

Abstract

From Local Government to Citizen Initiative: A Search for Seoul's Model of Self-Governance

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At each stage of urbanization, Seoul has developed different styles of governance systems as well. The newest form of urban governance were introduced to the Seoul citizens with the changed social environment such as global financial crisis, aging society, and social dichotomy.

In 2015, Seoul launched 'Neighborhood Community Service Center' program, which fundamentally transformed the characteristics of social services delivery system. Citizens were expected to be better off with more comprehensive welfare programs, and given more accessibility to public resources with less effort to claim ones.

This Neighborhood Community Service Center program aims to integrate independent services such as welfare, health, and community programs into networked and transdisciplinary ones so that citizens can be given the necessary services on time.

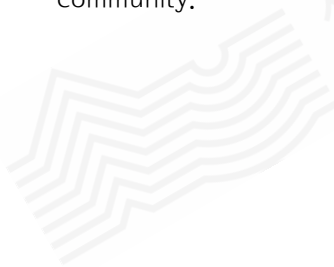
This reform of social service delivery can only be successful when it is loaded on the appropriate institutional infrastructure. In this regard, this study defines this Neighborhood Community Service Center as new institution of local autonomy system, and evaluates the effects of institutional reform on the self-governing capability of the communities in Seoul.

Although these capabilities are not easy to be conceptualized, this study believes that the values of social trust, willingness to participate, and the level of community identity of the citizens can provide the

good surrogates.

The result of the analyses shows that the major hypotheses of this study are generally held in most cases, proving that the Neighborhood Community Service Center reform is clearly successful in promoting self-governing capability.

However, this result does not mean that it can be diffused without any criticism. As the spectrum of service contents widens, the coordination of the parts of the program becomes more difficult to achieve. And the number of stakeholders increases rapidly, which needs coordinating capacity as well. The self-regulating local ecosystem that this reform aims to build cannot exist without proper managing capacity of the local leaders in both public and private sectors. However, it is self-evident that the key to success lies in the wisdoms stemming from the laypersons' experiences. Mobilizing self-interested citizens and enabling them to solve public problems still remain as the fundamental issue. Again, regardless of the quality of the institutions and amount of resources at hand, people still only hope for the future of the community.



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