



# CREATIVE RESPONSES TO SUSTAINABILITY

Cultural initiatives engaging with social and environmental issues

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### Cultural initiatives engaging with social and environmental issues

#### Korea Guide

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# 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Foreword

Our crashed economies, fossil fuel-based energy consumption, and changing natural environment and climate are just a few examples that prove that our current systems are broken in many ways. We have an urgent need for new structures in society. But moving away from these current systems is complex and requires imagination, vision and creativity. The starting point for this research is an investigation into the potential of artists for proposing and envisioning alternatives and for shaping new and resilient societies.

Our modern societies have become very complex and are changing so quickly that there is barely time to reposition or to develop a response to that change. Artists, however, have a unique ability to respond, often taking the role of pioneers, or even activists. They can also take a position of addressing issues in a (more) 'free' realm and may therefore have the 'response-ability' to react on what needs to change, or how we can change it. The word 'response-ability' is used here deliberately, as originated by philosopher Emmanuel LEVINAS<sup>1</sup>, and refers to having a unique and creative ability to respond to something, this being the essence of the reasonable being. Just as the European Renaissance exploded during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, artists can be at the forefront of igniting 21<sup>st</sup> century social and environmental transformations.

Globally the creative sector receives increasing recognition for its contribution to building more sustainable societies. We have realised that climate change is – at least in large part – a cultural problem, an effect of our lifestyle and consumer behaviours. To start influencing human behaviours we have to go beyond communicating the science of climate change. The creative and cultural approach to climate change has proved to be very effective, since it speaks to people on an engaging, human, accessible, critical or fun level. Arts and culture have proved to be effective tools with which to advance new ideas and influence social norms. Critical engagement from the creative sector is complementary to the engagement of business, science and industry.

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1 LEVINAS, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity*. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh. 1961

Many developing countries see technological innovations as the answer to shaping these new societies. 'Technology is going to save us' is a recurrent phrase. However, more and more artists are moving in exactly the opposite direction, focusing on projects related to craft, gardens and working with communities, taking a strong interest in our changing environment. These artists do not think that technology is the answer to all our problems, but that an important part of moving towards a sustainable future is related to social, cultural, human, low tech solutions. Developing alternative structures to our current system requires a change in the way we live, embracing low tech, human solutions, as well as high tech innovations.

At the same time, economic growth in Asia is transforming cities, lives and landscapes. Asia, and specifically China, has the power to drive this change. What our futures will look like depends in large part on how the growing economies are responding to rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. Their response is critical to environmental disruptions that are often a consequence of such processes, such as contamination of soil and water systems, erosion of natural habitats, a growing number of endangered species and rapidly collapsing biodiversity, the production of greenhouse gases contributing to unprecedented air pollution and climate change. These challenges, nevertheless, bring huge opportunities for science and sectors such as the renewable energy industries.

Climate change and other environmental disruptions do not acknowledge borders. How do we, as nations, deal with a problem without borders? To instigate real change we need to collaborate globally on as many levels as possible. This research aims to build cultural bridges between Asia and Europe in terms of mapping artists engaging with social and environmental issues and identifying their needs and wishes. This research is a small step towards providing an overview of who is doing what. It aims to stimulate more cultural collaborations on these themes and seeks to inspire future projects with examples of best practice. Each research is compiled in a country Guide with the following objectives:

- 1.** An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the arts scene based on over 50 interviews with artists, curators, cultural policy makers and academics.
- 2.** A directory of the 20 most pioneering or influential cultural initiatives that engage with social and environmental issues.
- 3.** A set of concrete solutions for the sector in order to contribute effectively to shaping more



sustainable societies through arts and culture.

The aims of the research are:

- 1.** To build the foundation for an Asian ‘knowledge alliance’, an informal network of artists, curators and arts managers supporting each other and working in the field of sustainability;
- 2.** To provide artists and arts professionals with an overview of potential partners to engage with on these issues in other countries and regions;
- 3.** To influence cultural policymaking to allow more opportunities for artists to collaborate with each other on issues related to social and environmental responsibilities.

Two earlier policy reports and one network have been instrumental in their contribution to the present research:

**1. ‘Arts. Environment. Sustainability. How can Culture make a Difference?’ (Asia-Europe Foundation/ASEF, 2011).** In 2008, the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) initiated a 4-year programme called *Connect2Culture* that investigated the evolving role of arts and culture in society, with particular focus on the debates surrounding climate change. The activities undertaken as part of the programme were summarised in the dossier *Arts. Environment. Sustainability. How can Culture make a Difference?* (ASEF, 2011). The programme engaged with many Asian and European experts from different sectors (arts, science, technology etc.) to address issues related to art and environmental sustainability through artistic collaborations and cultural policy meetings. The dossier is both a summary of ASEF-supported work in this area and an invitation to continued engagement and network forming. This research builds on that knowledge and work. The dossier is available online at: <http://www.asef.org/images/docs/Culture%20make%20a%20difference.pdf>

**2. International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA) and Julie’s Bicycle, D’Art Report 34b: ‘The arts and environmental sustainability: an international overview’, November 2014.** This D’Art report gives a global review of developments in policies and programmes related to culture and environmental sustainability. It informs international arts leaders about good practice and resources in this key policy area, and how such policies impact on national arts and cultural organisations. D’Art Report 34b provides a snapshot of arts and cultural engagement with environmental sustainability with an emphasis on policies,

not on artistic content or wider arts practice. The present research Guide hopes to complement the D'Art report, with a focus on art practices engaging with environmental sustainability in different countries in Asia. <http://www.juliesbicycle.com/files/IFACCA-Report-Full.pdf>

**3. The Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) 2012-2015.** The Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) was an EU-funded project coordinated by TransArtists/DutchCulture and Julie's Bicycle; a pan-European network of cultural organisations engaging with environmental issues. The two years of GALA activities (across 2012-2015) were spread over 22 countries in Europe and confirmed the appetite in the cultural sector to engage with environmental issues in many artistic ways. It showed the different types of engagement possible (labs, residencies, workshops, exhibitions) and the impact of collaboration and knowledge sharing. This functioned as catalyst to explore opportunities for a Green Art Lab Alliance in Asia. <http://greenartlaballiance.eu>

Creative Responses to Sustainability – Korea Guide, has been presented during the *8th ASEF Public Forum on Creative Cities in Asia and Europe - Cities: Living Labs for Culture?*, on 24 November 2015 in Gwangju<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore the launch of this Guide marks the birth of Green Art Lab Alliance Asia, a knowledge alliance for cultural organisations engaging with social and environmental issues in Asia. GALA Asia kicks off with a three-day conference (10-13 December 2015) attended by art collectives from eight Asian countries, hosted by Margaret SHIU, renowned cultural leader and founder of Bamboo Curtain Studio. The Korean representative in this knowledge alliance is artists' collective Listen to the City.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Introduction to Korea

### FACTS AND FIGURES

Korea, officially called the Republic of Korea, is located in East Asia and is a peninsula divided into two separate countries, North and South Korea. In this Guide 'Korea' refers to the Republic of Korea or South Korea unless stated differently. The national currency is the South Korean Won (KRW). The land surface is 100,033 km<sup>2</sup> with a population density of 517 people per km<sup>2</sup> in 2013<sup>4</sup>. Around half the country's 51,395,238 inhabitants live in the capital Seoul.

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2 <http://www.asef.org/projects/themes/culture/3469-8th-asef-experts-meeting-and-public-forum-on-creative-cities-in-asia-and-europe>

3 <http://www.listentothecity.org>

4 <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/south-korea/population-density-people-per-sq-km-wb-data.html>



North and South Korea were divided in 1945 following the surrender of Japan at the end of the Second World War. Relations between the North and the South are complex: Koreans from the North are not allowed to enter the South and vice versa, with the exception of the DMZ, the Demilitarized Zone. This strip of land functions as a buffer zone between the North and the South and is, in spite of its name, the most militarised border in the world. Very few people live in this area, which is 250 km long and 4 km wide. Its isolation from human contact has made it into a good breeding ground for flora and fauna, and several endangered animal and plant species have been spotted in the DMZ. Ecologists have identified some 2,900 species of plants, 70 types of mammals and 320 bird species within the narrow DMZ buffer zone.<sup>5</sup> Art Sonje Center in Seoul has initiated several interesting art projects in their programme 'The real DMZ'.<sup>6</sup>

Korea is categorised as a 'high income' country according to the OECD with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 1.410 trillion in 2014<sup>7</sup>. The average unemployment rate<sup>8</sup> (1999 to 2015) is very low: 3.6% and, according to World Bank statistics, there is 100% primary school enrolment.<sup>9</sup>

The main religions are Christianity and Buddhism, but almost half of Koreans do not have a stated religion. The Korean alphabet is called Hangul, which has been used to write the Korean language since the 15th century.

Korea is facing a few important health care issues, including the impact of environmental pollution on the people living in cities. Korea has the highest suicide rate in the world with a general of 29.1 suicides per 100,000 (14,160 a year), according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Health Organization.<sup>1011</sup>

The winters in Korea are long, dry and cold, while the summers are hot, humid and relatively short. Spring and autumn are short but with pleasant temperatures. Korea is less vulnerable to typhoons than for instance the Philippines and has generally 1-3 typhoons per year, usually in the late summer.

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5 <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/east/08/22/korea.bio.dmz/>

6 <http://realdmz.org/?ckattempt=1>

7 [http://data.worldbank.org/country/korea-republic#cp\\_wdi](http://data.worldbank.org/country/korea-republic#cp_wdi)

8 <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/south-korea/unemployment-rate>

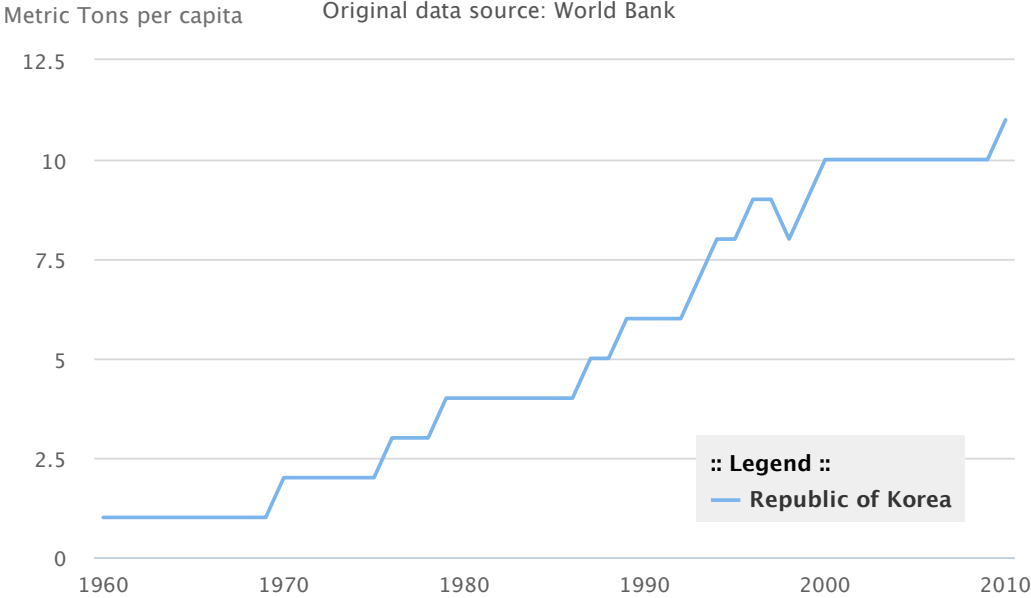
9 [http://data.worldbank.org/country/korea-republic#cp\\_wdi](http://data.worldbank.org/country/korea-republic#cp_wdi)

10 <http://www.who.int/gho/countries/kor/en/> (World Health Organisation)

11 <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150830000310>

The OECD has recognised Korea as one of the most innovative countries in the world, developing scientific and technological innovations. Korea’s R&D investment-to-GDP ratio is said to have doubled over the last 20 years, from 2.2% (below the global OECD average of 2.4%) in 1995 to 4.15% in 2013.<sup>12</sup> Korea is famous for having the world’s fastest internet speed<sup>13</sup>, according to the Guinness World Book of Records, with connectivity almost everywhere, including in the MRT (Seoul’s underground transport). Korea is also the highest ranked country on the Bloomberg Innovation Index, which compiles its rankings using data from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the United States Patent and Trademark Office, the OECD and UNESCO.

### CO2 emissions - per Capita (WDI)



Source: UNEP (2015): The UNEP Environmental Data Explorer, as compiled from World Development Indicators (WDI-The World Bank). United Nations Environment Programme. <http://ede.grid.unep.ch>.

Source: <http://uneplive.unep.org/country/index/KR#charts>

Korea’s energy emissions are 604.7 metric ton of CO2e<sup>14</sup>, 1.4% of global greenhouse gas

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12 <http://www.businesskorea.co.kr/news/sciencetech/12551-innovative-recognition-korea-recognized-one-most-innovative-countries-oecd>

13 [http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/fastest-internet-connection-\(country\)](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/fastest-internet-connection-(country))

14 CO2e (Carbon dioxide equivalent) is a term for describing different greenhouse gases in a common unit. For any quantity and type of greenhouse gas, CO2e signifies the amount of CO2 which would have the equivalent global warming impact.

emissions<sup>15</sup>. Korea's target is to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 37% below business-as-usual (BAU) emissions.<sup>16</sup> The Korean Government has stated that a 25.7% reduction below BAU will be achieved domestically and a further 11.3% reduction will be achieved by international market mechanisms (Ministry of Environment, 2015).<sup>17</sup> However, Climate Action Tracker, an independent scientific analysis produced by four research organisations tracking climate action, rated this target 'inadequate'.<sup>18</sup>

In January 2015 Korea launched a new emissions trading scheme, which imposes caps on emissions from 525 of the country's biggest companies and thereby will become the world's second largest carbon market. This scheme should enable the government's plan to meet its target of limiting greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 to 37% below current levels. This makes Korea the second country in Asia (after Kazakhstan) to launch a nationwide emissions market.<sup>19</sup>

Seoul is home to the headquarters of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGI), an international organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The GGI was established in 2012, at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and its mission is to accelerate the transition towards a new model of economic growth – green growth – founded on principles of social inclusivity and environmental sustainability.<sup>20</sup>

With the Japanese colonisation (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953) and, as a result of its geographical position between China and Japan, Korea has in the past struggled to maintain its own territory and culture. However, Korean culture is stronger than ever today. Typical Korean dishes such as *kimchi* and the Korean style barbeque are popular all over the world. Furthermore, Korean temple food is lauded by the *New York Times*: 'The most exquisite food in the world, say many celebrated chefs, is being made not in Copenhagen or New York, but in a remote temple

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15 World Resources Institute: <http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/06/infographic-what-do-your-countrys-emissions-look>

16 Business as usual (BAU) stands for the normal execution of standard functional operations within an organization and forms a possible contrast to projects or programmes which might introduce change.

17 <http://me.go.kr/home/web/board/read.do>

18 <http://climateactiontracker.org/countries/southkorea.html>

19 South Korea launches world's second-biggest carbon market. <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/01/12/southkorea-carbontrading-idINKBNOKL05K20150112>

20 <http://gggi.org/about-gggi/background/organizational-overview/>

complex south of Seoul by a 59-year-old Buddhist nun.’<sup>21</sup>

Even more popular is Korean pop music culture, known as K-pop. K-pop is Korea’s biggest export product and is part of what is known as *Hallyu*, translated as The Korean Wave. The Korean Wave refers to the popularity of Korean culture since the late 1990s, first driven by the popularity of K-drama (televised popular dramas) and later by K-pop. Korean pop music videos are mainly viewed on YouTube. K-pop is not only popular in Asia but has a fan base across the world: from Latin America to Africa to Eastern Europe. In 2012, Korea’s Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism estimated *Hallyu*’s economic asset value as USD 83.2 billion, of which USD 5.26 billion was thought to be attributable to the music industry.<sup>22</sup> Popular Korean export products are not restricted to music and TV: the fashion and film industries are thriving and tax incentives and government funding for start-ups have boosted the video games industry since 2014.<sup>23</sup>

Following the success achieved in promoting *Hallyu*, current efforts aim to replicate the model for Korean businesses. In 2015, Korea’s president PARK Geun-hye introduced a policy of ‘creative economy’, which is supposed to foster start-ups and ease the country’s current economic reliance on a small number of large business groups, known as *chaebols*<sup>24</sup>, such as Samsung and Hyundai.<sup>25</sup> Korean companies such as Samsung, LG, Daewoo and Hyundai are mostly family businesses and often operate with a monopoly position.

Koreans are generally very quick adopters of new trends. They are technology and design savvy and things can change very quickly. That change can occur in unexpected places: Korea is also the world capital for cosmetic surgery.<sup>26</sup>

Cultural policy is an independent policy field in Korea and, since the 1990s it has been accompanied by an official position in the Ministry of Culture. At the turn of the 21st century, interest in the cultural and creative industries peaked when arts and culture gained acceptance as important contributors to economic growth. Since then ‘continuous effort’ has been made to

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21 [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/t-magazine/jeong-kwan-the-philosopher-chef.html?referer&\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/t-magazine/jeong-kwan-the-philosopher-chef.html?referer&_r=2)  
22 <http://business.financialpost.com/news/retail-marketing/how-korea-became-the-worlds-coolest-brand>  
23 <http://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21611039-how-really-uncool-country-became-tastemaker-asia-soap-sparkle-and-pop>  
24 *Chaebols* are big business conglomerates in Korea that monopolise the market.  
25 Financial Times, 24 June 2015. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9203e38c-0dab-11e5-9a65-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3p69dLBoF>  
26 <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/03/23/about-face>

maintain the standard of ‘1% for culture of national budget’, according to Kiwon HONG, Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Public Policy and Industry, Sookmyung Women’s University. She identified three main thematic areas for cultural policy issues in contemporary Korea:

- 1.** How to achieve a policy balance between the commercial drive and the public aspect of culture;
- 2.** How to enhance the cultural welfare of citizens;
- 3.** Acknowledging multiculturalism.

For a detailed analysis of the history of cultural policy in Korea, see: <http://culture360.asef.org/magazine/korea-an-introduction-to-cultural-policy-part-ii/#sthash.V9Y71ILA.dpuf>

Key organisations for information, statistics and support for arts and culture are the Korea Arts Management Service (KAMS)<sup>27</sup>, their APRO online information system<sup>28</sup>, the Korean Artist Welfare Foundation (KAWF)<sup>29</sup>, Seoul Foundation for Art and Culture (SFAC)<sup>30</sup> and Arts Council Korea (ARKO)<sup>31</sup>.

For further information on trends in relation to cultural exchange between Korea and European Union member states, please see a comprehensive research report by the European Expert Network on Culture: <http://www.eenc.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/EU-Korea-Cultural-Exchanges-final-report-September-2013-final.pdf>

## 1.3 Methodology

### WHO IS THIS FOR?

This Guide is for policymakers, artists, arts managers, curators, or anyone working in the cultural field interested in a healthier and more balanced lifestyle, more liveable cities, and more creative and sustainable societies. The different country Guides offer a starting point to find collaboration partners and give an introduction to what the cultural field in that country looks like. Each Guide

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27 <http://eng.gokams.or.kr/main/main.aspx>

28 <http://eng.theapro.kr/MA/>

29 <http://www.kawf.kr>

30 <http://culture360.asef.org/organisation/seoul-foundation-for-the-arts-and-culture-sfac/>

31 <http://www.arko.or.kr>

provides concrete solutions, an analysis of the scene, best practices and a directory of key players.

### **WHAT WAS THE METHODOLOGY?**

This qualitative research is based on in-depth interviews with key players in the cultural field engaging with social and environmental issues, such as curators, museum directors, policymakers, funders, (arts) educators and cultural managers. The interviews lasted around 90 minutes and transcripts of the interviews are available upon request (with permission of the interviewee). Key people have been identified using different local and international networks and by word of mouth. Not all identified key people were available for an interview so this research is by no means exhaustive. The selection for the Directory is made based on over 50 interviews conducted between July and September 2015. The research objectives for the interviews aimed to identify:

- How do artists and cultural organisations engage with social and environmental issues in Korea?
- How can they be more effective in contributing to building a healthier, more creative and more sustainable Korea?

### **HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE?**

This Guide consists of the following sections:

- State of Affairs. This is based on over 50 interviews conducted with key players in the cultural field in Korea. It gives a taste of the challenges the cultural field is facing in 2015.
- The Directory lists the 20 most significant initiatives in Korea, engaging with social and environmental issues. This selection is based on over 50 interviews conducted, but is not exhaustive.
- Concrete proposals on how to strengthen the sector.
- Glossary
- Sustainability Trends; recurring themes that emerged among the interviewees. The identified trends are: arts education, gentrification, artist' residencies, community art and the rise of independent spaces.

# 2

## State of Affairs, Korea Guide

THE KOREA ARTS SCENE	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Government recognises art, design and culture to be useful tools for engaging people.	Very focused on prestige, fame, status and (audience) numbers
There is generally a lot of interest in art, culture and design.	Very bureaucratic and time-consuming procedures for funding
Number of artist-run spaces	Lack of long-term thinking and strategies
Available resources and speed of production	Lack of discourse and reflection

Part Time Suite (artists' collective):



*Government doesn't love artists, but they love artwork.* <sup>32</sup>

### 2.1 Funding

Originally established as the Korea Culture and Arts Foundation in 1973, the main national funding body for the arts in Korea is called ARKO (Arts Council Korea). The main aim of ARKO is to make the arts more central to the lives of the Korean citizens by supporting arts organisations and artists in Korea and abroad through grant-giving services and programmes. ARKO is governed by an eleven member council appointed by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Each council member serves as the steward of federal funds appropriated for the arts.<sup>33</sup>

With roughly half of Korea's population (and most of the artists) living in the capital, arts funding has traditionally been very focused on Seoul. In recent years, this has slowly changed. Major cultural initiatives outside Seoul such as the Asian Culture Complex (ACC) in Gwangju, Busan International Film Festival (BIFF), and also Gwangju Biennale and Anyang Public Art Project

32 Interview with Part Time Suite on 20 August 2015

33 <https://www.arko.or.kr/english/about/history.jsp>



(APAP) have established themselves with national and international reputations. A few years ago the government started promoting a local government policy, shifting arts funding away from being centrally organised via ARKO.

This new policy is decentralising the main funding body; ARKO’s headquarters will be relocated to the city of Naju and seed funding for the arts will be phased out by 2017. The majority of the interviewees were very concerned about this process; in future, funding applications will be assessed by local governments, often without any in-house arts experts. This means there will be no ‘arts body’ between the government and the artists and the government can decide on all policies without interference. The artists are worried that their applications will not be judged with the same level of expertise and the ‘drying out of seed-funding’ means there will be less funds available for artists.

Part Time Suite (artists’ collective):

“ ARKO has always been a good filter between local governments and artists. ARKO is national and reasonably independent. The government wants to change that by decentralising the funds to local governments, so they can influence the policies more.<sup>34</sup>

Applying for funding in Korea is a very bureaucratic procedure and involves a lot of paperwork. However, once funding is received, the main thing funders care about is the report – more than the actual product, according to the majority of the interviewees. Both Korean people and the government are generally very focused on direct results, audience numbers are considered especially important. If a lot of people attended the event, it is considered a success. Reputation is very important. The artists interviewed expressed the view that the funding system is too outcome-focused and should allow for a more open-ended process. There does not seem to be an understanding that art projects do not always have a clear outcome. Administrators are struggling to change this, as they need clear criteria to judge the work on.

Yunkyung KAM (artist, curator):

“ Unfortunately the government is mainly looking at audience numbers when defining what a successful project is.<sup>35</sup>

.....  
34 Interview with Part Time Suite on 20 August 2015  
35 Interview with Yunkyung KAM on 19 July 2015

Mix rice (artists' collective):

“ A lot of office people think artists take a picture or make a painting, whilst more and more artists are working project-style, sometimes in a two or three year projects. For administrators, the report is important. But for the artist, preparation of project, process and a connection with next work are important. That requires a different type of funding. Public art, community art and bigger scale projects are about time and process, and this is not recognised. <sup>36</sup>

Minor Adjustment (artists' collective):

“ There is a lot of funding available for residencies and production budgets, but they all need to have a clear outcome. A workshop we once gave to children resulted in an argument with the residency, as we didn't end up with something clear and tangible we could show to the parents, even though the workshop was a huge success for the children. <sup>37</sup>

Because of these different challenges around acquiring and administrating the funds, many artists are moving away from even applying for government funding. This is not because they do not need the funding, quite the contrary, but because they have indicated that the procedures are too complicated and do not allow them to do what they want to do. Alternative roads are explored: some artists are looking into crowdfunding, using platforms such as Tumble Bug (that has now raised over 1.5 million USD). <sup>38</sup>

The option chosen by most interviewed artists is to fund their projects by working part time in 'normal jobs'. Many artists do teaching, building and installing of exhibitions and (graphic) design jobs including occasional design work in fashion or for coffee shops. These commercial commissions allow the artists to work on their own art in the evenings and weekends. This creates a very unstable financial position for them in which they cannot further develop their artistic careers. On a positive note, the dissatisfaction with the funding infrastructure has created an appetite among artists to function without the bureaucracy of the institution, resulting in a big influx of small independent cultural spaces scattered around Seoul. [Read more about the Independent Spaces movement on page 38.](#)

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36 Interview with Mix rice on 25 August 2015

37 Interview with Minor Adjustment on 8 August 2015

38 <https://www.techinasia.com/tumblebug-korea-series-a-funding/>

Listen to the City (artists' collective):

“Crowd funding is easier and happier than governmental funding. The crowd that donates seems to be different every time. It's more a system of pre-purchase than donation, people order books or other artworks that we make.”<sup>39</sup>

It is complicated to get government funding to start a cultural initiative since a 'new' space can only apply for funding when they have been in existence for at least two years. There is no financial support for the first stages. At present, just in Seoul, there are more than thirty small independent spaces trying to establish themselves.

Another reason why artists are shying away from government funding is that, when they are trying to establish a sustainable cultural space, it is too risky to depend on government funds because they can be unstable. When government positions change, organisations may suddenly lose their funding.<sup>40</sup> Residency space Take Out Drawing explains: 'We currently don't receive any government funding and we live from the café and producing exhibitions outside our own space. Otherwise, whenever the government changes, we risk losing our money and place. We've seen this happening many times. It's not a sustainable model.' Unfortunately it seems that Take Out Drawing will lose their café now anyway, because the Korean pop star PSY has bought the building where the residency is located and he has ordered them to move out.<sup>41</sup>

The status of artists and designers is generally very precarious and they are often expected to work for free 'as apparently they love what they do.'<sup>42</sup> An artist's fee is seldom included in funding for projects. Recently a group of Korean artists, including collectives 413 and Listen to the City, published the research paper 'Art Workers Gathering'<sup>43</sup> on this issue. They collaborated with three international collectives that are campaigning for the standardisation of artists' fees: CARFAC (Canada)<sup>44</sup>, NAVA (Australia)<sup>45</sup> and W.A.G.E.<sup>46</sup> These collectives have been campaigning

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- 39 Interview with Eunseon PARK (Listen to the City) on 12 August 2015
- 40 Interview with Hyemin KANG (Takeout Drawing) on 4 August 2015
- 41 Ibidem
- 42 Interview with Eunseon PARK (Listen to the City) on 12 August 2015
- 43 <http://www.listentothecity.org/Art-Workers-Gathering>
- 44 <http://www.carfac.ca>
- 45 <https://visualarts.net.au>
- 46 <http://www.wageforwork.com>

for years addressing the issue that artists are often not paid for their work. CARFAC has even developed a tool to calculate a minimal artist's fee<sup>47</sup>. In more and more countries this issue is finally being addressed.

The weak position of the artist is nothing new and in 2011 the government established the Korean Artists Welfare Foundation<sup>48</sup> to support artists living in poverty. However, according to several interviewees, the policies for this foundation are quite limited. Artist JIN Huiung explained that you need many different certificates proving that you are an artist and that your parents don't have any money. 'The Artist Welfare Foundation promotes artists to get a "normal" job. They see artists as cultural workers and will try and get you to do "creative therapy" or something so the national unemployment rates can stay low.'<sup>49</sup>

Jaeyong PARK (Workonwork):

“*The government focuses on the consumers, not the producers of culture. That means they would rather reduce the entrance price for a museum than spend money on artists. But that is also eating out of the cultural budgets. The government sees artists in a functional way.*<sup>50</sup>

## 2.2 Discourse

The majority of interviewees indicated that there is a lack of discourse and reflection in the Korean art field, as there is too much focus on production and reaching big audiences. The (minimal) writing on contemporary Korean art is mostly in Korean. This makes Korean art journalism inaccessible to the international world; very few international contemporary art articles are translated into English, which makes the Korean art scene very inward looking. There are only a handful of active art critics and professional art criticism and critical dialogue should be more stimulated (beyond object-based work), the majority of interviewees confirm. Universities do not play an active role in the art field and there are only a few good art magazines in Korea.

The focus is mainly on exhibitions. Helen KU from the Book Society<sup>51</sup> explains: 'When we wanted to publish an article about our festival we published it in a magazine about indie music and in a

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47 <http://www.carfac.ca/tools/fees/>

48 <http://www.kawf.kr/>

49 Conversation with Huiung JIN on 5 September 2015.

50 Interview with Jaeyong PARK (WorkonWork) 20 August 2015

51 <http://www.thebooksociety.org>

political literary magazine. These magazines are much more focused and interested in current social issues compared to art magazines and they are freer in terms of subject and form. Luckily art space POOL is now working a new version of *Forum A*, which was a great magazine.<sup>52</sup>

The art scene in Korea is still quite conventional and white cube based. There is the white cube and there is public art, but the space in between can still be explored. However, since the 1980s there have been limited alternatives in terms of artistic ideas and expressions. 'Failure to democratise the Korean political system in the 1980s brought about limitations in freedom of thought and artistic expression. Confrontation with the communist North also aggravated the situation in the name of protecting national security. During this period, the opening of the cultural market to the United States and Japan was limited, as local arts and culture suffered from various regulations', according to Korean cultural policy researcher Kiwon HONG.<sup>53</sup>

The Minjung movement (literally, 'people's mass movement') in the 1980s aimed to explore alternatives to the, then heavily regulated, official state institutions and the conservative commercial gallery sector. Due to the political situation, these two institutions did not allow for large-scale experiments, let alone for approaches that were critical of the system.<sup>54</sup> However, this discontent was the birth of the alternative art spaces, the start of artists organising themselves outside the established scene. These alternative spaces were mainly created in the 1990s and include Pool<sup>55</sup>, Loop<sup>56</sup> and Sarubia<sup>57</sup>. These 'Alternative Art Spaces' also became part of the establishment over the years, now making the term 'alternative' quite confusing. Understandably new, young and independent initiatives nowadays do not want to be called Alternative Art Space because of this.

## 2.3 Production and the art market

Compared to other Asian countries large amounts of funding and resources are available in Korea. Production is fast, relatively cheap (compared to, for instance, Japan) and there are many modern production facilities available such as 3D printers and maker spaces providing .....

52 Interview with Helen KU (Book Society) on 5 August 2015

53 <http://culture360.asef.org/magazine/korea-an-introduction-to-cultural-policy-part-i/>

54 Arts researcher Susa HUSSE in her research about Seoul in 2012 <http://www.goethe.de/ges/prj/res/mag/int/en9507291.htm>

55 [http://www.altpool.org/\\_v3/en/about/mission.asp](http://www.altpool.org/_v3/en/about/mission.asp)

56 <http://www.galleryloop.com>

57 <http://www.sarubia.org>

tools. Although the interest in more sustainable production is growing slowly among artists and designers, the supply chain is far from ready. In particular, the textile and clothing industry, which played a major role in Korea's early industrialisation, is still very much focused on fast, rather than sustainable, production. The reason why production can be so fast and cheap in Korea is largely because of the intense work ethic in the industry.

The art market is viewed as very distorted by the majority of interviewees, mostly because the infrastructure does not distinguish quality of work. 'There are no standards on how to judge a good Korean contemporary artwork, the only standards are the imported standards', states filmmaker Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK. 'Collectors here look through their ears, meaning that they will have heard from someone they should buy it. They mostly buy foreign work as it has the international stamp of approval; they buy it as investment, not for the love of it. It's rare to get a fair judgment of your work.'<sup>58</sup>

Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK (filmmaker):

“*The stuff you can buy in commercial galleries is whatever the upper/middle class people want to hang on their walls. The market is not functioning in a healthy way, unless the art is imported. It's very difficult for a local Korean artist to climb up as there are no standards of what is good and bad art. Modernity is not fully internalised so it's reversed of what the Western art scene is doing. Only the infrastructure for modernisation is here, but not the content.*”<sup>59</sup>

## 2.4 Well-being

Apart from a few significant (mostly non-urban) examples, the engagement with environmental issues from the arts scene is very low in Korea. Ecological issues are under-represented even though there is, for instance, a huge food culture. German artist Dirk FLEISCHMANN, who has been working in Korea since 2009 and set up an art school in Seoul with his partner Mijoo PARK, sees food as a good starting point to engage Koreans in environmental sustainability: 'The issue of food is important and slowly art and cooking are becoming more popular.'<sup>60</sup>

Engagement with social issues in the arts is stronger. This is mainly due to two reasons:

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58 Interview with Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK on 7 August 2015

59 Interview with Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK on 7 August 2015

60 From interview with Dirk FLEISCHMANN and Mijoo PARK on 7 August 2015

1. people in Seoul having to move home because of huge regeneration projects;
2. general work/life imbalance and often poor working conditions.

Since the Korean system is mostly top-down and very hierarchical, the well-being of employees is not very high on the agenda. Job positions (especially in the arts) change frequently. The hierarchy means that sometimes even the best people cannot change anything as their hands are tied.

Wealthy families have set up many private museums; as a result, interesting museum job positions may be taken by family members, not always the best person for the job. New directors in museums come in almost every two years, meaning it is hard to build long-term plans or strategies. Particularly in art galleries, workers change on average every six months. 'That's because they can't bear the system', according to curator Dawn Alba LIM. 'Most gallery owners are private so they can do what they want. They have a reputation for not treating their staff very nicely.'<sup>61</sup>

Institutions do not generally give many opportunities to young artists. Curator Jaeyong PARK adds: 'One of the problems of the art scene is that the institutions are not willing to open up their archives, knowledge and ideas to others. They are scared of ideas being stolen. This results in a lack of input for fostering the new generation. Korean art institutions do not share the idea of the commons.'<sup>62</sup> PARK was concerned with what he had seen happening in the arts in recent years, mainly around the impossible expectations of artists and cultural workers, such as five people (including interns) managing a project with a hundred artists. PARK shared his frustration with a model that he does not consider sustainable. He says: 'Yes we can make it happen with incredible hard work, but what's so good about that? When the project is finished nothing is left, just administrative reports.'<sup>63</sup>

It is not just artists and cultural workers who suffer from this system focused on high production. People in government positions often have to deal with huge amounts of paperwork. This sometimes results in administrators choosing to award grants to projects that are less complicated, requiring less paperwork.

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61 Interview with Dawn Alba LIM on 12 August 2015  
62 Interview with Jaeyong PARK on 20 August 2015  
63 Interview with Jaeyong PARK on 20 August 2015



Yunkyung KAM (artist, curator):

“Foundations prefer to grant projects that are not too complex, ambitious or experimental – as that will only risk adding to their workload.”<sup>64</sup>

## 2.5 Role of artists

With the poor position of artists and the hierarchical top-down system, in general the artists interviewed were very sceptical about being able to instigate change through their work. This partly explains why many artists shy away from engaging with political, environmental or social issues – they feel they would not be able to change the situation anyway. Young artists feel that making political work is boring and repeating what has been done in the seventies and eighties with the Minjung movement and that nothing has been changed since. Young artists at that time believed that things could improve. Young artists today have lost that feeling. In addition, there is a big difference in Korea between who you are professionally and privately. You might worry about environmental or social issues at home, but it is not considered appropriate to bring these issues into your work context. In professional working environments change is perceived as having to come from the top.

Some responses from artists on their role as actors of change:

Ayoung KIM (artist):

“Art can’t be the measure to transform societies but the basis can be criticism. Some people will get that, some people won’t. It’s a very soft power. It has a different value than social demonstrations. Art transcends time and space and temporary issues.”<sup>65</sup>

Hyemin KANG (Takeout Drawing):

“This world seems to be controlled by very detailed and complex systems and capital. Artists have the privilege to think and work standing from outside of this system. That’s their main role. This huge system of ideologies such as capitalism and democracy is actually built on power. It is believed that artists can see beyond the façade of the system. Do they then have a role in improving society? I hope so, but that won’t be concretely visible within many years. Artists can

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64 Interview with Yunkyung KAM on 19 July 2015

65 Interview with Ayoung KIM on 23 July 2015

only try and counterbalance the system with their own language, with their art.<sup>66</sup>

Hyemin SON and John REARDON (Minor Adjustment):

“ The artist has a role in society however this role is not determined in advance. That’s the freedom we claim as artists and the freedom we should claim as artists. In that sense it’s a very powerful tool.<sup>67</sup>

SungHoon KIM (artist and farmer):

“ What can you do as an artist? Where is my knowledge area, my knowledge territory? There are a lot of limitations to what I can do and I can’t change everything but that doesn’t mean I shouldn’t try and do something. Thinking is also a political activity.<sup>68</sup>

Seewon HYUN and Inyong AN (Audiovisual Pavilion):

“ In the eighties and nineties there were a lot of political artists and activists but that movement has been diminished. Artists don’t really get chances to state their political opinions so they use different forms that are more inside looking. The older artists get, the more they lose the wish to change the world. Now artists just want to get people together. When it’s your personal story it’s different, then you’d be more willing to make work that critically engages. When you are poor you are free. If you speak out, your chances in life will go away, people usually don’t want to risk that.<sup>69</sup>

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66 Interview with Hyemin KANG (Takeout Drawing) 4 August 2015  
67 Interview with Minor Adjustment on 8 August 2015  
68 Interview with SungHoon KIM on 6 August 2015  
69 Interview with Audiovisual Pavilion on 19 August 2015

# 3

## Concrete proposals

### 3.1 Long-term thinking and strategies

Due to several reasons such as staff turnover, lack of reflection and focus on reports and direct results, there is a strong need for long-term thinking and building strategies in the arts and cultural sector in the country. Without this long-term thinking, cultural initiatives cannot further professionalise, make their programmes stronger and become financially sustainable. In terms of international collaboration, long-term planning is also needed, since major international institutions usually need at least three years to plan and establish a meaningful collaboration. Cultural organisations focus too much on the present and are forgetting about the past and the future.

CHO Jieun and YANG Chulmo (Mix rice)

“ In 2012 we did a festival with a furniture factory in a migrant area and it was a huge success, everyone was talking about it. We repeated the year after, and the year after again. Every year it improved. I personally think in longer terms, like three years. Administrators are usually only thinking about what looks good on the piece of paper - now.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.2 Standardisation of research, conservation and artists' fee in budgets

Research, conservation of the artwork and the artist's fee are three things that are too often still missing in art project budgets. Especially in Community Art, research on the community is a crucial aspect for making a successful project. Because the focus is on production and exhibition, the conservation of the artwork is often overlooked. In terms of sustainability and smart use of resources this is poor practice since work gets thrown away. Furthermore the artist's fee should be standardised and included in budgets, as this is a basic need for the artists.

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70 Mix Rice in an interview on 25 August 2015

Gina LEE (Culture Keepers):

“ We are now in the process of thinking how to keep the work and to include research in our budgets. That change started with the curators and they pursued the government. We need time to talk to the people, trying to understand what they need. Currently work is very quickly made and after, very quickly chucked out.<sup>71</sup> ”

**3.3 More opportunities for young non-established Korean artists**

Currently there is a lot of focus on prestige, fame and status in the Korean art world. This makes it hard for young Korean artists who are not established to develop their careers. It seems like they first have to get famous abroad before they get recognised as an artist in their own country.

Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK (artist/filmmaker):

“ As an artist I needed to survive but my work wasn’t picked up here. When I was invited to Berlinale, people here suddenly paid attention to me. I needed to be there to be here. ”

*The process here isn’t from local, to national to international. In order to survive here, to keep your status here, you need to keep your status abroad.<sup>72</sup>*

Dawn Alba LIM (Kigoja Art Space):

“ Korean curators choose to work with artists that are already established and have built up their CVs. No one wants to take the risk of exhibiting a new and young artist, because of both the audiences and the funding system. The government doesn’t give funding if you’re not well known, which means the same faces come back all the time and the choices are always safe. First you have to get a name internationally and then people will start to call you in Korea. That’s why everyone wants to study abroad, to build up a network there.<sup>73</sup> ”

**3.4 Evaluation process**

Evaluation procedures could be improved, to place less of a focus on audience numbers and .....

- 71 Interview with Gina LEE on 22 July 2015
- 72 Interview with Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK on 7 August 2015
- 73 Interview with Dawn Alba LIM on 12 August 2015

direct results, and acknowledge time for process and more long-term projects. It is important that applications and reports are judged and evaluated by art experts, not just by local councils. There should be new standards and assessment criteria, especially for Community Art.

Dirk FLEISCHMANN and Mijoo PARK (RAT school of the ART):

“Community Art projects are mushrooming and creating frustrations on both sides, with the community as well as with the artists. Assessment of these projects is done purely on a visual basis and the expertise is missing to properly evaluate it. We are pro-art that engages with social issues, but this is a real missed opportunity. It’s missing standards and assessment criteria.”<sup>74</sup>

### 3.5 Stimulate critics and discourse

A healthy art scene reflects on itself through art critics, art magazines and by being part of a national and international discourse. In Korea the interviewees indicated all three of these elements are lacking. Art critics need to be stimulated to write, more art magazines should flourish and more articles on international contemporary art should be translated so they are more available to artists and curators in Korea. To become part of the international art world critics will have to write in English.

Helen KU (The Book Society):

“We need to share information more openly, more kindly. Researchers need to work in English. Translation is very expensive and often not possible because of budget restrictions. However we do find it important and useful to have the text in English.”<sup>75</sup>

Dawn Alba LIM:

“There are not many art critics in Korea and there is only one art critic who encourages young artists and independent spaces. Without a mention or visit from the critics there will be no interest from the wider people in the arts, you stay invisible.”<sup>76</sup>

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74 Interview with Dirk FLEISCHMANN and Mijoo PARK on 7 August 2015

75 Interview with Helen KU on 5 August 2015

76 Interview with Dawn Alba LIM on 12 August 2015

### **3.6 Sustainability of relationships and exchange**

The quality of relationships and exchange is influenced by the time that is made available to spend together. Currently speed and production are prioritised over quality and relationship building. Projects should be allowed to become slower, based on process rather than outcome, so that there is time for meaningful exchange. There are so many residency programmes in Korea and allowing time together is crucial in terms of network building and international collaboration. Trust needs to be built up in order for relationships and exchange to sustain.

# 4

## Glossary

### 4.1 What we mean by sustainability

This Guide is called ‘Creative Responses to Sustainability’. The word ‘sustainability’ is used globally in many different ways. Some consider it to be a policy word or a Western word; it is found in the annual reports of large commercial corporations (sometimes to ‘greenwash’ their practices) whilst small environmental charities also use the same word to indicate their deep-rooted engagement with environmental issues. Words such as ‘organic’, ‘green’, ‘natural’, ‘recycled’, ‘biodegradable’ and ‘renewable’ are seen all over our consumer products and are used interchangeably. Used so frequently, these words have become hollow, empty, so that they have almost lost their meaning.

This Glossary is a ‘growing document’, collecting alternative words and terms related to sustainability, for the lack of a better word. It is an attempt to further explain what is meant by the word sustainability in this Guide in a Korean context.

For the title of this Guide, the word sustainability refers to a holistic approach to things, recognising the interconnectedness of people as well as nature. It means that sustainability encompasses and inherently touches upon social issues (from ageing populations to migrant workers’ rights) as well as environmental issues (from climate change to the extinction of species). Sustainability is about respecting and caring for your environment, people and planet, not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance.

‘Sustainability goes beyond saving energy or making products or houses more “environmentally-friendly”. It directs us in such a way that it questions the way in which society functions, including governance, legislation and policy, but also culture, belief systems, behaviour and education.



These are among the many factors that determine social and environmental outcomes.’<sup>77</sup>

Eunseon PARK from artists’ collective Listen to the City explains:

“*The word sustainability has been used as a bluff too many times. The government called their river construction project ‘Saving the Rivers.’ How can you say no to a project carrying that name. Even the word Occupy can’t be used anymore. There was a lot of writing about Occupy NY in Korea. You really have to choose your words very carefully as they will influence your result. If you don’t have a good name you can never have a good result.*”<sup>78</sup>

Below are some of the most interesting recurring themes and terms in the interviews that were related in various ways to creative responses to sustainability.

### — ARTIVISM

*Artivism* is a term used by artists’ collective Minor Adjustment and is a conscious combination of the words art and activism. ‘The term was adopted to demonstrate a more radical approach and value-loaded attitude to engage in social-spatial issues through arts project. Artivism was an intentional attempt to bring the community and environmental concerns to the fore and collaborate with the participants’ subjects to precipitate the transformation of certain social meaning.’<sup>79</sup>

### — JOURNALISTIC ART

This term is introduced by artists’ collective Listen to the City, explaining a form of art-making that is similar to working as a journalist; doing research and revealing a story of major social or environmental injustice to be picked up by the media and communicated to a wider audience.<sup>80</sup>

### — NATURE-ART

This term was introduced by Yattoo, explaining a form of art-making that is done in nature, using

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77 *Asian Perspectives on Sustainability*, Vol. IV of the *Encyclopedia of Asian Design*, Bloomsbury 2016. Volume IV: Transnational Issues in Asian Design; Volume Editors: Haruhiko FUJITA, Osaka University, Japan and Christine GUTH, Royal College of Art / Victoria & Albert Museum, UK.

78 Interview with Eunseon PARK (Listen to the City) on 12 August 2015

79 *Asian Modernity and the Role of Culture Cities / Asian Culture Symposium*, Gwangju, Korea. Con-fronting the Edge of Modern Urbanity – GAPP (Global Artists Participation Project).

80 Interview with Eunseon PARK (Listen to the City) on 12 August 2015

nature as your only resource. The goal of Nature-Art is to raise awareness about the importance, power and creativity of Nature.<sup>81</sup>

### — OCCUPY

On 1 May 2012, Labour Day, many artists' collectives from Seoul joined the general strike and found each other. Inspired by Occupy, a movement that was also very popular in Seoul, the strike was like a social, cultural and political gathering and, for a lot of artists' collectives, the first time they got politically engaged. 'Before that, artists were working more individually but after they met on this day they connected and started talking about problems in the art scene.'<sup>82</sup>

### — INTANGIBLE CULTURAL PROPERTIES

Intangible Cultural Properties is a term used in Korea for aspects of intangible culture that the government has designated for preservation. Since 1962 there is an official law (the Cultural Property Protection Law) that protects the Intangible Cultural Properties and they are maintained by the Cultural Heritage Administration.<sup>83</sup> The term is used for craftsmen, traditional dancers and sometimes shamanists. They are chosen to safeguard the various traditions. However, trying to sustain traditions in a rapidly developing country has proved to be complex at times since traditional craft-making is time consuming. Also, when big objects are made (such as large traditional instruments) there is no space to store them.<sup>84</sup>

Hyemin KANG (Takeout Drawing):

“ We can't make big changes in the society by ourselves, only as artists. But we can maybe expand the boundary of language. We need a new language as our current language is built on power structures. It's impossible to make change within our current power language so we have to make the alternative.

An example is the use of the word 'queer'. It used to be used in a negative way, but now that word is reclaimed by the community and queer stands for a type of culture.<sup>85</sup>

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81 <http://yatooi.com>

82 From a conversation with Part Time Suite on 20 August 2015

83 <http://english.cha.go.kr/english/new/index.action>

84 <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00311&topic=lht&cp=kr>

85 Interview with Hyemin KANG on 4 August 2015



— Workers in Busan engaging in Community Art project  
**Yunkyung CALM, A Piece of Cake, 2015**



— When artist' collective Part Time Site couldn't find a suitable location to exhibit, they started exploring the public space.

**Part-time Suite, off-off-stage, 2009**  
Stainless frames, wooden boards and a red carpet.





— Gentrification in Busan; Gamcheon Culture Village.  
**Jeremy Yip**, *Gamcheon Culture Village*, 2015



— ‘Nature-Art’ made by  
**Olga Ziemska** during a  
one month residency at  
YATOO International  
Artist in Residence  
program in Wongol,  
Korea, commissioned  
by Daejeon Museum  
of Art.

**Olga Ziemska Studio**, *Stillness in motion: Matka 2*, 2012  
Bamboo, wire, metal armature

# 5

## Sustainability Trends

The researcher has identified seven trends in relation to sustainability. These are themes that recurred repeatedly in the interviews. The seven identified trends for creative responses to sustainability in Korea are: Community Art, Gentrification, Nature-Art, Independent Spaces, Arts Education, *Hallyu*, and Artists' Residencies.

### 5.1 Community Art

Artists are increasingly seen as a possible solution to a whole range of local problems. This has made Community Art a very fashionable art form in Korea and it is relatively easy for artists to obtain funding to work with the local community. It has therefore become something a lot of artists are tempted to do. Unfortunately there is seldom any budget for research and artists do not always know the community they are dealing with. This has created frustration on the community side as well as with artists.

Popular types of community art events are recycling projects and art markets. The Busan Cultural Foundation is a big initiator and organiser of community art projects in Busan and they lease old and run down houses in the area to host events. They do not rebuild the houses but repaint, redecorate and fix where needed, so they can use the space for workshops and they clean up the neighbourhood. They buy everything locally. It took a long time for the original local residents to get used to this. Song Soo KYUNG, teamleader at the Busan Cultural Foundation explains: 'For a few months local people were very negative about what was happening, but they kept on talking with them, they built up relationships of trust and now they really feel like a family. It's very important to us to give back to them and to make sure they are happy. We ask for their input and integrate their ideas in to the plans, using their materials and workforce.'<sup>86</sup>

Outside the centre of Busan, Hongti Art Centre is located amidst the factories, a place where a different type of Community Art project takes place, engaging local factory workers in art projects.

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86 Interview with Song Soo KYUNG (Busan Cultural Foundation) on 31 July 2015

Yunkyung KAM organised the project 'A Piece of Cake' in which she decorates cakes and talks about art with the participants.<sup>87</sup> Chang KONG at Sunbo factory explains that he enjoyed the event organised by KAM because it brought him and his colleagues a bit closer to each other and gave them a chance to relax and leave the stress of the job behind. 'Usually in the factory you do not show your personality, you always keep a poker face. Most of my colleagues I have never seen smiling. Seeing them smile at the event made me change my mind about them. Having spent some time with each other outside of the factory will improve our teamwork.'<sup>88</sup>

## 5.2 Gentrification

The Korean government is highly aware of the potential of artists in making neighbourhoods popular and trendy, thus raising the property values and changing the look and reputation of the neighbourhood. This is often accompanied by an influx of new and wealthier residents. In most gentrification projects artists are knowingly or unknowingly complicit in this process of raising rents, making it impossible for the original residents (including the artists themselves) to stay.

Korea is developing rapidly and this is changing neighbourhoods every day. In recent years, several major cultural infrastructure construction projects have been instigated such as the realisation of Zaha Hadid's Dongdaemun Design Park (DDP)<sup>89</sup> in 2014 and Gwangju's Asia Culture Complex (ACC)<sup>90</sup>, completed in 2015. Both these huge futuristic buildings are intended to be cultural hubs, DDP for fashion and design and ACC for art and culture. Though these mega projects have a cultural purpose, local and artistic communities have been suspicious towards them, mainly because these big projects were accompanied by the eviction of the original residents of the area.

The Design Park Plaza was one of the key efforts of Design Seoul, which was developed in 2006 just after OH Se-hoon was first elected as mayor. The plan was to revitalise the economy of the Dongdaemun area by demolishing Dongdaemun Stadium (including the baseball stadium) and building a design complex in its place. Originally, it was supposed to be completed in 2010 in time for the Design Olympiad and Design Capital Seoul events but as the mayor's term came to an end, the completion date was pushed back and the construction costs ballooned to 480

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87 <http://www.apieceofcakeart.com>

88 Interview with Chang KONG on 30 July 2015

89 <http://www.zaha-hadid.com/architecture/dongdaemun-design-park-plaza/>

90 <http://culture360.asef.org/magazine/transforming-gwangju-towards-the-asian-culture-complex/>

billion KRW – double the initially planned 240 billion KRW. Eunseon Park (Listen to the City) adds: ‘Zaha Hadid visited Korea once, 18 years before, so it would not be easy for her to understand the particular spatiality of Dongdaemun Stadium. Like other cities, Seoul is home to a middle class that is able to partake in culture, but Hadid could hardly be expected to have been aware of the history of anti-Japanese resistance bound up in Dongdaemun Stadium, the crowds that vented their anger under the dictatorship through baseball, the retail and wholesale clothing merchants who passed by it, the streetside restaurants that packed the area, the thousands of street vendors who fed off this area that disappeared for the sake of her structure.’<sup>91</sup>

There are also examples of successful gentrification projects where the locals have benefited from the area undergoing a facelift, such as Gamcheon cultural village in the South of Busan.<sup>92</sup> Rather than building new buildings the council realised that the old buildings in Gamcheon gave the neighbourhood its unique identity. During the Korean War (1950-1953) a lot of people fled from North Korea and came to Busan. The city did not have the capacity to accommodate the immigrants so they started to build their own neighbourhoods on the mountain. They were slums with small houses that the migrants built themselves, all very close to each other. Nowadays all these little houses have turned into colourful crafts shops and small coffee shops. Even though the prices have gone up because of the area’s popularity with tourists, the original residents keep the area clean and are running most of the shops. Maps of the area are sold and the money for the maps goes back to the locals. The locals do not understand the sudden popularity of their neighbourhood, but they are happy with the income.<sup>93</sup> Busan city council is already looking at two places to turn into ‘art villages’, meaning opening little shops where people can sell their (traditional) crafts.

### 5.3 Nature-Art

The concept of Nature-Art is not a new trend and has been popular with artists since the early 1980s when Nature-Art collective Yattoo started organising their Biennales and other Nature-Art events. Yattoo is the name of a group of artists who first started this movement of making art in nature in Gongju, using nature as the only resource. The Nature-Art movement is seen as completely separate from the (Seoul) art world and there are hardly any connections. This is partly because Nature-Art is made in nature, and the art world is mostly in the city.

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91 Excerpt from the website: <https://vimeo.com/43113613>  
92 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamcheon-dong>  
93 Interview with Yunkyung KAM on 19 July 2015



Nature-Art requires any person (not just artists) to go into nature with empty hands and an empty mind. The most important thing with Nature-Art is the experience. After spending some time in nature, nature will reveal itself and that's when you can start making Nature-Art. You can only make Nature-Art by using your own hands and using nature as your material, your canvas.

This is why Yattoo offers workshops, so that people can use their own hands. The basic idea is that Nature already has everything and it is up to you to concentrate and meditate to see it. Yattoo member Wongil JEON: 'When you prepare something and have a plan you won't see what's already there. But when you come with an empty mind and wait, then nature will always give something good. Nature has the life and the power, invite it into your work and it will work itself.'

Although Nature-Art is not an activist movement, the work that comes out of it is supposed to demonstrate how we should live with nature. Nature Art shows a way of life that is balanced and harmonised. Nature-Art works with the relationships between nature and nature, and nature and art – making connections. It's about revealing the character of nature. JEON: 'If people see the character of Nature they will start caring and realise that Nature is not just for food or manufacturing.'<sup>94</sup>

There have been over 125 artists involved in the Yattoo international project, with people from all over the world. They work with elementary school teachers, older people and people with disabilities. The Nature-Art centre includes a library and a Nature-Art school, both based in Gongju. They have a big network around the world, with many catalogues and other kinds of documentation, built up over the years. The network is tight: 'when you sleep and eat together in nature you build up a strong bond, in the evenings we show our artworks to each other, present what we have been doing. People become friends forever and Yattoo is the hub that binds them together.'<sup>95</sup>

However, what is missing in this movement is the engagement of the next generation. Being outside the city, with its hippie reputation, young people are not very interested in Nature-Art. Even though the government is and has been very supportive of the movement, it will not survive with just money. Yattoo invites young people to come and organise their own projects, spread the movement as all the facilities are there.

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94 Interview with Wongil JEON on 24 August 2015

95 Interview with KO Seung-Hyu on 24 August 2015

Wongil JEON (Yatoo):

“ We want to see young artists as we learn from them too. But you don't see a lot of young people interested. They are waiting for the call from the gallery, not the call from nature.<sup>96</sup> ”

## 5.4 Independent Spaces

Since the early 2000s, most of the formerly described 'alternative art spaces' have become institutionalised. 2008 was a peak for the arts in terms of selling and after that the recession kicked in and sales started to decline. Something else became visible, as artists were not looking at selling their work anymore. Small artists' collectives and communities started appearing in Seoul; a positive consequence of the recession. After the well-known Ssamzie space<sup>97</sup> closed its doors, the Seoul art scene changed and a second generation of art spaces slowly started to appear. Now there are around 30 emerging artist-run spaces, mostly owned by artists and curators in their twenties and early thirties. The disappointment in the infrastructure for these spaces actually generated energy, mainly to function without bureaucracy and the institution. Many of them started their space because of a lack of opportunity and engagement in the established art world.

Okin Collective:

“ Main art institutions are losing their function. For example, in the recent past, art organisations were always run by the government. In the 1990s to the early 2000s, artists would kick off their career in the independent art spaces, then move on to museums and then to the international art world, such as Biennales. Now the artists stay in the independent spaces, also later on in their careers. They stay in very small organisations or artists' collectives and the spaces aren't seen as a stepping stone. In the past there was a bigger goal, a career path where it was necessary for the artist to become part of the system.<sup>98</sup> ”

What is specific for Seoul is that more and more artists are running their own spaces, without any government support. They are self organised and are sharing information between themselves, are very active on Twitter and are introducing artists to each other. They use SNS (social media) as a tool to promote their shows and support each other. When some places are difficult to find  
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96 Interview with Wongil JEON on 24 August 2015

97 <http://www.artfactories.net/SSamzie-Space-Seoul.html>

98 Interview with Okin Collective on 27 July 2015

they just give an online map so people can find it on their phones. A good example of a space that works in this way is space 413.

Artists who started their careers in the 1990s up to early 2000 are now in their mid-thirties and are still influenced by the belief there is a working structure. Younger generations do not believe in that structure anymore:

Okin Collective:

“ You are either a superstar tomorrow, but can be a nobody the next day. You don't need stepping stones, you don't need to build a career, you can't plan it. The art practice is becoming more ephemeral and temporary. Biennales are looking for the next big stars, the new faces, but not within a working structure. If the younger generation doesn't believe in the working structure, then how do they position themselves?<sup>99</sup>

According to some of the independent spaces, the established scene is not that interested in them, mostly because the independent spaces are too critical of them. The people who used to protest and be independent now have all the good jobs in the established scene.

The current movement of independent spaces is very related to real estate issues in Korea. Most people combine having a space with a part-time job. Sometimes they can just make one artwork per year. They do jobs that are somehow related to the arts, or work in cafes. Finding an affordable studio is problematic so artists are always looking for residencies as a way of having a place where they can make work. Unfortunately the residencies are almost only available for artists that already have a career or for international artists. Most people expect artists to also have a 'normal' job, since being an artist is not seen as an occupation but something you do on the side.

Independent space Audio Visual Pavilion explains that when they were looking for a space for their exhibition 'No mountain high enough' they could not find anything that they liked in the regular art circuit so they went looking for something else. They could only find White Cube type of spaces.

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99 Interview with Okin Collective on 27 July 2015

Audio Visual Pavilion:

“ We don’t want to be art space owners, but just be ourselves as journalist and curator with a place where we can do what we want to do. We are not doing it for the money, that’s so boring. We are not so ambitious so we don’t need a manifesto.<sup>100</sup>

They found the systems in the regular art scene were too strict and found also that artists preferred to work in a more free environment, where they ‘don’t just talk about administration and applications, but where you can have a conversation about art and open the show ‘till late when you want to’. Government officers usually do not want to work late and in galleries you cannot touch anything or take photos. Audio Visual Pavilion found that even senior artists who have worked in museums a lot prefer to work in a more flexible way, as it is boring for them to work with museums. ‘At AVP we don’t have rules and limits.’ Unfortunately they also indicate they are tired and have no hope for change. They do their artwork in the afternoon and still go to their part-time jobs. They have no faith that there will be change, neither social nor environmental because ‘art and politics are too far away from each other.’<sup>101</sup>

## 5.5 Art Education

A recurring theme in the interviews was the incredible number of Korean artists wanting to go to London for their art education. Almost every Korean art student either wants to go abroad for their education, or has done so. However, arts education in Europe is inherently looking at art from a European point of view, meaning Korean art students return to Korea with a Eurocentric vision on art. Goldsmiths and UAL, amongst others, are on the wish list of almost every art student; universities are very aware of this appetite and capitalise on it. They have recruiters (‘agents’) in different countries across Asia actively on the look out for students (i.e. parents) who can afford the tuition fees to study art in London, because the tuition fee for Asian students is much higher than for European students. Artist Ayoung KIM, who studied at UAL, explains: ‘as a Korean artist it was very awkward to study in a place where the educational approach is very Eurocentric. Though there is a lot of writing and research on colonialism, it’s never from an Asian perspective.’<sup>102</sup>

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100 Interview with Audiovisual Pavilion on 19 August 2015

101 Interview with Audio Visual Pavilion on 19 August 2015

102 Interview with KIM Ayoung on 23 July 2015

Filmmaker Kelvin Kyung Kun PARK confirms his reverse culture shock returning to Korea:

“*Everything I learned in Europe was suddenly useless as Western culture is a reversed kind of understanding of things. I was forced to reverse again what I was taught. Many art students in Korea study abroad and try to mimic here what they were taught but the language is still external.*”<sup>103</sup>

Artist Hyemin SON refines the point:

“*Art education is not better or worse here or in the UK. I did my MA in the UK but that was mostly because I wanted to meet new people. You know the conversation is going to be very Eurocentric, but you want to have a sense of what’s out there. However you need to realize that after graduation - given the difficulty of getting a visa - you can’t stay.*”<sup>104</sup>

Artists Mijoo Park and Dirk Fleischmann try to offer this aspect of meeting new and international people without having to leave Korea. They have set up a new art school in Seoul, RAT School of the Art. The RAT School offers a master class certificate along with a rather un-Korean study programme mainly involving critique sessions with advisors and visiting exhibitions. There are no assignments or educational standards. A very unconventional set up in a country where official diplomas and certificates are valued very highly. It’s a welcome alternative for students looking for a less hierarchical, international learning environment.<sup>105</sup>

Art students do not realise that there is not going to be much money when you work as an artist or curator and that they will be at the bottom of the economic ladder. Young students are not educated about that, which is partly a generational problem, because their teachers did not grow up in a time when there were so many art academies and artists as nowadays. Some of the interviewees are worried about the privatisation of the national galleries and the government taking over the art schools. The government likes to keep the employment rates very high and artists generally bring down these rates. For this reason some universities are trying to get rid of art students.<sup>106</sup>

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103 Interview with Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK on 7 August 2015

104 Interview with Hyemin SON on 8 August 2015

105 Interview with Dirk FLEISCHMANN and Mijoo PARK on 7 August 2015

106 Interview with Part Time Suite on 20 August 2015

## 5.6 Hallyu: Creative Industries

The government is stimulating young people to start their own business, especially in design, gaming and fashion. These three areas are supposed to further fuel the creative industries of Korea, the *hallyu*, literally meaning the flow of Korea. Korea currently holds a strong position as Asia’s foremost trend driver and fashion is one of the pillars of Korean popular culture. Koreans pioneered the mix of streetwear and high-fashion. The crown jewel of Korea’s fashion scene is the country’s largest fabric market Dongdaemun, a six-floor complex in the Jongno District of Seoul. It is home to 30,000 retail clothing shops and over 5,000 sewing workshops. These manufacturing conditions allow for a huge speed of production. It means that designs can move from ideation to reality with some of the shortest turnaround times imaginable. Dongdaemun area can boast over KRW 20 trillion (approximately 18 billion USD) in annual revenue. With hundreds of other smaller markets around Seoul, Korea is a very attractive place for fashion designers and generally sourcing materials.<sup>107</sup>

The film industry is also very advanced, more than the visual arts. Filmmaker Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK explains this is because filmmaking is a modern invention. ‘We are far more comfortable with this medium in Korea than visual art. The industry is more organised and Korean film is popular abroad.’<sup>108</sup> The film industry is unionised and Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) celebrated its 20th year anniversary in 2015. As a film festival they have good international networks and funding and functions as a portal for Asian filmmakers.<sup>109</sup>

## 5.7 Artists’ Residencies

Residency programmes are very popular in Korea, and there are over 50 active programmes available for national and international artists. Often empty spaces such as former factories are used as residencies, or for example the renovating unused sewage treatment facilities on Nanjido, which are now the SeMA NANJI Residency.<sup>110</sup>

Usually these residency programmes are led or initiated by the government. The government-led residencies are often more strict and aimed at bringing in well-known international artists to

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107 <http://hypebeast.com/2015/8/dissecting-why-south-korea-is-at-the-forefront-of-fashion-with-kathleen-kye-of-kye?>  
108 Interview with Kelvin Kyun Kun PARK on 7 August 2015  
109 <http://www.biff.kr/structure/kor/default.asp>  
110 <http://www.transartists.org/air/sema-nanji-residency>

Korea. The government sees it as an efficient way to work internationally: it is inexpensive and you can document it. However, many international artists coming on a residency find it hard to integrate as they have limited time and the local artists are tired of meeting a new international artist every time. There is little chance of building up a relationship or meaningful, sustainable and long-term collaboration. Artists come and go and they get the same menu of people to meet and places to visit. Generally residencies do not collaborate with each other and resident artists are not really embedded in the art scene. Foreign artists feel they are outsiders, with no access to the real art world. When residency programmes just started to become popular this was very different; the lectures and artists' talks by resident artists were very popular and the programmes were carefully curated. Nowadays artists come and go and there is no time for proper exchange or evaluation.<sup>111</sup>

Artists' residencies have a lot of potential to become interesting and diverse places for art and artists but currently are mostly very official, administrative and limited for participating artists. There is a lack of an informal network, which makes it very challenging for resident artists to make connections that are not superficial but that are long-lasting and meaningful on both sides.

Dawn Alba LIM:

“*Korea is full of residency programmes. All the city local governments want to have their own residency. All the residencies 'host' international artists but no one is really helping them. In my work I often saw international artists being quite lost and unable to make meaningful connections.*”<sup>112</sup>

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111 Interview with Dirk FLEISCHMANN and Mijoo PARK on 7 August 2015

112 Interview with Dawn Alba LIM on 12 August 2015

# 6

## Directory of Organisations

### 6.1 Introduction to the Directory

What can you expect to find?

This Directory offers a selection of 20 initiatives in Korea engaging with social and environmental sustainability. It is a combination of art spaces, festivals, biennales, government agencies, platforms, residency programmes, artists' initiatives, labs, community organisations and more. The selection is made by the researcher and not exhaustive but based on over 50 interviews conducted in Korea between July and October 2015. It may provide a starting point when wanting to make connections in Korea with artists and other creative people who are committed to building more sustainable societies. The Directory features the following details:

- A description of the initiative
- When it was founded
- Who it is for
- How it relates to the 7 identified sustainability trends
- Some entries include a quote from the organisation
- The URL

In the Glossary you can find more detailed information on how the interviewees relate to the identified trends, which were recurring themes in all interviews.



## 6.2 Selected initiatives

### — ANYANG PUBLIC ART PROJECT (APAP)

Designed by Álvaro SIZA VIEIRA, the pavilion is at once an open building for enjoying nature and a temporary architecture for public events and exhibitions. The programmes for Anyang Pavilion focus on converting the resources of APAP, accumulated for almost ten years, into different kinds of experiences. Housed in Anyang Pavilion are the 4th APAP's initiatives and APAP's infrastructural projects, [Park Library](#), [Making Lab](#), [Project Archive](#) and [APAP Tours](#). The programmes hosted at Anyang Pavilion provide various channels and occasions for the public to meet and experience public art. The purpose of APAP is to invite artists to engage with the time and space of Anyang, and commission them to make new works or practice that reflects on the particular contexts of the city.

**Founded:** 2013

**Type:** public art pavilion, government-funded

**Related trends:** community art, arts education

**Who for:** citizens of Anyang, national and international artists

**Quote:**

“*Making Lab demonstrates artistic potential based on the application of open source technology. It explores an archetype of sustainable lab or studio, driven by local community's needs and participation. For the past few years, spaces such as makerspace, hackerspace or fab labs have emerged around the world. Based on the values of sharing and cooperation, these spaces explore what the ideal community of makers should look like. We allow the citizens of Anyang to familiarize themselves with new technology through various types of workshops focused on making rather than outputs, and are able to share conversations on different subjects.*<sup>113</sup>

**URL:** <https://apap.or.kr>

### — ASIAN ARTS THEATRE

The Asian Arts Theatre is part of the Asia Culture Complex (ACC) in Gwangju. Though it only opened in 2015 it put its name on the international cultural map with a cutting edge artistic programme that is not shying away from engaging with social and political issues.

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113 Email correspondence with JC KWON on 17 August 2015

**Founded:** 2015

**Type:** theatre, government-funded

**Related trends:** artists' residencies, gentrification

**Who for:** national and international communities interested in contemporary (performing) arts.

**URL:** <http://asianartstheatre.kr>

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### — ART SONJE

Art Sonje is a private art museum exhibiting contemporary and experimental art. They host regular art exhibitions, lectures, movies, dance and music performances. One of their recent programmes is 'Real DMZ' in which artists research the Demilitarised Zone, the area separating South Korea from North Korea. This zone has become an extraordinary natural environment, and home to many different species because its inhabited by such few people.

**Founded:** 1998

**Type:** private art museum

**Related trends:** gentrification, *hallyu*, arts education, artist' residencies

**Who for:** anyone interested in contemporary art or the DMZ

**URL:** <http://www.artsonje.org>, <http://realdmz.org>

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### — AUDIO VISUAL PAVILION

Audio Visual Pavilion is an independent art space run by curator HYUN See-won and journalist AHN Ihn-yong. The goal behind the Pavilion was to create a new form of cultural movement, a step beyond the existing artistic forms in Seoul. They create their own experiments, things that are not limited to displays, installations, sales, collections, and a support system.

**Founded:** 2013

**Type:** independent art space

**Related trends:** gentrification, independent spaces

**Who for:** artists, curators, anyone interested in art and independent spaces

**Quote:**

“ We work with unknown artists when we want to, build something weird when we want to, make a book when we want to and change the opening times when we want to. Then we can be

happy with the result. When we're excited, the audience is excited. They know it.<sup>114</sup>

**URL:** <http://audiovisualpavilion.org>

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### — BARIM

BARIM is a cross-genre collective of artists who are based in Gwangju, working from a former *goshiwon*.<sup>115</sup> Barim aims to vitalise local activities to create a community of artists, local citizens, and audiences in Gwangju and to support cultural and artistic exchanges between local and international artists through artist-in-residence and research-in-residence programmes. The focus of these programmes is on process and discussion rather than completion and production.

**Founded:** 2013

**Type:** residency, independent spaces

**Related trends:** independent spaces, artists' residencies, gentrification

**Who for:** artists, curators, cultural organisations and anyone interested in Gwangju

**Quote:**

“ I believe if you really want to do something you can do it, sometimes it is even better when you don't get governmental funding as it can restrain you. Unless you use the government funds the way you like it.<sup>116</sup>

**URL:** <https://barimart.wordpress.com>

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### — GEUMGANG NATURE-ART BIENNALE

The Geumgang Nature Art Biennale is an international Nature-Art exhibition planned by Yattoo, the Korean Nature-Art Association. The first Biennale was held in 2004, supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, South Chungcheong Province and Gongju City. Every other year this Biennale invites artists from around the world to live together and create their works. An introductory session for the nature-art project and other programmes are conducted in parallel. The works of the artists are displayed at *Ssangshin Park* allowing visitors to observe how they interact with the natural context.

**Founded:** 2004

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114 Interview with Audio Visual Pavilion on 19 August 2015

115 A Korean *goshiwon* is a small and inexpensive house, usually occupied by students.

116 Interview with Min Hyung KANG on 9 September 2015

**Type:** biennale

**Related trends:** nature-art, artists' residencies

**Who for:** children, citizens of Gongju, local and international artists and anyone interested in nature and art

**Quote:**

“ Nature Art works with the relationships between nature and nature, and nature and art. Making connections is important. If people see the character of Nature they will see things differently and they will start caring and realising that Nature is not just for food or manufacturing. <sup>117</sup>

**URL:** <http://natureartbiennale.org>

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### — GWANGJU BIENNALE

Gwangju Biennale is Asia's first and most prestigious contemporary art Biennale, founded in memory of the protests in 1980; the Gwangju Democratization Movement (also called Gwangju Uprising). The Gwangju Biennale is hosted by the Gwangju Biennale Foundation and The Metropolitan City of Gwangju and takes place every other year. The curators of the Biennale are mostly a mix of Korean and international curators with a global perspective on contemporary art.

**Founded:** 1995

**Type:** biennale

**Related trends:** arts education, gentrification

**Who for:** local artist community in Gwangju, international artists and curators

**URL:** <http://www.gwangjubienale.org/>

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### — HONGTI ART CENTER

Hongti Art Center is an art space built at the former Hong-ti Port inside Rainbow Industrial Complex in Dadaepo, Busan. Hongti Art Center has diverse facilities including a guesthouse, art studios and supports research, exhibition, education and academic activities. Located amidst the factories their programme has a strong focus on building a local cultural community with domestic and foreign artists.

**Founded:** 2013

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117 Interview with KO Seung-Hyun and Wongil JEOL on the 24th of August

**Type:** residency, government-funded

**Related trends:** gentrification, community art, artists' residencies

**Who for:** local and global artists, Busan community, factory workers

**Quote:**

“If we want to work with local people our best method would be to engage community art – artists. It just works. Gradually people are getting to know the art centre through the community art projects. For Europeans and other foreigners it's great to see Hongti Art Center, they are sometimes amazed that the government support this.<sup>118</sup>

**URL:** <http://hongti.busanartspace.or.kr/>

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### — LISTEN TO THE CITY

Listen to the City is an interdisciplinary group of artists, filmmakers and architects, forming critical and artistic responses to urban engineering projects and social and environmental injustice. They have been speaking out about shopping malls and large-scale architectural projects that are destroying sites of local identity and traditional small economies and explore alternative models.

**Founded:** 2009

**Type:** artists' initiative

**Related trends:** gentrification, independent spaces

**Who for:** artists, activists, people interested in civic media, urban governance, arts and environmental protection.

**Quote:**

“I'm not sure about the role of the artist in society. I feel uncomfortable both with the title artist and activist. We don't care about that title, we just love to make things in a good way. We did many exhibitions and made posters that became a form of alternative journalism. But if we need to sue the government we will do that and if we need to make a book, we'll do that. There is no concrete form. We plan things and try different things every time. We just look at the situation per case and decide on locations, tactics and design.<sup>119</sup>

**URL:** <http://www.listentothecity.org/>

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118 Interview with Enjin YANG on 30 July 2015

119 Interview with Eunseon PARK (Listen to the City) on 12 August 2015

## — MINOR ADJUSTMENT

Artists' collective Minor Adjustment is interested in a performative and public engagement with material and infrastructure. Central to their work is the idea of the prototype that contains the potential to produce a rupture or disturbance in the public domain. Much of the work they make operates in a kind of intermediate or middle state, somewhere between object, performance and event. With a lot of work they do, they are trying to understand it as they do it.

**Founded:** 2007

**Type:** artists' collective

**Related trends:** gentrification, community art

**Who for:** artists, the local community, children

**Quote:**

“Our work is not pedagogical and it's not about 'getting it'. It needs to ask questions, it's not about the result. As artists we have the freedom to say thanks but no thanks to commissioned projects expecting a certain outcome.”<sup>120</sup>

**URL:** <http://minoradjustment.net/index.php/growing-manual/seoul/>

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## — MIX RICE

Mix Rice is an independent art collective working on theatre projects, organising festivals and video classes with migrant workers, amongst many other things. They are very socially engaged and in their projects often address social or environmental injustices.

**Founded:** 2002

**Type:** artists' collective

**Related trends:** community art, independent spaces

**Who for:** artists, activists, migrant workers

**Quote:**

“We are very interested in the subject of the environment, it's very important, especially after Fukushima and if you look at the development policy by the Korean government. Also in my personal life it plays a big role; we started a co-op in the countryside, two hours outside of Seoul, which we share with other artists. It has a small comic book library, we have a garden with vegetables and we all come and visit to read and have dialogues about what the life of an

.....  
120 Interview with Minor Adjustment on 8 August 2015

artist in Korea looks like. This network of friends and the co-op we call SAMGEORI, meaning intersection. It's like a think tank of art and life. Seoul is so expensive so the sharing structure of a co-op works well.<sup>121</sup>

**URL:** <http://mixterminal.net>

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### — OKIN COLLECTIVE

The Okin Collective was formed as a series of artistic interventions to protest against the demolition of an apartment block in the centre of Seoul. Since then, their performances, installations, and a radio programme have focused on issues around systemic problems in the arts and society.

**Founded:** 2009

**Type:** artists' initiative

**Related trends:** gentrification, independent spaces

**Who for:** anyone interested in issues in the arts and society

**Quote:**

“ I'm essentially a political person and the work is close to me, so my work will be political. Being political is being ethical.<sup>122</sup>

**URL:** <http://okin.cc/>

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### — PART TIME SUITE

The work of artists' collective Part Time Suite is focused on cityscapes, narratives in spaces and the status of artists in these landscapes. They are interested in the prevailing economy-centrism that dominates the foundation for everyday life and the little power the arts can create in and against the force. Their work is often exhibited in unexpected and 'unattractive' locations, such as: basements, roofs and the overgrown spaces between houses.

**Founded:** 2009

**Type:** artists' collective

**Related trends:** gentrification, independent spaces

**Who for:** anyone interested in cityscapes and urban regeneration and social and political issues

121 Interview with Mix Rice on 25 August 2015

122 Interview with Okin Collective on 27 July 2015

addressed in the arts.

**Quote:**

“ We are worried about the conditions for artists, the economic problems of Seoul, the changing systems and how this change is impacting the cityscape and the city space.<sup>123</sup>

**URL:** <http://www.parttimesuite.org/>

.....  
**— RAT SCHOOL OF THE ART**

RAT school of the ART is a Seoul based art programme free from assignments and educational standards. It involves critique sessions with advisors who are present in the Korean and international art world. RAT wants to facilitate exchange with artists and institutions abroad and foster the potential of Korean art.

**Founded:** 2014

**Type:** education

**Related trends:** arts education

**Who for:** artists interested in contemporary non-hierarchical art education

**Quote:**

“ The RAT school of the Art serves as a place to compensate for a lack of other kinds of art education. It’s a school for both local and international people. It’s a place that should remind people that Seoul is a great place for the arts. There currently is no cooperation between the universities and the cultural organisations, the resident artists are not able to reach the wider audience. We want to create those connections.<sup>124</sup>

**URL:** <http://www.ratschoolofart.com/>

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**— SEOUL ART SPACE GEUMCHEON**

Seoul Art Space GUEMCHEON is located in a former printing factory and functions as an art space and international residency programme. With 19 resident studios, 5 hostel rooms, 1 co-work space and 1 rehearsal room for the members of the community, Seoul Art Space Geumcheon invites artists from a wide range fields including visual arts, installation art/media arts, performing arts/experiment arts and critical theory.

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123 Interview with Part Time Suite on 20 August 2015

124 Interview with RAT school of the ART on 7 August 2015



**Founded:** 2011

**Type:** art space, residency

**Related trends:** artists' residencies, gentrification

**Who for:** local and international artists, curators

**URL:** <http://geumcheon.blogspot.sg/>

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### — TAKEOUT DRAWING

Using the cafe as its vehicle, Takeout Drawing stages sustainable culture via cultural activities such as residency programmes, exhibitions and performance. It is a space for self-improvement, and fosters independent art activities, made possible by means of profits from sales of cafe products.

Takeout Drawing presents trends of contemporary art showcased mostly by artists-in-residence.

**Founded:** 2007

**Type:** art space, café, residency

**Related trends:** gentrification, artists' residencies and independent spaces

**Who for:** Anyone interested in arts, political engagement, gentrification issues.

**Quote:**

“*The role of the artist in contemporary society is both on the political side and the aesthetic side. Aesthetics have their own role to play, and political art is more to respond to our world. ‘I’ve seen a lot of people worrying about the big problems of our contemporary society, from climate change to politics, but they can’t act. They don’t know what to do and it’s too hard to get out of their busy routine.*”<sup>125</sup>

**URL:** <http://www.takeoutdrawing.com/>

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### — THE BOOK SOCIETY

The Book Society is a project space and bookshop that specialises in art and critical theory books. They frequently host talks and also publish their own books and magazines.

**Founded:** 2009

**Type:** bookshop and workshop space

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125 Interview with Hyemin KANG on 4 August 2015

**Related trends:** independent spaces, gentrification, art education

**Who for:** anyone interested in critical theory, art, design and books

**Quote:**

“ I don't see myself as an activist; I'm just working in a field that includes feminism and critical theories.<sup>126</sup>

**URL:** <http://www.thebooksociety.org>

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### — UJEONGGUK

Ujeongguk is an art space housed in a former post office building in Seoul. The group won the bid for the building at a public auction. This means their space is available at relative low cost for a longer time and they are independent from real estate fluctuations. In their programme they acknowledge and are aware of the artworld selective tendencies and try to address that.

**Founded:** 2015

**Type:** art space, residency, independent

**Related trends:** artists' residencies, independent art spaces

**Who for:** everyone, especially people interested in different disciplines of art such as sound art, video, performance and graphic design.

**URL:** <https://m.facebook.com/ujeongguk>

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### — WORK ON WORK

The 2 members of Work on Work are practicing the role and mode of curating through their collaborative efforts. This encompasses a range of activities, including production, writing, collaboration with other institutions and participating in exhibitions as artist and/or curator. Work on Work has an office in Seoul that also functions as a shared space where people with a serious interest in contemporary art can look into the various materials Work on Work collected. Sometimes the office is transformed into an exhibition space. Central to their way of working is allowing time for things to develop and materialise.

**Founded:** 2012

**Type:** artists' initiative, design studio

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126 Interview with Helen KU on 5 August

**Related trends:** arts education

**Who for:** artists, designers, curators, cultural spaces, anyone interested to collaborate

**Quote:**

“It’s difficult to survive as an artist, but that’s not going to change. Instead of complaining, why not try and think of unthinkable things. As an artist the society allows you to imagine the future without even much research! People are concerned about the suffocating art scene, but it’s imaginary, people have their own idea that they are being suppressed. It’s like a form of self-censorship. They are scared that if they do extreme things or say extreme things they will be cut away from money.”<sup>127</sup>

**URL:** <http://www.workonwork.org/>

### — YATOO-I

Yatoo-i is a movement of artists, mostly based in Gongju, who seek direct inspiration from nature. At their base in Gongju they have a centre, school, café and residency programme for which they invite international and local artists who actively work directly with Nature in a way that encourages healthy discourses and sharing of ideas and methodologies.

**Founded:** 1981

**Type:** residency

**Related trends:** nature-art, residency programmes

**Who for:** nature and art lovers

**Quote:**

“Ordinary artists should experience this way of working, it will make them rethink their relationship with nature and art. I developed my own work through nature art, sometimes it’s better to learn directly in nature than in school. If all people would do nature art, the world would look very different; it’s the opposite of capitalism.”<sup>128</sup>

**URL:** <http://www.yatooi.com/yatooi>

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127 Interview with Jaeyong Park on 20 August 2015

128 Interview with Wongil JEOL on 24 August

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## References

### List of Interviewees

(in alphabetical order)

AHN Hyunsook (KAMS)	24 July 2015
AU Matt (photographer)	17 July 2015
CHO Jieun (Mix Rice)	25 August 2015
CHUNG Isak (architect)	24 July 2015
DINTHER Jos van (Dutch Embassy)	18 August 2015
DONG Sijeok (PSR)	12 August 2015
FLEISCHMANN Dirk (RAT school of the Art)	7 August 2015
GLEBBEEK Olivia (artist)	28 July 2015
HAM Sunkyung (artist at the Busan Cultural Foundation)	31 July 2015
Hin-Bo-yeon (KAMS)	24 July 2015
HUSSE Susa (curator)	22 October 2015
HWANGBO Yumi (KAMS)	24 July 2015
INYONG An (Audiovisual Pavilion)	19 August 2015
JEOL Wongil (Yatoo-i)	24 August 2015
Shiu JIN (Okin Collective)	27 July 2015
KAM YunkYung (artist/curator)	19 July 2015
KANG Hyemin (Take Out Drawing)	4 August 2015
KANG Min Hyung (Barim)	9 September 2015
Ki-Young Peik (Gyeonggi Culture Foundation)	28 July 2015
Kim Beom-jong (413 collective)	8 August 2015
KIM Gun- Tae (artist)	27 August 2015

KIM Jongbuhm (NoNameNoShop)	27 August 2015
KIM Sun Young (KAMS)	24 July 2015
KIM Ayoung (artist)	23 July 2015
KIM HYO Jung (curator)	6 September 2015
KIM Souyoung (KAMS)	24 July 2015
KIM Sung Hoon (artist, farmer)	6 August 2015
KNIJN Rob (curator)	24 June 2015
KO Seung-Hyun (Yatoo-i)	24 August 2015
KONG Chang (Sunbo Factory)	30 July 2015
KU Helen (Book Society)	5 August 2015
KWON JC (APAP)	26 August 2015
KYUNG Song Soo (Busan Cultural Foundation)	31 July 2015
LEE Jina (Culture Keepers)	22 July 2015
LEE Miyeon (PartTimeSuite)	20 August 2015
LIM Dawn Alba (Kigoja)	12 August 2015
LIM Jaoh (Sunbo factory)	30 July 2015
LIM Samuel (musician)	31 August 2015
PAIK Yongsung (critic)	9 September 2015
PARK Eunseon (Listen to the City)	12 August 2015
PARK Jaeyong (Work on Work)	20 August 2015
PARK Jaeyoung (Part Time Suite)	20 August 2015
PARK Kelvin Kyung Kun (filmmaker)	7 August 2015
PARK Mijoo (RAT school of the Arts)	7 August 2015
PARK Sam (filmmaker)	3 August 2015
POHLE Sascha (artist)	9 September 2015
REARDON John (minor adjustment)	8 August 2015
SEEWON Hyun (Audiovisual Pavilion)	19 August 2015
SHIM Heereen & Hian (Art Space One)	26 July 2015
SHIN Hyunjin (curator)	20 July 2015
SON Hyemin (minor adjustment)	8 August 2015

WAN Jo (PostPoetics)	5 August 2015
YANG Chulmo (Mix Rice)	25 August 2015
YANG Enjing (Hongti art centre)	30 July 2015
YI Young-min (Okin Collective)	27 July 2015

## About the researcher

Yasmine OSTENDORF is a cultural policy researcher with over ten years of professional work experience in the international cultural field. She researches, stimulates, connects and facilitates art, design and culture that positively contributes to society; i.e work that explores, questions and addresses our social and environmental responsibility. Seconded from Trans Artists to Julie's Bicycle in 2012 she founded the Green Art Lab Alliance, a pan-European alliance for the cultural sector with over 20 partners, to enable knowledge exchange on environmental issues. She continued to work as Programme Director for Cape Farewell in London, connecting artists and scientists to work with the topic of climate change.

With a grant from the Mondriaan Foundation (NL), she is currently doing research on 'Creative Responses to Sustainability' across interviewing artists, curators, and cultural policymakers about their needs, wishes and challenges in engaging with environmental issues. The research forms the foundation for an Asian sister of the Green Art Lab Alliance, launched by Margaret SHIU, renowned cultural leader and founder of Bamboo Curtain Studio, in December 2015. Yasmine OSTENDORF is a Julie's Bicycle Associate.





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