

The Rural Saemaul Undong Revisited from the Perspective of Good Governance

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Abstract: This study analyzes the rural Saemaul Undong of the 1970s in the Republic of Korea from the perspective of good governance. Diverse characteristics of good governance appeared in the Saemaul Undong—in particular, spontaneous participation by village people. This participation was not only a primary factor in the achievements of the Saemaul Undong, but also made it consensus-oriented, responsive, and transparent in terms of decision-making and project implementation at the village level. Participation in the villages was promoted and supported by government intervention and strategies, which brought not only efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, but also increased equity and inclusiveness in the Saemaul Undong. The Saemaul Undong embodied a number of characteristics of good governance.

Keywords: rural Saemaul Undong, good governance, rural development

INTRODUCTION

The rural Saemaul Undong (New Village Movement in English) was a community-based rural development program that emerged in the Republic of Korea in the 1970s. Recently, interest in the Saemaul Undong has increased. As antipoverty and community development programs have been promoted in earnest in developing countries, it has begun to receive attention as a successful example of such a program. In particular, countries that promote community development policies, such as China, Vietnam, and African countries, and international organizations that support the development of rural areas and communities in the developing countries, have begun to send rural community leaders and public officials to the Republic of Korea to learn about the

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procedures and elements that led to the success of the Saemaul Undong (Jeong, 2007; So, 2007).

In spite of this increased attention from policy makers and researchers, it seems that a more comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the Saemaul Undong is needed. Those working from a position that opposes the authoritarian political system of the Park Chung-hee era tend to offer a one-sided negation of it. Others stress only its positive aspects and disregard its problems and limitations (Hwang, 2006). Due to this, analysis and evaluation of the Saemaul Undong has tended to resort to dichotomous logic, presenting it in terms of success or failure and spontaneous participation or forced mobilization.

The various and multilayered functions of the Saemaul Undong as a modernizing project cannot be properly analyzed from such extreme either-or perspectives. Because previous research has adopted such perspectives, the institutional and social contexts that defined the Saemaul Undong and the idiosyncratic interactions between the state and rural communities in the course of implementing it have been overlooked, and empirical analyses of these contexts have not been fully carried out. Limitations like these have contributed to scholars' current inability to answer the most fundamental and practical questions regarding it (Park, 2009; So, 2007): Is the rural Saemaul Undong of the 1970s relevant to the 21st century as a model of community development? What aspects of it should we preserve or discard?

This study revisits the Saemaul Undong by applying the good governance model. It explores structural and agency factors related to the Saemaul Undong using good-governance suggestions regarding characteristics that the public sector should have in developing countries that are also liberal democracies. This analysis is expected to identify various multilayered characteristics of the Saemaul Undong and also re-evaluate it in terms of values governance should possess in the 21st century.

To best achieve the purpose and execute the detailed tasks of this study, its range is limited to rural aspects of the movement in the 1970s, the time of its greatest vigor and achievement. Since the 1980s, as an effect of the changing political environment, its content and range have changed greatly, and its achievements have lessened (Hwang, 2006). Though the government expanded the Saemaul Undong to cities and workplaces after the rural prototype proved successful, this analysis will focus on the early phase of the rural Saemaul Undong, which had the most impressive results.

The following section examines previous studies on the Saemaul Undong and reviews the good governance model, establishing this study's theoretical background and key characteristics. Next, the background, development process, and achievements of the Saemaul Undong are presented, followed by an analysis of the movement according to the characteristics of good governance. The conclusion evaluates the

characteristics of the Saemaul Undong and suggests its policy implications for the current era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Positive Argument

Studies positively evaluating the Saemaul Undong tend to appreciate it as one of the modernizing strategies of the Park Chung-hee regime and find it to have contributed significantly to both modernization and economic development. Even though they point out problems, such as the oppressive promotion of the Saemaul Undong, these scholars evaluate it as a successful community development effort that built people's confidence in social change and significantly reduced poverty in rural areas (Park, 2009; So, 2007; S. Ha, 2002; Y. Kim, 1991; J. Kim, 1990; Kim & Kim, 1981).

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (1981), the Saemaul Undong's successes included the national awakening of attitudes of confidence and aspiration to a better life, the introduction of new social education systems for promoting the movement, the operation of support systems appropriate to the circumstances of each village, and the exhibition of tenacity among leadership. The National Council of Saemaul Undong (2000) has praised the government's steadfast efforts to overcome poverty, its mobilization of people to promote the Saemaul Undong, its investment in Saemaul projects, the visible effects that stimulated people's increased participation, and the gradual development of a farmers' consciousness. Successes can be summarized as follows: the nationwide governmental support and guidance, the promotion of the Saemaul Undong at the pan-government level, effective promotion, the participation of residents in the implementation phase, the representatives elected by residents themselves and their leadership, and the increase in diligence, self-help, and cooperation among ordinary people (Park, 2009; Hwang, 2006).

Lee and Lee (2005) argue that the Saemaul Undong helped educate people to develop the powers latent within themselves, improve living conditions in rural areas, and create opportunities for financial independence. In addition, pro-Saemaul Undong scholars argue that the movement contributed to a transition from a clan society centered on family loyalty to a civil society. They consider the communality of the Saemaul Undong as something to preserve and develop in the future (Hwang, 2006). Some argue that the Saemaul Undong had universal principles that can be applied to development programs in other developing nations: (1) many community leaders were produced and actively played their roles in the villages; (2) residents participated as joint

producers; (3) limited resources were used efficiently; and (4) participation and bottom-up approach of decision-making were carried out (So, 2007).

The Negative Argument

Those with a negative perspective on the Saemaul Undong view it as representative of the domineering strategies of the Park Chung-hee regime. Most notably, some political and sociological studies evaluate the Saemaul Undong as a tool for maintaining the authoritarian ruling system or an oppressive total mobilization system, though they acknowledge that some of its achievements were positive (Cho, 2004; Jun, 2003; Oh, 2002; Ryu, 2001; H. Kim, 2000; Park & Hahn, 1999). In the same vein, Koh (2006) recognizes that the Saemaul Undong, developed with the aim of modernizing rural areas, responded to the deepening sense of loss and alienation among farmers that emerged during the industrialization of the 1960s. The Saemaul Undong further isolated rural areas from the political resistance to the authoritarian Park regime and was somewhat successful in re-establishing farmers as a political stronghold for the regime.

From an economic perspective, several negative studies on the Saemaul Undong have emerged. Ho (1979) argues that it began with the aim of solving issues related to income differences between cities and rural areas, which resulted from the economic growth of the 1960s; however, it tried to increase rural household incomes not through agriculture but through the development of nonfarm income sources, such as small-scale Saemaul factories in rural areas. Even the effort to create Saemaul factories and agricultural industrial complexes tended to have poor results due to insufficient resources and personnel, stagnant sales, poor infrastructure in rural areas, and insufficient funds (Cho & Joh, 1988). As a result, although the government praised its economic achievements, the Saemaul Undong was not able to achieve qualitative economic improvement in the agricultural sector (Moore, 1984; Douglass, 1983).

Studies that criticize the Saemaul Undong point out that it did not achieve its expected results; rather, it made farmers and farm villages more dependent on government support and other outside resources, and even contributed to the collapse of rural communities as traditional self-governing organizations, destroying the foundations on which local self-governing systems could have developed, and accelerating centralization (Park & Hahn 1999).

A Critical Review

Although the previously cited studies have increased understanding of the Saemaul Undong, both positive and negative arguments are limited in that they emphasize only

certain aspects of the Saemaul Undong. First, the negative argument highlights the oppression and forced mobilization that characterized the development of the Saemaul Undong, criticizing its achievements and the way in which it was promoted; however, it disregards positive aspects, such as the grassroots support for the Saemaul Undong, the spontaneous participation of local residents, and the agreement among towns that adopted it. In fact, not only media reports published then but also more recently published historical and sociological studies have recognized farmers' high levels of participation in and support for the Saemaul Undong (Y. Kim, 2009; D. Kim, 2004).

It has been suggested that the negative argument does not fully explain why a majority of farmers wanted to be exempt from the government's forceful promotion of projects and unreasonable interference, but at the same time wanted increased government support (Yoo, Choi, & Oh, 2001). In brief, those who take a negative position have not provided sufficient explanation of how such enthusiastic participation and agreement on the Saemaul Undong could emerge in the 1970s.

Second, those who make negative arguments tend to have unrealistic perspectives on political participants in rural areas in the 1970s, when the Republic of Korea was still relatively underdeveloped. It has been argued that we should not evaluate political participation in underdeveloped countries based on the standards for political participation in developed countries. Such an evaluation requires a realistic perspective, one that acknowledges that widespread political participation in a developing country can be only be achieved when three elements—personal interests, the commitment of political leaders, and the government's administrative mobilization—are all present and aligned (Dams, 1980, quoted in Whang, 1983). Scholars with a negative perspective on the Saemaul Undong seem to evaluate participation in the movement in the 1970s based on the standard of political participation in advanced countries. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider whether those who embrace the negative argument overlook the individual's autonomy and the resilience of rural societies and farmers, excessively focusing instead on the authoritarian characteristics of the Park regime (Park & Lee, 1997).

Positive evaluations of the Saemaul Undong seem to be equally one-sided. They tend to emphasize only its achievements, such as the level of residents' participation and quantitative measures of improvement in residents' living conditions and income-generation opportunities. They have not paid attention to the mechanisms and administrative systems that brought about those successful results (So, 2007). For example, political leadership, pan-government-level promotion systems, political support, and the participation of rural societies have been assumed to be elements of the Saemaul Undong's success in the studies to date. However, there is a need for more analysis of the diverse strategies of government to motivate rural people to participate in the

Saemaul Undong, as well as the interactions between government actors and rural people in the course of the Saemaul Undong.

Another limitation of the positive argument is that it does not comprehensively consider various elements of the Saemaul Undong's success. Research has emphasized economic achievement or improvements in living conditions in rural areas as well as spontaneous participation and government interventions. However, considering the fact that the Saemaul Undong was an integrated rural development program, it is necessary to delineate its various aspects, including accountability, equity, inclusiveness, and responsiveness, and the mechanisms and administrative measures for facilitating such aspects. Such limitations seem to be reasons for the general inability to satisfactorily illustrate the relevance of the Saemaul Undong in the 1970s to rural development in the 21st century.

In conclusion, existing studies of the Saemaul Undong tend to take a strongly one-sided approach, whether negative or positive. To overcome this limitation, it is necessary to analyze the movement from a theoretical perspective that acknowledges various values. In that way, various aspects of the Saemaul Undong will be drawn out and it is possible to examine how the movement's diverse characteristics could bring about its overall achievement. In addition, the institutional and social contexts affecting the various characteristics of the Saemaul Undong should be examined. When such analyses are carried out, not only will the level of understanding of the Saemaul Undong rise, but the dynamics of development in the 1970s in the Republic of Korea will be better understood.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Governance: Definitions and Components

The term governance has often been used in recent literature on economics, social development, and community development (ODI, 2006). Governance can be defined and utilized in various ways according to the context, as shown in terms such as *enterprise governance*, *international relations governance*, and *regional governance* (UNESCAP, 2007; Rhodes, 1996). In a broad sense, governance refers to a system, procedure, and administrative processing mechanism that decides how power is executed, how people's opinions are presented, and how decisions are made regarding public interests (Lynn, Heinrich, & Hill, 2001, p. 7).¹ International organizations supporting

1. In a narrower sense, governance can be defined as a way of problem-solving through

the economic and social development of developing countries define governance from this viewpoint. For example, the World Bank defines it as ‘the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs’ (Leftwich, 1993).

According to these definitions, governance is essentially political (UNESCAP, 2007; Bell & Hindmoor, 2009; Pierre & Peters, 2005). Interactions like negotiation and compromise take place among participants with various interests. A variety of official and unofficial agents participate, depending on the different levels and contexts of governance, and the government can be one of the participants. Also, participants make decisions and implement them within formal and informal constraints. Different structural factors influence governance depending on the context and level. In sum, governance is a result of interactions among various participants made under formal/informal institutions to solve common concerns.

Good Governance

Many governance theories and models have been proposed from diverse perspectives. While most of them focus on the industrialized countries, some international organizations such as the World Bank have suggested key concepts and elements of good governance especially for developing countries, because good governance has been considered “a requisite for many different forms of growth, whereas the various features of bad governance ... corruption, waste, abuse of power and exploitation of public means for private ends ... tend to drive unfortunate nations into vicious spirals of decline, disruption and destruction” (Tarschys, 2001: 28 and 40).

To achieve the institutionalization of democracy and economic performance in developing countries, the good governance model not only values efficiency and effectiveness, but also regards transparency, inclusiveness for minorities, and a low level of corruption as key elements of economic and social development. Moreover, it emphasizes transparency, responsiveness, and accountability to the current and future demands of society. For example, UNESCAP (2007: 3-4) said that good governance has the following eight characteristics as follows:

1. Participation: Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate

networks or democratic structures; as not a hierarchy or a market but a third societal coordination mechanism, which functions through interdependence and spontaneous cooperation among networks or agencies; or as a way of solving social problems by various members of the government and private sector who form an autonomous network without depending upon the government’s official authority (Stoker, 1998).

intermediate institutions or representatives. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand.

2. **Consensus-orientation:** Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community.
3. **Responsiveness:** Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.
4. **Transparency:** Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.
5. **Rule of law:** Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.
6. **Equity and inclusiveness:** A society's well being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their well being.
7. **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.
8. **Accountability:** Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders in good governance. Who is accountable to whom varies depending on whether decisions or actions taken are internal or external to an organization or institution. In general an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

OVERVIEW OF THE RURAL SAEMAUL UNDONG

Background and Purpose

The Republic of Korea experienced successful economic growth in the 1960s by using industrial policies and export-oriented trade policies. This selective strategy, however, put rural development on hold and widened the gap between urban and rural standards of living. For example, the agricultural sector's share of GDP shrank, and the productivity gap between the agricultural and industrial sectors grew (see table 1). This economic imbalance was followed by political instability and a decrease in political support for President Park and his administration, especially in rural areas.² The need to ameliorate the widening economic gap between rural and urban areas and to maintain political support for the ruling party and President Park comprised the economic and political background of the initiation of the Saemaul Undong (Park, 2009; So, 2007; Park & Hahn, 1999).

Table 1. Rate of Economic Growth (%)

Period	Overall growth rate	Agriculture and fisheries	Mining and industry	SOC and other services
1962-1966	7.9	5.9	14.3	8.5
1967-1971	9.6	1.6	19.9	12.4
1972-1976	9.7	6.2	18.2	8.5
1977-1981	6.0	1.2	9.9	5.9
Average	8.3	3.7	15.6	8.8

Source: Bank of Korea. Annual Chronology of Economic Statistics, quoted in Compilation Committee for Korean Economy, 2010.

Against this background, the purposes of the Saemaul Undong were as follows (Park, 1973). First, it aimed at improving living conditions and agricultural infrastructure. For this purpose, community rehabilitation projects such as the expansion of village and farm roads, irrigation projects, housing improvements, and construction of storehouses and village halls were carried out. These projects were also expected to improve rural people's welfare and to employ idle workers during the agricultural off-season.

Second, the Saemaul Undong aimed at income generation and economic develop-

2. For example, in the national election of 1969, the approval rate for the ruling Democratic Republican Party of President Park fell by 15 percent—even in rural areas, which traditionally had been regarded as favorable to him (Park, 2009).

ment in the villages, implementing projects including the adoption of new agricultural technologies, chemical fertilizers, and improved seeds. Improved agricultural infrastructure was expected to lead to an increase in productivity and income growth. Saemaul wage-earning projects and factories in villages were also expected to increase employment and to become new sources of income for farmers.

Third, the Saemaul Undong aimed to change farmers' values and attitudes by stressing Saemaul values such as diligence, self-help, and cooperation. It was believed that changes in the perceptions and attitudes of rural people were required for long-term sustainable changes and development in rural communities. To inculcate the desired values and attitudes in individuals, formal and informal education programs were offered, and public relations campaigns were carried out by government agencies and voluntary organizations.

Initiation and Progress

The Saemaul Undong started in the winter of 1970 with the distribution of 355 packs of cement to each of 34,665 rural communities free of charge with one restriction: the cement was to be used for the welfare of the entire community (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981). The plan received a favorable reaction from local communities and achieved significant results beyond the government's predictions. The cost of the free cement was 4.1 billion won, but the estimated monetary value of the projects carried out by the rural communities was almost three times that much: 12.2 billion won (Park & Lee, 1997).

Encouraged by this success and incorporating the lessons learned from previous rural development programs, the Saemaul Undong was carried out in three stages, emphasizing in turn (1) improving living conditions, (2) income generation and consciousness reform, and (3) broadening the impact of the Saemaul Undong as well as expanding its scope with the promotion of urban-rural links (see table 2).

Table 2. Progress of Saemaul Undong in the 1970s

	Emphasis	Projects
Stage 1 1970-1973	Initiation Led by the government Priority: projects to improve living conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living conditions improvements: expanding roads within towns, creating public laundry facilities, improving roofs and repairing walls • Improving infrastructure and income generation: expanding agricultural roads, irrigating farmland, adopting new technologies, encouraging cooperation among villagers • Education and public-relations campaigns to promote Saemaul values

	Emphasis	Projects
Stage 2 1974-1976	Spatial and functional expansion Forming nationwide consensus Priority: income improvement and consciousness reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving infrastructure and income generation: farmland arrangement, encouragement of combined farming, building joint workshops, developing non-farming income sources • Consciousness reform: Saemaul education, public relations campaign for change of consciousness and behaviors • Living conditions improvement: improving houses, improving water supply systems, building community halls
Stage 3 1977-1979	Increasing scale Promotion of urban-rural links Distinguishing special features of each project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural areas: improving housing, cultivating special crops, building Saemaul factories • Urban areas: street renovation and beautification, campaign for observance of traffic rules • Workplaces and factories: improving productivity, conserving resources, cultivating cooperation between labor and management

Source: National Council of Saemaul Undong, 2000.

Outcomes

Improvements in Living Conditions

In terms of improving living conditions, most of the projects exceeded their goals, as shown in table 3. It appears that these achievements helped improve both the standard of living in rural areas and agricultural production.

Table 3. Major Achievements of Saemaul Undong Projects in the 1970s

Project	Goal	Outcome	% achieved
Expanding village roads	26,266 km	43,558	166
Establishing farm roads	49,167 km	61,797	126
Building small bridges	76,749 bridges	79,516	104
Building village halls	35,608 halls	37,012	104
Building storehouses	34,665	22,143	64
Housing improvement	544,000 improvements	225,000	42
Community resettlement	–	2,747	–
Installing sewage systems	8,654 km	15,559	179
Installing telephone lines in farming and fishing villages	2,834,000 households	2,777,500	98
Establishing Saemaul factories	950 factories	717	75

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981.

More comprehensively, the Saemaul Undong also contributed to balancing regional development, as shown in table 4.³ In 1972, 2,307 (7 percent) of 34,665 villages in the

country were classified as developed, 13,943 (40 percent) as developing, and 18,415 (53 percent) as underdeveloped. However, in 1979, underdeveloped villages no longer existed, developing villages comprised 3 percent of the total, and 97 percent of villages were developed. This suggests that the general living standards and the level of agricultural infrastructure were enhanced during the Saemaul Undong period, partly because of its promotion.

Table 4. Improvements in Village Development Level

Year	Total villages	Underdeveloped villages (%)	Developing villages (%)	Developed villages (%)
1972	34,665	18,415 (53)	13,943 (40)	2,307 (7)
1973	34,665	10,656 (31)	19,769 (57)	4,246 (12)
1974	34,665	6,165 (18)	21,500 (62)	7,000 (20)
1975	35,031	4,046 (11)	20,936 (60)	10,049 (29)
1976	35,031	302 (1)	19,049 (54)	15,680 (45)
1977	35,031	–	11,709 (33)	23,322 (67)
1978	34,815	–	6,114 (18)	28,701 (82)
1979	34,871	–	976 (3)	33,893 (97)

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981.

- Beginning in 1974, the movement adopted a step-by-step approach for advancing each village to a higher level, from underdeveloped to developing to developed, based on specific criteria. Each village in the country was assessed annually. The criteria for achieving “developing” status included the following: (1) the main streets and the entrance road should be completed; (2) more than 70 percent of roofs should be improved, and the main ditches should be maintained; (3) more than 70 percent of farmlands should have irrigation, and the small rivers in the town should be managed; (4) a community center, a warehouse, or a town joint workplace should be built, and the joint village fund should be more than 500,000 won; and (5) more than one community income project should be carried out, and the average annual income per household should be more than 800,000 won. The criteria for achieving “developed” status included the following: (1) the central road of the town should be completed, and a bridge less than 20 meters long should be completed; (2) more than 80 percent of roofs and walls should be improved; (3) more than 85 percent of farmlands should have irrigation, and small streams around the town should be maintained; (4) three or more of the facilities required for “developing” status—community center, warehouse, and joint workshop—should be completed, and the joint village fund should be more than 1 million won; and (5) a profitable project other than agriculture should be promoted, and the average income per household should be more than 1.4 million won (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981).

Income Generation

The Saemaul Undong also contributed to some extent to income generation for rural households and to the decrease in urban-rural income differentials (Hwang, 2006). As shown in table 5, rural household income was 79 percent of that of urban working-class households in 1971; however, as the Saemaul Undong was carried out in earnest, the urban-rural income differentials tended to decrease. From 1974 to 1977, the nominal income per rural household exceeded that of urban working-class households. It is hard to deny that Saemaul Undong income-improvement projects helped mitigate urban-rural income differentials and grow the rural economy. Nevertheless, these achievements seem to have had limitations. The improvement in rural household income and the mitigation of urban-rural income differentials might have been influenced by other agricultural programs such as the rice price policy. The income gap also started to increase again in the late 1970s.

Table 5. Average Annual Income, Farming and Urban Working-Class Households

Year	Nominal income per household (1,000 won)			Real income per household (1,000 won)			Real income per capita (1,000 won)		
	Farming	Urban working class	%	Farming	Urban working class	%	Farming	Urban working class	%
1971	356	452	78.9	715	811	88.2	122.6	150.2	81.6
1972	429	517	83.0	761	831	91.6	133.3	156.5	85.2
1973	481	550	87.4	781	857	91.1	136.5	162.9	83.8
1974	674	645	104.6	835	808	103.3	147.5	154.8	95.3
1975	873	859	101.6	873	859	101.6	155.1	165.8	93.5
1976	1,156	1,152	100.4	926	999	92.7	167.1	195.1	85.6
1977	1,433	1,405	102.0	980	1,106	88.6	177.5	229.0	77.5
1978	1,884	1,916	98.3	991	1,319	75.1	184.2	278.9	66.0
1979	2,227	2,630	84.7	1,030	1,530	67.3	198.1	328.3	60.3

Source: Hwang, 2006.

% = farming household income percentage of urban working-class household income.

For rural households, the real income was deflated based on the standard rural household price index as of 1975, whereas income for urban households was deflated based on the consumer price index for all urban consumers as of 1975.

Attitude and Consciousness Change among Rural People

The Saemaul Undong has been evaluated as successfully affecting the attitudes and consciousness of farmers (Whang, 1980). Respondents told a 1978 survey of 821 people in eight villages (Yu, Park, Benjamin, & Turner, 1980) that gambling had decreased, funerals had been simplified, participation in decision making by villagers had increased, drinking had decreased, and the social status of women had increased

significantly in most villages during the 1970s (see table 6). These changes were bigger in the villages whose Saemaul Undong projects received the highest evaluations than in typical villages. Of course, these changes cannot be seen as due only to the effects of the Saemaul Undong. Yet it appears that some positive changes in farmers' attitudes and consciousness occurred during the period of the Saemaul Undong.

Table 6. Reported Changes in Villages during the 1970s

Area of change	Range of positive response (%)
Decrease in gambling	99-88
Simplification of funerals	95-75
Increase of participation in town's decision-making	94-72
Decrease in drinking	95-62
Simplification of wedding ceremonies	91-40
Improved status of women	88-44

Source: Yu, Park, Benjamin, & Turner, 1980.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THE SAEMAUL UNDONG

Participation

One of the main elements of the Saemaul Undong's success is often assumed to be the spontaneous participation of residents. In fact, during the Saemaul Undong's prime, the number of participants in Saemaul projects per town sharply increased—from 216 in 1971 to 7,472 in 1978 (table 7).

Table 7. Expansion and Diffusion of the Rural Saemaul Undong

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Number of villages	33,267	22,708	34,665	34,665	36,547	36,557	36,557	36,257
Number of participants (1,000)	7,200	32,000	69,280	106,852	116,880	117,528	137,193	270,928
Number of projects (1,000)	385	320	1,093	1,099	1,598	887	2,463	2,667
Average per town								
Participants	216	1,409	1,999	3,082	3,198	3,215	3,753	7,472
Number of projects	12	13	32	32	44	24	67	74
Investment (1,000 won)	367	1,378	2,839	3,831	8,096	8,825	12,764	17,492

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981.

Residents not only participated in Saemaul projects but also donated construction materials, land, and other assets. As shown in table 8, from 1971 to 1978, the amount of investment by residents exceeded government investments every year.⁴ The spontaneous participation of residents allowed the mobilization of resources and their efficient distribution. Additionally, the government was able to achieve its stated goals while minimizing its budget allocation to the Saemaul Undong.

Table 8. Investment by Year, Source, and Type (millions of won, %)

Year	All investments				Investment by residents				
	Total investment	Investment by government	Investment by residents	Other	Cash	Loan	Labor	Materials	Land
1971	12,200	4,100 (33.6)	8,100 (66.4)	–	–	–	–	–	–
1972	31,594	3,581 (11.3)	27,348 (86.6)	665 (2.1)	–	–	21,116 (77.2)	5,238 (19.2)	994 (3.6)
1973	96,111	17,333 (17.8)	76,850 (80.0)	2,128 (2.2)	–	–	–	–	–
1974	132,790	30,780 (23.1)	98,734 (74.4)	3,272 (2.5)	17,923 (18.2)	14,699 (14.9)	54,139 (54.8)	10,089 (10.2)	1,888 (1.9)
1975	295,895	124,499 (42.1)	169,554 (57.3)	1,842 (0.6)	53,471 (31.6)	40,790 (24.1)	63,876 (37.6)	8,646 (5.1)	2,771 (1.6)
1976	322,652	88,060 (27.3)	227,440 (70.5)	7,152 (2.2)	56,734 (24.9)	77,080 (33.9)	78,197 (34.4)	12,553 (5.5)	2,885 (1.3)
1977	466,532	138,057 (29.6)	325,033 (69.7)	3,442 (0.7)	80,425 (24.7)	107,951 (33.2)	96,268 (29.6)	33,888 (10.5)	6,501 (2.0)
1978	634,191	145,703 (23.0)	487,835 (76.9)	653 (0.1)	113,337 (23.2)	192,697 (39.5)	102,437 (21.0)	42,803 (8.8)	36,561 (7.5)

Source: Whang, 1980.

Won are given in 1971 values.

The right-hand half of the table gives a detailed breakdown of the totals listed under “investment by residents” on the left.

We should pay attention to the social context and the mechanisms by which the participation of village residents spread. In 1970, many farming villages were relatively homogeneous societies consisting of small farming households that mainly cultivated

4. As shown in table 8, residents’ investment ratios fell rapidly after 1975. The reason for this is considered to be the loan method used by financial institutions to prepare investment funds that was introduced during the movement. In table 8, it was included in the category of government support. If loan amounts are converted into resident investments, resident investment’s proportion of total investments exceeded 70 percent (So, 2007).

rice. Cooperation among village residents in agriculture and life in the town was essential. To achieve this, unofficial cooperative mechanisms such as *gye*, *durae*, and *hyangyak* were widely used.⁵ Various functional groups operated in these contexts, such as youth groups, women's associations, agricultural co-ops, forestry gyes, and irrigation gyes. Through these organizations, communication, decision-making, and debates on issues related to the common interest of the town were carried out (Y. Kim, 2009; Park, 2009; Park & Lee, 1997). These small functional groups worked to achieve agreement on common village goals, promote members' participation, and prevent exploitation, among other accomplishments.

In this context of rural societies, Saemaul leaders were elected or appointed in order to encourage the participation of residents. They were in charge of contacting public institutions to promote Saemaul projects, and they took leadership roles in any major projects. Also, they determined the priorities of Saemaul projects, promoted the projects, and encouraged residents' participation (J. Chung, 2009; D. Kim, 2004).

The government's methods for promoting projects and encouraging farmers' participation were effective (Y. Kim, 2009; So, 2007; D. Kim, 2004; Park & Lee, 1997). First, in the early phase of the Saemaul Undong, the government provided cement and reinforcing steel rod to villages for free and trusted residents to agree on their use. The early Saemaul Undong was centered on projects aimed at improving living conditions and forming regional communities. These measures not only encouraged residents to trust government policy on the Saemaul Undong, but also made it clear that they would reap the benefits of their efforts in Saemaul projects, which further encouraged their participation (So, 2007; Whang, 1980).

Second, the government granted more support to the towns that achieved more, which stimulated competition between towns. Also, towns with high achievements were showcased through various media outlets, the symbolic effect of which was further maximized by presidential awards and other such measures. Thus, by allocating support preferentially and recognizing the autonomy of Saemaul leaders who accomplished excellent results, the government promoted active participation by village residents. A virtuous circle was formed in which government support and farmers' joint efforts achieved results which, in turn, expanded participation.

5. *Gyae* is a small savings scheme that is especially popular among women. *Doorae* is a tradition of cooperating to complete difficult work that could not be done by one household. *Hyangyak* is an autonomous customary norm promoting cooperation and good deeds among villagers, based on the Confucian tradition (Park, 2009).

Consensus-Orientation

The Saemaul Undong was conducted through the agreement of entire villages. Early projects were determined by residents through town meeting discussions on how to use the reinforcing steel rods and cement the government had supplied for free. Therefore, the decisions on project priorities, beneficiaries, and residents' investment were made in bottom-up way during the period of Saemaul Undong (So, 2007; Park & Lee 1997).⁶

Most Saemaul leaders were directly elected or recommended by town residents. About 48 percent of surveyed leaders were elected by a general vote or by the village development committee (discussed in more detail below), 32 percent were either appointed at the request of village residents or volunteered, and 20 percent were nominated either by a government official or the village headman (Whang, 1980, pp. 111-154).

Decision-making mechanisms at the village level could be divided into two categories according to the range of participants included in the decision-making process. The first major mechanism was the town meeting, which all village residents had the right to attend. This was the top decision-making mechanism in each village, at which specific local problems and issues with far-reaching consequences for the village were addressed.

The second mechanism was the village development committee, whose main function was to make decisions relating to the planning, coordination, and implementation of village development projects. This committee was chaired by the village headman or the Saemaul leader and consisted of major decision makers, including the chiefs of the functional groups in the villages and some elected villagers. The daily tasks and routine issues concerning rural Saemaul Undong projects were dealt with at this meeting (Y. Kim, 2009, pp. 187-214; So, 2007).

6. This tendency can be indirectly confirmed by the results of a questionnaire on the democracy of decision-making and leadership during the movement. One survey, conducted in the early 1980s in 320 towns, asked respondents how much discussion leaders engage in when making decisions about their town's public affairs. Of the town residents participating in the survey, 64 percent responded that leaders are required to discuss decisions while 31 percent said they actually do so and 5 percent said they often do not do so at all (Choi & Jung, 1984, pp. 60-63, quoted in Park & Lee, 1997: 62).

Responsiveness

This consensus-oriented, participatory decision-making process effectively increased responsiveness and led to the selection of Saemaul Undong projects that promoted residents' long-term benefits and reflected their shared values. The government also tied its support to projects from which the most town residents could benefit. Therefore, most projects carried out in the first phase of the Saemaul Undong aimed to improve living conditions in ways that strongly corresponded to the common values and demands of town residents (Whang, 1980, p. 32); this in turn further encouraged residents to participate.

Transparency

Participatory, consensus-oriented decision-making within town units also increased transparency. Information about projects was disseminated through town meetings and village development committees. In the course of carrying out projects, Saemaul leaders also played the role of information disseminators or educators for rural people. They actively offered village residents information about the background, purposes, and necessities of the Saemaul Undong as well as specific new farming technologies (Whang, 1980, pp. 139-140).

The government's decision-making process involved setting objective standards and constantly checking results. For example, towns were classified according to their project-related achievements, and government support for each town differed depending on its classification as underdeveloped, developing, or developed. Quantitative criteria, defined in advance, were used for classification (see footnote 3).

Also, in the process of promoting the Saemaul Undong, local administrative institutions tried to improve their transparency by separating departments that carried out planning and evaluation from departments responsible for implementation. The government also established an evaluation system through which superior agencies regularly checked the achievements of lower-level agencies, which provided a link between individual towns and the central government (Whang, 1983). All these institutional arrangements helped enhance transparency within the Saemaul Undong.

Rule of Law

Though the Saemaul Undong was repeatedly confirmed as a program of the highest priority through presidential declarations and other means, its legal basis remained weak. There was no constituting law for the Saemaul Undong; it was largely promoted

according to the president's will and administrative intervention (K. Chung, 2010, p. 51; Lee, 1998, p. 83).

However, as the Saemaul Undong began to be promoted more earnestly in the 1970s, related organizations were founded and individual projects were carried out based on the enactment and revision of laws and statutes. For example, the registration of Saemaul properties was based on the Real Property Registration Act, and roof-improving activities followed the procedures set out by the Agricultural Housing Roof Renovation Act, which was revised on December 26, 1972.

Offices related to the Saemaul Undong were created in the Ministry of Home Affairs by revising the Presidential Decree on the Organization of the Ministry of Home Affairs on August 19, 1971. The Presidential Decree for the National Council of Saemaul Undong was enacted on March 7, 1972. This presidential decree contained the provisions for creating a national council to facilitate full-scale promotion of the Saemaul Undong, related decision-making processes, the formation of practical committees, and other organizational tasks. The Saemaul Leader Training Center Installation Act (December 28, 1979) enabled the operation of training programs for Saemaul leaders (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981).

Equity and Inclusiveness

One of the main goals of the Saemaul Undong was securing social equity by reducing the gap between regions and classes and improving urban-rural equity. It was expected that the improvement of the standard of living and income levels in rural areas by the Saemaul Undong would increase purchasing power and help expand the domestic market. Such improvements, in turn, would ultimately be expected to promote the social welfare of both urban and rural areas (Park, 1973).

This meant that the Saemaul Undong was one of the historical efforts that made economic development broad-based with effective poverty reduction and relatively equal distribution of income (Kwon, 2010). It can be argued that, through the Saemaul Undong, small farmers and their families started to be included in the government's poverty-reduction programs and to be brought into the fold of modern citizenry (Koh, 2006). Saemaul projects such as renovation of houses, reconstruction of town halls, and maintenance of village roads were evaluated to contribute to enhancing the living standard of rural villagers and to drastically reducing absolute poverty among both rural and urban households, although the Saemaul Undong was limited in its ability to reduce the productivity gap between the agricultural and industrial sectors or to reverse the decline of the rural sector (see table 9).

Table 9. Incidence of Absolute Poverty, 1965-1991 (%)

	1965	1970	1976	1980	1991
Urban households	54.9	16.2	18.1	10.4	8.7
Rural households	35.8	27.9	11.7	9.0	2.8
All households	40.9	23.4	14.8	9.8	7.6

Source: Kwon, 2010.

The absolute poverty line was 121,000 won per month (at 1981 prices) for a five-person household.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Various institutional devices were used to promote the Saemaul Undong more efficiently and effectively. At the town level, systems were formed to maximize the effectiveness of the Saemaul Undong. Decision-making and project-promoting systems were established centering on Saemaul leaders and village headmen. Constant communication was maintained among the village headmen, Saemaul leaders, representatives of towns' functional groups, and officials (Y. Kim, 2009; Park & Lee, 1997). Such promotion systems in towns brought about effects that included bridging differences in opinions among the residents, preventing unfair advantages, and mobilizing various resources in towns, including residents' labor forces and other contributions.

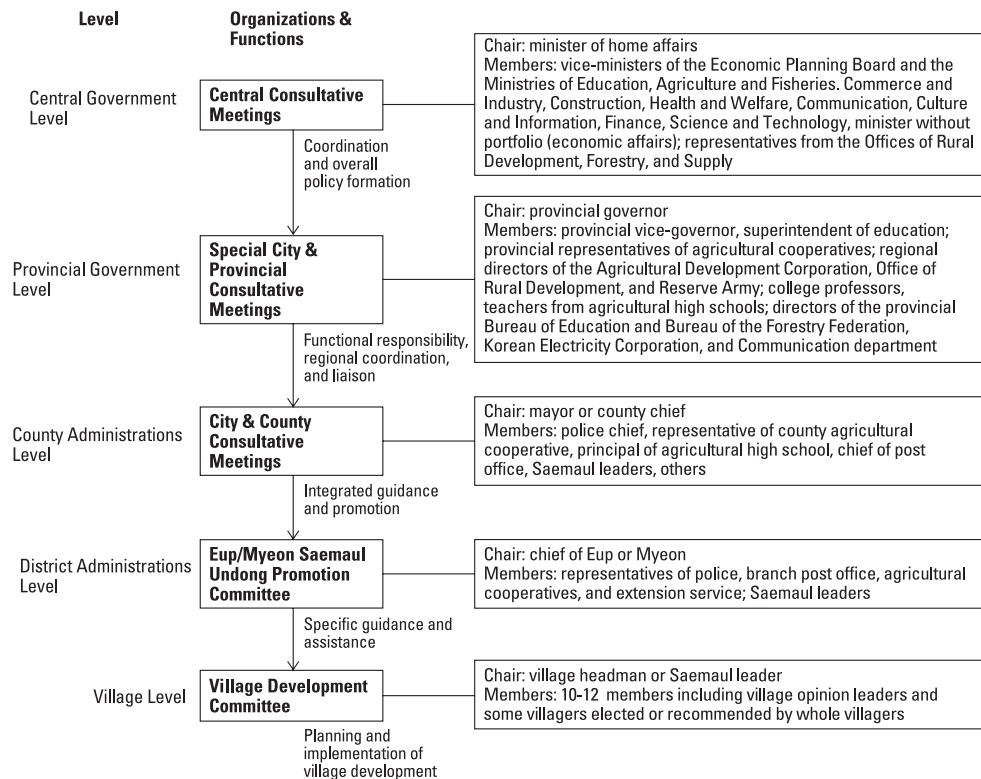
At the core of the promotion system in towns were the Saemaul leaders. They educated residents about any information pertinent to the Saemaul Undong, collecting the residents' opinions and encouraging their participation. In addition, through the networking of various functional groups (such as women's associations and youth groups) and their representatives, related officials, and leaders in neighboring towns, outside resources were mobilized and support systems constructed. Also, the leaders introduced ideas for Saemaul projects and spearheaded the promotion of various projects. Such activities effectively improved the achievements of the Saemaul projects at the town level (J. Chung, 2009; D. Kim, 2004).

At the same time, the government supported the Saemaul Undong at the township level, not the individual level. Towns were classified by the extent of their development, and villages that excelled were continuously provided with more materials and higher symbolic compensation than villages with ordinary achievements. This "principle of preferential support for excellent villages" led to competition between villages to promote participation in and the success of the Saemaul projects. In other words, as farmers competed to work on the Saemaul projects and received the government subsidies selectively distributed to towns, the efficiency of project promotion increased and other related improvements followed, such as the strengthening of welfare facilities in rural villages (Park, 2009).

With the promotion system at the village level, government-wide organizational arrangements for promoting the Saemaul Undong were established. These arrangements included almost all the central agencies and local administrative institutions. First, major authority for the RSU was assigned to the Ministry of Home Affairs, because this ministry originally had formal authority for managing public personnel in central and local administrations and diverse policy tools for encouraging local administrations to participate in the RSU. Based on this authority, bureaus and divisions responsible for implementing the Saemaul Undong were created in the Ministry of Home Affairs and local administrations.

Second, a series of committees and consultative meetings with government agencies from the central government to the village level were established, as summarized in figure 1. At the central government level, the central consultative meeting, in which all central government departments participated, was organized with the general purpose

Figure 1. Organizational Arrangements for the Saemaul Undong



Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981.
Eup and Myeon are levels of district in local administrative system in Korea.

of promoting and coordinating the Saemaul Undong more systematically and efficiently. In addition, this meeting served to establish and to adjust long- and mid-term plans as well as to make action plans for education and promotional activities for the Saemaul Undong.

At each local level, consultative meetings or promotional committees were established and took responsibility for promoting the Saemaul Undong. The upper-level councils gave the lower-level councils comprehensive plans and guidance for carrying out projects. The lower-level councils were responsible for reporting the results of the RSU in their own jurisdictions and had the authority to ask for support for projects from the upper-level councils.

Through these vertical and horizontal promotion systems, promotion plans for each project were formed and adjusted. The results of Saemaul Undong projects in each region were reported back to the central administrators, and rewards and punishments were delivered accordingly in order to encourage the greatest effectiveness. This comprehensive promotion system became an institutional prerequisite for quick and responsible support and evaluation as well as coordination and adjustment for the Saemaul Undong (Park, 2009; Whang, 1983).

Local administrative organizations were also reformed to promote the Saemaul Undong. In February 1973, city and provincial administrative organizations were restructured, and an Office of Saemaul Guidance was established in each city and province administration, as well as a general Saemaul Department. On January 1, 1975, the operations of the Saemaul Department were transferred to the vice governor for enforcement. The new vice governor was in charge of all Saemaul Undong-related operations with the authorities for planning, budgeting, and auditing (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981).

Accountability

The Saemaul Undong was motivated by a sense of accountability of village residents and officials. First, farmers were held accountable for the results of the Saemaul projects in their villages, because the government supports were linked to those results (So, 2007). If the results in some villages were not good, they could lose government supports. This can be viewed as a project promotion strategy based on accountability.

Various crucial accountabilities were imposed upon public officials. If their communities achieved or exceeded project goals, they would be rewarded.⁷ However, if

7. Because of this, central and local government officials preferred to work in departments related to the movement, since it gave them a better chance of being promoted. The most

they did not cooperate with the Saemaul Undong, or their project achievements were unsatisfactory, they could suffer personnel-related repercussions, including dismissal. Project-related officials and superior officers were considered responsible for poor progress, and the government intensively exercised its authority to fire mayors, village headmen, and township staff members calling them account for the poor outcomes of the Saemaul projects within their jurisdictions (Y. Kim, 2009; J. Ha, 2006).

CONCLUSION

This study re-evaluated the Saemaul Undong of the 1970s from the perspective of good governance. It found many characteristics of good governance in the Saemaul Undong, which produced a number of achievements. In particular, diverse types of participation by village people were found. This participation made the Saemaul Undong agreement-oriented and, in turn, led to responsive and transparent decision-making and project implementation at the village level. Participation in the villages was promoted and supported by administrative intervention, which enhanced the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability as well as the equity and inclusiveness of the Saemaul Undong. It is noteworthy that the Saemaul Undong embodied a number of characteristics of good governance.

However, this embodiment of diverse characteristics of good governance should not be taken for granted. As critics claim, there are also many cases in which government intervention overwhelmed spontaneous community participation in the implementation of Saemaul Undong projects. Those led to various side effects, such as complaints by villagers of “window dressing,” and resulted in achieving other characteristics of good governance (Park, 2009; Park & Hahn, 1999). In addition, Saemaul Undong activities in urban areas are usually seen as having lower achievement levels than those in rural areas. The reason for this is that urban areas lacked the communality that existed in rural villages, an effective regional promotional system was not established, and spontaneous participation was accordingly lacking (Yoo, 1983).

The results of this study suggest the following policy implications for other developing countries that are promoting poverty-reduction and rural development programs. First, community development and economic and social growth programs should strive to produce the diverse characteristics of good governance, and more importantly,

competent officials were assigned to the Saemaul Department, given extra points in their efficiency ratings, and given personnel-related benefits that could be applied to two-year limits on length of service and preferential promotion systems (Kim, 2004).

a balanced combination of the good governance characteristics should be considered in the course of formulating and implementing such programs. For these, the synergy of spontaneous participation by rural people and effective and efficient institutionalized supports from the government will be needed, as is clear when considering the case of the Saemaul Undong.

Second, the importance of institutional innovations for achieving a combination of good governance characteristics should be stressed. For the success of the Saemaul Undong, a series of innovations were adopted, such as the pan-governmental organizational arrangement, management training programs for local officials, and strategies based on the principle of “the better village, the first support,” which promoted competition between villages. Based on the analysis of the Saemaul Undong, it is predicted that these innovations will not only be instrumental in stimulating rural change but also become driving forces for promoting good governance in rural development programs in other developing countries.

In spite of its contributions to understanding of the rural Saemaul Undong, this study has some limitations. The good governance model was developed by international organizations to promote neoliberal and democratic reforms in developing countries, and thus may not be relevant to the rural Saemaul Undong during the authoritarian Park regime. In addition, the credence of the data used in this research may be doubtful. It is possible that information on the rural Saemaul Undong that was reported by government agencies during the authoritarian Park regime was manipulated in order to emphasize the movement’s positive aspects. Future research should address these issues with more relevant theories on developmental issues in authoritarian regimes and reliable data on the rural Saemaul Undong.

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