



**Seoul City's social
innovation strategy:
A model of multi-channel
communication to strengthen
governance and citizen engagement.**

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Seoul City's Social Innovation Strategy: a model of multi-channel communication to strengthen governance and citizen engagement

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Abstract

Over the past two years, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has significantly changed the way it engages with its citizens – moving away from a one-way public communication model towards a system with greater focus on getting citizens involved in decision-making processes. The Seoul Metropolitan Government has developed various communication channels that open up a two-way dialogue between the city administration and citizens. This research paper explores how these new communication channels are creating a culture that encourages the city administration to shape new ideas from engagements with citizens who provide information about their needs. The research results show that the Seoul Metropolitan Government's multi-channel communication methods build shared understanding and trusting relationships among various stakeholders, including citizens. It enables stakeholders to become partners in creating innovative solutions to problems in society, rather than only being those who are affected by these changes.

1. Introduction

Social innovation is gaining considerable interest from public policy discourse throughout the world and South Korea is no exception. Ever since a well-known social innovator, Wonsoo Park, became the Mayor of Seoul in October 2011, there has been a shift towards an open and participatory dialogue between the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) and Seoul citizens. Mayor Park's philosophy of open dialogue and citizen participation was evident early on from his election campaign where he used social media to communicate and listen to the needs of voters¹. Since he started in his new post, his philosophy has been reflected in a diverse range of policies, programmes and legal framework initiated and directed by the SMG.

One of the core mechanisms used to embed the values of openness and participation in the way the SMG functions is the multi-channel communication between the SMG and Seoul citizens. The key element of the SMG's multi-channel communication is the appreciation for strengthening good governance through citizen engagement. This study examines how the SMG's multi-channel communication is strengthening citizen engagement and good governance. The aim of this research is to answer the following questions: How does the SMG's multi-channel communication help foster citizen engagement? Is citizen engagement strengthened by the SMG's multi-channel communication support, and does it help to sustain social innovation in Seoul? What are the challenges of the SMG's multi-channel communication in strengthening citizen engagement?

This report draws together information and insights from relevant reports, literature, and public data on Seoul City's social innovation and citizen communication agenda. It also conducts a deeper study of a few of the multi-channel communication tools used, including in-depth qualitative interviews with 11 city officers in key departments². This report also provides an overview of the SMG's public communication strategy and values (Section 2); introduces major communication tools and programmes used by Seoul City (Section 3); presents a case study which shows how multi-channel communication tools work in practice when solving a specific social problem (Section 4); discusses the challenges faced (Section 5); and provides concluding thoughts (Section 6).

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2. Citizen communication principle and strategy

The SMG is a large organization consisting of 30 departments and around 17,000 employees³. Among the various departments, the Social Innovation Bureau (SIB) and the Public Communication Bureau (PCB) are primarily involved in the social innovation activities of Seoul⁴. The fact that these two bureaus² are directly under the Mayor's Office shows his determination to make social innovation and citizen engagement a core principle of the city administration³. While the SIB was set up to plan citywide social innovation strategy and support social innovation activities in Seoul⁴, the PCB's mandate is to develop ways (tools and programmes) in which citizens can better engage with city policy and decision-making processes. This study focuses particularly on the innovative communication strategy and tools that are mainly developed by the PCB to encourage citizen engagement.

2.1 Principle: Towards a public engagement model

The PCB's role has changed significantly under Mayor Park's administration. It had previously focused on promoting Seoul City's activities and policies, which mostly functioned as a one-way flow of information from the SMG to Seoul citizens. Under Mayor Park's leadership, the PCB has shifted towards a model of two-way dialogue between the SMG and Seoul citizens. It has given citizens access to policy-making processes and information by opening up and sharing communication media channels⁵.

In order to enable two-way dialogue, the PCB places the core values of "participation" and "openness" at the heart of its communications channels⁶. Both online and offline⁵ communication channels are used to engage citizens (See Table 1 & 2). Most online channels have been geared towards two functions: opening up policy-making processes and information to the public, and receiving citizen feedback on a real-time basis. Several online broadcasting channels broadcast live SMG meetings and events, and real-time information is transmitted through multiple social network services (SNS)⁷.

3 (J. Ryu 2013)

4 (Y. Kim 2013; T. Kim 2013)

5 (D. Kim 2013; H. Kim 2013)

6 (SMG 2013a)

7 See Table 1 and section 3.1 for details.

Name	Description	Features
Hope Seoul (www.seoul.go.kr)	Official SMG web site	It includes several citizen engagement pages such as "Electronic Petition", "Open Government" containing SMG 's public data and meeting minutes, "Citizen Engagement" containing participatory budget programme reports and "SMG administration news".
WOW Seoul (wow.seoul.go.kr)	Web site showing User Created Content (UCC) site	Site showing various contents created by Seoul citizens. It includes video and photo sharing platform and webtoon (web+cartoon) services. It encourages citizens to participate in activities related with Seoul.
Live Seoul (tv.seoul.go.kr)	Online live broadcasting platform which shows administrative activities of SMG	It broadcasts various meetings and events hosted by SMG through online real-time streaming services. It includes Mayor Wonsoo Park's Seoul Story, book discussions, Cheong Chaek forums and others. Citizens can add their feedback on the site using various SNS tools.
Seoul Talk Talk (inews.seoul.go.kr)	Citizen news	Seoul Talk Talk provides news on issues concerning citizens lives such as welfare, job openings and cultural events. It regularly publishes newsletters where citizens create content as 'Citizen Reporters'.
Social Media Center (social.seoul.go.kr)	Central location for various social networking tools run by SMG	Official SNS platform integrating 44 SNS accounts run by various departments of SMG. It aims to promote efficient communication between citizens and related departments.
Online Dasan Call Center (120dasan.seoul.go.kr)	Online citizen petition platform	120 Dasan Call Centre is a 24 hour call center for Seoul citizens. They can ask any questions related with living in Seoul City. It is mainly used to file complaints of Seoul citizens. Online Dasan Call Centre is the extended online platform providing same service.
Online Mayor's Office (mayor.seoul.go.kr)	Official website of Seoul city Mayor	It provides information on Mayor's activities and core policies of Seoul City to citizens. The site includes Mayor's personal blog, online broadcasting channel streaming MMOs, Mayor's daily schedule, description of honorary deputy mayor and citizen feedback pages linked with various SNS accounts
Ten Million Imagination Oasis (oasis.seoul.go.kr)	Online platform for gathering and discussing citizen ideas for new policies	Seoul citizens can post their own suggestions which have potential to be realised as policies. It goes through a process from ideation to policy adoption and promotes collective intelligence and communication among citizens, experts and public officials.
Seoul Smart Complaint Report App	Mobile application for processing citizen complaints and suggestion	Citizens can report complaints on public facilities, traffic, and environment by using web and mobile application. Users can upload text complaints with photo and geographic information, and also trace SMG's progress to provide solutions.
Seoul Safety Keeper App	Mobile application specialised in disaster prevention and notification	Mobile app for reporting disasters such as heavy rain, storms, and heavy snowfalls with photos and geographic information.

Table 1. Online Communication Tools of SMG

Furthermore, these communication channels are becoming normal procedures in policy-making processes ranging from problem identification and agenda-setting stages to policy formulation, selection and approval stages (See Figure 1). The early stages of policy making processes feature the SMG's multi-channel communication tools including the Cheong-Chek Forum (CCF), Suk-Ui, the Mobile Mayoral Office (MMO) and social media platforms. Among them, the CCF is a citizen town hall meeting designed to enable further discussion and understanding of the detailed characteristics of a selected issue⁸. Citizen suggestions made at this forum are discussed extensively at expert meetings called Suk-Ui (deliberation)⁶. Social media is also used continuously throughout the entire process (including implementation and evaluation stages) so that citizens can receive information about the on-going progress and give real-time feedback and comments.

8 See section 3.2 for details.

Name	Description	Features
Cheong Chek (Policy by Listening) Forum (CCF)	A town hall meeting designed to develop new policies or programs	Setting agenda based on citizen suggestions, finding out policy partners specialized in agenda including civic groups, professionals, citizens, relevant public officials, and inviting them to discuss citizen suggestions
Suk-Ui (Deliberation)	Meeting with experts and civil society leaders to formulate and approve policies	Many suggestions made at CCF are intensely discussed at Suk-Ui. This is the program where SMG with experts and civil society leaders transform ideas into implementable policies or programs.
Honorary Deputy Mayor	Following Mayor Park's slogan, 'The citizens are the Mayor', citizens act as an honorary deputy Mayor for a year.	Invites citizens as Honorary Deputy Mayors based on their expertise and communication skills. Their role is delivering diverse groups of citizen voices to SMG. For a year, honorary deputy mayors have monthly meetings with the Mayor, policy initiative meetings and other events.
Citizen Speakers' Corner	Speech podium locates at the basement of Seoul Citizen Hall.	Benchmarked Speakers' Corner at Hyde Park in London. The easiest way for citizens to speak up any stories related to living in Seoul. All speeches are recorded and corresponding departments of SMG provides feedback.
One Day Honorary Mayor	Program for citizens from a variety of fields to become a honorary Mayor for a day	Honorary Mayor for One Day is chosen among citizens interested in civic affairs and has previously participated in SMG's events or programs. Through open invitation, selected citizens have a chance to attend meetings and events planned at Mayor's official schedule for one day.
Mobile Mayoral Office (MMO)	Mayor with SMG directors and managers visit places related with pending issues and listen to direct citizen voices	It aims to identify invisible causes of issues or hidden problems on the spot, and suggest solutions in partnership with SMG and boroughs. The suggested solutions are further discussed at CCF which is a part of MMO.
Policy Expo	Annual expo promotes citizen participation in policy making process with conferences, meetings & events.	Provides easy opportunities to citizens participate in a policy making process. To encourage citizen participation, it holds various formats of programs such as workshops, seminars, market events, concerts, etc.
Seoul Citizen Hall	Public Space locates at the basement of Seoul City Hall.	Serves as a courtyard where citizen can show their creativity while joining in various programs provided by SMG, NGO and citizen groups. It encourages citizen engagement with various activities of SMG.

Table 2. Offline communication tools

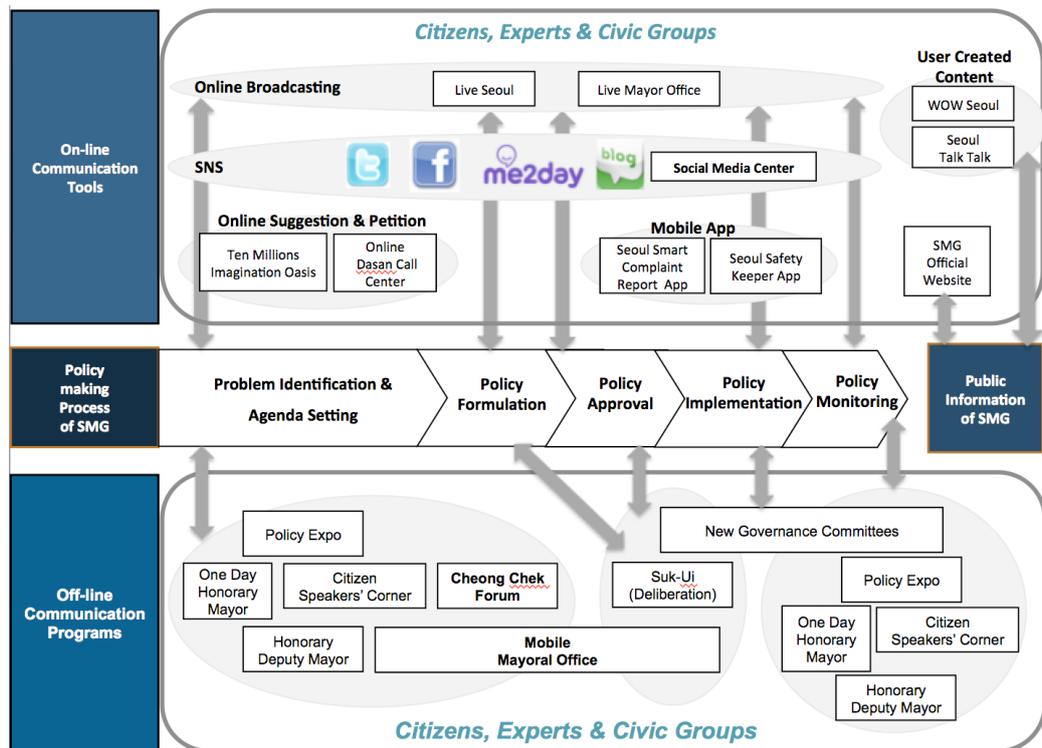


Figure 1. Online and offline communication tools in the policy-making processes

By utilising online and offline communication tools and programmes, the SMG encourages citizens to express their opinions by sharing in its communication channels. The SMG owns various media outlets (including websites, radio stations, billboards, subway/bus advertisement spaces) previously used exclusively to promote the SMG's work to citizens. Currently, around 30% of these media outlets are open to citizens. Citizens can use them to promote their own social activities⁷. There are also increased opportunities for citizens to contribute their own writing, photographs or videos on websites such as WOW Seoul and Seoul Talk Talk. HyunSeong Kim, the Media Advisor at the Mayor's Office, emphasises that such efforts send strong messages to city officers and citizens that Seoul City aims to move away from one-way communication towards public engagement.⁹

2.2 Strategy: Start by listening to the voices of citizens!

It has not been easy for the PCB to initiate and foster citizen engagement through communication. The main challenge is the existing culture and attitude of civil officers that are resistant to change. Civil servants have only recently begun to think of citizens as important partners in co-creating solutions. Breaking away from this entrenched culture within the SMG is an indispensable condition for innovation. The first step towards this change is listening to citizens' voices through diverse communication channels. Mayor Park recognises the importance of giving city officers an opportunity to experience and learn the value of 'listening' and engaging with citizens¹⁰.

In order to listen to citizen voices better⁸, the PCB created the 'Attentive Listening' team, responsible for various offline 'listening' programmes aimed at reversing the information flow of 'the SMG to Seoul citizens' to 'Seoul citizens to the SMG'¹¹. Furthermore, multiple social media tools are used to help engage with citizen voices¹². The Social Media Centre¹³ provides a centralised one-stop SNS message collection point, which distributes messages from citizens to the most relevant departments in the SMG, collects feedback from the relevant departments and sends replies to citizens. The Mayor has been a leading proponent of Seoul City's so-called 'Big Ear Policy' of listening to citizens through various channels for the past 20 months. This strategy has enabled citizens to become familiar with an environment where they express opinions and ideas and has prepared Seoul City officers to be ready to collaborate with citizens. The city administration is going through an important transition period from having a weak citizen engagement culture to appreciating citizen input in creating new city policies and programmes¹⁴.

3. Multi-Channel Communication Tools and Programmes

This section introduces three representative communication tools and programmes that reflect the current administration's core communication values of participation, openness and sharing.

3.1 Social Media Centre (SMC)

What is it and how is it run?¹⁵

The SMG started its blog service in 2008 and since then has been actively using social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook and MeToday⁹ to communicate with citizens. The SMG also runs several websites that provide information about activities of the SMG and Seoul citizens¹⁶. Under the so-called 'SNS administration' communication approach, Seoul City provides interactive information to citizens in real-time and opens up space for the public to freely add and share content.

One of the Social Media Centre(SMC)'s responsibilities is organising and centralising information

9 (H. Kim 2013)

10 (H. Kim 2013)

11 (D. Kim 2013)

12 (PCB 2012; PCB 2013)

13 See section 3.1 for details on the Social Media Centre

14 (H. Kim 2013)

15 (SMG 2013a; J. Kim 2013)

16 See Figure 1 and Table 1 for the details of these sites.



Figure 2. Social Media Centre

The SMC shortens the message processing time by automatically gathering all messages received through the 44 accounts. The SMC then operates at the center, channelling relevant messages to appropriate teams, receiving feedback from those teams and sending feedback to the public through various accounts run by relevant teams and the Mayor¹¹.

Outcome¹⁷

The centralised system significantly reduces SNS message processing times and enables the SMG to handle more citizen suggestions per day. Between November 2012 and March 2013, a total of 18,807 messages were received and on average 125 messages were processed per day. This is a total increase of 20 messages per day, which shows significant improvement. The SMC is particularly useful during unforeseen emergency situations. The SMG can send out urgent messages through 44 SNS accounts at the same time. For example, when the Seoul public bus system was recently hampered by striking workers, Seoul citizens were informed of bus routes still in operation and alternate routes on a real-time basis. This type of SNS communication is also effective in communicating important information during natural weather related emergencies such as during heavy rain or snow.

The citizen comments that are passed to the SMC cover a broad range of issues, from small problems that can be fixed quickly to complex issues requiring innovative solutions. SNS communication has also been helpful in gathering citizen feedback on pilot services. For example, when SMG announced the beginning of the operation of night buses through its Facebook account, an instant online debate was started with 3,000 replies and 50,000 likes. The citizens' comments were reviewed and reflected upon when the night bus operation plans were being refined.

3.2 Cheong-Chek (Policy by Listening) Forum

What is it and how is it run?¹⁸

The Cheong-Chek Forum (CCF) is a town hall meeting, which is becoming a core element within Seoul City's policy development process¹⁹. Cheong-Chek is a new word made by combining two Korean words 'listening' and 'policy'. This shows the determination of the Seoul City administration to listen to citizen input when creating new policies. By engaging with citizens through these forums, the SMG aims to understand local needs, find better ways to address these issues, and understand who the main beneficiaries of a policy really are.

The Cheong-Chek Forums are different from the previous consultation meetings run by the SMG. In the past, consultation meetings with citizens were carried out in the final stages of a policy making process. At this point additional comments and suggestions from citizens could not influence the major direction or content of a new policy. In contrast, the CCF takes place at the early stages of policy-making processes and provides space for citizens to propose and suggest new ideas. This gives them more influence over agenda setting and decision making processes (See Figure 1). This is an innovative approach for Korean public administration, which often regards citizen engagement as perfunctory²⁰.



Figure 3. Cheong-Chek Forum on urban farming in Seoul²¹

Since the first forum was held in November 2011, CCFs have taken place once a week on average. The subjects discussed have widely ranged, addressing issues from the local economy, education, welfare, homelessness, and health to name a few. The topics for these forums are determined after reviewing citizen voices from various demographics collected from multi-communication channels such as social media, the Mayor's listening tour¹², e-mails, direct petitions and phone calls. After the review, the Attentive Listening Team (ALT) within the PCB, which is in charge of running CCFs, selects the subjects that will be covered at a subsequent CCF. The ALT then contacts various civic groups and experts working in fields of relevance to the particular issues to be covered. The team holds several meetings with different stakeholders to discuss what the agenda and format of the CCF would be, who to invite and what roles they will play.

18 (SMG 2013a; K. Ryu 2013)

19 (H. Kim 2013; K. Ryu 2013; J. Ryu 2013)

20 (K. Ryu 2013)

21 Source: Official website of Seoul Mayor: <http://mayor.seoul.go.kr>

The CCF is open to every citizen in principle, but motivating citizens to actually participate is difficult. The ALT puts substantial effort in advertising through various online communication channels and inviting appropriate groups of citizens (based on the selected topic)¹³. The entire process is broadcast live through the 'Live Seoul' site, SMG's Twitter account and Facebook page. The CCF usually lasts for 100 minutes and it can be run in various formats such as those similar to World Café or TED style presentations with Q&A sessions. The Mayor sits among citizens, listens to their ideas, and shares his thoughts at the end of each CCF. When each forum is finished, the ALT compiles the suggestions made from the CCF and establishes a committee comprised of city officers in relevant departments, representatives from civic groups and other experts. This committee continues to hold official discussions until the suggestions made by citizens are implemented in practice. Usually it takes from two months to one year for the suggestions to be realised. During this period of time, the SMG officers publish progress reports every two weeks on the CCF website and shares updated information with CCF participants through text messaging services.

Outcome²²

Between November 2011 and November 2012, 41 Cheong-Chek Forums were held and a total of 5,456 citizens attended them. These 41 forums have produced 717 citizen suggestions and of those, 538 (75%) have been implemented. The remaining 166 suggestions are under review to be included in the SMG's long-term plans. The implemented 717 suggestions can be categorised into three groups: development of supporting programmes (84.1%), improvement of existing systems (13.0%), and allocation of new budget (2.9%).

A key outcome of CCF's one-year operation is the creation of new public-citizen governance bodies that aim to develop and support public policies. The biggest task involved with the CCF is continuing progress reporting while the SMG implements the citizen proposals made at the CCF. This task naturally requires the SMG to set up many public-civic group collaboration bodies, ask them to take on some of the responsibilities of implementing citizen ideas, and continuously gather feedback through them. The Seoul Library Network¹⁴ is such an example that was created after discussing new policies to support libraries in Seoul.

3.3 Mobile Mayoral Office

What is it and how is it run?²³

The SMG runs the Mobile Mayoral Office (MMO) programme that is designed to identify the root causes of unresolved issues or discover unseen problems, and suggest possible solutions. To achieve this goal, key decision-makers, including the Mayor, two deputy Mayors, the head of a borough, MPs, and city and local councillors visit local sites where these issues persist and meet with citizens. The MMO employs multi-channel communication (The CCF, Suk-Ui, and other online communication tools) throughout the operation of one programme.



Figure 4. MMO at Gangbuk-gu on 5 September 2013

22 (SMG 2013a)

23 (Hwang 2013; K. Kim 2013; MMO (Mobile Mayoral Office) 2012; SMG n.d.; LAT(Local Authority Team) 2013)

The SMG runs two types of MMOs: one for boroughs in Seoul and one for selected issues¹⁵. The MMO for a borough runs regularly while the MMO for a selected issue operates only when a certain concern has become the center of serious social debate. The preparation team, which usually consists of officers from the Local Authority Team (LAT) at the SMG and from a borough office, select ten major issues within the borough to go over¹⁶. The team also organises a visiting plan and citizen meetings to address the selected problems. The MMO for a borough typically runs for two days. It starts with the LAT's briefing on selected issues to key decision-makers, visiting related places of interest, and having meetings with resident representatives. During the first day, if key decision-makers and their working teams come across new issues that are not included in the original ten selected major issues to be discussed, these new issues can be added to an agenda for later discussion¹⁷. In the evening of the same day, key decision-makers with their working teams¹⁸ have an internal meeting to review the issues based on what they have experienced and heard from citizens. Their discussion ends once conclusions have been made regarding the immediate actions to be taken, mid to long-term plans, and who will be in charge of overseeing these actions and plans.

On the second morning, the Mayor presents the suggestions from the previous night followed by an open town hall meeting with citizens. The whole process is broadcasted through the 'Live Mobile Mayoral Office²⁴' website and reported live on Twitter and Facebook. As the final step, a new governance committee is set up to monitor and discuss the action items that will follow after the completion of the MMO. The committee members include the Directors of the Local Authority Division in the SMG, managers of relevant SMG teams, directors of relevant borough divisions, and citizen representatives. The committee continues to monitor whether the action items that came out of the process are actually implemented.

Outcome²⁵

Since November 2012, Seoul City has organised 19 MMOs. The LAT summarises four key outcomes achieved by the MMOs. First, the MMO provides solutions to petitions and problems that caused serious conflict among diverse stakeholders. Second, the MMO provides richer understanding of projects that have been under long-term review and guides the next steps to be taken. Third, the MMO solves unexpected problems which arise during on-going projects and provides additional resources to move these projects along. Fourth, the MMO establishes close collaboration between the SMG and local boroughs, which can lead to new solutions. The more detailed outcome of the MMO is discussed in the next section through a case study.

4. Case Study: 'Unsold Apartments in EunPyeong New Town'

The unsold apartments in the EunPyeong New Town development had been a long-standing problem of the Seoul City administration that put a significant burden on city finances²⁶. The SH Corporation, the public housing company owned by the SMG, had 618 unsold apartments remaining in EunPyeong New Town three years after the construction was completed on the apartment buildings²⁷. These unsold apartments were worth around 290 million GBP and it was crucial to sell them to address the large-scale debt that the city had accrued¹⁹. The residents around this area were also concerned about security as a large number of apartments were left empty for more than four years²⁸. However, in January 2013, the SMG announced that all 618 apartments were sold within 70 days of establishing a task force to address this problem²⁹. This case study examines how the SMG's multi-channel communication contributed to obtaining such a result.

First, multi-channel communication helped the SMG to identify and understand the nature of unknown and unexpected needs. When the Mayor heard about the EunPyeong New Town problem, he wanted to understand why these apartments failed to attract Seoul citizens and find a way to sell them. He asked his team to relocate his office to one of the unsold apartments and stayed there with SMG officers for ten days³⁰. This was how the MMO started. For ten days, the Mayor and his team stayed at the complex, listening to residents and identifying their needs. From this, the SMG,

24 www.seoul.go.kr/runningmayor/

25 (LAT(Local Authority Team), 2013)

26 (SH Corporation 2013)

27 (SMG 2012)

28 (Song 2013)

29 (SH Corporation 2013)

30 (Song 2013; JongEon Lee 2013; Hwang 2013)

in conjunction with SH Corporation, started to discover hidden problems and the true extent of the severity of known problems. The major complaints by residents were problems of infrastructure. These included shortages of nurseries, libraries, public transportation and complaints about the existence of an army base near the complex. After discussions with residents through the CCF and social media platforms, which were significant parts of the 10-day MMO, the residents made a total of 146 suggestions³¹. In the end, it was through discussions with residents about their issues that the SMG and SH corporation were able to comprehend the nature of the problems they were addressing. As a result, the SMG and SH corporation came up with new approaches to attract prospective homeowners²⁰.

Second, multi-channel communication contributed to creating innovative solutions through diverse types of governance. All the interviewees repeatedly commented that the initiation of new types of governance is a key outcome of the SMG's multi-channel communication³². The SMG's use of communication tools and programmes helped to encourage a new type of governance between the SMG and citizens, boroughs, councillors, MPs, and other public organizations. Communication with the SMG seeks to strengthen citizen engagement with the end result being the creation of policies or programmes that respond to citizen needs. To achieve this, the SMG collaborated with many other parties that had close ties to citizens.

In the case of EunPyeong, this type of governance through communication was crucial in helping the apartments to sell-out. By inviting all key decision-makers and residents to help clarify the problem at hand and suggest new solutions, the existing preconceptions amongst public parties were removed and a new way of thinking started. Two key factors eventually aided the key decision-makers in compromising and agreeing upon solutions. Firstly, all the MMO attendees were able to hear the trouble caused by the given issue. Second, a target was set to make decisions regarding the issue within one day³³.

Furthermore, solutions suggested to citizens were to be reviewed within 24 hours by the public through the CCF and various SNS methods including live internet broadcasting. All the various decision-makers were eager to show citizens that they were there to help them²¹. This kind of pressure created by government officials having to work "live" on internet and within a time constraint, with other public and private sector organizations as well as regular citizens, drove the creation of creative and new solutions³⁴. For instance, citizen solutions often turned out to be difficult to be implemented for various reasons such as legal restrictions beyond the control of the SMG or local boroughs, thus forcing new ideas to be thought up. The MMO attendees managed to find creative solutions that often required sharing responsibilities among different parties or with civic groups. During this process of creating innovative solutions, the Mayor played an active role as an arbitrator and facilitator. His role at the MMO and CCF was to continuously remind different parties involved about the nature of problems and citizens' needs. His role was also to suggest that new ideas and alternative solutions can be implemented together³⁵.

Third, the open and participatory nature of multi-channel communication contributed to providing legitimacy to the public service delivery. The interviewees, mainly SMG officers, emphasised the importance of openness and engagement achieved through multi-channel communication³⁶. During the course of using communication tools and programmes, the interviewees repeatedly heard from Seoul citizens, especially those living in underserved areas where they felt their voices were finally being properly heard by the authority for the first time. This acknowledgement boosted the legitimacy of the SMG's work. Citizens started building trust towards the SMG as they felt heard and because they could watch the Mayor make promises face-to-face at the CCF and through other SNS methods²². This in turn led citizens to cooperate with the SMG and accept its suggestions, even if they were sometimes different from what they had originally wanted.

One interviewee clearly pointed out the value of this outcome as follows³⁷. The interviewee said, "The ultimate goal of public administration is delivering efficient and effective public services. In

31 (MMO (Mobile Mayoral Office) 2012; SH Corporation 2013)

32 (J. Ryu 2013; Hwang 2013; JongEon Lee 2013; K. Ryu 2013)

33 (JongEon Lee 2013; JongSun Lee 2013; Hwang 2013; K. Kim 2013)

34 (Hwang 2013)

35 (Hwang 2013; JongSun Lee 2013)

36 (J. Ryu 2013; K. Ryu 2013; Hwang 2013)

37 (J. Ryu 2013)

this sense, the SMG's multi-channel communication exercising openness and citizen engagement has certainly contributed to achieving such goal. While the communication with citizens might have delayed the process of the SMG's administration, it offered the most valuable opportunity for public officers to gather very different, sometimes conflicting and contrasting, opinions among citizens and provided citizens and the SMG a space to express their thoughts openly and come up with agreeable new solutions. By doing so, citizens could accept SMG's decisions and enjoy the public services delivered by the SMG."

5. Challenges

The SMG's multi-channel communication faces several challenges although it has contributed to strengthening citizen engagement and governance.

First, new communication tools and programmes including both online and offline channels do not guarantee that a wide range of people's voices will be heard. Considering the high usage rate of the Internet and smart phones in Seoul²³, the SMG's online communication tools certainly increase its coverage of citizen voices. Nonetheless, active utilisation of these tools in expressing their thoughts is often limited to young generations or certain groups of outspoken people. Offline communication programmes also usually attract citizens who are active speakers or have close relationships with civic groups invited to the CCF or the MMO. The question is whether these people are representative of the people who are suffering from given issues. At this stage, it is hard to state confidently that participants of these programmes indeed represent the ideal diverse range of people's voices.

Second, the new communication tools and programmes introduced in this study contribute to solving a limited range of problems. Each communication channel undoubtedly has strong features to help solve certain issues²⁴. However, it is too early to claim that these new channels are always good at handling all types of major social issues. While this study has shown that new types of governance emerged through using these programmes that have addressed many difficult issues, there are several aspects of them that need to be further scrutinized. For example, further study could be done about how complex problems can be handled and whether other external factors (such as political reasons) might seriously hinder new types of governance.

Third, new communication tools and programmes require larger resources to operate and it is hard to provide sufficient resources under fiscal austerity. This challenge is more pressing in the operation of offline programs. This is because most offline programmes lead to continued conversations within governance committees until suggested ideas and solutions are realised. Follow-up procedures²⁵ demand one full-time SMG officer³⁸. However, this is a new type of work within the SMG and the large scale of the SMG's current debt makes it hard to increase staff costs.

Fourth, mature citizenship and trust among the SMG, civic groups and individual citizens are needed to obtain positive results of citizen engagement. However, Korean society is not quite endowed with these essential factors yet. Although mistrust²⁶ among the SMG, civic groups and individual citizens has started to diminish, there have not been many opportunities for professionals at different sectors to co-create solutions together. With new communication channels, there is a shift towards a new collaborative culture based on trust between different sectors. However, many interviewees felt that they still needed stronger trust and relationships with civil society and individual citizens.

Finally, strong leadership is required to make multi-channel communication work. The core values of the SMG's multi-channel communication are openness, participation and sharing. These values require the SMG to give up their authoritative power, conduct additional work for citizen engagement, and be monitored by over ten million Seoul citizens at any time. On the surface, these requirements impose extra burdens to SMG officers. Under these circumstances, the power of a strong leader who truly understands these values and therefore is able to pass his messages effectively to his or her teams within the SMG cannot be understated. The strong leadership also needs to positively influence not only SMG officers but also many different stakeholders outside the SMG. This study has clearly observed Mayor Park's strong leadership and its impact on the

success of the EunPyung case using MMO. Likewise, strong leadership is a necessary element for applying innovative models and obtaining tangible results. However, this can become a challenging point since strong leadership means that new communication models greatly depend on one individual.

6. Conclusion

This work reviews new multi-channel communication methodologies of the SMG and analyses how they help strengthen citizen engagement and governance. The true meaning of citizen engagement lies in whether citizens are able to collaborate or are empowered to develop and sustain solutions to social challenges³⁹. Citizen engagement cases presented in this paper do not yet exhibit citizen involvement to such degrees. Nevertheless, the authors would like to stress the novelty and significance of these cases in the Korean context. Until recently, citizen engagement opportunities designed and carried out by Korean public authorities failed to regard citizens as trusting partners and delegate power to them. Past experiences have misled many Koreans to think that citizen engagement is a waste of time, and have created a sense of apathy towards the values of citizen engagement²⁷. The biggest challenge in initiating and fostering social innovation in Seoul is encouraging trust among citizens, public officers, civic groups, and experts to work together and co-create new solutions.

The SMG's multi-channel communication approach is designed precisely to tackle this challenge. By gearing all citizen communication tools and programmes toward stimulating citizens to speak out and SMG officers to listen and empathise, diverse groups of people from different parties have had opportunities to talk to each other and understand each other better. Furthermore, transparency strengthened by various online tools and authenticity illustrated through offline programmes have together contributed to establishing trust among different parties and created positive experiences citizen engagement. Such challenges of building trust and engaging citizens are also not only limited to Seoul City. The SMG's multi-channel communication approaches offer valuable lessons to other cities that are ambitiously planning to initiate and drive social innovation.

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(Endnotes)

1 Mayor Park's election campaign team was able to raise 1.5 billion won (US\$ 1.3 million) on the first day of his official campaign. This result was obtained mainly through around 2,000 supporters who were instantly gathered through Twitter and Facebook messages (Kim 2012).

2 The third department directly managed by the Mayor is the spokesman room. There are other departments such as the Open Information Policy Department and Participatory Budget Division that place citizen engagement and openness at the heart of their programmes and policies. However, the SIB and PCB are the only units within the SMG directly managed by the Mayor that are dedicated to social innovation activities based on citizen engagement (Y. Kim 2013; H. Kim 2013; SMG 2013b)

3 One important common mission of these two bureaus is the dissemination of innovation and citizen engagement via communication throughout the SMG and Seoul. This is different from other departments, which develop and run public administration policies and programmes tackling specific social issues. These two bureaus support the other SMG departments to design and operate their policies and programmes through innovative approaches and citizen engagement (Y. Kim 2013).

4 The SIB also operates a number of citizen engagement programmes such as the social invention programme, citizens participating in sharing economy programmes, participatory community building programmes, and many more (T. Kim 2013; Cho 2013; SIB 2012). This study is limited to examining the communication tools and programmes of the PCB that initiate and strengthen further citizen engagement.

5 The PCB's communication tools and programmes can be categorized based on communication channel types such as online tools (including mobile apps), offline programmes, call centres, print media, radio/TV stations and billboards (PCB 2012). Among them, this work reviews only a subset of online and offline channels, which involve active two-way dialogues that trigger citizen engagement.

6 Suk-Ui is different from expert policy meetings undertaken previously by the SMG. Whereas expert suggestions made from previous meetings were considered as possible references only, Suk-Ui continues to propose ideas and plans until all participating experts and the SMG agree to implement them (K. Ryu 2013).

7 This media has been used by Seoul-based social enterprises to advertise their products or programmes. The advertisements were also produced with donations from major advertisement agencies that support the principle behind this opportunity. Around 60 enterprises have benefited from this scheme as of July 2013 (PCB 2013).

8 To begin with, SMG changed the direction of the flow of information. Information passed through SMG communication channels was mainly encouraged to flow 'from the SMG to Seoul citizens'. This means that SMG communication aimed to emphasise how well the SMG explained what they did to Seoul citizens, and helped citizens enjoy the services offered by the SMG (D. Kim 2013). However, this flow of information has changed to go 'from Seoul citizens to the SMG'.

9 MeToday (me2day.net) is a popular Korean social media platform, similar to Twitter, run by the Korean company Naver.

10 There are 33 Twitter accounts, 6 Facebook accounts, 4 MeToday accounts and 2 blogs run by the SMG. The Mayor himself uses his own Twitter account, @wonsoonpark, with 736,519 followers and a Facebook account, www.facebook.com/wonsoonpark, with 170,894 followers.

11 Figure 2 shows a screenshot of the Social Media Centre website. The left side of the screen shows citizen messages received by the SMC and the right side shows SMG replies sent via SMC. Anyone can easily browse citizen messages and SMG feedback messages in real-time.

12 The Mayor organised listening tours during his election campaign to listen to what Seoul citizens wanted him to do when he became Mayor. From this tour, he was informed of many issues and problems directly from Seoul citizens (K. Ryu 2013).

13 For instance, the ALT works hard to identify online communities particularly relevant to CCF discussion topics and concentrates on advertising the CCF through those communities (K. Ryu 2013).

14 The Seoul Library Network has members including the SMG, the Seoul Education Authority, the Seoul Library Association and many other reading groups in Seoul.

15 Seoul has 25 boroughs and they are responsible for addressing many daily troubles faced by Seoul citizens. However, the budgets of local boroughs are quite small and many of them hope to get financial support from the SMG to solve the issues of citizens. In order to provide a programme that is directly beneficial to citizens, the SMG runs MMOs with each local borough based on mutual requests. The second type of MMO is run to solve a specific issue that has already attracted major social attention in Seoul. For instance, in 2013, the SMG ran MMOs to invigorate traditional markets, which are rapidly losing their customer base to big supermarket chains. This MMO lasted for four days as four traditional markets were visited and various citizen meetings were conducted including the CCF. The MMO for boroughs is typically run for two days at each borough and 15 MMOs for the 15 boroughs have been held between November 2011 and September 2013. The MMO for a specific issue usually lasts longer than the MMO for boroughs.

16 In this process, the SMG contacts and gathers diverse opinions from different civic groups. In order to complement suggestions made by boroughs, the SMG actively searches for different opinions from a diverse range of groups (K. Kim 2013; Hwang 2013).

17 When key decision-makers and working teams personally experience and/or hear stories directly from those affected by the problem, they tend to prioritise solving these problems. By directly engaging with citizens, unseen aspects of problems are revealed.

18 Interviewees commented that they have never experienced this kind of meeting, which all major decision-makers with their working teams attend together. The number of attendees alone informs the uniqueness of this meeting. There are around 20 decision-making attendees including the Mayor, two deputy Mayors, heads of boroughs and directors of the SMG. There are also about 60 team members from these groups that attend this meeting. All together around 100 decision-makers and working team members make instant decisions and draw out action plans.

19 The city's debts stood at 20 trillion won (around US\$ 19 billion) when Mr. Park was elected as the Mayor. The debt decreased to 18.861 trillion won (around US\$ 17.6 billion) by the end of May 2013 (SMG 2013b).

20 Often key decision-makers within a big organization find it difficult to understand the true nature of problems. This is because problems are reported to them only through oral briefings and documents prepared by their staff. This kind of report is typically concise and does not accurately portray the problems experienced in everyday life by the public. MMOs guided all key decision-makers with working teams to comprehend the true characteristics of problems, which were often ignored through condensed oral or written reports (Hwang 2013; JongEon Lee 2013).

21 In many cases, these kinds of behaviours are truly oriented for political purposes. However, the nature of MMOs also aims to use these kinds of politicians' desires. By letting them meet up with the public face to face, key decision-makers have become highly motivated to solve those problems together. A kind of competition occurs between the Mayor, the head of borough, MPs and the city and local councillors, who are all elected by the public (Hwang 2013).

22 In regards to the EunPyung case, only 24 hours after residents had communication with key decision-makers, the Mayor himself openly presented possible solutions to residents and gathered further feedback from the residents. This kind of format largely boosted citizens' trust toward public authority and at the same time it also put pressure on the working teams of the SMG and boroughs to implement those promises (Hwang 2013; K. Kim 2013; JongEon Lee 2013; JongSun Lee 2013).

23 South Korean high-speed wireless Internet penetration rate reached 100.6% in 2012 according to OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) report (Moran 2012).

24 For instance, on-line communication tools are great for reporting unseen problems quickly, communicating policymaking processes and public information, and gathering quick feedback from diverse groups of people (See section 3.1 for details). This in turn helped to devise and refine new solutions. Off-line programs like the CCF and MMO were good for solving longstanding issues and resolving issues affecting many different groups of citizens (see Section 3.2 and 3.3 for details).

25 These procedures include arranging committee meetings, providing feedback to committee members and citizens on a regular basis, and coordinating them to agree on one finalised policy or program (K. Ryu 2013; Hwang 2013; K. Kim 2013).

26 Korean civil society only has a recent history of 30 years of democracy movements and this has resulted in substantial mistrust between the public sector and civil society until recently. Even many individual citizens tend to view civic groups only as loud advocacy groups that are not capable of delivering tangible solutions.

27 With a strong tradition of democracy movements over the last 30 years, Korean society has vibrant citizen advocacy activities and a strong belief in citizen power. However, citizens are relatively weak or muted in expressing their opinions in making policies or solutions to social challenges, particularly through collaboration with public authority. Not many Koreans believe that the public authority would give power to citizens when creating policies. This is because they have never experienced such opportunities.