves with it (Cooper & Packard, 1997; Moore, 1999; Sivaramakrishnan & Agrawal, 2003; Walley, 2004, as cited in Sharma, 2008). Following Gupta's (2012:278) call to 'pay close attention to social processes rather than rehearsing well-intentioned political slogans', this study pays attention to the different ideologies and rationalities that informed the programme and how these were experienced at ground level. The existing literature on Saemaul leads scholarly debate to a dead-end, of *for or against* or *good or bad*, leaving out the possibility of understanding the paradoxes and complexities found in the movement (and its long afterlife). While Saemaul, which emerged in early 1970s, precedes the 1980's neoliberal turn in global political economy, its techniques of self-government and making of the self display surprising similarities with today's neoliberal *empowerment* craze whereby individuals are fashioned into aspiring and entrepreneurial actors, each capable of looking after oneself and taking responsibility for one's fate. Saemaul Undong programme's celebrated revival in global development circles can be explained by this seeming resemblance with the recent neoliberal trend on development and empowerment, championed by institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (see chapter 2).

Anyone who has been closely following the trend of neoliberal development would have noted the rise of *empowerment* as a new development mantra. Even global corporate brands like Nike and the Body Shop have campaigned for the empowerment of girls and women. Their advertisements portray girls and women to be potential entrepreneurs who, when empowered, are capable of taking care of their own selves, becoming entrepreneurs, generating profits and most importantly, taking charge of their own destiny. The notion of empowerment, generally linked with the idea that social agents are made to be responsible, proactive, entrepreneurial and self-regulating individuals, has its roots in feminist, leftist (and even Gandhian) rhetoric and practices as early as the 1970s (Calvès, 2009; Sen & Grown, 2013; Simon, 1994; Sharma, 2008). In the current neoliberal conjuncture, mainstream development

institutions and national governments alike embraced *empowerment*, replacing the term *welfare* in development circles (Sharma, 2008: 2). Empowerment involves the self-realisation of individuals who have autonomy and the capacity to think and act in the interests of their own and of the greater society, which presses individuals to act on their behaviour (Cruikshank, 1999). This connection between mind, behaviour and body espoused in the notion of empowerment has been the epitome of neoliberal ideology; it is the focus of major development institutions as evident in their publications and related programmes on mental training and behavioural change (World Bank, 2014). I detail my discussion of neoliberal notion of empowerment and its implications on Saemaul Undong in the next chapter.

Yet, the rationalities behind Saemaul cannot be neatly packaged in a single box of neoliberal ideology or as a simple tool of domination or of mass mobilisation, as many critical scholars of Saemaul argue. The confluence of rational economic decision-making and self-sacrifice is one example. Individuals were encouraged to become rational entrepreneurs and each village an enterprise (D. H. Han, 2012). Simultaneously, they were encouraged to present selflessness by giving away their own resources and time for the greater good (Sonn & Gimm, 2013). This example, alone, suggests that the fashioning of the self under Saemaul was a product of diverse rationalities and influences that have been retooled in this instance. This study navigates the multiple forces (political, social, historical and ideological) at play in this one development project and historical moment. This close navigation in the context of everyday development encounters allows me to understand the kind of bricolage found in Saemaul and the power dynamics underpinning it, as well as the experience of the original Saemaul participants who were affected by it (Sharma, 2008).[23]

[23] 'a piecing together of something new out of scavenged parts originally intended for some other purpose' (Levi-Strauss, 1966; as cited in Ferguson, 2009: 183)

By using archive records and interviews with participants, I find that Saemaul Undong's ways of working and underlying logics have had long-lasting effects on its original participants– in terms of shaping their ways of seeing (Chapter 4), becoming (Chapter 5) and remembering (Chapter 6). 50 years on from 1970, South Korea has achieved incredible economic development. More wealth and less hardships have led to a different kind of thinking among the new generations of Koreans. While Saemaul's can-do spirit may not appeal to Korea's younger generation, the programme is sustained by the decision makers in government, many of whom are part of the older generation who experienced Saemaul Undong first-hand. I unpack the generational tensions in South Korea briefly in chapter 6 which is followed by a short discussion in the conclusion.

1.3 Main research question

This study is informed by the following central question:

- **How did Saemaul Undong in the 1970s' South Korea affect the subjectivities of villagers who participated in the movement?**

1.3.1 Sub-questions

- What rationalities informed the art of government in Saemaul and what purpose did they intend to serve?
- How were the participants' subjectivities constituted in accordance with or in opposition to the movement?
- How did the Saemaul participants experience governmental technologies in their everyday life?
- How were the individual and collective aspirations of Saemaul participants shaped by the movement?
- What are the memories of Saemaul participants today and how are they formed and narrated? Are there differences between public and private memories?

1.4 Thesis Outline

In Chapter 2, I review the main theories and the trend of the existing literature on Saemaul Undong. I find that the existing literature lacks a rich understanding of the movement because most studies are polarised and simplified, either praising the movement's achievements on economic growth or denouncing it as a usual state propaganda of the then authoritarian regime. This study contributes to filling in the gap of this literature, contributing to an emerging *middle ground*, while shedding light on the actual experiences of the people during Saemaul Undong. I also introduce the main conceptual frameworks of governmentality and the self which helped inform this study.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodological and ethical choices I made for this study. This is a qualitative study, where I triangulate through in-depth interviews and an analysis of archival records and documents. In-depth interviews proved to be effective for extracting life histories from participants. During my field work in South Korea, I conducted in-depth interviews with participants, several of whom were my relatives including my own maternal grandmother. This method was not only a research tool, but also became a channel through which I re-connected to my family and its history in Korea.

In Chapter 4, I explore the optics of development and its governmental effects under Saemaul Undong. The South Korean state created and imposed a new aesthetic norm for rural villages through the Saemaul Remodelling project, and by making use of the media, such as publications (magazines, newspaper and cartoons) and TV. I discuss how the state's training the public eye to 'see like a state' (Scott, 1998) had an impact on shaping the villagers' way of seeing, conduct and interests. I use the concept of aesthetic governmentality as an analytical tool to understand how the focus on the visual facilitated the state's will to improve and govern.

My findings show how governmentality becomes powerful and effective when it operates at the level of aesthetics. Saemaul Undong and its visual campaign show how it is possible to govern and *develop* a population with visual representations of modernity and of the model individual/citizen.

In Chapter 5, I explore the constitutive effects on the subjectivities of Saemaul participants under Saemaul Undong and its campaigns. I map the process of how the self is treated as a principal site of improvement and fashioning. Drawing from specific *technologies of the self*, such as voluntarism, confession and everyday life, I argue that the subject position of the *nongmin* (farmer) turns from a simple farming individual into active citizen subject. I discuss how Saemaul authorities established their own version of truth-telling, linking individual improvement with national development.

In Chapter 6, I turn to the present and pay attention to Saemaul participants' memories and narratives from their present-day points of view. I shift focus to individuals' life stories and experiences, departing from state-centric analyses. Drawing from participants' personal memories, I analyse interviews conducted with participants, emphasising their experiences, recollections, and interpretations of Saemaul Undong. From the participants' narratives, I find that the memories of hunger and humiliation from periods like the Japanese occupation and Korean War contrasted with recollections of abundance and happiness associated with Saemaul Undong, highlighting its symbolic importance. Much of the chapter delves into participants' personal histories, intertwined with significant 20th-century events such as Korean War, Vietnam War, and South Korea's democratisation. These narratives are rich with emotions ranging from bitterness and trauma to pride and excitement. Saemaul Undong, illuminated as a bright moment amid darker historical periods, symbolises resilience and progress, especially

for the *development generation* who distinguish themselves from younger generations who are shaped by different experiences.

In Chapter 7, I provide conclusions of the thesis and explain how this study makes contributions to existing literature and theories, from governmentality studies in the global South to post-development, identity, memory and social change. I return to the global brand of SMU to raise questions for future research on what happens when development initiatives travel beyond their origin.

Chapter 2 Literature review and conceptual frameworks

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to review the main trends of the existing literature on Saemaul Undong, and to identify gaps in the literature that this study seeks to fill. The chapter also introduces the conceptual frameworks that informed and guided this study. As indicated in the introduction, the existing literature on Saemaul Undong is often oversimplified and polarised, either romanticising how rural farmers were empowered through spiritualisation *or* dismissing the movement as a form of political brainwashing of the peasantry. Although a few scholars have attempted to find a middle ground by studying the participants' experiences of the movement, the number of their case studies is small, and they are often marginalised in the field of Saemaul Undong. Studies on Saemaul Undong in the past two decades have mostly focused on the practical implementation and impact of the global Saemaul Undong programme, rather than the original project of the 1970s in Korea. My study is situated in this middle ground that looks into the experiences and subjectivities of individuals under Saemaul Undong.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first section outlines two major camps of Saemaul studies – positive and critical. This extreme binary in Saemaul literature reflects highly polarised political views in contemporary Korea over the assessment of late President Park Chung Hee and his rule. As a result, far less is known about the ways in which individual persons understood and contributed to Saemaul Undong, and how the state sought to transform rural mentalities. The second section reviews the attempts by a few scholars who look for the middle ground in Saemaul studies and introduces the recent trend whereby scholars, both domestically and internationally, increasingly try to assess the relevance and potential merit of implementing Saemaul Undong in developing countries of the Global South. The final section

introduces the main conceptual frameworks of this study, namely, governmentality, neoliberal governmentality and self-government. The chapter concludes by highlighting how despite some developments in Saemaul literature, there is a need for a more nuanced account of how human subjectivities of Saemaul participants were affected and shaped, towards which this study wishes to contribute.

2.2 Praise vs. Criticism: Two camps of Saemaul studies

Since the early 1970s, Saemaul Undong has drawn a huge amount of interest from scholars from different disciplines. The literature on the movement can be found from a wide range of disciplines such as political studies, sociology, agriculture, and economics. Each of these studies seek to understand and assess Saemaul's success as a development programme, using the knowledge and theories of their respective discipline. In agricultural studies (Douglass, 1983; Kihl & Bark, 1981; M. Moore, 1984; Reed, 1978), scholars debate the agricultural and environmental outcomes of Saemaul by studying the movement's attempt to introduce new grain variants and organisational techniques to enhance agricultural output. In economics, scholars have tried to understand the mechanism behind Saemaul's success in boosting rural household income and to draw out lessons from Saemaul's experience in newly developing economies (Keim, 1974; Pak, 1979; J. W. Park, 1987; Whang, 1981). In social sciences, studies from political studies and sociology are mostly focused on studying the processes of decision-making (So, 2007), patterns of participation and governance (Hwang, 2006; S. Park, 2009), and dynamics of power relations between the state and the people (S. M. Han, 2004). This study contributes to this stream in seeking to understand how participants of Saemaul Undong experienced top-down governmental techniques and logics in their everyday life. It also explores the complex terrain of self-making when it comes to Saemaul participants, as they engage with Saemaul's development model and narrative. Since the nature of such an enquiry

is discursive and political rather than technical, the scope of literature reviewed will also largely be limited to studies from the social sciences. I will trace and review scholarly works that study the politics of participation, in terms of process, achievements, failures, contexts, techniques and rationale.

The predominant trend in existing literature on Saemaul is often trapped in a rigid dichotomy of good versus bad, painting contrasting pictures of praise, on the one side, and heavy criticisms of the historical moment, on the other. The positive camp of scholars, often insiders who directly or indirectly participated in the movement and provided advisory services, applauds Saemaul as a celebratory example of community driven development (CDD) programme (Asian Development Bank, 2012). For them, Saemaul is a development model which successfully garnered grass-roots participation of peasants and turned them into active, hard-working citizens who strove for rural prosperity (O. C. Choi, 2008; Ha, 2002; D. H. Han, 2012; J. L. Kim, 1990; J. W. Park, 1987; S. Park, 2009; So, 2007). While the then-government's strong will to promote and implement Saemaul contributed to the movement's widespread, the key to its success is found in the cultivation of leadership and the voluntary participation of leaders and peasants. So (2007) argues that although Saemaul, at its initial stage, may have been kick started under an authoritarian ruling system, it managed to cultivate community leaders in the process, turning villagers into common producers who used limited resources effectively, and achieved a governance system in which participation and upward decision-making were realised, inducing stable social change. According to Hwang (2006) and Park (2009), the key to Saemaul's success was in the broad participation of villagers themselves as well as the strong leadership of Saemaul leaders who were directly elected by villagers and whose mindsets were reformed based on the three Saemaul spirits of diligence, self-help and cooperation.

The general consensus in the positive camp is that mental reformation or 'attitudinal change' (D. H. Han, 2012: 16) greatly contributed to stimulating grass-roots participation and proactive leadership. In his analysis of Saemaul's achievements, Han Do Hyun (2012) stresses the significance of individual transformation, from being demotivated, unproductive and traditional to becoming self-reliant, business-orientated (entrepreneurial) individuals who are committed to development. He argues that the education and training programmes of the Saemaul Leaders' Training Institute instilled a sense of development in individuals in that they would break away from dependency and exercise their agency to participate in Saemaul projects. The Saemaul Leaders' Training Institute was first established in 1972. The institute aimed to teach farmers enterprise, farming skills and, most importantly, the spiritual rehabilitation of the Korean nation. Its trainees included Saemaul leaders, high-level government officials, businessmen, university professors and even foreigners. The institute provided an intensive training programme, which involved lodging at the training centre for up to fourteen days. The curriculum included lectures on farming skills, life education, group dialogue and discussion, and success stories of leaders. One example from Han's study shows that a Saemaul leader, with a vision to eradicate poverty, encouraged fellow farmers who were once subsistence farmers to now engage in commercial farming to raise surplus income. In another example given by Han (2012), women community leaders launched savings drives and campaigns in their villages to discourage unproductive habits such as drinking and gambling. The positive camp views the participation of individuals – either Saemaul leaders or ordinary peasants – to be voluntary and free of any coercion or force. These individuals participated because they aspired, it is believed, for a better future in terms of economic success, and not for political mobilisation.

The limitation of the positive camp is that it paints a one-sided picture by over-emphasising the level of voluntary participation of community members and by completely

ignoring the cases of coercion and mobilisation from the top (by state and government officials). The validity of the primary sources, which the positive studies often rely on are called into question by critical scholars (Cho, 2010; Park & Han 1999), as these documents and official records were written by the government officials and Saemaul leaders who directly participated in Saemaul projects. According to these documents, Saemaul was not only an excellent example of a successful rural development project, but also an incredible mental revolution and reform movement as well as a voluntary modernisation project of community members themselves. Many of these studies which celebrate Saemaul, lack detailed accounts of the lived experience of participants. They take for granted that Saemaul education and training automatically and successfully stimulated the participants' voluntary action.

The critical camp of scholars, on the other hand, denounce Saemaul as a mere political tactic to mobilise and control the rural as well as urban masses to bolster President Park's authoritarian regime (H. Y. Cho, 2004; 2010; S. M. Han, 2004; S. Y. Kim, 2007; Koh, 2006; M. Moore, 1985; Oh, 2002; Reed, 2010). For some scholars, Saemaul served only as a tool to control people, because the movement's success as a booster of agricultural production and rural household income was not as great as thought to be (M. Moore, 1985). They argue that Saemaul Undong's success has been over-emphasised while it was actually limited; it was, in fact, a mere tactic of organising and controlling the masses for political purpose. Koh Won (2006) argues that Saemaul was born out of the Park regime's fear that evolving political resistance in urban areas would spread to rural areas because rural peasants felt increasingly neglected under a rigorous industrialisation policy in the 1960s. Thus, argues Koh (2006), the Park regime introduced Saemaul, targeting rural villages as a means to appease rural peasants and thereby turning them into political buttress to expand and secure the regime's political support base. These critical scholars, including Cho Hee Yeon (2010), refuse to view Saemaul as a purely technical development project that is free from any political influence. They focus

on the authoritarian nature of the political system in Korea at that time and claim that Saemaul was manipulated to serve specific political purposes. According to Cho (2010), the Park administration coerced people to passively consent to its development projects and therefore Saemaul was a typical example of mass mobilisation campaign to build and sustain Park's Yushin regime. Moore (1985) sees Saemaul as unsustainable because it was a coercive mobilisation project and was typical of state-led development. Han Seung-Mi (2004: 69) characterises the mass participation in Saemaul as a result of 'state populism'. State populism is what Han describes Park Chung Hee's rural development policies because they promised economic equality[24] and egalitarianism to rural farmers. The egalitarian ideals and Park's supposed sympathy for farmers attracted many non-elite young farmers (mostly in their forties) with a desire for a better life.[25] However, this 'strange amalgam of egalitarian ethos, an ideal of social welfare and developmentalist dictatorship,' argues Han (2004: 87) 'was a far cry from democracy, because it never cherished proper decision-making procedures, let alone representational politics' but a 'national mobilisation project' and a 'panoptic disciplinary system.'

The critical camp of scholars saw the whole movement of Saemaul as inspired by the state's will to suppress, control and mobilise the masses, denying any individual freedom and capacity to act upon themselves. This criticism overlooks the claim that villagers voluntarily participated in Saemaul projects, consensus was reached democratically at village level, and that there was a great deal of support from below. Thereby, the individual's capacity and freedom to act is almost completely denied. According to these critical scholars, the ordinary

[24] The Park administration adopted an "industrialize first, invest in agriculture later" approach in 1963. This exacerbated the urban-rural income gap and increased discontent from rural farmers.
[25] The traditional Confucian society in Korea had strict social hierarchies and Korea had just gone through the Land Reform in 1950.

people were not free to think and act for themselves, and instead were mere puppets of the authoritarian state (Koh, 2008).

While it may be true that peasants were coerced and were not content with the state's top-down business approach and unfair intervention, they still wanted sustained and increased support from the state (S. M. Han, 2004). The critical camp of literature is unable to provide an explanation for such a paradox in the peasants' dual attitude. Such willing participation and consensus cannot be reduced to an outcome of political mobilisation and coercion alone. While both positive and critical camps of scholars attempt to understand the details and motivation of people's participation in Saemaul, the extreme binary logic of the existing literature means that they both require a more nuanced analysis of power dynamics and the politics around people's participation in the movement.

2.3 The middle ground and recent developments, post 2000

Such a rigid dichotomy has recently come under scrutiny by scholars who argue that the stark binary in the existing literature fails to provide a holistic understanding of the movement and people's experiences thereof (Cha, 2016b; Eom, 2011; Y.H. Park 2013). Scholars argue that the positive and negative camps of literature each provides contrasting assessments of Saemaul Undong, often producing sweeping generalisations or one-sided views of the movement. This is particularly so when it comes to studying the logics and rationality of the movement and the nature and experience of villagers' participation. There have been a number of studies in the last ten years that have moved away from assessing the movement to taking a more neutral stance toward Saemaul Undong. These studies from various disciplines approach the movement through a range of conceptual lenses, such as good governance (Eom, 2011), local time (Cha 2016a), history of local villages (Y. M. Kim, 2009) and oral history (D. H. Han 2010;

J. Lee 2018). They serve as the middle ground by shedding light on the actual experiences of the people during Saemaul Undong. However, Saemaul Undong is often not the main subject of their studies but rather serves as a medium to demonstrate certain new theoretical concepts.

For example, Lee Jiyeon's 2018 article shows how the collective memory of Saemaul Undong is shaped by a group of elderly women in a rural village. Lee conducts in-depth interviews with six women who experienced the Saemaul Undong in the 1970s and finds that in telling their stories, the women constructed their memories to fit the *model story*.[26] To hear the women's personal stories, the author then progresses to change the interview question to 'What was (did) Saemaul Undong (mean) to you?', adopting a conversational constructivism approach.[27] Lee's study is distinct from the existing studies in that the former's focus is on ordinary women's stories about Saemaul Undong whereas the latter is focused on women leaders' stories. However, as the author makes clear (J. Lee, 2018: 110) even as the intention was to expand and explore more methodological avenues for oral history research, the article does not detail women's experiences or stories nor does it analyse them. The study instead focuses on the manner in which the women's life stories were recollected by the narrators in relation to the mutual conversation between the researcher and the respondents. The middle ground of Saemaul studies seems to have somewhat stifled in the last five years. As it will be discussed below, more studies are focusing on the contemporary projects of global Saemaul Undong rather than the original project of the 1970s in Korea. This study hopes to build on the middle ground of Saemaul literature by looking into the details of Saemaul participants' experiences in everyday life.

[26] Model story is a concept by a Japanese scholar, Atsushi Sakurai (2002), which points to a narrative that is widely accepted and shared by a society or group. Sakurai cautiones against the authority of the 'model story' with its potential marginalization of stories that deviate from the model story, dismissing them as not worth hearing or told.

[27] This approach observes the circumstances of the creation of a story through a linguistic mutual act of the speaker and the listener in examining the social side of one group's recollection (see J. Lee, 2018)

More recently, Saemaul literature has seen more academic contributions that focus on the global and contemporary Saemaul Undong (global SMU) programmes in response to the growing efforts from various actors such as the South Korean government and civil society organisations alike to export Saemaul Undong as a global development model (Burghart, 2023). Efforts to export Saemaul Undong abroad began in the 1990s when the Kim Dae-jung (Kim Taechung) government in co-operation with Korea Saemaul Undong Centre provided funds and implemented rural development projects in North Korea. The successive governments attempted to expand pilot Saemaul Undong projects to Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Rwanda and more countries in the 2000s. Since the Lee Myung Bank administration, the South Korean government increasingly viewed Saemaul Undong as a great diplomatic and geopolitical asset and intensified the global Saemaul Undong projects overseas, which later would reach up to 46 countries worldwide. As the South Korean government began to provide funding and incentivising research on establishing Saemaul Undong as a development model, the research on global Saemaul Undong increased significantly since the 2000s. Global SMU programmes received mixed reviews by scholars. For instance, in his essay, Park Jong Dae (2022) – former South Korean Ambassador to Uganda and South Africa – strongly advocates for the implementation of SMU scheme in African countries. In his capacity as an Ambassador, Park assisted to launch and oversee SMU projects in Uganda from 2009. Ugandan government officials, including the Vice President, visited South Korea in 2009 to attend Saemaul training course (later President Museveni also visited Korea Saemaul Undong Centre in 2013). Model village pilot project launched in 2009 in two villages of Ketemu and Nsagni over a five-year period. In 2015, the pilot project increased to another 6 villages. The goal for the model villages were to: improve living conditions; increase agricultural production and household income; and to provide education opportunities. Based on his experiences of overseeing the project, Park argues that SMU's focus on mindset change

to instil the values of self-help and competition is beneficial and calls for expanding mindset change programme across Africa. Schwak (2022), on the other hand, is sceptical of the recent globalisation of Saemaul Undong. Schwak argues that promotion of Saemaul Undong outside of Korea serves the materialist interests of the global development agencies and the Korean state-*chaebol* nexus.

Notwithstanding such scepticism, there have been also some excitement from scholars in developing countries about the possibility of adopting Saemaul Undong as a rural development model in their country settings, such as Kyrgyztan (Musaeva, 2021) Cuba (Leyva Leal, Choi & Lee 2020), Indonesia (Maksum et al., 2020); and Ghana (Ofosu-Anim & Back 2020). Suphian and Jani (2020) take a more practical approach to studying Saemaul Undong by evaluating the existing Saemaul project in Tanzania. They find that the more people participate and involve themselves in the project, they have a more positive perception of the project outcome. Thus, the authors call for careful project planning and design whereby implementors of Saemaul project identify different resident groups with interests and attitudes and select right target groups.[28] Lee and Shim (2020), in their study of Saemaul project in Myanmar, arrive at a similar finding, that there is a positive correlation between villagers' level of participation and the success of a rural development project. Jun and Choi (2019) evaluate a Saemaul project in Ethiopia through questionnaires and make suggestions to improve effectiveness of Saemaul policy training for Ethiopian Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) officials. Consensus in this line of studies seems to be that there needs to be a careful and well-thought project design in terms of better communication (Burghart, 2023) and an understanding of unique local dynamics (Claassen, 2020).

[28] This Saemaul project was funded and run by the South Korean government and an NGO called Saemaul Foundation.

An increasing interest in Saemaul Undong as a possible development model has also led to more comparative studies. Nurliana and Jan Vincent (2020) compared Saemaul Undong with Malaysia's Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), first introduced in 1956. This article reviews how women in two countries were affected by respective rural development programmes – FELDA in the 1950s and Saemaul in the 1970s. FELDA was a state-led rural development programme, aimed to increase productivity and income levels in villages by providing land to the rural poor. Untapped land in jungle areas were cleared and cultivated where upon settlements were established and the poor were relocated. Although provision of land was not the main goal of Saemaul Undong – as South Korea had already begun its land reform process in the 1940s – authors argue that Saemaul and FELDA have similarly contributed to an elevation of women's status in both societies as active agents of change. The authors view that the inclusion of women in administrative structures in both development programmes have contributed to women's participation in decision-making process and their increased capacity of earning income and increasing their own savings. FELDA introduced a local governing structure in traditional villages in Malaysia, creating a multi-tiered administration system that ensured representation of settlements. Settlements, much like *maul* (village) of Saemaul Undong, had settlement managers – the (main) Chair - and chairs of various organisations like school board, cooperative and women's organisation. The women organisation of FELDA has grown to become Malaysia's largest women organisation and their chairs are represented in each settlement. Over the years, women under FELDA have seen more education and employment opportunities and also engage in and food and craft production, which led to increased income for women. The study finds that, under Saemaul Undong, women were similarly encouraged to engage in income-earning activities and have their own savings, producing a positive effect on household income and village saving levels. The authors of the study, however, provide extremely rough sketches of women's activities of

the two programmes, revealing very little information on women's personal experiences and their actual voices.

Another comparative study investigates the similarities and differences between Saemaul Undong with the New Rural Development (NRD) programme in Vietnam, a nationwide state-led development initiative first introduced in 2010 (Bui, Nguyen, Nguyen & Kwak, 2021). The authors take examples from two villages in Thai Nguyen province, Vietnam to suggest that the villages, where Saemaul Undong New Rural Globalisation Foundation (SGF)[29] started implementing its pilot village projects since 2005, have managed to exceed the setting targets of the NRD. [30] Saemaul Globalisation Foundation (the name was later changed to Saemaul Foundation, *Saemaŭl chaedan*, in 2022) is an NGO, launched by Gyeongsangbuk-do (Kyŏngsangbukto) provincial government with an aim to share Saemaul with the international community. Based on these examples, the authors claim that Vietnam's NRD benefitted from practical experiences from Saemaul. The authors (Bui, Nguyen, Nguyen & Kwak 2021: 72), however, do not clearly discuss which practical experiences were taught or shared. The comparison (similarities and differences) of Saemaul Undong and Vietnam's NRD are lightly touched upon (remarks that need more explanation include, 'rural women…playing an important role in the implementation and monitoring of NRC programs' and do not illuminate people's everyday experiences of the programmes. Their study then concludes by making a few recommendations for replicating Saemaul's success, two of which are: a call for an understanding of the larger context in which Saemaul was implemented and to adapt its approach to fit local situations and to add the special ingredient, the Saemaul Spirit – again without providing any guidelines about *how* to adapt to the local situation in Vietnam's NRD

[29] It is a distinct organisation from Korea Saemaul Undong Centre (*Saemaŭrundong chunganghoe*), which is the administrative home to the original Saemaul movement, overseeing 1.96 million membership in Korea. Korea Saemaul Undong Centre also campaigns for global Saemaul Undong and runs pilot Saemaul villages overseas.
[30] The targets were mostly measured in the level of rural infrastructure developed: e.g. length of roads paved, number of meeting rooms and libraries built.

and elaborating *what* the Saemaul spirit are. Bui et al.'s study is an example of literature that makes an impetuous attempt to draw lessons from Saemaul Undong for local development – without sufficient understanding of the original Saemaul Undong in the first place.

Yoon and Mudida (2020) compare the transformation strategies and processes between Saemaul Undong and *Ujamaa* of Tanzania and seek to understand why the two programmes' economic outcomes differed.[31] This study finds that Saemaul Undong's policy of *economic discrimination* and its development of institutions and community organisation contributed to people's motivation and economic progress. Economic discrimination is a concept introduced by Jwa Sung Hee (2018) as a key factor behind Saemaul Undong's success. It is a principle which rewards high performance and penalizes low performance. Jwa (2018) explains that Park Chung Hee strictly applied economic discrimination in his economic and social policies, Saemaul Undong being the main example. The Park administration explicitly provided exclusive support to villages that performed better than others to motivate villagers to perform better in terms of agricultural output and infrastructure development. Yoon and Mudida (2020) contrast this economically discriminating principle of Saemaul Undong from Ujamaa's egalitarianism. The authors contend that, different from Saemaul Undong, Ujamaa's insistence on egalitarianism prevented rural villagers to develop incentive to increase agricultural production or to invest but instead rely on the state or donor for assistance. The above-mentioned studies tend to view Saemaul Undong as South Korea's national asset in terms of its geopolitical power in the international community and they hope to adopt the movement to the advantage of their own development potential.

[31] Ujamaa (Swahili for "extended family" or "familyhood") was a social and economic experiment set up under the Arusha Declaration of February 5, 1967 by Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the president of Tanzania from 1964 to 1985, and the experiment centred on collective agriculture under a process of "villagization" in Tanzania.

These recent studies have revitalised Saemaul literature, by adding more studies to the existing literature as well as bringing in diverse topics for debate and discussion. I find them still inadequate to answer the simplest yet most critical enquiry in development: how does development affect the people involved? And what are their experiences? The recent literature's inadequacy in answering these critical questions has led me to the questions of my own research: how did Saemaul Undong in the 1970s' South Korea affect the subjectivities of villagers who participated in the movement? and what were the everyday life experiences of the people? The following section will discuss conceptual frameworks that have helped me get closer to answering these questions.

2.4 Conceptual Frameworks

As explained in the previous section, the existing literature on Saemaul Undong is limited to producing a flat ('peasants were coerced into participating in Saemaul under Park's authoritarian regime'), dichotomous (Saemaul was good vs. bad), and value-laden subjective analysis (the movement was well-intentioned to bring prosperity to the poor vs. it was an evil strategy of mass mobilisation and political brainwashing). This section introduces three conceptual frameworks – governmentality, neoliberal governmentality, and development and the self – all of which are interlinked and help together to answer to my own research question.

2.4.1 Governmentality

> Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through desires, aspirations, interests and belief of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes (Dean, 1999: 18).

Michel Foucault introduced governmentality in his lecture series of 1978-1979 as a new critical perspective and social and political analysis. Governmentality can be broadly defined as the *conduct of conduct*, meaning any deliberate attempt to shape and direct one's behaviour or action to meet a variety of ends. In tracing the genealogy of governmentality, Foucault points to a significant transition in the mode of governance in the eighteenth century in Europe, from a rule based on sovereign power to a rule aimed at managing and caring for a population, using multiple and distinct governmental techniques (Burchell, Gordon & Miller, 1991; Sharma, 2008). This transition was driven by the demographic expansion in Europe and the abundance of money and agricultural production – hence the recentring of economy into political practice. As 'the problems of population' – like the rise of public health and social stability and security discourse - emerged, population became 'the ultimate end of government' (Burchell et al., 1991: 100). With population having become a field of intervention and management, discipline emerged as an essential component in a society of government (Burchell et al., 1991). The mechanisms and strategies of discipline, in the form of self-regulation and surveillance, seek to shape the conduct of individuals and collectives (Rose, 1999). A disciplined individual is one who constantly monitors oneself and one's behaviour, seeks to transform oneself according to certain desirable ways *and* is made aware that to be self-regulating and disciplined is in the best interest of oneself and one's well-being. Thus, discipline entails a process of recognising the need for self-government and acting upon regulating one's behaviour. This process employs various strategies and technologies of government.

Government, as an attempt to shape and direct one's actions, is an exercise of power. It can however be distinguished from conventional exercises of power, like sovereign rule (of the king) or domination and control. Nikolas Rose (1999: 4) argues that government is different from simple domination whereby 'to dominate is to ignore or to attempt to crush the capacity for action of the dominated. But *to govern* is to recognize that capacity for action and to adjust

oneself to it. To govern is to act upon action…. Hence, when it comes to governing human beings, to govern is to presuppose the freedom of the governed. To govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge it and to utilize it for one's own objectives.' Power, then, is not only negative but might also be a 'positive force', producing an array of wills, aspirations, emotions and ultimately new subjects, as this thesis will show in subsequent chapters (Cruikshank, 1999: 31).

The conventional analysis of politics and power, as explained by Rose (1999), sees power and freedom as zero-sum games where coercion or domination is conceptualised as absence of freedom and vice versa. Such an analysis will mostly fuel questions whose answers are dichotomous (yes or no; A or B) in nature: Who holds power? Is the one who wields power legitimate? In whose interest is power exercised? Studies of governmentality, on the other hand, in recognising high levels of agency of the governed, entails a much more complicated and nuanced sense of power relations than conventional analyses of politics, domination and power. Governmentality allows us to ask an array of critical questions concerning 'the means of calculation, both qualitative and quantitative, the type of governing authority or agency, the forms of knowledge, techniques and other means employed, the entity to be governed and how it is conceived, the ends sought and the outcomes and consequences' (Dean, 1999: 18)

It is governmentality's critical perspective and the rich nature of enquiry into the role of subjectivity and agency that this research is drawn to. This study finds the governmentality framework useful in understanding the politics around participation and the assumptions behind a development intervention called Saemaul Undong. By posing an array of *how* questions at the movement and its participants (e.g. how were the participants' subjectivities constituted in accordance with or in opposition to Saemaul Undong?; how did the participants experience distinct technologies of government?; How are participants' memories constructed

and narrated?), this study seeks to paint a more textured, multi-faceted picture of the micro-politics, subjectivity and agency at stake in Saemaul Undong (Dean, 1999). In considering an art of government, this study also seeks to reveal a much richer picture than available in the existing evaluations of Saemaul Undong. While the mobilising tactics of Saemaul may have been coercive, the rationality behind the movement was also about empowerment and helping people to help themselves, as it is apparent in the three spirits of Saemaul: diligence, self-help and cooperation. The capacity of Saemaul participants to act upon their actions and aspiration was recognised and in turn acted upon through a set of various techniques and sites of governmentality, and not merely coercion and domination alone.

2.4.2 Neoliberalism & neoliberal governmentality

The neoliberal age came to its predominance in the Global North at the turn of the 1980s with the ascent of Margaret Thatcher to Prime Minister of Britain in 1979 and Ronald Reagan to President of the United States in 1980. Against the backdrop of the economic crisis of stagflation, the two leaders promoted and implemented neoliberal policies during their respective terms in office. They sought to address the existing economic challenges by implementing market-oriented reforms and reducing the role of the state in economic affairs and the market. This marked a departure from the interventionist and Keynesian policies that had dominated in the preceding decades, opening a way for neoliberalism – as an economic and political philosophy that advocates for limited government intervention in the economy, free-market capitalism, deregulation, and a focus on individual entrepreneurship (Harvey, 2005). The reduced role of the state signalled the end of the welfare state and the beginning of economic liberalisation.

The shift, described as the transition ‘from dependence to empowerment’ (Clinton, 2006, as cited in Sharma, 2008: xv), meant that individuals were no longer to be dependent on the

state to be looked after, but were now to be *empowered* as self-responsible entrepreneurs who would look after themselves. This neoliberal turn in government necessitated the production of a new neoliberal subject, who has come to be known as *'homo oeconomicus'* (Foucault, 2008), or the economic man (Hamann, 2009). With neoliberal governmentality, it became imperative for a good government to ensure the well-being of its population through economic growth, to be attained through commodification and marketisation. The economy and market mechanisms have since gained the status of scientific truth, extending their power and influence beyond the economic, to the social realm. The new neoliberal subject is thus a self-interested and rational entrepreneur who makes decisions based on meticulous cost-benefit calculation in all spheres of life, not only to ensure their economic well-being but to best compete in the new economic game of the social realm (Oksala 2013). Engaging in activities that are not congruous with free market mechanism (e.g. poor work ethic, laziness, drinking and gambling and etc.) is thought to undermine their ability to compete in the market, let alone maximise their profit. Therefore, neoliberal rationality finds the root cause of problems such as poverty, poor health and homelessness in the failure of the individual to manage themselves.

Under neoliberalism, individuals are governed as market agents. Through a variety of governmental techniques and strategies, these subjects are produced to be self-governing and self-transforming. Neoliberal governmentality is different from the logic of classical liberalism in that individuals are not just coerced to be self-governing or proactive, responsibilised citizens. They are encouraged to act upon themselves, transform themselves and *help* themselves (Binkley, 2009). The techniques of such governmentality do not entail coercion nor manipulation nor an evil intention to suppress the subjects' agency. Rather, the purpose is to care for the subjects and to acknowledge and incite their agency toward economic ends.

Neoliberal governmentality and its techniques are exemplified in the concept of empowerment especially as used in current development discourse and practice. Empowerment is an attempt to 'help people to help themselves' (Cruikshank, 1999: 4). In her book, *The Will to Empower: Democratic citizens and other subjects*, Barbara Cruikshank (1999) traces the genealogy of the will to empower from the Victorian era to contemporary liberal settings in the U.S through her study of welfare schemes and empowerment programmes. She concludes that the voluntaristic, self-governing citizens are not natural but are made through the *will to empower* that is manifested in the concerted efforts of the state, NGOs, various community groups and individuals. She also shows that empowerment entails a relation of power, in that the will to empower makes subjects act upon their agency and transform themselves.

Critics tend to associate Saemaul Undong and its social technologies employed over the course of the movement's implementation with neoliberal rationality (Choi, Kang & Kang, 2015; J. H. J. Han, 2011; Schwak, 2022). For example, Choi, Kang & Kang (2015), in their study of Korean local governments' community building policies in the 2010s, argue that Saemaul is the pioneering community building policy that makes use of neoliberal governmental technologies. These community building policies have recently focused on supporting social enterprises, growing public-private partnerships and nurturing villager workers by supporting their capacity building. The authors argue that these community building policies are designed to govern villagers to become active citizens who practice volunteerism and self-help, following Saemaul Undong in promoting neoliberalism. The authors suggest that the governmental technologies of Saemaul, such as strategies to promote self-help, voluntarism and entrepreneurial conduct, were used to promote and strengthen neoliberalism. Jui Hui Judy Han (2011), in her ethnographic study of the contemporary Korean evangelical missionaries in Africa, finds Saemaul at the crossroads between evangelical Christianity and neoliberal capitalism, making it a model of Christian neoliberalism. According

to Han's finding, Korean missionaries operating in Africa devote a great deal of their mission in sharing Korea's development experience and promoting a revival of Saemaul spirits in Africa, besides their evangelical activities. Han (2011) draws an analogy between Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal capitalism and Saemaul's ethos of diligence and personal accountability. There is a striking similarity between Thatcher's neoliberalism inspired by the Bible verse, 'If a man will not work, he shall not eat. Work or starve' (J. H. J. Han, 2011: 150) and Saemaul's emphasis on discipline, productivity and self-help. This 'assemblage of neoliberal capitalism and the Protestant ethos of perpetual self-improvement' (J. H. J. Han, 2011: 149) combined with personal historical experience of Saemaul lead the Korean missionaries to continuously engage in their missions, proselytising the gospel as well as Saemaul spirits. Indeed, a number of governmental techniques used during Saemaul Undong overlap with those of a neoliberal art of government. Saemaul's focus on the responsibilisation of individuals and fashioning of self into volunteering, entrepreneurial and productive subjects are similar to Cruikshank's conceptualisation of empowerment. Instead of entering the debate as to whether Saemaul Undong was neoliberal or not, this thesis analyses such a claim in a novel way using the lens of governmentality and neoliberal governmentality to show the interaction between governmental techniques and selves.

While recognising some overlap and similarities between Saemaul Undong and neoliberalism, this study is also informed by a group of scholars who have sought to challenge the notion that neoliberalism works in the same manner everywhere and at all times, and that its policies and technologies are its own, exclusively. In his study of South Africa's Basic Income Grant (BIG) campaign, Ferguson (2009), for instance, demonstrates that neoliberalism does not follow the same pattern of policies and techniques as in the North. The African National Congress (ANC) government of South Africa, while following the line of neoliberal ideology, engages in not-so-neoliberal pro-poor policy of making direct cash transfers to its

people in order to win popularity and maintain its political reign. Similar examples can be seen in other developing countries like Brazil and India (Ferguson, 2009). These examples show that neoliberalism does not have a singular or predetermined end, and states could even purpose neoliberal strategies toward welfare provision. Policies borrow across different ideologies (Ferguson, 2009) and the state could use neoliberal policies to maintain a developmental state, for instance[32] (Hundt, 2015). In the global South, in particular, neoliberalism appears malleable and fluid (see for instance Roy, 2022).

Likewise, scholarly work on neoliberal development and empowerment suggests that the technique of empowerment does not always mean the same thing, nor does it follow a unified pattern, nor produce identical relations of power in and across different societies, cultures, and geographies. Aradhana Sharma (2008), in her study of state sponsored women's empowerment programme in India, finds that while the Indian state seems to be pursuing development programmes that are influenced by neoliberal logics such as the notions of empowerment and self-help instead of a redistributive welfare programme, its effects on the ground contrast with the aim of neoliberal orthodoxy and its policies. Sharma's inquiry into the Mahila Samakhya (MS) women's empowerment programme discovers that rural subjects in India (the recipients of programme) in fact demand the distributive state to stay and continue to provide for the poor. Her case illustrates that a hegemonic development discourse of neoliberalism does not smoothly play itself out, following its own orthodoxy. She finds that, 'marginalised actors use the development idea to fashion themselves as morally upright and deserving citizens, to reflect on their rights, and to criticise and reimagine the state. They not only imbue dominant notions of development with new meaning, but also contest neoliberal ideas about self-interested, entrepreneurial citizenship, abstract rights, and dewelfarised states.' (Sharma, 2008: xxiv).

[32] Hundt (2015) argues that South Korean government made use of neoliberal policies to maintain and strengthen its developmental state.

Roy's (2017) ethnographic study of a local women's NGO in Eastern India, also finds that on the ground, the strategies of government surrounding the empowerment of adolescent girls are not informed by neoliberal rationalities only; but by multiple ideologies of Indian feminism, the developmentalist and neoliberal state, and transnational logics. These distinct ideologies have been mixed and retooled, and reborn, taking the form of various governmental techniques, including empowerment programmes.

Saemaul Undong too was a product of diverse ideologies and historical influences. At face value, Saemaul's focus on self-transformation based on spiritual training and its governmental strategies of self-help seem to be almost identical to what we now consider to be a neoliberal conception of empowerment. However, the rationalities and workings of Saemaul were paradoxical, in fusing the concepts of rational economic decision-making with self-sacrifice. While individuals were encouraged to become rational entrepreneurs and each village an enterprise (D. H. Han, 2012), they were equally encouraged to be selfless and to donate their own assets to village community (Sonn & Gimm, 2013). So, the overlap of *some* governmental technologies between Saemaul and neoliberalism presents us with a very different picture. It must be stressed that these technologies, which resemble neoliberal governmentality, appeared in a very different context and time. They appeared in a unique social, cultural and political context, whose genealogy may be traced back to Korea's unique history. This calls for a historical task of tracing the genealogy of thoughts in the movement in South Korea. Due to the scope of this work, however, this thesis cannot comprehensively offer this. I have briefly discussed the history of the concept of *self-help* in Korea during the first half of the 20th century in the previous introductory chapter. Future research could benefit from this perspective and develop this insight further.

2.4.3 Development and constitution of the self

I was particularly drawn to the framework of governmentality because it provided the key to my question, '*how did Saemaul Undong in the 1970s' South Korea affect the subjectivities of villagers who participated in the movement? and what were the everyday life experiences of the people who participated in the movement?'* My question was about the *becoming* of the self amid everyday life experiences under Saemaul Undong. After conducting initial desktop research on the movement, I found interesting its emphasis on the self and the fashioning of the self. Saemaul Undong, as a development intervention, had varied consequences: from changes in rural infrastructure and farming technologies to an increase in household income and a new governing structure for rural villages. Nonetheless, I was most intrigued to understand Saemaul Undong's consequences for its subjects – their constitution and transformation. I viewed Saemaul Undong to be more than just another state development project. I was interested in understanding how this top-down project flowed through the self, creating new subject positions which people could inhabit, as evident in my archive, such as: the peasant worker and entrepreneur, the enterprising villagers and volunteers, and so on.

When Foucault (2008) introduced his concept of governmentality, he meant government as not just governing the others, but also self-government as a way of governing the self. Government encompasses not only formal political institutions but also the diverse strategies and technologies through which power is diffused and applied and thus shapes everyday life. Foucault's framework of governmentality, therefore, provides a nuanced understanding of how power operates at the level of individual subjectivity and how individuals are implicated in processes of self-governance within broader societal structures. As individuals encounter technologies of the self – various practices and techniques individuals use to shape their own identities and conduct in accordance with given discursive resources – they are not merely

subjects of external forms of governance; they actively participate in the construction and regulation of their own subjectivities.

Foucault's conception of a multiple governmentalities prompted me to think about the confluence of government and self-government under Saemaul Undong – how the state's project of governing rural peasants laid the ground for producing individual peasants as new subjects, who aspired to transform, manage and care for themselves. In this thesis, Saemaul Undong is therefore not seen as just an example of state governance alone but government as a very broad concept, allowing discussion of the self, subjectivities, agency and positions of people who participated in Saemaul Undong by paying attention to their experiences, becoming, identities and aspirations.

As eluded earlier, a theory of governmentality conceptualises power very differently than conventional ideas of government (and power). Traditionally, exercise of power would mean sovereign rule of the king whereby the role of agency is limited, and subjects dominated. Rose (1999) explains that, in modern societies, the exercise of power is positively conceptualised as acknowledging the individual and collective capacity to act. This understanding of power helped me understand development in a novel way; that development in the neoliberal (but not limited to) conjuncture has a transformative power on the self (Ferguson, 2015; as cited in Roy, 2022). Scholars have illustrated the generative aspect of neoliberal governmentality which affords new ways of relating to the self and through which new subjects and subjectivities are produced (Brown, 2015; Foucault, 2008; Lorenzini, 2018; Oksala, 2013; Rose, 1999).

It is this process of making and becoming the self which, Tanya Jakimow (2015) argues, is critical to development studies. She argues that a self is in a continuous state of becoming and this 'self-in-process… acts upon the world and in the process produces it anew', situating the 'self-in-process' at the 'heart of social reproduction and social change' (Jakimow, 2015:

28-19). In short, understanding the process of self-becoming is critical because it can illuminate the forces and potentialities for social change. Core to my interest is the understanding of this process of self-becoming – the production and constitution of a new self - under Saemaul Undong and beyond, as my thesis will show.

Scholars have paid attention to the constitutive effects of (neoliberal)[33] development projects on the self. Ethnographies in South Asia by feminist scholars have illustrated how subjectivities were made and transformed through technologies that were geared at governing the self (Jakimow, 2015; Madhok, 2012; Rankin, 2001; Roy, 2022; Sen, 2017; Sharma, 2008). For instance, Katharine Rankin (2001) studied the emergence of microcredit programmes in Nepal, a key neoliberal development practice, and found that markets, contrary to the widespread belief that they lead to deregulation and liberalisation, served as a mechanism of governance that regulated individual behaviour. Microcredit re-scaled state power to the local level - and even to the level of the self, producing particular forms of (gendered and racialised) subjectivity. Microcredit cultivated a new subjectivity of "rational economic woman" among rural women, by turning them from "beneficiaries with social rights" to "clients with responsibilities to themselves and their families". Foucault's governmentality framework informed Rankin's rethinking about development's consequences on its subjects, producing new unique forms of subjectivity.

Jakimow's 2015 book, *Decentring Development: Understanding Change in Agrarian Societies*, is also an excellent example of research for development and social change, focused on the scale of the self. The book starts with the author's main question, 'what kinds of

[33] I have put neoliberal in brackets because development projects culminate in the constitution and/or transformation of selves in predominantly neoliberal settings but also in settings where such projects are inspired by a mixture of different histories, cultural influences and ideologies other than pure neoliberal logics, as this thesis will show.

knowledge can we produce in research *for* development?' By *decentring* development, Jakimow means decentring the conventional practical and scientific knowledge, deemed as *useful*. She suggests a new, anthropological orientation to research development, centring the 'self-in-process'(Jakimow, 2015: 6). In this book, Jakimow investigates processes of the (re)production of agrarian societies in Indonesia and India at the micro level of the self, paying attention to the process of self-becoming in relation to development. Jakimow's observation that 'people were not doing different things, they were becoming different people.' (2015: 6) points to the constitutive effect of development on its subjects, as opposed to the dominant governmentality explanation that development turns people into governed *subjects* whose behaviour is regulated from above.

Srila Roy (2022) in her book, *Changing the Subject*, also illustrates how development, in the form of feminist governmentalities, has (trans)formative consequences on the self. Through an ethnography of two feminist NGOs in India, Roy maps how feminist subjects are made and stylised in the contemporary neoliberal conjuncture in the global South. Her interlocuters, as activists and agents of feminist development projects, while being in their role of empowering others, also engaged in self-governing and self-making. This observation led to a central claim of her book: 'if feminism can be thought of as a form of (neoliberal) governmentality, it can also be considered a project of self-government and transformation' (Roy, 2022: 11).

Back to centring the self-in-process, Jakimow calls for an approach which investigates the complex processes of self-becoming. She finds Foucault's concept of the discursive constitution of subjects useful in explaining how development provides resources and models 'upon which people draw on in their cultivation of self.' (Jakimow 2015, 30). Development's discursive practices and sites act as '(these) games of truth, no longer involve a coercive practice, but a practice of self-formation of the subject' (Foucault, 1994: 281–282). Thus,

individuals, in their encounter with development and its practices, do not go through normalisation (as in subjecting individuals to norms and cultural practices) but rather undertake 'a project of self-cultivation or self-stylisation' (H. Moore, 2007; as cited in Jakimow, 2015: 29) by drawing upon (even selectively) these cultural and social models. Roy (2022: 11) goes further to suggest the possibility of highly creative forms of self-transformation, 'they [neoliberal and NGO governmentality] offered not a set of rules or norms to be followed but sites and resources for self-making through which individuals could rework and reimagine the self and even exercise some choice.' As the following chapters will show, this thesis maps the terrain of self-cultivation among Korean rural peasants as they encounter and negotiate with the state's aesthetic models (see chapter 4) and moral and ethical frameworks (see chapter 5).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the main theories, trends, and notable characteristics of the existing literature on Saemaul Undong. The first section reviewed the two major camps (positive and critical) of Saemaul literature and pointed out their shortfalls; in helping one to understand *how* individual persons understood, experienced and contributed to Saemaul Undong, an essential middle ground is, in other words, needed. The second section looked at more recently published studies that are concerned with the growing global Saemaul Undong projects. It noted that Saemaul literature in recent years has grown both in volume and diversity. However, the literature still warrants the need for understanding people's experiences of the movement at the time of Saemaul Undong's implementation, a significant gap that this thesis seeks to fill. The final section introduced the main conceptual frameworks that helped shape and inform this study; mainly the concepts of governmentality, neoliberal governmentality, and development and the self. The following chapter will discuss methodological and ethical considerations that were made for this thesis.

Chapter 3 Methodological and ethical reflections

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to lay out some methodological and ethical reflections encountered along my research journey. The chapter is divided into two parts, methodological approaches and ethical considerations. In the first part, I explain why I chose to adopt qualitative methodologies of in-depth interviews. These were supplemented by the analysis of archival records and documents. I also describe my experiences during fieldwork in South Korea, by introducing the research sites and method of sampling my participants. In part two, I explain the ethical considerations I made during research and data analysis.

3.2 Methodological approaches

This study is a sociological as well as a historical research project. I seek to understand how South Korean rural villagers experienced Saemaul Undong and its governmental techniques in their everyday life. I wanted to hear people's personal stories to understand the processes of their becoming before, during and after their engagement with Saemaul Undong. Saemaul Undong started in early 1970s before I was born and understanding its meaning and legacy meant that I had to employ methods that entailed historical digging, like accessing and analysing archival records; and oral history interviews with participants to hear their life stories. A qualitative research approach was thus selected over a quantitative one, as the former enabled me to gather rich, in-depth data that could provide detailed insights into Saemaul Undong as well as a contextual understanding of the social, cultural and political context of the time (Janesick, 2010). Quantitative approaches that focus on establishing a hypothesis or causal relationship using a large set of samples and numerical data sets tend to produce general

information and would thereby have failed to capture the detailed narrative and subjective accounts of my research participants' experiences. This study, thus, employed qualitative research methodologies of in-depth interviews alongside archival records and document analysis. I conducted in-depth interviews for rich context and deeper understanding of participants' personal experiences of Saemaul Undong. I faced challenges of relying solely on interviews and life histories when I realised that many Saemaul participants have died and those who are alive are not able to recount their memories to the full capacity. I thus chose to include methodologies of archival records and document analysis as a way of gaining knowledge about the movement and also to triangulate the data gathered from the interviews.

3.2.1 Research Sites

This research was mainly conducted in South Korea, the country where Saemaul Undong originated. Research was conducted in both urban and rural settings. The National Library of Korea and Korea Saemaul Undong Archives are all located in major urban cities of Seoul and Seongnam. At these sites, I was able to access rare official documents, newspapers and academic works on the movement. In-depth interviews were conducted in *Dohwa-myeon* (Township of Dohwa), *Goheung-gun* (County of *Goheung*), *Jeollanam-do* (South *Jeolla* Province), South Korea[34]. Rural villagers who experienced the movement in 1970s are all in their 70s or 80s and many of them still reside in their same villages.

[34] *Myeon* is a township in rural areas of county with a population of more than 6,000. Townships are often subdivided into *ri* (리, 里) which are translated as villages. For more information about Korea's administrative divisions, visit Korea's Institute for Basic Science (https://centers.ibs.re.kr/html/living_en/overview/lines.html)

FIGURE 1. A map of Goheung-gun, South Korea. *Google.*

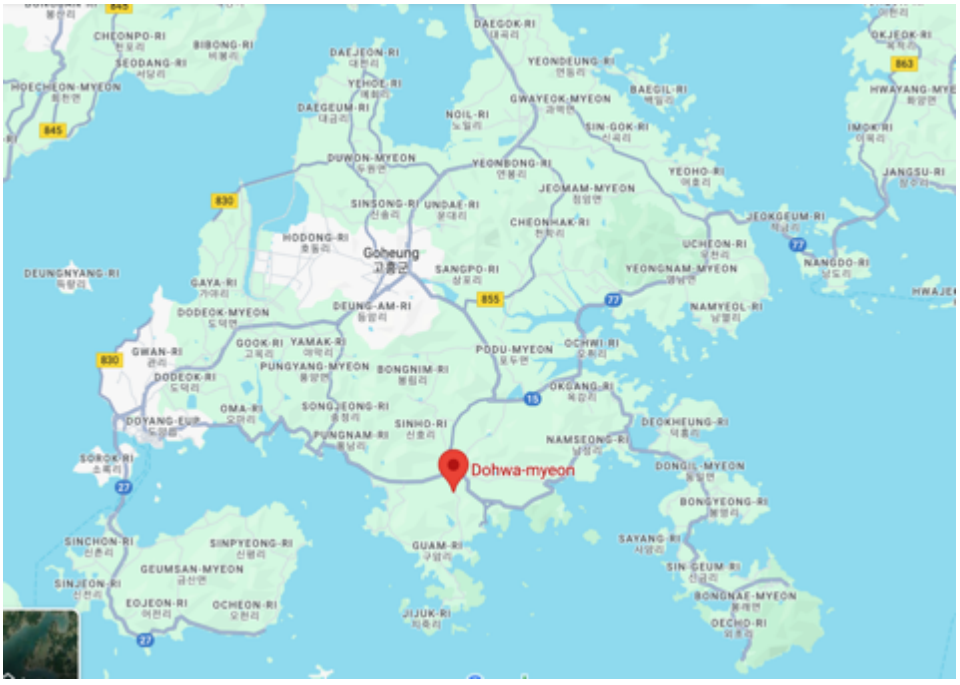

FIGURE 2. A map of Dohwa-myeon, Goheung-gun, South Korea. *Google*.

FIGURE 3. Dohwa, Goheung, is a quiet seaside township. *Author's photograph*.

FIGURE 4. Villagers in Dohwa work in farming and fishery. *Author's photograph*.

FIGURE 5. Centre for senior citizens in Dohwa. *Author's photograph*.

Dohwa-myeon in Goheung-gun is a township with a population of 3,700. Dohwa is situated in the far south of the Korean peninsula. It is also the hometown of my mother and maternal grandmother, aged ninety-two, at the time of the interview; she still resides in the village. Goheung-gun has both farming and fishing villages where Saemaul movement was once highly active. In Goheung, the movement and its activities are still in operation as of today. My numerous previous visits to Goheung since my childhood have equipped me with knowledge on the geography, culture and dialects spoken in the selected area. Having grown up in South Korea, I had visited Dohwa since my childhood during school holidays and the festive seasons of the Lunar New Year or *Chuseok*[35]. Therefore, I was familiar with the area and the residents there who were close friends of our family. Dohwa houses the Centre for senior citizens[36] where the elderly from different villages in Dohwa congregate and socialise.

[35] Korean Thanksgiving Day
[36] Officially, it is called Dohwa-myeon Welfare Centre.

I undertook two field trips to South Korea. South Korea is my home country where I was born and raised until the age of thirteen. My father and mother were the odd ones in the family as they chose to emigrate to South Africa while the rest of the family stayed in South Korea. Having extended families - both paternal and maternal - present in South Korea, I feel deeply connected with Korea. I am also familiar with the history, wider culture and distinct locales there. My proficiency in Korean language and knowledge of geography were also beneficial to the trips and research. The first field trip was conducted in June 2019 for a period of two weeks. The purpose of the first field trip was to familiarise myself with geographies and logistics of access to research sites. I visited the national library and the archive. My status as a Korean citizen made it easy for access cards to be issued. I also visited my grandmother in Dohwa in Goheung, to seek access to potential research respondents through her. She helped me identify potential respondents and build rapport with them, after I contacted them. During and after the first field trip, I was able to access more historic materials about Saemaul Undong. This meant that I became more knowledgeable about the movement, enabling me to draw up a more specific set of research questions and prompts for future interviews. The second field trip in September 2019 was conducted for one month. The first batch of in-depth interviews were conducted during this second research trip.

After the second trip, having analysed the interview data made me realise that I needed to interview other respondents for more data in terms of both quantity and quality. The elderly community members, mostly in their eighties and some even in their nineties, did not seem to remember things clearly due to their age. They also liked to speak of things that were not directly related to Saemaul Undong. While I was planning a third field trip in South Korea for collecting more data, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in early 2020. Cross-border travel restrictions, coupled with my pregnancy, made it impossible to proceed with another trip to South Korea from South Africa (all of which were also self-funded). This led to the decision

to conduct telephonic interviews with new respondents, who were now younger than the first group of respondents and remembered more details about the movement.

FIGURE 6. Inside the Centre for senior citizens in Dohwa. The banner says, 'Let us become elders who deserve respect'. *Author's photograph*.

3.2.2 In-depth interviews and oral history

I conducted a total of thirteen in-depth one-to-one interviews with eleven respondents for this research. My respondents can be broadly divided into two groups: a group of elderly citizens of Dohwa, Goheung between the age of seventy and ninety-three and a group of younger generation, from the age of sixty and seventy-six.

I accessed the elderly citizens of Dohwa, Goheung through my grandmother who is also a long-time resident of the village. I faced a challenge after a few interviews with the elderly, when I noticed that older respondents were not able to recount their memories *correctly* due to their old age. They made mistakes, like mixing up the chronological order of historical events or even the names of the programme. This challenge put me in a dilemma of whether to continue using the methodology of oral history, particularly with this group of elderly community members. Initially, I thought that their memories were deemed unreliable, especially when their memories were very distant from present and were being recounted a long time after since the event.

Yet, I decided to continue using the method of oral history because I felt that it would still work in favour of the aims and objectives of my research. The objective of this study was to understand how individual subjectivities and identities were composed in the light of the larger culture or social reality, rather than assessing the success or failure of Saemaul Undong in material terms. Memory and narrative thus remained crucial resources because they enabled me to shift the scale of my analysis towards the individual level, and because they facilitate a close examination of the production of meaning. Discovering scholarly works emphasising the production and narration of memories, rather than their content, illuminated the significance of my participants' memories as tools for meaning-making (Portelli, 1991; Roy, 2012; Summerfield, 1998). These memories provided unique insights into how individuals construct

their identities in relation to historical events and social and cultural contexts. For instance, Alessandro Portelli (1991: 50) believes that a narrator's personal history produces 'narratives in which the boundary between what takes place outside the narrator and what happens inside, between what concerns the individual and what concerns the group', meaning that memory cannot be separated from culture, discourse, nor social reality. Penny Summerfield (1998) agrees that accounts of lived experience reflect the social reality and dominant discourses of the time, which simultaneously feeds into collective memory. Memory, thereby, is 'a form of representation' that performs an important cultural function of connecting the larger culture ('public representation') with individuals ('private memory') (Roy, 2012: 4). The merit of such a conception of memory, allowing us to interpret and to represent, is that it sheds light on how individuals' subjectivities and identities are constituted. As I was interested in unpacking subjective experiences as well as a community's collective aspiration and imagination, I needed to render *meaning* more important than *event* when analysing interview data. I return to the discussion of my approach to memory as a source but also an analytical tool in chapter 6.

Although I did not intend it at first, interviews and casual conversations often took place around the respondents' everyday life practices and most importantly, food. This was crucial in building trust and rapport with the respondents and allowed me to gain more intimate knowledge of the respondents' experiences and emotions. This applied both to interviewing my family as well as the elderly. For in-depth interviews with senior citizens, I had chosen to visit the Centre for the Elderly to identify potential research participants and build rapport with them. The centre is run by the local council and is a place where the elderly of the village gather during the day to socialise, play games and to share meals with one another. On the first visit to the centre, my grandmother accompanied me so that she could introduce me to the community. On the way to the centre, my grandmother insisted that we buy a box of cold drinks for the people at the centre. She hoped that this gesture of kindness would make the elderly

welcome me warmly, which worked well. Since that day, I sat with my participants around lunch and coffee. I participated in their everyday life activities at the centre, like watching the news on TV and playing *baduk* (Go)[37]. My participants were narrating their experiences and memories to me in relaxed and familiar settings, as if they were telling stories to their own granddaughter. Interviews with my grandmother and uncle also took place in the kitchen after meals and living rooms while sharing late-evening snacks like boiled eggs, sweet potatoes, and strawberries.

Interviewing my family members and especially my grandmother was a unique and unforgettable experience. From the first night of my arrival at her house, I started asking my grandmother casual questions about our family history. After dinner, my grandmother and I sat at the dining table in her tiny sixty-year-old kitchen, smelling the delicious fish she had grilled for me earlier. I started by asking how old she was. I felt a little ashamed that, after all these years, I did not know my own grandmother's exact age. To my surprise, my grandmother could not give me a definite answer right away because the actual year of birth and the year printed on her birth certificate were different. Her father registered her birth only after she turned three because her older brother had died in infancy. Her father thought not to register her birth right away but to wait. He was being cautious because he worried that this newborn baby girl might also die in infancy (see also chapter 6). That's how our *interviews* began: a journey back to our family's history made up of pieces of memories which were both joyful and heart-breaking.

What surprised me was how our family's history and memories were so intertwined with the broader history and trajectory of the South Korean nation. Historical events like the Japanese annexation, the Korean War and Saemaul Undong deeply affected not only the

[37] Baduk (also known as Go) is an ancient board game for two players, popular in East Asian countries of China, Korea, and Japan.

FIGURE 7. Interview with my grandmother in her kitchen. *Author's photograph*.

everyday lives of my family but also their thoughts and emotions. My grandmother, Mrs. Kong, was born in 1926 in *Gahwa* village, Dohwa in Japanese-ruled Colonial Korea. From the age of nine, she was forced to read and write Japanese language. When she turned sixteen, she became an instructor for Japanese military drill training. By this time, her future husband, my grandfather, had returned from Japan after being forced to work in a coal mine in Japan. Soon

FIGURE 8. My interview participants in the 1960s – my maternal grandmother and two uncles. *Personal collection of interview respondent* (circa 1967)

after marrying her husband, the Korean War broke out in 1950. With each massive bombing, my grandmother would pack her belongings; she joined the evacuation rally with two little babies. Food was scarce and survival became the foremost priority. Just after a decade, she lost her brother who fought as a soldier in the Vietnam War on behalf of the U.S. These experiences of bitterness and loss have shaped my grandmother's perspective and aspirations, especially to prioritise survival for a better and safer living (I return to my grandmother's life history in chapter 6). I had not expected to find the imprint of national history let alone global forces (such as the Vietnam war in the Cold War context) in the history of my family that I considered so ordinary and plain. These life histories of my family have been so complex in ways that exceeded my expectation but also the scope and limit of this project. I would like to revisit this aspect of my family's complex life histories in my future research.

The research into my family's life-histories also allowed me and my family the opportunity to remember our loved ones and reconnect with emotions and feelings once lost. On the third night of my visit, I noticed an old wooden suitcase on top of a wardrobe in the guest room. When I asked my grandmother about it, she explained it was grandfather's suitcase containing his personal belongings, and the family had not opened it again since he passed away about forty years ago. I felt the urge to bring it down and open it. Inside the suitcase were ordinary items like a pouch, metal spoons, a pair of glasses, maps and notes. But as I was taking each object out of the suitcase, threads of family history emerged. My grandmother would point at each item and explain my grandfather's personal stories that were associated with the item. At one point, she took out a pair of glasses and tried them on herself. She then became tearful, telling me how much she missed her husband, and this time telling me the joyful memories she shared with him.

The following week was Chuseok, the Korean thanksgiving festival. When my uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces came down to my grandmother's, I told them about the suitcase. As the family gathered in one room and opened the suitcase together, the memories contained in the suitcase bound tightly the four generations gathered there. It was a reminder of our loved ones but also a reminder of who we were and where we came from. Overall, interviewing my family and researching into their life histories was an extraordinary experience, a methodology I would be happy to undertake again in future research.

FIGURE 9. My grandfather's wooden suitcase and his belongings. *Author's photograph*.

FIGURE 10. My grandfather's wooden suitcase and his belongings. *Author's photograph*.

FIGURE 11. My grandmother trying on her husband's glasses. *Author's photograph*.

FIGURE 12. My family opening the suitcase. *Author's photograph*.

3.2.3 Sampling of participants

Broadly, I had two groups of participants: the first group of older generation who were aged between seventy and ninety-three. These participants were in their thirties and forties in the 1970s at the time when Saemaul Undong was in its full swing; and the second group of younger generation who were in their sixties and up to seventy-six. This group experienced Saemaul Undong as teenagers or young adults in their twenties. Two (Mr. J. S. Kim and Mr. W. P. Hong[38]) of the five elderly respondents served as local government officials at the time of Saemaul Undong; as civil servants, the two were deeply involved in Saemaul projects at the village level, often directing and assisting the projects. Two respondents (Mr. K. M. Kuk and Mr. T. H. Kang) served as Saemaul leaders in the 1970s. The rest of the seven respondents participated in Saemaul Undong as students (Mr. S. Y. Hong and Mrs. S. H. Ch'oe); young adults (Mrs. K. M. Yun, Mr. J. Y Ch'oe and Mr. K. U. Pak); and ordinary villagers (Mr. C. C. Ch'oe and Mrs. Y. S. Kong).

Participants from the older generation were more or less from a similar class background in terms of their financial status and level of education. Except for two individuals who served as local government officials at the time of Saemaul Undong (Mr. W. P. Hong graduated from a university with a bachelor's degree and Mr. J. S. Kim dropped out of high school), all of the older participants received only basic level education, either dropping out of elementary school or attending *yahak.* Yahak was a night school where Korean letters were taught to men, women and children alike who did not have access to formal education (I present my participant's memory about yahak in chapter 6). Until the mid-1930s, fewer than one in six Korean elementary school-aged children were enrolled in officially recognised schools, indicating a significant educational deficit. To address this gap, Koreans established numerous

[38] I also refer to Mr. W. P. Hong as *Chairman Hong* in this thesis, as his fellow villagers widely call him.

unlicensed schools, with many operating as night schools staffed by recent graduates from public or missionary educational institutions (Seth, 2009). Most of my older participants were born in Korea at a time when the immiseration of the nation worsened from 1930 to 1945. Much of rice production was exported to Japan, leaving very little for domestic consumption in Korea.[39] By this time, indebtedness and high interest rates had contributed to the impoverishment of Korean farmers. Around eighty per cent of rural Korea was in debt, with interest rates averaging 30% and reaching as high as 80% (Nam, 2018). Except for Mr. W. P. Hong (who was a son of a physician) and my own grandmother, all of the older participants were tenant farmers who suffered from poverty and hunger almost on a daily basis. Although my grandmother married into my grandfather's family, who was a landed elite, she also experienced hunger quite regularly (more about my participants' experiences of hunger is detailed in chapter 6). The group's homogenous background meant that the participants shared similar experiences of hardship and hunger in their early days. Only one exceptional case is with Mr. W. P. Hong who attained university level education, but he claimed that he lived only a slightly better living standard (meaning he didn't starve on a regular basis) but also experienced hardship much like other participants, given that he had ten siblings in the family.

To dig into their life histories, I began by asking them questions that were related to their childhood which included their biological information ('when and where were you born?') and about their family and education. I then asked questions relating to their experiences of Saemaul Undong. On a second field trip to South Korea, I realised that the group of older participants were not remembering accurately. For instance, the older participants would debate on different versions of accounts when the villagers constructed a reservoir in the area. They also mixed up the chronological order of events in their communities like when

[39] Between 1920 and 1936, per capita rice consumption in Korea decreased by 25%, from 90 to 69 kilograms, despite a 30% increase in production during the same period (See Nam 2018).

electricity and telephone were introduced. In extreme cases, a few respondents remembered that they were Saemaul leaders (this was confirmed by other respondents whom I met at the centre) but could not remember what they did as the leaders or what they learned while attending Saemaul leaders training sessions. In terms of quality of their memories, many of the older participants gave me simple answers (such as, 'yes, of course I went to attend the Saemaul leaders training for two weeks at the Saemaul Leaders Training institute') but not much details on what they heard, did or felt during their training time. I then decided to interview more younger population participants. The younger group, who were either in their teens or twenties at the time of Saemaul Undong recounted their experiences relatively better than the older group. The younger participants were able to provide more detailed information about their experiences, emotions, and feelings. For example, when asked about their experience of seeing newly painted and installed roof tiles, they recounted their feelings ('I felt as if the whole village has brightened') in detail, almost as if they experienced the feeling yesterday. If fact, a few younger participants told me that the memories of listening to the Song of Saemaul and looking at the coloured roofs are quite vivid as if they happened yesterday.

In general, participants from both older and younger groups shared positive opinions about Saemaul Undong and evaluated their experiences of the movement favourably. All of the older participants were from rural villages. Four of the six younger participants were also from rural villages and two from peri-urban areas, which were like rural villages at the outskirts of urban cities. Both respondents from rural areas and peri-urban areas share similar everyday life experiences of Saemaul Undong such as waking up in the morning while listening to the Saemaul song, witnessing, or engaging in communal labour projects.

One exception was Mr. Kuk, a ninety-year-old interviewee I met in Dohwa, whose memory of working as a Saemaul leader was not so favourable. Mr. Kuk's memory and

emotions about the movement are generally bitter, departing from the common memory, accompanied by positive feelings of pride and excitement evident in other interviewees. As a young Saemaul leader, Mr. Kuk claimed that was often looked down upon by the powerful folks in his village and his work was not acknowledged enough. He called himself 'a push over'. Mr. Kuk's story took an unexpected turn when, all of a sudden, he told me a story of how he, as a young boy, pioneered Saemaul Undong in his village by paving a bumpy road. This showed his eagerness to portray himself as the idealised Saemaul subject. As it will be unfolded in chapter 6, Mr. Kuk's narrativisation of his memories and of himself illustrated how the image of an ideal Saemaul subject informed the ways in which he related to himself.

3.2.4 Archival records and document analysis

Although oral history was an important methodology for the thesis in providing valuable information about Saemaul participants' personal experiences, memories and their impact on individual emotions and subjectivities, I chose to include archival records and document analysis as another core methodology. This was a conceptual as well as a practical decision. I needed to triangulate the research because my interview data was limited in terms of both quantity and quality due to the old age of most Saemaul participants. For example, I consulted the archive material of *Saemaul* magazine in Chapter 4 and 5. *Saemaul* was a monthly magazine published from 1972 by the Korea Information Service Inc. in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Public Information of South Korea. The magazine was part of the South Korean government's promotion of Saemaul Undong among rural peasants. It contained the news and photos of President Park's activities relating to Saemaul Undong, news of profound Saemaul leaders from many rural villages, opinion pieces from farming experts and Saemaul leaders, cartoons, and educational articles such as how to modernise apple farming and boost harvest. I consulted the *Saemaul* magazine for the historical and cultural context of the Saemaul

beautification project and relied on my respondents' interview data for information on their personal feelings and subjective views and thoughts on the project.

Saemaul Undong is known to have a rich and vast archive in terms of its collection size and quality. Today, the archive of Saemaul Undong contains a total of 22,084 records and is managed by Korean Saemaul Undong Centre. Saemaul Undong's archive materials include presidential speeches, government papers, village documents, letters, manuals, photographs and video clips. Most of the state-produced records such as government papers, photos and magazines had been kept by government offices. It also contains recorded interview videos with Saemaul leaders, some of which this thesis refers to in chapters 4 and 5. Though dates of interviews are not available on the archive website, it is presumed that they have been recorded around the 2010s. Personal records such as photos, journal entries and letters have been donated to the Korea Saemaul Undong Centre by Saemaul participants. The archive is jointly owned by the government of the Republic of Korea and Korean Saemaul Undong Centre. Out of a total of 22,084 records, the Korea Saemaul Undong Center owns 7,437 records and 14,647 are owned by the National Archives of Korea.[40] The archive of Saemaul Undong, containing 22,084 records have been registered as UNESCO memory of the world in 2013[41]. UNESCO memory of the world is an international programme launched in 1992 to register documents, manuscripts, oral traditions, audio-visual materials, library, and archival holdings of universal value.[42] The Korea Saemaul Undong Centre operates an online archive website where most record materials have been digitised and can be accessed by the public.[43] In addition to the Saemaul online archive, many of written materials such as government papers and magazines are stored and owned by the National Library of Korea. Some of the records have been digitised

[40] http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/saemaul/unesco
[41] https://en.unesco.org/memoryoftheworld/registry/338
[42] https://web.archive.org/web/20050228192535/http://www.geocities.com/seapavaa/whatsnew/memory.htm
[43] The archive can be accessed on the internet. (http://saemaul.udemzi.co.kr/)

and can be accessed via computers at the national library and other records can be requested and physically accessed at the library reading rooms.

For this research, I used written materials of government papers, magazines, presidential speeches and training textbooks. I also consulted visual materials from magazines and pictorials. Prior to my visit to the Korea Saemaul Undong Centre in Seongnam, I did not know about the online Saemaul archives. So, I opted to access written materials at the National Library of Korea in Seoul. At the national library, I was able to access digitised government papers and speeches through the library's computers. For records that were not digitised such as Saemaul magazines and training books, I had to make a request for the records online in advance and access the hard copies in the reading rooms of the library for a limited time. Accessing the National Library was not a challenge for me because all South Korean citizens could sign up as members of the library and be issued with access cards at no cost. Library members are granted access to the library's collection. After learning about Korea Saemaul Undong Centre's online archives, I opted to access the digitised records from their website. This was immensely helpful for continuing the research during COVID-19 lockdowns as I was still able to access the archive materials online despite the travel restrictions.

Most of the written sources in forms of magazines, newspapers and official documents were in the Korean language, so I did not have difficulties understanding and analysing them. However, some written sources contained Chinese letters as it was a common practice in the 1960s and 1970s South Korea. With these sources, I relied on my knowledge of basic Chinese letters, and I also made use of a dictionary on the internet.

Visual materials such as the *Saemaul* magazine and pictorials have been a significant source for this research, especially for my analysis of aesthetic governmentality (see Chapter 4). I was able to access these materials on Saemaul Undong Archives website where they have

been digitalised and uploaded for viewing. Without these visual materials, I would not have understood the optics of development under Saemaul Undong and their governmental and subjective effect. As said by a Korean proverb, *Paengmuni puryŏilgyŏn* (meaning, a picture is worth a thousand words), the pictures not only provided me with visual data but also transported me back to the period, giving me a *feel* of the time. I found this critical in understanding the period because I was researching a time that I have not experienced.

When selecting and analysing the archival sources, I tried to remain careful and inquisitive about them to see if they contain any particular agenda. As a researcher I understand the issue of neutrality within qualitative research and its ethical implications. Simultaneously, I also understand that no knowledge is neutral, making it difficult for all research to be neutral and impartial. So, I dealt with my sources in this spirit. For example, many of the archival sources such as Saemaul magazines and Saemaul leaders training books were produced by the government, serving the government agenda. Saemaul magazine can be best exemplified as a propaganda material. While recognizing that this source was produced and disseminated with certain moral and political values, I try to remain uninvolved personally in the interpretation of the sources. I tried my best to use the sources for constructive purpose of providing wider cultural and historical context in the thesis. The same applies to my family memoir. I acknowledge that my family members and the respondents whom I gained access to through my family members cannot remain value neutral. If a different researcher had interviewed them, they would have received a different text than what I did when I interviewed them.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

While this study obtained an ethics clearance prior to going into the field (protocol number H19/08/12) and it followed the ethical standards of the School of Social Sciences at the

University of the Witwatersrand, there were two ethical issues related to insider research: indirect coercion of the research participants and sharing of controversial data.

A majority of the elderly I met and interviewed were through my grandmother. Since my grandmother was a respected and well-known figure in the village for her role in Women's association and in the Catholic church, I experienced very little difficulties approaching the elderly community. When I introduced myself as Mrs. Kong's granddaughter, I was welcomed and conversations with them would start naturally. As a close relative of an insider of the community, this way of accessing research participants can pose an ethical dilemma. Some of the elderly could have felt obligated or coerced to speak to me because of my grandmother. I tried to mitigate this ethical issue by ensuring the principle of informed consent from all my participants. I made sure my participants were given information about my research and understood the research objectives and process. It was made clear to participants that their participation was voluntary, and they could freely withdraw at any time. On the other hand, my role as someone's granddaughter was a strength when gaining access to participants. If I, as a researcher from a foreign university having no ties to the community, had tried to gain access to any potential respondents, it would have been very difficult. Most importantly, because their level of trust was higher (due to my grandmother), they shared more intimate, personal stories with me. In this case, researching through friends and family worked in my favour.

Another ethical dilemma I could have potentially experienced in the course of this research was the issue of controversial data. I chose to employ an in-depth interview method to hear life stories from the participants. It is an open method where the interviews are semi-structured with only guiding questions. During interviews, my family shared somethings that were deeply personal and private that they might otherwise not disclose to a stranger. My grandmother spoke of experiencing her loss of loved ones or her struggles and shame of trying

to feed her family in times of famine. Since my family were free to share their stories, it could have created a situation in which they share stories or information that were also controversial or sensitive.

Fortunately, none my family members revealed anything that I felt uncomfortable with sharing or documenting. If they had, however, this would have posed an ethical dilemma. What if they shared something that would have provoked feelings of shame and guilt in me or in other family members? What if they revealed that a member of my family had done something that would be considered inappropriate or illegal? Would disclosing some controversial data cause any harm to my participants, who are my close relatives, or to me as a researcher? While protecting participants and the researcher is important (Mauthner, 2023), upholding researcher's integrity and research credibility is also important. Calculating the possible ethical dilemma here in terms of risk-benefit ratio could be one option – do I put my family first? That is, protect participants from my family from controversy? Or do I put the public's interest first and preserve my integrity as a researcher? What are my risks in sharing information which I feel uncomfortable with? And what are the benefits of sharing them? This approach lets the researcher anticipate possible risks and harms to both research and research participants and to devise a technique that would minimize harm.

In the social sciences, ethical dilemmas are context-specific, making it difficult to follow a standard approach to research ethics (Small, 2001; Wiles, Charles, Crow, & Heath, 2006). Another option is to follow Kikumura's call to 'examine (our) needs and motives for conducting research as well as the needs and motives of (our) life history participants.' (1986: 6). Kikumura used life history approach when researching her mother's experiences as a Japanese immigrant woman in 1930s America. As an insider researcher, she also ponders the advantages and limitations of having both insider and outside perspectives in research. Which

perspective can provide us with an 'access to social truth?' (Merton 1972, as cited in Kikumura 1986: 2). Kikumura (1986:3) stresses the importance of a researcher's role to 'evaluate the distinctive advantages and limitations of each perspective in relationship to the problem of research at hand.' Following this advice, I would first investigate whether the piece of revealed data serves my research objectives i.e. it provides an essential insight into the personal experiences of my participants. If it is deemed critical, then I would ask the participant who shared the data how they feel about it and if it was okay for me to disclose the information in publication. I would also ask them if they wish to be anonymised.[44] This would ensure credibility of research and protection of my family.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the methodological and ethical considerations for this research. The first section of the chapter discussed my methodological choices for the research. I adopted qualitative research methods which included in-depth interviews especially life histories, and the analysis of archival documents and records. I have highlighted how my experience of interviewing my family and listening to their life histories have impacted on the research as well as on me personally. I have explained my decision of including archival records and documents in addition to in-depth interviews for triangulation purposes. I have also explained my choice of sources and reflections on accessing and using the sources, given the geopolitical context of South Korea.

[44] I decided to forgo anonymisation after discussions with my family members and other interviewees, who expressed a preference to retain their actual names. My participants and I believed that the individuals involved deserved recognition through the acknowledgment of their real names, particularly given the narrative nature of the research. See Roy (2012) for a similar negotiation of the issue of anonymity when interviewing women political activists.

In the second part of the chapter, I discussed the ethical considerations for the research. I discussed two potential ethical issues related to insider research: indirect coercion of the research participants and sharing of controversial data. I did my best to prevent participants feeling coerced into participating by ensuring informed consent. All of my research participants were guided to feel free to share their personal information and stories and to withdraw from research anytime. I also speculated the possibility of a controversial data being shared by my family and my course of action. I concluded that it is important to treat each research problem at hand differently by first examining the needs and motives of research, while minimizing harm to participants. The next chapter will introduce the first finding from the research, aesthetic governmentality of Saemaul Undong. Using the visual materials from the archive, the chapter will map out how certain kinds of aesthetic norms were created and imposed by the state, and how villagers' conduct and interests were shaped as a result.

Chapter 4 Seeing development: Aesthetic governmentality

4.1 Introduction

Today, many Koreans remember Saemaul Undong as a movement that 'did away with thatched roofs and replaced them with cement (or slate) roofs' (Chŏng, n.d.). This visual transformation of the rural landscape during and after Saemaul Undong left a clear footprint upon Korean people's memories. The movement started off as a rural remodelling project and focused on the rehabilitation and beautification of villages in its early stages of inception. In this chapter, I explore the project's focus on the optics of development and its governmental effect – what kind of aesthetic norms were created and imposed, how they were disseminated, and in what ways villagers' conduct and interests were shaped in their light.

This chapter is divided into six sections. It begins by setting the context of the Saemaul Remodelling project and the aesthetic norms and narrative it proposed for rural areas and villagers. The second section discusses the concept of aesthetic governmentality as an analytical tool to understand how the focus on the visual facilitated the state's will to improve and govern. The subsequent three sections analyse how on three levels – of the landscape, house and the individual – the state's aesthetic norms were produced, normalised and shaped people's interests and their literal ways of seeing. I provide a close reading of archival records from state-published magazines, cartoons, and pictorials. I also draw on my interviews with Saemaul Undong participants as well as existing interviews with former Saemaul leaders in the official Saemaul archives for my analysis. The personal accounts and memories of Saemaul participants showed me how individuals experienced the processes of an aesthetic governmental project. In the final section, I will argue that Saemaul Undong's articulation of

development in terms of visual images was successful, producing a governmental effect of shaping aspiration and the conduct of villagers.

4.2 Saemaul Remodelling Movement

The first mention of Saemaul Undong in the archives can be found in President Park Chung Hee's famous speech of 22 April 1970, delivered during his meeting with the provincial government leaders (C. H. Park, 1970a). In this speech, Park (1970a) lamented how the leaders and the officials in rural development agencies suffered from defeatism and inefficiently maintained the villages, highlighting how some villages were not taking good care of their newly installed agricultural equipment. He saw this as a lack of will in the villagers and their leaders, in making villages 'a better place for living'.

Park revealed how some villages were exceptionally well-maintained, and others were not, urging government officials and rural leaders to take proactive measures in rehabilitating their villages. Some 'hopeful villages', he described, had rehabilitated their environment, and had achieved a new look (C. H. Park, 1970a). These villages were nestled by well-forested mountains with wide, straight roads connecting villages to major national roads. Their houses had replaced thatched roofs with tiled or tin coverings and old fences had been replaced with brick walls. He saw high-yielding crops and vegetables in their fields. All of these images were an indication of the villagers' strong will and determination for their own community's development.

Sindo-ri Village, *Chongdo-eup, Chongdo-gun*, in *Gyeongsangnam-do* (Gyeongsang North Province) was one of the hopeful villages, claimed Park. When the President visited the village in July 1969, he saw that Sindo-ri village looked quite different from other ordinary rural villages. The village paths were wide and had flower beds. The President was impressed with how this village had recovered very quickly despite the recent monsoon flood which

damaged the entire country (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Park attributed this successful aesthetic transformation to the spirit of diligence, self-help, and cooperation in Sindo-ri villagers. Sindo-ri became an inspiration for Park's vision for rural modernisation and Saemaul Undong (C. H. Park, 1970a; as cited in Asian Development Bank, 2012: 5-6):

> There is no hope in the village where villagers' yearning [for a better life] is not evident... If the villagers [themselves] initiate a development initiative, the village community can complete it in 2 or 3 years with only a small amount of government subsidy. It is the responsibility of local government officials to encourage the villagers in this regard. Rural poverty should not be viewed as a pre-destined outcome, but rather confronted with a spirit of self-help and self-support. In the near future, all villages could be well-kept communities. Why not build a village road and bridge within this coming year with your own resources? You could refer to such an initiative as a "Village Remodelling Movement" or a "Making Your Village Comfortable Movement."

According to Park, a village is regarded as promising and hopeful when it can prove that its villagers are enthusiastic about progress. Villagers can show their yearning by transforming the appearance of their villages: voluntarily building a village road or a bridge to demonstrate their ability to maintain their communities. Whereas the same old appearances of villages reflected the same old mentality of the villagers; the modern and well looked after aesthetics of villages meant a change in the villagers' mentality with a strong sense of self-reliance.

Thus, in 1970, Park Chung Hee ordered the launch of Saemaul Remodelling Movement (*Saemaŭl kakkugi undong*). By this time, his government was becoming anxious about the waning support from rural areas. As discussed in the introduction, the 1967 election results showed that a majority of rural peasants seemed to support the opposition party and their pro-agrarian policy. More than before, Park needed to gain a favourable response and trust from rural peasants, who once constituted his widest base of support (S. M. Han, 2004). Park's 1970 speech quickly prompted the government to distribute 335 bags of cement and 0.5 tons of iron

rods to a total of 33,267 villages nationwide (Asian Development Bank, 2012). These materials were used for refurbishing rural infrastructure and beautifying the village surroundings. House roofs, traditionally made with thatch, were replaced with tile or slate coverings. Village paths were either created or widened and bridges were built. Farming facilities of warehouses, compost storage and barns were built. Communal wells, water pipes and laundry yards were made in consideration of women's convenience. Villagers were encouraged to plant trees for reforestation efforts and to make flowerbeds by the wayside. This sparked the first stage of Saemaul Undong, which was focused on village remodelling. It was the beginning of a massive aesthetic transformation of Korean villages.

In his directive for rural rehabilitation, President Park sought to make sure that Korean villages move away from the old, traditional village settings. By the early 1970s, urban cities of Korea had almost completely transformed their landscape thanks to the vigorous industrial developments of the 1960s. The sceneries and skylines of cities had changed drastically. Seoul, for example, had become a metropolitan city with many high risers and well-paved roads. The images of ruined buildings and the destitute streets of Seoul during and right after the Korean war could no longer be found. The rural villages, however, had not developed as much as the urban cities. The roads, buildings and infrastructures of rural villages hardly underwent any transformation at all.

Most of the rural villages, except in a few cases as mentioned by President Park, retained the old, traditional look. The typical Korean rural villages of the 1960s looked pretty much the same as the villages in the early 1900s. The Korean farmhouses were built with wood and mud, capped with thatched roofs of golden yellow colour. The fences were made with thin wooden sticks, held together by straws. The paths in rural villages were narrow and at most invisible because they were improvised from time to time to suit immediate needs of travel. For this reason, motor vehicles could not travel into rural villages, making transportation of

goods and people difficult. In the event of the monsoon floods or excessive snow fall, even people could not move around the villages easily because the paths were not properly paved, and bridges were scarce. Sewerage system and water pipes were almost non-existent in most villages. With 80% of Korea's territory being mountainous, most villages were found on, below or near mountains. Through the years of Japanese rule, war and poverty, the mountains of Korea looked like a bare chest simply because there were so little trees. Years of hunger, poverty and Japanese rule meant that people cut up the woods to use as fuel and food. Basic food ingredients including staple grains were so hard to find, that the poor even scraped the bark of trees to make a soup out of them. During the war, the Japanese plundered the whole of Korea, cutting all the trees and taking crops to Japan for the Pacific war effort. Mountains and fields displayed their bare face of brown soil. The visual images of rural villages in Korea were not only representative of the traditional way of life but also contained memories of destitution, trauma and hardship through the first half of the century.

Soon after Park's 1970 speech which sparked the Saemaul Remodelling Movement, images of ideal Saemaul villages started pouring in. Television, movies, magazines and photos showed rural villages now transformed with lush green fields and mountains, village paths well-paved and widened, houses with roof tiles painted in bright colours, and villagers at collective work to implement these changes. The images of rehabilitated villages were a visual interpretation of President Park's concept of a *better life*. Park Chung Hee was a strong proponent of rural modernisation. With the rural population still making up to 80% of the total, it was an important part of his grand ambition for achieving national modernisation. Park wanted rural villagers to have the same vision as him and the way of life it required. For Park, the end goal of rural modernisation was a better life. A better life, alternatively referred to as *living better* or a *prosperous life* in many of Park's speeches, meant a materially rich and prosperous life.

A boost in rural income was critical so that one's children would not go hungry. Images of vast green fields growing high-yielding crops and small home businesses like basket weaving would often appear in magazines. Modern lifestyle and efficiency were emphasised. Traditional kitchens were renovated or re-built to accommodate a new way of cooking with coal instead of firewood. Tractors and pick-up trucks now passed through widened roads. New washing yards were built with cement, equipped with built-in pipes and communal wells, so women no longer carried water or walked to streams to wash their clothes. The images of transformed villages were encouraged to be shared throughout the country. Whether you go to a village in Jeollanam-do – the south region of Korea – or *Gangwon-do* – in the north – the ideal Saemaul village would look almost identical and serve as a constant. A better life also meant having a certain transformed attitude to life. Park (1970a) stressed,

> You can live a genuinely better life only when you become diligent and strong in the sense of independence, and work hard in helping each other, thus permitting you and your neighbours to live well, and making your village and your country a good place to live.

Images of villagers working collectively in the fields were dominant. Even when one or two people were pictured, they were always seen to be *productive*. They were either busy fixing the roof or watering the flowers; they were never idle. In order to improve the village environment, you as a rural villager, needed to be hard-working and enthusiastic. Once you had achieved the look of a modernised Saemaul village, you proved that you deserved a better life. The Korean state's attempt to conduct the conduct of rural villagers through Saemaul Undong was made possible through this strong visual campaign. Whether it was intended or not, the aesthetic norms produced, circulated and imposed at the time had a profound impact on villagers' collective consciousness and subjectivities. The aesthetic norms affected the way

villagers imagined, conceptualised and aspired for their landscape, houses and ultimately, their selves.

4.3 Aesthetic governmentality

Between the previous attempts of fostering rural upliftment in Korea and the 1970's Saemaul Remodelling movement (the first stage of Saemaul Undong), there was an important shift. The shift involved an emphasis on the visual representation of rural life. Prior to Saemaul Undong, areas of intervention in rural development were mostly limited to increasing agricultural production through modern farming techniques and educating rural peasants to adopt attitudes of self-help and a modern lifestyle. Campaigns, showing visual materials illustrating how rural development would (or should) look like, were less common. When Saemaul Undong initiated with the project of Saemaul remodelling in 1970, the state's rural government scheme became more visually oriented with the use of visual materials that modelled aesthetic ideals for the entire rural belt.

This chapter takes Asher Ghertner's (2010; 2015) concept of aesthetic governmentality as a point of departure for understanding the importance and implications of the shift towards the optics of development. Aesthetic governmentality is a mechanism of power whereby the state (or the regime of government) attempts to conduct the conduct of its people by imposing a set of aesthetic norms. These aesthetic norms, in the form of ideal images or appearances, are used to promote certain kinds of capabilities in the governed, eliciting changes in people's subjectivities and in their conduct. Ghertner's book, *Ruled by Aesthetics* (2015:1), is a study of how the government of a population in New Delhi, India was made possible through imposing a set of aesthetic norms, rather than scientific knowledge. His case study of slums in urban Delhi illustrates how – even without accurate statistics and maps of a given population and

territory – guiding the conduct of slum residents from a distance can be managed through disseminating the narrative of 'a world-class aesthetics' (Ghertner, 2015:1).

The main thesis of Ghertner's study is that counting (accurate scientific knowledge and norms, often acquired through the practice of counting and making statistics) is not the only calculative foundation for governing. The calculative foundation of rule is 'the epistemological basis on which information is gathered, knowledge assembled, and *truths* verified so as to guide and manage a population's interests' (Ghertner, 2010: 186-187). The case of urban Delhi in India shows that aesthetic politics can also provide a calculative foundation of rule where aesthetic norms are used to obtain knowledge about the governed population and territory as well as to guide their interests and conduct. This directly challenges the conventional notion of *governing by numbers* whereby governmentality scholars (Foucault, 2007; Rose, 1999) believe that mechanisms of power functions through scientific knowledge such as the identifying and quantifying of population and territory through statistics and mapping.

James C. Scott (1998), in his well-known book *Seeing like a state*, looks at a number of state schemes from around the world that aim to govern population groups and space. These states with a high-modernist view seek to achieve legibility to see clearly and know the subjects they wish to govern and into whose lives they wish to intervene. Mapping and measurement were important instruments to attain legibility as tools of governing by numbers. Scott also discusses an important part of the visual representation employed by these state schemes: proposing and imposing certain aesthetic norms like modern planned villages. He explains how 'the carriers of high modernism tended to see rational order in remarkably visual aesthetic terms. For them, an efficient, rationally organised city, village, or farm was a city that looked regimented and orderly in a geometrical sense' (Scott, 1998: 4).

Scott (1998) introduces Tanzania's Ujamaa village campaign from 1973 to 1976 as a state effort at settling its population in villages with a focus on visual aesthetics. Nyerere's high modernist administration designed these villages to be modern rural spaces with a tidy and legible layout. It was expected that these villages would be inhabited by a modern, disciplined and productive peasantry as well. Unlike the case of Saemaul Undong, the Ujamaa village campaign was met with much resistance from Tanzanian peasants. The Tanzanian authority might have been able to change the rules and regulations which enforced the resettlement, but it failed to govern its population in changing the preferences and behaviour of the peasantry. A similar response can be seen in Ethiopia's ideal state villages of the 1970s (Scott, 1998).

Here, I would like to take note of the ability of states to disseminate aesthetic norms and to standardise them. The training of the eyes of the public to *see(ing) like a state* (indeed a very famous phrase coined by Scott) is a critical element of aesthetic governmentality. The effect of training how to see (like a state) extends beyond forcing a visual representation on a population through regulations. It is a synchronisation of perspective; the ways of seeing the landscape and the self, leading one to believe that what a state sees *is* what one sees, allowing aspirations and visions of the state to become one's own aspirations and visions.

Scott's accounts of state legibility schemes are limited in the sense that they only explain why they have failed, mostly focusing on how the states regulated and used force to govern the peasantry without understanding their nature and habit. It is hoped that this chapter will contribute to the literature of aesthetic governmentality, by examining the case of Saemaul Undong's visual campaign – how the imposing of aesthetic norms as a technology of government can effectively govern villages and peasants with minimal resistance. I argue that this was achieved through training *how to see*, and the synchronisation of state aspirations with peasants' own.

The visual campaigns of Saemaul Undong, whether they were intended or not, formed an important *calculative foundation* of government. Aesthetic norms of modern rural life as shown in visual image and description were powerful tools of gathering knowledge about the population and the territory, and to construct intelligible fields for intervention (almost as important as the lectures given at Saemaul leaders training institutes or texts from the newspapers and magazines). There was a clear visual representation of the ideal modern rural life, espoused in Park's grand scheme of national modernisation, informing whether a village looked promising (modern, tidy and new) or not. Eventually, the rural villagers themselves were guided to see and judge their villages (and even themselves) in the same way as the state saw.

The aesthetic norms produced during Saemaul Undong were used to inform the field of intervention in two ways: first, the people and the territory (i.e. the villages). If a village looked old and traditional it meant that the village needed intervention. Villages with traditional Korean thatched roofs, narrow pathways, walls made with straws and rough patches of field with no clear-cut boundaries were all regarded as outdated and *not modern*. The outdated nature of the villages was narrated with a guide around its visuality, which implied that they needed to be modernised and changed. This also meant that if villages *looked* modern, they were regarded as modernised and better off. The look of newly laid roof tiles of bright colours, widened village pathways and clearly demarcated fields all symbolised modernity and thus a success of the Saemaul Undong campaign in the village. It was a similar case with people, the villagers. The official Saemaul Undong pictorials and magazines displayed ideal images of Saemaul leaders and villagers, looking busy and occupied, which implied a materialisation of the spirit of diligence, one of three Saemaul spirits. They were always seen working – tilling the ground, harvesting the crops, repairing bridges and making straw baskets for added income.

The visual representation of modern, tidy villages and its hard-working residents as the *ideal* made it possible for the state to guide the conduct of Korean rural villagers from a distance.

4.4 *Maul* - The landscape

Saemaul Undong's primary unit of focus was maul (village). Unlike the previous state development schemes which aimed at rural communities at large, Saemaul projects were planned and carried out at village level. Each village had its own Saemaul leaders (one male and one female) and acted under their guidance. In this section, I will show that Saemaul Undong's visual campaign was made an effective tool of aesthetic governmentality mainly because villages became visible. By *visible*, I mean that the village, as a physical space, can be seen and observed with human eyes. While maul is mostly conceptualised as community in most Saemaul literature, I also approach maul as a geographical unit with its own sceneries and landscape.[45] Hence, at the level of village, its development and progress are presented and measured in visual materials.

4.4.1 The Saemaul aesthetic

The word, Saemaul, is a direct translation of a new village. As the name suggests, Saemaul Undong aimed to bring changes to rural villages and most importantly, to their appearances. This new look, what I call the Saemaul aesthetic, embodied the Park regime's drive toward national modernisation – a break from the past and creating a new history for the Korean nation. The Saemaul aesthetic became a standard image for Korean rural villages for many decades to come. A model Saemaul village looked modern, urban-like and materially affluent. Residents of a model Saemaul were cooperative and hard-working, whilst still enjoying a cultured and dignified lifestyle.

[45] Saemaul Undong's use of maul as a unit of focus is claimed to have empowered rural communities and their leaders, further strengthening Korea's social capital (See S.I. Jun 2010 and S. Park 2009).

The image on the front cover of a 1974 *Saemaul* pictorial book (Figure 2.1) is a good example of the Saemaul aesthetic. The village in the picture is seen with straight wide roads that possibly have convenient access to an urban city. The clearly demarcated fields are busy growing crops. The houses in the village have removed thatched roofs and replaced them with tin or colourfully painted slate coverings.

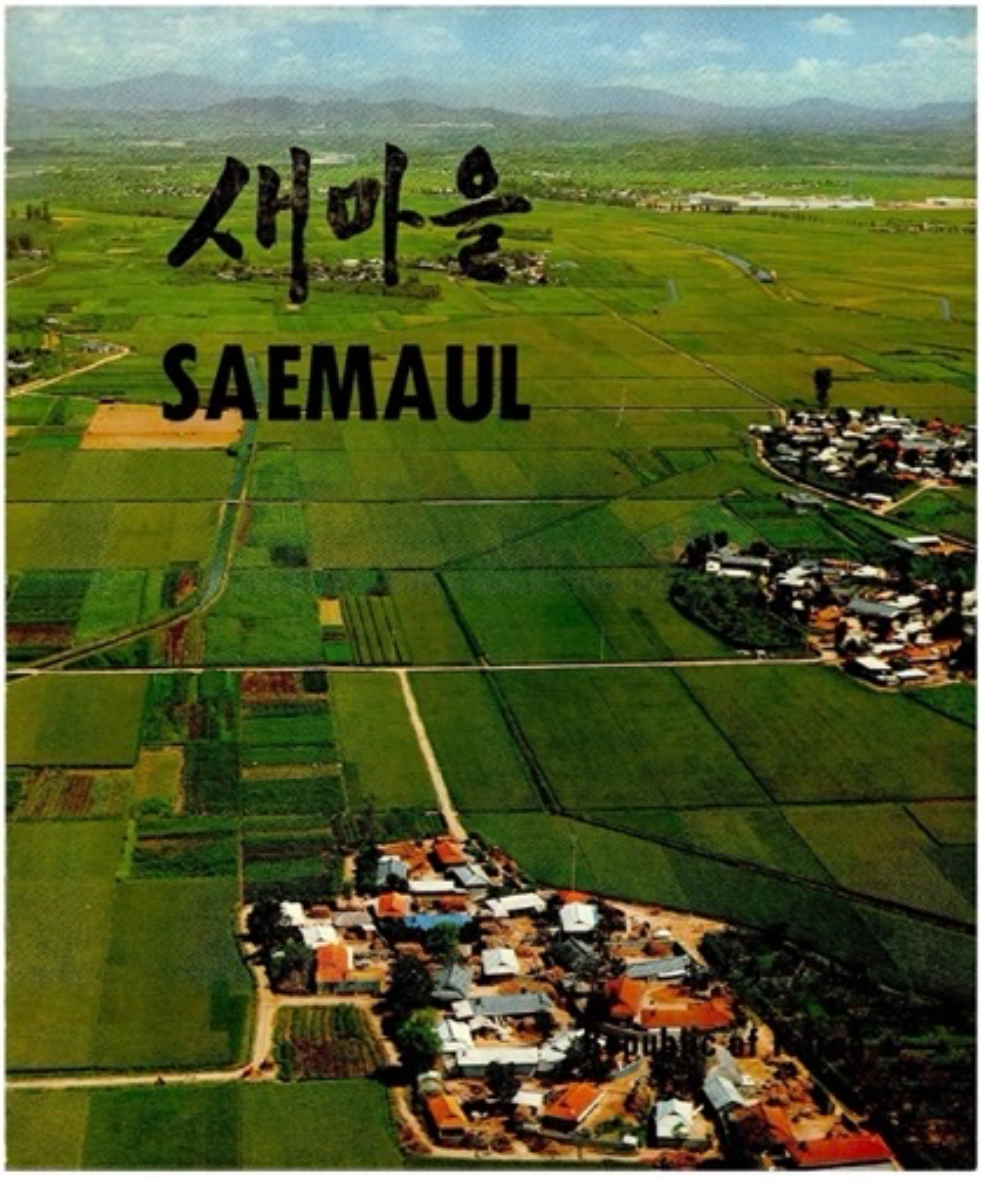

FIGURE 13. Front cover. *Saemaul* Pictorial (1974).[46]

[46] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/byType/view/139434?searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%20%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4&pg=6 [accessed January 23, 2020]).

With the Saemaul aesthetic established as the model appearance of rural villages in Korea, villagers learned a novel way of seeing their own villages. When villagers saw straight, wide and well-paved village paths, they saw these images as tokens of development and progress. Prior to the 1970s, the image of a rural village adorned with modern roofs and widened village pathways was an unfamiliar image. At least by then, people were familiar with thatched roofs. This perception was to be changed as the media framed the traditional structures as inefficient and outdated. More and more people started to see the thatched roof as a sign of outdatedness and laziness. On the other hand, images of widely paved village paths and colourfully painted slate roofs were accepted as symbols of modernity, presented as positive and desirable.

Saemaul was a monthly magazine published by *Taehan'gongnonsa* (Korea Public Information Inc.) and the Ministry of Culture and Public Information, which widely popularised the Saemaul aesthetic through its reports, photos, and opinion pieces. The 1974 May edition of *Saemaul* magazine published articles written by two prominent figures who re-visited their hometowns after living for years in Seoul, the capital of Korea (Saemaul, 1974). The first article is a piece by a poet, Mr. Hwang Kŭmch'an, recounting his visit to his rural hometown. He managed to visit his home for a writing conference after years of staying in Seoul. Throughout this piece, the writer spends a good deal of time describing what he saw (views from the plane, bus, and his own eyes) during his stay:

> My hometown was no longer the old hometown I knew. The thatched roof house, in which I lived with much affection, was nowhere to be found. Instead, a big house with tiled roof was there. My village was no longer the sickened poor rural farm village… Fields next to national roads were arranged neatly in straight lines, and houses with thatched roof could not be seen. I almost mistook my hometown to be a farm village in the Netherlands or a peaceful village in Denmark. Seeing my hometown living such a good life fills me with infinite joy (K. C. Hwang, 1974: 77).

It is interesting to note how the writer constantly describes his visual observations. The sight of tiled roofs, straight and clean roads were all visual cues, making the writer believe that his hometown was now enjoying a better life. The writer also describes the new, unfamiliar images of his hometown as a desirable aesthetic, and he associates the past images with being 'sickened poor'. Framing the unfamiliar, yet modern aesthetics of the village as a desirable aesthetic norm continues throughout the magazine's May edition. The second article tells experiences of Mr. Kim Chinkyu, a movie star, during his visit to his hometown, written in the form of an open letter to the Saemaul leader of his home village. The actor describes the excitement and pride he felt during the visit:

> When I went back to my hometown last year, I was astonished by the changes I saw in the village. I almost thought I was in a different village… I could not hide my excitement, knowing that all these changes took place in just a few months. The village paths and farm roads were clean and straight. The fences were neat and well-kept. The roofs were well covered in tiles… I was proud of my village and its Saemaul leader for having worked so hard (C. K. Kim, 1974: 124).

The actor admits he could hardly recognize his hometown as it looked so different from how it did in the past, but he finds such a transition *exciting* and *proud*, because he considers it as proof of the hard work undertaken by the Saemaul leaders and the villagers. The strange and unfamiliar images of his home village have now become a source of pride and happiness.

Consider a poem, published in the same edition of Saemaul magazine with title, *Bright times*:

> Paths open
> Electricity enters
> Television's antenna rise
> Talking about the whole world
> The Western movie is full of screen in this mountain village
> Our heads are dazed with scenes from London, Paris and New York
> Love scene of a young couple fills our bedroom
> The Saemaul wave fills the whole nation

> Our times are brightened
> With TV screens (Saemaul, 1974: 1).

The sceneries from western movies, of great cities of New York, Paris and London are sceneries foreign and strange to the villagers in Korea of the early 1970s. Yet, these images are described as having 'brightened' the times and look of the rural village. The idea of urban-like rural areas is then re-enforced as something desirable – to desire for and aspire to. Although the villagers are physically in rural areas, they are connected to the rest of the globe. Images of great metropolitan cities are delivered to rural Korean villages through television (modern technology). Accessibility to modern technology and foreign images (of global cities) are presented as something exciting and positive because they have brightened the villages.

The association of a new visual standard of rural villages with feelings of excitement and joy clearly trained the way ordinary villagers saw their own homes. Note the following excerpt from an interview with my respondent (K.M. Yun, personal communication, June 11, 2020). When asked if she remembers how she felt when she saw the changes in rural villages, she recounted:

> I remember… As for the people who lived in semi urban-rural areas, we naturally felt and experienced many things about the rural villages, not that we would try hard to remember. First of all, the houses were… *bright*? I felt that the houses were brightened. These houses did away with thatched roofs and changed (to cement roof tiles) with brighter colours.

In her remark, the changes to rural villages are described in visual terms, as having brightened the villages. We could say that this respondent had been trained to see like the state, as Scott (1998) famously put it. The surprising similarity in how the Saemaul aesthetic was seen, by the media and ordinary villagers alike, tells us about the power of the visual. When visual norms

are created and disseminated, they become potential tools of governing a population's interests and ways of seeing, aspiring and becoming.

4.4.2 Rendering technical

> The roof was decayed with one side completely fallen down. The walls have collapsed, so the soil and stones lay all over the yard. The compost was piled up in a mess right in front of the room. When you enter the village, you're not sure which is the road and which is the rice field. The land is completely disorganised. If you look at the mountain behind the villages, there are no trees so it looks like it's been peeled off. People have dug the ground, I don't know why, causing red soil to sit on the road. It looks like wounds on a man's skin who has suffered from boils. When I look at a farming village in this kind of state, I think that even though this village receives the government's help for a hundred years, *there is no hope for development*. I haven't visited each household of such village, so I don't know them well. However, *even by the looks of it, this village is destined to fail*.

The above excerpt from Park Chung Hee's 1970 speech indicates how Park associated visual appearances with a state of mind (C. H. Park, 1970a). According to him, the villages that were poorly maintained showed no hope for development. The broken fences and narrow village paths meant that the residents of the village were too lazy to repair them and that they had no enthusiasm for their own village's development. Thus, the appearance of the village served as an indicator of its potential for progress and development ('Even by the looks of it, this village is destined to fail'). Saemaul Undong used its own classification system to assess villages according to their development stage. Villages were classified into three groups: underdeveloped (basic village), developing (self-help villages), and developed villages (self-reliant villages). The criteria for a level upgrade included improving the state of village roads (i.e. widening and paving of village paths), residential environment (i.e. roof replacement), farming facilities, cooperative activities, and income level (Yang, 2012). For example, for an underdeveloped village (basic village) to be upgraded to a developing village, it needed to meet

the requirement of replacing 70% of the village's total number of thatched roofs. That village roads and residential environment were included as prioritised criteria for assessing village's development stage indicates that the Saemaul aesthetic, as the standardised "new aesthetics" for rural villages functioned as a crucial criterion.

This section explores how the rural improvement project of Saemaul was effectively problematised as well as rendered technical with aid of the visual. Here, I borrow Tania Murray Li's concept of *rendering technical*, where the term refers to a set of processes representing 'the domain to be governed as an intelligible field with specifiable limits and particular characteristics . . . defining boundaries, rendering that within them visible, assembling information about that which is included and devising techniques to mobilise the forces and entities thus revealed' (Murray Li, 2007: 7). To render a set of processes technical and improvable, explains Murray Li, 'an arena of intervention must be bounded, mapped, characterised, and documented; the relevant forces and relations must be identified; and a narrative must be devised connecting the proposed intervention to the problem it will solve' (Murray Li, 2007: 126).

The Saemaul aesthetic played a pivotal role in identifying and characterising an area of intervention. Bluntly represented by slate roofs and wide straight village paths, this new standardised appearance for villages served as the ruler against which all villages were measured. Apart from the statistics (for example, the number of roofs replaced or percentage of increase in village income), villages were known as well as judged through their images. Visual images were thus effective tools to render Saemaul Remodelling project technical.

According to Murray Li (2007: 7), questions which are rendered technical are also rendered nonpolitical: 'for the most part, experts tasked with improvement exclude the structure of political-economic relations from their diagnoses and prescriptions'. A similar observation was made by James Ferguson (1994) in his book, *Anti-Politics Machines*, in which

he notes the depoliticisation of the socio-economic causes of poverty, in the name of development in the 1970s Lesotho. While a study is required on its own to see whether the Saemaul Remodelling project would fit into the argument of Murray Li or Ferguson or not, the case of creating village paths suggests that the state may have aimed to render this progress technical and visual alone. The framing of development in terms of visual appearances contributed to depoliticisation in the process of creating village paths to a certain extent. But as it will be discussed below, the process of improving village paths was political as well as social.

Creating and improving village paths was a complex task because, where the concept of village path was non-existent, it often required that landowners give up a portion of their private land to create space for making new paths. The project of securing village paths as wide and straight thus involved political processes of community consensus and tenacious persuasion from Saemaul leaders. In several recorded interviews from the Saemaul Undong Archives, Saemaul leaders recalled that persuading fellow villagers and landowners to give away their land for free was one of the most challenging experiences. When it came to dealing with villagers who protested giving up their private land or replacing their roofs, the state did not maintain a centralised policy in terms of compensation. Interview records of former Saemaul leaders suggest that different leaders and their villages dealt with these issues differently to suit their own circumstances. In most cases, Saemaul leaders tried their best to persuade the reluctant landowners by frequently visiting the landowners' homes with gifts like liquor and cigarettes, hoping to win over their hearts and get them to give away their land for communal purposes. For instance, in April 1972, *JoongAang Ilbo*[47] (meaning Central Daily), featured an article entitled *A Visit to Standard Project Site*, which presented a vignette of a rural Saemaul project in *Dongsan-ri* village, *Nonsan*. Quoting from the interview with the

[47] JoongAng Ilbo is one of the 3 major daily newspapers published in South Korea.

village's Saemaul leader, Mr. Hwang, the article described how the leader and his fellow youth group found it very challenging to persuade big landowners to give away their land. Young people in the village, including Mr. Hwang, took the initiative by tearing down the walls of their own houses, offering up land, and then persuaded other landowners to sign and seal the Oath of Contribution to the land. A majority of the younger people followed their wishes, but some elderly people did not readily comply. The young people, led by village leader Mr. Hwang, were able to persuade them over twenty days and finally got their consent. In some villages, landowners were compensated (although not in full market value) from village collective funds or from Saemaul leaders' own pockets. A Saemaul leader, Mr. I.W. I explained that he gave his own land to his fellow villagers who had to contribute their land for village paths so that these villagers and their families had a place to stay (I. W. I, n.d.).

In addition to home visits and continuous talks, a visit to a model village was one of the methods used to allow reluctant landowners to *see* the model villages with their newly paved village paths. Mr. J. S. Kim, who served as a civil servant at the time of Saemaul Undong in Dowha, told me in an interview that when landowners were being difficult and would not give away their land, they were forced to visit neighbouring model villages and then they would change their mind and agree to donate their land (J. S. Kim, personal communication, September 10, 2019):

D. Jeong: What kind of success?
J.S. Kim: Village paths. *Undae* Village was selected as an excellent village from the total of 56 villages in Goheung. So we show them this village so they can say, 'I went there and I saw that village was good'
D. Jeong: After you showed them [the village], did they change their minds?
J.S. Kim: Yes, sure. These are the people who didn't budge an inch. But we took them there and showed them.
D. Jeong: Oh, so they can go and see?
J. S. Kim: Yes.
D. Jeong: And did they change their minds?

> **J. S. Kim:** Yes, but no compensation for their land, whether the land was 100 *pyung*[48] or 10 pyung, they were not paid for the land.

The case of Dowha village from Mr. Kim's interview suggests that the impact of the neighbouring village's visual transformation was so strong that landowners who were not willing to give away their land before, changed their minds after *seeing* the model. Mr. Kim's account of 'changed opinion after seeing the complete roof replacement' is supported by other Saemaul leaders who also give similar explanations (I. W. I, n.d.; C. P. Pak, n.d.). On the other hand, there were also extreme cases where persuasion or the *sightseeing* to a model village did not work and landowners were then coerced into giving up their land, often with assistance (and pressure) from Saemaul officials, as it will be seen with the case of roof replacement in the next section.

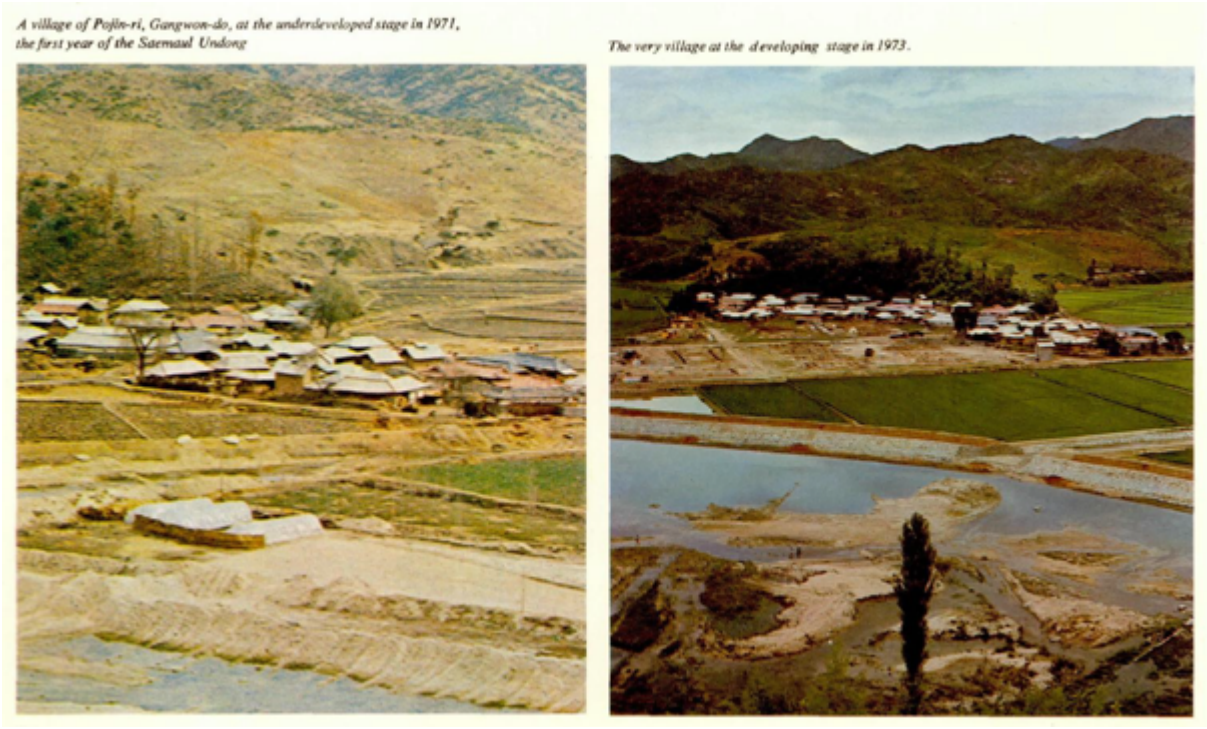

FIGURE 14. Photos showing transformation of *Pojin-ri*. *Saemaul* Pictorial (1973)[49]

[48] *Pyung* is a traditional Korean unit of measurement. 1 pyung is equivalent to approximately 3.31 square metres.

[49] Figs. 14–16 retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/byType/view/139412?searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%20%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4&pg=6 [accessed January 23, 2020]).

4.5 *Jip* – The House

> About 500 students were assembled in the hall. I gave a slideshow presentation about Saemaul Remodelling project. Right then, one female student raised her hand and asked a question, 'The thatched roofs in rural villages have ingenuous and natural charm on their own. Then, why replace the thatched roofs?' I answered, 'They may look good but repairing thatched roofs require lots of straws and manpower. Wouldn't it be more productive to use the same straws towards feeding the cattle and making baskets?' (Ko, 2013, April 9)

Upgrading residential housing was a major component of Saemaul Remodelling movement and the subsequent Saemaul Undong. The common terms describing housing upgrade were *urban-like* and *efficiency*, in line with the state's grand project of rural modernisation. Building structures of rural houses were either replaced or remodelled to incorporate modern materials and design. Traditionally, kitchens in Korean houses were built with wood and clay, designed for cooking with firewood as well as to provide heating for the house. The new kitchens were refurbished with higher counter-tops, allowing cooking while standing. Kitchen walls, floor and counter-tops made of clay and wood were now replaced with ceramic tiles. Food was now cooked using briquettes instead of firewood. Rural houses also equipped themselves with water pumps and taps in order to reduce the burden of villagers having to draw water daily from community wells. Electrification and installing telephones were part of the housing upgrade project, leading to an increased use in electronics such as television, refrigerator, and fans (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Most notable, of the Saemaul housing upgrade scheme, was the replacement of thatched roofs in rural houses.

In the first year of implementation of Saemaul Remodelling movement in 1972 alone, 423,000 houses had replaced their thatched (straw) roofs with slate roofs or tiled roofs. Slate roofs, as they were widely known, were corrugated asbestos-cement sheets. They were great alternatives to more expensive and heavy clay tiles. These slate roofs were regarded as

innovative materials in that they were light in weight, reduced the risk of flammability of construction materials, reduced the costs of labour and materials required by thatched roofs in their maintenance and replacement. Rural support and responses to the slate roofs were quite overwhelming. From 1972 to 1978, a total of 2,628,000 homes had replaced their thatched roofs with slate roofs (see Table 1.1). This was a significant number, considering that rural villagers had to finance the roof replacement by themselves, with little or no government subsidy. The fact that rural villagers had to bear most of the costs for roof replacement may partly explain the state's efforts to convince villagers to buy into the new aesthetic model of the village home. Thatched roofs were replaced with slate roofs at a rapid speed. By the 1980s, thatched roofs were already a rare sight in rural villages of Korea.

Table 1. Annual achievement of roof replacement projects
(thousands of homes)

Year	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Units Replaced	423	476	401	338	466	494	30
Running Total	423	899	1,300	1,638	2,104	2,598	2,628

Source: Asian Development Bank (2012)

Aside from its efficiency and convenience, slate roofs boasted their new looks – colourful and luxurious. Slate roof pieces were painted in bright colours like red, green and blue. The presence of slate roofs added multiple colours to the rural scenery – which seemed like a monochromatic photo before. The idea of painting slate roofs in colours originated in one Saemaul leader, Mr. Chŏng Hwan Sŏng. In his recorded interview, Leader Chŏng said that he had given his advice to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Korea Slate Inc.,[50] Kim In Tŏk, to paint his slate pieces in five colours of yellow, pink, green, blue sky and red. Leader

[50] Korea Slate Inc. was a major slate manufacturer in Korea at the time.

Chŏng thought the mosaic of these colours, representing the four seasons of Korea, would add to beautifying the scenery of rural villages. President Park Chung Hee reportedly also remarked when he saw photos of the painted slate roofs, 'What a change! They look beautiful indeed.' (H. S. Chŏng, n.d.) The addition of colours to slate roofs spread to the rest of Korean villages like a wildfire and soon became the standard aesthetics for rural scenery. The Media published photos of exemplary Saemaul villages, adorned with slate roofs painted in multiple colours. The bright colours of the roofs were easily noticeable even when photos were taken from bird's eye view or from afar, leaving a far more strong and vivid impression than thatched roofs. It is difficult to verify whether the painting of the slate roofs in different colours was indeed an original idea of Saemaul leader, Chŏng, according to his personal account. The idea might have originated from the state or government officials – or the CEO of Korea Slate himself. It is important, however, to note that the state and its Saemaul Undong took advantage of this new aesthetics to convince and shape people's desires and perspectives toward modernisation and development.

Another selling point for slate roofs was that they looked somewhat similar to tiled roofs. Tiled roofs, made of clay, were used by Koreans as early as BC 300s. Korean tile-making techniques were so advanced and sophisticated that they were popular export products to neighbouring countries like Japan. Some luxury tiles were even made of ceramic. Tiled roofs, however, were only found in houses of the rich and noblemen due to high costs and the professional craftsmanship they required. Tiled roofs thus have long been a symbol of luxury and affluence in rural Korea. Slate roofs, although made of new materials of cement and asbestos, made villagers to feel as if they have been made affluent and better off. Consider a comment from a former Saemaul leader:

> When we first started Saemaul Undong, only the roofs had been replaced with cemented roofs, but I already felt as if the house had become a *palace*. If Saemaul Undong took

> place not in the 1970s, but before, that would have provided an opportunity for Korea to become richer than other great nations[51] (C. S. Chŏng, n.d.).

The changes in the look of the roofs alone were significant for this Saemaul leader, making him feel as if he was now living in a *palace*. The replacement of roofs did not thus only enhance efficiency but also had a huge impact on the feelings of residents. The new aesthetics of rural villages provided different possibilities for self-imagining as well as the self's relation to the world in terms of hopes and aspirations (H. Moore, 2011; cited in Jakimow: 35). Rural villagers' comprehension of the self and their immediate environment did not only take account their current experiences of poverty. Their self-understanding was greatly influenced by the new *modern rural* aesthetic norms that have been presented to them in visual materials. Moore claims that it is through 'focusing on the sensations, emotions, feelings and intensities that are not captured by power and systems of signification [that] reconnect[s] the human subject to the material world . . . and its potential for change and transformation' (H. Moore, 2011: 170, as cited in Jakimow, 2015: 35). Imageries invoke sensations and feelings that in turn lead to endless possibilities for self-making. As the former Saemaul leader commented that his house felt like a palace with the new roof, we can discern the feelings of immense pride and joy that emerged simply by the look of his immediate environment.

By implementing Saemaul Remodelling project and the use of a visual campaign, Park Chung Hee's government and the mass media sought to provide imageries (and presenting them as desirable) as resources to guide individuals' conduct of themselves and their aspirations. Whereas in Moore's (2011) observation, sensations and feelings lead to indefinite possibilities of self-making (spontaneous and unfixed), in Saemaul Undong's case, the

[51] 새마을운동을 시작하면서 초가지붕을 없애고 슬레이트로 바꾸기만 했는데도 집이 대궐이나 마찬가지였습니다. 만약 새마을운동이 70 년대가 아닌 그 전에 이루어졌다면 다른 대국(大國)보다 더 잘살 수 있는 기회가 됐을 거라고 생각합니다. (정종수)

possibilities of self-imagining were a little more guided by the Saemaul aesthetic norms. It all began with training ways to see.

In most of the state published Saemaul pictorials and magazines, one can find *before and after* photos of rural houses. Figure 15 shows before and after photos of *Yangbul* village in *Gwangju-gun*. The *before* picture, on the left, was taken in 1971. The caption below says, 'Photo taken before Saemaul Undong began – looking shabby and miserable'. The before picture shows a typical Korean traditional house build with clay, capped with thatched roof and surrounded by a straw fence. In front of the house is a small brook where women come to do their laundry. The caption dismisses the image of traditional house as shabby and miserable, painting the image as undesirable. Right next to the *before* photo is the *after* photo, which was taken in 1973. The after photo shows a completely different image of the house, now remodelled with new slate tiled roofs, straw fence replaced with bricks and with a wide village road in front of the house. The caption says, 'The villagers continued grooming the village and have now completed replacing the roofs. Now they can live in an environment that is beautiful and clean. The village's old image is nowhere to be found'. The caption describes the new look of the house and village as the ideal image of the rural home - beautiful and clean.

Figure 16 also shows before and after photos of rural houses, titled 'Roof replacement and beautifying of the house'. The caption next to the photos reads, 'In any Saemaul (village), the most noticeable is the scenery of roofs being replaced. When a farmer sees his new village refreshed and remodelled, his heart is filled with love for his own village and motivation to work harder. Villagers have now found the joy of living– they diligently mend their houses and also buy new houses.' The caption ('most noticeable') directs the readers' eyes to the newly replaced roofs and guide them to view the new roofs as the most striking feature of a Saemaul. By choosing words like love, joy and motivation, Saemaul authority (the state) seeks to associate the new aesthetics of the slate roofs with positive emotions and feelings.

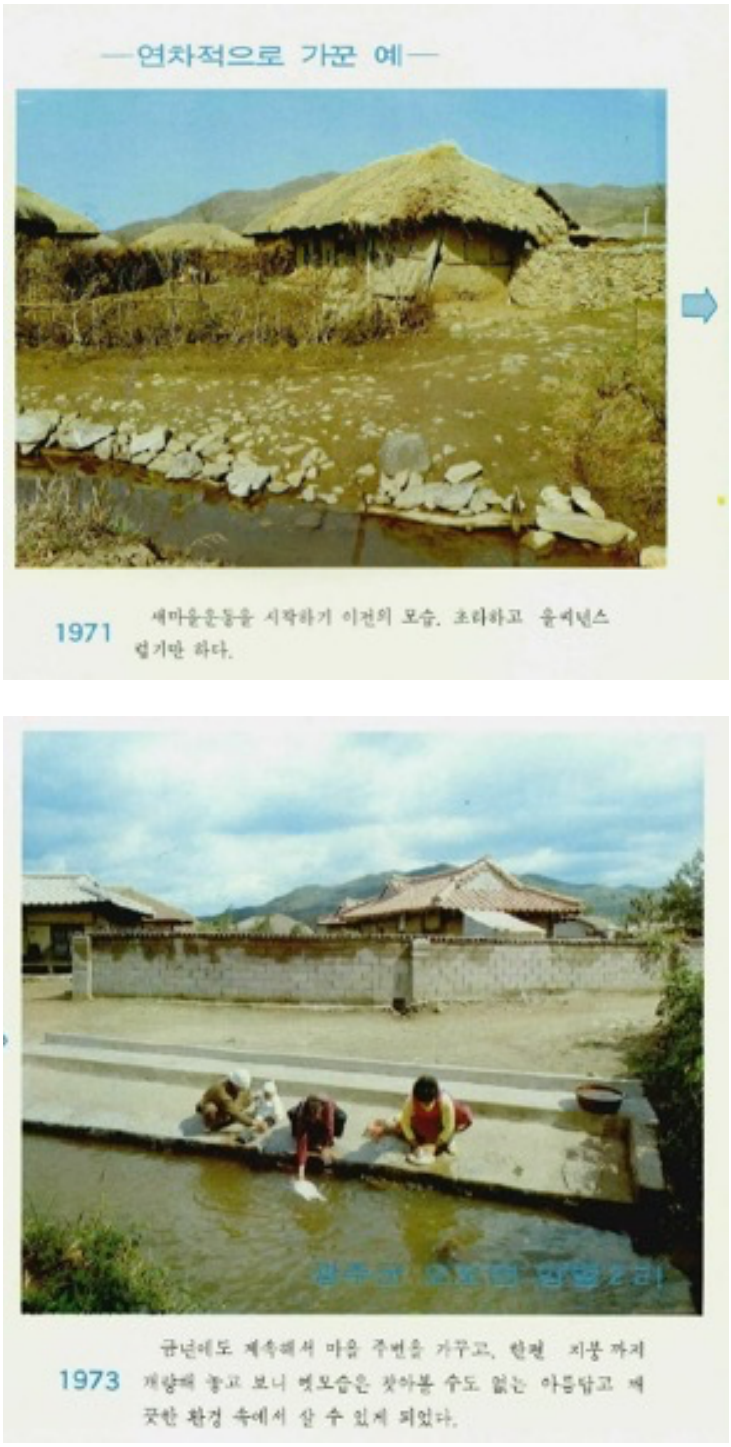

FIGURE 15. Before and after' photos of *Yangbul* village in *Gwangju-gun*.

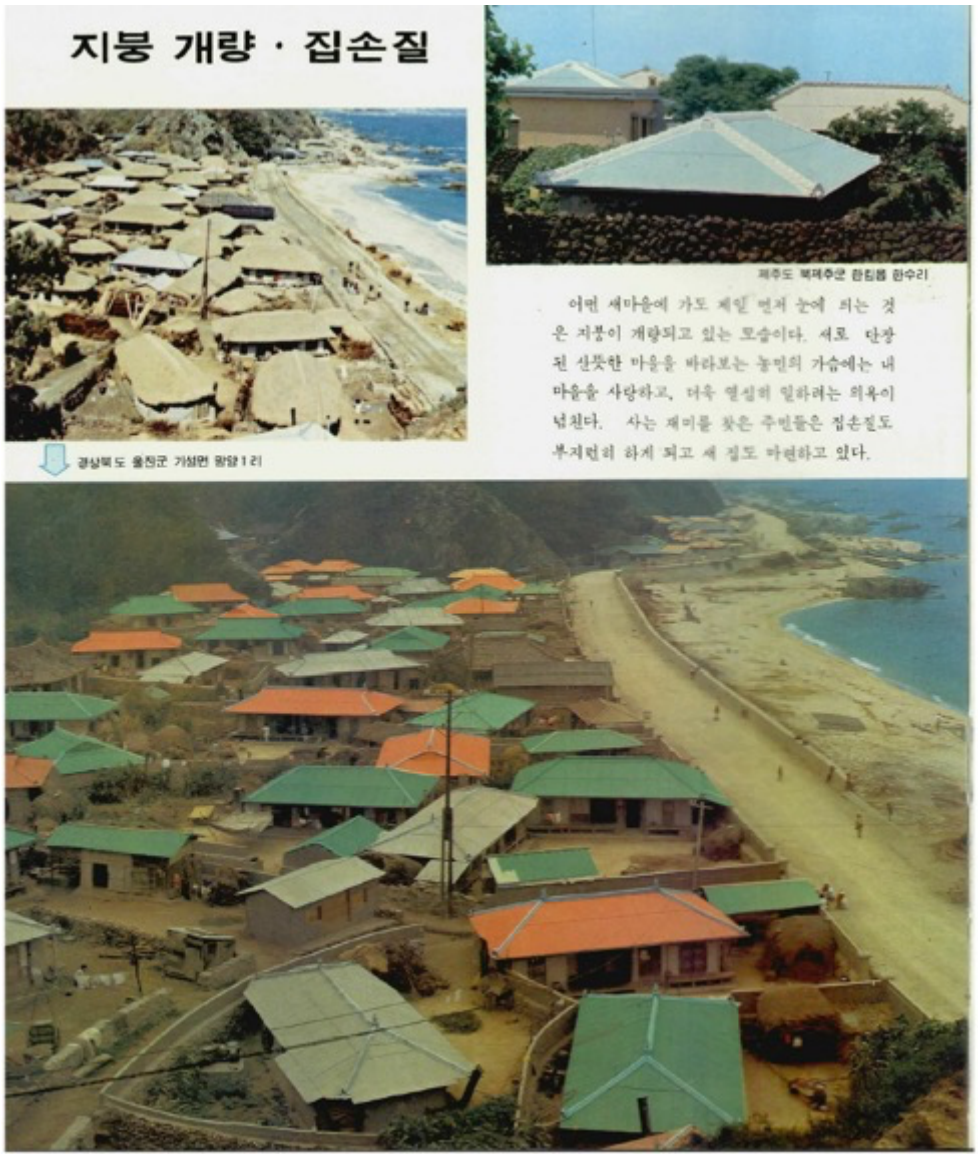

FIGURE 16. Photos showing roof replacement.

The presentation and association of imageries with certain sensations effectively trains the viewers toward a distinct way of seeing. Rural villagers are led to imagine themselves being filled with love for their own villages and the joy of living in an environment remodelled with the new aesthetics. It is not only that the new aesthetics of the colourfully painted slate roofs look great – the new look also makes you love your own village and feel motivated to work harder. Replacing the roofs with slate roofs is not just an action which results in change of the

roofs. By replacing the roofs, the media suggests, you love your village and care about efficiency; you're also more fit to live in a modernised rural village.

The female student's remarks in the beginning of this section suggests that her way of seeing the traditional aesthetics of the rural was different from the way the state saw. She initially saw thatched roofs as having a natural charm. Like this female student, in the beginning of Saemaul Undong, people did not immediately associate the old appearances of the rural with inefficiency and misery, and the new aesthetics with joy and productivity. The quote with the female student's remark comes from a newspaper article in which Mr. Ko Kŏn, the former Prime Minister of Korea, recalled his experience while working as a young community development officer in the early 1970s. On the day of the event, Mr. Ko was visiting his home university to give a presentation of Saemaul Remodelling project. He recalls the general public did not welcome the project at first. The visit to school was part of his department's effort to change public opinion on the project. Mr. Ko made a slideshow of *before and after* photos of Saemaul villages and showed them to the wider public, starting with journalists, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and schools. It took efforts on the part of the state and media to present the new aesthetics of the rural in the most desirable way as possible, and train people to see like the state.

The costs of replacing the roofs were mostly borne by rural villagers themselves, as the government provided only a little subsidy (which was hardly awarded, except in limited cases). People even had to take a loan to cover the costs of replacement. My interviewee, Mr. J. S. Kim, explained that he paid for the slate roofs over three-year instalments (J. S. Kim, personal communication, September 10, 2019). This is not to deny that some villagers had been forced or strongly persuaded into replacing their roofs for the sake of presenting their village performance level to bureaucracy. The roof replacement project was met with resistance of some rural villagers, as was the case in constructing village paths that made landowners give

up a portion of their land. In Chang Sub Lee's study of Saemaul Undong project in *Samwha* 2-*ri, Dangjin-gun, Chungnam* in the 1970s, one villager recollected that roof improvement was a project done at great personal expense. When some villagers resisted the project, feeling burdened by the cost of replacement, 'the thatched roof was forcibly removed by soldiers and military reservists.' (C. S. Lee 2016: 8).

A report in 1977 in the Korean daily newspaper *Chosun Ilbo*[52], entitled, *Sacheon-gun without thatched houses*, covered a story of how Sacheon-gun became the first in Korea to completely do away with thatched roofs and received the Minister of Home Affairs' commendation. The article explains that when Sacheon-gun began its roof improvement project in 1972, there was little response from farmers. Deputy Governor and his local officials then set up a financial support plan for the poor, encouraged a slate collection movement to help the underprivileged and laid the foundation for achieving a 100% replacement rate. In just 8 months, 2.5 million won in donations were collected from 387 supporters. With this money, Deputy Governor Lee purchased slate, accompanied by president of the Saemaul Leader Association and Saemaul Department staff, and went out carrying the slate to the villages in Sacheon-gun.

During my fieldwork in Dohwa, Korea, a question that lingered on my mind was, 'why did the Korean government decide that Saemaul Undong starts with remodelling project?' From my interviews with a number of respondents, I gathered that food was a critical issue for many rural villagers at the time. The memory of hunger and starvation during the period of colonial Korea under the Japanese rule and the Korean War was vivid and strong. As one former Saemaul leader in his early nineties put it:

> We were so poor at that time. I only know that we were extremely poor. I bet the people of today can't possibly imagine. We were so poor that we peeled off pine tree barking. Inside the barking is a soft peel. We would take that soft part, detoxify it in boiling

[52] Founded in 1920, Chosun Ilbo is the oldest active daily newspaper in Korea

> water, and mix it with some other food and ate. It's a very old story…. The memory is vivid to us. We lived like that up until we were older. When I was in primary school, we were so poor (Kuk, personal communication, September 10, 2019). [53]

As his comment shows, the memory of hunger and destitution was deeply embedded in these elderly villagers. 'While securing food security was a critical matter,' I asked myself, 'Why would anyone bother with replacing the roofs and planting flowers by the wayside?' A series of questions followed: 'Why and how is Saemaul Undong remembered as the movement that did away with thatched roofs?'; 'Why did people care so much about aesthetics more than food? (or equally as food?)' and 'what was the significance of the new rural aesthetics to the villagers?' Broadening of village roads and building basic rural infrastructures such as barns and bridges may be directly related to enhanced productivity in transportation and farming. But replacing the roofs and modernising kitchens and laundry yards were more about changing rural lifestyle and equally about their new, sleek appearances than about material self-sufficiency. When you look modern, you feel modern. When you look affluent, you feel affluent. You look new, and you feel new. You may be struggling to get by in your everyday life, but you can already feel modernised and better off by seeing yourself living under colourful tiled roofs and seeing trucks driving on wide, straight village roads. This was a completely new, different environment in which the rural villagers found themselves.

The case of roof replacement under Saemaul Undong highlights a weighted value of the optics – that the visual mattered to people. The significance of the optics is evident in respondents' memory – how people immediately think of roof replacement and broadening of village roads when remembering Saemaul Undong. This suggests that governmentality, when

[53] 그때 우리가 참 없이 살았어. 아주 없게 산 것은 알어. 참 그때 인자 선생님들은 그런 것을 꿈에도 생각을 못할거여 하도 없이 살아서 소나무 껍질을 뱃겨다가 그 속껍질이 있어. 소나무 겉 껍질을 뺏기면 그 안에 속 껍질이 있어. 그 껍질을 삶아서 옮어가지고 독을 빼 버리고 그 속 껍질을 뭣에다가 섞어서 해먹고 살았냐 그라면 참 옛날 얘기지… 우리는 그게 생생해. 나이 솔찬히 많이 먹어서 까지도 그렇게 살았어. 우리 초등학교 댕기고 그럴 때 없게 살았어.

it operates at the level of aesthetics, becomes a powerful force in guiding the desires and behaviour of the governed.

Today, the slate roof, the material of the dream, is slowly fading away in Korean rural sceneries. Safety issues of the slate roof were raised by environmentalists in early 2000s and the Korean government completely banned import as well as the use of asbestos in all building materials, like asbestos gaskets and industrial friction materials (H. R. Kim, 2009). Corrugated asbestos-cement sheet, widely known as the slate, is made by mixing cement with asbestos in ratio of 84:16, containing between 10 to 15% of asbestos (C. H. Song, 2020). Exposure to asbestos, used in producing slate roofs, has been known to cause Mesothelioma, a type of cancer. Local governments in Korea have since 2011 begun to subsidise rural residents to replace the slate roofs with more environment-friendly roofs. But the sensation and look of the slate roof remains powerful in the memories of many.

FIGURE 17. Modern kitchen of Korea. *Decade of Success – Korea's Saemaul Movement* (H. Edward Kim, 1980: 78).[54] In the original page, caption reads, 'The wife and daughters of Leader Yun prepare supper in their refurbished kitchen. Supper time gathers family members together'.

[54] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/search/view/139988?searchEnable=1&keyword=decade&pg=1 [accessed January 23, 2020].

4.6 *Saram* – Orienting the Individual

> The Saemaul Undong has brought about not only surface changes, but also, it is believed, much change in the ways of thinking of our farmers, and even in the structure of our farmers' consciousness (Saemaul pictorial, 1974: 10).[55] [emphasis added]

Saemaul Undong's crusade on rehabilitating rural villages meant much more than just revolutionising the look of rural spaces and increasing productivity. The excerpt from President Park Chung Hee's speech above indicates that as much as the optics (surface changes) were important, orienting the minds and conduct of individual farmers (more fundamental changes) was of a crucial importance. This section will highlight how Saemaul Undong's visual campaign and its visual ideals operated as a technology of government at the individual level, producing as well as imposing certain aesthetic norms to shape individuals' subjectivities in terms of their thoughts and behaviour.

In 1961, Park Chung Hee's military regime succeeded in a coup under the banner of *national modernisation*, calling for a new nation and a new future. Park's government located the cause of under development in individual citizen's states of mind and poor work ethic:

> "Ultimately, the issue is an individual mindset and attitude to life… thereby, for us to lead an abundant lifestyle like other country people, we should first have a strong desire to become self-helping individuals like them, and we should nurture the spirit of cooperation and unity like them. *All our thoughts and actions must be constructive and productive* (C. H. Park, 1965)."[56]

In his speech, Park explains that the wealth of other country people (wealthy countries like the USA, Denmark, Australia or Israel) was created by individuals who practiced the spirit

[55] Presidential remarks on Saemaul Undong 1974

[56] 결국 국민 개개인의 정신의 문제요, 자세의 문제인 것입니다…. 따라서 우리가 다른 나라 사람들처럼 여유 있는 생활을 하려면 먼저 그들처럼 자립하겠다는 의욕에 불타고 그들처럼…. 단합과 협동의 정신을 길러야 하는 것입니다. 우리가 생각하고 행동하는 것이 모두 건설적이고 생산적이어야 하겠다는 것입니다.

of *self-help*. Korean people, therefore, are urged to nurture the same spirit of self-help because doing so will bring them an abundant lifestyle. Here, it is notable that Park emphasised the importance of transforming mentalities, not just of action. His comment gives us a glimpse into his functionalist understanding of society and development.

Rural development, in the same vein, was believed to be attainable when individual farmers practice self-help and productivity. In another speech to farmers in 1967, Park urged them to develop a sense of ownership for their rural community development and to play their part:

> Dear farmers! The success of the government's efforts relies heavily on you farmers' diligence and efforts. No matter how much the government provides its support, if farmers like yourselves don't help yourselves, then the government support will not be of any help. On the other hand, if you put in extra efforts, it will maximise the effect of the government support no matter how little. Ultimately, the development of our farming villages is in the fate of your hands…. If you continue to work hard in sweats for the next few years, our rural villages will be rich and our farmers will live an abundant life, like that of other rich nations, I firmly believe. They say heaven helps those who help themselves. The government will work hard, too, and will not spare support for those farmers who help themselves (C. H. Park, 1967).[57]

Again, Park Chung Hee urges farmers to be self-helping individuals by becoming diligent and working hard because it would bring an abundant life, like that of other rich nations. Likewise, the ideal *nongmin* (farmer) subject under Saemaul Undong was expected to embody the three Saemaul spirits: diligence, self-help and cooperation. Scott (1998: 225) explains that the key to success for any social engineering project is in 'the response and

[57] 이제 앞으로 몇 년만 더 땀 흘려 일해 나간다면, 우리 농촌은 정말로 잘 사는 농촌이 되고, 우리 농민도 세계 어느 나라 농민이 부럽지 않은 풍족한 생활을 할 수 있게 드린다는 것을 나는 굳게 믿고 있읍니다. 하늘은 스스로 돕는 자를 돕는다고 하였읍니다. 정부도 부지런히 일하여 스스로 돕는 농민에게는 최대한의 지원을 아끼지 않을 것입니다… 그러나 농민 여러분! 이러한 정부의 노력이 성공하느냐 못하느냐 하는 것은 결국 농민 여러분들의 근면과 노력에 달려 있는 것입니다. 정부의 지원이 아무리 많아도 농민 여러분이 스스로 돕는 노력이 뒤따르지 못한다며, 그러한 지원은 농촌의 발전에 아무런 도움도 못되는 것이며, 반대로 여러분의 노력이 비상하면 정부의 조그마한 지원도 농촌 발전에 커다란 도움이 될 수 있는 것입니다. 결국 우리 농촌의 발전은 농민 여러분의 손에 달려 있는 것입니다.

cooperation of real human subjects'. Tanzania's Nyerere, according to Scott, had failed to induce the response and cooperation from Tanzanians during Ujamaa. The Saemaul administration found it essential that farmers themselves find Saemaul spirits favourable and practice them. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Korea took up the task of creating and disseminating visual standards for the ideal nongmin, using publications (pictorials, magazines) and films with an aim to facilitate favourable response and cooperation from rural villagers.

FIGURE 18. Poster for National Saemaul Leaders' Conference. (1976). Ministry of Internal Affairs.[58]

[58] Retrieved from National Archives of Korea website., https://theme.archives.go.kr/next/semaul/gallery.do?type=05&page=4 [accessed January 23, 2020].

The archival data of magazines, newspaper articles and films portrayed a unified set of visual standards for rural villagers: a hard-working, diligent, cooperative and thrifty nongmin (farmer). The three Saemaul spirits (diligence, self-help and cooperation) were visualised through farmers' action and appearances in images. In the posters published by the Ministry of Home Affairs for annual National Saemaul Leaders' Conference, for instance, farmers are seen working or producing in the field, thus portraying ideal qualities of productivity and diligence.

In Figure 18, farmers are pictured working together in the field with their Saemaul caps on. In the background is the scenery of a well-groomed village (characterised by wide straight village roads and colourful slate roofs), suggesting that the farmers' diligent work ethic had nurtured the new look of the village.

FIGURE 19 Poster for National Saemaul Leaders' Conference. (1975). Ministry of Internal Affairs.[59]

[59] Retrieved from National Archives of Korea website., https://theme.archives.go.kr/next/semaul/gallery.do?type=05&page=3#photo-box-5 [accessed January 24, 2020]

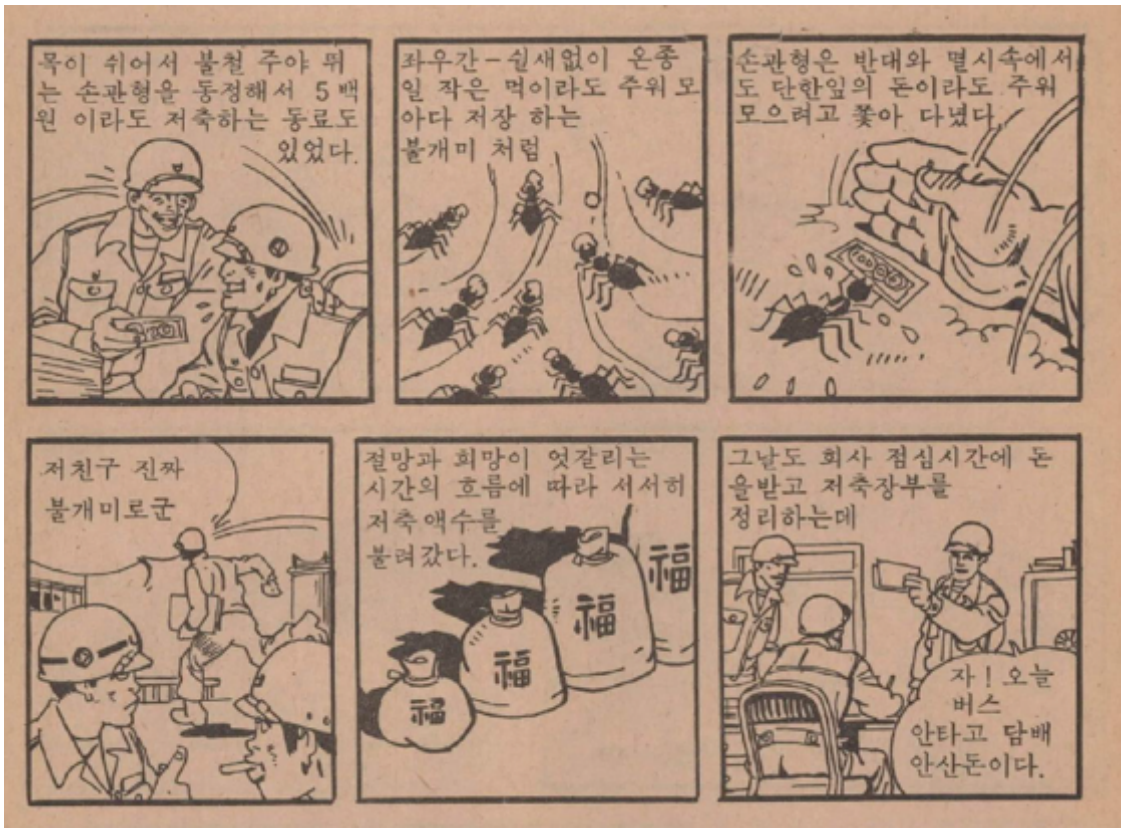

FIGURE 20. Red Ant of Port Incheon (1977). A cartoon describing Saemaul leader Son as a red ant.[60]

Images of hard-working animals like ants, bees and oxen were adopted to symbolise the diligence of an ideal farmer. Figure 19, the poster for 1975 National Saemaul Leaders' Conference, shows in the background the bees in a honeycomb and a Saemaul logo in the centre, held by two hands. The bees in this poster signify Saemaul leaders who spend their days in a busy schedule. In a cartoon (fig. 20) published in 1977, titled *Red Ant of Port Incheon*, the protagonist of the cartoon, Saemaul leader Mr. Son Kwanhyŏng, is described as a red ant. The cartoon shows a drawing of red ants moving up and down with a caption 'Just like the red ant who collects and store food day and night'[61]. Leader Son is then drawn as a red ant, with a banknote in his mouth. The caption says, 'Leader Son Kwanhyŏng made every effort to save

[60] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website Saemaul Undong Archives., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr /collection/col4/view/55 [accessed January 24, 2020]
[61] '좌우간 -쉴새없이 온종일 작은 먹이라도 주워 모아다 저장하는 불개미 처럼'

up money amidst resistance and scorn from others.'[62] The colleagues then point at Leader Son who is running, and comment, 'He is a real red ant'. Their commentary is one of commendation and admiration, praising his resilience for saving up diligently like the red ant.

Besides diligence, cooperation was emphasised as an essential Saemaul spirit that every villager had to cultivate. Photos depicting various Saemaul projects – from building of bridges to cleaning the streets – would always show villagers working in groups (fig. 22 and 23). The narrative promoted by the media was that cooperation enhanced efficiency and helped villagers with achieving difficult tasks. In doing so, villagers would gain confidence that they now could

FIGURE 21. Scene of village conference. The writing on the wall says 'Let us unite and work like the ants'. Saemaul Pictorial (1974: 151).[63]

[62] '손관형은 반대와 멸시 속에서도 단 한잎의 돈이라도 주워 모으려고 쫓아다녔다'

[63] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/byType/view/139434?searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%20%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4&pg=6. [accessed January 24, 2020]).

FIGURE 22. Villagers constructing a bridge for themselves according to the guidance of their Saemaul leader. Saemaul Pictorial (1979: 23).[64]

FIGURE 23. Cooperative efforts of villagers create extra energy and bring about the successful accomplishment of any difficult projects. Saemaul Pictorial (1979: 17).[65]

[64] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/ record/search/view/139827 ?searchEnable=1&keyword=%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4%20%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%20 1979&pg=1 [accessed January 26, 2020].
[65] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/search/view/139827?

accomplish anything. Visuals of people working together were often juxtaposed with the images of Saemaul flags or logo. In Figure 22, a group of villagers are seen working together, constructing a bridge. In the background is a part of the bridge already completed, suggesting that their cooperative efforts have built the bridge. Meanwhile, a Saemaul flag is placed right next to the villagers who are working. FIGURE 24, an illustration in *Saemaul* pictorial, also shows three villagers marching together with tools in their hands, headed by one who is holding the flag saying, 'Saemaul Undong'. Above the illustration, it is written: 'Did we not come to have confidence that "there is nothing impossible if we push ourselves, be diligent, cooperate with one another and unite"? Saemaul Undong! That is our hope and our reward for life. Where the Saemaul flag goes, poverty flees.' Visual images of people working together next to a Saemaul flag and a seemingly successful project in progress together create a feeling of hope and confidence.

The concept of cooperation, as portrayed in images, was inculcated in the villagers through their actual practice and witnessing of it in their everyday life. For the younger generation, the experience of seeing an older generation working in groups and themselves as children engaging in group activities and games has become deeply embedded in their memories. Mr. S.Y. Hong, an interviewee from the younger group of participants, who was a primary school pupil in the 1970s commented:

> I'm not sure about internal changes… but cooperation. I have seen many times all the villagers in my neighbourhood come out to the streets in the mornings and do it [group work] and leave. Together – not my own business nor yours only. As for the maul business, they all came together and did it together. As a community…. Yes, yes. I grew up seeing that at the time (S. Y. Hong, personal communication, June 6, 2020).[66]

searchEnable=1&keyword=%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4%20%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%201979&pg=1. [accessed January 26, 2020].

[66] 내적인 변화는 모르겠고, 그 협동적인…그 저기가 하고 그러면은 동네 사람들이 전부 나오셔 가지고 아침에 나와서 하고 들어 가시는 거는 많이 봤죠. 같이 너일 내일이 아니라, 마을 일이라고 하면 전부 다 같이 오셔서 같이 하고 했었으니까. 공동체로… 예, 예. 그 당시에는 그렇게 보고 자랐으니까요.

"우리가 새로히 분발을 하고 근면하고 서로 협동을 하고 단결한다면 이 세상에 안될 일이 없다"는 자신을 갖게 되지 아니 했는가.

새 마을 운동! 그것은 우리의 희망이요 삶의 보람이다. '새마을' 깃발가는 곳에 가난은 물러간다.

FIGURE 24. '"Did we not come to have confidence that 'there is nothing impossible if we push ourselves, be diligent, cooperate with one another and unite'? Saemaul Undong! That is our hope and our reward for life. Where the Saemaul flag goes, poverty flees.' *Saemaul* (1972a: 11).[67]

Mrs. S. H. Ch'oe (aged sixty-four at the time of interview), my mothers's sister and another participant from the younger group who was also in her teens in the 1970s, agrees that Saemaul Undong sought to make people cooperate: 'Saemaul Undong has made many people to unite, the world changed a lot and the economy boomed. So, I think those were very good – that everybody was together (or did things together). I really liked those times when we all

[67] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., https://saemaul.udemzi.co.kr/record/byTheme/view/139476 [accessed January 26, 2020].

lived together rather than individualism of today (S. H. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 16, 2020).'[68] Mrs. Ch'oe believes that people coming to cooperate with one another contributed to the larger economic development in Korea. Like Mrs. Ch'oe, many Korean people have come to recognise Saemaul Undong as a movement that united the Korean people under the sole purpose of living a better life. Hence the nostalgia for this particular period in modern Korean history is still quite strong in many people.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined how the Korean state's governmental project of rural improvement in the early 1970s was made effective through imposing a set of aesthetic norms and standards. Remodelling of rural villages was premised on the highly popularised Saemaul aesthetic, typified by wide, straight village paths and colourfully painted slate roofs. The state popularised these aesthetic norms for rural villages with help of visual materials published in magazines, pictorials, and TV.

I explored how the aesthetic norms that were used to guide the interests and conduct of rural villagers operated on three levels: the landscape, housing and the individual. My findings in this chapter point toward how governmentality becomes powerful and effective when it operates at the level of aesthetics. The case of Saemaul Undong and its visual campaign show that it is indeed possible to a considerable extent to govern a population with visual representation of modernity and that of a model individual (I will discuss Saemaul Undong's model individual in the next chapter).

[68] 그런 새마을운동을 통해서 많은 사람들이 단합이 되고, 또 세상이 많이 바뀌고, 경제도 살아나고. 그러니까 내 생각은 그런 게 참 좋았던거 같애요. 모든 사람들이 같이 활동 한다는 것. 같이 단합이 된다는 것. 이렇게 지금처럼 개인주의보다, 함께 살아가는 것. 그런 시대가 참 좋았던 것 같아요.

Saemaul authority's use of visual guidelines helped render its rural remodelling project technical. The framing of modernity and prosperity in visual representations take away one's attention from the greater social dynamics of local villages. Here, the processes of rural improvement are rendered technical into something as smooth and linear as: number one, look at this picture of development; number two, this is what you want to achieve; and number three, now you make it happen. On the ground however, as it was briefly discussed in sections 4.4 and 4.5, the processes of improving village paths and house roofs were not rendered technical as the state would have hoped it would be. The processes of Saemaul village remodelling project were entangled in political, social and economic dynamics. The examples of widening the village paths and replacing thatched roofs demonstrated that the village remodelling project did not follow a mechanical, automated process.

While the scope and available data for this study offered a valuable initial exploration, they primarily provide a sketchy overview of the dynamics at the village level in terms of economic class and political authority. With more detailed data, future research could illuminate on the workings of aesthetic governmentality of Saemaul Remodelling project at the village level. For instance, rural villagers with varying economic and social standings would have responded differently to the project. It is not straight forward whether relatively wealthier villagers would have been more receptive towards the remodelling projects such as giving away land for widening village paths or replacing thatched roofs. Wealthier villagers, who had more at stake, might have opposed these changes than poorer villagers, who had less to lose and more to gain through their labour contributions. The relationship between aesthetic governmentality and self-making could thus have been influenced by villagers' political and social positions. Obtaining such local-level insights would provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of the Saemaul Undong's processes and implications, enabling a more critical discussion on the technical and depoliticized aspects of its aesthetic governmentality.

Nevertheless, Saemaul Undong offers an interesting case of a visual campaign in full action, appealing to collective feelings and the aspiration of peasants. It presents a different picture from the cases of planned model villages in Tanzania and Ethiopia where the authority tried to control and guide peasants' action through regulation and use of force (like forced resettlement, see Scott 1998). It is also notable that the Korean state drew a close connection between how one looked and how one became, requiring a genuine transformation of the self. Not only did you have to *look* diligent, but you had to *become* diligent. Accomplishing the Saemaul aesthetic took substantial amount of labour power and cooperation from the villagers. A total change in landscapes also meant a total change of the self. It is this process of self-making which I turn to next in chapter 5.

Chapter 5 'New Mind Movement': Making the Farmer-Citizen Subject

> By widening the narrow farm roads, we are opening up a spiritual path for unhindered progress of the nation. The Saemaul Undong repudiates the diseases of inertia and indolence bred in the shade of ease and complacency and represents a spiritual revolution to eradicate the evil habits of waste and luxury (C.H. Park, 1972; cited in Jager, 2003).

5.1 Introduction

What makes South Korea's Saemaul Undong so unique is that the programme sought to change and *improve* the mentality of rural peasants, distinguishing itself from conventional rural development programmes, which mostly tend to focus on increasing agricultural production. Saemaul Undong was often referred as *Sae Maum Undong* meaning, a new *mind* movement. It was claimed that with a new mindset and new behaviour patterns, farmers would build a better future for their own selves as well as for their country. The texts from Saemaul leaders training demonstrate that rural Saemaul leaders were taught to work on self-improvement by equipping themselves with a new mentality and behaviour. Rural peasants were made to conceive of themselves as a site of work and change, as the government declared them responsible for the future of their nation as well as of their own lives. The *nongmin* (farmer) subject was no longer a natural or private matter. It was now conceptualised as 'embodied and socially constituted' (Mclaren, 2002: 16), who had social responsibility towards one's village and nation.

In this chapter, I discuss how Saemaul Undong and its campaigns had constitutive effects on the subjectivities of Saemaul participants, treating the self as a principal site of improvement and fashioning. Saemaul authorities established their own version of truth-telling, linking individual improvement with national development. Saemaul participants experienced practices of the self, aimed at finding the authentic self and empowering it.

The first section of this chapter begins in the early 1960s when Korea experienced radical changes in its leadership, signalling a shift in state narratives and the requirements of nation-building. The new ideal image of the Korean nation, espoused by the succeeding Park regime, was composed of active and responsible citizens who contributed to national development through self-governing and self-improvement. In the same way, Saemaul Undong inherited Park's ideal farmer figure and focused on farmers' spiritual development.

The three subsequent sections explore volunteerism, confession, and everyday practices as technologies for 'conceiving, accounting, and experiencing the self' (Hewitt, 1991: 972). It was through imposing and executing these technologies in Saemaul Undong programme that the individualisation and responsibilisation of the farmer took place, requiring the self to engage in constant reflection and self-improvement. As material for analysis, this chapter turns to the archives, for Saemaul leaders training materials, speeches of President Park and interview data. I then turn to my interviews with respondents to see what effects the state discourse had on the respondents in their understanding of their duty and identity as a citizen, and how they experienced some of the new technologies of the self.

5.2 A new nation, a new man

5.2.1 A nation in the making

"Citizens are not born; they are made." (Cruikshank, 1999: 3)

As dramatic as the first half of the 20th century was with the Japanese annexation and the Korean War, two events of the early 1960s marked a 'great transformation' (Kang, 2018: 9) in making of Korean nation. The student-led April 19 Revolution of 1960 overthrew the first President of the Republic of Korea, Rhee Syngman (I Sŭngman) and his authoritarian government. In the following year, Major General Park Chung Hee and his allies seized power

through the May 16 military coup d'état. The two events, illustrating the demise of one ruler and birth of another, were significant because they entailed a shift to a new type of nation-building. The image of an ideal Korean people shifted from being a muted, obedient mass to becoming active, voluntary citizens who were responsible for the fate of their own as well as of their country.

Since he was first elected in 1948, Rhee Syngman assigned an anti-communist identity to the (South) Korean nation in the name of countering threats from the communist North. He conceptualised the Korean nation based on his political ideology of *Ilminism* (meaning, one-people principle) and stressed the importance of national unity. Any deviance or differences from the *ilmin* nation was not tolerated and was deemed communist and anti-state (Hong, 2019). Under Park Chung Hee's rule, a new model for the Korean nation emerged. While national security was still a crucial affair, economic development was emphasised as more urgent. With management of the economy occupying centre stage, efficient management of the people was imperative. The key to managing the population was self-government, which required work on improving oneself. The Korean nation, Park stressed, needed to be reborn to save itself from a tragic past and to build an economically prosperous nation:

> We value work above all else, and for the reconstruction of this country, each and every citizen must be reborn and changed as soon as possible into a human being who can contribute to the country and a good-hearted and conscientious citizen (C. H. Park, 1962: 55).[69]

The need to create a new history for the nation was particularly emphasised because Park believed that Korea's history before his rule was one full of tragedies, national disharmony, and humiliation (Moon, 2011). In his 1962 book, *Our nation's way forward*, Park claimed that the *Chosŏn* dynasty and the Confucian ideas left an adverse legacy on the country.

[69] 근로를 무엇보다도 소중히 여기고 이 나라의 재건을 위해서 국민 한 사람 한 사람이 다 같이 국가에 이바지 할 수 있는 인간으로 그리고 착한 마음과 양심 있는 국민으로 하루빨리 거듭나고 바꾸어져야 한다

He said that Confucian ideology systemised the class system in Chosŏn, dividing the population into two major classes of *yangban* (the landed aristocratic class) and *nongmin* (landless peasant class). Under the Chosŏn dynasty, nongmin was differentiated from yangban class and grossly discriminated against, making them suffer from exploitation from their landlords and extreme hunger. Park explained that the nongmin class was made to obey any orders blindly and as a result, they came to embody a servile spirit. It was this servile spirit of the nongmin class which prevented them from taking proactive measures for rural development and in turn, adversely affected Korea's economic progress at large. Therefore, Park considered it important to bring rural peasants and farmers to the forefront of national development discourse.

During his rule, the Korean government began installing statues of historical figures in major landmarks of Seoul and schools throughout the country. Park believed that Korean history, marred with internal political wars and threats from neighbouring countries, had constantly overcome crisis and hardship, thanks to the brave acts of heroes. There would be stories of these heroes in public campaigns and school curricula, and how they embodied the great virtues of perseverance and bravery. A frequently featured national hero was Admiral Yi Sun-sin (I Sunsin), who was known for his victories against the Japanese navy in the 1590s (Moon, 2011). Admiral Yi is most celebrated for the Battle of *Myŏngnyang* where, despite the Korean navy being outnumbered 333 to thirteen by the Japanese, he gained victory through an ingenious military operation planning. Praising individual heroes, like Admiral Yi, for their qualities of great character and competency, highlighted the importance of individual citizens to act upon their soul. Park envisioned himself and the rest of the Korean nation to be the hero who would save the country from hunger and poverty (Kang, 2018).

How does an ordinary person become a hero? In his public speeches, Park claimed that rural farmers were responsible for building a new modern Korea. His government would work

hard for achieving economic progress and modernisation, but the people would work equally hard to help themselves because success of the government's efforts ultimately depended on farmers' diligence and efforts (C. H. Park, 1967). In his 1970 appreciation speech at the 2nd Farmer and Fisherman Income Increase Special Project Contest, he said 'the key to rural modernisation lies in the hands of our farmers and fishermen themselves.' (C. H. Park, 1970b). When the president handed the key to rural modernisation in the hands of farmers and fishermen, he also gave them a heroic mission to make their nation better. Farmers now had a duty to fashion themselves into ideal citizens who would contribute to the well-being of their country.

5.2.2 'Sae Maum Undong' (New Mind Movement)

> "Sae maul" (new village) Undong – it is also "*Sae maum*" (new mind) movement. Saemaul undong aims to create a new wave of cooperation, a new tide whereby one: does not blame one's destiny for today's poverty but drive it out with help of one's own strength; works diligently to adorn and grow rich town and happy village; contributes one's mind and strength to help oneself and stand on one's own feet (Saemaul, 1972: 1).[70]

Saemaul Undong was often referred to as *Sae maum* (new mind or heart) undong for its emphasis on changing the mentality of rural farmers. The Saemaul Undong campaign promoted three Saemaul spirits of self-reliance (does not blame one's destiny for today's poverty but drive it out with help of one's own strength), cooperation (a new wave of cooperation) and diligence (works diligently to adorn and grow rich town and happy village). During the 1970s, the Saemaul leaders training played a vital role in educating Saemaul leaders from rural villages. The Saemaul Leaders' Training Institute[71] first opened its doors in 1972 as the

[70] '새 마을' 운동. 그것은 곧 '새 마음' 운동이다. 오늘의 가난을 팔자 소관이나 운명으로 돌리지 않고, 스스로의 힘으로 가난을 몰아 내고, 잘 사는 고장, 행복한 마을을 가꾸고 세우기 위해 부지런히 일하며 스스로 도와 제 발로 딛고 서기 위해 마음과 힘을 합하는 협동의 새 물결, 새 바람을 일으키자는 것이 곧 '새 마을' 운동이다.

[71] It is now called Korea Saemaul Undong Academy, http://sua.saemaul.or.kr/sub/intro/history.php

Leading Farmer Training Centre, aimed to teach farmers enterprise and farming skills. Soon, President Park wanted a unified and systematic Saemaul education programme that prioritised the spiritual rehabilitation of the Korean nation. In 1973, the training centre was renamed Saemaul leaders training institute and the training mainly catered for Saemaul leaders and farmers from rural areas. In 1975, as Saemaul Undong spread to factories and urban cities, the institute became the mecca of national spiritual training, with its trainees now including high-level government officials, businessmen, university professors and even foreigners. By the late 1970s, about 600,000 trainees had gone through the Saemaul leaders training programme (Chung, 2009). A majority of trainees were Saemaul leaders from villages whose names were nominated and compiled by local government offices. These leaders were then sent to the institute to attend the training programme. Some eager leaders would apply themselves to be part of the training programme. In most cases, trainees were encouraged to take part in an intensive training programme, which required lodging at the training centre for between seven to fourteen days.

Examples of the training curriculum are as follows: lectures on nurturing Saemaul spirits, national security and economy, Saemaul projects; and presentation of successful Saemaul Undong cases, group discussion, and a site visit to successful Saemaul villages (D. H. Han, 2012). As this chapter will later discuss, *Presentation of successful Saemaul Undong cases* and *Group discussion* largely contained messages of self-help and self-improvement. A significant amount of time and the programme was dedicated to the development of farmers' mindsets.

FIGURE 25. "A new spirit for each person, A new village for each village" (left), "Let's work together to build a new village" (right). Saemaul Undong publicity slogan (circa 1970).[72]

FIGURE 26. A lecturer is giving Saemaul leaders training. Saemaul Pictorial (1972: 11)[73]

[72] Retrieved from National Museum of Korean Contemporary History website.,https://www.much.go.kr/L/ZITmsY4AWY.do [accessed March 4, 2020]).
[73] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/byType/view/139474?searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%20%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4&pg=6. [accessed March 6, 2020]).

Behind Saemaul Undong's strong emphasis on the importance of mental attitudes and beliefs was the thinking that one's mentality and values shape one's behaviour and actions. President Park's 1971 speech illustrates this logic:

> It can be said that the ultimate goal of modernisation is to modernise people. Modernisation in developed countries had a guiding ideology that awakened the reform of all mental attitudes prior to economic and social reform (C. H. Park, 1971, as cited in Moon, 2011: 74).[74]

Hence, farmers needed to improve and modernise their minds first, to contribute to the nation's modernisation. Saemaul training materials explained that its emphasis on mental development was 'different in nature and scope from the community development movement' that they promoted in the past (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1975: 183)[75]. Cultivating the spirits of Saemaul Undong would enhance people's living environment and their income level, they argued.

Likewise, the development of human resources was made an important national task. A lecture named, *Saemaul Undong and Our Attitude*, a part of Saemaul leaders training curriculum, claimed that the development of human resources was 'the key to a well-lived life and accelerating modernisation of the country.'[76] (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1975: 131). Human resource development was particularly important for Korea because 'unfortunately, the material resources that we (they) were given are limited', thus, 'one cannot but only depend on man's creative will power and development of one's capacity' (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1975: 131). The development of human resources, as suggested by the lecture, entailed individuals engaging in the task of self-improvement by practicing Saemaul spirits in their everyday lives.

[74] 근대화의 최종 목적은 바로 인간의 근대화에 있다고도 하겠다. 선진국에서의 근대화에는 경제사회의 개혁에 앞서 모든 정신적 자세의 개혁을 일깨워주는 지도 이념이 있었다

[75] 따라서 생활환경의 개선과정에서 새마을정신을 계발하고 이를 소득증대로 연결하는 방법으로 추진하는 운동으로써 우리가 과거에 추진했던 지역사회 개발운동과는 그 성질과 범주면에서 상이하다 하겠다

[76] 인간자원의 개발이야 말로 우리가 잘 살 수 있고 조국근대화를 앞당기는 관건임을 알아야 할 것이다

5.2.3 Saemaul Undong as a technology of citizenship

It was discussed in the beginning of this section that under Park Chung Hee a new type of nation-building project emerged. With the Park regime's priority being economic prosperity, it was no longer feasible to keep people passive, waiting to receive instructions. The state required responsible citizens who desired to govern themselves to best contribute to national development (Rose, 1999). Park's government started introducing several initiatives and programmes that would govern and manage the population, starting from family planning (E. Cho, 2016; DiMoia, 2008) to a resident registration number system (S. T. Hong, 2012; Y. M. Kim, 2007; Shin, 2006).

In media and public campaigns of the 1960s, a term referring to industrial workers was *sanup yeokgun* (translated as, pillars or workers of industry). Ordinary Korean citizens, especially labourers and farmers, were handed the protagonist position of Korea's national development. The use of words like *pillar* embodies an image of industrial workers supporting a giant structure that is the Korean nation. Such image placed responsibilities on the individual citizen for the nation's fate. The state narrative in Saemaul Undong created a very similar framing. After Saemaul Undong was launched, the popularity of term, sanup yeokgun, was soon replaced with *Saemaul yeokgun* (translated as, pillars or workers of new village).

The 1975 Saemaul textbook emphasised, 'for Koreans living today, now is the time to build a nation' [77]. Saemaul leaders were referred to as the workers of nation building and national modernisation. The farmers' identity as Korean citizen was emphasised and they were expected to contribute to (re)constructing Korea. Through the framing of farmers as responsible citizens who were tasked with national development, Saemaul Undong became a social project and a technology of citizenship that facilitated 'self- and populational -

[77] 오늘을 사는 한국인이라면 지금은 바로 국가건설의 때

governance' (Kohja-Moolji, 2018: 7). As a technology of citizenship, Saemaul Undong played a pivotal role in turning the nongmin subject into farmer-citizen subject. Technologies of citizenship, as defined by Barbara Cruikshank (1999:1), are a set of discourses, programmes, and other tactics aimed at 'making individuals politically active and capable of self-government' whereby individual subjects are transformed into citizens. Farmers still farmed but now their action of farming contained social and political meaning: their farming contributed to rural development - it was a patriotic act.

Saemaul leaders' training materials made sure that female Saemaul leaders also identified themselves as aspiring model citizens with autonomy and capacity. A Saemaul leaders training lecture in the 1975 Saemaul Textbook named, *Saemaul Undong and Women's Activities*, proclaimed: 'As housewives, it is desirable for us women to not only take care of their own families and homes, but also to participate in various community activities as active citizens (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1975: 325).'[78] Women Saemaul leaders were called to become active citizen who had responsibilities to contribute to community development. Meanwhile, women were expected to retain their traditional role of homemaking. The lecture continues:

> The spirit of hard work, self-help, cooperation, and self-reliance is the spirit of Saemaul. It starts from not only the cultivation of this spirit, but also the establishment of *a wise woman image*…. Therefore, the first goal to be achieved in mental development is the establishment of *correct values*. In human life, if the spirit of rightly judging what is valuable in human activities and living a worthwhile life is rooted, it can be said that a person's basic mental attitude has already been developed (325).[79]

[78] 우리 여성들은 가정의 주부로서 단순히 자기의 가족이나 가정만을 돌보는 것만 아니라 여성들도 적극적인 시민의 한사람으로서 여러가지 지역사회의 활동에 참여하는 것이 바람직하다

[79] 근면하고 자조, 협동, 자립하는 정신이 새마을 정신이며 이러한 정신의 함양 뿐만 아니라 **슬기로운 여인상의 확립**에서 출발한다. … 그러므로 정신계발에서 먼저 이루어져야 할 목표는 **올바른 가치관의 확립**이다. 인간생활에서, 인간활동에서 **무엇이 가치 있는 것인가를 옳게 판단**하고 가치있게 살고 **보람 있게 활동하는 정신이** 뿌리 박히게 된다면 그 사람의 기본적인 정신자세는 이미 개발되었다고 할 수 있다.

According to the lecturer in the quote, a true wise woman must develop a mental attitude rooted in *correct* values. The lecture continues:

> We must keep in mind that Saemaul Undong that renews our village not only makes ourselves blessed in a small way, but is also directly related to the development of the whole community and the country in a large way. Just as the mental attitude and action of each villager makes the whole village well, the Saemaul Undong of one village, one village can be sublimated into a national movement to build a prosperous country by spreading it out and making a big wave nationwide (328).[80]
>
> Therefore, we women should first put themselves in the mental arm to be a sincere warrior of Saemaul and take the lead in building a new village in cooperation with our neighbours. Bearing in mind that this effort is directly connected to the path of true patriotism, the path of modernisation of the country, the path of true national revival, and furthermore, the path of national reunification, it must be pursued by actively participating in the Saemaul Undong with pride and a sense of duty (326).[81]
>
> *We must first realize the sense of social responsibility. When we take a step forward as a housewife narrowly, as a member of society and broadly as a mother of mankind*, we will be able to succeed in the October Yushin task through the Saemaul Undong with the power of our women and children and achieve the reunification of South and North Korea (330).[82]

The correct value for women to establish for themselves, as we find out later, was a sense of social responsibility, such that one's mental attitude and action could spread and affect the fate of one's village and one's nation. The lecture goes even further to describe women as *a mother*

[80] 내 마을을 새롭게 만든다는 새마을운동이 작게는 자기 자신을 복되게 함은 물론이지만 크게는 지역사회 전체와 국가를 발전시키는 것과 직결된다는 사실을 우리는 명심하지 않으면 안된다. 마을 한사람 한사람의 정신자세와 실천행동이 온 마을을 잘 가꾸어 나가는 것과 마찬가지로 한마을 한마을의 새마을운동은 그것이 뻗혀 전국적으로 큰 물결을 이루게 되어 잘사는 나라를 건설해 나가는 범국민적인 운동으로 승화될 수 있기 때문이다.

[81] 그러므로 우리 부녀자들은 내 자신을 먼저 성실한 새마을의 역군이 될 수 있는 정신무장을 하고 내 이웃과 우애있게 협동하여 내 마을을 새롭게 건설하는데 앞장서야 할 것이다. 이 노력이 바로 참다운 애국의 길, 조국근대화의 길, 참다운 민족중흥의 길, 나아가 민족 통일의 길로 직결되어 있음을 명심하고 긍지와 사명감을 가지고 새마을운동에 적극 참여하여 추진해 나가지 않으면 안된다

[82] **우리는 먼저 사회적 책임의식을 깨달아야 하겠다. 좁게는 가정의 주부로서 한걸음 나가서는 사회의 구성원으로서 넓게는 인류의 어머니로서 부여된 책임을 다할 때** 우리 부녀자의 힘으로 새마을운동을 통하여 10 월 유신과업을 성공시킬 수 있으며 남북통일을 이룰 수 있을 것이다.

of mankind. The coupling of individual woman with the rest of society and even mankind produces the woman as a socially responsible subject-agent, situating her between the private and the social realm.

5.3 Technology of the self: Volunteerism

During the Saemaul decade of the 1970s, Korea saw a rise of volunteerism in public campaigns across the country. Magazines and newspapers covered stories of volunteers who took initiatives to provide various services in their communities. The rise of volunteerism in Saemaul Undong created social norms of selfless citizens dedicated for the good of society. Promoting volunteer service as a social norm was an effective way of bringing individuals to the social environment whereby one's self-transformation (from being selfish to becoming altruistic, for instance) brings forth social change. In this process, volunteers came to conceptualise themselves not as private entities but as socially and politically constituted. Two articles, titled 'We're married to Saemaul Undong: volunteer activities of young ladies' (Saemaul, 1972b) and 'Miss Saemaul Volunteer Corps' (Saemaul, 1973a), featured in *Saemaul* Magazine, covered the story of a group of young ladies who volunteered to serve their communities. They highlight how the young ladies refrained from buying snacks and saved their snack money towards a volunteer fund to help the needy. They also gave their time for looking after the children in their villages, while the children's parents work in the field.

FIGURE 27. 'We're married to Saemaul Undong: volunteer activities of young ladies'. *Saemaul Magazine* (1972b: 10-11). Text reads: 'When the village girls got together, they exchanged opinions. "The Saemaul Movement is in full swing in the neighbouring village, so what can we do?" Thus, *'Assihoe'* (Meaning, assembly of young ladies/ girls) was born. The Assiheo members between the ages of 16 and 25 officially organised a meeting on February 12 this year, led by Ms. Lee Jung-jae (aged 23). After three or four extraordinary general meetings, they decided to guide the villagers with creative ideas under systematic discipline and unanimously agreed to bring changes to the old, immodest will power and lifestyle of the villagers.'.[83]

[83] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website.,http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/byType?&searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%9B%94%EA%B0%84%20%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84&pg=1. [accessed March 1, 2020]

FIGURE 28. 'Miss Saemaul Volunteer Corps'. *Saemaul Magazine* (1973a: 10-11) [84] Text reads: 'They raised a volunteer fund through no-snacking campaign….the female staff at Fairchild Semiconductor Company in Seoul launched a campaign not to drink coffee... and they are saving the money for a Volunteer Fund. With the fund, they visit old aged homes…. If such "Miss Saemaul Volunteer Corps" were organised throughout the country, there would be no doubt that the Saemaul Undong, a movement for the well-being of all of us, would achieve radical results.'

5.3.1 Mrs. Yun

One of my younger interviewees, Mrs. Yun (aged sixty-seven) participated in a volunteer programme for a rural village in *Ŭijŏngbu* in mid or late 1970s (she couldn't recall the exact year) when she was in her mid-twenties. She joined the wave of volunteer activities in rural villages which was a predominant phenomenon for young people. She recalled that the rural revitalisation movement was very active at the time. She had experience in volunteering prior

[84] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/byType?&searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%20%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4&pg=1. [accessed March 4, 2020].

to this particular activity in a rural village. She had participated in a programme where underage female sex workers were rehabilitated and taught skills for future employment. Mrs. Yun explained that Saemaul Undong provided her with a motive to volunteer:

> While doing that kind of volunteer work, when I think about it now, I think that Saemaul Undong may have been a motive for me. Because we resonated strongly with the hope that if the rural areas became prosperous, it seemed that we would also prosper, and our[85] whole country would rise to a new level economically. So, we volunteered with very much willing and delightful heart. And we were *rewarded* (by the beneficiaries) and thanked with words. Oh, by *rewarded*, I mean no renumeration. We were just serving them (K. M. Yun, personal communication, June 11, 2020).[86]

Mrs. Yun understood Saemaul Undong to be contributing to the progress of rural villages which, in turn, would also contribute to individual as well as national progress. In the beginning of their work, Mrs. Yun and her colleagues gathered the children and played with them from morning until late afternoon when the children's parents came to collect them. The volunteers would prepare food and snacks for children and let them take an afternoon nap. She 'did it with a happy heart', but she soon found the work 'so boring and difficult'. She explained that even after hours of playing and singing, time would not pass. She then decided to change this daily pattern and incorporate educational activities. She set up a blackboard under a tree and taught the children how to read *hangeul*, the Korean alphabet. The children were given notebooks and coloured pencils so they could freely write and draw. When I asked Mrs. Yun which moment she considered most rewarding while volunteering, she answered that it was when she helped many children learn Hangeul:

> Because there were a lot of kids going to kindergarten at that time in the city, but not in the farming villages. So, helping the children learn Hangeul at an age when it was

[85] In Korean language, country is referred as 'our' country, instead of 'my' country.
[86] 그런 봉사를 하면서, 지금 생각 해 보면은, 새마을운동이 모티브가 되지 않았나 하는 생각을 해요. 왜냐면은 농촌이 잘살면 우리도 잘살게 될 것 같고, 우리 나라 전체가 뭔가 경제적으로 한단계 올라서는 것 같은, 그런 바램, 희망적인 거 그런 게 마음에 많이 와닿았으니까 굉장히 흔쾌하게 기쁜 마음으로 그 봉사를 했죠. 그래서 감사하다고 많이 사례도 받고, 감사하다는 말씀도 듣고 그랬죠. 아 사례라는 것은, 보수는 없었어요. 그냥 봉사하는 거니까

> important to learn Hangeul before going to school was very rewarding for me. For me, that was very rewarding and my heart felt full with pride, and I felt good about myself. That I didn't just play around and let time pass, but I provided for them organised, systematic learning and it contributed to their education (K. M. Yun, personal communication, June 11, 2020).[87]

Mrs. Yun understood her act of teaching and caring for the rural children in Ŭijŏngbu to be a contribution to the prosperity of the farming village and ultimately, to Korea's rural and national development. She explained, 'and although many years have passed, it remains a great *joy* for me that I helped the parents to focus on farming without having to worry about their children. I still feel it was worthwhile.'[88] The *joy* that she felt was from her knowing that she took such actions as a responsible and altruistic citizen. For Mrs. Yun, being a responsible citizen provided her with a sense of fulfilment of the self.

I asked her what her understanding of an ideal citizenship was (including today). Mrs. Yun's understanding showed that to be a responsible citizen, it required work on the self, for the betterment of the self which was intrinsically linked to the betterment of society and the nation. When she found the volunteer work boring and difficult, she did not end her work there. She persisted and brought changes to the children's daily routine and introduced the literacy programme. In the interview with Mrs. Yun, she called for constant work on the self as well as self-transformation:

> I'm not sure how to say about this but, I think the role of an ideal citizen is *keeping my place*. I just need to keep my place, that's how I think. I should just keep my place rather than trying to achieve something or dig up an issue to contribute to something greater. I think that is the most important yet fundamental role of a citizen.[89]

[87] 왜냐면은 그때 유치원에 가는 애들도 도시에서는 많이 다녔는데 농촌에는 없잖아요. 그러니까 학교 가기 전에 한글을 깨우치는거를 중요시 한 그 나이때 한글을 깨치게 해준게 저는 참 보람 있었고 내 스스로 뿌듯하고 기분이 좋더라고. 헛되이 놀기만 하고 시간을 보낸게 아니라, 아이들에게 어떤 체계적으로 학습을 시켜서 뭔가 교육에 보탬이 됐다는 그런것들이.
[88] 그리고 부모들에게는 아이들 걱정안하고 농사에 전념할수 있게 그런것을 했다는게 세월이 많이 흘렀지만 굉장히 기쁨으로 크게 남아있어요. 보람도 남아있고.
[89] 예 질문을 언뜻 들으니까 어떻게 말해야 할지 모르겠지만 나는 뭐 그게 그렇게 굉장히 뭔가 시민의 역할이라는거는, 내 자리. 내 자리 잘 지키면 된다 나는 그렇게 생각을 해요. 그것이 어떤 내가 무언가를 해야하고, 뭔가 이슈를 파가지고 거기에 뭘 해야 하는 그런거 보다는 내 앉은 자리를 잘 지키면 된다. 그것이 가장 중요한 기본적인 시민의 역할이라고 생각하고요.

> If I'm a professor, I do what a professor should do. If I'm a teacher, I should convey the dignity I should have as a teacher. If you do those things well, I think it's a very exemplary role as a citizen. Also, for example, if I am a cleaner, then I think it's enough when I excel in my job as a cleaner. What is a cleaner? The basics of a cleaner is to keep the environment clean and to clean things well, right? Likewise, if you are a student, then keep your place as a student. Everyone should play their role as a citizen like that…[90] In society, a manager has a role of a manager, and a staff has a role of a staff, right? So, for example, I am a manager but (if I say) let me play the role of a general manager, because I'm so good. I don't think that's right. Rather than that, I think that the most basic and the best citizenship is to keep one's place. I think of it as an (ideal) role of a citizen (K. M. Yun, personal communication, June 11, 2020).[91]

When Mrs. Yun suggested 'keeping one's place', I initially thought she meant that people had to stay in their comfort zones and that they did not need to engage in any self-improvement to try and achieve upward social mobility. However, what she really meant was a constant endeavour for self-development without encroaching upon other people's freedom and privacy.

> You know young people are also like… If you look at computers (Internet) these days, many netizens do a lot of things. Sometimes there are sad things. These people dig up things that we don't need to know and publicise them. There are so many of them who seek to satisfy people's right to know things. There must be people like that, of course. They have much passion to dig up other people's private lives, to know and to publicise that knowledge. But how much time do young people these days spend on their own self-development and protecting other things (that they ought to)?[92]

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[90] 내가 교수면 교수의 해야 할 일, 교사라면 교사로써 가져야 할 품위. 그런 것들을 잘 한다면 아주 모범적인 시민의 역할이라고 생각을 하고요. 또 가령 내가 청소부다. 하면 청소부로서 내 역할을 잘 하면 된다고 생각을 하거든요? 청소부는 뭡니까? 환경을 깨끗하게 하고 청소도 잘하는 게 기본이잖아요? 그렇게 하고. 학생이라면 학생의 자리를 잘 지키는. 각자 시민의 역할을 잘 담당하고 그렇게..

[91] 사회에서도 과장이면 과장의 역할, 사원이면 사원의 역할이 있잖아요?. 그러니까 가령 내가 과장인데, 내가 부장의 역할을 해야 한다. 그거는 아니라고 생각하거든요. 내가 부장의 역할을 잘 해야겠다. 나 잘하는데. 그것보다는, 각자 내가 과장의 역할만 철저히 잘하고, 각자 자기 자리를 잘 지키는 것이 나는 최고의 기본적인 최고의 시민이라고 생각을 해요. 시민의 역할이라고 생각을 해요.

[92] 젊은이들이 또 그런 거 있잖아요. 자기 있으면서 뭐가 이렇게 요즘 컴퓨터들 보면 수많은 네티즌들이 정말로 많은 일을 해요. 어쩔 때는 안타까운 것들도 있어요. (그 사람들이) 뭔가 알지 않아도 될 것들, 그런걸 캐 가지고 또 알게하고, 국민의 알 권리를 철저하게 충족시켜주는 사람들이 너무 많더라고요. 그런 사람들도 있어야죠, 물론. 있어야 되지만 거기 과연 그 사람이, 그 네티즌들이 속속들이 남의 사생활까지 파서 그걸 알고, 알리고 하는 열정이 과연 자기 발전과 다른 것을 지키기에는 얼마나 시간을 할애하고 할까, 요즘 젊은이들이?

> I feel sad when I think like that. I wish they would spend a little more of that passion on self-development, preserving and protecting their place, and cultivating their role. It would be good if they can do that (i.e., publicising other people's private lives on the internet) in the rest of the time left. But it's like they put the cart before the horse. I found there are people who do that work as if it is their main job. There are a few people around me who are working hard online (K. M. Yun, personal communication, June 11, 2020).[93]

By 'the people who dig up issues', Mrs. Yun was pointing at some Korean YouTube creators who specialised in investigating social issues. In recent years, they have caused a lot of controversies by uncovering private lives of well-known figures, ranging from politicians to celebrities. Instead, she expressed her wish for young people:

> For the sake of self-care and self-development, there are many times when I think that I wish young people these days would have the wisdom to look back and spend more time for themselves.[94]

> Positively, there are many young people who spend their time very wisely and live life, although there are many who do it more gracefully in self-development. But I wish our young people could spend more time on self-development and be wise. I want today's young people to know how to use skilfully the cutting-edge science and live wisely. It makes me think like that a lot. I think that we can apply the basic framework of Saemaul Undong to everything (K. M. Yun, personal communication, June 11, 2020).[95]

Mrs. Yun urges today's young people to work on improving their selves. She understands self-improvement to be contributing to national improvement. That is the ideal role of a citizen. her statement, 'I think that we can apply the basic framework of Saemaul Undong to everything',

[93] 그런 생각을 하면서 안타까울 때가 있고. 그 열정을 자기 개발과 자기 자리를 잘 보존하고 지키고 자기 역할을 수양하는데 조금 더 써줬으면, 그 다음에 남은 시간에 하면 좋은데. 이거는 길이 전도된 것처럼, 이거는 완전히 바뀐 것처럼 그게 본업인 것처럼 활동하는 사람들도 있더라구요. 제 주변에도 온라인 상에서 열심히 활동하는 사람이 몇이 있어요.

[94] 뭔가 자기 관리, 자기의 발전을 위해서 조금 더 요즘 젊은이들이 돌아볼 줄 알고 시간을 좀 더 자기를 위해 쓸 줄 아는 그런 지혜와 현명함을 가져줬으면 좋겠다 하는 생각이 들 때가 많아요.

[95] 긍정적으로 자기 시간을 굉장히 현명하게 그리고 삶을 살아가는 젊은이들, 자기 개발에서 더 우아하게 하는 사람도 많이 있지만. 그러나 우리 젊은이들이 자기 개발에 좀 더 시간을 할애할 줄 알고 지혜롭고 현명했으면 좋겠어요. 지금 첨단 시대를 첨단과학시대를 요리 할 줄 알고 지혜롭게 살아가는 젊은이들이 됐으면 좋겠다. 그런 생각을 많이 하게 됩니다. 나는 모든 것들이 새마을운동의 기본 틀이 다 있다,라고 생각을 해요.

shows that Mrs. Yun understands Saemaul Undong as a project of self-fashioning and for her, it is still an ongoing project that even today's young people can benefit from.

The will to empower, or to help people to help themselves, can be both limiting and enabling at the same time (Cruikshank, 1999). When the model farmer-citizen is expected to act upon the self voluntarily, practicing the three spirits of Saemaul (self-reliance, diligence and cooperation), it can also limit certain freedoms, such as their leisure time and spending money for their pleasure, but can also be empowering in surprising ways. Interviews with female Saemaul leaders and related research suggest that women felt liberated because they were given opportunities to exercise their autonomy and self-sufficiency. In the 1970s, women in Korean rural communities lived under a patriarchal system of traditional values. Women's roles were limited to homemaking, raising children, and assisting with farm work. Decisions in the family were made by husbands or in-laws. When Saemaul Undong started to incorporate women leaders in its programme, mainly through the Saemaul Women's Associations (SWAs), women's participation was low at the beginning. Research shows that only 24% of women leaders volunteered to join Saemaul Undong and close to 76% of women Saemaul leaders were either nominated or coaxed to join (H.S. Kim, 2016). This has led to an argument that women were victims of state-led development and that they were incited to sacrifice themselves for the development of the nation and the state (Jang, 2007; Shin, 2001, as cited in H. S. Kim, 2016). On the other hand, studies that focus on the female Saemaul leaders' experiences highlight a rather liberating effect of their participation in Saemaul Undong (Jacob & Choi, 2020; Yŏ, 2015). The SWAs emerged as influential agents of change, spearheading a myriad of endeavours, including savings movements, anti-gambling campaigns, welfare programmes for women, and temperance movements. By engaging in these activities, women leaders not only demonstrated their agency but also played instrumental roles in introducing innovative methods for income generation within their villages. Meanwhile, traditional gender norms and

entrenched patriarchal attitudes posed significant barriers, with elders and men expressing scepticism and resistance towards women assuming leadership roles. Women leaders were told a Korean proverb, *When a hen crows, the family is ruined* and they experienced instances of verbal abuse and disdain ('An older man cursed at our husbands, saying that this village would soon be ruined, and even spat at me as I passed by, asking what I was going to do with the wives in this village.'[96]).

Nevertheless, women leaders persisted in their volunteer work for their villages, as it was suggested in some of the recorded video interviews with women leaders. Leader Chŏng Muncha (n.d.) would wake up at 4:30am every day and help plant rice in the neighbour's field as large as 2,000 pyung with her fellow SWA members. After one or two hours of work, the members would return home and cook breakfast for their families. This way, the SWA members could earn trust from the villagers and do more projects such as establishing a village credit union. Leader Chŏng recollected how her father looked down upon her mother for being uneducated and ignorant and how this made her aspire a better life for herself: '…my mother was treated very harshly by my father, being told that she was ignorant and uneducated. So, from a very young age, that was deeply ingrained in my mind – about my mother's life. Strangely enough, whenever I talked about my future dreams, I always dreamed of going to a rural area, starting a farm, and raising poor orphans. But strangely enough, I got married in a rural area and ended up getting together with women and doing that kind of thing (meaning, Saemaul projects). God helped me.' For Leader Chŏng, sacrificing her time as a Saemaul leader did not limit her freedom, but instead liberated her to live a better life than her own mother's. This experience led her to not only work on herself to become a good leader but also to help other women:

[96] Kim, T. C. (n.d.). Interview [Video recording]. Saemaul Undong Oral History, Saemaul Undong Archives, http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/oralrecord/video d/119/0

> Even though I lived in poverty, I was treated like a human being by my husband. But when I came to the countryside here, I realised that the women had learned nothing. Also, their lives were difficult. Since they did not have financial power, they were prone to being abused by their husbands. (I realised) Ah, in order to improve the status of women here, we need to become economically independent and also educate ourselves. So we actually did various projects to save money, started a public credit unions and saving funds, opened our bank accounts, and developed a culture of savings (Chŏng, n.d.).

Leader Kim Tongch'un (n.d.) also spoke of her volunteer activities and how the recognition of her hard work brought her joy: 'I worked really hard at that time. In the days when there were no telephones, we would go from house to house in the evening, ask people to come to the meeting hall, gather together, discuss, and hold meetings. We (the women) would strip down thatched houses in the village and put them up with slate. Women took the lead in doing this, and later they were recognised by our husbands as well… When we opened bank accounts (for women in the village), we felt proud that we had our own bank accounts now, even if it (the balance) was just 1 won.' [97]

Individuals, through their self-transformation, are led to dream and aspire to new, endless possibilities – possibilities of raised income, affluence, education for their own children, strong nation and better selves. Consider a letter from a female Saemaul trainee, addressed to Director Kim Jun (Kim Chun) at the Saemaul Leaders Training Institute in 1973:

> I think that by keeping alive the pride of a leader who perseveres and pushes forward to the end, my village can also become a village worthy of its price, so I am doing my best to do this worthwhile work. The men in this village are now following the example of women with some interest. I can clearly see that a new history will be created in my village, which was the most troubled and ranked last place in *Uljin-gun*. *As a leader, I feel like I am lacking, so I am determined to learn more, lead by example, and give my all until the day comes when all my fellow villagers can move together as one.* Although we are currently appearing as the smallest mother's association in the country, *I promise*

[97] 1 US dollar was about 300 Korean Won in the early 1970s, https://www.kpi.or.kr/www/bbs/bbs_download.asp?BBS_NO=9926&file=1

> *to become a leader who will not be lazy in creating a prosperous village that will be number one in the country tomorrow* (O. I. Ch'oe, 1973)[98]

Leader Ch'oe, the author of this letter, was a widow with a three-year-old son who joined Saemaul Undong in her hometown. Prior to joining the Saemaul Leaders Training, she said that she was doubtful about the training. But when she heard the lectures from the trainers, the lessons became her driving force to give her all and create her village as a prosperous one:

> During the training at the Training Institute, I was so moved that I cried several times while studying. The instructors' mental attitude and every word they said touched my heart sweeter than a honeycomb…I will become a fruitful leader who dedicates my all to my son and the residents of my hometown.[99]

Leader Ch'oe did not specify in the letter which particular lecture or words had moved her and made her cry several times. But from her determination of becoming a selfless leader for her village, we can assume that a model of a selfless volunteer had an affective impact on Leader Ch'oe, stirring strong emotions. By working on herself to become a dedicated leader, Leader Ch'oe was able to dream of a better self, a future better for her own son and prosperity for her village.

When Saemaul leaders were encouraged to volunteer for their villages, they experienced changes to their relationship with themselves, their family, their neighbours, and the nation. The changes in their identity (from an ordinary rural villager to a Saemaul leader) brought them limitations as well as certain possibilities. A poem below illustrates how multiple identities and roles were expected to be played by Saemaul leaders:

> Saemaul leaders are the centre and core of the Saemaul Undong.

[98] 참고 끝까지 밀고 나가는 참된 지도자의 긍지를 살림으로써 저의 마을도 내외가 격에 맞는 알맞는 마을이 되지 않나를 생각해서 이같이 보람 있는 일에 온갖 힘을 다하고 있어요. 이 마을 남자분들은 이제 좀 관심있게 부녀들의 뒤를 따라오고 있읍니다. 울진군에서도 제일 말썽이었고 꼴등 부락인 제 고장에 새로운 역사가 창조 될 것이 생생히 옅 보입니다. 지도자인 저가 부족한 것 같아서 좀 더 배우고 솔선수범하여 동민이 하나같이 움직일 수 있는 그 날이 되기까지 안간힘을 다 써 제 전부를 바칠 각오입니다. 지금은 전국에서도 제일 작은 어머니회로 등장되고 있지만 분명 내일엔 전국에서도 제 1 위의 잘사는 부강 마을을 만드는데 게으르지 않는 지도자가 되길 다짐하는 바입니다.

[99] 연수원 교육 시 저는 너무나 감격하여 공부를 하면서 몇 번 속으로 눈물이 났는지 몰라요. 교관 님들의 정신 자세며 일거일동 말씀이 꿀 송이 보다 더 달콤하게 제 심금을 울렸어요…나의 아들과 나의 고장의 주민을 위해 제 모두를 바치는 알찬 지도자가 되겠습니다.

Become a leader of Saemaul
Become a zeal of Yushin
As a strong fragrance of the nation, sometimes
become a village doctor
become a village teacher

Poem, *Path of the leader* (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1973)

Many Saemaul leaders have recounted their difficult memories as parents. Wanting to perform the duties of ideal Saemaul leaders (selfless, dedicated and hardworking) clashed with their role as parents, husbands and wives. Many Saemaul leaders commented that they felt sorry toward their families because they often had to put their village work first, before attending to their family matters. When they had to negotiate these multiple roles, they chose Saemaul leader first, because they believed it was also for the good of their families. They had a firm belief that if Korea became prosperous, then they and their children would all benefit. This shows that these Saemaul leaders perceived themselves as the workers of the nation first, and not just an ordinary father or husband, and so on.

5.4 Technology of the self: Confession

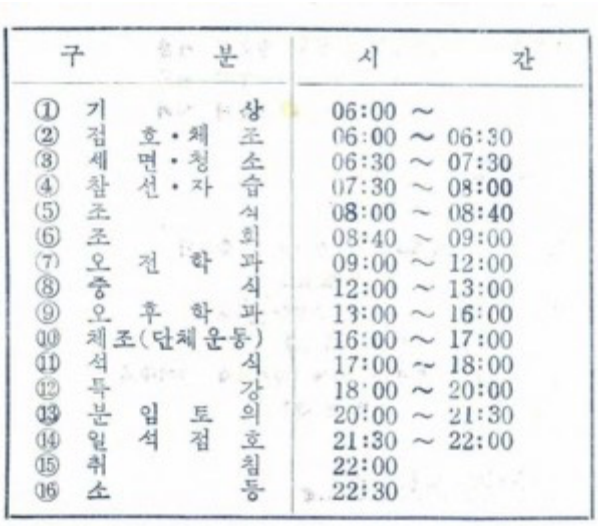
'I was born in the village of ….' (O. B. Kim, 1974). Many success stories of Saemaul leaders, like Mrs. O. B. Kim's, take the form of autobiographies, detailing the past of the speaker from childhood, what kind of families the speaker was born into, and so on.[100] The storytelling involved sketching of the speaker's background, mostly how poor they were, and the hardships they had gone through. The experiences of poverty were usually narrated and coupled with them looking back at their, often *wrong,* attitude to life. Saemaul Undong became a turning

[100] Saemaul Undong Archives website provides access to a collection of success stories of Saemaul leaders from the 1970s, http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/search?&searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%84%B1%EA%B3%B5%20%EC%82%AC%EB%A1%80%20%EC%9B%90%EA%B3%A0&pg=6.

point in their lives. By learning and practising Saemaul spirits of self-help, cooperation and diligence, they experienced self-transformation. Having transformed their mentalities and behaviour, the narrators then introduce rewards they have reaped because of their diligence and hard work. This pattern of self-narration was a prominent feature of Saemaul Undong in the 1970s, and the pattern continued even until the early 1990s.

The narration of the self, stating truths about oneself, often takes the form of confession. Confession has been used in diverse disciplines in various forms, from communist practice of self-criticism to self-voluntary disclosure in therapy. In this section, I shall focus on the rituals of confession, practiced by instructors and trainees at the Training Institute for Saemaul Leaders. The rituals of confession, such as Saemaul success stories, group discussion, and writing letters, have a common element of telling one's story about oneself to others. Through the process of telling one's own stories, one establishes the truth about oneself. Foucault saw acts of stating the truth about oneself as having an effect on the shaping of one's subjectivity (Foucault 2001, [1977] 206, 317–318, as cited in Burchell, 2009).

Saemaul education curriculum emphasised the importance of mindset changes and its application in real life settings. The curriculum focused on life education to learn how to make concessions and cooperation in everyday life. Participatory education based on dialogue and discussion, and case education to experience mutual education and success stories of leaders (Chung, 2009). The schedule for an average Saemaul leaders training camp was as follows:



구 분	시 간
① 기 상	06:00 ~
② 점호·체조	06:00 ~ 06:30
③ 세면·청소	06:30 ~ 07:30
④ 참선·자습	07:30 ~ 08:00
⑤ 조 식	08:00 ~ 08:40
⑥ 조 회	08:40 ~ 09:00
⑦ 오전학과	09:00 ~ 12:00
⑧ 중 식	12:00 ~ 13:00
⑨ 오후학과	13:00 ~ 16:00
⑩ 체조(단체운동)	16:00 ~ 17:00
⑪ 석 식	17:00 ~ 18:00
⑫ 특 강	18:00 ~ 20:00
⑬ 분임토의	20:00 ~ 21:30
⑭ 일석점호	21:30 ~ 22:00
⑮ 취 침	22:00
⑯ 소 등	22:30

FIGURE 29. Daily schedule of Saemaul leaders training. *Saemaul Training Textbook.* (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1973)[101]

1) Wake up 06:00 -
2) Roll call and stretching/ exercise 06:00 - 06:30
3) Wash and cleaning 06:30 – 07:30
4) Meditation (zen) and self-study 07:30 – 08:00
5) Breakfast 08:00 – 08:40
6) Assembly 08:40 – 09:00
7) Morning lectures 09:00 – 12:00
8) Lunch 12:00 – 13:00
9) Afternoon lectures 13:00 – 16:00
10) Group exercise 16:00 – 17:00
11) Dinner 17:00 – 18:00
12) Special lecture 18:00 – 20:00
13) Group discussion 20:00 – 21:30
14) Evening roll call 21:30 – 22:00
15) Go to bed 22:00
16) Lights off 22:30

The boot-camp styled training, where trainees were not allowed access to television, radio, newspaper or telephone, ensured that they were isolated from the outside world for at least a week and could fully absorb themselves in learning the Saemaul mindset. Through activities such as meditation, self-study and group exercise, trainees learnt to practice and apply Saemaul education in real life settings. Trainees were instructed and guided to reflect on themselves and

[101] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., https://theme.archives.go.kr/viewer/common/archWebViewer.do?archiveId=0001316627. [accessed February 26, 2020].

embark on self-transformation by the end of the training. I will now investigate three rituals of confession in the Saemaul leaders training schedule, from morning to evening.

9:00am: Morning lectures

Lectures were delivered twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. Whereas afternoon lectures revolved around technical farming skills, morning lectures were mainly about mindset education. Lecturers were mainly university professors and government officials. Of all lecturers, Director Kim Jun was the most popular among the trainees. While Director Kim, also a Professor, headed the Saemaul Leaders Training Institute for twelve years between 1972 and 1984, he became symbolic of Saemaul education through his philosophy and teaching of *nongshim*. According to Director Kim Jun, nongshim (literally translated as "farmer's heart") signified the true, authentic state of mind that Saemaul leaders had to discover and nurture in themselves. This teaching of reflecting on oneself and finding one's true self was in line with President Park's call to farmers:

> Everyone! If you go back today, go to the farmland where you live, the farmhouse you live in, and the farmland you manage, and *take a good look!* Let's take a look at whether our farmers did everything that we could do on our own, or did we do what we were supposed to do before we blame the sky or others? (Park, 1970c)[102]

Park Chung Hee urged farmers to *examine* themselves, asking them to reflect upon themselves. President Park emphasised that the individual mindset was at the core of rural problems. Depending on one's state of mind, one could be either a source of problem or a solution to rural development. Such an approach draws one's gaze on oneself. In his lecture titled, *Saemaul Undong and Spiritual revolution*, Director Kim Jun (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1975: 122) explains that it is important for Saemaul leaders to create a new history for the nation 'by

[102] 여러분! 오늘이라도 돌아가면 여러분이 사는 농촌, 또 여러분들이 사는 그 농가, 여러분들이 경영하는 농토에 나가서 한 번 잘 살펴 보십시오! 우리 농민들이 우리 스스로의 힘으로써 할 수 있는 일을 다 했는가 안 했는가, 하늘을 원망하기 전에, 남을 원망하기 전에 내 스스로가 해야 할 일을 했느냐, 이것부터 살펴봅시다.

finding the true self'[103] because 'without the perfect development of my true life, there would be no development of the state, nation, and humanity'.[104] Thus, one must revisit oneself, work on understanding and improving it through "reflection and reformation" (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1975: 122).[105] As the trainees are guided to examine and discover themselves (an example of this guidance session is given below in the case of group discussion) they are naturally led to a prepping stage for creating a narrative about oneself.

6:00pm: Special lectures

At 6pm after dinner, special guests were invited to deliver lectures. These special lectures featured successful case studies from exemplary Saemaul leaders. One of the educational policies of the Saemaul Leaders Training Centre was to maximise the educational effect through mutual education focusing on successful cases and group discussions (Chung, 2009). It was President Park's idea to include successful case studies as the most important teaching material for Saemaul education. For a twelve-day training programme, trainees listened to twenty-one hours of successful cases on average. In each lecture session, a Saemaul leader would stand at the podium and narrate his or her experience of leading Saemaul projects in respective villages. Most of these stories followed a similar pattern of describing adverse situations of the narrator and the narrator's village, and how they later overcame challenges to successfully implement Saemaul projects and increased income of the village. The stories are narrated like mini autobiographies in that they contain quite personal information rather than formal and bureaucratic information. Narrators start by giving their personal histories and background, recounting their difficult as well as successful experiences and describe their

[103] 우리도 참 나를 찾고 큰 이상을 찾음으로서 확고한 신념을 얻고 현실을 초극할 수 있는 개척정신을 발휘하여 새 역사 창조의 영광된 대열에 설 것을 시대는 부르고 있다.
[104] 자아를 찾아가는 것이란 -> 잘 살게 되는 것? 사회적 지위를 높이는 것? 나와 전체가 대립되지 않는 내가 참 나이다. 나의 참 생명의 완전한 발전없이 국가, 민족, 인류의 발전도 없고, 전체의 생존, 발전없이 나의 생존과 발전 또한 있을 수 없는 것이다.
[105] 우리의 국민정신에 있어서 고쳐야 할 점은 어떤 것인가에 관하여는 사람에 따라 서로 다른 의견이 있을 것이다. 필자는 다음 몇가지 점에 있어서 **반성과 개조가 있어야 한다**고 본다

feelings of disappointment and hopefulness. They end their stories with a determination to keep strong in Saemaul spirits and work harder to make their villages better.

The narration of success stories was just like testimonies delivered in religious ceremonies in that they were personal but also emotional. Often there would be tears in the eyes of both narrator and listeners. One leader said, 'I reflected on myself with tears in all the success story presentations' (D. H. Han, 2012: 24). The successful stories affected trainees, making them want to become like the protagonist in the successful story. Those who received training at the Saemaul Leaders Training Centre said that they were most impressed by the lectures and presentations of success stories by Director Kim Jun and Elder Kim Yong-gi (J. H. Bak, 2005). Most of all, the ritual of confession in Saemaul's success stories had a profound impact on the narrators themselves. In sharing their personal experience, they were in fact producing a form of confessional autobiography. In the process, the narrator is not only a part of the normalising force, but also ties themselves to a collective identity (Mclaren, 2002). In other words, in the process of narrating, the narrators become attached to their own narration, which affects the way in which they understand themselves.

Leader Ha Sayong is the so-called the legendary Saemaul leader who narrated his success stories over 3,500 times (S. D. Kim, 2002). Since 1972, he has been invited by Saemaul Leaders Training Institute, private companies, government offices, school, and prisons. He has also instructed Saemaul training in Mongolia and China. Leader Ha's first success story was delivered in November 1970 at the National Farmers and Fishermen Income Increase Special Project Contest. At this contest, Leader Ha was awarded the first place for his achievement of increased income through farming, receiving the Bronze Tower Order of Industrial Service Merit from President Park Chung Hee. Government officials had prepared the script for his success story, but Leader Ha declined to read from the script. He went on to narrate his life history – how he had overcome extreme poverty, persisted in diligence, and achieved an

increase in income through farming. He was in tears when he recalled how he had to leave behind his wife to go and work for another family, and all smiles when he explained to the audience his unique farming skills. President Park was reportedly touched by his story, saying, 'You have done a great work. You have created something out of nothing', and gave an impromptu speech of appreciation instead of the pre-written one (S. D. Kim, 2002).

In the 1970s, the protagonists of success stories like Leader Ha received much publicity in the media and were treated like national heroes. They were featured in the daily news on television. Movies and cartoons were produced based on their stories. Often, they starred as themselves in the movies. The practices of self-telling and self-writing can of course be found in all cultures in different forms, but they are culturally and historically specific. In the 1970s Korea, the practice of self-telling in Saemaul Undong was a significant activity that received the attention of the President, media and public. While it was a tool to spread the message of hope and reinforcing the Saemaul spirits, it also tied the narrator to a self-discourse of the diligent, hardworking leader. The Chosun monthly magazine article of 2016 quoted the-then 86 years old Leader Ha, who still seemed to firmly believe in Saemaul values, 'Working hard until the day I die is the greatest happiness.' (S. D. Kim, 2016)

8:00pm: Group discussion

The last programme of the day was group discussion. The size of groups was between eight and twelve members (or discussants). Trainees with similar background and interests were allocated the same group. Each group had an instructor who guided the discussions but did not directly intervene. On the first day of the group discussion, the instructor guided group members to introduce themselves, making them speak about their personal background and experiences in order to feel comfortable and to open up towards other members. The main aim of the group discussion was for trainees to share their experiences of leading Saemaul

FIGURE 30. Leader Ha Sa-yong receiving the Bronze Tower Order of Industrial Service Merit from President Park Chung-hee at the Seoul Civic Centre in November, 1970 (S. D. Kim, 2016)

FIGURE 31. Leader Ha Sayong in 2016. He is wearing a Saemaul vest. (S. D. Kim, 2016)

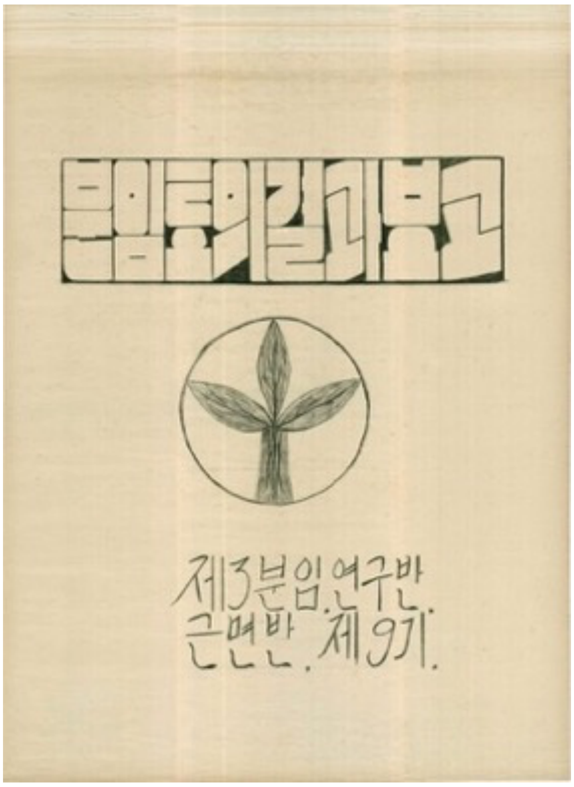
programmes in their respective villages and, most importantly, to internalise the contents of the lectures. It was a procedure whereby the discussants take time to think how they could translate what they have learnt into specific practice. They were allowed to freely structure their group discussions but a general pattern of structure looked like the following: 1) Topic and sub-topic, 2) Reasons for the chosen topic, 3) Reality review, and 4) Problems and solutions. After the group discussion was finalised, one of the group members wrote down the discussion in a presentable report format on paper.

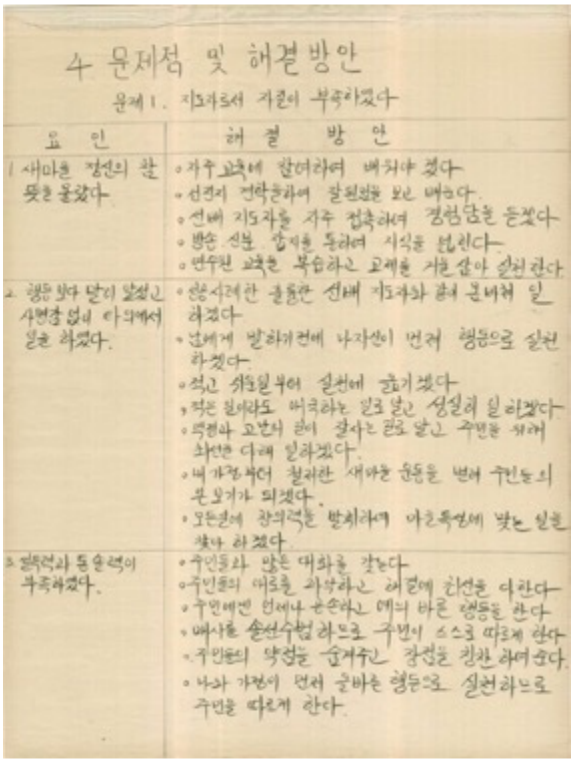
The official Saemaul Undong archives keeps about 2,700 of group discussion reports from the 1970s. Here is an example of group discussion from the Saemaul Undong archive (FIGURE 32). Group number 3 of the 9th class trainees[106], named *Diligence*, chose their topic, 'A plan for the sustainable development of Saemaul Undong'[107] and the sub-topic, 'An image of desirable Saemaul leader'. Topics and sub-topics were to be goals related to advancing Saemaul programme. Trainees of the ninth class Saemaul Leaders Training were leaders of the so-called, backward villages (*nak'u purak*) whose villages had not achieved the desired outcome according to Saemaul programme. The members of the group 3 explained their motivation for choosing their topic in introduction:

> While the flames of Saemaul soar high, we examined ourselves in shame as to what led us to be selected as backward villages. As the history proves to us, we know that it has always brought prosperity and hope to the diligent nation, and the lazy nation suffers from poverty.[108]

This group's pattern of discussion was a little different from the general pattern. They decided to combine the two components of 'Reasons for the chosen topic' and 'Reality review'. Thus, although it was not explicitly written 'reality review', this group has still attempted at

[106] The exact year of the archive material is not known. The archive says 'the 1970s'.
[107] 새마을 운동의 지속적 발전 방안
[108] 높이 치솟아 오르고 있는 새마을의 불꽃… 어쩌다 낙후된 부락으로 선정 되었을까 하고 부끄러운 마음으로 생각을 해보았습니다. 역사는 우리들에게 증명을 하여주듯 항상 부지런한 국민에게는 번영과 희망을 안겨주었고 게으른 민족에게는 가난으로 시달림을 받고 있다는 것을 역역히 알았습니다.





4 문제점 및 해결방안

문제 1. 지도자로서 자질이 부족하였다

요 인	해 결 방 안
1 새마을 정신의 참뜻을 몰랐다	· 자주 교육에 참여하여 깨우쳐야 겠다 · 선진지 견학을 하여 잘된점을 보고 배운다. · 선배 지도자를 자주 접촉하여 경험담을 듣겠다 · 방송 신문 잡지를 통하여 지식을 넓힌다 · 연수한 교육을 복습하고 교재를 거울삼아 실천한다
2. 행동보다 말이 앞섰고 사명감 없이 타의에서 일을 하였다.	· 솔선시범한 훌륭한 선배 지도자와 같이 몸바쳐 일하겠다 · 남에게 말하기 전에 나 자신이 먼저 행동으로 실천하겠다. · 적고 쉬운일부터 실천에 옮기겠다 · 적은 일이라도 싫어하는 일도 없이 성실히 일하겠다 · 명예와 고관의 길이 잘사는 길로 알고 주민을 위해 최선을 다해 일하겠다. · 내 가정부터 철저한 새마을 운동을 벌여 주민들의 본보기가 되겠다. · 모든일에 창의력을 발휘하여 마을특성에 맞는 일을 찾아 하겠다
3. 협동력과 통솔력이 부족하였다.	· 주민들과 많은 대화를 갖는다 · 주민들의 애로를 파악하고 해결에 최선을 다한다 · 주민에겐 언제나 겸손하고 예의 바른 행동을 한다 · 매사를 솔선수범하므로 주민이 스스로 따르게 한다 · 주민들의 약점을 숨겨주고 장점을 칭찬하여 준다. · 나와 가정이 먼저 올바른 행동으로 실천하므로 주민을 따르게 한다

FIGURE 32. Group discussion report. Group number 3 of the 9th class trainees, Class of ‘Diligence’. Saemaul Training Textbook (circa 1973). Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/search/view/116958?searchEnable=1&keyword=%EB%B6%84%EC%9E%84%ED%86%A0%EC%9D%98%20%EC%A0%9C9%EA%B8%B0%20%EC%A0%9C3%EB%B6%84%EC%9E%84%EB%B0%98&pg=1&CA_ID=2

Table 2. Translation of a table in FIGURE 32

Main problem 1. I had poor leadership qualities[109]	
Causes	Solutions
1.I did not understand the true meaning of Saemaul Spirits[110]	a. I should participate in Saemaul education frequently to learn[111] b. I will take a field trip to advanced villages and learn from their good things[112] c. I will frequently contact senior leaders to hear their experiences[113] d. I will broaden my knowledge through broadcasting, newspapers, and magazines[114] e. I will review Saemaul training centre education and practice the education material as if it's my mirror[115]
…..	…..
3. 'We had poor leadership qualities.'	a. If it is helpful to the village, even if there is an economic loss, I am willing to take the lead in sacrificial service.[116] b. In community joint ventures, I will always sacrifice mine first.[117] c. If it is difficult to make financial contribution due to circumstances, then I will do my best to serve with our body and mind.[118] d. I will do my best to help the poor people as if they were my own family.[119] e. If it is a way for the villagers to live well, I will dedicate myself to whatever pain and sacrifice that may incur and I will overcome them.[120] f. I do the work and I give the credit to the villagers.[121] g. When a work is difficult and avoided by others, then I'll do it before others.[122]

[109] In the original report, the members used pronouns of 'I' and 'we' interchangeably, often referring to themselves as both 'We' and 'I'.
[110] 새마을 정신의 참 뜻을 몰랐다.
[111] 자주 교육에 참여하여 배워야 겠다.
[112] 선진지 견학을 하여 잘 된 점을 보고 배운다.
[113] 선배 지도자를 자주 접촉하여 경험담을 듣겠다.
[114] 방송, 신문, 잡지를 통하여 지식을 넓힌다.
[115] 연수원 교육을 복습하고 교제를 거울삼아 실천한다.
[116] 마을에 도움이 되는 일이라면 경제적인 손실이 있더라도 기꺼이 희생 봉사에 앞장선다.
[117] 공동 사업에는 항상 내 것부터 먼저 희생한다.
[118] 형편상 경제적인 협조는 어렵지만 몸과 마음을 바쳐 최선을 다해 봉사하겠다.
[119] 빈곤한 주민을 내 가족과 같이 여겨 최선을 다해 돕겠다.
[120] 주민이 잘 사는 길이라면 어떠한 고통과 희생이 따르더라도 극복하고 헌신한다.
[121] 일은 내가 하고 공은 주민에게 준다.
[122] 어려운 일이나 남이 하기 싫은 일은 내가 먼저 한다.

reviewing the reality they were facing. *Reality review* is a process of reflection about group members themselves and their fellow villagers. It is a time for the members to cast a gaze at themselves and think what they must have been doing wrong (or what they should have done more). During this process of self-examining, the self implicitly becomes the object of scrutiny and the site of potential improvement. This group wanted to find out what had led their villages to be backward and this process involved examining themselves, reflecting upon their actions and attitude. And they situated the cause of the backwardness of their villages in the leaders themselves and their laziness. The members' declaration that 'the diligent nation' is rewarded with 'prosperity and hope' and 'the lazy nation suffers from poverty' reflects the Saemaul logic of self-help, characterised by the popular phrase, *Heaven helps those who help themselves*. The members continued, 'Through this training at the training centre, we learned thoroughly about Saemaul Undong and clearly understood the sense of mission and direction we should walk'.[123]. The *mission and direction* were to admit their fault, improve themselves and start 'demonstrating the spirit of sacrifice one by one, starting with actions of possibility.' [124]

After having reviewed themselves, the group members continued to the next section of *Problems and Solutions*. In this part of discussion, the members listed problems. The three main problems that prevented Saemaul Undong's sustainability in their villages were identified as: 1) We had poor leadership qualities; 2) The villagers failed to participate because of their poor understanding of Saemaul Undong; and 3) Administrative support from Saemaul authority did not match local conditions of villages. Each main problem had a list of sub-problems as *causes* (or factors) and solutions for the causes. Let me take the first main problem to highlight the process of confession and determination: Consider *Cause number. 3 - We had poor leadership qualities* – it is notable that the group members were not simply naming the

[123] 요번 연수원 교육을 통해 새마을 운동을 충분히 배웠고 우리들이 걸어 가야 할 사명감과 방향을 뚜렷히 알았습니다.
[124] 실천 가능성이 있는 것부터 하나 하나 희생정신을 최대한 발휘

problems they were facing. In identifying the problems, the members were in fact scrutinising themselves for possible problems in themselves. They were also admitting their shortcomings and wrong doings by naming them (e.g. we had poor leadership qualities). This was a confession about how the leaders failed to foster the spirit of volunteerism. Effectively, this session became an opportunity for the members to confess their faults and state the truth about themselves to the public. The solutions listed for Cause number. 3 were related to how the members could improve themselves and align their thoughts and actions with a spirit of voluntarism. The members felt that they needed to become more committed to sacrificing and servicing for their villagers in order to nurture good leadership qualities.[125] The pattern of confession in group discussion (to examine oneself, admit one's shortcomings and seek modification and improvement of oneself) is also captured in *conclusion*:

> *Conclusion*: We had so many shortcomings, and we felt that we were irresponsible as leaders who could not put what we knew into practice and action - we only blamed the circumstances of the remote village.
>
> However, after hearing the success stories of our senior leaders through the training, we were greatly moved by the will and sense of duty of those who created something out of nothing, which sparked our heated discussion. We've found a lot of our shortcomings.
>
> Under the firm belief that we should become a never-extinguishing candle for our backward villages, burn our bodies and make devotion to make them self-sufficient villages that are second to none, we realise that the only way to achieve a self-sufficient village is the path to practice. Therefore, we as Group 3, firmly resolved ourselves to practice into action every single item that was discussed in our group discussion.[126]

While the ritual of confession in group discussion was initiated for the trainees as part of the training curriculum, we could also observe that the trainees themselves engaged in the activities

[125] e.g. If it is helpful to the village, even if there is an economic loss, I am willing to take the lead in sacrificial service; I will dedicate myself to whatever pain and sacrifice that may incur and I will overcome them.

[126] 우리들은 부족한 점이 너무나 많았고 사실상 실질적으로는 알고 있었다 하더라도 실천과 행동으로 옮기지를 못한 지도자로서의 무책임 하였음을 느꼈고 오지마을이란 여건만을 탓하여 왔습니다. 그러나 연수생활을 통해 선배님들의 성공사례를 듣고 무에서 유를 창조한 그 분들의 의지와 사명감에 크게 감동되어 열띤 토의를 불러 일으켜 주었습니다. 우리들의 결점이 수없이 많은 것을 발견 했습니다. 우리들은 숨김없는 토의에서 낙후한 우리마을을 위해 영원히 꺼지지 않는 촛불이 되어 나의 몸을 불사르고 헌신 노력하여 그 어느 마을 보다도 뒤지지 않는 자립 마을로 만들어 놓고야 말겠다는 굳은 신념아래 우리 3 분임반 전원은 오직 실천하는 길만이 자립마을을 앞당기는 길 임을 절감하여 분임토의 사항을 하나도 빠짐없이 실천할 것을 굳게 다짐하였습니다.

of self-examination and undertook to improve themselves. The firm resolution of the trainees for self-transformation and improvement was not something that was forced upon them but came from the trainees' genuine wish to change and become better. Effectively, in the process of confession in Saemaul training, 'norms are both imposed on and taken up by the individual' (Mclaren, 2002: 146).[127] As much as the purpose of Saemaul training was to induce spiritual and behavioural reform of Saemaul participants, the rituals of confession in the training proved to be an effective technology of the self.

5.5 Technology of the self: Everyday practices

> Applying the art of social conduct at the level on which the individual was constituted and regulated meant that power had to find a way into the minute and mundane reaches of the habits, desires, interests, and daily lives of individuals.; The art of social conduct was applied to secure the "social cooperation necessary to keep state intervention to a minimum; in the same step, the sphere of individual liberty was enlarged."… "With the advent of the social as the principle of governing individual conduct, power was articulated through the constitution and regulation of individual liberty. Even, or most especially, the smallest details of life came under the terrain of social intervention. (Cruikshank, 1999: 8)

In an article titled, *Saemaul Spirit in Tidal Flat Village: Famous 19-year-old who takes care of the sea* in *Saemaul* magazine is the story of Ms. Shin Hwangsook (Saemaul, 1973b). According to the article, Ms. Shin is a 19-year-old girl from a rural fishing village, who was awarded an honorary achievement award in the industry award category, established by the Seoul Shimbun. Her diligence, as the breadwinner of a hungry family of nine, has earned her money and respect. With the money which she earned from fishing eels, she paid off her

[127] This points to Foucault's claim that confession is a doubled-sided procedure of power, involving both objectification and subjectivation (Burchell, 2009: 163).

family's debt and even bought a field of 420 pyung. The article calls her 'a living witness of Saemaul Movement to live well'. While it all sounds similar to other Saemaul articles covering success stories, emphasising the value of diligence, I found this particular article interesting because it provided considerable space for detailing Shin's daily schedule.

One's daily routine or schedule is something mundane and can be considered insignificant. In this article, however, Ms. Shin's daily routine is highlighted. It shows how her day is packed with work. She wakes up early in the morning at 4:30am. After working almost all hours all day, at 9pm, although she is very tired, she plans for the following day and prepares her fishing equipment in advance. This alludes to Ms. Shin's anticipation and hopefulness for the next day. The schedule, which shows hardly any time for rest, shows that Ms. Shin gets reward (a daily income) for practicing diligence in her everyday life.

FIGURE 32. 'Saemaul Spirit in Tidal Flat Village: Famous 19-year-old who takes care of the sea'. *Saemaul Magazine* (1973b: 28-29)[128]

[128] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., https://saemaul.udemzi.co.kr/record/byTheme/view/139492. [accessed March 6, 2020]).

FIGURE 33. A close-up of 'Saemaul Spirit in Tidal Flat Village: Famous 19-year-old who takes care of the sea'. *Saemaul Magazine* (1972b: 24-25)[129] Text reads as follows:

> 4:00am - Ms. Shin Hwangsook wakes up in the dark at dawn and packs her tools to go out to sea.
>
> 4:30am - She goes out to sea with a 0.9-ton barge to pull out 2,100-needled net for eel fishing, which she had thrown the previous evening.
>
> 5:00am - Each time the net is pulled up with eels wriggling up in it, Ms Shin's sun-kissed cheeks glow (Her daily catch income is between 3,000 won to 10,000 won)
>
> 8:30am - After 3 hours of early morning work, she returns home, arranges fishing tools, has breakfast, and trims fishing nets.
>
> 10:30am - She goes out to the sea in a diving suit, dives into the water three to four meters deep to catch bugs called *Gulchi*, which are used as food for sea urchins and eels. (Income of 1,000 won to 2,000 won a day)
>
> 2:00pm – lunch
>
> 5:00pm - light dinner
>
> 6:00pm – She goes out to the evening sunset sea and casts eel fishing net.
>
> 9:00pm – She returns home with a tired body, trims the net, and prepares tomorrow's plans and tools for fishing in advance.
>
> 12:00am – She goes to bed

[129] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/byType?&searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%9B%94%EA%B0%84%20%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84&pg=1. [accessed March 6, 2020].

As a primary school student in mid-1990s in South Korea, I remember having to review my daily schedule in my journal entries. Diary writing was school homework, and our journal entries were read and checked by our teachers daily. Students could buy any diaries we preferred, but almost all diaries that were sold in the market contained columns where we had to keep record of what time we woke up and went to bed. Underneath that column was another column where we had to write *my good behaviour for the day* and *reflection on my behaviour and how I could change it tomorrow* (or simply, *my regrets*). This practice of reviewing one's daily schedule and actions could be seen as an inheritance from the 1970s, as it had been just over a decade since the passing of President Park in 1979. This practice of the self, through journaling and setting up goals, is a practice that continues to this day, not only in Korea exclusively but by many in all parts of the world. The practice of reviewing one's actions and thoughts of the everyday life draws one's attention to 'the smallest details of life', bringing them under 'the terrain of social intervention' and improvement. (Cruikshank, 1999: 8).

FIGURE 34. 'Practice of Saemaul Spirit in Everyday Life'. Presidential Calligraphy by Park Chung Hee. *Saemaul Pictorial* (1976)[130]

[130] Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website., http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/byType/view/ 139348?searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%20%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4&pg=5 [accessed March 6, 2020]).

Saemaul Undong provided practical guidelines for leading an ethical and sensible life. They were to be executed *in action*. As suggested by President Park's calligraphy, *Practice of Saemaul Spirit in Everyday Life* (FIGURE 34), the guiding Saemaul spirits were to be practiced in daily routine, starting with easy tasks (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1973). The easy tasks referred to everyday practices such as waking up in early hours of morning and sweeping village paths in front of one's house (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1975). Individuals, through the bodily experience of practicing the tasks, were expected to learn the Saemaul spirits of self-help, diligence and cooperation:

> Knowing is not enough. We must practice what we know and work hard. The Saemaul Undong is a philosophy of action. Words or theories alone cannot bring achievement unless they are matched with practice and action (Saemaul Pictorial 1976: 13).

While conducting primary research for Saemaul Undong, it came to my attention that many newspaper articles and interview participants associated one song with the movement. Most Koreans I met during fieldwork and who lived in rural Korea in the 1970s remembered the song quite well. Even though close to five decades have passed since the 1970s, they remembered the melodies and lyrics of the song[131]. The song, mostly referred as the *Saemaul Song* or the *dawn-bell-tolls-song*, was first introduced in 1972 and is known to have been written and composed by President Park himself[132]. As a song written for promoting Saemaul Undong, it could be heard frequently from the radio and television as well as in schools and even cinemas. While there were several other songs, the Song of Saemaul served as the

[131] (DJ) Do you remember the lyrics and stuff like that? (KY) Of course, 'Dawn bell tolls; new dawn breaks. Let us get up you and me [Mrs. Yun laughs) , it's a very familiar song to me, and you don't have to try to learn the song on your own. You know the song automatically. The song cannot still be forgotten' [Mrs. Yun laughs] . (K. M. Yun, personal communication, June 11, 2020).
[132] https://m.khan.co.kr/view.html?art_id=200811071803105

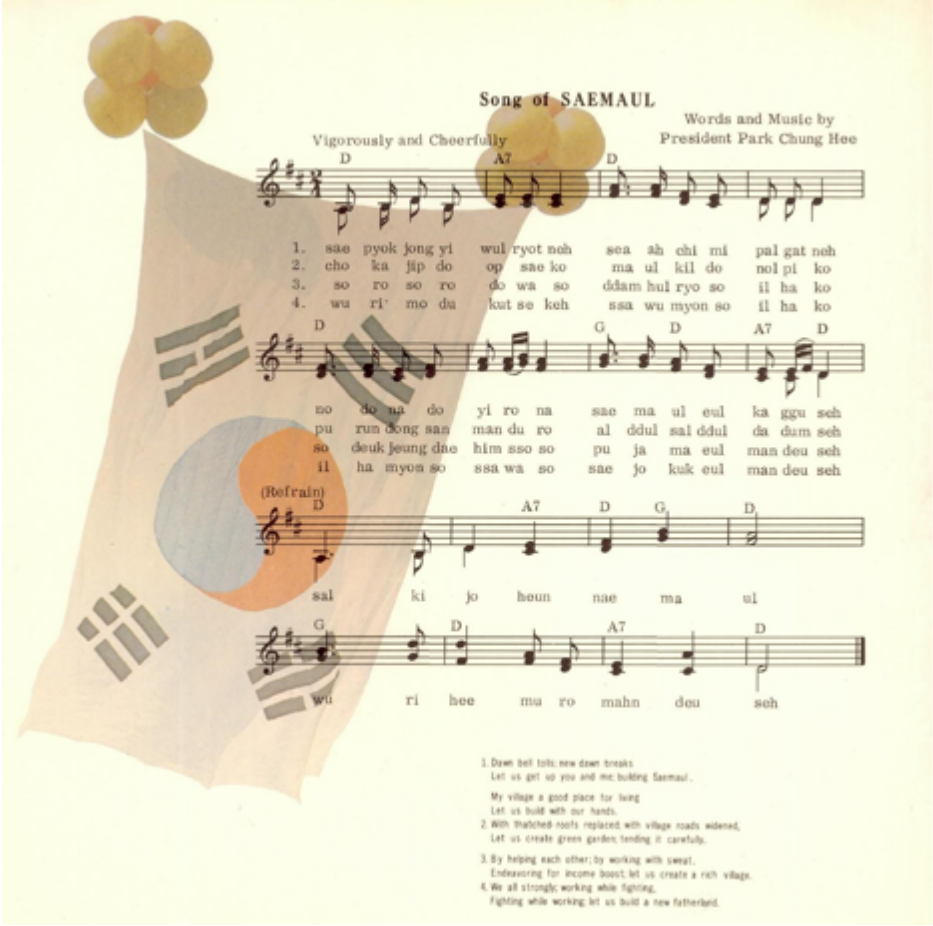


FIGURE 35. Song of Saemaul. *Saemaul Pictorial* (1979)[133]

Lyrics of the song:

1. Dawn bell tolls; new dawn breaks
Let us get up you and me; building Saemaul.
2. With thatched-roof replaced; with village roads widened,
Let us create green garden; tending it carefully
3. By helping each other; by working with sweat,
Endeavoring for income boost; let us create a rich village
4. We all strongly; working while fighting.
Fighting while working; let us build a new fatherland.

(*Refrain*) My village a good place for living
Let us build with our hands.

[133]Retrieved from Saemaul Undong Archives website.,http://archives.saemaul.or.kr/record/search/view/139827?searchEnable=1&keyword=%EC%83%88%EB%A7%88%EC%9D%84%20%ED%99%94%EB%B3%B4%201979%EB%85%84&pg=1 [accessed March 6, 2020]

signature song, almost like the anthem of the movement. One of my interviewees even compared the song to the national anthem of Korea.[134] The lyrics of the song call upon the Korean nation to build their villages into good place for living. The first stanza is the most widely known: *Dawn bell tolls; new dawn breaks. Let us get up you and me; building Saemaul. My village a good place for living. Let us build with our hands.*

For people who lived in rural Korea in the 1970s, the Song of Saemaul was an inescapable part of their everyday life. My younger participants, who were in their teens or twenties, told stories of how their typical day would start with the song. At around 6 o'clock in the morning, communal speakers in villages would start playing the song, '*Dawn bell tolls, new dawn breaks. Let us get up you and me…*'. Mrs. Yun recalled hearing the song: 'I would wake up to that song in the morning many times. Every morning at the district office or something like that… then also, in rural villages, they played that song at the village hall. So, our morning begin with that song resounding' (K. M. Yun, personal communication, June 11, 2020).[135] Almost all villages in rural Korea had communal speakers installed to make sure that important announcements reached the villagers. For villages without speakers, or too big for speakers to reach every corner, garbage or fumigator, trucks would drive around the village while playing the song through a speaker. Saemaul Undong made sure that people's daily routine began with the song and this use of everyday tactics left a strong impression in people's memories.

After the song was played, people in villages were encouraged to go out of their homes and sweep the streets in front of their houses. The song was a cue as well as a reminder to get ready to embark on yet another day of hard work and diligent lifestyle for making *my village a*

[134] 'We thought at the time that the song was equivalent to the national anthem of Korea' (J. Y. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 18, 2020).

[135] 아침에 눈 뜨면서 그 노래를 들으면서 눈 뜰때가 많아요. 아침마다 동사무소나 이런데, 그런데서 또 시골같은데 마을회관에서 그 노래를 틀었어요. 그러니까 그 노래가 울려퍼지면서 아침이 시작되는거죠.

good place for living. Mr. J. Y. Ch'oe, aged sixty seven at the time of interview, is my uncle who grew up in the seaside village of Dohwa, Goheung. He was in his early twenties in early 1970s when Saemaul Undong was just picking up its momentum. When asked if he has ever heard the Saemaul Song, my uncle answered that he sang the song many times and participated in Saemaul projects. He remembered waking up with the song and going out of his home to start the day's work, 'When the song is played in the morning and everyone wakes up, they all go out to the local village with pickaxes and *jige*[136] (in Jeolla-do dialect) or something. Some do cleaning and some do road work. The village neighbourhood is also getting better. And some went to block the reservoir. That was the Saemaul project' (J. Y. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 18, 2020).[137]

Mr. S. Y. Hong, another younger interviewee, also remembered cleaning the streets when the Saemaul song was played. Mr. Hong, aged sixty-five at the time of interview, is currently serving as a Saemaul leader in *Hyangnam-eup, Hwaseong-si* in *Gyeonggi-do* province. Mr. Hong was attending a middle school in the rural village of Baran-ri[138] in the early 1970s. He recalled having to go out to the streets when the song was played, 'When we heard the song in the morning, we would automatically hold brooms and go out to sweep the streets' (S. Y. Hong, personal communication, June 6, 2020).[139] Although my interviewees lived in different parts of Korea, they shared the common experience of hearing the Saemaul song in the morning, followed by engaging in communal labour (sweeping of street or participating in communal labour). For all the interviewees, the Song of Saemaul served as an everyday reminder for practicing the spirit of diligence and cooperation.

[136] A traditional Korean carrying frame in the shape of the letter A
[137] 아침에 그 노래가 일어나면은 다 곡괭이, 전라도 말로 지게. 이런거를 지고 동네 마을로 나가는거에요. 그래서 또 일부는 청소를 하고 일부는 도로작업을 하고. 동네도 완전히 좋아지는 거죠. 그리고 일부는 저수지를 막으러 가고 그랬었어요. 그 새마을 사업이.
[138] Prior to becoming a city in 2001, Hwaseong was a rural district and the current Hyangnam-eup was called Baran-ri village.
[139]그냥 자동적으로 아침에 그 노래 소리가 들리면 빗자루 들고 마당 쓸러 나오고 그랬거든요.

During his interview, my uncle, Mr. J. Y. Ch'oe kept mentioning '*Saemaul saŏp*' (directly translated as, Saemaul project or business). When asked if he has ever heard of the Song of Saemaul, he answered, 'Ah, I sang that (song) many times. I participated and *did* Saemaul projects together' (J. Y. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 18, 2020).[140] At the time, my uncle was an ordinary villager in his early twenties. He was not a Saemaul leader, nor did he hold any official Saemaul title. Yet, I could sense that, for him, listening to the Saemaul song, waking up early and sweeping the streets were themselves deemed as a Saemaul project. Thus, by listening to the song and engaging in the act of diligence, my uncle was *doing* the Saemaul project.

While the Song of Saemaul aimed to inculcate in its listeners the will to work harder to make their villages a better place for living, the listeners of the song did not feel burdened or overwhelmed by it. In fact, the opposite was observed by my research participants. Many have associated the song with positive energy, recalling memories of feeling happy and excited. My interviewee, Mrs. Yun, explained that she felt 'a bright energy' and the urge to do something. She thought that the song was played to bring a change to the Korean people, from feeling hopeless and defeated to aspiring to achieve something great (creating a new village with their own hands):

> **D. Jeong:** As I said before, why do you think the song is played?[141]
>
> **K. M. Yun:** Well, we… I wonder if that has something to do with our nationality... We went through the Japanese colonial period, (they taught Koreans that) we are a lazy nation. So, things like that. Well, Koreans can't succeed because of this and that. So, self-demeaning. The Japanese made such idea to sink into our subconscious…. But songs like, "The dawn bell tolls; New dawn breaks", we went through the 1950s and 1960s, and then as President Park Chung Hee came to power, although he has made some mistakes, I think his greatest achievement was the effort to change the Korean nationality. So, I think that the desire to create a new village through the Saemaul

[140]아 그거 많이 불렀고, 또 새마을사업에도 참석했고 같이 새마을 사업도 하고 그랬어요
[141] 아까도 말씀 하셨지만, 그 노래를 왜 틀어줬다고 생각하세요?

> Undong and to do it with a new heart is contained in the song. So, when I listen to that song over and over again, without realizing it, I get immersed in it, I feel a bright energy, I feel like I have to do something, I feel like I have to be diligent, and I come to know these things as if I become addicted.[142]

Mrs. Yun contrasted the feelings of humiliation to the feelings of hope. For her, the Song of Saemaul was the key that changed people's feelings. It seemed that the song gave Mrs. Yun a hopeful feeling that she could have a meaningful achievement by striving to become diligent. Similarly, Mr. J. Y. Ch'oe, associated the song with positivity and strength: 'For us, at that time, we couldn't eat much and it was hard for our country. But when that song was played, it gave us strength. "*Dawn bell tolls. New dawn breaks*." Just hearing this song gave me strength and it woke me up' (J. Y. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 18, 2020). [143] Like Mrs. Yun, Mr. Ch'oe also felt that the song's call for diligence was positive because 'people who slept until eleven o'clock in the morning… but in the morning they play a Saemaul song and then everyone goes out to do Saemaul project. So the atmosphere in the neighbourhood improves'. He mentioned that he believed Korea's economic development was fast forwarded by ten or fifteen years because people became diligent (waking up early and sweeping the streets) through the song ('The Saemaul project is... with my narrow thoughts, I think that economic development was fast forwarded by 10 or 15 years')[144]. Another interviewee also described her feelings about the song as '…very good. My heart was very happy and good. yes… I got that feeling a lot' (S. H. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 16, 2020). [145] A

[142] 글쎄, 우리… 그거는 민족성하고도 관계가 있지 않을까 하는 생각이 들어요. (중간생략)일제강점기를 거치면서 우리는 게으른 민족이다. 하여튼 그런것들. 뭐 조선 사람은 이래서 안돼. 저래서 안돼. 그러니까 스스로 비하하는. 일본 사람에 의해서 그것이 뭔가 잠재의식 속으로 파고 들게끔. (중간생략) 근데 새벽종이 울리고 새아침이 밝고 이런것들은 그때 당시 50, 60 년대를 지나면서 그 다음에 박정희 대통령이 집권하면서 박정희 대통령의 염원에 의해서 그 분이 실도 있고 여러가지가 있지만은 가장 잘했다고 생각하는데 국민성을 바꿀려고 노력한 그 부분이라고 생각하거든요 나는 개인적으로. 그러니까 **그 새마을운동을 통해서 새 마을을 만드는 것과 동시에 새 마음으로 하려고 하는 그런 염원이 그 노래 속에 들어있다고 생각을 해요. 그러다보니까 그 노래를 계속 반복적으로 듣다가 보면은 나도 모르게 거기에 젖어들게 되고 밝은 기운을 느끼게 되고 뭔가 해야될것 같고, 뭔가 부지런해야 될것 같고, 이런거를 스스로 이렇게 중독되듯이 알게 되지 않나.**

[143]우리에게 그때 당시는 너무 못 먹고 우리나라가 힘들었잖아요. 근데 그 노래가 나오면 우리에게 힘을 주는거에요. 새벽종이 울렸네 새아침이 밝았네. 이 노래소리만 들어도 힘이 생기고 일어났었어요.

[144]새마을사업은 그.. 이 좁은 나의 그 좁은 생각으로. 한 10년, 15년 경제발전이 더 빨리 된것 같다고 생각해요

[145]굉장히 좋았어요. 마음이 되게 기쁘고 좋고. 네… 그런 느낌을 많이 받았어요.

Saemaul leader also described: ‘when the song was played, the villagers became excited and their morale was boosted’ (Sim, n.d.).[146]

The Song of Saemaul, as a part of daily routine of rural villagers, evoked deep emotions of positive feelings and hopefulness. The bodily experience of hearing the cheerful song and feelings of exuberance have shaped the actions of rural villagers at the time and their memories. In her 2009 book, *Moving Politics*, on lesbian and gay communities and AIDS activism in the U.S during 1981-1995, Gould found that collective emotions and feelings shaped people’s political attitudes and behaviour. In her book, Gould argues that while humans are rational and cognitive, they are also affectively moved. The concept of emotion (or a state of being moved) is receiving an increased attention for their possible role in social movement and development. In the next chapter, I will look into the oral narratives of my research participants and their memories to understand their feelings and the affective memories of Saemaul Undong.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the transformative impact of Saemaul Undong on the subjectivities of participants. I discussed how Saemaul Undong, as a technology of citizenship, turned individual farmers into socially embodied citizen subjects, imbued with responsibility to transform society and nation, by transforming themselves. Drawing from archival sources of presidential speeches, Saemaul leaders’ training textbooks and magazines, I identified the state discourse on the idealised Saemaul subject. I also considered interview data (both recorded interviews from the archives and the ones I conducted) to analyse the effects of state discourse on farmers' perceptions of duty and diligence.

Operating as what Rose (1999: 188) calls ‘the government of souls’, the government of the self under Saemaul Undong extended beyond one’s action and behaviour to include

[146] 그때는 주민들이 노래만 나와도 신이 났고 사기충천(士氣衝天)이 됐습니다.

governance of one's desires and even moral standards. Saemaul's technology of citizenship sought to align individual aspirations and pleasure with those of the society and governing authorities, one of them being national progress. As illustrated earlier in the cases of Mrs. Yun and female Saemaul leaders, these women understood themselves not as suppressed but rather liberated through Saemaul Undong. They viewed themselves as catalysts for change, whose 'happiness and fulfilment of the self' came from their volunteering experiences (Rose, 1999: 261). A look into these women's narratives helped me understand the way in which their subjectivities were shaped in their engagement with state discourse.

This chapter has also illustrated how the Korean state positioned the self to national development though the technologies of the self like volunteerism, confession and a scrutiny of everyday practices. Saemaul Undong encouraged self-governance and responsibility, challenging predominant perceptions of authoritarian states as ruling from above, through discipline and domination alone. Instead, it worked through the self, inciting the self to improvement and progress.

Saemaul Undong's focus on the self is rather paradigmatic of neoliberal development. The idea of an individual's failure being due to his/her inefficiency directs one's attention to the interior change, rather than exterior condition. My interview materials presented in this chapter showed how Saemaul participants and leaders embraced this logic. For their strong neoliberal resonance, Saemaul Undong and governing rationalities have been labelled as a form of neoliberal development by some scholars (Choi, Kang & Kang, 2015; J. H. J. Han, 2011; Schwak, 2022). While acknowledging that the focus on the self may be quite unique to neoliberal development, this thesis also finds a long tradition of the self in South Korea (see chapter 1). Throughout the 20th century, self-help discourse has been utilised by various groups and regimes with diverse objectives, all emphasising self-reliance and capitalist values. This pre-existing discourse of the self, which precedes the introduction of Saemaul Undong in 1970

(and even the global neoliberal turn of the 1980s), challenges the idea that neoliberalism and its rationalities emerged out of a vacuum. In fact, this case shows neoliberalism 'retooling' pre-existing rationalities for its new purpose (Roy, 2022: 6).

The chapter's analysis could be strengthened by more critically questioning the interplay between self-making and authoritarian developmentalism. The current analysis provides a foundation for understanding the technologies of the self in Saemaul Undong, yet it could be enhanced by incorporating a more nuanced examination of the interactions between these technologies and local village-level social structures and political authorities. Future researchers would do well to explore how these technologies influenced and were influenced by the specific contexts of village life. They could investigate how the Saemaul Undong's governmentality might have been met with responses that not only align with but also challenge the authoritarian state's political objectives, such as transforming farmers into ideal citizen-subjects. By exploring the ways in which Saemaul Undong's governmentality was received but also resisted and even negotiated, scholars can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics of governmentality and its impact on local communities.

In the next chapter, I draw on interviews conducted with participants. I delve more into the individual experiences and recollection of Saemaul participants and learn how individuals construct and interpret memories of Saemaul Undong.

Chapter 6 Between Past and Present: Oral history and memory

6.1 Introduction

As the previous chapter showed, Saemaul Undong was more than a rural development policy directed towards increasing agricultural output and improving the rural environment. Saemaul Undong's campaign and programme sought to create new farmer-citizen subjects whose conduct and aspirations would be governed and directed in line with Saemaul spirits of self-reliance, cooperation and diligence. This chapter is interested in learning about the subjectivities of Saemaul participants through an analysis of memory-work and meaning – how they remember the movement and give meanings to it. But how do we answer questions of subjectivity and identity when they can seem so intangible, especially through memory-work? As it would be unfolded in this chapter, I focused on the emotional vividness of my participants when they talked about the events before and after Saemaul Undong.

When telling their life stories, my respondents went between the past and present, hopping from colonial Korea to the present and back to the 1988 Seoul Olympics and further back to the Korean War. It was as if these historical events, all of which happened in the lifetime of my interviewees, were entangled in a spiral. Most of the time, the older group of respondents were not even talking about Saemaul Undong but about what had transpired before and after. What is significant about this temporality of memory and what does this tell us about the interviewees? Memory is a very important part of our identity, not just about the past but also about the present. It is about the relationship between the past and the present, individuals and culture, and also individuals and their selves.

Saemaul Undong did not, in fact, seem to be *the* major feature in my respondents' interviews (as I had perhaps presumed it would be). The movement, or the event itself, at times receded to the background and instead, other events and historic moments were foregrounded

in my respondents' stories. Narratives of these other times, accompanied by strong emotions, both negative and positive, were presented to me as puzzle pieces. It was my role to finish this puzzle and enjoy the final picture, that is, the meanings my participants ascribe to Saemaul Undong. For instance, my older participants would choose to speak about their experiences of hunger during and after the Japanese rule in Korea. They did not withhold their emotions. Feelings of bitterness and grief were apparent in their facial expressions and in their choice of language. Ultimately, this made me realise that Saemaul Undong could not be separated from these darker days before. Because of what happened before, when these individuals have made plenty of sacrifices, the volunteering and nation-building under Saemaul Undong seemed so positive to them. In other words, it was hard to treat Saemaul Undong as a singular event or memory.

This chapter will study the interview data collected during my fieldwork in South Korea (and a few were collected over the telephone due to travel restrictions under COVID-19 lockdown). The first section provides an explanation for using memory as research data and its benefits. The second section discusses the collective memories around Saemaul Undong in contemporary Korea. The subsequent sections unfold the respondents' memories and seek to understand the respondents' experiences and value judgements by analysing the ways in which their memories are constructed and narrated. Each section deals with themes of hardship (section 6.4), nostalgia (section 6.5), departure from the ideal subject and self-representation (6.6), and the implication of enduring ideals of Saemaul Undong today (section 6.7).

6.2 'Truths beyond the facts' - using memory as research data

> Oral history respondents are, after all, the interpreters of their own pasts; their personal histories are the building blocks of the identity they construct for themselves (Summerfield, 1998: 128).

I remember how I felt so disheartened after my first round of interviews with the elderly community members of Dohwa, Goheung, South Korea in September 2019. Most of the interviewees, in their 80s and some even in their 90s, did not seem to be able to successfully answer my questions about their experiences of Saemaul Undong – simply because they could not remember things clearly or they spoke of things that were not directly related to the movement. I felt that using oral life history as my research method was not an easy job unless interviewees remembered their past experiences *correctly,* and I even thought of discarding the interviews and switching my interviewees to a younger generation group who did not lead the movement as Saemaul leaders but sill experienced Saemaul activities as teenagers or young adults in the 1970s. Later, I did change my research respondents to a younger group of people in my second round of interviews in 2020, but still kept the first round of interviews with the older respondents because I felt that those were hard-earned material from my fieldwork.

The disappointment with my first round of interview data came from the concern that these interviews may not be providing factual information about the past. There were problems with *what* my interviewees remembered – their memories of the past were often unclear and *wrong*. In a few instances, the interviewees gave different versions of memories about the same incident. While one interviewee maintained that all villagers had voluntarily participated in communal labour as a part of Saemaul Undong programme, another interviewee said that villagers were paid their wages in sacs of flour and sometimes money and that was why they participated in communal labour. Since the interviewees were giving me different accounts, I was not sure which one to trust and which one to dismiss.

Similarly, historians have questioned the validity of memory as a historical source based on the argument that one's memory cannot be considered as an accurate memory or recalling of the past (Perks & Thomson, 2015). A shift in the use of oral life history took place in the 1970s, with a number of historians moving from viewing personal memory narratives as

a path to gaining objective truth about the past to approaching them as 'the products of numerous social and cultural interactions' (Summerfield, 2019: 126). Memory is deeply subjective because one's memory is influenced by various factors such as culture, social norms and one's personal histories and belief. Like individual memory, collective memories are also influenced by culture and social norms.

What, then, can be the merit of using memory as a source of analysis in history and sociology? Culture and social norms are huge building blocks of one's identity and subjectivity. Rather than pursuing *objective* knowledge, the work of analysing oral histories and testimonies provides us with a glimpse of historical subjectivities through careful studies of popular culture, public discourse and of course, one's personal experience.

If memory, as oral source, contains multi-layered information about one's subjectivities, then paying attention to *how* individuals remember can be equally or even more important than paying attention to *what* they remember. In her book *Remembering Revolution* (2012), Srila Roy's understanding of memory is that it does not only constitute ground for one's identity or subjectivity but also performs a dual cultural role of influencing and being influenced by culture and meanings. Roy embraces the idea that memory produces, mediates and influences culture and meanings, 'Memory cannot give us access to some pure past unmediated by culture—by cultural discourses, narratives, and practices (as well as unconscious desires) that shape our memories and the narratives through which they are transmitted. This makes memory itself a discursive production, a product of historical and cultural construction, and not a mere record of past happenings' (Roy, 2012: 3).

Alessandro Portelli (1991), in his study of the relationship of folk songs to working-class identity in the Italian steel town of Terni, noticed a collective misremembering of tragic events in his interviewees. The respondents incorrectly associated the police shooting of a twenty-one-year-old steel worker, Luigi Trastulli, to 1953 industrial dispute where over 2,000

steel workers were laid off, rather than a pacifist demonstration against NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). Portelli did not just ignore this seemingly unreliable remembering but took note of it. He saw that this collective misremembering had symbolic value. The death of Trastulli by the police was not just an event, but it symbolised for the Terni workers how their lives were at risk from their employers and state authorities. That is why, instead of associating Trastulli's death with the pacifist demonstration, the workers associated his death with another significant event of the massive layoffs of workers.

Portelli's study is a good example of going beyond analysing *what* respondents remembered to probe further into the *how,* so as to excavate 'the truths beyond the fact' (Summerfield, 2019: 111). In reflecting on her oral narratives of women's participation in World War Two, Penny Summerfield (1998: 126) explained that 'inconsistencies and contradictions, omissions and silences, no longer threaten historical practice in such hands, but are subject to analysis. Signs of seeming unreliability, such as collective and individual misremembering, are scrutinised for the light they throw on the symbolic meanings of chronological and locational displacements.' Portelli and Summerfield's focus on *how* stories are told and memories narrated prompted me to rethink the confusion and surprise I encountered when examining the first batch of interview transcripts. Surely, there was some misremembering, and errors as well as dissonance. And for these *unconventional errors* in remembering, I had actually dismissed some interview data as unworthy of analysis. It was now worth going back to those interviews to see *how* my respondents told their stories about the past. Following Summerfield's call, my approach to using interview data and the interviewees' memory changed significantly from trying to extract a factual account of the past to understanding how memory was constructed and what this could tell us about the shaping of individual and cultural identity over time.

Roy's *Remembering Revolution* concerns the ways in which (male and female) subjectivities are composed through practices of cultural remembering and forgetting. Roy explains that the practice of *composing* or constructing memory is highly political because this composure is not uninfluenced; we seek to compose our memories such that they fit with the public and popular narratives available at the time. One of the main questions that she tackles is thus: how are female subjectivities constituted through practices of individual and collective memorialising? She observes how individuals draw on cultural and historical constructions of idealised subjectivity (e.g. revolutionising masculinity and heroic femininity) in making sense of their own past and their selves.

Roy's approach to memory helped me realise that my interviewees, especially from the first round of interviews, were not only telling me hard facts about their past but in actuality, they were interpreting their past through narrating – *composing* – their memories. What they were telling me were their life stories, blending a mixture of personal history, experiences but also by drawing on cultural and collective norms and social forces. They were in fact making sense of their identities and subjectivities through the practice of remembering their days before and during Saemaul Undong.

What I thought was digression on the part of my participants was in fact not digression at all. My participants, even when not talking about the event itself, were in fact talking about it. Everything that they said about other things in their life shed light on Saemaul Undong, giving meaning to this event. For my grandmother, for instance, without talking about the humiliation suffered under Japanese colonial rule, what happened after would not make sense to her. If she had not experienced the deprivation and hunger, the meaning of Saemaul would have been very different to her. I stopped looking for facts.

I then began to throw many varied questions at my interviewees: what do they choose to remember (or forget, as Roy paid special attention to what the female respondents decided

to lacerate from their memories; see also Passerini, 1992) and how do they remember? How has their present-day reality shaped their understanding, experiences and narrativisation of their past? The first point of departure was: what are the collective memories about Saemaul Undong that is prominent in Korea today, and how are they told?

6.3 Collective memory

> But in hindsight, the grand historical narrative of modern Korea is told through the triumphalist lens of market capitalism and liberal democracy as a *fait accompli*. Regardless of their ideological allegiances past and present, and their actual contributions, all present-day Koreans can claim the protagonist status in the marvellous history of achievement in modern Korea (J. H. J. Han, 2011: 147)

As discussed in the previous section, memory cannot be considered a straightforward recalling of past events but a process of production and editing (Halbwachs, 1992). Memory is also social and collective – and not simply individual or personal – in that its production and maintenance are inherently influenced by the 'social frame of memory', or particular contexts for recalling the past, selecting some of them, and collecting and rearranging them (Kim, 1999: 576-90, as cited in K. H. Ma & H. K. Kim, 2015: 81). So collective memory, as memory shared by a group or a society, can either lead to social cohesion or conflicts around producing and interpreting certain memories.

In South Korea, collective memories of the 20th century are generally disputed, often along ideological differences between the left and the right. The 20th century was full of traumatic events that are 'still being debated today based on left-right divides over how to interpret the event and their impact on Korea, and how to evaluate and remember the actions of Koreans caught up in them' (Baker, 2010: 194). The two sides of the political spectrum disagree about the fundamental identity of the Korean people. The right-wing argues that the Korean people have always been unified throughout the twentieth century. They forget how

Koreans have sometimes disagreed over the future trajectories of the nation. For example, the right-wing group remembers Koreans to be united in their struggle against Japanese rule and communism. They also view Koreans to have collectively achieved the country's economic development. The left wing, on the other hand, argues that some Koreans have acted in their own interests, ones that could jeopardise the nation's fate and therefore the left excludes them from the Korean nation. For example, the left criticises the pro-Japanese (*ch'inilp'a*) for having collaborated with the Japanese during the colonial period because it would have financially and socially benefitted them. Till today, successive governments and scholars struggle to agree on one unifying collective memory about Korea's 20th century events and continue their journey to find the *facts* or the most *correct* version of the nation's past. This clear divide is also apparent in the literature on Saemaul Undong, showing how scholars from different ideological backgrounds offer different versions and evaluations of the movement.

While the period of Park Chung Hee's authoritarian rule from 1961 to 1979 is also a part of traumatic events that are subject to divergent interpretations, one can discern that there is still a unifying discourse about this particular period. Notwithstanding ideological differences, there is one common area of agreement amongst Koreans, namely, that substantial economic development was achieved during Park's rule and that Saemaul Undong played a huge role in the process. This is especially the case when Korea has now become a member country of the OECD and the memories of poverty in the 1950s and the 1960s are still fresh in the minds of the older generation. These are the so-called *development generation* or *industrialisation generation* who experienced the bitterness of poverty and the sweetness of economic progress later on in their lives. American sociologist, Ju Hui Judy Han (2011: 147) excellently summarises the experiences of this generation:

> Born in the last days of Japanese colonial rule in the 1940s, this generation came of age during the devastation following the Korean War in the 1950s, and witnessed the establishment of the American provisional government and military bases throughout

> South Korea in subsequent years. They joined the reconstruction, modernisation, and state-led industrialisation efforts in the 1960s, saw one repressive regime after another in the 1970s, and lived through the growing struggles for democracy and clamor for economic advancement, culminating in the euphoria of the 1988 Seoul Olympics. In 1996, the initiation into the OECD marked South Korea officially as a member of the "league of the richest nations in the world." Only the development generation can claim to have personally experienced the range of bitter hardship and sweet success of modern Korean history, having borne the fruit of economic development through their own sweat, tears, and blood.

This generation of Koreans remember and represent their own past through 'the fierce emotion of nationalism, the desire to remember ourselves and our ancestors in the best possible light, or the relevance of a particular memory to an on-going political struggle' (Baker, 2010: 207). President Park Chung Hee and his leadership in the dominant public discourse are evaluated in the same *best possible light vein*, namely, that his political actions and policies were necessary and justified because they resulted in the country's phenomenal achievements. This representation of President Park is also reflected in interviews with my respondents when they talked about their judgement of Park, as will be shown later in the chapter.

Often, the history of Korea's economic success during Park's regime and of Saemaul Undong in particular are narrativised through personal memories that have an effect of creating a moral discourse. Han (2011) observes that Saemaul Undong has become *a moral discourse* which influenced the way people understand and interpret the *pursuit of a better life*, through its emphasis on values of discipline, productivity and collective mobilisation. In her ethnographic work in Tanzania of 2006, Han (2011: 155) finds that Korean evangelist missionaries in Africa produce a narrative of deliverance and achievement, by constructing Korean history (and of Saemaul Undong) as a result of modernisation, industrialisation and Christianisation. In the process, the Korean missionaries are trying to reproduce 'evangelical-capitalist subjectivities… reinforced through nostalgia and narratives of deliverance'. It is

interesting to observe that these missionaries' project of evangelisation is fuelled by 'their own personal and historical experiences narrativised in terms of an inevitable connection between evangelical Christianity and neoliberal capitalism.' (J. J. H. Han, 2011: 154). In other words, the memories of Saemaul Undong are not simply presented as a recollection of events that are related to a rural development policy that took place in the 1970s but are presented in personal and narrativised form. I found it interesting in Han's article that many of the Korean missionaries and mission programme participants in Africa often became emotional about their own past and the nation's historical past. Han found that memories of post-war hardship and deprivation in these individuals were attached to strong emotions. The following sections also reveal a strong emotional resonance in my participants' narratives of their memories.

6.4 'Those were the dark days': contextualizing personal histories of hardship

Another interesting point about the older generation of interviewees, in addition to the fact that they struggled to remember clearly, was that they seemed to have much clearer and vivid memories of the period prior to Saemaul Undong. For this group of interviewees, who were aged between 85 to 92 at the time of the interviews, the period from the 1930s to the late 1950s fall into their child and young adulthood. The same period was also the most turbulent in Korean history, marked by the Japanese annexation and the Korean War. *Those were the dark days* was the same remark from several of my respondents, describing their experiences of hardship, hunger and humiliation. In this section, I focus on what my respondents choose to remember, as opposed to *choosing to forget* in Roy's study. In focusing on what they *choose to remember*, I highlight the role of this *chosen* memory in relation to Saemaul Undong, as a marker dividing the bleak past versus the 'brighter times' of Saemaul Undong and years to come. My respondents, by associating days prior to Saemaul Undong with memories and experiences of hardship, emphasised Saemaul Undong as the *good old days*. In composing

memories of the times prior to Saemaul Undong as bleak and hopeless, Saemaul Undong's merit as a turning point for the fate of their own as well as their nation is highlighted.

6.4.1 Humiliation and hardship

Of all interviewees, Mr. Kuk Kyŏngman (aged ninety at the time of interview in 2019) was the most memorable respondent. When asked about his experiences as a Saemaul leader, Mr. Kuk did not remember his activities clearly. But he chose to recount vividly his experiences of poverty and bitterness of a much earlier period than Saemaul Undong, as if they happened just yesterday. Born in *Chungyong* village of Dohwa in 1929, nineteen years into the Japanese rule of Korea, Mr. Kuk was the last born of four siblings. As it was common for most Korean families at the time, Mr. Kuk's family was hungry all the time. They survived on a meagre diet of pine tree coverings they scavenged in the woods and buckwheat powder. His parents sold *yeot,* Korean sweet taffy*,* on streets, for a living and for this, they were often looked down upon by other villagers. To make matters worse, Mr. Kuk fell ill when he was in grade three of primary school and had to come back to school only two years later. But soon, with his parents no longer able to support their children's education, Mr. Kuk went off to Seoul – the capital city of South Korea – at the age of fifteen with his younger brother to work in a roof tile factory. When not working at the factory, the brothers went to *Chungryang-ri* train station and worked as porters carrying passengers' luggage. 'When I think of those difficulties, tears come out with pity'(K. M. Kuk, personal communication, September 10, 2019). Mr. Kuk was deeply bitter about his experience of being poor, uneducated but also being harassed and despised by others.

Mr. Kuk's sense of bitterness mostly came from the fact that he was powerless – that he had no power and resources to provide for himself and his family. What also seemed to trouble him was the feeling of humiliation he experienced during his school days. He spoke of how the Japanese authority degraded the Korean people and Korean language:

K. Kuk: Those people (the Japanese) called the Korean language the *dog letters*. You young people may think that I'm telling lies but the older generation [knows]. It makes blood come out of our eyes… It's a shameful history. Doesn't it bring tears to your eyes?[147]

D. Jeong: So you learnt Japanese language when you were in primary school?[148]

K. Kuk: Yes, that's why I'm still a fluent speaker of Japanese. Now, when you talk about someone, if someone acts very unlearned, you will say *Bakayaro*[149]. Bakayaro. Do you know what that means? Do you know what the word *baka* means? If you say baka, people usually don't understand. When people try to fix machines, they say it is worn out, right? If a part of the machine has been ruined, then it is called baka. That means it is broken. Baka. Bakayaro. The Japanese called Korean people, baka (K. M. Kuk, personal communication, September 10, 2019).[150]

Since Japan took control of Korea in 1910, the Japanese authority pursued an assimilation policy of incorporating Koreans as Japanese citizens. In the name of welcoming Korean people into Japanese culture and society, Japan made sure that Korean culture, language and history were degraded and forgotten.[151] Koreans were not allowed to speak nor teach Korean. People's Korean names were forced to be changed into Japanese names[152]. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and entered the war in the Pacific region and World War Two, thing became much worse for average Koreans. Resources, human and material, were uprooted and taken to Japan mostly for the Japanese war effort. While young Korean men were taken into forced labour on Japanese isle, young Korean women were taken as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers. These

[147] 그 사람들이 우리 한국말을 개 글이라고 그랬당께. 나 말이 거짓말인가 젊은 사람들은 모르겠지만은 나이 든 사람들은. 눈에서 피가 나올 일이지… 참말로 부끄러운 일이제. 눈물 나올일 아니겄는가?

[148] 그럼 초등학교 다니실때 일본말도 배우시고?

[149] *Bakayaro* is a Japanese insulting word, meaning idiot or fool.

[150] 그렇제 그랑께 내가 지금도 일본말을 잘해. 지금 누구에 대해서 이야기 할 때 몹시 못 배운 행동을 하면 바가야로. 바가야로 그게 뭔 말인줄 알겄소? 바가 라는 말이 뭔지 알겄소? 바가라고 하면 보통 다른 사람들을 잘 모를거이다만. 무슨 기계를 만지고 그럴때 마모 되었다고 그라제잉? 여기가 여간 망가져 버렸다 그러면 바가 라고 하지. 못쓰게 되었다고. 바가. 바가여로. 일본사람들이 한국 사람들보고 바가라고 한단 말이여.

[151] Japanese colonial government looked to the European imperialist models of England and France and adopted assimilation policy. The policy was doomed to fail because of its deeply discriminating nature in practice. For more on the Japanese assimilation policies in colonial Korea, 1910-1945, see Caprio (2011).

[152] *Sōshi-kaimei* (or *ch'angssi-kaemyŏng* in Korean) was a forced name change policy of pressuring Koreans to adopt Japanese names in 1939 (see Seth, 2019: 74).

horrendous collective memories of humiliation were narrated by my respondents through telling their personal life histories.

Another respondent who told vivid stories of hardship was my own *halmŏni* (grandmother), Mrs. Kong Yangsun, who was ninety-three at the time of interview. Like many people of her generation, my halmŏni lived a life of turmoil, as though it was a direct reflection of Korean history. Halmŏni was born in 1926 in a village called *Gahwa* in Dohwa. On her birth certificate, it is stated that her birth year is 1929 because her father registered her birth only after she turned three. She had an older brother who died in infancy and her father was too tormented when he had to report his own son's death at the government bureau. So, with his new born daughter, he thought he would wait and not register her birth right away. When halmŏni turned three, her birth was registered but this time it was her father who passed away in a landslide after returning home from assisting his neighbour with looking for his family's graveyard. At the time of her father's passing, her mother was already pregnant with another baby boy who himself later lost his life while serving in the Vietnam War. Throughout her life, my halmŏni experienced many losses of her loved ones and she had to try her best to survive and not to lose more of her people.

Halmŏni recalled her days under Japanese colonial rule of South Korea. When she turned nine, her mother took her to yahak, a night school where Korean letters were taught to men, women and children alike who did not have access to formal education. Halmŏni sat in the classroom along with newly married housewives and old grannies. On her first day, she received a Korean letters textbook. By next evening, halmŏni, had memorised most of the words in the book. Troubles happened on the third evening after she joined yahak when three young men bulged into the classroom with bamboo rods in their hands.

> **Y. Kong:** When these men came in, we were all speaking Korean, not Japanese. And these men brought sticks this long, you know like bamboo rods. They came with them. That's why I still say that all Japanese must be put into water to drown. They beat us on our heads, shouting in

> Japanese '*Chōsen-go tsukaona*! (meaning, don't use Korean), *Chōsen-go tsukaona*!' I still remember everything (Y.S. Kong, personal communication, September 7, 2019)[153]

Then the men took away the *ganadara* (Korean alphabet) textbooks and instead distributed to class *hiragana* and *katakana* (Japanese alphabet) textbooks. Since then, halmŏni had to learn how to read, write and speak Japanese. She did not get another opportunity to learn Korean alphabets until many years later. As evident in her comment that she wished all Japanese to drown in water, halmŏni's personal experience under Japanese colonial rule led her to remember the days with bitterness and outrage. After being forced to join the Japanese school, halmŏni and her two female friends were nominated to become instructors for Japanese military drill training when they turned sixteen in 1942. Upon entering the Pacific War in 1941, Japan needed as many military forces as possible and carried out military drill training amongst ordinary Korean villagers and school learners. Every day for three hours, halmŏni was made to stand on a wooden pulpit and demonstrate military drill moves in front of 200 odd people who were forced to join the training.

Around this time, fears loomed in villages that the Japanese soldiers were taking away people to Japan and neighbouring countries in forced labour. Students as young as twelve years old to college students were conscripted to be a part of *Geunro Bogukdae*, forced volunteer corps[154]. Young girls were lured with promises of better employment opportunities overseas but in fact taken away as sex slaves (widely known as *comfort women* for Japanese soldiers). When halmŏni's mother heard that halmŏni's three friends in the village of *Bongsan* had been taken away, she knew it would be now her daughter's turn. To desperately prevent her daughter from being taken away by the Japanese, she hurriedly married halmŏni off to a young man who

[153] 그렇게 들어오드만 들어옹께 이제 다 일본말 할꺼이냐, 한국말로 다 하제. 그랑께 요만쓱한 대. 신이대라고 있지 않았냐. 그란 매를 가져갖고 왔어. 그랑께 나가 지금 일본놈들을 다 걍 물에다가 다 여집어놓라고 한다. 전부 머리를 때림시롱 '조센고 스까오나' '조센고 스까오나' 그때 그걸 다 안잊어버리고 있다.

[154] As much as the name, *forced volunteer corps,* sounds ironic, Geunro Bogukdae served to supply forced labour for Japanse war efforts in the name of volunteer corps. For historical contextualisation of Korean forced labourers in Japan, see Palmer (2006).

had recently returned from Japan. The young man, my own grandfather, had earlier been taken to Japan as a part of Geunro Bogukdae, taking part in various manual labour such as burning coal. Each day, the Japanese supervisors would line up Korean workers *like dogs* in a big yard and assign them with daily tasks. When the workers looked directly in the eyes of the Japanese supervisors or when supervisors were not in the mood, the workers would be beaten with metal chains and trampled with boots. Workers were easily beaten and killed spontaneously. When my grandfather witnessed this, he instantly knew that he would not survive there, so he ran for his life. He slipped into a Korean man's house and received the man's clothing but no food because the man did not have enough food for his own family. After hiding himself in the woods for one week with no shelter or food, my grandfather risked the life of his own and his sister's by visiting her home in another town in Japan. Unfortunately, the Japanese police caught him and put him in prison for three months during which he was brutally beaten. My grandfather returned to Korea upon his release and married halmŏni soon after. When halmŏni, my grandmother, was telling me the story of my grandfather, she was so emotionally charged that she had a scowl on her face, expressing the brutality of the Japanese towards the Korean workers with her hand motions (suggesting how the Japanese supervisors were beating Korean workers). She shed tears when she mentioned how the three months of brutal incarceration in Japan had left my grandfather ill and led to his untimely death years later.

In her interview, my grandmother detailed the struggles of my family members – how they were humiliated under Japanese colonial rule, how they struggled for independence and how they made every effort not to lose their loved ones. All these memories of hardship - so fresh and vivid - served as a solid foundation to explain why my grandmother's generation made sacrifices during Saemaul Undong. For them, having to work for free or volunteering to engage in fund-raising events were not really *difficult sacrifices* because they had lived in far more *darker days* before. Memories of hunger, as it will be seen in the following section, also

add on to this experience of hardship, and emphasise Saemaul Undong's credit for bringing much better and brighter days, compared to the dark days prior to the movement. This concurrent connection of multiple events in our memories suggests how the meaning of one single event is produced, negotiated and edited in relation to other events.

6.4.2 Memories of hunger

From the interviews, one of the most striking memories my respondents chose to highlight was that of hunger in the days prior to Saemaul Undong. Lives of ordinary Korean people have always been harsh – food was scarce and there were frequent famines. Under Japanese rule, food was made even more scarce because most of Korea's resources such as wood, rice and fuel were taken to Japan. The Korean War was a huge blow to the already suffering nation and things did not get better until Saemaul Undong emerged in the early 1970s. Saemaul Undong did not only pave village roads and train the minds of emergent Saemaul leaders. According to my interviewee, Mr. J. S. Kim, the movement also filled the hungry bellies of the people and therefore, Saemaul Undong was a great movement.[155] Another respondent, Mr. J. Y. Ch'oe said that whether people willingly volunteered or not back then was not so important because *now* when he thought of it, it was well done:

> J. Y. Ch'oe: Honestly, it doesn't matter whether the residents cooperated voluntarily, participated for the sake of flour, or were asked to do it by someone else. Is it not because of the Saemaul Movement that Korea has come this far now? (J. Y. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 18, 2020)[156]

[155]새마을 운동 도입을 참 잘했어. 그 정신에서 식량해결도 하고 (J. S. Kim, personal communication, September 10, 2019)

[156] 주민들이 자발적으로 협동을 했건 밀가루 때문에 참여했건 누가 시켜서 했건 솔직히 그건 중요한게 아니에요. 새마을 운동 덕분에 지금 대한민국이 여기까지 온 것 아니예요?

The result was that Saemaul Undong fed hungry people, and their villages prospered. At least, this is what my respondents remembered. Personal experiences of hunger, strongly imprinted on their memories, served to highlight the merits of Saemaul Undong.

During my interviews, memories of hunger would almost always spring up whenever respondents recalled their pasts and evaluated Saemaul Undong. As a young researcher who was born in a middle-class family in the late 1980s and grew up in both countries of South Korea and South Africa, I found it hard to imagine what hunger would feel like. The more life stories of hunger I listened to, the more I realised that the experiences of not being able to provide basic food for yourself and your family have a huge impact on one's emotional and psychological well-being let alone the physical.

I once heard a story from my mother, about how my paternal grandfather witnessed his own younger brother dying from starvation. In the same month after their own wedding, my parents were at the annual family gathering celebrating *Chuseok*, the Korean Thanksgiving Day. This was my mother's first encounter with a dining scene at her in-laws during a festive event. At the dinner table, my mother was surprised to find so much food. She had never seen such a sumptuous table filled with so many dishes. She asked why so much food was prepared, much more than what was necessary. 'It's to *abŏnim*'s[157] liking', she was told. When my paternal grandfather was ten, he saw his younger brother die in front of his eyes because his brother had not eaten for many days, as they had no food in the household. The pain of watching his own brother dying and the guilt that he could do nothing to help overwhelmed my grandfather. No matter what, he was determined to put food on the table for his future family. For my grandfather, having a table full of food was a proof in a way that he had worked hard for his family. It was also a reminder for himself that he had made it in his life.

[157] Abŏnim means father-in-law

In Korea, people experienced hunger on a yearly basis as early as the 1400s. Referred as spring hunger (*poritkogae*), the period between April and May was the hungriest season when the previous year's harvest had been depleted, and the barley crops had yet to mature. After paying rent, debt or interest, taxes, various expenses, and other expenses from the farmers' harvest earnings, the remaining food was absolutely insufficient to last until the barley was harvested in early summer. During the colonial era, the level of spring hunger reached unprecedented heights. In 1930, nearly half of all agricultural households, comprising 7,498,336 individuals, experienced spring hunger. resorting to consuming grass roots and tree bark for sustenance. The claim of millions facing starvation was not exaggerated (Takahashi, 1935: 205, as cited in Nam, 2018). Given this history, the meaning of food - its availability and accessibility – becomes special. It can provide so much motivation for one's action.

'Saemaul Undong relieved the bitterness of hunger indeed,' explained Mr. J. S. Kim (personal communication, September 10, 2019), my interviewee who was a retired civil servant and Saemaul leader in Dohwa village at the time of interview. He described how young mothers in the 1960s would go around the village with babies on their backs, begging for food to feed their babies. People cried because they were hungry. Mr. Kim said that the introduction of a new rice variety '*Tongil'*[158] was the most memorable achievement of Saemaul Undong. In early 1970s, the South Korean government promoted a high-yielding rice variety, a hybrid of Indica and Japonica rice (T. H. Kim, 2018). Although the taste of Tongil rice was regarded not as good as that of *Indica* or *Japonica* rice, it spread nationwide quickly thanks to its high-yielding character and high subsidy from the government. Korea's domestic rice production came to six million metric tons and finally surpassed demand for the first time in 1977 (T. H. Kim, 2018). By the following year, three-quarters of total rice-farming field was cultivated with Tongil. My grandmother and uncle also remembered the Park Chung-Hee administration's Tongil rice to

[158] Meaning reunification, the name emphasised Koreans' dream of reunification of the Korean peninsula.

have relieved the hunger problem for them. My grandmother recalled how she struggled to feed her children under straining circumstances. White rice was so scarce that the entire family would have less than six servings of white rice[159] in a whole year. Often, after she put a boiling pot of pumpkin porridge outside to cool down for a while, she would come back to find the pot missing because someone had stolen it. But things improved after tongil rice was introduced because 'tongil rice yielded double although it tastes not as good as the normal rice' (C.C. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 10, 2019).[160]

Did Saemaul Undong really contribute to solving the hunger problem? The answer is both yes and no. Some argue that Tongil rice is an achievement of Korea's own green revolution in collaboration with International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and its introduction happened to coincide with Saemaul Undong period[161]. Some argue that Saemaul Undong did not only bring about the introduction of Tongil rice but also facilitated building of advanced farming infrastructure such as better irrigation. However, it appears that whether Saemaul Undong truly relieved the hunger problem is not the sole important question. From the interviews, it was clear that in my respondents' memories, the movement was strongly associated with notions of prosperity and the start of a brighter future in people's lives. People tend to assign positive and meaningful interpretation to certain life events – like the national euphoria about Korea's independence in 1945 and the 1988 Seoul Olympics in Korean people's collective memory. For them, Saemaul Undong was also a symbol of prosperity and a turning point of their own as well as the nation's fate, because of the period of deprivation that preceded and how much they are haunted by those memories.

[159] My grandmother mentioned 4 *hobs* of rice, which is equivalent to about 720ml of rice.
[160] 밥맛은 좀 별로였는데 수확이 배로 나왔어
[161] https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/123180

6.5 'The summer of my life'

> **Y. Kong:** I got married when I was eighteen. It was the Japanese people's world back then. I cooked some *ssuk*[162] and I told my sister-in-law that I would go to the mudflat (to look for food). She asked me if there would be any catch. I said I would still go because I had nothing at home to serve to guests… In that year, Korea became independent and there was good harvest. Right when Korean became independent, even potatoes were growing well.[163]
>
> **D. Jeong:** Did it not rain before then? Or was it because the Japanese took all the crops?[164]
>
> **C. Ch'oe:** No, at the time of *Imo* year, did the drought lasted for seven years?[165]
>
> **Y. Kong:** Seven years. The drought lasted seven years (Y.S. Kong, personal communication, September 7, 2019).[166]

My halmŏni and uncle recalled that there was a great famine from late 1930s to mid 1940s due to a drought. Let alone crops and grains from land, they could not find much catch even in mudflats. Indeed, flood damage and drought continued in the 1930s. There were indeed great droughts in Korea in 1932, 1935 and 1939 (Ko, 2020; National Institute of Korean History, n.d.). The 1932 drought began in early spring and took a heavy toll on the South, including Goheung, Jeolla-do where my halmŏni lived. The damage from the drought of 1935 was nationwide, but Chungcheong-do and Jeolla-do were most hard-hit regions. The disaster, which was described as the first drought in thirty years, resulted in 100,000 displaced farms in Jeollanam-do alone.

When Korea became independent in 1945, the year coincided with the end of the drought and a 'bumper harvest' (J. W. Kim, 2007: 215).[167] Halmŏni seemed to believe that

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[162] mugwort

[163] 나 열여덟에 시집을 왔는데 그때는 일본 놈 세상이여. 쑥을 좀 해놓고는 형님 나 갯바닥에 좀 가볼라요 그랑께 뭐 있당가? 그래도 가볼라요. 뭘 가지고 손님 대접을 하요….
그해에 해방되고 풍년이 되버렸어…. 해방 딱 되불고. 해방 되고는 감자도 잘 되더라.

[164] 그럼 그 전에는 비가 안왔어요? 일본 사람들이 다 가져가서?

[165] 아니, 임오년 흉년때 같은 경우는. 그때 7 년이 가물었나?

[166] 7 년. 7 년을 가문께

[167] Despite a good harvest in 1945, Korea still experienced food shortages due to a mixture of factors including poor distribution of food and the failure of rice policy by the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) who took over control of Korea from liberation to 1948 (see J. W. Kim, 2007).

Korea's independence from Japan brought good luck to the country and therefore also resolved the drought problem. In the second interview with halmŏni, she again displayed her belief that Korea's another national event brought her good luck – this time, to my life. I was born on September 17th 1988, on the day of the Opening Ceremony of the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Halmŏni described that day:

> **Y. Kong:** You were born on the day of opening ceremony of 88 Seoul Olympics. When your mother went into labour, the nurses at the hospital complained that they were now going to miss the opening ceremony on television because of you. I scolded the nurses, "You're now going to receive a baby! What's the big deal about the Olympics?" But I knew that you were going to become a great one. Although you were a daughter, I knew that you would grow to achieve something great. Because you were born on such an auspicious day - the day when people from all over the world gathered in Seoul, South Korea (Y.S. Kong, personal communication, September 7, 2019).[168]

1988 Seoul Olympics *was* a big deal. For South Korea, the Olympics stood as a symbol of Korea's resurgence, its own 'coming out party', showcasing the remarkable progress achieved in just thirty years since its status as one of the world's poorest nations during the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War (Bridges, 2008: 1939). The slogan of the Seoul Olympics - *The World to Seoul, Seoul to the World* - represented South Korea's economic leap from the 'Third World' to the 'First World' (Bridges, 2008: 1948). In Asia, this was the second Summer Olympics to take place in Asia after 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Considering how the Olympic Games have been associated with Western modernity (industrialisation, urbanisation and capitalism), hosting the Games in an Asian country meant that it was also an opportunity to showcase Asia's greatness (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2012). Internationally and historically, the

[168] 다운이 너가 88 년 올림픽 개막식날 태어났단 말이다. 너그 어매가 진통이 시작돼서 병원엘 갔는데, 병원 간호사들이 개막식 못본다고 불평을 해. 그래서 내가 그 가스나들한테 올림픽이 뭐시당께 지금 아기를 받아야제. 그래도 나는 너가 큰 사람이 될 걸 알았어. 딸이어도 커서 훌륭한 일을 할줄 알았어. 전세계 사람들이 대한민국 서울에 모이는 그런 엄청난 날에 태어났단 말이다.

1988 Seoul Olympics was the biggest Olympics with over 13,000 athletes from over 160 nations competing. It was also the first boycott-free Games after eight years and attended by both capitalist and communist states (except for North Korea), representing a union of the world. For these reasons, halmŏni said that she always believed I would live an extraordinary life, achieving much more in my life than any other people.

People have a tendency to assign great meaning to certain social events that take place in the course of their lives. To them, an event is not a mere historical and factual happening but a source of meanings, feelings and prospects (such as, brighter future and hope). When these events happen concurrently with their own life events, the meanings of the events are more profound for their personal lives. From the interviews, I found that Saemaul Undong remains a symbol of optimistic outlook, associated with people feeling *able to do something* for their lives as opposed to feeling hopeless and unable to, as before. My respondents also shared a nostalgia for Saemaul era's communal life and widespread co-operation.

When asked what meaning Saemaul Undong brings to his personal life, Mr. J. S. Kim responded that had it not been for Saemaul Undong, South Korea's structural environment would not have developed as today and that the Saemaul spirit of *let's live a good life for our descendants* was a successful campaign. Mr. Kim had served as a government official in Dohwa village up until his retirement and in his capacity as an official he guided a number of Saemaul projects in the village in the 1970s, for which he received merit awards from the South Korean government. He mentioned that 'the summer of my (his) life' was when he was serving in the military and also when he participated in Saemaul projects as a government official.[169]

[169] 그럼 어르신은, 물론 그 당시 공무원이고 면사무소에서 근무를 하셨지만, 어르신 개인적으로는 어르신 삶에서 이 새마을 운동이 꽤 의미가 있었나요? 그러제. 새마을운동이 없었으면 우리 나라 농어촌 구조환경개선이 이렇게 발전될수가 없어. 없어. 완전히 퇴보. 거의 새마을운동의 공적인 성공은. 목적도 그러했고. 후손을 위해서. 잘살아보자. 그것이 새마을 정신이 성공을 했어. 완전히 성공을 했지. 그때 영웅이 나오는데..박정희 통치철학. 박정희 대통령이 새마을 운동 도입을 참 잘했어. 그 정신에서 식량해결도 하고, 인자 안타깝게도 자기집권을 해가지고. 그 지도자가 훌륭한 지도자가 있었기 때문에 우리나라가 외국에서 놀랄정도로 경제대국 이런데 되부렀지. 그리고 인자 그 당시에 열심히 살았지. 외국에 광부들, 월남에. 나도 베트남전쟁때 가서 달러 벌었고. 서독 광부를, 간호사들 우리 나라가 경제대국이 되부렀어. 경부고속도로. 그 당시에는 1달러에 환율이 740원. 지금은 1200원 1300원 하는데. 배가 됐지. 새마을사업은 성공을 했어. 지금도 어려움이 있으면은, 인생의 여름이 있으면, 군대생활할때, 새마을사업할때 공무원할때 훈장 있잖아. 새마을 사업할때 훈장.

Mr. Kim dropped out of high school in grade ten because he had too many siblings and his parents could not afford to send him to school any longer. After dropping out, Mr. Kim helped his parents with their farming venture and later served in the South Korean military service. During his service, Mr. Kim joined the Korean troops fighting in the Vietnam War. He went on to explain that he used his combat pay to support his struggling family and bought farming land for them, 'thereafter, we (our family) became self-sufficient in food, and all my younger siblings went to high school and college. Because I was uneducated. I made a sacrifice' (J. S. Kim, personal communication, September 10, 2019).[170] Mr. Kim considered this period in his life as 'the summer of my life', despite having to risk his life by fighting overseas and giving up the combat pay for supporting his family, because he was at least now able to do something for his family – putting food on the table, as opposed to helplessly watching them go hungry without eating. He also received merit awards from the government for his leadership in Saemaul projects, meaning that he was recognised and awarded for his work. Therefore, Mr. Kim remembers this particular period of his life, the decade from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, as the best part of his life.

Mrs. Ch'oe Sunhŭi, my mother's older sister aged sixty-four, also recalled her youthful days in Dohwa with nostalgia. When I asked her to describe the atmosphere and the villagers in Dowha at the time of Saemaul Undong in the 1970s, she pointed to several changes in her everyday life, such as the introduction of electricity and telephone in her village, new farming methods and newly paved roads. Mrs. Ch'oe emphasised that there was community-wide solidarity in Dowha at the time of Saemaul Undong, 'People's hearts were well united, and they were so pure. Yes. We did not act individually. We always did things together. People were pure, they liked to share. If they had anything, they would share it with one another' (S. H.

[170] 거기서 식량 자급자족을 해가지고 동생들 다 고등학교 보내고 대학교 보내고. 내가 못 배웠기 때문에. 희생을 한거지.

Ch'oe, personal communication, June 16, 2020).[171] She told me stories of how the villagers helped their neighbours' farming and how her mother (my halmŏni) took the lead to organise *nongak* [172]band for fundraising for village projects. She then lamented that technical advances and lifestyle changes have 'developed people's thoughts and intelligence as well'[173] and as a result, 'people's heads [minds] having developed too far'[174], and they have lost love for one another and have become selfish:

> **S.H. Ch'oe:** As the world develops, it becomes selfish. So selfish to live well only for yourself. I think it's because of that. That's why love keeps disappearing and those things (hearts) get cold. We have to develop loving hearts and caring hearts, but those things gradually disappear, and only material things are important to us. Yes. So, I think it's very bad (S. H. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 16, 2020).[175]

Like Mrs. Ch'oe, a number of other participants also had fond memories about people in rural villages working together or leading community-focused lifestyles. They said that they missed the old times when people were not *you and I*, but *we*. They remarked that in today's society, people or the younger generation were individualistic and did not like to work together or practice *hyupdong* (co-operation). Another interviewee aged 76, Mr. Kang T. H., who guided industrial Saemaul Undong at his workplace in the 1970s, pointed out that Saemaul Undong promoted cooperation and the unison of communities in Korea. He understood people's *cooperation* to be motivated by people's willingness to sacrifice themselves for the Korean nation. Throughout his interview, he emphasised that Saemaul Undong required individuals' sacrifice for the greater good of the nation. Mr. Kang told me about his experiences with the Korean community in Canada during his visit in recent years and lamented how the Korean

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[171] 사람들의 마음이 단합이 잘되고, 참 순수했어요. 예. 개인적이 아니고 항상 함께 하는 일들이니까. 순수하고 서로 나눠먹기 좋아하고 뭐든지 있으면 서로 나누고.

[172] *Nongak* is a Korean traditional community band music, derived from communal rites and rustic entertainment. It combines a percussion ensemble and sometimes wind instruments, parading, dancing, drama and acrobatic feats. Local Nongak performers clad in colourful costumes perform their music and dance during community events with various purposes, such as appeasing gods, chasing evil spirits, praying for a rich harvest in spring then celebrating it during autumn festivals and fund-raising for community projects (UNESCO: https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/nongak-community-band-music-dance-and-rituals-in-the-republic-of-korea-00717)

[173] 변화라는게 많이 있었지. 사람들의 생각들도 그 지능들이 많이 발달되고 사람들이

[174]근데 사람들이 머리가 이제 너무나 많이 발달되어버렸잖아요

[175]세상이 발달 되면서 이기적이 되는거에요. 그러니까 자기만 잘 살겠다는 이기적. 그런것 때문에 그런것 같애요. 그러니까 자꾸 사랑이 없어지고 그런것들이 식어져 가요. 사랑하는 마음들이, 남을 돌보는 그런 마음도 생기고 해야하는데 , 그런것들이 차츰차츰 없어지고 물질만 우리가 중요시 여기고. 예. 그러니까 굉장히 안좋은것 같애요.

FIGURE 36. Performance of nongak band in Dowha village, Goheung. *Personal collection of interview respondent* (circa 1970)

FIGURE 37. Dowha villagers enjoying a picnic together. *Personal collection of an interview respondent* (circa 1970)

community was not so cooperative and unified compared to the Chinese or Japanese community in Canada. He said that his friend, who was a Korean immigrant in Canada, should have started Saemaul Undong there. Although Saemaul Undong is, in a strict sense, defined as a national development programme largely aimed at rural community development,[176] Mr. Kang perceived Saemaul Undong as some kind of a mind rehabilitation programme that promoted cooperation and unison in community. He stressed the need for a renewal of the movement's cooperative spirit in society today:

> **D. Jeong:** Then, what changes occurred in the village where you lived through Saemaul Undong? What was the major change?
>
> **T. Kang:** The most important thing is that the people around me cooperated. Cooperation. Before that, everyone was minding their own business. That was the characteristic of our nation. There is a history of people turning their backs when their bellies were full. Our country's national character. I am still proud of the fact that the cooperation system improved a lot in the span of five to six years due to Saemaul Undong's mind development programme (T. H. Kang, personal communication, June 17, 2020).[177]

Other respondents, Mrs. K. M. Yun and Mr. K. U. Pak understood the concept of cooperation to be motivated by the need for enhanced productivity during Saemaul Undong. They both believed that the villagers' collective achievements such as widening of village paths enhanced confidence in the national sentiment. Mrs. Yun and Mr. Pak felt that cooperation was not only a practical means of achieving development and progress but also to be motivated by *hope* and expectation that if people act together as one, they can achieve something. This is reflected in Mrs. Yun's comment where she compares the candlelight demonstrations of 2016

[176] Saemaul Undong went on to become a nationwide campaign later in the 1970s, including urban and factory Saemaul Undong programmes

[177] (정다운) 그러면 선생님 계셨던 마을에서 새마을운동을 통해서 어떤 변화가 있었나요? 가장 대표적인 변화가 무엇일까요? (강태훈) 가장 핵심적인것은 주변 사람들이 협조를 했다는것. 협조. 그 전에는 각양. 우리나라 국민성이 그렇잖아요. 자기만 배부르면 뒤돌아섰던 역사가 있습니다. 우리나라 국민성이. 그게 한 5-6 년사이에 새마을운동 정신개발로 인해서 협력체계가 많이 좋아졌다는거, 그거는 내가 아직까지도 자부하고 이야기 합니다.

to the Saemaul spirit[178]. She thinks that the candlelight demonstrations or rallies were motivated by the Saemaul spirit of cooperation, a belief that when people unite as one and act together, they can achieve something greater. In this way, she believes that Saemaul Undong remains relevant in the current generation. The three respondents, Mr. Kang, Mr. Pak and Mrs. Yun, believed that the notion of cooperation, as espoused in Saemaul spirits, greatly contributed to Korea's national development and that cooperation is an ideal value that Koreans of today should still pursue.

Another respondent gave a slightly different explanation for the motivation behind cooperation. Mr. S. Y. Hong, who was a teenager in the 1970s (he is currently serving as a Saemaul leader in his village) said that people cooperated with one another during Saemaul undong because it served practical purposes of increased productivity and raised income levels. Since the Korean state was unable to provide services and goods to its people (especially the villagers in rural areas), the rural villagers had to take action for themselves and work together when it came to building infrastructure and increasing productivity in farms. Mr. Hong says that people today do not really work together or practice cooperation because they simply do not need to. As the South Korean state and its government has become richer, today's people simply need to make a request to the government when they are in need of any service or goods. There is no need for them to cooperate with one another. For example, when a village needs a bridge today, they can lodge a request with the local government to build it for them.

I had earlier introduced an interview with Mrs. Ch'oe, who narrated memories of Dohwa villagers working together with pure hearts and love. Her memories, when cross checked with other respondents, were not entirely correct. According to other respondents,

[178] This people-led protest was made famous worldwide as it led to the impeachment of former President Park Geun-hye, a daughter of President Park Chung Hee. Such form of protest was also seen during President Lee Myung-bak's rule when there was the mad cow disease allegation and citizens poured out to the streets of Seoul to protest against import of US beef.

some villagers participated in Saemaul projects for their own interests and financial benefits, rather than out of *pure hearts* only. One group interview with my halmŏni, uncle and aunt revealed that the villagers in Dohwa did not necessarily participate in Saemaul Undong voluntarily, nor did all of them dedicate themselves for development of their villages, as Mr. Kang explained. At least for the village of Dohwa, there was an in-kind incentive for villagers to participate in various Saemaul projects. My uncle, Mr. C.C. Ch'oe, pointed at a reservoir nearby his home and called it the *flour reservoir*, because Dohwa village authorities handed out flour to the villagers who participated in the construction of the reservoir (Mr. C. C. Ch'oe: I got a sack of flour after working there for ten days). [179] My other uncle, Mr. J. Y. Ch'oe agreed that this in-kind incentive was a great help for the hungry villagers, '3.6 kilograms of flour was a great fortune to the hungry poor people.'[180] At times, penalties were even imposed upon those who did not participate in Saemaul projects. Halmŏni explained that the penalties paid by non-participants would be collected and often given to the people who gave up portions of their land for building village paths and roads.

How then can this incongruency between different memories be explained? My aunt, Mrs. Sunhŭi Ch'oe, remembered that villagers cooperated with pure hearts and love for one another. Halmŏni and my uncle, Mr. J. Y. Ch'oe, remembered that villagers cooperated because of incentives. The most prevailing comment I heard from my respondents was, 'had it not been for Saemaul Undong, Korea would not have developed so much today'. Mr. J. Y. Ch'oe, who said earlier that Dowha villagers participated in construction of the reservoir for flour, picked Saemaul Undong to have the most influence on his life:

> **D. Jeong:** What impact did Saemaul Undong have on your personal life?
> **J. Y. Ch'oe:** Ah, the Saemaul project at that time. I think the Saemaul Undong project has most greatly influenced my life in this world. Because I became diligent (due to

[179] 밀가루 주고 만들었다고. 아 열흘 일했드만 한 포 나왔더라
[180] 못 사는 사람들한테 그때 당시에 밀가루 3.6 킬로, 그것은 어마어마한 우리한테는 재산이었죠.

> Saemaul Undong), then I became thrifty. After that, Korea became rich because we were diligent. That is what I think (J. Y. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 18, 2020).[181]

Whether villagers participated in Saemaul projects for incentives like flour, or for practicing the Saemaul spirit of cooperation, memories of my respondents recreated villagers into model Saemaul individuals who worked together for national prosperity. Mr. Ch'oe explained that Saemaul Undong had power to guide people to cooperate with one another:

> **J.Y. Ch'oe:** Oh why? *The dawn bell tolls, a new morning dawned* - although this song[182] may be nothing, it had the power to bring many people together. At that time, people were all busy doing their own business: person A, person B, and person C … However, once the Saemaul project has started, order is established because everyone is brought together, and cooperation is created by having people work. And you get food when you work. Just how wonderful is the Saemaul project? (J. Y. Ch'oe, personal communication, June 18, 2020).[183]

When I asked Mr. Ch'oe, if he thought that Saemaul Undong was important not only to the generation at that time, but also to the current and future generations[184], Mr. Ch'oe agreed that it was important because it was good for *mental development* of people[185]:

> **J.Y. Ch'oe**: Although it (Saemaul Undong) may be a little straining physically. Physically, it might be hard because you go to work, but mentally, yes. Mentally, I thought it was a very good business. If there was no Saemaul project, what would people at my age do at that time? I would go drink *makgeolli* (Korean rice wine) all the time and sit under a zelkova tree and gossip., 'So and so is bad, someone's daughter-in-

[181] (정다운) 개인적으로는 삶에 있어서 어떠한 영향을 미쳤나요, 새마을운동이? (최종율) 아 그때 당시에 그 새마을사업. 그 새마을사업이 아마 내가 지금 이 한 세상을 살면서 그 영향을 많이 받았다고 생각을 해요. 왜 그러냐면 부지런해졌고, 그 다음에 절약을 했고. 그 다음에 부지런 했기 때문에 우리나라가 잘 살게 됐고. 저는 그렇게 생각을 해요.

[182] Song of Saemaul

[183] 아 왜 그러냐면은, 이 새벽종이 울렸네 새 아침이 밝았네. 이 노래가 아무것도 아니지만은 여러 사람을 한군데 모아놓는 그 힘이 있었어요. 그때 당시에 A 라는 사람, B 라는 사람, C 라는 사람 서로가 갈길이 다 바쁘고 뭐 하는 사람… 그렇지만, 새마을사업이 딱 시작하고 나서는 모든 사람을 한군데다 모아놓으니까 질서가 잡히는거고 그 다음에 일을 시키니까 협동이 생기는거고, 또 일을 하니까 먹을것이 생기는거고 뭐 얼마나 새마을 사업이 좋은 사업이에요?

[184] 그. 새마을운동이 1970 년대에 가장 활발했는데 지금은 2020 년이잖아요. 많은 시간이 흘렀어요. 그 당시 세대들 말고도 현재나 미래의 세대들에게도 이 새마을운동이 중요하다고 생각하세요?

[185] 어우. 저는 그것이 엄청 중요하다고 생각을 해요.

> law is bad, I would be gossiping and speak ill of others. However, when Saemaul project was introduced, order was established, so there was no one to criticise – while we're working with everyone, sweating, working, giggling and laughing. It makes people good - *good*. If there was no Saemaul, we would be talking rubbish about someone's daughter-in-law and someone's child, right? Sitting under a zelkova tree. But all that was gone. We all went, sweated with shovels and pickaxes in our hands. When there is a big rock, we push it together and carry it. How wonderful is it?[186]

It is noteworthy that my respondents share the nostalgia for the place and people that are no longer there today – i.e. Korean rural villages where the ultimate goal was to live better and not go hungry. Present day South Korea is a member of the OECD (The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) as well as the G20 (The Group of Twenty). As much as rural villages in South Korea today struggle with an aging population and the lack of a young workforce, their key challenge is certainly not to stop people from starving.

At the same time, the irony is that respondents' memories are also told through the triumphant lens of today– that South Korea and its people have made it to where it is today through practicing the spirits of Saemaul Undong. The narrative of *had it not been for Saemaul Undong, Korea would not have developed as it has today* is noticeable in the reconstruction of the respondents' memories and this shows how respondents have been impacted by South Korea's position in the global economy.

[186] 육체적으로는 좀 힘들지 몰라도. 육체적으로는 가서 일을 하니까 힘들지 몰라도, 정신적으로는 예? 정신적으로는 아주 좋은 사업이라고 생각을 한게. 만약에 새마을 사업이 없었다면은 그때 당시에 내 나이 또래들이 뭐하겠어요? 맨날 막걸리나 먹고 느티나무 아래 앉아서 놈 흉이나 볼 꺼 아니에요. 누구 나쁘네, 누구 집 며느리 나쁘네 욕이나 하고 그럴 거 아니에요. 근데 새마을 사업을 딱 하고 나서는 질서가 잡히고 하니까 욕을 할 사람이 없잖아요. 다 가가지고 일하고 땀 흘리고 일하고 또 히히닥 거리고 웃고. 사람들이 선하게 되는 거죠. 선하게. 예를 들어가지고 새마을 자체가 없다고 한다면 누구 집 며느리는 어떻고 누구집 자식은 어떻고 뭐 그냥 쓰잘데기 없는 소리나 할거 아니에요 그죠? 느티나무 평 나무 밑에 앉아서. 그런데 그 자체가 없어졌잖아요. 다같이 가가지고 땀 흘리고 삽질하고 곡괭이 들고 돌멩이가 나오면은 다같이 영차 영차 밀어내고 들고. 얼마나 좋아요?

6.6 A Tale of Two Men: departing from the ideal subject

On the third day of conducting interviews at Dohwa Senior Centre, I met two elderly men, Mr. Kuk (aged ninety) and Mr. W. P. Hong (or Chairman Hong, as many would call him in the village; aged eighty-three). As their stories unfolded, I noticed how these two lived starkly different lives. Mr. Kuk, who I spoke of in earlier section in this chapter, lived a very difficult life due to his family's financial struggles and his own illness. Although he served as a Saemaul leader in his village for several years, he would not speak much of his achievements as a leader. Overall, his life story was narrated with feelings of bitterness and shame. Chairman Hong, on the other hand, was a prominent figure in Dohwa village, as he worked as a government officer for his entire life and served as the chairman of senior association in Dohwa for six years. Having been raised in a wealthy family and his father being a renowned medical doctor, Chairman Hong lived a relatively comfortable life. In this section, I pay attention to these two interviewees' life stories because their personal stories and the manner of narrating their stories illustrate the influence of accepted image of a good citizen in Korea (Daley, 1998, as cited in Summerfield, 2019: 115). Often, the respondents' telling of their past experiences and self-representation were intertwined with various emotions. The emotions of bitterness, shame and pride were measured against the ideal subject that was made popular and accepted during the Saemaul Undong era.

In the beginning of the interview, Mr. Kuk treated his life story as though it was not significant enough to be told publicly:

> **K. Kuk:** Well, I have nothing to boast. I should have achieved something in order to present it. So, if you ask me to talk about something, then there really is nothing to talk about except the hard life that I have lived (K. M. Kuk, personal communication, September 10, 2019).[187]

[187] 뭐, 내 놓을 것이 아무것도 없어. 뭐 해 놓은 것이 있어야 내놓을게 있지. 그래서 나보고 뭔 얘기를 해보라 그러면 어렵게 살았던 생활 밖에는 아무 얘기가 없어.

Yet, he seemed emotionally charged when narrating his life story, which was apparent from his facial expressions and raised voice. Overall, he felt bitter about the poverty, illness, and powerlessness he experienced in his life. He described his life as 'suppressive' (*chichpalphita*, literally meaning, being trampled on), 'But there are things that people never forget. That is, being suppressed. That we cannot forget. Why is that? I lived a suppressive life – how can that be forgotten?'[188] His life was very far from the famous catchphrase of Saemaul Undong, *chal-salapose*[189] meaning, *let's live a good life*. Against this material standard of *good living*, Mr. Kuk and his family had failed to live up to this standard. During the interview, Mr. Kuk constantly made comparisons between him and Chairman Hong:

> **K. Kuk:** Our Chairman Hong's father was a doctor since Chairman Hong was little. A medical doctor. Nowadays, there's nothing special about being a medical doctor. But at *that* time, during the Japanese government era, if you were a national public figure, you were a very important elder of society. A medical doctor back then had much higher authority than the director of large hospitals now… I suffered a lot when I was young because my intestines were not healthy. Yes, Chairman Hong and I went to primary school together even though there was a difference in age between three to four years old. [190]

Mr. Kuk referred to Chairman Hong as *our* chairman, showing some closeness between himself and Chairman Hong. Nonetheless, Mr. Kuk needed to point out the different social strata they belonged to and how Chairman Hong lived a very different, privileged life from him. Unlike Chairman Hong who seemed to earn respect and followers among villagers during his days as a government officer, as we will learn in later section, Mr. Kuk did not enjoy any backing from his villagers even after he became a Saemaul leader because did not have a 'fist' and

[188] 그란데 사람이란 것이 안 잊어버리는게 있어. 그게 뭐이냐 면 짓밟히고 살던거. 그건 안 잊혀져. 왜 그러냐. 짓밟히고 살았는데 그게 잊어버려지겄는가?
[189] 잘 살아보세
[190] 우리 홍회장님은 어렸을 때부터 아버지가 의사님을 지내셨어. 병원 의사. 지금은 의사가 솔직하게 얘기하자면 별것도 없어. 그렇지만 그때 왜정시대에는 국가적인 공인이라고 하면 아주 훌륭하신 어른이여. 지금 무슨 큰 병원 원장보다도 더 높은 어른이여…. 나가 장이 건강하질 못해서 젊어서 고생을 많이 한 사람이여. 그래 갖고 우리 홍회장하고 나하고 나이가 세 살인가 네 살인가 차이가 있어도 초등학교를 같이 다녔어.

'money'[191]. He lamented that he became a Saemaul leader for being a 'pushover' (*Manmanhan Saram*):

> **K. Kuk:** Who would want to go and receive training? … People all want to care for their own business. Who pays you salary or a daily wage for going there (training)? Do you think they would treat you nicely for having gone through the trouble of receiving training? They send only the pushovers. People who are proud and powerful don't go… Do you know what a pushover is? Someone who has *nothing*. The pushovers are the ones who are despised by others.[192]

Mr. Kuk's personal experiences tell us that, in real life, people liked to follow Saemaul leaders who had power and money, but not the ones who are uneducated with no money like himself. Even the idealised qualities of Saemaul leaders – selfless and hard-working leaders who were dedicated to village development - were not enough to make a successful Saemaul leader because villagers did not easily follow their lead.

Mr. Kuk's experience of being a *pushover* deviates from the ideal subject - a model Saemaul leader who is widely respected and supported by their fellow villagers and elders. Instead of being respected and supported by villagers, his experience of working as a Saemaul leader was one of being despised and suppressed. Mr. Kuk was aware of his own departure from this ideal subject and felt deeply bitter about it. His strong and negative emotions were vivid even at the time of the interview in 2019, almost a half century later. I found it significant that Mr. Kuk's unhappy memories were deeply ingrained in him with strong emotions that still haunt him to the present. And Mr. Kuk, almost as if he wanted to make up for the dark and embarrassing memories of his life, started painting a very different picture of himself:

> **D. Jeong:** Did you volunteer (to become a Saemaul leader)? Or who made you do it?

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[191] 새마을 지도자가 주먹이 있고 돈이 있는 사람 말은 들어줬어. 그래도 새마을 지도자가 나같이 못나고 배우지도 못하고 돈도 없고 그라면 들어주지도 않해.

[192] "누가 교육받으러 갈라고 했당가… 자기 일 하려고 하지. 거기 간다고 누가 월급을 준단가 일당을 준단가? 갔다 와서 고생했다고 부락에서 대접해주는 사람이 있단가? 만만한 사람만 보내고. 그래도 목에 힘주고 그런 사람은 가도 안하고… 만만한 사람이 어떤 사람 인줄 알어? 아무것도 없는 사람. 그랑께 무시나 당하고 살고 그게 만만한 사람들이여."

K. Kuk: I did not volunteer. I don't know, I'm more iron-willed than anyone else. I try to do everything by *Solsŏnsubŏm*. And I put a lot of effort into it. Rather than trying to work other people off, I thought I should do more (than them). So, I did it with sincerity and I think that's why they let me become a Saemaul leader"[193]

All of a sudden, Mr. Kuk started portraying himself as a qualified Saemaul leader with a quality of Solsŏnsubŏm. Solsŏnsubŏm, translated as *leading by example* is a quality most expected of Saemaul leaders. Mr. Kuk was now speaking of himself as a Saemaul leader who was the helpless pushover, but a strong-willed and altruistic leader who gave his time and service for the village with sincerity. Mr. Kuk even called himself 'the pioneer of Saemaul Undong' in his village:

K. Kuk: If you're looking for a pioneer of Saemaul Undong in our Cheongyong Village, then you should count me in. (People don't know because) I moved to Dohwa Ochi village and lived there. When we were young and went to primary school, to go to the village where we live, we go had to go up a little bit from the reservoir and there is a slightly sloped road, even today. It's got a slope like this. At night and at dawn, on my way back home from church I would dig and pave the road with my hand hoe. To go down that crooked hill a little and make it a little more comfortable.

D. Jeong: You did it all by yourself?

K. Kuk: Yes, myself.

D. Jeong: Although no one asked you to?

K. Kuk: Who? Nobody.

D. Jeong: Why?

K. Kuk: To make the road on the hill a little more accessible. [194]

[193] (정다운) 자원하셨어요? 아니면 누가 시켜서 하셨어요? (국경만) 나가 지원은 안 했지. 몰라 내가 누구보다 고집이 있고. 뭐든지 솔선수범해서 하려고 하고. 노력을 많이 한께. 요샛말로는 남을 부려먹으려고 하는 마음보다는 내가 좀 더 해야 되겠다는 그런. 그래서 성의껏 하고 그래가지고 새마을 지도자를 시켜줬는가 그랬는가.

[194] (국경만) 우리 청용 마을에서 새마을 선구자라고 하면 나를 손꼽아야 할 것이야. 나가 도화 오치로 이사를 와서 살고 있응께롱 그라지. 어렸을 때 우리가 초등학교 다녔을때. 우리 사는 마을을 가려면 저수지 있는 데를 조까 올라가면은 지금도 조금 깎인 길이 있어. 거가 이렇게 깎였네. 그 길을 나가 밤이 되면 새벽이면 교회를 다녀오다가 나 손 괭이를 가지고 그렇게 판 사람이여. 그 삐딱 고갯길을 조금 판 내려가지고 조금 편하게 만들려고. (정다운) 혼자? (국경만) 혼자서. (정다운) 누가 안 시켰는데요? (국경만) 누가? 없어. (정다운) 왜요? (국경만) 그 고갯길을 조까 편하게 맹글라니께.

Mr. Kuk's self-representation as a selfless and dedicated citizen subject in the composition of his memory shows his eagerness to portray himself as the idealized Saemaul subject. When he told the story of how he smoothened the village path for everyone, a sense of pride was even visible on his face. Mr. Kuk's feelings of pride and achievements originate from the fact that he was indeed *a good man* who set an example to fellow villagers, albeit he had no *fist* or *money*. Mr. Kuk was in fact negotiating his identity in relation to dominant cultural and social expectations.

Like Mr. Kuk, Chairman Hong also produced a similar self-narrative of an ideal Saemaul subject. When I asked him if there were any memories about Saemaul Undong that stood out to him, he told me a story of how he helped directing Saemaul projects in *Shin-pyung* village in Goheung, while he was working for the city council of Goheung. As a government officer, he was assigned a village where he would assist the Saemaul leader of the village and guide their projects. After listing all things he achieved for the village, he stressed that these achievements were possible because he was a leader who led by example (W. P. Hong, personal communication, September 10, 2019) *:*

> **W. P. Hong:** Other officials don't know because they haven't done this. They can't even think. Not all civil servants are the same. How many people do you know who love the village that much and I lead them? If all the civil servants did like me, our country has already been revitalized and developed. But there is no one like me. I will not. I go first and lead by example. I ride a motorcycle from Goheung-eup to there (village) in the morning.[195]

Chairman Hong told me that he drove 8km to the village every morning to make announcements through speakers, encouraging the villagers to wake up early in the morning. To also encourage villagers to participate in Saemaul projects, he bought sweets and gums with his money and handed out to the hungry villagers. When I asked Chairman Hong why he put

[195] 다른 공무원들은 이거를 안 해봐서 몰라. 즈그들 생각도 못해. 다 공무원이 아니여. 다 공무원이라고 해도 그렇게 마을을 사랑하고 내가 지도를 하고 그런 사람들이 몇이나 있난 말이여. 전 공무원들이 나같이 했다고 하면 우리나라 지금은 진작 부흥발전 됐지. 근데 없어 안해. 근데 나가 먼저 가서 솔선수범 해분디. 고흥 읍에서 거기까지 싸이카를 타고 가서 아침에

in so effort as a leader, he explained that he simply did his duty as an official. Again, he emphasised the importance of practicing solsŏnsubŏm*:*

> **D. Jeong:** Why did you put in so much effort?
> **W. P. Hong:** That is the duty of government officials. A government official is a volunteer, no? As a government official, I should sacrifice and volunteer myself for the people of our village and our nation…. For the village of Dong-ochi to develop, the chief of the *Dong-ochi* village should practice solsŏnsubŏm and take the lead. He should be visiting house to house and check if everybody is well.[196]

Chairman Hong was confident that his quality of practicing solsŏnsubŏm earned him respect from the villagers. He told me a story of how, years after he stopped going to the Shin-pyung village, he was still remembered and respected by the villagers. One day, he was eating at a local restaurant nearby Go-heung government office when a waitress noticed him. The waitress came, explaining how she was grateful for Chairman Hong having supervised her village's Saemaul projects and her village flourished. Chairman Hong told me that all the gratitude and respect from the villagers are due to his solsŏnsubŏm. His feeling of pride and sense of achievement were aligned with the idealised Saemaul subject, a good person who works on self-improvement. As opposed to Mr. Kuk who felt that he did not have much to say, Chairman Hong had a lot more to say about Saemaul Undong and offered advice for development when asked. He was much more confident to tell me about his experiences, as though he felt more qualified to tell his stories and opinions about Saemaul Undong. Mr. Hong seemed to be quite proud of his life and what he had achieved as a government official. He was able to tell me about the Saemaul spirits and values and how he would advise other countries to develop as Korea:

> **D. Jeong:** What do you think people need the most to live well?

[196] (정다운) 왜 이렇게 열심히 하셨어요? (홍왕표) 그것은 공직자의 의무다 이 말이여. 공직자는 봉사자여. 봉사자 아니여? 국민을 위해서 면민을 위해서 군민을 위해서 내가 희생하고 봉사하는 것이 공직자재…. 동오치 마을이 발전을 하려면 동오치 이장이 솔선수범해서 지가 앞에 나와서 하고 지가 집집마다 들어 댕기면서 건강하냐 건강 안 하냐. 이 노인이 잘 사냐 안 사냐 이런것을 확인해야 하고…

W. P. Hong: More than anything, I believe that conscience of the self must change.

D. Jeong: Can you elaborate that specifically?

W. P. Hong: To be specific, I have to become a person who practices solsŏnsubŏm. I have to become an example, a norm, and a role model for myself, and become an elder who is respected by all people first. Since I am an elderly person and I am old, as an elder, I should be respected by my juniors and seniors, and all individuals should become adults who are respected by their neighbours. That's it. To live well is when my heart is filled with the spirit of service and sacrifice, and when I receive everything with a grateful heart, I become rich.[197]

Chairman Hong's memory and advice for development tell us about his understanding of the self. He perceives development to be preceded by improvement of the self and the conscience. Chairman Hong's emotions were associated with his self-representation as an ideal Saemaul subject who achieves national development through self-improvement.

6.7 Transcending the past and the present: the *can-do* spirit

A show made by Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), *History Journal: That Day* (*Yŏksa Chŏnŏl: Kŭnal*) aired an episode about Saemaul Undong, *Catch the rural people's heart!* on 2020, October 6th. This episode formed part of a series that covered historical events of the 20th century Korea. The show was hosted by a presenter, two professional academics and three panellists (an actress, a writer and a German national media personality). The show gave an overview of a chosen historical event and the panellists discussed the event in between the show.

In the middle of the show, the presenter introduced three cartoons from the 1970s, featuring success stories of Saemaul leaders, and explained that the common message found in

[197] (정다운) 사람이 잘 살기 위해서는 어떤 게 가장 필요하다고 생각하세요? (홍왕표) 나는 뭐라고 그래도 자기 양심의 변화가 되어야 돼. (정다운) 구체적으로 말한다면? (홍왕표) 구체적으로 말한다면 내가 내 자신부터 솔선수범하는 하자 되어야 돼. 내 자신부터 모범이 되고 규범이 되고 귀감이 되어서 뭇 사람들에게 존경을 받는 어르신이 먼저 되어야 돼. 나는 어르신이니께 나이가 많으니까 어르신으로서 후배들이나 선배들한테 받아야 되고, 개인들도 전부가 다 뭇 사람들이 이웃들에게 존경받는 어른이 되어야 된다. 그것이여. 잘 사는 것은 내 마음이 봉사 희생 정신이 가득 차 불면, 모든 것이 다 감사한 마음으로 받아 불면 부자가 되는 것이여.

these cartoons was *hamyŏn toenda* (can-do) spirit.[198] It was the panellists' discussion that drew my attention to the show - the young panellists, in their thirties, expressed their disagreement with the can-do spirit of the Saemaul era. A young writer, a male panelist, claimed that he found that can-do-ism was no longer relevant in contemporary Korean society:

> **Presenter**: Let's live a better life! *hamyŏn toenda*! (translated as 'If I try, I can do it')[199]
> **Writer (panellist #2)**: I think I understand what it (can-do spirit) is all about, but I don't like can-do-ism maybe because I have the sensibility of the current generation.[200]
> **Presenter**: Why?[201]
> **Writer (panellist #2)**: For me, it is "I'll do it if I can", rather than "If I try, I can do it" (hamyŏn toenda). The hamyŏn toenda spirit was also a policy that secured the sacrifice of a certain class. So let's stop buying and selling labour at a bargain price any more.[202]
> **Presenter**: It's an important topic, but why are you so self-conscious, as you're speaking?[203]
> **Writer (panellist #2)**: I'm not being self-conscious at all. I'm unabashed….[204] I'm simply asking to be paid a fair price. Even to the people behind the monitor over there... (Referring to the show's crew)[205]
> **Presenter**: So, for Mr. Park (the writer), it is "Let's receive it well!"[206]
> **Writer (panellist #2)**: I'd like us to create a rich country for all, whether you're the employer or employee.[207]
> **Presenter**: So it's "let's take our share well?"[208]
> **Actress (Panellist #1)**: Now, this can-do-ism can come across as a little bit demanding today, but I think it (the 1970s) was an era when values like hard work was inevitable [Panellists all nod their heads]. But I think the fundamental question should be this: Did it really bring about a fundamentally positive change in rural areas? I think that's a really important issue, right? (KBS Yŏksa Chŏnŏl: Kŭnal, 2020).[209]

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[198] Or *can-do-ism* as it was called in the show
[199] 잘살아보세. 하면 된다.
[200] 이것의 순 기능은 알겠는데, 제가 요즘 세대 감성이라 그런지 몰라도 캔두이즘 저는 좀 싫은 거 같애요.
[201] 왜요?
[202] 저는 "하면 된다" 보다는 "되면 한다". 이런 "하면 된다" 하는 정신이 어떤 특정 계층의 희생을 담보로 하는 어떤 정책이기도 했잖아요. 그러니까 우리 더이상 헐값에 노동을 사고팔고 하는 것을 하지 말자.
[203] 중요한 얘기인데 왜 그렇게 눈치 보면서 얘기해요?
[204] 눈치 안봐요. 저 지금 되게 당당해요.
[205] 제 값을 치뤄 달라는 말이에요. 저기 모니터 뒤에 계신 분들께도.. (스탭 지칭하는 것 같음)
[206] 박상영씨는 잘 받아보세!
[207] 사용자 노동자 할 것 없이 모두 그런 정신으로 함께 부국한 그런 나라를 만들어 가자고…
[208] 잘 챙겨보세?
[209] 지금 이 캔두이즘이 지금으로써는 좀 부담스러울수 있지만, 당시에는 근면 이런것들이 필요 할수 밖에 없는 시대상이었던것 같아요 (페널리스트들이 모두 고개를 끄덕인다). 근데 정말 근본적인 질문은 이래야 할것 같아요. 정말 근본적으로 긍정적인 변화를 농촌에 불러일으켰는가? 그게 정말 중요한 문제 일것 같거든요?

The writer in this short excerpt did not hold a favourable view of can-do-ism because he felt that Saemaul Undong, under the banner of the *hamyŏn toenda* spirit, elicited rural people's sacrifices but did not pay them a fair price for their time and labour. His comments portray the younger generation's thoughts about work ethic, fair wage and ideal attitudes in contemporary Korean society. This is a small instance that highlights how idealised values of model citizen subject have changed over the years since Saemaul Undong and now, over forty years later. In recent years after the Asian financial crisis, the South Korean labour market has increasingly polarised into regular and non-regular workers, leading to economic instability of marginalised labour force (Koo, 2021; Y. K. Lee, 2015). The economic hardships have hit the younger generation particularly harder than the older generations of their parents and the industrialisation generation. Research shows that, as a result of Korea's younger population experiencing economic hardships, the group is increasingly becoming sceptical of the possibility of upward social mobility. Between 2009 and 2017, the percentage of the under-29 group who believed that strenuous efforts could lead to a rise in class within their own generation decreased from 46.6% in 2009 to 24.1% in 2017 (Jung, 2018). The writer's comment of 'I'm simply asking to be paid a fair price' is reflective of the younger generation's struggles with access to economic resources – that they have to claim and exercise their rights rather than be made to sacrifice themselves and having to 'selling labour at a bargain price'. Between the older and the younger generation, normative values are prized differently. The industrialisation generation was forced to accept collectivism in the name of economic growth and development, upholding the values of diligence, hard work and frugality. The younger generation today may be more individualistic, as some of my interviewees suggested, but also seem to place a high premium on fairness. Towards the end of this chapter's discussion, we have seen how different norms between generations may lead to tension and conflicts. Saemaul Undong's idealised subject, as a cultural form and resource, is still accepted and internalised

by the older generation, affecting their perspective of the world today and of the younger generation, in particular.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at how paying attention to people's memories and life stories can help understand an unfolding story of a nation and its people. Here, I delved into the life stories and personal experiences of my participants, diverging from the state-centric discourse explored in the previous chapters which relied heavily on government publications, media, and archival sources. Instead, this chapter exclusively delved into the interviews I conducted, emphasising participants' experiences, recollections, and interpretations of Saemaul Undong.

The chapter began with a challenge encountered during my second research trip to Korea. Most of my older participants, rather than discussing their involvement with the movement, opted to recount tales of hardship and deprivation which took place before Saemaul undong. This initial frustration with the abstract nature of these memories redirected my focus away from memory as a path to objective *facts*. Memory and its strong emotional resonances proved to be valuable research data, capable of revealing significant meaning into subjectivities of my participants. I realised that even when participants weren't explicitly discussing Saemaul Undong, they attributed immense significance to it within the broader context of their life stories, influenced by past events and current circumstances. reminiscences of Saemaul Undong symbolised moments of happiness and abundance, regardless of their factual accuracy.

As my participants navigated between past and present, they recounted pivotal moments such as Japan's annexation of South Korea, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Saemaul Undong, and South Korea's democratisation, juxtaposed with its current global prominence. These memories evoke a spectrum of emotions, ranging from bitterness and

trauma to pride and excitement. It becomes evident that Saemaul Undong cannot be isolated from preceding darker historical narratives; rather, it emerges as a beacon of hope amidst bleak historical moments, as the *summer of life* for many participants.

Towards the end of the TV show discussion, as introduced earlier, one of the panellists posed the question, 'Now, this can-do-ism can come across as a little bit demanding today…But I think the fundamental question should be this: *Did it really bring about a fundamentally positive change in rural areas?*'. This question, whether Saemaul Undong was indeed a *positive* force has long been the subject of Saemaul study and has also divided scholars in the field. People's memories about Saemaul Undong were more than just about its success or failure, however. Their memories showed that Saemaul Undong opened up a dynamic space for self-fashioning and for new aspirations. Furthermore, for the people of an older generation like Chairman Hong, the image of a model citizen made popular during Saemaul Undong still serves as an ideal version that the younger generation should embrace and emulate. In this sense, as Yongki Lee (2012: 84) puts it, Saemaul Undong is not a simple icon of the 20th century history or a place of memory but can work as a 'realistic power' and spirit that can lead individuals to act upon the self. Another research participant, Mr. J. Y. Ch'oe, also mentioned that he would want the younger generation to learn to become diligent and thrifty. He said that the younger generation would not understand the struggles they have gone through such as hunger and poverty. This generational tension in contemporary Korea - and what it means for Saemaul Undong - is touched upon in the final concluding chapter of this thesis, to which I now turn.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This study was born out of my curiosities about Saemaul Undong as a project of the self. I have always wondered why and how a state development project launched in 1970 under a strong authoritarian regime, Saemaul Undong focused so much on the self, seeking to transform the individual mentalities and subjectivities of rural communities. The initial research into existing studies on Saemaul Undong pointed to a need for a more nuanced understanding of the movement itself, moving away from binary schools of thoughts that are polarised between praise and criticism. These simplified and dichotomous narratives about Saemaul Undong ran the risk of leaving out detailed knowledge of the impact and consequences of the movement. This type of approach is limited when it comes to answer the most critical enquiry in development studies: how does development affect the people involved?

My interest was less about whether the movement was good or not – or whether the participants were forced to take part or not. My core interest was how participants experienced Saemaul Undong in their everyday life and the resulting impact on their self-becoming. This enquiry translated into a relay of questions: how were participants' subjectivities shaped by Saemaul undong? What was the rationality behind the art of government in Saemaul Undong and what were its techniques of government? What were participants' everyday life experiences? How did participants respond in their engagement with Saemaul Undong's development narrative? How do they remember the movement today and what does this tell us?

This thesis is one of the first studies to ask these significant questions, which I hope to carry on in future. It draws on document analysis and rich archival records alongside thirteen in-depth interviews containing my research participants' life histories. My interest in Saemaul

Undong as a crossroad of the state and individuals led me to heed the voices from both the state (mainly chapters 4 and 5) and individuals (chapter 6). Borrowing from the conceptual framework of Foucauldian governmentality and memory-work method, this study found that Saemaul Undong created a space for the constitution of new types of selves, and new ways of relating to the selves, in the shadow of the trauma of war and colonialism. These findings are premised upon the view that neither the state is an overarching entity with total governing power nor individuals are the state's puppets alone. The thesis illustrates the confluence of how a development project is imposed by the South Korean state but also successfully embraced and implemented by rural communities. Government, according to the conventional understanding of power, is both dominating and limiting in the sense that the governing entity (e.g. the state) disciplines its subjects, preventing creative forms of subjectivities from emerging. Foucauldian governmentality, on the other hand, involves not only the government of the self by other but also 'the government of the self by the self', allowing possibilities for new subject positions to arise (Roy, 2018: 8). Through governmentality, the thesis pays attention to the generative force of the movement, in terms of how the state provides resources for the emergence of diverse aspirations, emotions, and ultimately new subjects. This study was a journey back and forth – between the past and the present. I tread gently on the footsteps of Saemaul Undong and those who experienced it. Tracing the state's footsteps and hearing people's voices provided a wealth of knowledge: what the state did; and what people heard, saw and felt; and the voices of people today – what they remember and why Saemaul Undong matters after all.

In this chapter, I start by presenting a summary of the key findings of the thesis. In the second section, I discuss the implications and contributions of the study to existing studies. It lays out the methodological and conceptual contributions of the thesis to studies on

development, memory, governmentality and Saemaul Undong. In the final section of the chapter, I present some of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

7.2 Summary of the thesis

The first chapter, *Seeing development: aesthetic governmentality*, explored the ways in which the Korean state governed the landscape and individuals in rural communities. The image of Korean villages typified by rows of colourful roofs set apart from one another by wide village paths emerged in early 1970s when the Korean state introduced the Saemaul Remodelling project. It rapidly spread to the entire country. How and why did the state normalise this aesthetic so widely and quickly, that it is now almost the standard look for rural communities in Korea? This chapter provided a close reading of archival records from state-published magazines, cartoons, and pictorials. I also drew on my interviews with Saemaul Undong participants as well as existing interviews with former Saemaul leaders in the official Saemaul archive for personal accounts and memories.

A closer look into the Saemaul Remodelling project and the state's use of visual materials revealed that in order to achieve a new look in villages, the state had to change people's ways of seeing and aspiring. The Korean state utilised visual representations and media such as magazines, pictorials, and television to promote Saemaul undong, disseminate and impose a new aesthetic norm on rural locales. The new aesthetic standard, which I call the *Saemaul aesthetic*, was produced through the landscape, housing and the individual. It was characterised by features such as wide and straight village paths (landscape), vibrantly coloured slate roofs (housing), and values like diligence and hard-work (individual). In media, individuals like Saemaul leaders and groups of participants were portrayed as thrifty and working diligently. Achieving the Saemaul aesthetic required significant amount of labour and cooperation from individuals, signifying not just a change in scenery but a fundamental shift

in the self. In this way, the Korean state emphasised a direct correlation between appearance and character, calling for a genuine transformation of the self. Not only did you have to *look* diligent, but you had to *become* diligent.

The findings in this chapter speak to the significance of the optics of development. In other words, it is possible to effectively govern a population's interests and conduct from a distance by mandating specific aesthetic and visual standards and norms. The thesis mobilised the concept of aesthetic governmentality to understand how the focus on visuals facilitated state control and governance at a distance. Aesthetic governmentality refers to a power mechanism employed by the state, or a governing regime, to regulate the behaviour of its populace by setting up new standards of aesthetics. These standards, manifested as idealised images or appearances, informed shifts in subjectivity and behaviours. The case of Saemaul Undong illustrates the effectiveness of governing through visual representations of modernity, shaping both the landscape and individual and collective conduct.

The second findings chapter, *'New mind movement': making of the farmer-citizen subject'*, delves more deeply into the transformative processes of the self under Saemaul Undong. The main finding of this chapter is that the Korean state of the 1970s positioned the self as a principal site for improvement and transformation, turning an ordinary farmer into a socially embodied citizen subject. The distinctiveness of this project was in its focus on transforming the mindset of rural peasants, a departure from traditional rural development programs centred solely on increasing agricultural output.

Against the backdrop of significant shifts in Korean leadership during the early 1960s – a shift in state ideologies towards active citizenship and nation-building – Saemaul Undong propagated a narrative that aligned individual improvement with national progress. Through this 'government of the soul' (Rose, 1999: 261), where individual aspirations are aligned with those of governing authorities, the self is neither crushed nor silenced. Individuals are

encouraged to view themselves as agents of change, bearing responsibility not only for their own lives but also for the prosperity of their nation. My analysis of the state discourse of an ideal citizenship reveals how citizens were made (as capable of self-government, in particular), under Saemaul Undong.

Often referred to as *Sae Maum Undong*, (translated, new mind movement) Saemaul Undong placed an emphasis on the significance of one's spiritual improvement. This chapter explored three technologies of the self – volunteerism, confession, and everyday life – and how they served as mechanisms for self-government and responsibilisation of farmers. Promoting the spirit of volunteerism sent out a message that an ideal citizen-subject is a selfless, dedicated individual who works hard for the collective good. The practice of confession in group discussion sessions during Saemaul leaders training ensured that the self became the object of scrutiny and a site of improvement, spurring a quest for an authentic self among farmers. A high interest in individual's daily routine in the media showed that something as mundane as everyday life could also become an object of scrutiny and improvement. Farmers were tasked with continual self-reflection and improvement and the state served as the governing authority providing practical guidelines for an ideal life. The positioning of the self at the heart of development under Saemaul Undong, as illuminated in this chapter, is interesting given that it was launched as a state-directed project under an authoritarian regime. This finding calls into question the conventional perception of the authoritarian state as solely enforcing domination and discipline, revealing instead its reliance on garnering legitimacy and consent from people.

Chapter 5 shed light on the state discourse on development and nation-building and its impact on farmers' perceptions of duty and identity by drawing on archival sources, training materials, presidential speeches, and my own interviews. The official documents such as Saemaul leaders training textbooks and presidential speeches were consulted for understanding

the state discourse and its technologies of the self. The analysis of interview data illuminated how participants experienced and embodied such technologies in their everyday lives.

In the last findings chapter, *Between Past and present: Oral History and Memory*, I shift the scale of analysis. I turn from the state to individuals' life stories and their experiences. While the two previous chapters centre state discourse by drawing on government publications and media and other archival sources (and some interview data), this chapter exclusively analyses the interviews I conducted with participants. I stress the ways in which individuals experience, remember and ascribe meanings to Saemaul Undong. The chapter begins with a challenge I faced during my second research trip to Korea: my first group of research participants, most of whom were aged between seventies and early nineties, could not recollect their memories of Saemaul Undong well. Instead of discussing their experiences of the movement, these participants chose to narrate their stories of hardship and deprivation that had occurred in the years before the movement. My initial frustrations with the slipperiness of these memories turned my attention away from memory as a route to past *facts* or truths. Instead, I started considering memory as research data in and of itself, as revealing meaning and significance. In other words, my approach evolved towards understanding how memory is constructed and its implications for making meaning for individuals, the community and even the nation. I realised that even when participants were not talking about Saemaul Undong, they ascribed it enormous meaning in their overall life stories because of what happened before and what is happening in the present. For instance, in contrast to the memories of hunger and humiliation which took place during the Japanese occupation of Korea and the subsequent Korean war, the memories of Saemaul Undong embodied moments and feelings of happiness and plentifulness – even if that may not have been true.

Much of this chapter is dedicated to contextualising and narrating my participants' personal histories of hardship. Deeply attached to the memories of hardship were strong

emotions of humiliation and distress. An extraordinary finding from their stories is that the memories of hunger and deprivation are very vivid – much more than their memories of Saemaul Undong. This was evident in my own grandmother's life story. Like her, the life histories of those from the older generation revealed major historic events of the 20th century, both domestic and global. As they travelled back and forth between the past and the present, my participants spoke of Japan's annexation of South Korea, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Saemaul Undong and democratisation in South Korea, to South Korea's current prominent position in contemporary global culture and economy. The unfolding of these memories was accompanied by strong emotions of bitterness, trauma but also pride and excitement. Saemaul Undong cannot exist in isolation from the previous (darker) histories. In fact, it stands out as the shining 'summer (of my life)' in the midst of these bleak historical moments. *The development generation*, who have lived through multiple traumas and histories also distinguish themselves from today's younger generation.

7.3 Implications and contributions

This section draws out implications of my findings while outlining some of the contributions that this thesis makes to existing studies in terms of theories, concepts and methodologies.

7.3.1 Development studies

This thesis, while studying a state, top-down development project, chose to look at the process of development from below. This more molecular approach entails understanding development not as an instance of state governance alone but also a site where the self, subjectivities, agency and positions of the people are constituted and negotiated. Often, in many studies, (state-led) development is packaged neatly as a box or a gift that is endowed from one actor to another. This type of imagery produces a simplified understanding of power in development as vertical and negative. It is vertical in the sense that the state, which is above society, exerts its

development agenda onto the people, and negative in that the state disciplines and regulates its subjects. My ambition for this thesis, along with studies like Ferguson (1990), Gupta (2012) Jakimow (2015), Murray Li (2007), and Sharma (2008), is to go beyond the state and look at development in a much broader, capacious and generative manner.

Research for development usually look for effects and consequences of development, asking if they are positive or negative. Questions are almost always interested in material change, such as 'Did this particular development project make things better for people?' or 'Was there an increase in food production?' Similar questions were thrown at Saemaul Undong, 'Did Saemaul Undong translate to an increased rural income?' Consider also the question from the actress, who was one of the panellists on the TV show featuring Saemaul Undong (see chapter 6), 'Did it really bring about a fundamentally positive change in rural areas?' I found these questions inadequate to answer my central enquiry about how development affects the people involved, which was posed at the start of this thesis: how were the participating villagers' subjectivities affected by Saemaul Undong in the 1970s' South Korea?

This thesis, to the best of my knowledge, is the first study to look at Saemaul Undong, as a development initiative or movement per se, from this micro level of the self while also turning away from judging its success or failure in terms of something tangible alone. It showed how individuals began to see and feel themselves differently under Saemaul Undong. For example, the Saemaul Remodelling Project and its new aesthetic standards for rural villages enabled people to relate differently to simple things like coloured roofs - these roofs were now symbols of progress and modernity, of global advance. Encountering the state development narrative in Saemaul Leaders Training, for instance, led farmers to recognise themselves very differently from before. Farmers still farmed in rural villages, but they now saw themselves as patriotic citizens who contributed to rural and national advancement. Their action of farming

now contained social and political meaning (see chapter 5). It is at the micro and everyday level where this thesis was able to unravel the power of development – its capacity to transform and constitute subjectivities – in similar ways as how Murray Li (2007: 282), in her study of a development programme in Indonesia, was able to 'explore how subjectivities were produced in the complex conjunctures where multiple powers coincide' through a micro-level, ethnographic approach. The strength and uniqueness of this thesis rests upon its novel focus on the subjectivity of human beings – how they remember, perceive themselves and relate to notions of progress, nationhood, a better life, future and so on. I hope this thesis contributes to other existing studies in development studies that have taken similar view but in different contexts.

7.3.2 Memory studies

For a historical research project like this, memory proved to be an important source. Memory allowed me to shift the scale of analysis to the individual and look closely at how meanings are produced at micro level. The previous section discussed how this research project was not interested in judging whether Saemaul Undong was successful or not in terms of material change, but how individuals' subjectivities were formed and changed. In other words, I had to shift the focus of my analysis from top (the state) to the ground level (people) and look closely at how people ascribe meaning to many things in their life – the self, the past experiences and events. It was also important to see how people changed the ways in which they perceive themselves, their landscape and their communities.

Memory allowed me to get to the ground level in two ways. First of all, I approached memory as an important source of analysis, not for factual information but for social, cultural and historical meanings. As I discuss earlier in the thesis (see chapter 3 and 6), I stumbled upon a challenge during my second research trip when I discovered that my older participants could

not remember their past correctly in the interviews. They would either give me different accounts of the same past event related to Saemaul Undong or decide not to speak about the movement at all. To my surprise, most of my older participants chose to recollect their memories of hunger and humiliation from the period of the Japanese occupation of Korea and the Korean War, all of which took place prior to Saemaul Undong. My initial frustration with these interviews turned into fear that I would have to discard all the interviews – until I came across the works of the scholars that focused on not what memories told us but instead how these memories were produced and narrated (Portelli 1991; Roy 2012; Summerfield 1998). This made me realise that my participants memories were in fact providing me with the kind of information that would only be accessible at the ground level – how individuals remember, imagine, and understand themselves in relation to historical events and cultural and social context.

It was only by rummaging through my participants' memories that I was able to observe the strong emotions of desperation and humiliation during the colonial and post-war period, accompanied by emotions of pride and nostalgic joy during and after Saemaul Undong. These emotions ran through the narrativisation of participants' memories, shedding light on the way in which individuals imbue significant meaning to Saemaul Undong in relation to their overall life history and the story of the Korean nation. This thesis is one of the first studies of Saemaul Undong to acknowledge the discursive nature of these memories. Rather than dismissing individuals' memories as an unreliable source, this thesis takes advantage of memory as an analytical tool to dig deeper into how subjectivities are formed in relation to the wider history of the nation and cultural and social context. I hope that my small collection of findings from this particular moment in history builds on existing works in memory studies.

Secondly, memory as a methodological tool, helped me fill in the other half of the picture, left incomplete by analysis of state archival data. Although the Saemaul Undong

archives is well known for its vast collection of records such as the government official publications, magazines, training textbooks and audio recordings from Saemaul leaders, this thesis did not solely rely on the state archive. As much as the volume of the archives was huge, many of the materials had been produced by the Korean state with a purpose of promoting Saemaul Undong and disseminating its values to the public. Studies of state-led development projects, in general, tend to consult state archive materials to obtain factual information about project implementation such as statistics, pictures and reports. At times, official documents and meeting reports also become useful to understand the state's rationale and development narrative.

Instead, the thesis took a triangulated approach by complementing the findings from state archive materials with the findings from sources such as interviews with participants and by considering cultural repertoires of magazines and audio recordings from Saemaul leaders. This way, I was able to prevent the thesis from sounding like another propagandist's work of the movement and also maintain an objective stance. If this study had chosen to use the state archive materials exclusively, it could have fallen into the pit of repeating the state's top-down perspective and propaganda. It is also crucial to note that I did not take my interviewees' narratives at face value. Mr. Kuk's narrative (in chapter 6) is one such example. Mr. Kuk, who had an unpleasant memory of being a *pushover* leader, told me that he was indeed a pioneer of Saemaul Undong because he always tried to do everything by solsŏnsubŏm (lead by example). But reading between the lines, I could see that he was clearly struggling to *compose* himself in the light of the ideal subject.

The memories of my interviewees were also diverse and multi-faceted. Though my participants shared overall positive memories about the movement (I contextualised my interviewees' memories before and after Saemaul to explain how the movement came to be embodied with such favourable meaning), again, Mr. Kuk's memory of struggles as a Saemaul

leader revealed that not all the memories were uniform. This points at the possibility that if I had a bigger sample of older participants and I would have obtained even more variety of memories. Ultimately, the mixed methods made the research much richer, embodying the voices of the state, the people and the cultural meanings of the time and beyond it. Future research in Saemaul Undong and studies of state-led development projects in general could benefit from this mixed method of research and by taking memory as a significant methodological tool.

7.3.3 Governmentality studies

By using the conceptual framework of governmentality in understanding a state development project in the 1970s South Korea, this study makes modest contributions to governmentality studies in two ways. Firstly, this thesis forms a small part of a greater scholarship in terms of understanding and applying the theory of governmentality as it travels through different time and space outside of Europe or the global North. The recent turn of thinking in how Foucault's governmentality, considered as mostly a Western thought or epistemic framework, travels to other places and times and what that illustrates has produced a rich collection of works on the Global South (Legg & Heath, 2018). These scholars have shed new light on different governmentalities by testing and applying Foucault's governmentality in different places and times, demonstrating that there is no 'governmentality in the singular' (Legg & Heath, 2018: 7). The edited volume of Legg and Heath shows the diversity of governmentalities within South Asia that, apart from colonial India, can also be found in a range of governmentalities across the region of South Asia, like in Burma, Bangladesh and even Tibet where the conventional notion of territorial governance or statehood is not applicable. Following the call of South Asian governmentality scholars that 'there is much more work to be done', this thesis aspires to become an extension of the work, now in the greater region of East Asia by applying this

analytical framework to the context of postcolonial and post-war South Korea (Legg & Heath, 2018:28)

Secondly, the thesis is a part of emerging research using the analytic of governmentality in understanding Saemaul Undong's governing rationalities and their contact with individuals in their everyday life settings. It is also one of the first studies to consider Saemaul Undong as one instance of many governmentalities that have existed or are with us today. After extensive research, I found that studies on Saemaul Undong using the concept of governmentality were very rare, with only one published academic article titled, *South Korea's Saemaul (New Village) movement: an organisational technology for the production of developmentalist subjects* authored by Sonn and Gimm (2013). In this work, Sonn and Gimm suggest that Saemaul Undong served as an important apparatus of South Korea's developmentalist governmentality. Developmentalist governmentality is a concept developed by the authors, which entails a developmental state's ability to shape individuals into a subordinate labour force through the strategic utilisation of various (governing) technologies. These technologies may entail employing disciplinary measures, organizing civilians in a military fashion, and leveraging ideological persuasion to promote anti-communism and nationalism. According to the authors (2013: 1), the Korean state used Saemaul leaders as 'half-civilian, half-bureaucratic agents' who played a vital role of relaying the state's hegemonic discourse of developmentalism in their everyday interaction with rural peasants. It is interesting how the authors take Foucault's concept of governmentality and develop a new concept in a very different context of South Korea and its history of Saemaul Undong from the 1970s. There were, however, no follow up studies published after this article. Understanding Saemaul Undong through the lens of governmentality provided me with a new perspective into the movement's state-citizen dynamic. Power is always embedded in the relationship between the state and individuals and its effect can neither be predetermined nor foreclosed (i.e. one is

dominating and the other is suppressed and dominated). More precisely, a conjuncture of multiple actors may open up opportunities for new forms of power and government, giving rise to new subjects. I hope that this thesis will interest more researchers to continue the thread of engaging with the analytic of governmentality when studying Saemaul Undong and its participants. For my future research, I'm also interested in developing this application of governmentality theory to the context of postcolonial and post-war South Korea further.

7.3.4 Saemaul Undong studies

To this day, the literature on Saemaul Undong remains deeply polarised along ideological lines. The two camps of scholars either celebrate the movement for empowering rural communities or criticise the movement as a form of brain-washing of the peasantry. This ideological divide is also due to South Korea's political history of an authoritarian government under former president Park Chung Hee, who ruled between 1962 and 1979. The critical scholars view Saemaul Undong as a mere tool of political propaganda to mobilise the rural masses under the influence of Park's authoritarian regime (H. Y. Cho, 2004; S. M. Han, 2004; Kim, 2007; Kim, 2009; Koh, 2006; 2010; M. Moore, 1985; Oh, 2002; Reed, 2010). According to these scholars, power in Saemaul Undong is one-way (i.e. exerted from the state to individuals) and restrictive (i.e. the state disciplines and represses individuals). This macro approach to understanding power at the level of the state falls short of producing a holistic picture of power dynamics in Saemaul Undong. The aim of this thesis, thus, has been to challenge this oversimplified understanding of power. At this point, it is worthwhile to remind us of the authoritarian nature of the Saemaul administration. Contrary to the widespread views of authoritarian states (including those of the critical scholars in Saemaul Undong) that they rule through coercive power alone, the findings in thesis suggest that authoritarian states also rule through more molecular forms of power. For instance, my findings in chapter 4 and 5 illustrate how Saemaul

authorities devised a number of technologies of the self to position the self as a site for transformation. Saemaul Undong's programmes provided various resources for new aspirations and ethical conduct, which in turn created possibility for self-government among rural villagers. This paints a very different picture of the state from the one of sheer domination and discipline alone. It also tells us how much the state, albeit being authoritarian, depends on making itself legitimate, through gaining the consent and embrace of wider society.

This thesis has made extensive use of the existing Saemaul archive materials. My analysis has benefitted from a rich collection of official records, media prints of texts, photos, video and audio recordings of Saemaul leaders and personal records such as daily journal entries. And yet, there are only a limited number of studies that have used the Saemaul archive materials for the purpose of understanding the movement's impact on people. I hope that this thesis would enthuse researchers of Saemaul Undong to take the existing archives more seriously and utilise it for further research. On another note, my interviews with participants can be a small contribution to the Saemaul Undong archive itself.

7.4 Limitations and further research

This thesis explored the experiences, feelings and memories of rural villagers in their engagement with Saemaul Undong and its governmental technologies during the 1970s in South Korea. Being a PhD student with limited time and budget meant that I had to narrow the scope of the study and aim to write a focused thesis. This research, therefore, focused on questions of the constitution of subjectivities and the agency of individuals, rather than delving into the details of their actual work for and nature of participation in the movement. A part of the reasons why I paid attention to my research participants telling their stories was because the participants could not give many details on what they *did*. As I have explained in this thesis (see chapter 3), I encountered a challenge during my second field work trip to South Korea

where my elderly participants were not able to remember their past experiences of Saemaul Undong clearly because a long time has passed since the movement took place (some were in their nineties). This obstacle prompted me to appreciate the participants' recollections in a new way, shifting my focus away from mere factual analysis to a deeper exploration of the genuine significance that their memories attribute to Saemaul Undong (see chapter 6).

Nevertheless, if I had more time and budget with no travel restrictions, I could locate potential participants and conduct more face-to-face interviews, perhaps in another region in South Korea. Politics in South Korea is deeply divided along regional lines where the people of Jeolla (Honnam region) largely support the left-wing liberal democratic party and those of Gyeongsang (Youngnam region) lean towards the right-wing conservatist party. The similar political and ideological division is also visible in general sentiment towards Park Chung Hee and Saemaul Undong. Usually, the people of Gyeongsang province, where Park Chung Hee was born, hold more favourable view of Saemaul Undong. My interviewees from Jeolla displayed an interesting case, as six out of seven interviewees - although they were all born and bred in the region – had favourable memories of Saemaul Undong and towards Park Chung Hee.

The quality of this research would have also benefitted from much richer or varied data in terms of what the participants did during Saemaul Undong in addition to how they saw, felt and remember. More in-depth interviews will not only add to the existing archive of Saemaul Undong, but also shed light on the questions such as: to what extent were individuals allowed to take action and really drive changes in their rural communities? Further research could also look into potential discrepancies between what participants felt (and/or what they were made to feel) and how much they could actually do. As the development generation is dying out, it is also important to capture their memories timeously and add to the existing archive.

This thesis revolved around the fundamental question of, 'how were the subjectivities of villagers who engaged in Saemaul Undong during 1970s South Korea influenced by the movement?'. While this thesis excludes the contemporary global Saemaul Undong development programme as it was beyond the scope of this work, I hope to encourage researchers of global Saemaul Undong to pose the same questions as I have asked of the historic movement. As of 2024, Saemaul Undong is an ongoing project of the day - albeit producing contrasting evaluations (see chapter 1 and 2). Now rebranded as a global Saemaul Undong Programme (global SMU), one of South Korea's official development aid programme for developing nations, it is considered a great geopolitical and diplomatic asset for Korea. Despite the Korean public's contentious and mixed feelings, Saemaul Undong is still impacting many people's lives today. So far, the recent studies on the global Saemaul Undong programmes have been limited to either evaluating the possibility of implementing Korea's Saemaul Undong to other developing countries or comparing Saemaul Undong to other development programmes abroad. Studies looking at the experiences of the people involved in the global Saemaul Undong programme are rare. It is thus significant and relevant to return to the fundamental question of 'how does development affect the people involved?', at a different time and in different places across the world. More research could be done in the field where global Saemaul Undong is being implemented, to listen to the people's experiences, understand the power relations within these projects, their micro-politics, and map the terrain of reception from the beneficiaries, from material changes to changes in the soul.

7.4.1 Generational tensions of today

Generational tensions between the older generations and the younger generations in South Korea today is an interesting point that I briefly touched upon in chapter 6. Many of my interviewees seemed sceptical or concerned of today's younger generation because the youth

were seemingly less appreciative of values like diligence and thrift. The younger generations typically include Generation X, millennials and Generation Z. Here, it would be more correct to state that by *younger generation,* my interviewees referred to *Generation MZ*. Generation MZ is a term used in Korea exclusively to refer to Millennials and Generation Z. The MZ generation, young people born between 1981 and 2005, are often portrayed in media as having distinct mindset and values from their older generations. The older generations, whom I interviewed, fall into two demographic categories of the industrialisation generation and baby boomers. Industrialisation generation (also called the *development generation*), the first group of the elderly I interviewed, denotes the population group who were born around the 1940s and lived through the Korean War, state-led industrialisation of the 1960s, Saemaul Undong of the 1970s, and the democratisation of South Korea. Baby boomers, the second group of my interviewees, are people who were born after the Korean War, between 1955 and 1963. Baby boomers have witnessed Park Chung Hee's military coup in 1961 and experienced Saemaul Undong of the 1970s.

It has been suggested in research and media that between the older generations and the younger generations, normative values are prized differently (Jung, 2018). While the older generations accept the values of collectivism, diligence and discipline, the younger generations seem to attach importance to the values of individualism, fairness and creativity. Lifetime experiences between the two groups of generations are starkly different. As evident in my own grandmother's life history, the industrialisation generation has had this extraordinary experience of having gone through colonial rule, independence, several wars, military coup, industrialisation, democratisation and Korea's rise through economic development at an unprecedented pace in world history – in one single lifetime. It was no exaggeration when Han (2011: 147) suggested that 'only the development generation can claim to have personally experienced the range of bitter hardship and sweet success of modern Korean history, having

borne the fruit of economic development through their own sweat, tears, and blood.' As such, my interviewees remarked 'We've been through all the hardship. The younger generations don't know any of this. They should learn to work hard and become diligent.'

I find the older generations' scepticism of the younger generation today quite ironic particularly at a time when South Korea is going through a huge cultural boom around the world, being a major cultural exporter of films, music, TV shows and even fashion design. *Hallyu* (meaning the Korean wave) began to surface across Asia since the early 2000s when Korean TV dramas and films gained increasing popularity. In the last decade, the success of Korean pop culture expanded to K-pop, fashion and even arts. Korean wave culminated in global megahits like Parasite (an Oscar-winning film) and Squid Game (a Netflix series) in early 2020s. In the midst of Korea's astounding (and unprecedented) global popularity, which is also the fruit of the younger generation's hard work and talent, the older generations' sceptical attitude and their nostalgia for the spirits of Saemaul Undong are intriguing.

While the generational tensions were not part of this work's scope, future research could benefit from this insight. A potential future research question could ask whether this type of generational tension will impact on the prospects of global Saemaul Undong and how. It would be interesting to see how global Saemaul Undong participants in developing countries engage with the three Saemaul spirits of self-help, cooperation and diligence, with particular focus on millennials. Another possible avenue for future research is to contemplate on what it means for global Saemaul Undong, when the projects are implemented by Korean volunteers who are from different generations. If the volunteers implementing the projects hold different values from one another due to generational differences, does it matter? Does it make any difference when implementing the projects? What is the power dynamic between volunteers? As the older generations are aging, it is more likely that younger generations who have not experienced the original Saemaul undong will be the implementors of the global Saemaul projects. How will

the younger generation's perspectives and attitudes to life and work play out for global Saemaul Undong? Or will they bring global Saemaul Undong to an end entirely?

7.4.2 Development under authoritarian regimes

It is worth pointing out that Saemaul Undong was a state-led development project that was implemented under the strict authoritarian regime of Park Chung Hee. The Park regime bulldozed through rapid economic development in the 1960s, powered by its vigorous industrialisation policy. In the 1970s, the regime attempted to recreate similar success in rural communities through Saemaul Undong. Overall, the relationship between Korea's rapid economic development and the authoritarian regime of Park Chung Hee is complex and subject to studies and debate by scholars even today (which also explains the divide in the Saemaul literature). Some argue that Park's authoritarian rule provided stability and allowed for long-term planning and implementation of economic policies necessary for rapid industrialisation (Amsden, 1989; Johnson, 1982). Critics contend that Park's authoritarianism stifled political dissent and suppressed labour rights, leading to social inequalities and exploitation. Park's regime prioritised economic growth and modernisation, often at the expense of civil liberties and political freedoms (Koo, 2001).

My findings in this thesis suggest an inconclusive and yet interesting point about Park's authoritarian regime and Saemaul Undong: that even though the programmes of Saemaul Undong were implemented under an authoritarian regime, they relied on gaining people's trust and consensus. For instance, the discussion of aesthetic governmentality (in chapter 4) and technologies of the self as seen in Saemaul Leaders Training (in chapter 5) map out how the authoritarian state took extra steps to impact the way in which individuals related to themselves and to their landscape and communities. Contrary to the conventional view that authoritarian states work by disciplining and dominating individuals alone, Park's Saemaul Undong

recognised the possibility of individuals to enact changes and thus incited their sense of responsibility, pride and patriotism to create collective ownership.

Exploring the reasons behind and the ways in which the Korean authoritarian regime needed to build consensus and work through it has been beyond the scope of this study. It is, however, an intriguing area of study that I would pursue or encourage other researchers to develop further.

7.4.3 Going beyond the ideological lines

An established Korean scholar once told me that studying Saemaul Undong was like entering a field of *landmines* because it was a battlefield of ideologies. Saemaul Undong, as a field of study and a historical moment on its own, is an ideologically and politically loaded space indeed. This is quite evident in the existing literature of Saemaul Undong as majority of the studies fall under either the praising or criticising the movement. Upon hearing the scholar, I felt rather relieved that I was fully aware of this aspect of Saemaul Undong.

In this thesis, I stay away from making normative judgement about Saemaul Undong as a development project. The nature of my enquiry is not a straightforward one, asking whether the movement was good or bad, a success or a failure. Such kind of normative judgements provide little help with understanding the effect of development on the people involved, which is my main interest. I have therefore deliberately chosen *not* to go down that path but to do something different. My original approach was to paint a very complex picture of the workings of power at a micro level. In other words, this study sought to illustrate how development informed and shaped subjectivity, an aspect that has been neglected in the field of Saemaul Undong. This kind of complex knowledge about individual experiences and subjectivities required not accepting my findings at a face value. For instance, while the memories and nostalgia of my participants were mostly positive about Saemaul Undong, I did not accept them

at a face value. Instead, I delved deeper into the narrativisation of these memories and sought to extract the meanings behind the memories– including what *flawed* memories said about the significance of Saemaul Undong, in relation to the histories of an individual life and their nation.

I hope that this thesis is the beginning of a new approach to studying Saemaul Undong, one that is not invaded by contrasting ideologies but one where people's stories and perspective take the central position. The global travel of Saemaul Undong continues to this day. It is being exported abroad as South Korea's unique development experience and an asset that Korea has to offer to developing nations. Further research on the contemporary global Saemaul Undong programmes could benefit from this thesis's approach on looking at development from below. Because, ultimately, it is the individuals that are at the centre of social change.

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