Soil for Cultural Production

securing the place for cultural ecology under gentrification

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Soil for Cultural Production

securing the place for cultural ecology under gentrification

by

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Abstract

Is culture still alive in the city? Culture is widely recognised as an essential element that shapes urban vitality, local identity, and economic value. As a result, many cities actively seek to implement culture as part of urban regeneration strategies. However, culture is not something that can simply be installed or imported. While art may be produced through individual creativity, culture emerges through collective processes, requiring sustained interactions between those who produce it, those who experience it, and those who support it. In this sense, culture operates as an ecology rather than an object.

This research argues that the role of urbanism and spatial design is not to insert cultural artefacts, but to cultivate the ground that allow culture to grow on. When culture is treated as an accessory or image, its relational foundations are easily overlooked, resulting in places where culture remains visible but no longer alive. Gentrification intensifies this process by prioritising the most profitable and symbolic aspects of culture, while undermining the spatial and relational foundations that previously sustained cultural production.

Using the indie music scene in Seoul as a case study, this research examines how cultural ecology forms through network of actors and its operation in place. It then explores how this system is disrupted under gentrification, transforming living culture into branded image. The study begins in Hongdae, once a thriving centre of indie culture but now better known for its popularity than for ongoing cultural production. It then traces how cultural ecology relocates within the city and how it is transformed through this movement. Ultimately, it investigates how cultural ecology operates spatially, what kinds of spatial factors support its persistence, and what role spatial design can play in sustaining cultural production under context of urban transformation.

Keywords:*Cultural ecology, Cultural production, Gentrification, Urban transformation, Indie music scene, Seoul*

1

Introduction

1.1. Problem

While art may originate from individual acts of creation, culture is inherently collective, formed through shared social processes. Artistic practices become culture only through ongoing interactions among those who create, experience, and support them. In urban contexts, cultural production does not occur in isolation but is sustained through interdependent relations among cultural producers, spaces of production, participants, and local economies. Through repeated, everyday interactions, these actors collectively sustain cultural practices over time. In this sense, cultural production operates within an ecology in which cultural practices rely not solely on individual creators but on the everyday interactions of multiple actors.

In contemporary cities, such forms of cultural production play an increasingly significant role in shaping the character and vitality of urban environments. In some contexts, cultural production contributes not only to place identity but also to broader urban economies. While cities increasingly rely on cultural activity to generate value and distinctiveness, cultural production also depends on specific spatial conditions in which it can take place. Cultural ecologies are inherently spatial, relying on urban contexts that enable cultural practices to emerge and persist over time. However, it remains unclear whether the spatial conditions and qualities that support cultural production are adequately protected or supported within urban environments, as the places occupied by cultural producers have repeatedly been exposed to gentrification pressures.

The problem is that the spatial continuity of such cultural ecologies proves highly vulnerable under ongoing urban transformation. As cultural production contributes to shaping the distinct character of a place, it often reveals the area' s economic potential and attracts external interest. Culture is then increasingly mobilised as a resource for revenue generation, in which everyday cultural practices are reinterpreted as branded images to attract visitors and investment. As profitability becomes prioritised, rising rents and shifts in ownership place pressure on small-scale venues, restaurants, and cafés that previously supported cultural production. The displacement of these spaces weakens the relational networks among cultural producers, places, and participants, ultimately undermining the conditions necessary for cultural production to persist.

One case in which the formation and subsequent weakening of a cultural ecology can be observed is Hongdae, a neighbourhood in Seoul where South Korea' s indie music scene initially emerged. The concentration of small music venues enabled repeated interactions among musicians, audiences, venue operators, and surrounding businesses, allowing niche musical practices to develop through everyday use. As the area gained popularity, however, increased attention from the real estate market prioritised profitability over existing cultural practices, leading to rising rents, changes in ownership, and the displacement of small venues that had sustained the local cultural ecology. While the cultural image of Hongdae has largely remained, the conditions necessary for ongoing music production have weakened, resulting in a significant decline in everyday cultural practice within the area.

Problem statement
Taken together, these observations point to a structural problem in the way cultural production persists amid urban transformation. Therefore, the problem can be stated as follows:

Cultural production relies on a networked cultural ecology;
however, under gentrification, this ecology struggles to maintain spatial continuity,
resulting in the decline of ongoing cultural production
while only symbolic representations of culture remain visible

1.2. Aim and objective

This project aims to support the persistence of cultural production as a networked ecology. It approaches cultural production not as the outcome of individual activities but as a process sustained by a relational network among multiple actors, as well as by spatial factors that support it. Within the context of gentrification and urban transformation, the project seeks to clarify how such cultural ecologies can continue to sustain cultural production and how spatial design can contribute to this process without prescribing or controlling cultural practices. To achieve this aim, the project pursues three interrelated objectives.

First, it develops a detailed understanding of cultural ecology as a relational network. For this, the research examines how indie music production in South Korea operates through interactions among the actors involved.

Second, it translates these actor-based insights into a set of spatial factors that sustain cultural production, identifying both spatial conditions and spatial qualities that enable relational dynamics to operate.

Third, it articulates the role and limits of spatial design in supporting cultural ecology. Here, spatial design is approached not as a primary solution, but as a complementary instrument that operates alongside existing institutional and community-based efforts, focusing on enabling and maintaining the spatial conditions through which cultural ecology can function.

1.3. Research question

In line with the problem statement and research aim, the research question is formulated to examine cultural ecology and how it can persist under the pressure of gentrification. The sub-research questions support the main question, covering social dynamics, spatial factors, and the role of design in order to achieve objectives.

How can spatial design strategies enable and support cultural ecology under the pressure of gentrification?

1. *How do actors in cultural ecology form networks and how do these networks respond to gentrification?*
2. *How do spatial conditions and qualities shape cultural ecology and how are they transformed under gentrification?*

3. *What is the role and limit of spatial design in enabling and supporting cultural ecology and how can it complement existing instruments addressing gentrification?*

1.4. Relevance

This section outlines the relevance of the research by situating the identified problem in relation to the actors involved in cultural production, as well as urban professionals and policy actors who engage with culture in the context of urban transformation. The section also addresses the broader societal relevance of the research and its scientific relevance within urban studies, framing how the research contributes to ongoing discussions on culture, space, and gentrification.

Societal relevance

The societal relevance of this situation lies in the structural separation between those who collectively produce cultural value and those who are able to capture its benefits. In Hongdae, musicians, venue operators, and small-scale entrepreneurs contributed to the cultural character and vitality of the area through everyday practices and interactions. Yet the value generated through these collective activities was not distributed among those who produced it.

This condition is articulated in the declaration of the Cooperation for Self-Reliant Music Producers, which states: “After fifteen years of busting our asses making music, all it did was raise land values in the area, feeding only landlords and property owners.(**<empty citation>**)” The statement reflects a broader societal contradiction: cultural value is generated through collective and place-based practices, while its economic benefits are largely captured by actors who are not directly involved in its production.

Urban systems and regulations tend to prioritise property ownership over use, contribution, and everyday participation. As a result, actors who actively shaped the cultural identity of the area had limited capacity to secure continuity of place and livelihood. Rising rents and redevelopment pressures were therefore not experienced as isolated market changes, but as structural conditions that systematically disadvantaged cultural producers and local merchants.

Scientific relevance

While existing research on gentrification and cultural production has largely focused on socio-economic dynamics such as displacement and rent escalation, the spatial dimensions for cultural production remain insufficiently articulated. Previous discussions have often reduced the spatial requirements of indie music scenes to affordability alone.

This leaves a gap between what existing research accounts for and what remains unexplained in the operation of cultural ecology. While spatial conditions such as affordability have been widely examined, the qualitative aspects of space that support interaction between actors are rarely addressed. As a result, affordability alone captures only part of the spatial factors through which cultural production emerges and persists, leaving the relational and everyday dynamics of cultural ecology insufficiently explained.

This research, therefore, approaches cultural production as being sustained not only by spatial conditions, such as the availability of affordable spaces for artistic practice, but also by spatial qualities, including proximity to everyday activities and opportunities for informal interaction. From this perspective, cultural production depends on a broader assemblage of spatial factors that enable artistic practices to be produced, experienced, and shared, eventually allowing art to persist and develop into culture.

Relevance to spatial design

The pressures facing cultural producers are widely recognised across different sectors in South Korea, from civil society to public institutions. From the cultural producer side, grassroots measures have been tried, including organising cooperatives and forming mutual support networks. In the public sector, efforts have been made to build cultural infrastructure and provide affordable spaces for those struggling to sustain their practice. Working across sectors, regulatory protections for tenants and district-level

agreements promoting coexistence between landowners and tenants have also been introduced to counter displacement.

However, these efforts remain largely fragmented, making it difficult to understand how their effects might be combined or sustained over time. Most instruments focus on individual actors, single spaces, or isolated economic conditions, while the broader relational and spatial conditions through which cultural production operates are left insufficiently addressed. The challenge lies in bringing different efforts together across sectors in ways that are mutually reinforcing rather than working at cross purposes.

This raises the question of what role spatial design can play. Public sector interventions often assume that providing space for artists will automatically promote active cultural production, yet such provision frequently remains distant from what cultural producers actually need to sustain meaningful interaction. The question is not simply one of space, but of place: how live culture can be accommodated within a given setting. Rather than treating design as a means of supplying creative space, this research asks what spatial design can do that other instruments cannot, and how it can be positioned alongside them to support cultural ecology as a whole.

2

Research design

2.1. Theoretical notion

This section structures the theoretical framework around three conceptual categories, namely cultural ecology, place, and gentrification, to develop an analytical lens for understanding how cultural production is sustained under urban transformation. Rather than treating these categories in isolation, the framework brings them together to understand how cultural production emerges, takes root, and is eventually destabilised across the three dimensions the research addresses. The subsequent sections develop this synthesis through interpreting the case of the Seoul indie music scene.

2.1.1. Cultural ecology

This section adopts a different approach to define *cultural ecology* as an analytical lens for understanding cultural production as a relational and situated process rather than an outcome of individual creativity alone. Instead of tracing the conceptual genealogy of the term, this framework selectively draws on different literatures that conceptualise culture as embedded in social networks and shaped by contextual conditions. The section provides a theoretical basis for understanding cultural production as a relational system that depends on both social networks and the environments that support them.

Culture as a relational system

This research understands culture as a collective production formed through networks of social relations, rather than as an outcome of isolated individual actors. Sampson's ecological approach provides a critical foundation for this perspective by giving attention to structural conditions that shape social interaction. This is particularly relevant for analysing cultural production, as focusing on what supports social interaction reveals how culture is continuously produced and sustained. However, focusing on social relations does not mean dismissing individual agency. Rather, it is about positioning individuals within broader relational contexts. As Sampson argues, "Ecological explanations do not deny individual action, but seek to explain how patterns of social interaction are shaped by contextual and structural conditions" (Sampson, 1988). This research follows this perspective, examining the narratives of individual actors while also situating them within the networks and relational contexts they inhabit.

Local friendship ties

To specify how such relational systems operate at the local level, Sampson introduces the concept of *local friendship ties*. These ties describe the social infrastructure through which cultural practices are maintained within specific places. Sampson defines local friendship ties as 'the density of acquaintances and friendship networks rooted in locality-based social interaction' (Sampson, 1988). This concept holds special weight in this research, as it captures the quality of interaction that characterises moments of cultural flourishing, a depth of connection that cannot be reduced to transactional

or exchange-based relations. The word friendship itself is worth noting here, suggesting that the bonds sustaining cultural ecology go beyond shared interest, rooted instead in genuine familiarity and mutual care built through repeated everyday encounters.

Supportive environment

While relational networks are central to culture, they do not sustain themselves on their own. Scholars have long recognised that the spatial dimension plays an equally important role in enabling cultural production, pointing to the environments and settings in which social relations take shape. In line with this, Fischer addresses the importance of place: ”Urban social relationships are sustained through routine encounters in localised settings such as cafés, bars, and neighbourhood institutions”(Fischer, 1982). Rapoport conceptualises the role of place through the notion of *supportive environments*, defining it as: ”Environments may be defined as good to the extent that they are supportive for the people who live in them” (Rapoport, 1983). This is grounded in the environment-behaviour relations (EBR) perspective, which examines how spatial conditions shape and enable the behaviours that take place within them. However, Rapoport cautions that supportive environments should not be understood as determining conditions. As he states, “Environments are not determining, but they do have effects on people, particularly under conditions of high criticality” (Rapoport, 1983). Following this, the research focuses on spatial qualities that, while not directly dictating outcomes, shape the context in which social interaction and cultural production are possible, in relation to actors and their instruments.

2.1.2. Place

This section introduces theory about place to examine how cultural relations are spatially experienced and transformed over time. Rather than understanding space as a neutral container, the literature discussed here conceptualises place as an environment shaped through inhabitation, everyday social interaction, and prolonged care. In this sense, place is understood not as a static space, but as a lived and relational phenomenon, with different manifestations of cultural life each reflecting a distinct state from its formation and flourishing to its gradual erosion under gentrification.

Place formed through inhabitation

The research adopts Friedmann’s concept of place to understand environments for culture not as fixed spatial settings, but as outcomes of sustained inhabitation. This perspective is well-suited for analysing place-based cultural production, where the continuity of everyday presence and routine interaction is more defining than the physical configuration of space. Rather than treating place as a designed object, Friedmann frames it as something that emerges through repeated acts of inhabitation among actors. As Friedmann argues, “The point is that the very act of inhabiting a neighbourhood will shape its character, its daily and seasonal rituals, and the recurrent socio-spatial patterns that imprint themselves on its memory” (Friedmann, 2010). This underlines the importance of active inhabitation for place, suggesting that without the continued presence of actors who interact and produce culture together, a place cannot retain its cultural character. From this point of view, cultural places persist only as long as the actors who use them remain present and engaged in everyday practices.

Third place

The research draws on Ray Oldenburg’s concept of *third place* to clarify the first state of cultural place, in which everyday spaces enable social relations to emerge through routine presence. Drawing on Oldenburg’s discussion, third places can be understood as informal public gathering places that foster regular, voluntary, and informal social interaction (Oldenburg, 1989). The relevance of the third place lies not in the function of space but in its role as an ordinary setting where familiar actors routinely encounter one another. As Oldenburg notes, “Regular patrons of third places create a sense of rootedness and belonging” (Oldenburg, 1989). From this perspective, third places initiate relational continuity, making them particularly well-suited to explaining how cultural places first take shape through repeated interaction, gradually cultivating regulars who later sustain their existence.

Fields of care
For a more intense state of cultural place, Yi-Fu Tuan's concept of *fields of care* offers a fitting perspective. Tuan distinguishes between different types of place based on how meaning is produced and sustained, describing fields of care as places whose significance emerges through prolonged experience, maintenance, and everyday involvement (Tuan, 1977). The research interprets this as an evolved form of third place, a status gained through inhabitation and attachment from regulars over time. This highlights the importance of affection towards place, representing the state in which actors develop a peak attachment and the place becomes deeply embedded in their relational lives.

Place as public symbol
Tuan contrasts fields of care with *place as public symbol*, highlighting the difference in the source from which place derives its meaning. According to Tuan, place, as a public symbol, derives its meaning from visibility, representation, and external recognition rather than from lived experience (Tuan, 1977). Symbolic places prioritise outstanding image and legibility, making them easily identifiable but detached from the everyday practices that once gave them life. The research uses this concept to explain the state of place after gentrification, in which lived cultural activities are flattened into an image. This differentiates a place sustained by social interaction and relational foundations from one that retains only its cultural image.

2.1.3. Gentrification
From the perspective of those who have been displaced, gentrification is often explained as a consequence of individual intentions or moral choices. However, the research approaches gentrification as a structural process that reshapes the conditions under which cultural practices can be sustained. This sub-section focuses on how shifts in both capital investment and valuation redefine the livelihoods sustained by place and change the activities happening within it. Gentrification is therefore understood as a process that reorganises both economic and symbolic conditions of place. As a result, this provides a framework for analysing gentrification as a process driven by capital investment and shifting priorities, while respecting the various ways gentrification unfolds across different local contexts, as well as its context-specific outcomes.

Capital-driven restructuring
To explain how gentrification occurs, Neil Smith's theory offers a structural account. Rather than attributing urban change to the preferences or intentions of newcomers, Smith argues that gentrification is fundamentally driven by the movement of capital. As Smith states, "gentrification is a back to the city movement by capital, not people" (Smith, 1979). Central to this argument is the concept of the *rent gap*, defined as the disparity between the current value generated under existing use and the potential value that could be realised through redevelopment (Smith, 1979). This concept explains the fundamental pressure behind the rise of rent, which is the main struggle of cultural practices. While it makes little sense for place operators whose profits barely grow through operations, the rent gap explains the perspective of landowners and the real estate market that initiate it.

Cultural revalorisation
In relation to the shift from fields of care to place as a public symbol, Sharon Zukin focuses on how culture becomes instrumental in legitimising and organising urban transformation. In their analysis, culture functions as a means of economic development and a way of controlling urban space (Zukin, 1982). Through processes of *cultural revalorisation*, selected aesthetic aspects of local culture are amplified and promoted, while practices that are less profitable, less legible, or more disruptive are gradually marginalised. As a result, cultural identity may persist at the level of image or branding, even as the critical conditions for cultural production are progressively undermined. Zukin's theory explains the logic behind gentrification, particularly how live culture turns into image through the process they name cultural revalorisation. The research draws on this lens to interpret what actors often describe as 'culture is dead', grounding their lived experience within a theoretical explanation of how cultural vitality is exploited economically.

Contextual variation
While previous scholars explain the general mechanisms of gentrification, David Ley challenges explanations that rely on a single dominant mechanism. Ley argues that no single explanation can adequately account for the complexity of inner-city gentrification (Ley, 1996). From this perspective, gentrification unfolds unevenly across contexts, so even similar structural pressures may yield different outcomes: cultural practices may disappear, persist in altered forms, or relocate depending on local conditions. The research draws on this perspective to inform its focus on certain context, namely the indie music scene in Seoul, South Korea. Although the displacement of cultural actors and places is a widespread issue across contexts, the research deliberately focuses on this specific case to acknowledge the influence of local conditions. This also extends to temporality, as the analysis is structured across different time periods to recognise that the conditions shaping cultural production and gentrification are not static, but shift over time. This temporal sensitivity further informs the inclusion of instruments as a key axis of analysis, as the instruments that actors employ are understood as part of the context itself.

2.2. Theoretical framework

The following subsection brings the previously discussed theories together into a unified framework, which serves as the analytical base for the research. To develop this framework, the research reads the case of Hongdae through a theoretical lens. By applying the concepts addressed in the preceding sections to a concrete situation, the framework gains the capacity to interpret empirical findings in the language of the research.

2.2.1. Reading Hongdae through the theory

Third place In its early phase, Hongdae functioned as a third place where clubs and neighbouring places provided everyday settings for voluntary interaction among musicians and music enthusiasts. Without being planned as a centre for culture, it became a supportive environment for cultural ecology to naturally take shape, through its spatial character and the growing network among actors who inhabited it.

Fields of care As the scene grew, repeated encounters became routinised and embedded in everyday life, forming local friendship ties among actors inhabiting the place, including musicians, place operators, regulars, and local entrepreneurs. Through this process, Hongdae developed into a field of care in Tuan's sense, whose significance derived from prolonged interaction among actors, helping them identify themselves through the place. As one account describes it, Hongdae is "the area where social activities have continued the longest," and it feels like a "second hometown" to those who have inhabited it (H. Kwon, 2024).

Place as symbol However, as gentrification set in, the rent gap drove up rents, making it increasingly difficult for small cultural places to sustain their operations and eroding the everyday infrastructures that had sustained cultural ecology. Hongdae progressively shifted from a field of care toward a place as a public symbol, where the image of indie culture remained visible while its lived practices were undermined. This tension is articulated in the founding declaration of the Self-reliant Music Collective, which explicitly rejects the term 'indie,' arguing that where live music scenes no longer exist, the label 'indie' functions only as a 'ghost-like false consciousness' (J. Lee, 2011).

2.2.2. Tracing the transformation of place

By interpreting the three theories through the lens of the Hongdae indie music scene, this research develops a theoretical framework that positions place as the medium through which cultural relations are enabled, accumulated, and eventually eroded under structural pressure. Rather than treating these theories as separate explanatory lenses, the framework brings them together to trace a sequence of relational transformation, moving from third places to fields of care and ultimately to place as a public symbol.

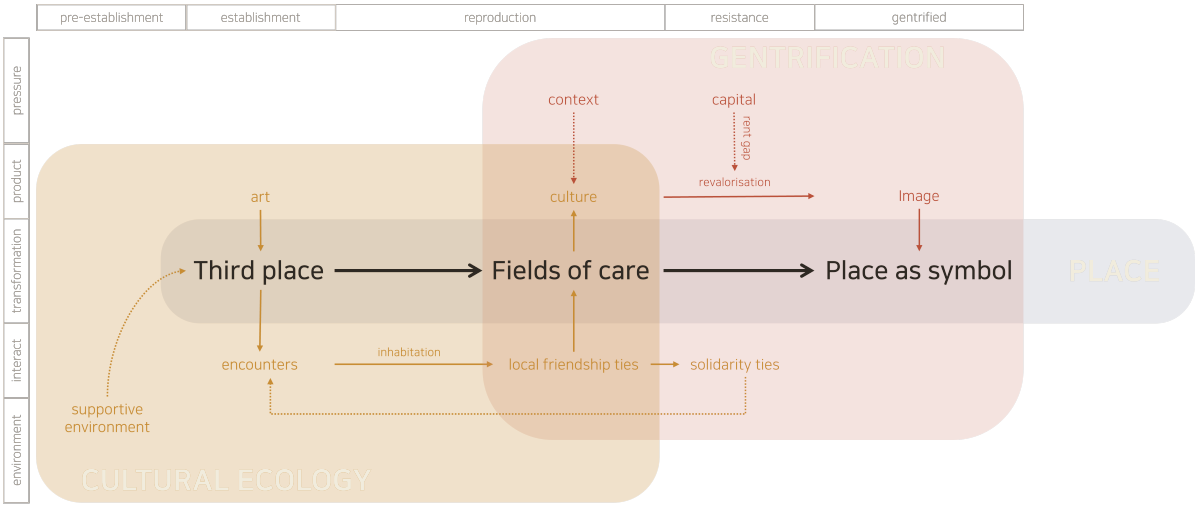

Figure 2.1: Theoretical framework.

Emergence of third place from supportive environment Before third places can form, the conditions for their emergence must already exist. This research understands these conditions as a supportive environment, introduced earlier under cultural ecology. Such an environment is not designed but accumulated, built up through successive layers of spatial transformation over time. No single condition is decisive. It is their combination, activated by particular spatial qualities, that makes an environment permissive enough for cultural activity to take root. Because it existed, actors were drawn to it and could begin to inhabit it. Third place formed through that inhabitation, not from the conditions alone.

Growing into fields of care Third places emerge under certain conditions that determine setting for art creation. It is, however, the spatial qualities of these environments that enable repeated interaction among actors. Through repeated encounters, actors begin to inhabit the place as part of everyday life, forming local friendship ties that bind them to it and to each other. As these ties accumulate, individual artistic practices are no longer isolated acts but become collectively produced and shared, turning art into culture through sustained interaction.

Turning into place as symbol However, under gentrification, the rent gap drives displacement of small cultural places, as rising rents make it economically impossible for them to continue operating. This displacement accelerates cultural revalorisation, as the living practices that once defined the place are gradually replaced by its image. What is promoted as culture at this stage is merely a symbol without vitality, no longer a scene in which culture is actively produced.

Still, capital is not the only force that threatens cultural ecology. In line with Ley's argument for contextual variation, structural pressures specific to a given context can constrain cultural production through different mechanisms. In Seoul from the 1990s through the 2010s, these included regulatory barriers, the dominance of idol music in the industry, and prevailing public perception of independent culture. Within the framework, these pressures act not on place directly but on the ecology as a whole, working indirectly to undermine the conditions under which cultural places can persist.

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From the relational perspective, the empirical findings of the Seoul indie music scene point to a form of bond not captured by existing theory. This research identifies solidarity ties as a relational pattern produced as a reaction to gentrification, distinct from local friendship ties in both origin and character. Where local friendship ties form through long-term coexistence and are quietly embedded in everyday life, solidarity ties are largely visible and active, formed deliberately to resist displacement. They are also capable of generating new encounters, and are particularly effective at drawing actors who were not previously part of the scene into its orbit.

These new encounters form the feedback loop visible in the framework, represented by the arrow running from solidarity ties back toward third place. The process takes different forms. In some cases, solidarity ties successfully prevent the shift of place into a public symbol, keeping the place from being lost to gentrification. In others, they lead to the relocation of existing places, restarting from third place elsewhere, or to the formation of entirely new third places through newly joined actors. Whether either outcome is possible depends on whether a supportive environment can be found or made. Solidarity ties generate relational energy; the spatial conditions must still be in place to receive it.

2.2.3. Connecting with research question

The framework can be overlapped with three analytical dimensions: actor, spatial factor, and instrument. Each dimension addresses a distinct part of the framework, as shown in the following diagram, and corresponds to one of the sub-research questions.

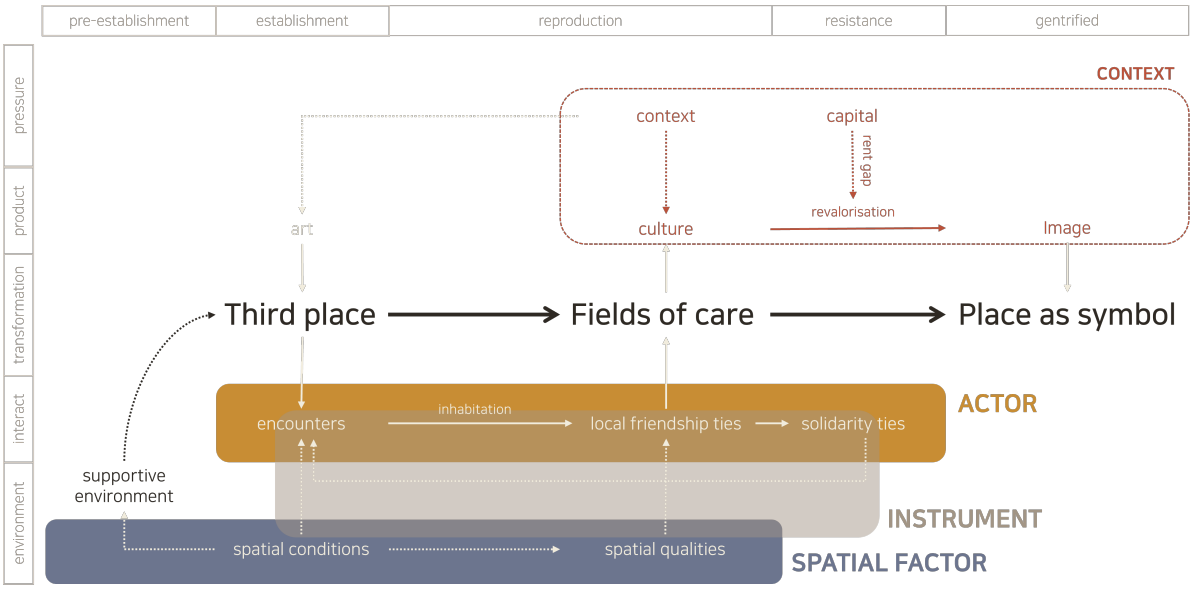


Figure 2.2: Venn diagram of three theories and their intersections.

Actor
The first sub-research question addresses actors, their networks, and their responses to gentrification. Cultural ecology conceptualises cultural production as a relational system of interdependent actors, showing how relationships between actors develop through inhabitation. This dimension foregrounds how actors form and expand their networks, and how gentrification impacts them, ultimately leading to the activation of solidarity ties.

Spatial factor
The second sub-research question asks about the transformation of place and the factors behind it. In cultural ecology, the supportive environment is addressed as the setting for interaction between actors, while emphasising the importance of spatial qualities. Place theory further describes how place transforms across three states of interaction intensity. Bringing these perspectives together, this dimension examines how the supportive environment and the different states of place evolve, and how spatial conditions and qualities affect that process.

Instrument
The third sub-research question addresses the role of instruments in spatial production. The case of Hongdae underscores how spatial meanings are formed through everyday practices, with different instruments used to arrange place and form relationships within it. Gentrification foregrounds the forces that revalorise these meanings through economic logic and broader contextual pressures, highlighting the need for instruments to counter structural pressures. This dimension provides a lens for interpreting the intentions behind different instruments used to enable and protect cultural production, addressing the dynamics among concepts within the framework.

2.3. Research scope

This section defines the boundaries within which the research operates, establishing where and when the indie music scene in Seoul is examined. The spatial scope traces the trajectory of cultural ecology across neighbourhoods, while the temporal scope situates this trajectory within a structured sequence of phases. Together, they form the frame through which the subsequent analysis is conducted.

2.3.1. Spatial scope

The spatial scope of this project follows the trajectory of indie musicians in Seoul, focusing on how cultural ecology has been reconfigured through their movements over time. This does not imply that cultural ecology relocates as a whole. Instead, the research traces how it is repeatedly reassembled and dispersed as core actors move and establish their practices in new locations. The areas investigated are shown in Figure 2.3.



Figure 2.3: Areas of the indie music scene have inhabited

2.3.2. Temporal scope

The research takes Hongdae as its primary temporal reference, particularly from the late 1990s through the early 2000s, when the cultural ecology of indie music was most densely configured. This period is treated as a historical phase in which spatial conditions and qualitative characteristics for cultural production were most intensively co-located. What preceded this peak and what followed it together define the temporal range of the research. Looking backwards, the research traces the scene to the early 1990s, when the early type of cultural places began to emerge in Hongdae. Furthermore, the coverage extends to the 1980s to understand what formed the supportive environment that made this possible, before cultural places began to emerge in Hongdae. Looking ahead, Hongdae's peak period lasted roughly until 2005, followed by gentrification. After 2010, the research follows the divergent movement of the scene within Seoul.

To structure this temporal range, the research assigns a name to each transition between states of place, in line with the theoretical framework. The earliest transition addressed is **pre-establishment**, the period before a supportive environment fully forms, when conditions and qualities are slowly accumulating. When a supportive environment enables the emergence of places for art that are later recognised as third places, it is **establishment**. This is followed by **reproduction**, the transition toward fields of care, when repeated encounters solidify into local friendship ties. Where gentrification sets in, **resistance** begins, describing the reaction of actors attempting to prevent places from shifting into place as public symbol. Each phase in relation to the theoretical framework is shown in Figure 2.4.

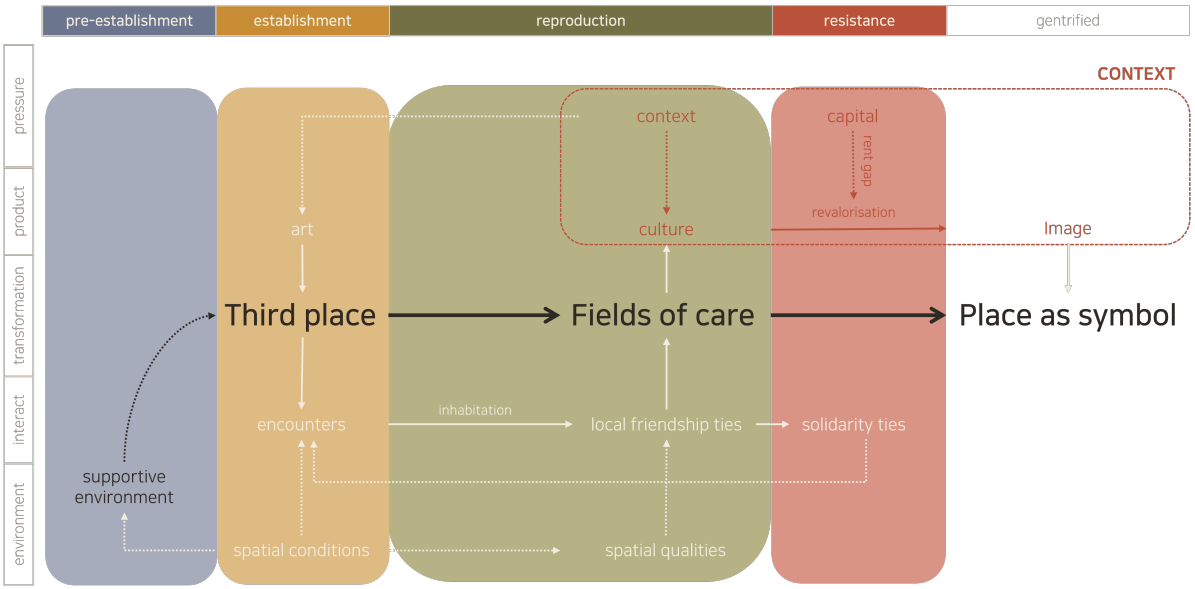
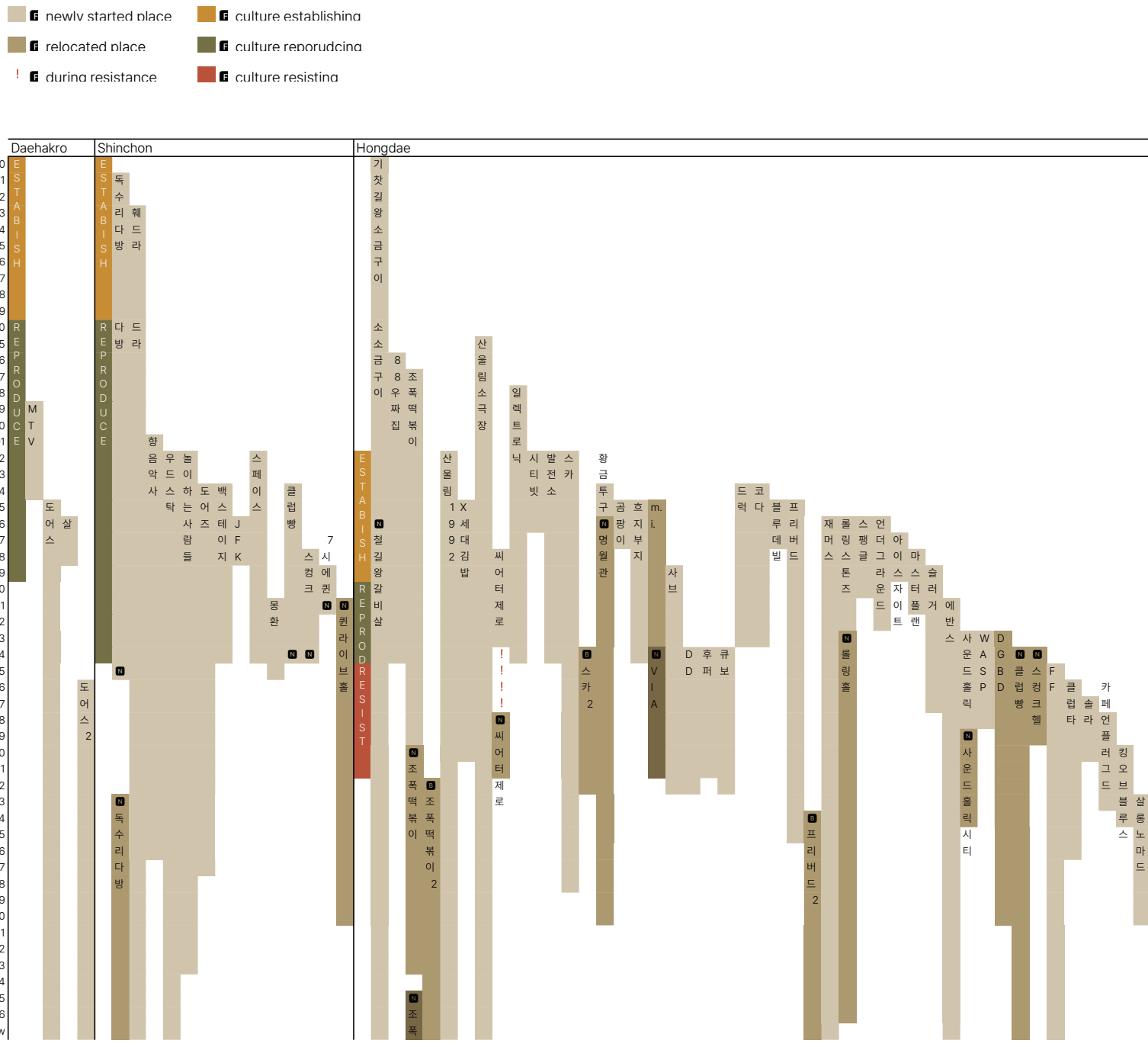


Figure 2.4: Areas indie music scene have inhabited

These phases do not occur in every area in the same sequence or full set. Some locations gentrified without a visible phase of resistance; others never reached reproduction, remaining at the level of a few scattered third places. When displaced cultural producers relocate and begin to cluster in a new area, the research terms this **re-establishment**, treating it as a recurrence of establishment in a new spatial context. By accounting for this variation, the research is able to evaluate instruments within their specific historical context, recognising that what works in one period may not translate directly to another.


newly started place
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REPRODUCE
독수리다방
훼드라
다방
드라
향음악사
우드스탁
놀이하는사람들
도어즈
백스테이지
JFK
스페이스
몽환
클럽빵
스컹크
7시에퀸
퀸라이브홀
독수리다방
기찻길왕소금구이
소소금구이
88우짜집
조폭떡볶이
ESTABLISH
REPRODUCE
RESIST
철길왕갈비살
산울림1992
X세대김밥
산울림소극장
일렉트로닉시티빗
발전소
스카
황금투구
명월관
스카2
곰팡이
흐지부지
m.i.
VIA
사브
DD
후퍼
큐보
조폭떡볶이
조폭떡볶이2
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드럭
코다
블루데빌
프리버드
프리버드2
재머스
롤링스톤즈
롤링홀
스팽글
언더그라운드
아이스자이트
마스터플랜
슬러거
에반스
사운드홀릭
사운드홀릭시티
WASP
DGBD
클럽빵
스컹크
홀
FF
클럽타
솔라
카페언플러그드
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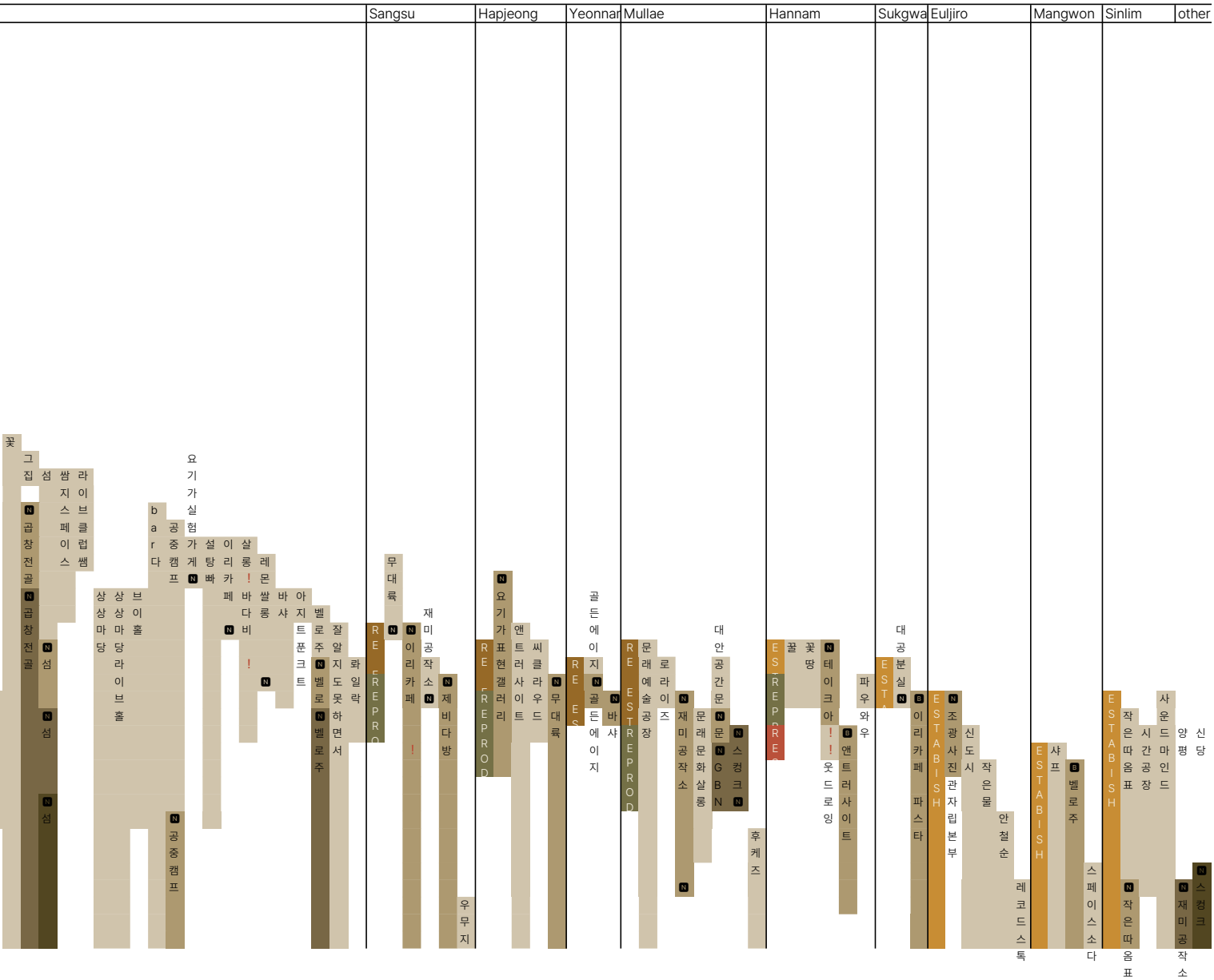
살롱노마드


Sangsu
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other
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쌈지스페이스
라이브클럽쌤
상상마당
상상마당라이브홀
브이홀
bar다
공중캠프
공중캠프
요기가실험가게
설탕빠
이리카페
살롱!바다비!
레몬쌀롱
바샤
아지트펀크트
벨로주
벨로주
잘알지도못하면서
화일락
무대륙
무대륙
이리카페
재미공작소
제비다방
우무지
요기가표현갤러리
앤트러사이트
씨클라우드
무대륙
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후케즈
꿀
꽃땅
테이크아!!웃드로잉
파우와우
대공분실
이리카페파스타
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신도시
작은물
안철순
레코드스톡
샤프
벨로주
스페이스소다
작은따옴표
시간공장
작은따옴표
사운드마인드
양평
재미공작소
신당
스컹크

2.3.3. Data and processing

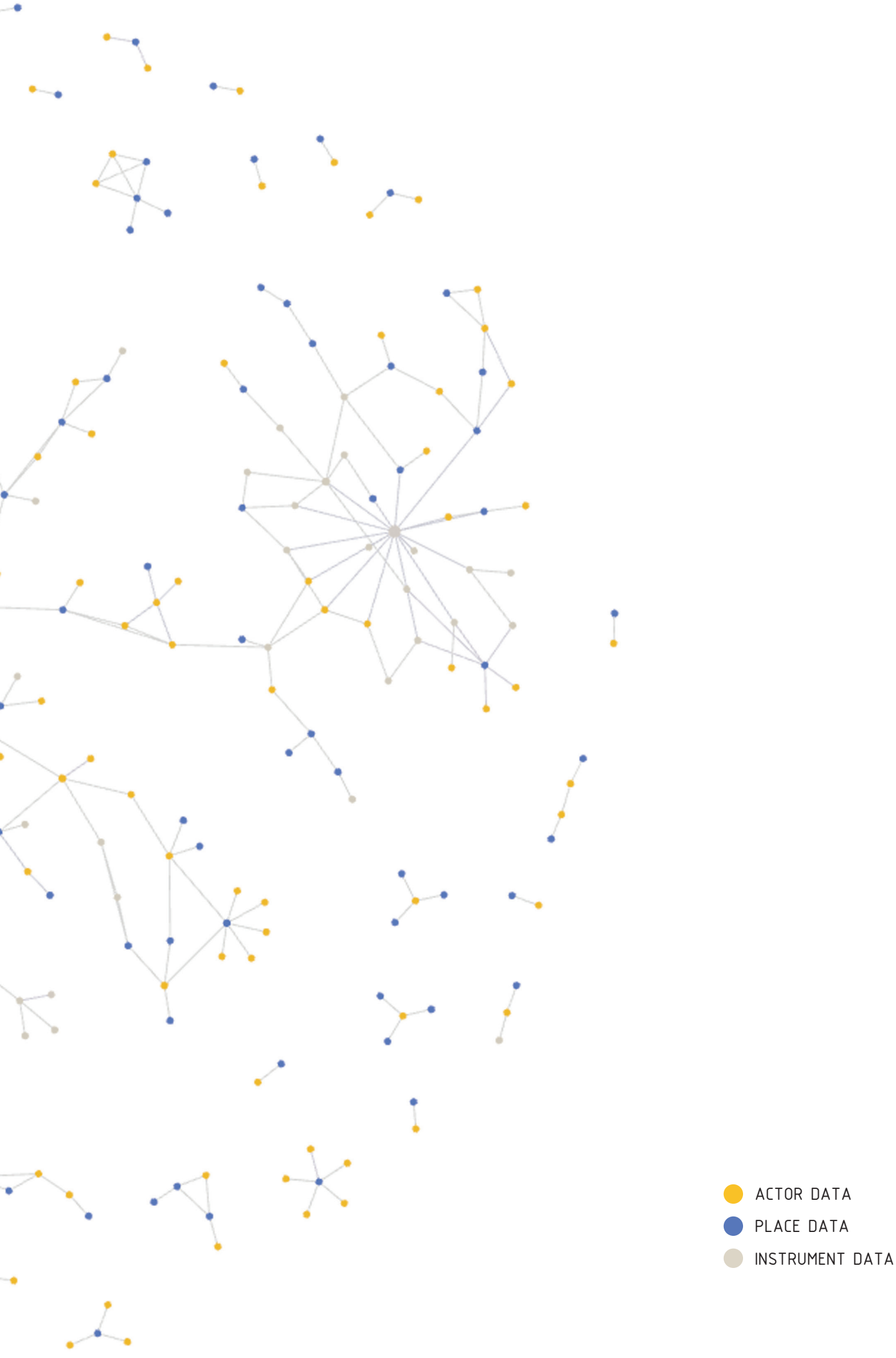
Following the trajectory of research, the research collects various materials addressing the indie music scene in Seoul, including related actors, places, and efforts to enable and support their presence, as well as contextual background, if needed. These materials can be organised into three groups, each further specified into sub groups.

- **Subjective accounts:** text materials collected from media that capture perspectives of actors related to the scene, including news articles, magazines, and blogs.
  - **Creator accounts:** subjective accounts from the perspective of cultural producers, including place operators, musicians, and others directly involved in the scene, such as interviews and self-written blog posts.
  - **Participant accounts:** accounts capturing the experienced place from the perspective of visitors, including place reviews, magazine recommendations, and recollections of regulars.
  - **Scene accounts:** accounts with critical distance, offering retrospective evaluations of the indie scene as a whole, including blog series tracing its history, scene reports, and interviews addressing collective moments and public perception.
- **Documentary records:** informative materials providing contextual and temporal grounding, in both text and visual form, including event promotions and social media.
  - **Temporal records:** document about when events occurred, or transformations happened, enabling timeline reconstruction of actors, places, or entire phases.
  - **Contextual records:** information for identifyng who was involved, where activities took place, and what structural conditions shaped them, providing the background against which specific events can be situated.
  - **Photographs:** visual materials capturing anything related to the research, particularly the spatial and atmospheric qualities of places.
- **Spatial data:** geospatial information used to situate cases within broader geographic and temporal contexts.
  - **Temporal spatial images:** series of images showing the transformation of the urban environment over time, including satellite imagery and street view records.
  - **Addresses:** the exact locations of relevant places, enabling their positioning within the scene.
  - **Geospatial data:** geometry files provided by the Korean government used as a basis for spatial analysis.

All collected materials are organised using Obsidian, a network-based documentation system. Relevant excerpts are extracted from each material and recorded as individual notes, each containing quotes and references tied to a specific subject. These notes are first categorised according to the three analytical components of the research: actor, place, and instrument, following the structure of the three sub-research questions.

However, the boundaries between these components are not fixed. Actors inhabit places, instruments are employed within places, and places shape the conditions under which actors interact. To address this interdependence, related elements are connected through hyperlinks, allowing relationships between actors, places, and instruments to be explicitly mapped across the collection. Using Obsidian, the relationship can be visualised in its graph view, aggregates all connections into a connecting lines between notes visualised as dots. Figure shows how the three components relate to one another across the full body of data collection.




ACTOR DATA
PLACE DATA
INSTRUMENT DATA

2.4. Methodology

This section sets out the methods used to process the material gathered for this study. Scraping, narrative, and typology extract and read the material, while categorisation and mapping place it into structure and space. Combined, these methods constitute the four methodologies through which this study answers its research question on actor, place, instrument, and the role of design.

- **Scraping** — extraction and organisation of relevant text and visual materials according to established keywords and categories. AI-assisted tools were used to support the organisation of large volumes of collected material.
- **Narrative** — construction of chronological accounts centred on one element, tracing its trajectory within the scene.
- **Typology** — classification of findings into types based on shared characteristics, without hierarchical distinction.
- **Categorisation** — grouping of identified findings into a structured hierarchical classification system. AI-assisted analysis was consulted to develop and refine the classification structure.
- **Mapping** — visualising elements spatially and relationally, showing both geographic position and connections between actors, places, and instruments.

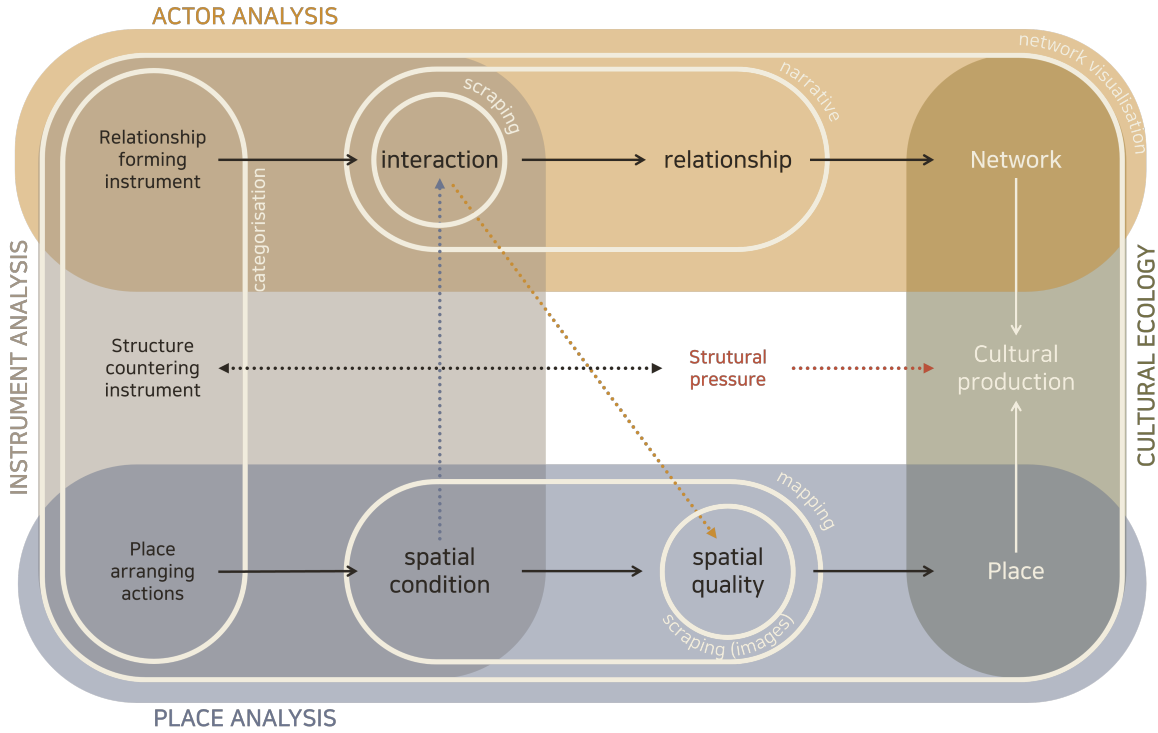


Figure 2.5: Diagram showing the combination of methods used for each analysis.

2.4.1. Actor analysis

This methodology is designed to establish an understanding of cultural ecology at the personal level by examining the emergence and evolution of actor networks over time. It addresses the first sub-research question: *How do actors in cultural ecology form networks and how do these networks respond to gentrification?* The main focus is on cultural producers, understood as the protagonists who actively initiate and maintain the networks through which culture is produced. This includes not only those who create artistic works but also those who facilitate and sustain interactions around cultural practices, broadly referred to as place-makers.

The primary sources for this analysis are subjective accounts that reflect actors' own perspectives. These include interviews in news articles and self-written texts such as blogs. For actors whose interviews are not available, retrospective accounts describing specific periods, cultural contexts, and key contributors are used instead. These materials provide insight into how actors describe their personal trajectories, relationships, and involvement in cultural practices. Documentary records are additionally used to reconstruct timelines and identify actors connected through shared instruments.

Actors are selected based on their centrality within the network and the diversity of their entry points into the scene. The analysis then proceeds through three procedures. Through **scraping**, relevant excerpts are extracted from the collected materials, with a focus on personal trajectories, relationships, and motivations. Interactions are also gathered and organised by place, capturing the types of encounters that took place and where. Through **narrative**, the extracted materials are arranged into chronological accounts centred on individual actors or collective actions, tracing how their positions within the network emerge and evolve over time. Related actors, places, and instruments are connected through hyperlinks, allowing relationships to be traced across time. Through **mapping**, these hyperlinks are visualised, revealing the relational structure of the network.

The analysis produces two complementary outputs. The first is a **narrative cartoon** that combines timelines, photographs, and maps to portray the personal story of each selected actor or collective, inspired by the approach in (Ruiz Carvajal, 2021). This format aims to convey the lived experience of cultural producers in an accessible and engaging manner, allowing readers to follow individual trajectories through the scene. The second output is a **network diagram**, generated by visualising hyperlinks in Obsidian, that maps the relational connections among actors, places, and instruments over time. Instruments that emerge prominently within the network serve as the basis for the subsequent instrument analysis.

2.4.2. Place analysis

This method investigates how interactions among actors manifest in space, building on the actor-based understanding of cultural ecology developed in the previous method. It addresses the second sub-research question: *How do spatial conditions and qualities shape cultural ecology, and how are they transformed under gentrification?* The analysis understands them as dynamic compositions of activities and supporting settings that evolve over time. By understanding what kinds of environments support cultural ecology, the method informs design decisions, enabling the identification of spatial factors that can sustain and accommodate cultural production over time.

The primary sources for this analysis are subjective accounts, drawing on both creator and participant perspectives, including operator interviews, operator-written blogs, visitor reviews, and place recommendations in news articles and magazines. Photographs complement this visually, capturing the spatial and atmospheric qualities of individual places. These are complemented by geospatial data and street view records to situate cases within broader spatial contexts and to trace their transformation over time.

The analysis proceeds through three procedures. Through **typology**, activity compositions drawn from the actor analysis are classified into place types, based on the recognition that places are defined not by singular functions but by recurring combinations of multiple activities. Through **scraping**, spatial elements that repeatedly appear across cases are identified and interpreted as the spatial manifestation of these interactions, drawing on both textual descriptions and photographic materials. Through **mapping**, the resulting typologies and spatial factors are situated across cases to examine how places relate to one another and collectively form a cultural scene.

The analysis produces four outputs. A **typology** classifies cultural places according to their activity compositions, showing how different combinations of activities correspond to different place types. An **image collection** captures the recurring spatial qualities across cases, providing a visual catalogue of the atmospheres and arrangements that support cultural practices. A **map** situates individual places within their broader context, revealing spatial conditions and clustering patterns that characterise cultural scenes. A **spatial factors catalogue** identifies and differentiates between spatial conditions, understood as the determining frame of a place, and spatial qualities, understood as what fills and animates it. Spatial instruments that emerge from this analysis serve as the basis for the subsequent instrument analysis.

2.4.3. Instrument analysis

This method examines how cultural actors sustain cultural ecology through organised actions and strategies, particularly in response to gentrification. It addresses the third sub-research question: *What is the role and limit of spatial design in enabling and supporting cultural ecology, and how can it complement existing instruments addressing gentrification?* In this research, instruments are understood as organised actions through which actors respond to specific circumstances to sustain cultural practices. While instruments are partially identified through actor and place analyses, this methodology focuses on understanding how instruments operate between actors and places and what they collectively aim to protect or enable.

The primary sources for this analysis are subjective accounts and documentary records. Subjective accounts include creator perspectives, such as operator interviews and accounts of their efforts to sustain cultural practices, as well as scene perspectives, such as critical retrospectives documenting collective actions and organised responses. Documentary records include event records and news coverage that capture the circumstances under which instruments were employed. Particular attention is given to incidents that occur during the resistance phase, as these moments reveal how actors actively respond to external pressures and which strategies they mobilise. In addition to these direct sources, the narrative outputs from actor analysis and the spatial manifestations identified in place analysis serve as further material from which instruments are derived.

Through **typology**, identified instruments are first grouped according to their role. Relationship-forming instruments are identified through the connections they enable or maintain between actors. Place-arranging instruments are identified through the creative efforts actors employ to shape or secure their environments. There are also instruments that do not produce relational or spatial outcomes, but protect them by dealing with threats, which are classified as structure-countering instruments. Moreover, cases where instruments proved effective are compared with cases where they fell short, revealing vulnerabilities and gaps in coverage. How different instruments interact, reinforce, or constrain one another is further examined in the subsequent analysis, where their combined operation is analysed in greater depth.

The analysis produces an **instrument catalogue**, classifying instruments that have been employed within the indie music scene according to their type, intention, and position within the relational and spatial structure of cultural ecology. This catalogue shows not only which instruments exist, but also where each is directed and how different instruments complement or depend on one another. Together, these findings serve as a **reference** for the subsequent design work, providing a basis for identifying how spatial design can support, complement, or extend the strategies that cultural actors have already

developed.

2.4.4. Design exploration

This method translates the analytical findings into a design-oriented approach, positioning design not as an initiating force but as a supporting system for existing or emerging cultural ecology. It addresses the main research question: *How can spatial design strategies enable and support cultural ecology under the pressure of gentrification?* Rather than following the conventional approach of urban design, which creates new cultural spaces and invites actors to occupy them, this approach focuses on places where cultural production is already taking place and explores how design can support their long-term inhabitance. In this sense, design is understood as a form of management that sustains relationships, activities, and spatial presence over time.

The method aggregates findings from the three preceding analyses and applies them as evaluation criteria to assess each site. For diagnosis, three dimensions are examined: whether active networks and interactions are present among actors, whether spatial qualities are functioning within appropriate spatial conditions, and whether continued inhabitance is ensured or at risk of displacement. Based on this diagnosis, relevant instruments are selected from the instrument catalogue to identify the kinds of intervention needed to address the identified gaps. These proposed instruments are then considered alongside instruments already in use, developing a strategy that shows how new and existing instruments can work together, reinforcing or complementing one another to support cultural ecology over time. Each site is additionally situated within its temporal phase, ensuring that proposed instruments remain relevant to the current context.

The method produces **spatial strategy** with the sequence in which a proposed set of instruments and strategies should be applied over time, and **spatial design examples** illustrating how selected instruments can be concretely expressed in space.

3

Case study result

3.1. Becoming a supportive environment

The trajectory of the Seoul indie music scene does not begin with indie itself. Before examining how the scene took shape, it is worth asking what came before it and what was already quietly forming. In terms of musical lineage, indie music is understood here as the structural realisation of an underground attitude. As J. Park, 2001 notes, indie generally carries the spirit of underground, and can therefore be seen as operating within the underground's domain. Across the city's cultural geography, this tradition was not suddenly born in Hongdae: other areas of Seoul had already served as its ground before the scene evolved there. Within Hongdae itself, what allowed it specifically to become the place where this tradition took root is the question this section addresses. In terms of the theoretical framework developed in chapter 2, this is the moment when Hongdae was becoming a supportive environment, with different clusters of places producing culture even before clubs arrived. The section moves from the broader cultural geography that preceded Hongdae's emergence, into the spatial character of the area itself and the place types that populated it, before drawing together how these conditions cohered into a supportive environment.

3.1.1. Shifting geography of music scene

"Place is closer to a series of processes that are experienced, transferred, shared, and recognised, and in that sense a cultural construct(H. Shin, 2013)."

Cultural scenes do not appear from scratch. They emerge through a continuous process in which the atmosphere shifts, actors migrate, and practices find new ground beyond their previous locations. The cultural geography of Seoul followed exactly this logic. From H. Shin, 2013 account, this shift began during the 1980s, when the concentration of cultural life in the old town started to diverge under different contextual pressures. Among the areas that absorbed this shift, Shinchon and Daehakro emerged as spillovers from the old town, located just nearby. What distinguished both areas was their proximity to multiple universities, which served as a condition that produced a culture-friendly density. This density found its spatial expression first in small theatres where live performance took place. It was sustained by a surrounding ecosystem of record shops, cafes, restaurants, and bars that enabled everyday social interaction between actors. This led to a concentration of artists, who lived nearby in rented rooms and set up studios.

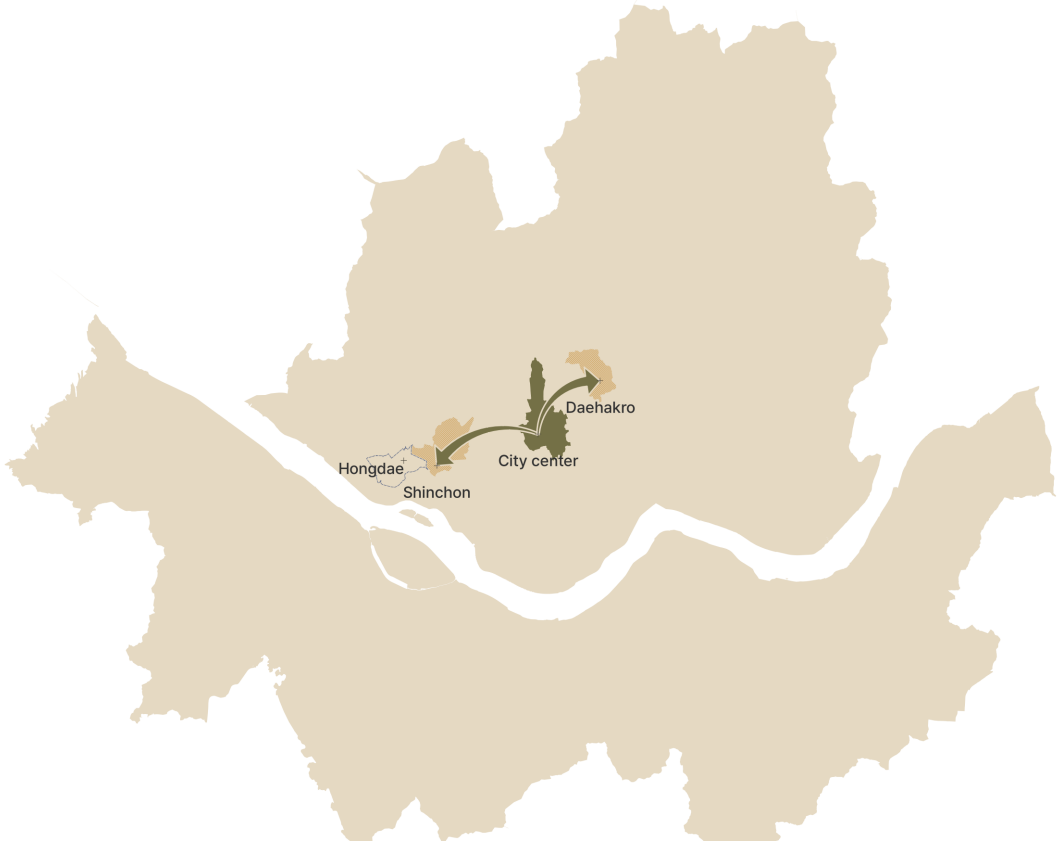


Figure 3.1: Key map of Seoul showing movement during 1980s

The musicians who gathered here came to be called underground: practitioners who kept their distance from the mainstream music industry. Shinchon was especially known for this, as alternative music across diverse genres came to be performed in its small theatres, music cafes, and clubs, with bands active in the area collectively earning the name 'The Shinchons' and the neighbourhood becoming recognised as a birthplace of alternative music (S. Ko, 2022). Independent music producers, who are called PD makers, operate outside mainstream commercial logic through what Shin (H. Shin, 2013) describes as an economy of intimacy. This scene can be understood as a precedent form of what would later become indie culture, and these areas as precedent conditions for what Hongdae would eventually become. The connection was not only cultural but also spatial: Shinchon sat directly adjacent to Hongdae, and Hongdae itself was equally shaped by proximity to universities, sharing the very condition that had made Shinchon and Daehakro fertile ground for alternative music culture.



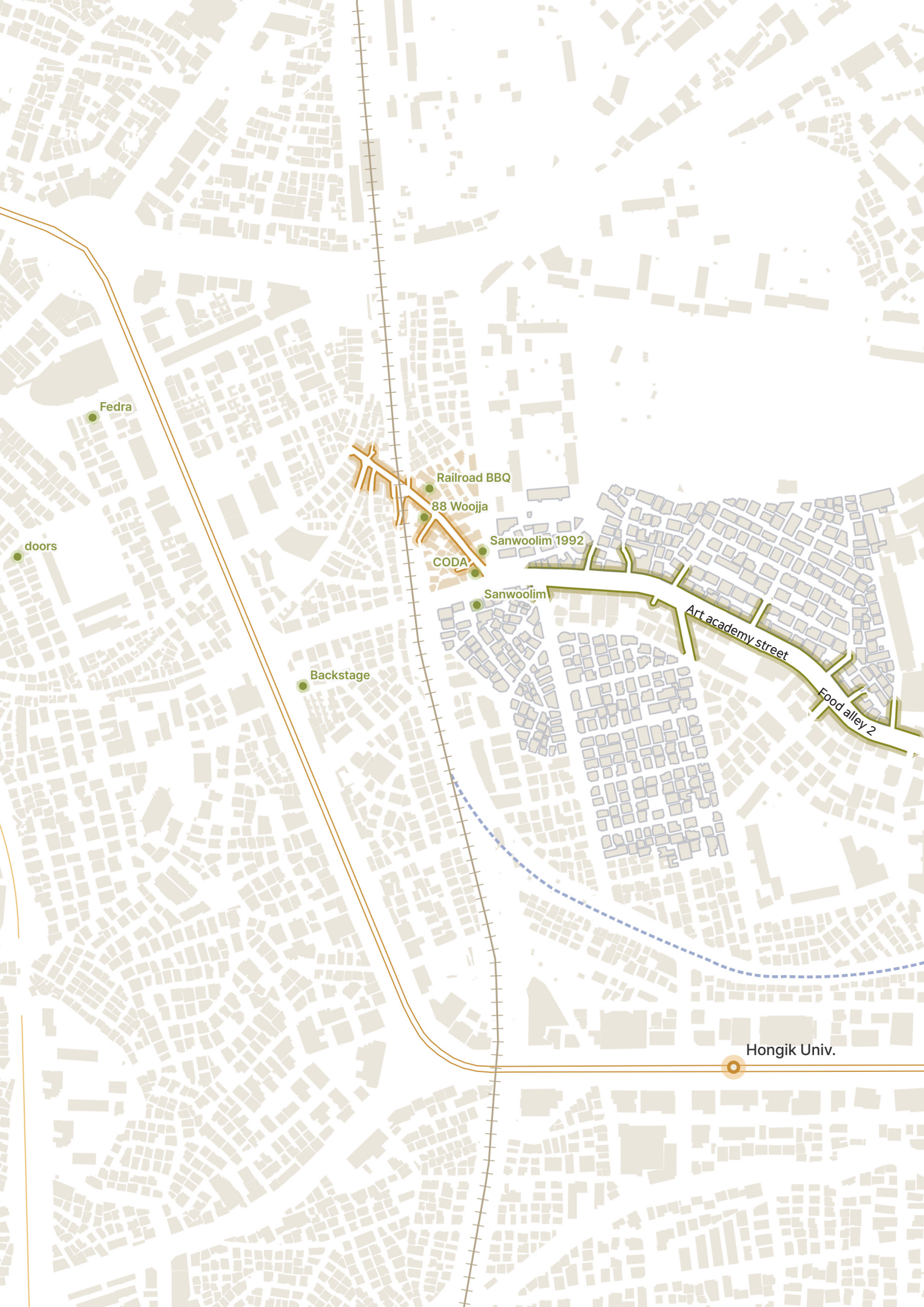
Figure 3.2: Shinchon, with universities around and cultural places



Figure 3.3: Daekhakro, with universities around and cultural places

3.1.2. How Hongdae served as cultural ground

Even though the centres of culture were Shinchon and Daehakro, Hongdae had been slowly accumulating layers that made it capable of accommodating a shift in the culture scene. These layers, which are a combination of spatial factors and structural changes, have been forming since the 1970s: an artistic atmosphere rooted in studios and art academies, followed by increased attraction brought by major infrastructure developments during the 1980s, then a cafe culture that blended the artistic and the popular. Among those cafes, rock cafes gradually emerged, later becoming the direct predecessor of clubs. Combined with the spillover of the underground music scene from Shinchon, this initiated the shift of culture toward Hongdae. What this process shows is that the ground for cultural production had already been prepared across decades of quiet accumulation, forming a supportive environment before the scene itself arrived.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Railroad BBQ
88 Woojja
Sanwoolim 1992
CODA
Sanwoolim
Art academy street
Food alley 2
Backstage
Hongik Univ.


DRUG
sk@
Powerplant
City beat
Gompangee
Blue Devil
m.i.
hodge podge
Gangster tteokbokki
Golden helmet
cafe street
Electronic
Freebird
gen X Gimbap
Food alley 1
0
100
200
300
400
500 m

Art university made area identity: studios and art academies

Hongik University, Korea's most specialised art university, drew a steady concentration of art students into the surrounding neighbourhood from its establishment on the Wausan campus (G. Nam et al., 2018). These students needed affordable spaces to work, and Hongdae offered exactly that: semi-basements, garages, and warehouses in the residential streets of Seokyo-dong were cheap enough to rent as studios (H, 2014a). As one account recalls, affordable spaces such as the 108 and 208 studios enabled art students to maintain working spaces close to the university (J. Lee, 2002). This studio culture became the seed from which Hongdae's artistic character would grow (H, 2014a).

The university's presence also generated demand for art academies. As university entrance quotas expanded under government policy during the 1980s (G. Nam et al., 2018), private art academies began clustering around Hongik University. This was further driven by a gap in the education system: practical art training was essential for university admission, yet unavailable in regular high schools, leaving students no choice but to seek private instruction near the most renowned art university (H, 2014a). By around 1986, a stretch of roughly one kilometre from the university gate to Sanwoolim theatre had become a dense art academy street (B. Jeong, 2020).



Figure 3.4: Article about art academy street

Together, studios and academies drew further art-related places into the area: art supply shops, craft workshops, galleries, and art bookshops accumulated around them (S. Ko, 2022; G. Nam et al., 2018). This made Hongdae's artistic density distinctly more concentrated than other university areas in Seoul, establishing an art-friendly character that would serve as the foundation for everything that followed.

Urban transformation led to increased footfall: food alleys

Meanwhile, Hongdae was also accumulating a different kind of layer alongside artist density: increased footfall driven by two major urban transformations. Drawing on G. Nam et al., 2018, the closure of the Danginri railway line in 1980 left a stretch of vacant land running through the neighbourhood. This underutilised space quickly attracted informal settlements, and along the former tracks and surrounding narrow alleys, small taverns, snack bars, and grillhouses began to cluster, forming what became known as the food alley. This process was further accelerated in the late 1980s, when a newtown development in Baekma, Goyang displaced many small drinking establishments, many of which relocated to Hongdae's food alley, rapidly intensifying its commercial character (H. Jo, 2013).



Figure 3.5: Photograph of food alley

Drawing on H, 2014a, the opening of subway line 2 in 1984 brought a steady flow of people into the area. Shops began forming along Seokyo-ro connecting the station to the university gate, and a second food alley emerged organically along the old Gyeongui line tracks near the station exit: an unpaved, locally rooted stretch of taverns and small eateries that grew without deliberate planning. These food alleys were not incidental to Hongdae's cultural development. Just as record shops, cafes, and diners had sustained everyday social interaction among actors in Shinchon, the food alleys provided a firm social base for the artists and students already present in Hongdae, offering places to gather, eat, and stay after work. This layer of informal social infrastructure would only grow more significant as the neighbourhood attracted more people in the years that followed.

Artistic density meets footfall: cafe culture

Building on the artistic atmosphere and increased footfall that had been accumulating in Hongdae, a new type of place began to emerge from the mid-to-late 1980s: cafes with distinct characters that set them apart from ordinary commercial establishments. Drawing on G. Nam et al., 2018, these were not generic cafes but places designed and run by art graduates of Hongik University, who brought their artistic sensibility directly into the places they created. Pioneer cafes such as 'Soil and two men' and 'Electronic' appeared in a previously quiet stretch between the university gate and the parking lot street, their crafted interiors drawing attention and visitors. As these cafes multiplied, the area transformed into a cluster of distinctive cafes, coming to be known as Picasso street.



Figure 3.6: Photograph of Electronic, one of cafes in cafe street

Drawing on G. Nam et al., 2018 and H, 2014b, this cafe culture was further amplified by a new generation of young people who had grown up benefitting from the economic prosperity of the late 1980s and gained exposure to foreign cultures through liberalised overseas travel. Known as the new generation, this cohort had first gathered around Apgujeong's commercial scene before moving toward Hongdae's cafes, bringing with them a culturally and consumption-oriented energy that intensified Picasso street's character. Around them, professionals from advertising, film, and music began to gather, and a more intense cultural atmosphere began to take shape.



Figure 3.7: Photograph of orange tribe

Starting from a few pioneering cafes and growing into a cluster, Hongdae has produced its own cafe culture, one rooted in artistic making and animated by a new generation's appetite for cultural expression. This served as the basis for rock cafes, a more music-oriented type of place considered an earlier form of clubs. Rock cafes will be examined as one of the place typologies in the following subsection.

3.1.3. Places before clubs

As the previous subsection traced the layers that made Hongdae capable of hosting a cultural scene, this subsection moves one step closer to the lively production of culture itself: the individual places. Before the clubs emerged and established the indie scene, there had been places that played distinct roles in implementing a unique culture in Hongdae. Whether deeply related to music or serving more as gathering points, together they initiated the formation of a cultural ecology.

The typologies examined here focus on places prevailing in the early 1990s in Hongdae. This means the period before, and areas other than Hongdae, are deliberately excluded to focus on the setting of the indie scene right before it established. Therefore, small theatres, the well-known place type of 1980s university towns, are excluded. Where helpful, cases from Shinchon or Daehakro are drawn on to support understanding of what each typology was like.

Now imagine you are a music enthusiast searching for something new to hear. You go to a rock cafe in Hongdae, or an MV theatre, to encounter music rarely heard elsewhere. This leads you to a record shop, searching for the album you just heard, or to an LP bar to request that same track and hear it again. Every night ends at a late night diner, over snacks and a few shots of soju, surrounded by people who share the same love for culture.

Rock cafe
Rock cafes emerged in the early 1990s as an informal and affordable alternative to nightclubs. As J. Gu, 2023 recalls, high taxes imposed on entertainment venues forced most nightclubs to close, and rock cafes emerged as a workaround: registered as regular restaurants, they operated as informal places to dance and hang out, attracting those with a limited budget. While these rock cafes were prevailing across the city, with many clustered in Shinchon, a distinctly different version was quietly emerging in Hongdae. Here, it was not only dancing and socialising, but also spontaneous live stages and art performances that brought uniqueness to these places. This led Hongdae's rock cafes to run on a different track from the usual ones, blurring the boundary between making and watching. In this sense, rock cafes were not merely places to dance but sites where culture was actively made. Thus, rock cafes can be understood as the 'starting point of Hongdae's music culture' before live clubs emerged (Kimjakga, 2007).

Interactions within rock cafes What distinguished Hongdae's rock cafes from those elsewhere in the city was not only the addition of live music and art performance, but the kind of encounters this addition produced. Where ordinary rock cafes offered a setting for drinking, dancing, and listening, Hongdae's verision provided informal stage for artists, made them come back repeatedly, allowing relationship to form in these interactions. At **Gompangee**, for instance, the owner Kim Hyeongtae, a painter himself, and a regular Cho Yunseok, an architect, met through repeated presence in the same place and eventually formed a band together, 'Hwang Sinhye Band' (G. Kim, 1996). This kind of place-born collaboration was not exceptional but characteristic: the rock cafe was the setting in which people who shared taste found each other without seeking each other out.



Figure 3.8: Photograph of Hwang Sinhye Band

There was also an inter-place relationship formed between neighbouring places. One visible case is the symbiosis between **Power Plant** and **City Beat**. As Y. Shin, 2007 recounts through the account of DJ Unkle, his record shop, City Beat supplied music for neighbouring rock cafe Power Plant, helping establish its reputation for unique music. Other rock cafe owners reached out to City Beat in turn, and the reputation for music spread across all rock cafes around Hongdae as a whole. The fame that accumulated around this cluster then circled back: people already working in music began making their way to City Beat specifically, which came to be known as a significant music archive for Korean music. This eventually earned the owner his own reputation as a DJ. What this pattern shows is the layered logic through which inhabitation produced encounter, encounter produced relationship, and relationship expanded the reach of the place itself.

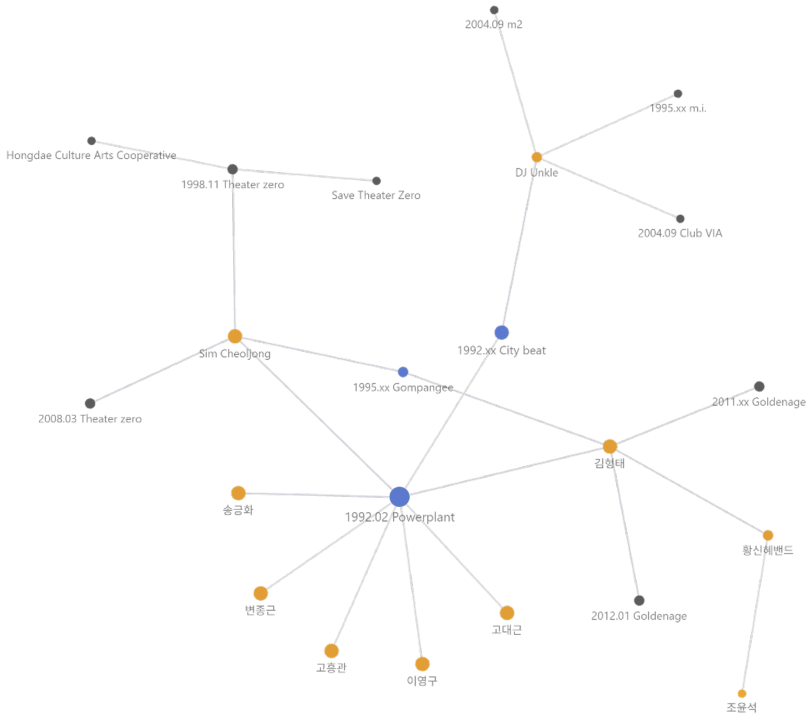


Figure 3.9: network formed around Powerplant

Spatial qualities supporting rock cafes The interaction within each rock cafe is supported by spatial qualities within the place, which can be identified through different spatial manifestations. Three qualities shaped how encounters took place. The first is **fluidity**, expressed through stages in rock cafes. Stages were set low with a vague border between performer and audience. This allowed spontaneous performance to happen, with intense engagement from audiences. As E. Park, 1996 describes it, beer cans were thrown onto the stage, and people climbed up to dance. In rock cafes, the stage was not a separation but an extension of the floor. In some rock cafes, performances were held on the floor, with no dedicated stage at all.

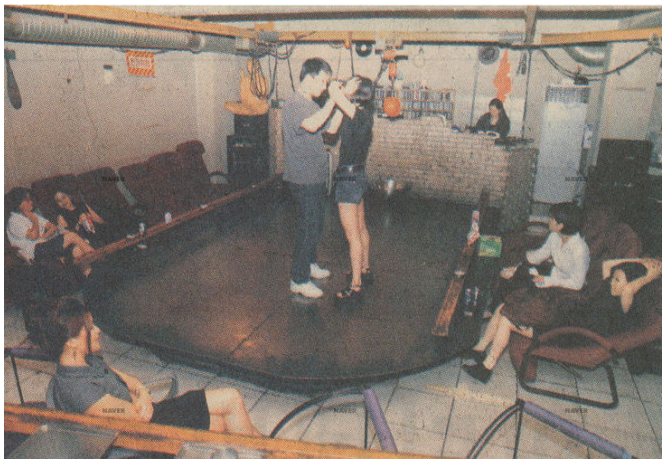


Figure 3.10: Stage in Powerplant



Figure 3.11: Stage in Goldemhelmet

The second quality is **area identity**. Many of these places reflected studio culture among art students at Hongik University. Power Plant originated from a sculptor's studio, with its interior self-made by the owner(Hwang, 2019). Gompangee had its aesthetic rooted directly in studio culture (Kimjakga, 2017). This made the space legible to artists as a place for them, drawing people of shared taste without much announcement. This was reinforced by **minimal exposure**. Most rock cafes carried minimal exterior presence, with a small sign, located in basement. This made them easy to miss for those not already in the know. The low visibility filtered who entered, and those who found their way in were already, in some sense, part of the same world.

The same qualities could also be found at the scale of the cluster. Regarding **area identity**, the proximity of Hongik University acted as a condition that enabled this. This **art university proximity** meant a dense population of art students who were both potential regulars and operators of these places. This dense artistic practice led to a density of cultural places. The rock cafes accumulated rather than competed, compounding their reputations: each place contributed to a shared atmosphere that made Hongdae as a whole more legible as a destination for those working in music and art.

Working around legal restriction There were two instruments rock cafes used to counter structures, which worked as a base that allowed these encounters to happen. The first was regulation for entertaining businesses. As a workaround for high taxes imposed on entertainment venues, rock cafes were registered as ordinary restaurants to sidestep the tax burden(J. Gu, 2023). This made it possible for visitors to enter without paying any entry fee, lowering the barrier and making the place accessible to anyone drawn to music or dance. The second structure rock cafes countered was mainstream dominance in the music industry. As Kimjakga, 2007 notes, in these rock cafes, avant-garde artists outside established institutions found a stage unavailable to them elsewhere. It was a site of cultural production operating outside legal, commercial, and institutional frameworks.



Figure 3.12: Map of hongdae with location of rock cafes

LP bar

Where rock cafes drew people through dancing and performance, LP bars gathered those who came specifically to listen. (Kang & Kim, 2015) describe LP bars as 'place for homo-musica', a resting place for those who live with music. The main interaction was through music requests: visitors chose what played, and in doing so opened a channel to everyone else in the room. Friends and music clubs gathered to talk and debate about music (J. Kim, 2025; G. Lee, 2018), while strangers found common ground through the same track, some becoming friends as the music started conversation between them (Kang & Kim, 2015). Over time, a quieter relationship also formed between owner and regulars, one deep enough that the owner could read what a regular had been through from the music they requested(Kang & Kim, 2015).

,

Enabling spatial conditions LP bars in both Shinchon and Hongdae clustered tightly, gathering around a single point rather than spreading across the neighbourhood. In Shinchon, most were concentrated near one elementary school, which was commonly used as a reference point for finding the location of LP bars. In Hongdae, they clustered in a spot close to Shinchon, a street called 'DDang DDang street'. The connection between the two clusters was not only spatial. As J. Jeong, 2013 recounts through Jang Mijin(also called Mija), a DJ who moved between the two areas. Mija said that she had been playing records since she was twenty-one, going back and forth between Noriba in Shinchon and Old Rock in Hongdae. This also affected her to start her own bar in Hongdae, named KKot. This suggests that formation of place cluster in Hongdae was affected by one in Shinchon, indicating spillover from established scene.



Figure 3.13: Map of Shinchon with LP bars clustered

Spatial qualities formed in LP bar Apart from the location, LP bars also shared same spatial factors. One common quality is **curatorial presence**, usually manifested through record collection. The volume alone signalled the owner's dedication, and the presence of rare records drew music enthusiasts into a sense of recognition. This was also shown in different forms other than record collection, as most LP bars were designed and built by owners themselves. This means that place and all the elements inside it directly reflect owners' own taste. One example is portraits of musicians on the walls, signalling what kind of music the owner likes. Even the name of the place carried this intent, with names like Woodstock or Doors referencing bands and festivals that pointed to a specific musical taste. When visitors could read the owner's taste through these elements, the place became a site of affinity before a single word was exchanged.



Figure 3.14: Record collection in LP bar

This affinity left traces, showing how much one place is beloved. The research identifies a quality here as **room for marks**: a deliberate openness in the interior that allowed regulars to leave doodles, memos, and photographs behind. It can be also seen as a natural form of co creation, while regulars add their own to owner's. The traces by regulars functions as a signal for new visitors that the place is worth inhabiting. This can be found from one visitor's account, saying:"I liked the traces on the wall left by various people, it felt like the place had been visited by many people for a long time." (Heunoni, 2015). This shows that marks by regulars were cumulative, turning the walls into a record of encounters and relations the place had contained.



Figure 3.15: doodles left in LP bar

Record shop
These places for gathering while listening pointed outward to another kind of place: the record shop. It was the only point where music could be purchased and taken home, housing the largest collections of records. As already shown in the case of City Beat, which functioned as a music archive for the wider music industry, record shops served many roles beyond selling. Not every record shop reached a scale like City Beat, but all of them drew a wide range of actors. This was due to the record market reaching its peak during the 1990s: music communities on PC communication platforms drove regular purchases, and listening events became common. As Kim Geonhil, the owner of Hyang Music, recalls, local record shops across Seoul were all thriving. Records would vanish from the shelf the moment he put them out (Sim & Lee, 2016).

Considered spatial factors Hyang Music, the shop Kim Geonhil ran in Shinchon, was one such place, staying in the same location for more than twenty years. From different interviews with Kim, the research could identify spatial factors he considered for location of the shop. Given its commercial character as a selling point, the shop was strategically positioned to attract as many visitors as possible. The first set of factors were conditions: **proximity to university** and **transit connectivity**, both of which indicated attraction. However, Kim did not think only about taking spot in busy area. He also cared about the atmosphere of the surrounding area, which points to spatial qualities rather than conditions alone.

Among many university towns, the reason Kim specifically chose Shinchon was its proximity to Ewha Womans University. During the 1990s, the area was well known for its advanced culture (O. Ahn, 2016), which indicates an **area identity**. Another indicator for him was the clustering of rock cafes in Shinchon. In an interview with Kimkija, 2011, he said he simply located his shop nearby rock cafes since he liked rock music a lot. However, from a spatial perspective, this suggests that he naturally gravitated toward neighbouring places that shared the same musical taste, knowing that people coming out of rock cafes would look for the music he stocked.

Interaction between owner and musicians Being a gathering point for those working in music brought the owner into repeated contact with musicians and label representatives. As Kim recalls (Sim & Lee, 2016), it was his exchanges with indie musicians that he found most rewarding. Musicians visited regularly to check how their albums were selling, and through repeated visits, these interactions turned into friendship. He became not just a shop owner but an elder figure who listened to their concerns and encouraged them to keep pursuing their work, telling them to use his shop as a stepping stone and to commit fully to both their performances and their music.

Countering mainstream dominance This intimacy extended into a practical supporting structure for indie musicians' careers. Albums that major labels would not distribute were sold exclusively at Hyang Music, and the shop developed its own sales chart compiled directly from weekly figures, helping indie musicians gain visibility through its own system, which major labels could not replicate. Feeling the weight of this role, Kim structured the shop's distribution to maximise revenue going directly to musicians. What had started as a selling point had become an alternative system, built on friendship and a quiet commitment to keeping the scene alive.

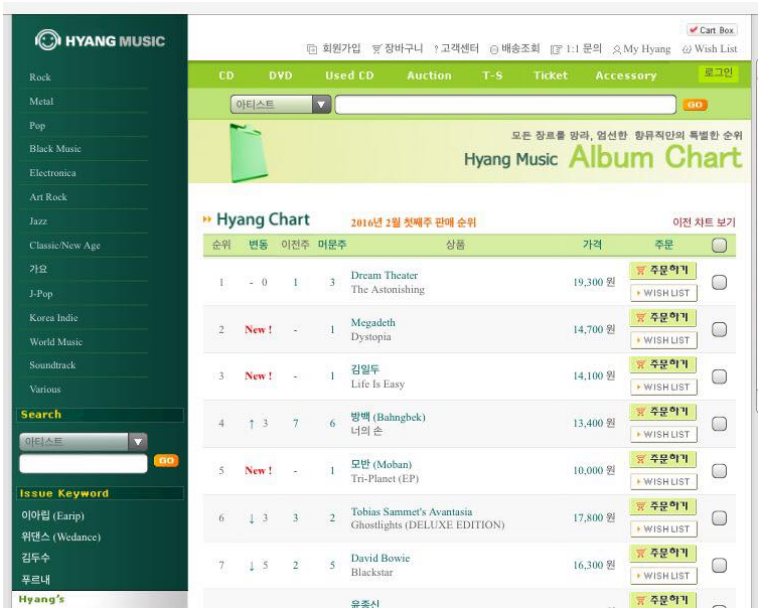


Figure 3.16: hyang music chart

MV theatre
While other types of places offered music to listen to, MV theatres offered music to watch. Before YouTube, and before satellite broadcasting reached Korea, these were the only places where music videos from overseas could be seen. Sucream, 2019 recalls it as the place where you could encounter video stars, for those who were passionate about foreign musicians but had no other means to do so. People who could not attend Live Aid or Woodstock gathered there to meet their artists on screen. In this sense, MV theatres functioned as a local channel through which new culture arrived.

Alternative distribution This made the role of MV theatres occasionally extend into distribution. S. Kwon, 2012 recounts one episode involving Kim Yoonjoong, the owner of Backstage. One day the threatre screened a music video of Deftones before the band was known in Korea. The audience response was strong enough that a trader brought a hundred copies of the album directly from the United States and asked Kim to sell them at the theatre. They sold out in five days. Kim recalled the moment with delight, and it later inspired him to start his own label focused on importing albums from abroad.



Figure 3.17: Album of deftones

Being part of daily routine Like record shops, MV theatres were located close to other cultural places, often along the route toward venues and rock cafes, serving as daytime spaces while waiting for the night to begin. Most were underground, hidden from street level, and people found their way there through acquaintances such as university seniors. Sucream, 2019 likens the contrast between the dark interior and the outside world to a scene from the film, suggesting that the darkness made what was inside feel rare and meant for those who had been looking for it.

Late night diner
This is the last stop of the night, where all the routes of those who gathered around Hongdae converged. As one artist recalls in G. Nam et al., 2018, all routes led to the same spot: someone doing theatre, someone recognisable from television, or a writer passing through: they were all there. Some called it the area around Sanwoolim Theatre, others the street along the old rail line near Shinchon, but it all pointed to the same cluster of late-night diners in Hongdae. With no agenda other than food and drink, it was the most open setting in the area, drawing every kind of artist into the same informal space.

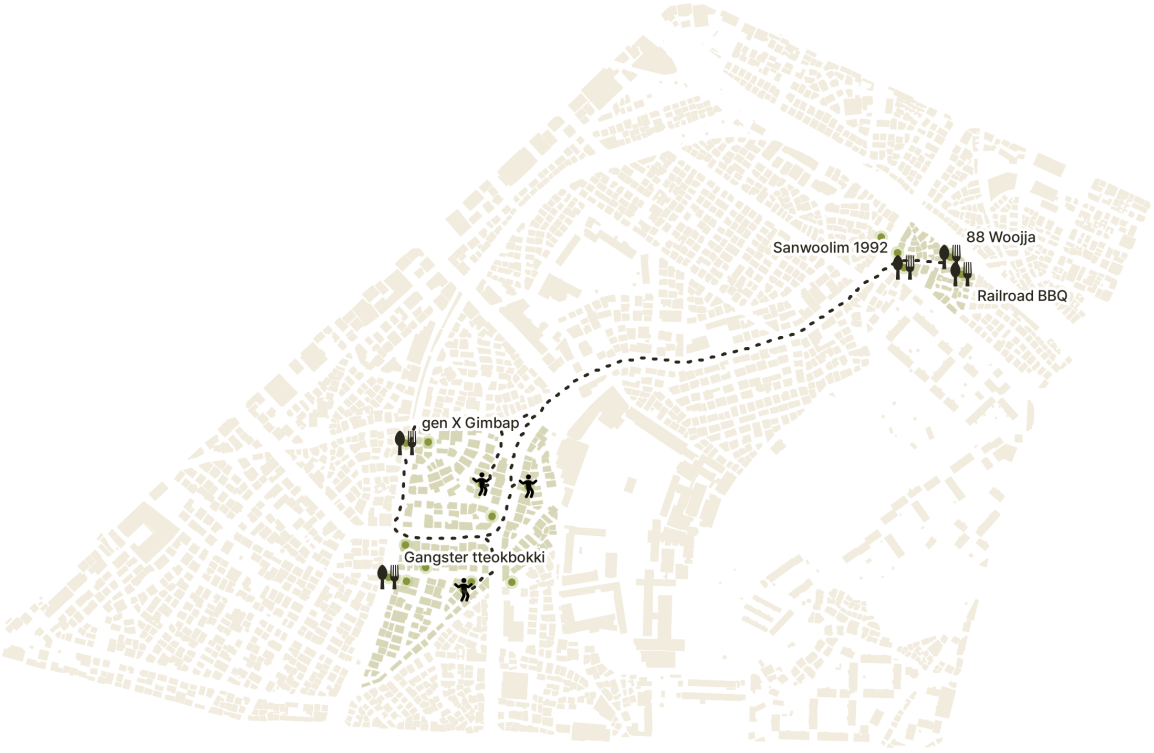


Figure 3.18: Route to late night diner from other places

Informal operation under legal restriction These diners had taken root during the 1980s, when the food alley formed around the new subway station. By the 1990s, they had become the gathering point for everyone who stayed out late after passing through MV theatres, LP bars, and rock cafes. The reason was practical: they were among the few places that remained open after midnight. Operating beyond the hour limits Korea enforced at the time (Hwang, 2019), these diners quietly continued serving, absorbing everyone still out, including the owners and staff of rock cafes finishing their own shifts.

Gathering at diner No single account names a collaboration or friendship that began at a diner table, but as a third place where the same people returned every night regardless of discipline or genre, it functioned as the most effective gathering point the area had. People mixed without friction, and the interaction repeated nightly. From that repetition, wide and deep friendships formed among cultural producers across Hongdae, laying the foundation for the network that would sustain the scene.



Figure 3.19: Photograph of people gathering in 88 Woojja

3.1.4. Collected cases

ACTOR

Observations about how relationships among actors form within cultural ecology. Each finding captures the collective character of cultural production through the depth of the relational process.

INTERACTION

Findings that describe how actors come into contact and develop familiarity. Each finding captures the process that gives rise to different stages of connection.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

2 referenced through network

An existing network of relationships routes a new or external actor toward a place or person, producing an encounter that the actor could not have initiated alone.

Jeong, J. (2013, May). I met — 039. Mija of 'Kkot'. Street H. *creator account of Jang Mijin, owner of Kkot*

> *A friend working as staff at the '100,000 won film festival' spread the word, and people from the nearby film academy and film world began to come. Then culture and arts people and musicians gathered one by one, until the place became their hideout.*



Sucream. (2019, May 22). Backstage. *participant account about Backstage*

> *I had only been to rock cafes that didn't play rock music in those days, so I didn't know about this place. A senior or classmate from school must have brought me there — I don't remember the first time clearly.*

3 referenced by place

A place mediates the encounter between an actor and a wider network or audience, producing an opportunity the actor could not have initiated alone.

Shin, Y. (2007, September 13). Hongdae clubs are my life. Ilyo Seoul. *scene account about Power Plant*

> *Power Plant turned Hongdae into a hub of music by introducing diverse genres, from modern rock to electronic. Behind it was City Beat, which supplied the music. From there, City Beat extended its reach beyond Power Plant — recommending and supplying music to rock cafe owners, broadcasting station music directors, and dance music composers alike — eventually becoming recognised as the definitive music archive of the Korean scene.*

LOCAL FRIENDSHIP TIES

Findings that describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity. Each finding captures the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.

1 familiarity through encounter

Bonds of personal familiarity that form gradually through repeated contact in the same setting, without any deliberate act of relationship-forming.

Park, J. (2014, July). Hongdae people. Street H. *creator account of Park Haejun, owner of Seom*

> *I've been here for so long that I'm close with the surrounding merchants and customers.*

Street H. (2015). Hongdae's longtime spaces — 003: Gobchangjeongol. *scene account about Gobchangjeongol*

> *Hongdae musicians whose names everyone knows — Sung Giwan of 3rd Line Butterfly, Jang Kiha, Hasegawa Yohei, Goonamguayoraidingstella — regulars at this place, which also serves as a regular after-party spot for foreign musicians on their Korean tours.*

Shim, E., & Lee, C. (2016). Hyang Music interview. *creator account of Kim Geonhil, owner of Hyang Music*

> *Many friends passed through this place. They would drop by every now and then to check how many copies of their record were left, or quietly glance to see how well it was selling. The exchanges with them were what I enjoyed most.*





2 creative exchange

Sustained co-presence in shared creative practice draws actors into mutual inspiration, deepening familiarity through repeated exchange.

Shin, H. (2013). The cultural geography of Sinchon and Daehakro. *scene account about 1980s underground scene*

> *Through this nexus, those who carried memories from before 1975 inherited the achievements of folk songs and group sounds from that golden era while also experimenting with rock, blues, and fusion jazz — forming a network of serious musicians.*

Lee, J. (2002). Interview with Cho Yunseok. *creator account of Cho Yunseok*

> *Studying architecture, I learned more in friends' studios than I did at school. Going to studios, passing around art books, listening to music, discussing — artists working alone face many limits. Creative ideas come from playing, talking, and studying together.*



3 place-born collaboration

Sustained co-presence in the same place draws actors into close working proximity, where personal familiarity develops into shared creative work.

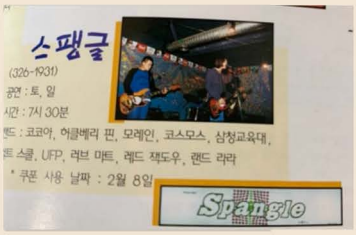
Kim, G. (1996). On Hwang Shin-hye Band. *scene account about Gompangee*

> *Hwang Shin-hye Band was formed last summer by painter Kim Hyungtae and architect Cho Yunseok, who met at Gompangee cafe in front of Hongik University.*



Kimjakga. (2018, January 10). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 3: Spangle. *scene account about Double Deuce / Spangle*

> *Spangle, lost to redevelopment in the early 2000s, traces its origins to a music bar called Double Deuce in the mid 1990s. Three women who had been frequenting the place since the Double Deuce days took over the venue together.*



4 inter-place symbiosis

A bond formed between two places or their operators through sustained exchange, where the practices and outputs of one become embedded in the other.

Shin, Y. (2007, September 13). Hongdae clubs are my life. Ilyo Seoul. *scene account about Power Plant and City Beat*

> *Power Plant helped establish Hongdae as a destination for music by introducing diverse genres including modern rock and electronic music, and behind this was City Beat. From there, City Beat extended its reach beyond Power Plant, recommending and supplying music to rock cafe owners, broadcasting station music directors, and dance music composers alike, eventually becoming recognised as the definitive music archive of the Korean music scene.*

PLACE

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology. Each finding captures a characteristic that enables cultural relations to emerge, accumulate, or persist.

SPATIAL FACTORS

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology.

CONDITION

Fixed spatial characteristics that enable cultural activity to find ground.

POROSITY

Spatial characteristics that leave room for cultural activity to occupy. Each finding captures how a space remains open to uses that exceed its original purpose.

1 underutilised space

Buildings or land not at full capacity, available for informal conversion into cultural places at low cost.

Seoul Museum of History. (2018). Hongdae: Seoul's cultural power plant. *contextual record about 1970s Hongdae*

> *The art university context drove a 'studio culture' from the start. Art students needed large workspaces, so they rented and used the small gap spaces in the residential Seogyo-dong area — semi-basements, garages, warehouses — as studios. With little developed commerce nearby, the art students and the artists who circulated around them spent most of their time in these studios.*

문화발전소 홍대앞. (n.d.). Cultural Power Plant Hongdae. *contextual record about 1980 Danginri line closure*

> *As housing density increased around Hongdae, the Danginri line that had served Seoul Thermal Power Plant for coal transport was gradually shut down through residents' complaints and accumulated deficits. In 1974 Broadcasting Station Front station was closed; in 1976 the entire line was scheduled for closure; and as the thermal plant switched from coal to heavy oil, the Danginri line was fully closed in 1980.*



2 affordability

The degree to which the cost of occupying a space remains within reach for cultural producers, enabling them to establish their place.

Lee, J. (2002). Hongdae studio culture. *participant account about Hongik art students*

> *Aside from Hongik having the largest art college in the world after Mexico's, studios were concentrated here also because rent was cheap. Choi Geumsoo, class of 87, recalled: 'when I was at university, there were affordable spaces like 108 studio (a million won deposit and 80,000 monthly) or 208 studio (2 million and 80,000).'*

4 transit connectivity

The opening or presence of a transit line brings actors into an area from beyond its immediate neighbourhood.

히스토리오브홍대앞. (2014). *scene account about 1984 Line 2 opening*

> *The Seoul Subway Line 2, opened in 1984, could be said to have lit the fuse for Hongdae's development. Notably, Line 2 has eleven stations named after universities — it has been closely tied to university commercial districts. As the subway opened, shops began appearing around Hongik Station and along Seogyo-ro toward Hongik's main gate.*



안옥희. (2016). Hyang Music location reasoning. *creator account of Kim Geonhil*

> *Sinchon was adjacent to Ewha — culturally developed at the time — and had heavy foot traffic and good transit. After coming here once, no other neighbourhood caught my eye.*



QUALITY

Characteristics of a place that emerge through the inhabitation of cultural production.

CULTURAL VITALITY

The activeness of cultural production within a place. Each finding captures the elements that indicate the intensity of interaction among actors.

문화발전소 홍대앞. (n.d.). Cultural Power Plant Hongdae. *contextual record about 1980s food alleys*

> *When the Danginri line was closed, unauthorised shanty houses began appearing on the abandoned railway land. Folk drinking houses, snack shops, food carts, and grilled meat places filled these shanties, forming what came to be known as the 'food alley'.*





ACTOR SUPPLY

Spatial characteristics of a place's surroundings that channel actors toward it.

2 spillover

A significant event or newly established place draws new actors into the surrounding area, increasing cultural density beyond what was already there.

Shin, H. (2013). The cultural geography of Sinchon and Daehakro. *scene account about 1970s downtown decline*

> *From the mid-1970s, the downtown declined, but areas 3-4km from the centre developed as 'sub-centres'.*

문화발전소 홍대앞. (n.d.). *scene account about late 1980s Bekma development*

> *In the late 1980s, many drinking establishments from Bekma in Goyang Gyeonggi-do moved to the Hongdae food alley area during new town development, causing this area to rapidly become a commercial space.*



문화발전소 홍대앞. (n.d.). *scene account about Hongik art college expansion*

> *A 'fine arts academy street' formed from Hongik's main gate to Sanullim Theatre. Painting studios, craft workshops, art academies, galleries, art-specialist bookshops — an arts-related commercial cluster began to form.*



3 lived traces

Oh, S. (2011, July 28). On The Doors. *scene account about The Doors*

> *Every corner of The Doors is filled with photos, drawings, frames, and postcards left by regulars. They are proof of the dense affection toward the bar.*

Heunoni. (2015). Nori bar visit. *participant account about Nori bar*

> *There were traces left by various people on the walls, giving the feeling that many people had been coming here consistently for a long time. I liked it for that reason.*

4 area identity

Shin, H. (2013). The cultural geography of Sinchon and Daehakro. *scene account about 1980s underground*

> *Both ends of this nexus — Sinchon and Daehakro — had been culturally and industrially under-resourced 'university towns' until the 1970s, but were endowed with rich cultural capital because Seoul's major universities sat there. Both became havens for marginalised intellectuals, artists, and romantics, offering the chance to carry out artistic experiment and creation.*



Shin, H. (2013). *scene account about Sinchon and Daehakro artist density*

> *Beyond music, artists working in theatre, film, literature, painting, photography also settled here. Rented rooms and studios where artists lived were also scattered across this nexus.*

Shin, H. (2013). *scene account about 1980s underground places*

> *Within this nexus, places to perform live music took the form of small theatres — and these small theatres were the place that condensed and summarised the practice of the 1980s underground.*

Shin, H. (2013). *scene account about 1980s socially supporting places*

> *Across this nexus were instrument shops, record shops, cafes, restaurants, and bars where music artists prepared their careers and carried on friendships and conversations with one another.*

정병욱. (2020). Hongdae's golden age. *scene account about Hongdae studio culture*

> *Combined with the geographic features, the residential area created by 1960s land readjustment provided studios to artists who took the Hongdae vicinity as their home — and this in turn triggered the birth and activation of 1980s underground culture.*



문화발전소 홍대앞. (n.d.). *scene account about Hongdae art clustering*

> *The presence of Hongik art college and the immediately related clustering of studios and art academies became the foundation on which various 'art' related facilities flowed into Hongdae and a distinctive atmosphere — hard to find in other districts or university areas — was established. Around Hongdae's main gate, beyond paint shops like Homi, were many art workshops, art-specialist bookshops, studios, and galleries.*

Park, J. (2014, July). Hongdae people. *creator account of Park Haejun, owner of Seom*

> *Only experts come here. There's a kind of insider culture only we share.*

Hwang, I. (2019). 88 Woojja history. *scene account about 88 Woojja*

> *Young people who came hungry after dancing at rock cafes like Power Plant, Myungwolkwan, Golden Helmet, and Gompangi gathered here, along with cafe owners and staff who had finished work.*

Lachouette. (2021). When I miss 88 Ujja. *participant account about Hongdae nightlife*

> *When we met we would drink while having dinner, then move to a second round at a loud rock cafe for beer. When we were forced to leave at midnight we would go to play billiards (where curfew didn't apply). After an hour or two there we'd get hungry again — and that's when we went to 88 Woojja.*



Sucream. (2019). Backstage memories. *participant account about Backstage usual route*

> *Steve Park: People who came to Rock World performances often stopped by when they had time. I performed at Rock World a lot myself — on nights without a show I'd head to Donggyo-dong to see another band, with time to spare I'd drop by Backstage first for an iced tea, then head to Rock World around 7-8pm.*

3 university proximity

The proximity of a university provides a steady supply of students and graduates who form an initial audience and social base for cultural places.

Shin, H. (2013). The cultural geography of Sinchon and Daehakro. *scene account about Sinchon and Daehakro*

> *Among them, Sinchon to the west — where Yonsei, Ewha, and Sogang universities sit — and Daehakro to the east — where Seoul National University's old liberal arts and medical campuses, along with Sungkyunkwan, are located — retained their distinctive cultural atmosphere even through commercialisation by power and capital.*



Ko, S. (2022). Hongdae cultural history. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *Hongik University, Korea's first comprehensive arts university, was a particular force behind the Hongdae area's cultural character.*



Kim, G. (2011). Hyang Music interview. *creator account of Kim Geonhil*

> *Sinchon felt different because it was a university area, and there were many rock cafes playing rock music — which I liked, since I loved rock.*

STABILITY

The capacity of a place to maintain its foundations over time.

1 off-centre

Shim, E., & Lee, C. (2016). Hyang Music interview. *creator account of Kim Geonhil*

> *When I opened Hyang Music, Sinchon had the feel of a working-class neighbourhood. Different from today's instant-food street. All gone now, but back then it was a beautiful street full of coffee shops and tailor shops.*



문화발전소 홍대앞. (n.d.). *scene account about late 1980s Picasso street*

> *'Earth and Two Men' and 'Electronic Cafe' were located in what was then the relatively quiet 'Hongik main gate — Far East Broadcasting — Parking Lot Street' area of Hongdae.*



CONTEXT

The structural and historical conditions within which cultural ecology operates.

STRUCTURAL PRESSURE

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

2 rent gap

An, O. (2016). Hyang Music closing. *creator account of Kim Geonhil*

> *As record buyers dropped, stock piled up, and shop rent shot up, the owner decided to close the store.*



SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

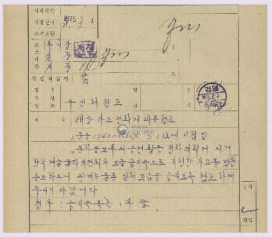
1 mainstream dominance

Shin, H. (2013). *scene account about 1980s underground*

> *These musicians came to be called 'underground' because they kept their distance from the conventions and forms of mainstream popular music mediated and regulated by Yeouido.*

Ko, S. (2022). Hongdae cultural history. *scene account about Sinchon underground*

> *From the 1970s, music listening rooms with live performance started appearing in Sinchon. After the 1975 'song purification movement' tightened album review, a distinct Sinchon underground scene was activated. Music different from existing mainstream began to appear, and various underground genres were performed in Sinchon's small theatres, music rooms, and clubs. Bands active in Sinchon came to be nicknamed 'the Sinchon faction', and through them Sinchon became the birthplace of alternative music.*



Cho, H. (2016). Indie distribution gap. *creator account of Cho Hueil, Hyukjungchima*

> *Back then, there weren't many record companies distributing indie music.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

3 trend shift

An, O. (2016). Hyang Music closing. *creator account of Kim Geonhil*

> *The small scale and low overhead let us hold on, but the boom in the digital music market — streaming and downloads — became a real threat. The era of digital distribution and rising rents on Yonsei street could not be overcome. Famous shops like Apgujeong Sinarara, Yongsan Yein, Hongdae Purple Records — almost every small offline record shop closed down.*



EFFECT

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

3 tenure support

Jeong, J. (2013, May). I met — 039. Mija of 'Kkot'. *creator account of Jang Mijin, owner of Kkot*

> *Our landlord is really sweet. We've come this far without ever rewriting the contract. Instead of raising rent, if the water bill went up a little, I'd just pay more on my own. He's been treating me like his own daughter since I was twenty-six.*

Jeong, J. (2013). *creator account of Jang Mijin, owner of Kkot*

> *Relationships aren't one-sided. If something is given, something comes back. What matters most is meeting human to human. Whenever the landlord sees an abandoned bicycle in front of the shop, he comes and asks Mija if it belongs to a customer, telling her one by one when locks have been left unsecured. Mija treats him casually but looks after him and his wife with care. Since their children are in America, she brings a carnation basket and gift on Parents' Day, and a big watermelon on hot summer days.*

INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships and places — countering structural pressure through capital, regulatory, systemic, and contextual means.

PLACE-ARRANGING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that shape the spatial ground of cultural ecology.

ACTIVATING CULTURAL VITALITY

Deliberate actions that generate or intensify the relational and creative exchange between actors.

2 self-making

> *The current sign is the same sign from then. Around 2007 it moved to the Dabok-gil area near Sanullim Theatre, but soon after the building owner decided to split the unit for separate tenants — so it moved again to where Gobchangjeongol now stands.*

MAINTAINING STABILITY

Deliberate actions that maintain the foundations of a place over time.

4 relocation

An actor moves to a new location where more stable settlement is expected.

Street H. (2015). On Gobchangjeongol. *scene account about Gobchangjeongol*

> *Around 2007 it moved to Dabok-gil near Sanullim Theatre. Soon after, the building owner decided to subdivide the unit and lease it out separately — so Gobchangjeongol moved again to its current location.*

STRUCTURE-COUNTERING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that directly address structural pressure on cultural places.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

5 economy of intimacy

An operator prioritises cultural production over profit, sustaining the place with minimum or no profit.

Shin, H. (2013). *scene account about 1980s independent labels*

3 alternative music distribution

Use of an established place as an alternative supply node for non-mainstream music.

Shin, Y. (2007, September 13). On City Beat. *scene account about City Beat*

> *Power Plant helped establish Hongdae as a destination for music by introducing diverse genres, and behind it was City Beat that supplied the music. From there, City Beat extended its reach beyond Power Plant, recommending and supplying music to rock cafe owners, broadcasting station music directors, and dance music composers alike — eventually becoming recognised as the definitive music archive of the Korean scene.*

Cho, H. (2016). Hyang Music interview. *creator account of Cho Hueil, Hyukjungchima*

> *At the end of 2008, I released the debut Hyukjungchima album through Hyang Music — it didn't even have a barcode printed. Back then few record companies distributed indie music, so the album was sold exclusively at Hyang Music.*

Kwon, S. (2012). Backstage interview. *creator account of Kim Yoonjung, owner of Backstage*

> *When Deftones, who were popular in the US, were not yet known in Korea, we played the music video for '7 Words' and the response was very strong. Not long after, a trader who had seen the video brought 100 copies of Deftones' Adrenaline that he had bought directly from the US and asked if we could sell them. All sold out in five days.*

Sucream. (2019). Backstage memories. *scene account about Backstage*

> *Although it focused on music videos rather than live performance unlike Drug, in an era of strict censorship Backstage played an essential role in supplying new music to Korea.*

4 open stage

A place opens its stage without professional threshold, directly countering mainstream gatekeeping.

Kimjakga. (2007, November 13). Hongdae is not dead yet. OhmyNews. *scene account about rock cafes*

> *The starting point of Hongdae's music culture was not limited to live clubs. It began with performances by groups like Uhuhboo Project and Hwang Shin-hye Band at places like Power Plant and Golden Helmet — distinctive spaces that differed from existing rock cafes. The performances of avant-garde artists who didn't belong to the established arts world were the embodiment of a new desire.*



5 scene infrastructure

A place offers a broader set of interconnected programmes, serving as sustaining infrastructure for the scene.

Shim, E., & Lee, C. (2016). Hyang Music interview. *creator account of Kim Geonhil*

> *Korea loves charts. We made the pure Hyang Music chart — just compiled from weekly online/offline sales. Through the Hyang Music chart we helped indie musicians sell their albums. It's something large labels can't do.*





6 fair distribution

Actors organise compensation arrangements that route a fair share of revenue to musicians and crew.

Shim, E., & Lee, C. (2016). Hyang Music interview. *creator account of Kim Geonhil*

> *Indie musicians start with nothing. Most are unknown, struggling, recording under a blanket at home. Those musicians brought their albums to us to sell, and some of them gained recognition — Hyang Music was part of that process. I always told indie musicians: step over me to climb. I tried to give as much of the album revenue as possible to the artist, so they could keep making music.*

3.2. Gathering into third place

Built on the layers that had been accumulating in Hongdae, the indie scene emerged in the mid-1990s. Among the pressures that shaped this, the shift in the music industry played a significant role, concentrating it around a single commercial format that later became K-pop. This narrowed the space available for anything outside it, leading to the breakdown of the underground scene. Thus, a more independent mode of production emerged in response: music made entirely on one's own terms, without the support of the mainstream system. The ground where this tendency arrived was Hongdae. From a theoretical perspective, this is when third places emerged from the supportive environment already in place, bringing together people pursuing a different kind of music. To examine this, the section begins with personal stories of actors, before turning to a spatial perspective, examining how places at different scales supported it, while attending to the structural pressures that shaped the conditions from behind.

3.2.1. Narrative of building the scene

To examine the establishment phase, the section first focuses on the actors who built the scene. Here, the report follows the personal narrative of an individual actor, tracing how they formed relationships with others and how these eventually led to the emergence of indie music culture. By doing this, the analysis offers readers a way into the lived stories inside Hongdae in the 1990s from the actors' perspective. This translates the relational dimension of analysis from concept into a lived story, showing the importance of the network among actors in producing culture.

Cho Sungsuk: the godmother of indie bands

Cho Sungsuk, known as the godmother of indie bands, is one of the recognised figures in the early history of indie music in Hongdae. As a devoted fan of modern rock and British bands, she was so enthusiastic about music that she even travelled to the UK on her own to follow the music she loved. This made her a regular of LP bars in Hongdae and an early witness to the indie scene forming in clubs that were just emerging, eventually leading her to start one herself. Her personal story shows how networks among cultural actors can draw a participant deeper into the scene, eventually shaping its development during establishment.

ne the godmother of indie bands
n Korea



I was really into British rock bands back then.
I used to hang out at LP bar called Double Deuce all the time.

There were two other regular I got closed to.
We were all into modern rock, and that naturally brought us together.

Later, the bar was looking for some to take over the place. So me and my friends decided to take it over by ourselves. This is how my live club, Spangle opened.

Spangle





PC communication

Since we were all member of a modern rock community on HiTEL(PC communication), we reached out to bands through this network.



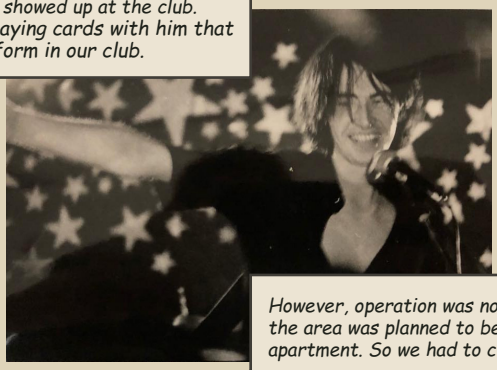
Delispice

Early Modern rock bands like Cocore, Sister's Barbershop, Delispice, and My Aunt Mary came to play and became our house bands.

Cocore

Soon Spangle became regular gathering point for all modern rock lovers, where they play, drink, and stay.

Butler showed up at the club.
hile playing cards with him that
d perform in our club.



작성자
Bernard Butler
Well that's quite an insight and sounds abo
right. I found that picture in a box yesterday
and uploaded on a whim. I dont know who
took it or why i have it. I remember those 2
days as joyous and free. England was not so
much fun for me at the time and those days
in Seoul were unforgettable, welcoming and
warm, the people of Korea remain friends to
me because of that night.
번역 보기

Sis, I have nowhere to stay...
can I sleep in your club?



Won Jonghee

One guy even asked me if he can sleep here for a while

However, operation was not so easy, and moreover, the area was planned to be redeveloped into apartment. So we had to close Spangle.





Not long after, SSamzie suggested me to become manager of live club they are making.
So I became concert manager of 'Baram', later called 'Live club SSam'.

SSamzie space 'Baram'



Lots of bands loved SSam. When the venue is about to close, everyone came back to take part of our last concert. The concert lasted for four days, and club was full with audiences.

I kept doing what I always did, listening to demo tapes, going to shows, seeking for hidden bands.
I even held auditions. Bands who performed at Spangle also came to perform.
The club is later known as where the most avant-garde bands can perform







I still dream of opening a place like Spangle again.
I believe there should be proper environment for new culture to emerge.

Network formed around Sungsuk The transition from regular to operator came through place, showing how collaboration can be brought about through repeated presence. The LP bar Double Deuce was where Cho found friends who shared the same musical taste, and those friendships later became a business partnership when the bar was looking for for someone to take over. The case shows how place-based intimacy and a music-driven bond lead to place-born collaboration, where shared musical taste deepens into partnership. What gave this collaboration its content was an existing network already forming through Hi-TEL, the PC communication platform of the 1990s. Through a channel called the modern rock group, Cho and other operators had already been connecting with bands online. When Spangle opened, it gave this online community a physical place to gather, showing how music-driven bond initiated through **online reachout** could be grounded in place.



Figure 3.20: Screen of Hi-TEL, PC communication platform

In Spangle, the place meant more than a site for performance. Different forms of bonds formed in place could be found among those who inhabited it. Bands were affiliated as 'house bands', which brought them there every day, even when no performance was planned. The club became a place to eat, drink, and gather without a particular reason, with the space owned not only by the owner but shared by everyone who inhabited it. The case of Won Jonghee, who slept in Spangle when he had nowhere else to stay, shows the most open form of this shared use of space. Operating as a third place, Spangle strengthened and consolidated the network between those who came daily, deepening the place-based intimacy that held them together.

Around Spangle, individual networks of different actors converged around the place, forming a collective network larger than any one person's connections alone. The network that formed around Spangle was wide enough that even Bernard Butler found his way there through connections within it. This network was also what the scene appreciated most, which brought opportunities for Cho when her club closed. While shifting from owner of Spangle to concert manager of Live Club SSam, she showed that a network can be a transferable asset, with Cho herself as its carrier. The bands that had been affiliated with Spangle performed in SSam.

In SSam, her main job was expanding the club's network by connecting to emerging bands, holding auditions, attending shows in other clubs, and listening to demo tapes. For musicians who were struggling to find a place to perform, giving them their first opportunity could initiate affection toward the place. This is how Cho formed strong place-based intimacy in SSam, even without bands exclusively affiliated to the club. This attachment to the place was expressed most intensely at the last concert at SSam, where musicians who had performed there came together to share their memories of the place. This shows how giving a stage to non-mainstream musicians can initiate encounters and also deepen them into local friendship ties.



Figure 3.21: Last concert at live club SSam

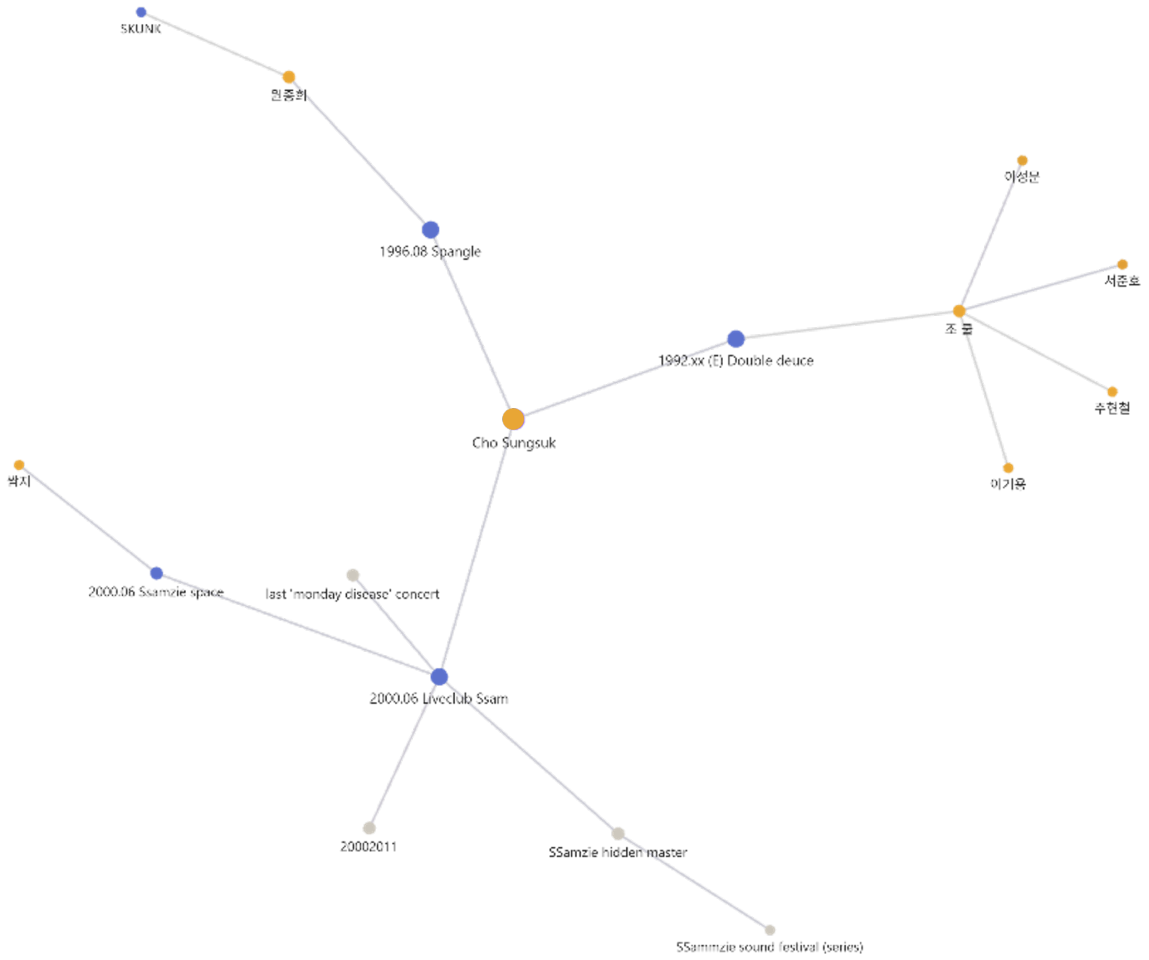


Figure 3.22: Network formed around Cho Sungsuk

Revealed vulnerability Lastly, both closures in Cho's story reveal the vulnerability of places under structural pressure. Her first club, Spangle, was lost to a housing development, making it impossible for the club to maintain its space. Live Club SSam had to close due to the bankruptcy of its sponsoring company, as the building was sold. In both cases, the ownership of physical space became a threat to cultural production when external conditions changed. This further indicates the need for new instruments that can anticipate and prepare for larger structural shifts.



Figure 3.23: Advertisement of housing development

3.2.2. How indie scene found its ground in Hongdae

The story of Cho Sungsuk shows how the indie music scene was established and developed in Hongdae, with her narrative extending beyond this section. Returning to the establishment phase, this section investigates the spatial factors that enabled the emergence of indie music culture on a broader scale, building on the supportive environment already formed by accumulated artist density, increased footfall, and cafe culture.


DDang DDang Street


Area of punk
club street
0
100
200
300
400
500 m

Change in spatial factor

The major shift at area scale was the migration of cultural producers from Shinchon to Hongdae. cite-SeoulMuseum2018 accounts that from the early 1990s, Hongdae was emerging as an alternative to Shinchon, as live cafes and rock cafes in Shinchon were declining. The primary factor drawing actors toward Hongdae was affordability. Rent in Hongdae was significantly cheaper than in Shinchon. This was possible since there were prevalence of housing blocks with buildings easy to change the use. The same conditions that had allowed artist studios to form were now receiving rock cafes and other cultural places. This was further reinforced by the culture-friendly density already present, with artists inhabiting studios and students from Hongik University nearby.

The structural pressures that pushed actors out of Shinchon are equally worth noting. From Kimjakga, 2017's account, around 1993 Shinchon's commercialisation happened rapidly, causing a hollowing out of the area in terms of culture. Commercialisation caused rising rents and increase in number of rock cafes, which intensified competition between shops around Shinchon. As a result, the places that are least oriented toward commercial return were the first to be pushed out. In leaving, they carried the cultural practices that would take root elsewhere. This meant that commercialisation of Shinchon marginalised those who valued music over profit, and it was Hongdae that became the new ground for cultural production.

Structural pressure

The more direct pressure came from regulation and opposition from universities, the very neighbours that had once enabled the scene. The culture that had been produced around Shinchon was not welcomed from university administration. In 1992, five universities identified the culture forming around them as problematic, labelling places like rock cafes as decadent establishments. A crackdown followed, supported by police and the municipality, targeting rock cafes and other places that were illegally holding live music (C. Ahn, 1992). The informality that had allowed these places to operate cheaply and freely made them vulnerable the moment regulatory pressure turned against them, and with universities taking a negative stance toward cultural production, the ground in Shinchon had shifted.



Figure 3.24: University presidents gathered to held meeting about rock cafes

3.2.3. Clubs as third place

In terms of place type, the most significant feature of the establishment phase was the emergence of clubs. Clubs can be understood as an evolution of rock cafes: where rock cafes had mixed various activities together, clubs concentrated on one. This may have been driven by the growing number of places migrating from Shinchon, pushing each to differentiate itself. This subsection examines two broad types: dance clubs, oriented around DJing and dancing, and live clubs, dedicated to live performance. The boundary between them was not always clear, but the distinction is broadly recognised in existing accounts and serves as a practical way to organise the analysis.

Live club

Live clubs are the central place type of this research, the core setting in which indie music was born and sustained in Hongdae. To understand how they emerged, the story of DRUG offers the clearest entry point. Starting as an LP bar near Hongik University (D. Lee, 2008), occasionally holding live performances. The moment that accelerated this was a spontaneous concert in 1994, held on the first anniversary of Kurt Cobain's death, where people began playing Nirvana's music in his memory (Kimjakga, 2014). The response was intense, and it led bands to perform regularly at the place, namely 'DRUG bands'. The idea spread beyond DRUG itself, leading to the formation of live clubs across Hongdae, each with their own house bands. Spangle, the club mentioned in the narrative of Cho Sungsuk, was also among those inspired by DRUG (Yoon, 2002).

Network around clubs Live clubs served as third places where encounters formed around shared musical taste. It was the house band system that brought musicians together: performing exclusively there in exchange for a stable stage. This made bands attended auditions as an entry point to the club. Individuals also came alone and found collaborators there, showing that there was a shared expectation in live clubs of meeting someone to make music with. The gathering happened with broader actors in support of online communication. In the 1990s, PC communication platforms were active among music enthusiasts, and for those already connected online, the club was where these networks were grounded in physical space. Cho Sungsuk brought bands from her Hi-TEL group to Spangle, and Master Plan was founded by Lee Jonghyun and two others from an online group, who took over a club in Hongdae as a place to hangout in person.

What these encounters turned into was friendship ties. The friendship within clubs was especially visible between bands and operators. This could be seen in the nicknames actors gave to operators: godmother, uncle, brother, sister, all signalling that bands considered operators as close friends and trusted figures. These ties did not only strengthen inward but also expanded outward as the network around the scene grew, reaching mainstream media. Magazines began covering live clubs, and some house bands entered the mainstream industry, introducing culture of Hongdae to the public. This outward expansion also happened in the other direction, as the club culture introduced itself to the public. One case is the Street Funk Show, a public showcase of DRUG's bands organised in collaboration with a magazine. It brought in people who had never heard of live clubs, some becoming regulars and others inspired to start bands of their own.

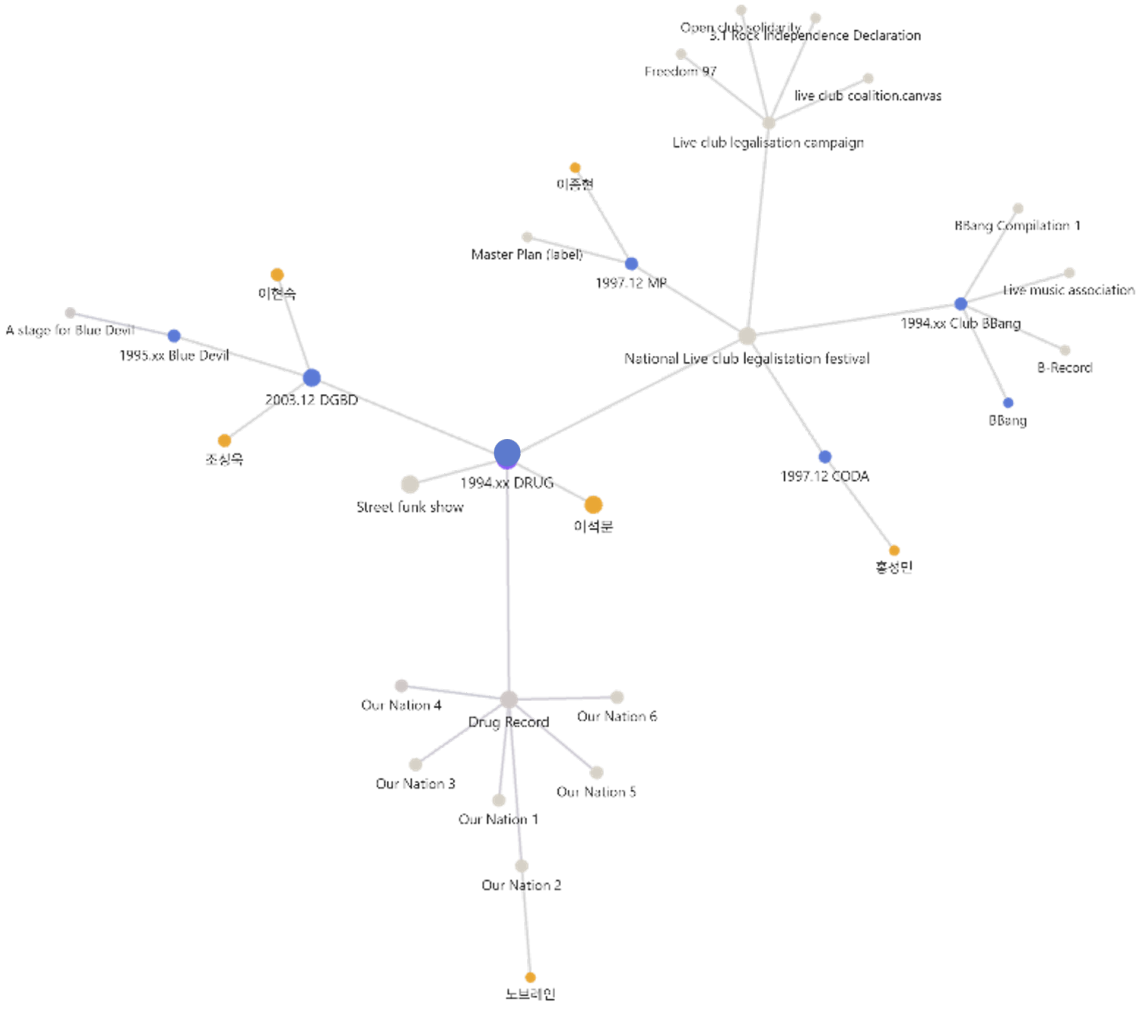


Figure 3.25: network formed around DRUG

Increased cultural vitality The spatial qualities of live clubs largely followed those of the place types examined in 3.1.3. They were hidden, mostly located in basements with minimal exterior presence and set away from the centre, where rent was affordable. Inside live clubs, interiors were crafted by owners, reflecting their own character. Two qualities showed visible change from earlier types. The first was the investment in music by dedicating space for the stage: while rock cafes had fluid, informal performance spaces, live clubs developed a more dedicated area for performance. Still, it remained distinct from a proper venue, with less hierarchy between stage and audience floor, and bands and audiences crossing the border between them with intensity. The second was an increased variety of lived traces: what had once contained doodles and visitors' memos now also carried posters, performance schedules, and band recruitment notices. Lived traces had extended into a communicative surface, reflecting the place's increased community character.



Figure 3.26: Stage in liveclub

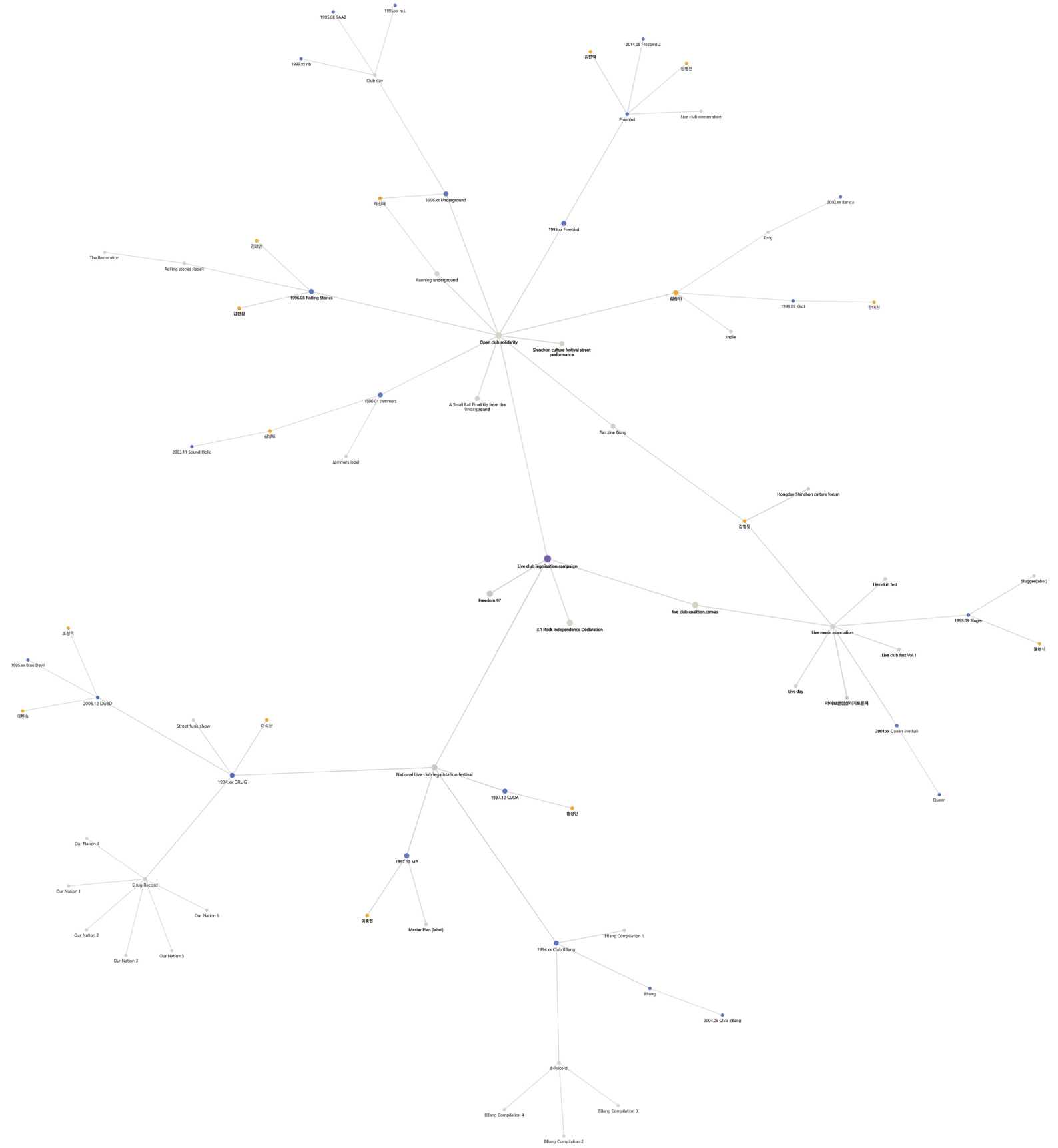
At the cluster scale, what had been a general clustering of places in Hongdae developed into differentiated territories as the number of clubs grew. Kimjakga, 2018 accounts for two clusters forming inside Hongdae: one closer to Shinchon along DDang DDang street, centred around Spangle and the LP bars nearby, which became known as the territory of modern rock. Another closer to Hongik University, where rock cafes had previously clustered, which became the territory of funk centred around DRUG. Each cluster developed its own atmosphere through spillover from neighbouring places, drawing people with a specific taste. The difference was visible even in what people wore: spikey hair, leather jackets, and metal studs around the funk cluster, tight shirts and vintage jeans from the old town market around the modern rock one (Kimjakga, 2018).



Figure 3.27: Different parts of Hongdae with its unique identity

Countering structural pressure The network and place-based intimacy formed around live clubs were not only productive but also protective. Two structural pressures shaped the conditions under which live clubs operated, and the way actors responded to each reveals the resilience of the network they had built. The first was mainstream dominance in the music industry. As the scene defined itself through independence from commercial labels, live clubs invented their own system. Each club established an independent label, producing albums with its house bands and distributing them exclusively through the club. This alternative system became a reference point for emerging musicians, reinforcing the image of Hongdae as a place where a musical career could begin outside the mainstream. This alternative system turned the area itself into more than a collection of places, consolidating Hongdae's identity as a ground where actors could encounter one another and build careers on their own terms.

The second pressure was regulation. As an evolution of rock cafes, live clubs inherited the same legal vulnerability: performance of more than one person in a space registered as a restaurant remained illegal under food service regulations. What had brought down rock cafes in Shinchon threatened to do the same in Hongdae, leading to the temporary or permanent closure of several clubs. This time, however, the network between clubs worked. Clubs formed a coalition, the Open Club Solidarity, in 1997(Y. Jeong, 2020). The coalition launched a legalisation campaign that combined concerts, festivals, and the publication of a magazine to build public support. After two years of collective action, the restriction was lifted in response to the coalition's demands. The campaign showed that actors could protect their places through collective organisation, a lesson that would carry forward as the scene faced new pressures.


1995.08 SAAB
1995.xx m.i.
1999.xx nb
Club day
2014.05 Freebird 2
김한덕
신병진
Freebird
Live club cooperation
1996.xx Underground
최상재
1995.xx Freebird
2002.xx Bar da
Tong
김영인
The Restoration
Rolling stones (label)
1996.06 Rolling Stones
김현성
Running underground
김종위
1998.09 KKot
김여진
Indie
Open club solidarity
Shinchon culture festival street performance
1996.01 Jammers
A Small Ball Fired Up from the Underground
Fan zine Gong
삼병도
2003.11 Sound Holic
Jammers label
Hongdae Shinchon culture forum
김영동
Live club legalisation campaign
Freedom 97
3.1 Rock Independence Declaration
Live club coalition canvas
Live club fest
Sluger(label)
1999.09 Sluger
Live music association
Live club fest Vol.1
윤현식
Live day
라이브클럽살리기토론회
2001.xx Queen live hall
Queen
조성욱
1995.xx Blue Devil
2003.12 DGBD
이현숙
Street funk show
이석문
1994.xx DRUG
National Live club legalistation festival
1997.12 CODA
홍성민
Our Nation 4
Our Nation 1
Drug Record
Our Nation 6
Our Nation 2
Our Nation 3
Our Nation 5
1997.12 MP
이동현
Master Plan (label)
BBang Compilation 1
1994.xx Club BBang
BBang
2004.05 Club BBang
B-Record
BBang Compilation 4
BBang Compilation 3
BBang Compilation 2

Dance club
Dance clubs inherited rock cafes, concentrating on playing music and dancing. The character of Hongdae's rock cafes, where owners introduced niche music to their crowd, developed into DJing, with a dedicated DJ selecting and playing the music. From this, the DJ became a figure that brought people to dance clubs, much as bands did in live clubs. DJ Unkle, the owner of City Beat introduced in 3.1, was among the well-known DJs of the scene, his reputation drawing visitors to the club he founded (Y. Shin, 2007). As clubs multiplied, this developed into specialisation: each club began focusing on a specific genre, playing a different kind of music from the next (J. Lee, 2002).

From niche to public In their early years, dance clubs were places known only to those already connected to the scene. The place drew a limited crowd, mostly those working in arts and culture, and entry depended on word of mouth. Over a few years, this changed entirely. The crowd had widened to students, office workers and, as one account notes, grandmother arriving together with their granddaughter (Y. Ahn, 2002). Among the factors behind this shift, Club Day proved decisive. By fixing a monthly event where a single ticket granted entry to any club for the whole night, dance clubs became accessible to anyone, lowering the threshold that had once kept the scene to its regulars. The change was dramatic: visitor numbers on Club Day grew from 1,500 to more than 6,000 (J. Lee, 2002).



Figure 3.28: people participating club day

From hidden to visible The same change could be seen spatially. In the early years, these places did not announce themselves. Hidden from the outside, their location could only be learned from someone who already knew. One account recalls arriving at Hongdae with nothing but the name of the club, watching the streetlights go out at midnight without finding the entrance (H. Park, 2025). Nothing about the exterior suggested what was inside, and the contrast with the music and dancing within gave these places an almost secret quality (Y. Ahn, 2002). After Club Day, clubs gathered into a stretch of alley that anyone in Hongdae could identify as club street (J. Lee, 2002). What had once required insider knowledge to locate was now visible to anyone passing through.



Figure 3.29: Formation of club street

Going around regulatory pressure While the transition of becoming familiar appears smooth, clubs have been under pressure. One of the pressures was regulation, which was also what brought Club Day. Under food sanitation law, dancing in restaurant-registered spaces was illegal, leaving many dance clubs in violation (H, 2011). Club Day was organised against this, drawing larger numbers in clubs until enforcement became difficult to sustain. Though it did not directly confront the regulation, the public-presence clubs the public gained offered some protection against closure. However, the visibility that came with this brought another challenge. As clubs became widely known, they began accumulating a damaging reputation, perceived by the public as places of moral disorder and drug use. This once again placed clubs under threat of scrutiny and a crackdown.

3.2.4. Collected cases

ACTOR

Observations about how relationships among actors form within cultural ecology. Each finding captures the collective character of cultural production through the depth of the relational process.

INTERACTION

Findings that describe how actors come into contact and develop familiarity. Each finding captures the process that gives rise to different stages of connection.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

1 scene entry

A new actor arrives at a place drawn by reputation or attraction, producing first contact with the scene without prior introduction.

Kimjakga. (2017, November 16). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 2, Street Punk Show. *scene account about Street punk show*

> *Even high school girls who had never heard a single note of punk were slamming and stage diving.*



Kimjakga. (2018, April 2). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 5: No Brain — march of young rioters. *scene account about No Brain*

> *After watching Cryingnut's performance at festival, Cha Seung-woo made his way to Drug. There was a vocalist who caught his eye.*



Kimjakga. (2018, April 2). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 5: No Brain — march of young rioters. *scene account about No Brain*

> *He had come to Seoul alone straight after graduating high school — from Masan, knowing no one — because all he wanted was to make music. While drifting from place to place with nowhere to stay, he had found his way to Club Drug, drawn by the Sex Pistols.*



3 place-born collaboration

Sustained co-presence in the same place draws actors into close working proximity, where personal familiarity develops into shared creative work.

Namu Wiki. (n.d.). Master Plan. *scene account of Master Plan, Liveclub*

> *The bands performing there proposed making records together, leading to the formation of label Masterplan in 2002.*

Kimjakga. (2018). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 3, Spangle. *scene account about Spangle, Liveclub*

> *Three women who had been frequenting the place since the Double Deuce days took over the venue together.*

Kimjakga. (2017, November 16). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 2, Street Punk Show. *scene account about Street punk show*

> *The journalists proposed a rock festival for the magazine's first anniversary. Lee Sukmoon countered with a street punk show, and they were immediately drawn to the idea.*



Kimjakga. (2018, April 2). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 5: No Brain — march of young rioters. *scene account about No Brain*

> *Cha Seung-woo approached him: let's start a band together. Along with other two guys, whom he had also met at the rehearsal studio. That was how the history of No Brain began.*



Kimjakga. (2017, November 16). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 2, Street Punk Show. *scene account about Street punk show*

> *There he met friends and formed the band Wipper.*

ndiecat. (2024, August 20). When Jang Kiha lifted us up. *scene account about Liveclub SSam*

> *Thanks to Cho Sungsuk from Spangle taking over the management of Baram, the modern rock bands from Spangle carried straight onto its stage.*

Kimjakga. (2018, April 2). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 5: No Brain — march of young rioters. *scene account about No Brain*

> *A boy who had just finished high school was watching. A month later, he walked into Drug with his guitar.*

2 referenced through network

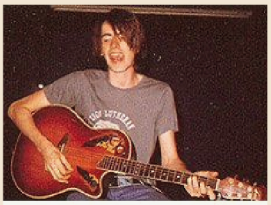
An existing network of relationships routes a new or external actor toward a place or person, producing an encounter that the actor could not have initiated alone.

Park, J. (2008, November 14). Interview with Won Jonghee, CEO of Skunk Label. *creator account from Won Jonghee, drummer of Rux*

> *A friend of my sister's, knowing I was in a band, told him there was a club called Drug in Hongdae that he would love. After failing the audition, he was told there were other clubs nearby, and that is how he ended up at Spangle. There I met Lee Boram and Cho Sungsuk.*

Kimjakga. (2018). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 3, Spangle. *scene account about Spangle, Liveclub*

> *Stopping briefly in Korea due to a visa issue, Bernard Butler found his way to Spangle through someone he knew. There he drank beer and played cards with whoever happened to be gathered.*



3 referenced by place

A place mediates the encounter between an actor and a wider network or audience, producing an opportunity the actor could not have initiated alone.

Sound Network. (2022, June 2). Kim Yuna (Jaurim) biography. *scene account of Jaurim, band*

> *On a Saturday when You&Me Blue could not make it, they filled in. That same night, the production team of the film 'Man with Flowers,' who had come to Blue Devil looking for You&Me Blue, happened to meet them instead and brought them on to work on the soundtrack.*



LOCAL FRIENDSHIP TIES

Findings that describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity. Each finding captures the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.



BOND

Findings that describe the depth of connection between actors. Each finding captures what a relationship has become and what it enables.

1 shared use of space

The physical space of a place is offered or used beyond its formal purpose, revealing a level of trust and care between actors that exceeds their formal roles.

Woo, J. (2023, June 9). Jaurim's 'ugly duckling' days. *creator account from Jaurim, band*

> *She gave us the key to the club — come during the day and rehearse whenever you want, he said. And on performance days, she opened up the fridge.*

2 inhabitation

Actors use a place beyond its performance or service function — sleeping, eating, working — revealing a depth of attachment that dissolves the boundary between the place and their daily lives.

Park, J. (2008, November 14). Interview with Won Jonghee, CEO of Skunk Label. *creator account from Won Jonghee, drummer of Rux*

> *I asked if I could sleep there since I had nowhere to stay — and she let me.*

Lee, D. (2008, September 3). Korean indie labels 9: Drug Records. *scene account of DRUG, Liveclub*

> *He ate and slept at Drug, performing as a guest vocalist for Crying Nut.*



4 given nickname

Actors assign informal titles to one another that signal the nature of their bond, expressing familiarity and affection accumulated through sustained shared presence.

Kang, C. (1998, April 14). Musicians from Club Blue Devil hold fundraising concert on the 15th. *subjective account of Blue Devil, Liveclub*

> *She went beyond being a stage owner, taking on the role of a kind older sister who looked after musicians concerns beyond music itself.*

1 familiarity through encounter

Bonds of personal familiarity that form gradually through repeated contact in the same setting, without any deliberate act of relationship-forming.

Park, J. (2008, November 14). Interview with Won Jonghee, CEO of Skunk Label. *creator account from Won Jonghee, drummer of Rux*

> *Magazine journalists began covering underground bands, and naturally developed personal bonds with Drug's bands and their operator Lee Sukmoon.*



Street H. (2015, May). Longtime spaces in Hongdae – 005: Freebird, twenty years aging with indie. *subjective account about Freebird, Liveclub*

> *The founding operator of Freebird was known as 'Brother Bird,' Kim Hantaek. On his 60th birthday, a celebratory concert was held at Rolling Hall. Many bands performed their without being paid.*



Yoon, M. (2002, March 31). Ssamzie Space in Hongdae, Seoul. *subjective account about Liveclub SSam*

> *in Hongdae, Sungsuk is known as the 'godmother of indie bands.' She remembers the early days of bands like Crying Nut and No Brain from when they were not well known, as she had been frequenting clubs like Drug since the mid-1990s, when club culture was just beginning to take shape.*

Kimjakga. (2018). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 3, Spangle. *scene account about Spangle, Liveclub*

> *While Lee Sukmoon of Drug was known as 'uncle' to the punk bands, Cho Sungsuk became something like a 'godmother' to the modern rock bands.*



Kimjakga. (2018, April 2). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 5: No Brain — march of young rioters. *scene account about No Brain*

> *This perfect punk guy naturally became a character of the place. He went by the nickname, fire-head, because of his hair.*



5 shared place memory

Actors return to or gather around a place to share accumulated memories, revealing how deeply the place has become embedded in their relational lives.

Kim, H. (2011, June 9). Goodbye SSam, thank you SSam. *subjective account about Liveclub SSam*

> *Every musician who took the stage shared their own memories of SSam. A band, who had held their Monday concert exclusively at SSam, held one final free concert on May 30th, sending the place off together with the fans who had shared it with them.*



PLACE

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology. Each finding captures a characteristic that enables cultural relations to emerge, accumulate, or persist.

SPATIAL FACTORS

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology.

CONDITION

Fixed spatial characteristics that enable cultural activity to find ground.

POROSITY

Spatial characteristics that leave room for cultural activity to occupy. Each finding captures how a space remains open to uses that exceed its original purpose.

1 underutilised space

Buildings or land not at full capacity, available for informal conversion into cultural places at low cost.

Seoul Museum of History. (2018). Hongdae: Seoul's cultural power plant. *contextual record about Hongdae*

> *As the live cafés and rock cafés of Sinchon declined, Hongdae emerged as the alternative. The relatively lower land prices compared to nearby Sinchon, and the abundance of residential buildings easy to convert, were key economic factors behind the establishment of live clubs in Hongdae.*

2 affordability

The degree to which the cost of occupying a space remains within reach for cultural producers, enabling them to establish their place.

Kimjakga. (2018, January 10). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 3: Spangle. *scene account about Spangle*

> *The opening cost around 40 million won — not cheap even then, but not unreasonable either.*

Namu Wiki. (n.d.). Master Plan. *contextual record about Masterplan*

> *In the mid-1990s, rent around Sinchon — where young people gathered most — was very high. Leaving from exit 8 of Sinchon station and walking for some time, one would find a hill turning left toward Hongdae, far enough from the centre to remain affordable.*



3 fluidity

A spatial arrangement that dissolves fixed boundaries between roles or functions, allowing different uses and users to co-exist without hierarchy.

QUALITY

Characteristics of a place that emerge through the inhabitation of cultural production.

CULTURAL VITALITY

The activeness of cultural production within a place. Each finding captures the elements that indicate the intensity of interaction among actors.

1 curatorial presence

The degree to which an operator's taste and selectivity is materially expressed in the space, signalling affinity before any word is exchanged.

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account of Freebird, Liveclub*

> *Behind it, John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and the world's three greatest guitarists watch over us. On the left wall, countless CDs and LPs — and Uncle Bird, the owner of Free Bird, waiting for us.*



Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account of Jammers, Liveclub*

> *Light bulbs lined in guitar shape on the walls, an American flag stares down from behind the stage, and Sharon Stone's photograph promises a more primal pleasure for the visitors.*

2 sensory threshold

The degree to which the physical atmosphere of a place produces a felt experience that signals entry into a different world.

Park, H. (2025, October 3). 30 years ago in Seoul: Hongdae, Seochon, Yeongdeungpo and Gangnam. *participant account of sk@*

> *"Are you alone?" With the sound of a walkie-talkie announcing "one woman, one female guest," I began climbing the stone steps past a second-floor hair salon and up to the third floor. As the stone steps gave way to wooden ones, a faint beat began to reach me, and my heart started pounding.*

Ahn, Y. (2002, June 2). Dance liberation zone: Hongdae music clubs. *participant account of Hodgge Podge*

> *Passing the doorman in a black suit, the moment I stepped inside, a whole new world unfolded. Music tearing at the ears, thick cigarette smoke, walls covered in spray-painted graffiti — some hundred people packed into a thirty-pyeong space, lost in the music, each pouring out their own dance.*

Bae, S. (2023, December 4). 1996.10. When chance makes history — Crying Nut's 'Maldallija'. *scene account about DRUG, Liveclub*

> *True to the motto "you can make music too," the stage and audience floor were not separated at all. The band leapt toward the audience, and the audience rushed toward the band and the stage.*

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account about Freebird, Liveclub*

> *Those who want to watch comfortably take the sofas behind the pillars; those who lose themselves in the music, indistinguishable from the band, position themselves between the pillars and the stage.*



4 disorder

An unpolished and unstructured physical environment that lowers the threshold for spontaneous participation.

Bae, S. (2023, December 4). 1996.10. When chance makes history — Crying Nut's 'Maldallija'. *scene account about DRUG, Liveclub*

> *The interior of Club Drug was, in a word, chaos. Whether the facilities, the band's performance, or the audience's actions — it would not be an overstatement to say that disorder was deliberately embraced in every aspect.*



ACTOR SUPPLY

Spatial characteristics of a place's surroundings that channel actors toward it.

1 proximity to established scene

The presence of an already active cultural scene in an adjacent area, from which actors and practices can flow into a new location.

Seoul Museum of History. (2018). Hongdae: Seoul's cultural power plant. *contextual record about Hongdae*

> *The geographical proximity to Sinchon — long established as the mecca of university culture — played an important role in the emergence of live clubs in Hongdae.*

3 lived traces

The degree to which surfaces accumulate evidence of past inhabitation, making the history of a place visible and legible to those who arrive later.

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account of Freebird, Liveclub*

> *Climbing the stairs, performance posters, band-wanted notices, and Free Bird's schedule board line the walls. What bands are playing tonight? I stop in front of the schedule, reading it through, then notice the band photos pinned neatly alongside — and now all that's left is to open the door.*

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account of Rollingstones, Liveclub*

> *The promotional board on the basement staircase carries a wealth of information for visitors and bands alike.*



Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account of Jammers, Liveclub*

> *The walls are packed with countless signs bearing school emblems, group names, and car logos. Vivid photos of bands who have performed here fill the space.*

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account of Freebird, Liveclub*

> *Looking up at the ceiling, autographed papers from famous figures flutter here and there, like soft feathers inside the body of a black Free Bird.*

4 area identity

The degree to which a place is recognised for a specific cultural character, attracting actors who share that sensibility and reinforcing their collective presence.

Lee, E. (2002, October 25). Clubbers' liberation zone in Hongdae. *subjective account of Danceclubs in Hongdae*

> *The streets of Hongdae are a paradise for clubbers. The alleys branching off to the right from the main gate toward Broadcasting Station form what is known as club street.*

Seoul Museum of History. (2018). Hongdae: Seoul's cultural power plant. *contextual record about Hongdae*

> *Hongdae's identity as an art and culture district drew young artists and students with an open mind toward live club culture.*



Kimjakga. (2018, January 10). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 3: Spangle. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *From Geukdong Broadcasting Station to Hongdae's main gate, punk ruled the street. Hair dyed in every colour, leather jackets studded with spikes bought from Cheonggyecheon — their hideout was, naturally, Club Drug.*



Kimjakga. (2018, January 10). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 3: Spangle. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *The railway stretch was modern rock territory — Cocoer, Huckleberry Finn, and their kind. The fashion was vintage: secondhand jeans and tight t-shirts from Gwangjang Market. In the late 1990s, there were few places outside Hongdae where you could see a man in a fitted t-shirt. They gathered in west Hongdae for one reason: Club Spangle was there.*

Lee, E. (2002, October 25). Clubbers' liberation zone in Hongdae. *subjective account of Dance clubs in Hongdae*

> *Each club maintained its own loyal crowd according to its chosen genre — hip hop, techno, rock. It is distinctive that community character is forming in each club based on different uniqueness and taste.*

Lee, E. (2002, October 25). Clubbers' liberation zone in Hongdae. *subjective account of Dance clubs in Hongdae*

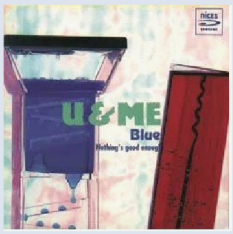
> *Clubs like Hodge Podge and Ska had already been loved by a small crowd of students and those working in film, music, and broadcasting for last five years.*

Kang, C. (1998, April 14). Musicians from Club Blue Devil hold fundraising concert on the 15th. *subjective account of Blue Devil, Liveclub*

> *Unlike the punk-heavy clubs nearby, Blue Devil attracted distinctive modern rock and blues musicians.*

Kang, C. (1998, April 14). Musicians from Club Blue Devil hold fundraising concert on the 15th. *subjective account of Blue Devil, Liveclub*

> *Well-known blues musicians including Kim Kwangsuk and Jung Kyunghwa, as well as You&Me Blue, were regulars on the stage.*



Shin, Y. (2007, September 13). Hongdae clubs are my life. *creator account of DJ Unkle, owner of m.i., Dance club*

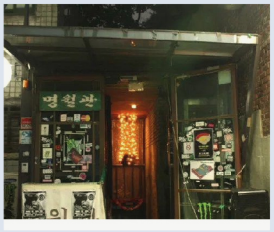
> *In m.i.'s early days, the techno music drew those who had studied abroad, freelancers, musicians, dancers, and models — people who self-selected around a sound unavailable anywhere else.*

Byorolong. (2004, October 8). Live clubs around Hongdae and Sinchon. *visitor account of Spangle, Liveclub*

> *True to the operators' taste as British modern rock enthusiasts, bands with delicate melodies were the main performers.*

Kim, H. (2017, December 29). Why did Walker Hill Hotel demand a name change from a Hongdae club? *subjective account of MWG, Danceclub*

> *Actors, designers, critics — well-known figures from the arts and culture world were regulars at Myeongwolgwan.*



Namu Wiki. (n.d.). Master Plan. *scene account of Master Plan*

> *The musical colour of the performing bands changed by day of the week. Hip hop and techno acts could be found on Fridays and Saturdays, while Sundays were for rock bands.*

Bae, S. (2008, September 3). Masterplan: From a hip hop mecca to an all-round music powerhouse. *creator account of Lee Jonghyun, owner of Master Plan*

> *All hip hop musicians flock to Masterplan.*



Lee, D. (2008, September 3). Korean indie labels 9: Drug Records. *scene account of DRUG, Liveclub*

> *It was a club playing punk — a genre almost impossible to find anywhere in Korea. Every music enthusiast who visited Drug at the time had the same thought: 'So this kind of place exists in Korea!'*



Kimjakga. (2017, November 16). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 2, Street Punk Show. *scene account about Street punk show*

> *Not only fans of grunge and punk, but those interested in cultural criticism that was spreading like a fever at the time, all gathered there.*



STABILITY

The capacity of a place to maintain its foundations over time.

1 off-centre

A location removed from the main commercial strip, where lower capital pressure and lower visibility allow cultural places to maintain their place.

Kimjakga. (2018, January 10). Hongdae's decisive moments ep. 3: Spangle. *scene account about Spangle, Liveclub*

> *Closer to the outskirts of Hongdae than the centre of Sinchon, turning up the hill from exit 8 of Sinchon station and into the alley, one finds a quiet residential area with not a single shop in sight — and there, tucked away, is Master Plan.*

CONTEXT

The structural and historical conditions within which cultural ecology operates. Each finding captures a pressure or effect that shapes the ground on which cultural places stand.

STRUCTURAL PRESSURE

Conditions that threaten the continued existence of cultural places.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

1 ownership change

A change in building ownership that introduces new terms of tenure, often disrupting established cultural use.

Kang, E. (2011, May 27). Hongdae live club 'Ssam' closing performance until the 29th. *subjective account about Liveclub SSam*

> *Ssam is holding its final four-day concert titled '20002011' before closing. After its parent company Ssamzie went bankrupt last April, no solution was found and the building was sold.*



REGULATORY

Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

3 planning designation

A formal planning or zoning decision that exposes cultural places to redevelopment pressure or displacement.

Kimjakga. (2018). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 3, Spangle. *scene account about Spangle, Liveclub*

> *Spangle, lost to redevelopment in the early 2000s, where Taeyoung Apartment complex now stands.*

1 stigmatisation

Street H editors. (2011, February). Talking about Hongdae and clubs through the suspension of Club Day. *scene account about Danceclubs*

> *Sensationalised media coverage of drug incidents in some clubs led them to close one by one.*





Ahn, Y. (2002, June 2). Hongdae music clubs as a sanctuary of dance. *scene account about Danceclubs*

> *The image of 'techno club = drug party' continued to haunt clubs. Signs reading 'No drug, No minor' were posted at entrances, yet suspicion remained. A civic group official argued that actual drug arrests at Hongdae clubs were rare, and that those who came for music and dance should not be viewed with prejudice.*

Shin, Y. (2007, September 13). Hongdae clubs are my life. *creator account of DJ Unkle, owner of m.i.*

> *Unkle pointed out that prejudice against the place was misplaced. Just as hotels are not blamed when drug use occurs inside them, clubs should not be condemned for incidents that happen as a result of increased density.*

2 neighbour opposition

Kim, S. (1992, November 6). Sinchon area to become university cultural district, eliminating decadent entertainment. *subjective account about crackdown in Shinchon*

> *Presidents of five universities in the Sinchon area met with the Seoul mayor and agreed to form a joint committee to transform Sinchon into an academically oriented cultural district.*



SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

1 mainstream dominance

The structural dominance of mainstream cultural industries that limits access and visibility for independent cultural producers.

Park, J. (2009, February 28). Collapse of the 1980s underground and alternative modes of activity: The beginning of the indie music scene (1990–1996). *scene account about indie music scene*

> *After Seo Taiji's emergence in 1992, the Korean popular music industry restructured around an idol production system, seen as the quickest way to generate large profit. As a result, underground musicians from the 1980s could no longer produce albums, marking the collapse of the underground scene.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

Byorolong. (2004, October 8). Live clubs around Hongdae and Sinchon. *participant account about Jammers, Liveclub*

> *No genre restrictions, but thrash and death metal are impossible due to neighbour complaints.*

EFFECT

Observed outcomes of structural pressure on cultural places and their communities.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

2 commercial marginalisation

The process by which rising costs exclude cultural producers from an area they helped make desirable.

Kimjakga. (2017). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 1, from Shinchon to Hongdae. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *Shinchon culture began moving toward Hongdae around 1993, as Shinchon's commercial district expanded. As it kept growing, a commercial desert started to form. Rents rose daily, touts appeared in every alley, and new bars and rock cafés opened weekly in streets that had once been boarding houses. Those pushed out of Shinchon settled near Sanullim Theatre.*



Kang, C. (1998, April 14). Musicians from Club Blue Devil to hold reconstruction fundraising concert on the 15th. *subjective account about Blue Devil*

> *Hongdae clubs have little profit despite their reputation. Most charge 5,000 won entry with one drink included, and unlike regular venues, additional orders are rare — once the performance starts, audiences are absorbed in the music and leave when it ends. Loss statements are inevitably full of red.*



Moon, S. (1998, March 29). Reconstruction movement spreading across Hongdae clubs including Icezait and Blue Devil. *subjective account about Blue Devil*

> *Operation was not a priority, and as finances deteriorated, the club closed last year.*

Comeup. (2017, January 12). The old future of Korean club scene: Hongdae landmark, Korea's longest-running club since 1994, Myungwolkwan MWG. *creator account of Kim Eunhee, owner of MWG*

> *Because our operating principles differ from other commercial clubs, we are always struggling with lack of funds. Every day feels like dancing on the edge of a knife.*

REGULATORY

Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

1 crackdown

Ahn, C. (1992). Expulsion of decadent businesses from all university areas. *subjective account about crackdown for rock cafes in Shinchon*

> *Joint police crackdowns and tax penalties pushed over thirty rock cafés in Sinchon to convert to other business types within a month. Five or six displaced from Sinchon were pushing into residential alleys around Hongik University, where enforcement was comparatively weak.*

Lee, J., & Song, D. (1999, January 29). Shaking youth to loud rock music. *subjective account about crackdown for Liveclubs*

> *Live clubs appeared around Sinchon and Hongdae around 1995, repeatedly cycling through crackdowns, business suspensions, and closures. Performing music with two or more people or selling beer in a general restaurant was illegal. Blue Devil, Harlem, Pureun Gul Yangsikjang, and Sting disappeared this way.*



Lee, M. (2006). New paradigm for regional development: Place marketing strategy. *scene account about Danceclubs*

> *Dance clubs, deemed illegal under food sanitation law, faced repeated crackdowns and business suspensions, forcing many to close.*

Shin, Y. (2007, September 13). Hongdae clubs are my life. *creator account of DJ Unkle, owner of Citybeat and m.i.*

> *Uncle had put the shop up for sale at one point, driven by his wife's fear of frequent police encounters due to ambiguous laws around club permits and late-night operation.*

Comeup. (2017, January 12). The old future of Korean club scene: Hongdae landmark, Korea's longest-running club since 1994, Myungwolkwan MWG. *creator account of Kim Eunhee, owner of MWG*

> *A new special ordinance by district required extensive renovation of Myungwolkwan. Mandatory upgrades to fire and electrical systems under safety regulations demanded tens of millions of won in construction costs at once.*

INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships and places — countering structural pressure through capital, regulatory, systemic, and contextual means.

RELATIONSHIP-FORMING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

1 open access

Ahn, Y. (2002, June 2). Dance liberation zone: Hongdae music clubs. *subjective account about Dance clubs in Hongdae*

Kimjakga. (2018). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 3, Spangle. *scene account about Spangle, Liveclub*

> *Bands who wanted to play something other than punk or heavy metal naturally gravitated toward Spangle. It was a natural flow since the operators were fans of British music and were also members of the HiTEL modern rock community that produced multiple rock bands.*

3 public showcase

Park, J. (2001, November). Lineages forming a new underground scene in 1996 and 1997. *scene account about Street Punk Show*

> *What decisively established Drug as the mecca of punk rock was the Street Punk Show, organised by a magazine in Hongdae's parking lot street and Myeongdong in 1996, where Drug's bands took centre stage.*



Lee, E. (2002, October 25). Clubbers' liberation zone in Hongdae. *subjective account about Dance clubs in Hongdae*

> *On the last Friday of every month, a single ticket allowed entry to over ten clubs. What had drawn fifteen hundred people the previous year had grown to six thousand.*



LOCAL FRIENDSHIP TIES

Findings that describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity. Each finding captures the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.

MAINTAINING STABILITY

Deliberate actions that maintain the foundations of a place over time.

1 minimal exposure

Minimising the external visibility of a place, limiting its discoverability to those already connected to the scene.

Park, H. (2025, October 3). 30 years ago in Seoul: Hongdae, Seochon, Yeongdeungpo and Gangnam. *participant account about sk@, Danceclub*

> *I had headed to Hongdae with no map, no phone number, no address, and no idea what the sign looked like. I called a friend from a payphone in front of the main gate*

Actors collectively organise a concert, directing all proceeds toward a financially threatened venue.

Kang, C. (1998, April 14). Musicians from Club Blue Devil to hold reconstruction fundraising concert on the 15th. *subjective account about Blue Devil*

> *Grieving musicians launched a reconstruction campaign a year later, holding a charity concert at Daehakro Live 2 with all proceeds donated to the Blue Devil reconstruction fund.*

Comeup. (2017, January 12). The old future of Korean club scene: Hongdae landmark, Korea's longest-running club since 1994, Myungwolkwan MWG. *creator account of Kim Eunhee, owner of MWG*

> *It was difficult to raise such a large sum at once. Friends, audiences, and artists who knew the situation came together at a party, and thanks to everyone's participation, the crisis was overcome. They are the ones who saved this space.*

5 economy of intimacy

An operator prioritises cultural production over profit, sustaining the place with minimum or no profit.

Jeong, J. (2011, June). Around the country – 003. Jammers. *creator account of Kim Youngdo, owner of Jammers*

> *I will keep going as long as I can pay the rent — this is the resolve that has driven Jammers' Kim Yeongdo, like many live club operators in Hongdae.*

REGULATORY

Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

1 audition

Lee, D. (2008, September 3). Korean indie labels 9: Drug Records. *scene account about DRUG, Liveclub*

> *When Crying Nut came in for their audition, what was on stage was closer to noise and chaos than music. He found potential in it anyway, and gave them a chance to perform.*



Yoon, M. (2002, March 31). Ssamzie Space in Hongdae, Seoul. *subjective account about Live club SSam*

> *To perform on this stage, bands had to pass her demanding audition. She also listen to demo tapes of the bands coming to her.*

2 talent scouting

Yoon, M. (2002, March 31). Ssamzie Space in Hongdae, Seoul. *subjective account about Liveclub SSam*

> *If word got around that a band was doing well, she would go and hear them herself.*

3 house bands

Kimjakga. (2018). The decisive moment of Hongdae: Episode 3, Spangle. *scene account about Liveclubs in Hongdae during 90s*

> *Early clubs operated on a house band system. Whether or not there was a performance, bands would show up at night, drink together, and watch each other play. The club was at once a live venue, a bar, a hideout, and a community.*

PLACE-ARRANGING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that shape the spatial ground of cultural ecology.

INITIATING ACTOR SUPPLY

Deliberate actions that shape the environment where new actors can easily enter a place.

1 open place

An operator deliberately lowers the physical threshold for entry, opening the place to a wider population of potential visitors.

Street H. (2015, May). Old spaces of Hongdae — 005: Freebird. *participant account of Freebird, Liveclub*

> *Rather than a formal venue, it presents itself as a community space where music lovers can talk about and enjoy music together.*

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account of Freebird, Liveclub*

> *Unlike clubs hidden underground, Free Bird stands boldly above ground, as if ready to soar into the sky.*

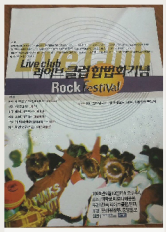
ACTIVATING CULTURAL VITALITY

1 formalising

An actor transforms a temporary collective effort into a permanent institutional structure, or demands legal recognition of existing cultural practice.

Jeong, Y. (2020, August 29). History of live clubs. *scene account about Liveclub legislation*

> *Representative live clubs from each region, the Live Club Solidarity, the Open Club Solidarity, and committed individuals came together to launch the live club legalisation movement. The Ministry of Health ultimately revised the Food Sanitation Act on November 13, 1999, making performance possible in restaurants, cafés, coffee shops, and any other venue.*



SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

1 independent label

A venue or scene actor establishes an independent record label, countering mainstream music industry dominance.

Lee, D. (2008). Korean indie labels 9: Drug records. Kyunghyang Shinmun. *scene account about DRUG records*

> *In 1996, Drug evolved beyond being a club into a record label, taking on album production in addition to live performance.*

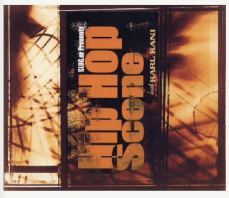
Park, J. (2008, November 14). Interview with Won Jonghee, head of Skunk Label. *scene account about SKUNK Label*

> *The label's founding release was 'We Are One Heart ('98 Punk Festival),' recorded on a home recorder at Rux Studio in Sinchon. Alongside Rux, it featured Gyeol.Ae.Sa, Ragebone, Song Jiwook, and K.A.B. — a lo-fi sound taken to its peak, as befitting a home-recorded album.*



Han, H. (2003, October 30). Korean live clubs (5): Slugger. *subjective account about Slugger, Liveclub*

> *Slugger also runs a label of the same name, through which hardcore band Hammer released an album, with Hurky Club soon to follow with their debut.*



1 naming

Assigning a name that signals a specific cultural commitment, setting the place's unique identity.

Byorolong. (2004, October 8). Live clubs around Hongdae and Sinchon. *participant account of CODA, Liveclub*

> *The name alone — taken from Led Zeppelin's final album — signals that this is no ordinary place.*

2 self-making

Directly fabricating the physical elements of a space, embedding personal taste and care into its material character.

Byorolong. (2004, October 8). Live clubs around Hongdae and Sinchon. *participant account of Spangle*

> *The interior, charmingly decorated using spangles by the female owners who had started as regulars, leaves a strong impression. Stars embedded behind the corner stage catch the light and glitter.*

7 investment on music

An operator strips back the space to performance alone, making the act of watching the only reason to be there.

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account of Freebird*

> *The first thing to catch the eye is the stage directly ahead.*

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account about Jammers*

> *Jammers, which opened in January 1996, was gaining recognition not only as a live club but also as an indie label — Jammers Label.*

Jeong, J. (2011, June). Around the country – 003. Jammers. *scene account about Jammers label*

> *Jammers' first compilation 'Cry of the Rock Chicken,' following Drug's Our Nation, caused enormous resonance. The album sold ten thousand copies after the 'Rock Chicken concert' drew three thousand rock fans from across the country, and Jammers was packed every weekend for years after.*



3 alternative music distribution

Use of an established place as an alternative supply node for non-mainstream music.

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account about Jammers*

> *Jammers Label has produced and is selling albums by Gosrak and the beautiful band Lydian, with Junky's album forthcoming. Albums by word-of-mouth bands including Heobukji Band, Maru, and Cocoer are also available at Jammers.*



4 open stage

A place opens its stage without professional threshold, directly countering mainstream gatekeeping.

Park, J. (2009, February 28). Collapse of the 1980s underground and alternative modes of activity. *scene account about indie scene*

> *Drug came to be known as a sanctuary for dropouts. At the time, only bands with a certain level of professional skill could take the stage at existing performance venues — those below that threshold had no way to perform in public.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

1 volume restriction

An operator limits the volume or intensity of programming in response to neighbour pressure.

Byorolong. (2004, October 8). Live clubs around Hongdae and Sinchon. *participant account about Jammers, Liveclub*

> *No genre restrictions, but thrash and death metal are impossible due to neighbour complaints.*

3.3. Reproducing culture in fields of care

Built on the third places that had taken root in Hongdae, the indie scene entered a period of deepening. The encounters that had begun in clubs and salons accumulated into local friendship ties, and the places that held them became fields of care: spaces whose significance was no longer just functional but relational, sustained by years of inhabitation and attachment. In terms of the theoretical framework developed in chapter 2, this is the reproduction phase, when individual artistic practices are no longer isolated acts but become collectively produced and shared through sustained interaction. To examine this, the section begins with a personal narrative of an actor who held the scene together through quiet care, before turning to how the area as a whole developed its identity and what new place typologies emerged to sustain it.

3.3.1. Narrative of sustaining the scene

To examine how the scene deepened into a field of care, this section follows the personal narrative of one of its key figures. This subsection asks how the indie music scene was held together — through care toward people and place, sustained over time. By doing this, the analysis shows how individual attachment, accumulated across years of quiet presence, becomes the force that keeps a cultural ecology alive.

Kim Yeongdeung : a protector of indie scene

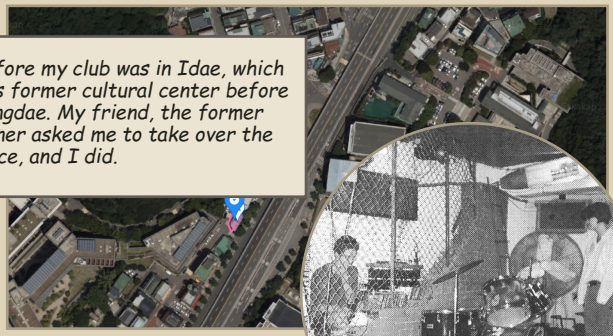
Kim Yeongdeung, known as the protector of Hongdae's indie scene, became one of its most important nodes by gradually becoming more involved into it. He was first drawn into the scene through a senior friend who introduced him to his network, which made him took over Club BBang at the earnest request of its previous owner. From there, he spent the next two decades quietly holding together what remained in the scene, while others passed through it. Calling Hongdae his second hometown, his deep attatchment toward scene kept him in it for long time. It was his care toward the people and places that sustained the vitality of culture over time. A narrative of Kim Yeongdeung best captures the process through which an area gradually transforms into a field of care.





Hello, I'm Yeongdeung.
I'm the owner of BBang, a liveclub in Hongdae

Before my club was in Idae, which was former cultural center before hongdae. My friend, the former owner asked me to take over the place, and I did.





However, after finished my military, the world totaly changed, now theres no more need for demonstration, but for culture



I used to study politics, participating in demonstrations to fignt for democratization.



I was convinced by my friend and joined different cultural projects, and.. it was fun!!





I became more attatched to musicians, especially indie bands. I wanted to do more for them. This is why I started making compliation album in my club

Yeongdeung! Let's make magazine together











During World cup, we arranged market together with other cultural producers nearby

this made me start living art creating center. and the partner is now my partner

To be closer to all my friends, I decided to move my club to Hongdae.
It was also due to many request from bands who were perfoming in BBang. I moved on the street with neighbouring alternative places and cafes.





now its quite different from when I moved in. the overal rent of the street increased sharply because of the cafe facing club became hot spot because of k-drama. cafes and galleries turned into fancy shops and restaurants





after paying rent, what left for me is hardly 400,000won (250euro).



Accumulated network Kim Yeongdeung is best known as the owner of Club Bbang, but his network is far beyond that of a single venue. Unlike operators who entered the scene through the clubs, he came in as an organiser, starting from a connection with Kim Jonghwi. Through co-producing a magazine and organising events with Jonghwi, he became part of a network of cultural actors. This network led him to encounter Club Bbang, where he grew close to its owners and later took it over. Running the club did not replace his role as an organiser but intensified it, as cultural planning found firm ground in Hongdae. Within the indie music scene, he began drawing together actors across individual clubs through activities such as the Open Club Solidarity. Through the Sinchon-Hongdae Culture Forum, this extended beyond the scene itself, bringing in local shops, residents, and organisers from adjacent fields around a shared concern for the area. What had begun as a friendship with one person scaled into a network that held not just the scene but the neighbourhood together.

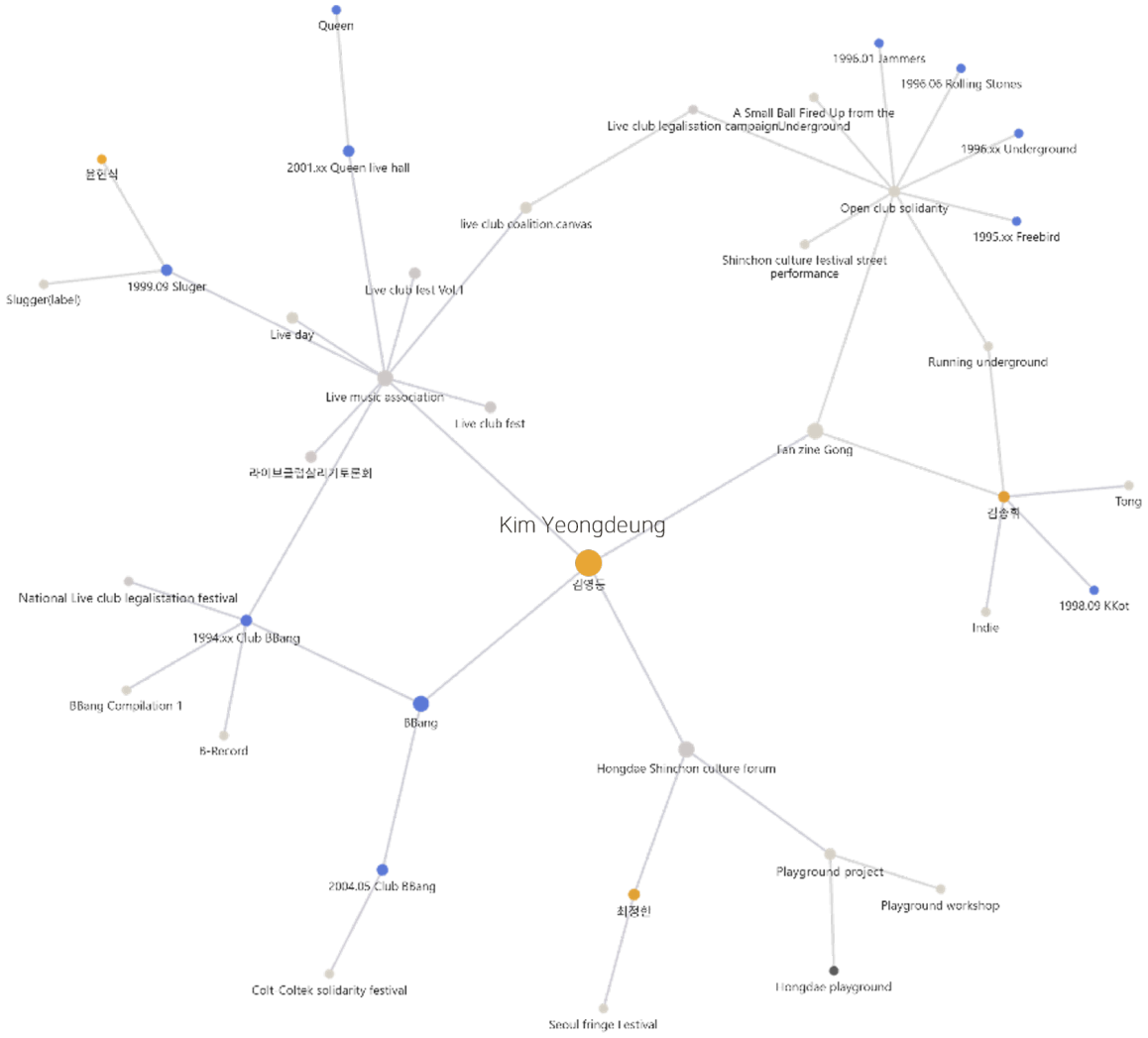


Figure 3.30: Network formed around Kim Yeongdeung

Attatchment at expanding scale As his network grew, so did the scale of place he felt responsible for. It began with Club Bbang, a single place that became the foundation of an attachment rooted in place. From there, attachment extended to clubs across the scene: through the Open Club Solidarity, what he felt bound to protect was no longer one club but the practice shared across all of them. This expanded further still through the Sinchon-Hongdae Culture Forum, where the network had reached

beyond the scene itself. Those who had gathered around a shared concern for the area brought with them a different unit of attachment, no longer the clubs alone but Hongdae as a whole. What had begun as stewardship of a single club had grown into attachment to an entire area, one he would come to call his second hometown.

Who manage the place Another finding from Kim Yeongdeung and the places he cared for is the importance of who manages the place. A place survives only when someone who understands the relationships it holds continues to tend it. When Club Bbang's previous owner sought out Kim Yeongdeung, it was not simply a matter of finding someone to run the space, but an act of entrusting. They wanted to pass the place to someone already embedded in its network, someone who knew what it meant to those who inhabited it. The same logic drove the approach taken toward the Hongdae playground. Through a series of workshops held by the Sinchon-Hongdae Culture Forum, the playground was redesigned and opened as a public space for performances, markets, and community gatherings. The Forum's successor, the Ilsang Arts Creation Centre, proposed a joint governance structure for its ongoing management, considering that only those who understood the communal meaning of the place could sustain the interactions that made it alive. In both cases, the wish was the same — that the place would remain in the hands of those who knew what it was for.

Formalising and regulatory limit A recurring pattern across Kim Yeongdeung's activity is the scaling up of individual efforts into collective movements. The most significant step in this direction was the establishment of the Ilsang Arts Creation Centre from the Sinchon-Hongdae Culture Forum. When the energy of the World Cup dissipated and the Forum risked dissolving with it, Kim Yeongdeung established the Centre as a non-profit organisation to carry the practice forward. What had been a loose gathering around a shared concern became a structure capable of sustaining it. However, this capacity to formalise had its limits. The Centre's proposal for a joint governance structure for the Hongdae playground — to ensure the space would be managed by those who understood its communal meaning — was not taken up. Without institutional backing, the free market held in the playground remained without stable ground — even though they had contributed to shaping the space, they could not secure the right to use it.



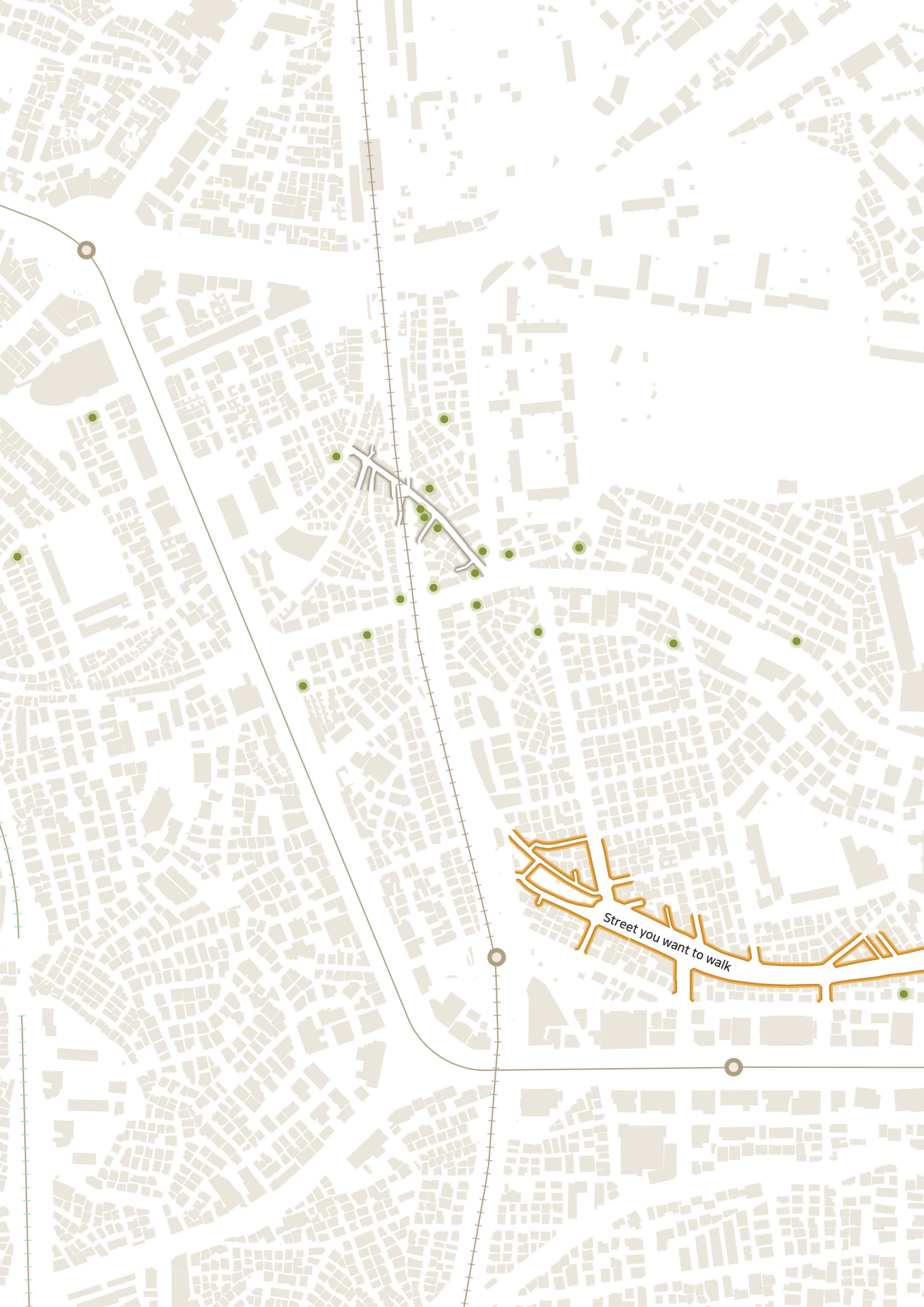
Figure 3.31: Ilsang Arts Creation Centre

Revealed economical vulnerability Where governance had been the barrier before, capital proved a more fundamental problem. As Hongdae gained fame and revenue became a real possibility, the question of whether to prioritise culture or profit began to divide actors. Within the Association for Live Music Culture Development, this tension surfaced as open conflict. What had been built on cultural conviction started to drift toward individual interest, revealing the limit of what solidarity alone could hold together under the influx of capital. Kim Yeongdeung's own position was unambiguous: culture over

profit, shown in monthly living expenses that stayed below 500,000 won (around 340 euros) Lee2004. He described this not as hardship but as a condition he had accepted, sacrificed for watching bands grow (J. Jeong, 2010). What his personal economy made visible was a structural condition: pursuing culture, in a system organised around capital, meant accepting a distance from it that often threatened one's livelihood. This was the vulnerability the indie scene carried at its core.

3.3.2. Hongdae as an identity

By the early 2000s, Hongdae had become more than a cluster of clubs. The changes that took place in this period worked across three registers: the influx of people drawn in by the World Cup, the expansion of cultural territory from basement clubs into the streets and open spaces of the neighbourhood, and the growing recognition of Hongdae's culture in the music industry and media. Together, these shifts gave the identity of indie music culture to Hongdae as a whole.


Street you want to walk


Hongdae Playground
0
100
200
300
400
500 m

World Cup drawing broader crowd

In the early 2000s, a significant shift came to Hongdae as the area began drawing a crowd it had not previously reached. The most critical catalyst was the 2002 World Cup. Hongdae's proximity to the stadium made it a natural destination for crowds after matches. Beyond geography, the tournament changed how Hongdae's culture was perceived. Live music and dancing had long been seen as inappropriate in the Korean context, subject to regular crackdown. The festive atmosphere of the World Cup — music, cheering, and mass public celebration — raised social tolerance toward youth culture and improved the image of club culture along with it. Meanwhile, cultural producers in Hongdae seized the influx as an opportunity. Club Day, which had launched a year earlier, drew even greater numbers to the dance clubs, and live clubs brought visitors each night via the club tour bus. During the day, markets and festivals gave people further reason to come and stay.

Invading the outdoors

As more people came to Hongdae, the territory of culture expanded beyond the clubs. The first signs appeared in a small outdoor space within the area: the Hongdae playground. Designated as a children's park, it had functioned as one until cultural practices took over the surrounding neighbourhood, leaving it underused. The first to use it differently was Nobrain. After splitting from DRUG in 1998, the band found their ground not in another club but in the playground. Founding the label Munhwasagidan, they gathered there daily to write songs and perform, claiming outdoor space as their territory. The same playground was later taken over by the Sinchon-Hongdae Culture Forum, which redesigned and reprogrammed it as a public space for markets and performances during the World Cup season. What had been an underused open space became a site that accommodated culture within the neighbourhood.



Figure 3.32: Performance at playground



Figure 3.33: Freemarket at playground

A parallel expansion was happening at a larger scale. The Street Funk Show in 1996 had already brought performance out of the clubs and into the parking lot street along the former railway. In addition, from 1999, rock festivals began appearing across Korea, gradually accustoming people to experiencing music outdoors. What made this culture truly public, however, was the 2002 World Cup. Street cheering filled every open space across Seoul, and the habit of gathering outside — singing, moving, celebrating together — became part of everyday culture. The streets of Hongdae, including the parking lot street, became fields for public cheering. From there, the boundary between the clubs and the rest of the neighbourhood quietly dissolved. Culture had penetrated every corner, filling the area as a whole.



Figure 3.34: Street cheering during 2002 Worldcup

Spilling into the mainstream

The influx of visitors and the expansion of cultural territory within Hongdae told one part of the story. The other appeared in the music industry itself. Media coverage began recognising Hongdae not merely as a place where something new was happening, but as an established domain: Hongdae was the mecca of indie. Bands from the scene reached mainstream audiences directly. Crying Nut and Yoon Dohyun, whose music had soundtracked the World Cup street cheering, became household names — a recognition the World Cup had accelerated. Beyond direct exposure, the album market itself created conditions for indie musicians to sustain their practice: at its peak, even lesser-known bands could sell three thousand copies on word of mouth alone. The culture that had been reproduced inside Hongdae had grown large enough to touch the mainstream, and the mainstream had begun to spotlight it.



Figure 3.35: Crying nut on TV show

3.3.3. Newly formed typologies

As the previous subsection traced how Hongdae consolidated its identity as a cultural scene, this subsection moves into the places that emerged as respond to it. During the reproduction phase, new typologies emerged alongside established clubs. These were shaped by the maturing needs of the scene and the deepening attachment of its actors. Where 3.2.3 examined the clubs and dance venues through which the scene first gathered, this subsection looks at what came after: place types that extended, supported, and complicated the cultural ecology that clubs had built.

Culture complex

Culture complexes brought together under one roof what had previously been scattered across the neighbourhood. Unlike clubs or galleries that served a single function, these spaces concentrated studios, performance venues, galleries, and cafes into a single building. Those who came for a performance might stay for an exhibition, and those working in studios upstairs would find themselves among musicians and audiences below. The result was a density of cultural activity that made unexpected encounters part of everyday presence in the space.

Network formed by cultural patronage This type of place emerged in Hongdae with the arrival of a new actor in the scene: the corporation. Until then, the indie scene had been sustained almost entirely by individual operators — club owners, label runners, record shop keepers — working with limited resources. What changed was the entry of corporate capital directed toward cultural support at a larger scale. Ssamzie, a fashion company that had been supporting artists from early on, pioneered this shift. The turning point came in 1999, when the Ssamzie Sound Festival proved a major success and the company began investing more seriously in music: launching an online broadcast platform and relocating their culture complex to Hongdae with their own live club inside. By this, Ssamzie gained a reputation as a company that stood close to independent culture and gave generously to it. A more deliberate version of the same logic followed in 2007, when KTandG opened Sangsangmadang in Hongdae — a tobacco company using culture as the instrument through which a corporate identity could be remade.

The decision to relocate to Hongdae reflected a broadening of what the company aimed to be connected with in range of culture. Ssamzie had focused mostly on visual art, but the success of the Ssamzie Sound Festival drew the company toward rock music. The founder found that rock was more immediate and physical in creating shared experience than exhibitions alone. This led to the launch of SSamnet, an online platform for music broadcasting and archiving, and the relocation of the art space to Hongdae — to be closer to where music culture was alive. While Ssamzie came to Hongdae to connect with its indie music network, its presence also brought new density to the area. One regular from a nearby LP bar noted that the area drew more people after Ssamzie Space opened, with critics and curators beginning to appear there regularly.

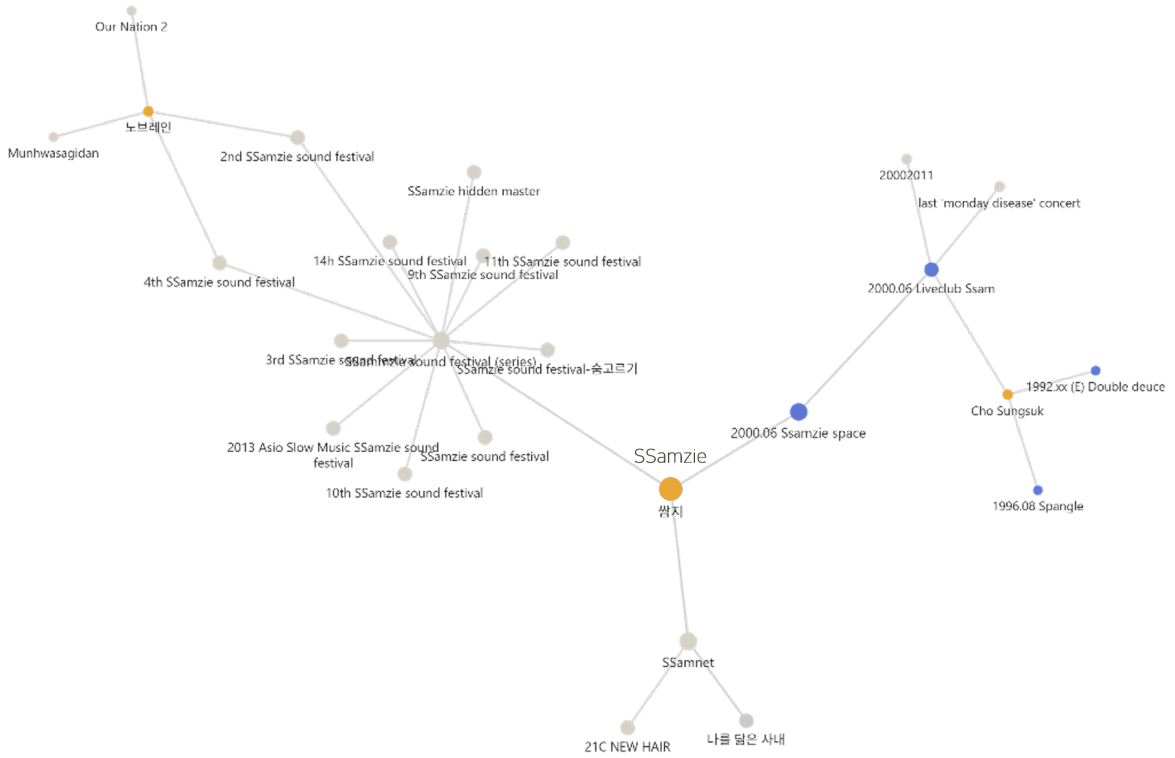


Figure 3.36: Network formed around SSamzie

Vertical layering of programs Within the building, activities were stacked vertically: artist studios on the upper floors, galleries and a live venue in the middle, a cafe at street level. This layering enabled encounters among different actors without anyone deliberately seeking out the other. An artist who had moved into one of the studios described the appeal directly: working alone had narrowed her perspective, and the space offered something different — people working in completely different directions were always within reach, and figures she would normally have had to seek out appeared without effort. This happened not only between creators, but between creators and a broader network. Ssamzie puts on six to ten exhibitions and events each year, with a particular focus on experimental work by young artists, connecting them with critics and curators from home and abroad.

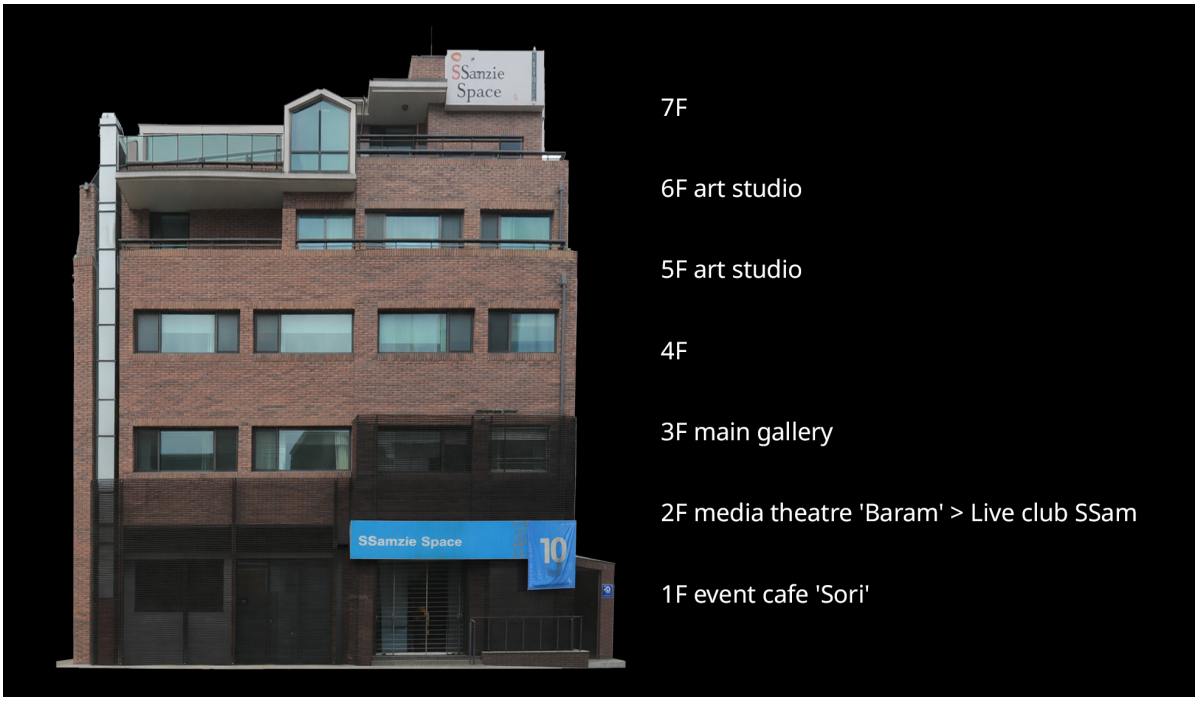


Figure 3.37: Ssamzie space and its program composition



Figure 3.38: SangSang madang and its program composition

Normalisation of culture complex The support Ssamzie offered met its limits through the convergence of two pressures. As cultural patronage became more widespread and alternative spaces multiplied, the distinctive role Ssamzie Space had carved out began to erode. Artists were less concentrated around it, and the programmes it had pioneered no longer felt new. At the same time, as a mid-sized company running a non-profit programme, Ssamzie lacked the capacity to reinvent itself or scale up its support (Lim, 2008). When programmes with larger backing began to emerge, the financial model that had sustained Ssamzie Space could no longer compete. The director concluded that without a fundamental shift in direction, one that the company could not make, closing was the only option.

Live venue
As the indie scene matured, a new type of place emerged that concentrated on live performance. Where the first clubs had combined drinking, socialising, and music into a single informal setting, these places drew a clearer boundary around what they were for. The shift took different forms. Some clubs stripped back their offering — no food, no drinks, just the stage. Others invested in sound systems and spatial scale, turning the quality of the listening experience into their identity. At the furthest end, fully professional performance venues appeared, oriented less toward community and more toward the craft of putting on a show. What united them was a move toward specialisation in live performance, and this research groups them as live venues.

Change in operation The emergence of live venues also brought a shift in how they were run. The earliest clubs had been operated by individuals who combined every role — owner, curator, community anchor — often with limited resources. As venues became more specialised, this began to change. DGBD was founded by two club owners pooling their resources, a sign that the scale of what was needed had outgrown what one person could manage alone. Veloso built a collaboration with Naver around the Onstage programme, which filmed and distributed live performances online. Ghost Theatre, founded by musician Shin Haecheol, sustained its operation through corporate sponsorship from companies such as Leejin Comics and Hanatour. In each case, the individual operator remained present, but the running of the venue had become something shared, brokered, or backed by larger structures. Cho Sungsuk's trajectory made this shift most visible: having run her own clubs, she moved into the role of concert manager at Live club SSam, which is part of a place operated by SSamzie.

Investment on music How these venues were shaped reflected their priorities toward live performance. The first factor was concentration on stage: live venues removed everything that was not about performance. No bar, sometimes no seats, only the stage and what supported it. SSam and Evans, both formed around 2000, exemplified this — spaces built entirely around the act of watching. The second was investment in sound and spatial configuration. DGBD upgraded its space from its owners' previous clubs, improving acoustics and expanding capacity across two floors, with the audience area oriented entirely toward the stage below. Veloso made ceiling height a deciding factor in choosing its location, treating acoustics as the primary spatial concern. An additional consideration emerged alongside these: filming. SSam was equipped with four cameras for live streaming on SSamnet, and Veloso's second location was built around the Onstage project, a video platform for introducing emerging bands to a wider public. Across all three, the shared shift was the same: place was treated more as a site for production.



Figure 3.39: Stage of SSam



Figure 3.40: Stage of Evans

Scene infrastructure The way live venues supported emerging musicians reflected the same shift. Earlier, clubs had discovered new bands as a way to form relationships. House bands were fully affiliated with a single club, and owners held auditions to find musicians who would become part of the club's everyday life. Live venues replaced this with more structured programmes. At SSam, the hidden master competition brought bands to a stage in front of an audience, with the strongest earning a path to the festival, a label connection, and further shows. Sangsangmadang's band incubating programme offered a year of dedicated support, from rehearsal space and album production to performance opportunities, before connecting bands with professional labels. Veloso served as the filming location for Onstage, a video platform that recorded emerging musicians and distributed their performances online, giving bands an exposure no single club night could match. What these programmes shared was a deliberate effort to surface talent and bring it to a wider public. In becoming more systematic, however, they also became more bounded, defined by timelines, criteria, and outputs rather than the open-ended presence that had once allowed a place and a band to grow together over time.



Figure 3.41: Band incubating programme

Losing communal character As venues became more specialised, the relational character that had once enabled the scene began to thin. Attachment to place weakened on both sides: bands no longer belonged to a single venue, and audiences came for a performer rather than with attachment to place. Without the daily presence that had once made discovery natural, venues found it harder to take chances on new acts. As spaces grew larger, the economics pushed further in the same direction: a bigger stage needed a bigger draw, which favoured established names over unknowns. The function of nurturing new musicians had not disappeared, but it had become the work of structured programmes rather than a natural process within the network. These tendencies were only beginning to show during this period, but their full weight would become apparent later, as the conditions that had sustained the scene continued to shift.

Salon

As live venues concentrated on the craft of performance, the spirit of indie culture found a different home. These were spaces where no single function dominated — not quite a cafe, not quite a club, not quite a gallery, but all of these at once and sometimes none of them. The term salon, borrowed from the European tradition of gatherings where artists, writers, and musicians met without an agenda or hierarchy, captures what these places were like. Informal, unpolished, and deliberately open, they drew people not by what they offered but by who kept coming back. Salon Badabie wore the name explicitly; others carried the same character without it.

Places arranged by community What distinguished salons from other place types was how centrally they were built around relationships. Gongjoong Camp was founded by fans of a Japanese band, Fishmans, who wanted somewhere to gather in person. Bar Sha was started by members of the band Huckleberry Finn, and Cafe Unplugged grew from a group of guitar enthusiasts that needed a place to meet and play together. Salon Badabie and Yri Cafe both trace back to a small bar where an owner and two regulars met daily, talking about art and music and eventually each went on to open a place of their own. This pattern had appeared in other place types like live clubs before, but among salons it was most consistently present. Where earlier places had drawn communities through the character of the space, salons reversed this: the relationship came first, and the place was built to hold it.



Figure 3.42: Owners of Kuchu camp



Figure 3.43: Owners of Yri cafe

Spatial factors and instruments that formed salon Salons carried spatial qualities familiar from earlier place types, while two were pushed further. The first was fluidity. Where rock cafes had dissolved the boundary between stage and dance floor, salons extended this to the entire space: there was no fixed programme, no dedicated function. A corner that served as a stage one night could become a workspace the next; where a workshop took place could become a reading room the day after. The second was room for marks. What had once meant doodles and memos left on walls expanded in scale until it encompassed the space itself. At Badabie, musicians built the interior together with the owner, shaping the very stage they would perform on. At Cafe Unplugged, performers redesigned the stage setting for each show — candles on the floor, cushions arranged in a circle, the whole room reorganised around the performance. Those who inhabited the space were always invited to shape it, and that ongoing co-creation deepened the attachment they felt toward it.



Figure 3.44: Lounge of Veloso, also serving as stage



Figure 3.45: Stage of salon Badabie

Deliberate openness The programmes these spaces ran reflected the same logic, deliberately open to contribution. The first dimension was openness to anyone, most clearly shown in open mic nights. At Cafe Unplugged, the acoustic night welcomed anyone with a membership regardless of skill. At Badabie's Thursday stage, no audition was required and no genre was set, so the most exploratory music that could find a stage nowhere else in Hongdae performed there. The second was openness to anything. At Gongjoong Camp, the recurring camp day held events ranging from film screenings to live performances. Badabie hosted poetry jam sessions combining improvised music with spoken word, born from the owner's love of poetry and the musicians who gathered around him. This shows

whatever proposed could take place in salon. Because the space remained open to suggestion, those who inhabited it could feel a sense of ownership over what they had contributed. That belonging was what held these places together, and what made them worth holding onto.



Figure 3.46: Open stage



Figure 3.47: Camp day of Kuchu camp

3.3.4. Collected cases

ACTOR

Observations about how relationships among actors form within cultural ecology. Each finding captures the collective character of cultural production through the depth of the relational process.

INTERACTION

Findings that describe how actors come into contact and develop familiarity. Each finding captures the process that gives rise to different stages of connection.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

2 referenced through network

An existing network of relationships routes a new or external actor toward a place or person, producing an encounter that the actor could not have initiated alone.

ndiecat. (2024, August 20). When Jang Kiha lifted us up. *scene account about Liveclub SSam*

> *Thanks to Cho Sungsuk from Spangle taking over the management of Baram, the modern rock bands from Spangle carried straight onto its stage.*

Lee, J. (2012, January). Around the country — 010. Cafe Unplugged. *scene account about Cafe Unplugged*

> *Having opened the cafe with two like-minded members, word reached musicians one by one, and naturally a monthly official performance came to be held.*



3 referenced by place

A place mediates the encounter between an actor and a wider network or audience, producing an opportunity the actor could not have initiated alone.

Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *A new act I had discovered performed at our club, and the show was so good I booked them again and again — within months the venue was packed. Bands like Jeon Jaeduk Band and La Ventana were like that. Their first stage was our club.*



LOCAL FRIENDSHIP TIES

2 creative exchange

Sustained co-presence in shared creative practice draws actors into mutual inspiration, deepening familiarity through repeated exchange.

Yoon, M. (2002, March 31). Seoul Hongdae 'Ssamzie Space'. *scene account about Ssamzie Space*

> *You could get inspiration from artists working in completely different directions.*



3 place-born collaboration

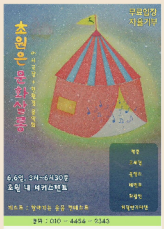
Sustained co-presence in the same place draws actors into close working proximity, where personal familiarity develops into shared creative work.

Jung, J. (2011, August). People I met — 019. Kim Myungryeol of BAR Da. *creator account of Kim Myungryeol, owner of Bar da*

> *Regulars who had fallen in love with Bar da's atmosphere stepped forward to fill the pages. The magazine Tong, known to anyone who had lived long in Hongdae, was born that way.*

Lee, J. (2012, February). Around the country — 011. Salon Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *The Sunday Poetry Theatre is a practice of dressing poets' and artists' own poems in their own way. The owner built a genre called 'poetry jam' — spontaneously connecting poetry and music.*



Jung, J. (2024, July). Meeting people — 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Iri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe*

> *It was a place where conversations would naturally turn into meetings. Anyone who loved art and culture and wanted to try something new could become an organiser here.*



Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Cultural counter-revolution by exiles in the 'side' of Hongdae. *scene account about Yri Cafe*

Findings that describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity. Each finding captures the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.

1 familiarity through encounter

Bonds of personal familiarity that form gradually through repeated contact in the same setting, without any deliberate act of relationship-forming.

Lee, B. (2013, June). Street H spotlight — 051. Bar Sha. *participant account about Bar Sha*

> *Huckleberry Finn had a somewhat closed image as a band, but running the bar became an opportunity to easily build friendships and communicate with other musicians and fans.*



> *Owner and guests were always making things happen together. Musicians prepared special music for a book concert, indie musicians performed in celebration.*





Jung, J. (2024, July). Meeting people — 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Iri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe*

> *The owner, himself an unpublished poet, joined forces with regular Kim Gyeongju to run readings from the early 2000s — combining improvised poetry, mime, and song in a free and experimental format.*



BOND

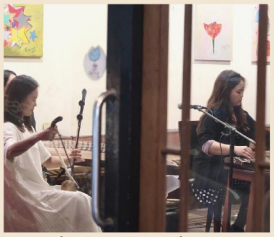
Findings that describe the depth of connection between actors. Each finding captures what a relationship has become and what it enables.

1 shared use of space

The physical space of a place is offered or used beyond its formal purpose, revealing a level of trust and care between actors that exceeds their formal roles.

Jung, J. (2024, July). Meeting people — 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Iri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe*

> *Poets, writers, and musicians who applied in advance were given the space for free for readings, exhibitions, and performances, as long as it did not interfere with regular business.*



Lee, J. (2012, February). Around the country — 011. Salon Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *In the early days, Badabie was truly a hideout for artists. They laid carpets on the stage and floor to sleep, cooked meals in a large pot, and almost every night a feast unfolded.*

Jung, J. (2011, August). People I met — 019. Kim Myungryeol of BAR Da. *creator account of Kim Myungryeol, owner of Bar da*

> *When I first made Bar da, it wasn't to make a wildly successful shop. I just wanted it to become a cosy gathering place where friends who write and take photographs would come and go happily, offering each other small encouragement in their work.*

Kimjakga. (2016, March 14). The tragedy of Hongdae culture, the fate of Iri Cafe. *scene account about Yri Cafe*

> *Artists naturally gathered around. Some spent whole days writing, others practising guitar.*

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso has returned. *scene account about Veloso*

> *During the day, music critics sat with coffee and wrote. At night, musicians poured in for drinks.*

5 shared place memory

Actors return to or gather around a place to share accumulated memories, revealing how deeply the place has become embedded in their relational lives.

Kim, H. (2011, June 9). Goodbye SSam, thank you SSam. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *Every musician who took the stage shared their own memories of SSam. The audience gathered to remember, not just to watch.*



PLACE

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology. Each finding captures a characteristic that enables cultural relations to emerge, accumulate, or persist.

SPATIAL FACTORS

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology.

CONDITION

Fixed spatial characteristics that enable cultural activity to find ground.

POROSITY

Spatial characteristics that leave room for cultural activity to occupy. Each finding captures how a space remains open to uses that exceed its original purpose.

1 underutilised space

Buildings or land not at full capacity, available for informal conversion into cultural places at low cost.

Im, E. (2017, June). Special feature: Hongdae playground returned as cultural park. *scene account about Hongdae playground*

> *As Hongdae became a centre of culture, the playground kept its name as a children's park but was no longer used by children — more precisely, it was a park children could no longer use.*

3 fluidity

A spatial arrangement that dissolves fixed boundaries between roles or functions, allowing different uses and users to co-exist without hierarchy.

Im, E. (2012). Street H spotlight — 026. Veloso. *creator account of Park Jungyong, owner of Veloso*

> *It was at once a cafe and a bar, a performance space and a music cafe. Some drank coffee, some drank beer, others worked alongside them. Everyone remembers Veloso differently through their own memories.*



Garamseulgi. (2010, November 13). Veloso: A music space near Hongdae where various genres can be enjoyed. *participant account about Veloso*

> *Recently there are many places near Hongdae that lightly cross the boundaries between cafe, club, and performance space — serving as rest and play spaces for those seeking music. Veloso stands out among them.*

ACTOR SUPPLY

Spatial characteristics of a place's surroundings that channel actors toward it.

2 spillover [NEW — add to bible]

Jeong, J. (2013). People I met — 039: Mija, owner of 'Kkot'. *participant account about Ssamzie Space*

> *As a nine-year regular noted, "the area got more people after Ssamzie Space opened" — and it was around that time that indie critics like Kim Jonghwi and Ahn Youngno began appearing there regularly.*



Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Cultural counter-revolution by exiles in the 'side' of Hongdae. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *The area's commercial momentum, which had slowed during the financial crisis, was reignited by the 2002 World Cup and Club Day.*

Gu, H., & Jeong, E. (2002, June 1). Cultural World Cup fever in Sinchon university district. *contextual record about Hongdae World Cup period*

> *Local souvenir shops and restaurants were overwhelmed with World Cup tourists, their sales surging beyond what they could handle.*

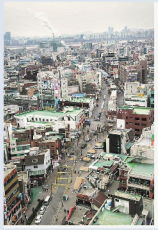


Nicht_einfarbig. (n.d.). [Threads post]. *participant account about Hongdae World Cup period*

> *After matches, people would head to Hongdae — drinks were handed out for free, someone would suddenly stick a funnel in your mouth and pour. There was a romance to it.*

Im, E. (2017, June). Special feature: Hongdae playground returned as cultural park. *scene account about Hongdae playground*

> *The completion of the 'Street You Want to Walk' project made the playground the centre of Hongdae culture.*



QUALITY

Characteristics of a place that emerge through the inhabitation of cultural production.

CULTURAL VITALITY

The activeness of cultural production within a place. Each finding captures the elements that indicate the intensity of interaction among actors.

1 curatorial presence

The degree to which an operator's taste and selectivity is materially expressed in the space, signalling affinity before any word is exchanged.

Garamseulgi. (2010, November 13). Veloso: A music space near Hongdae where various genres can be enjoyed. *participant account about Veloso*

> *Seeing the diverse CD collection in one corner of the cafe, I could feel the owner's passion and dedication to music — it filled me with both admiration and a sense of familiarity.*



Street H. (2010, November). 12 bars of that winter. *participant account about Bar da*

> *Low lighting, worn but comfortable chairs, and the dried anchovies served as a basic snack — many people are won over by these, and if you arrive late there are no seats left.*

Jung, J. (2024, July). Meeting people — 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Iri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe*

> *At the cafe entrance hung a painting by the owner. The bookshelves were filled with art books, catalogues, and rare imported design publications — most purchased through Amazon. At the time there were few places where you could see such books in person, and many designers and artists came for that reason.*



3 lived traces

The degree to which surfaces accumulate evidence of past inhabitation, making the history of a place visible and legible to those who arrive later.

Kim, H. (2011, June 9). Goodbye SSam, thank you SSam. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *The walls beside the stairs leading up and down to the venue were covered in posters from every performance ever held at Ssam. The posters made time run backwards, stirring memories.*



Sung, J. (n.d.). Hongdae playground. Lomography Magazine. *participant account about Hongdae playground*

> *For occasional visitors, there is always the anticipation of what new drawing will have appeared on the toilet wall.*

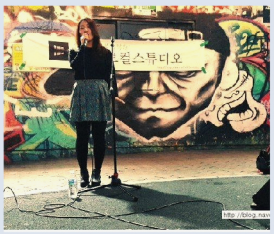


4 area identity

The degree to which a place is recognised for a specific cultural character, attracting actors who share that sensibility and reinforcing their collective presence.

Sung, J. (n.d.). Hongdae playground. Lomography Magazine. *participant account about Hongdae playground*

> *Not once have I seen a child here — instead, the space is always filled with events. That is what this park is famous for.*



Street H. (2010, November). 12 bars of that winter. *participant account about Sugar Bar*

> *It is a representative 'artist bar' in Hongdae where writers, painters, musicians, and filmmakers gather.*

Jung, J. (2011, August). People I met — 019. Kim Myungryeol of BAR Da. *creator account of Kim Myungryeol, owner of Bar da*

> *Publishing, art, and cultural practitioners came and went regularly, and it became beloved as a gathering spot for cultural figures.*

Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Cultural counter-revolution by exiles in the 'side' of Hongdae. *scene account about Yri Cafe*

> *Even part-time staff took pride in pursuing their own artistic work — poetry, painting, music.*

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso has returned. *scene account about Veloso*

> *People began gathering one by one — music lovers who shared a taste. Word spread and it became a gathering spot for music enthusiasts and a Hongdae landmark.*

CONTEXT

The structural and historical conditions within which cultural ecology operates. Each finding captures a pressure or effect that shapes the ground on which cultural places stand.

STRUCTURAL PRESSURE

Conditions that threaten the continued existence of cultural places.

REGULATORY

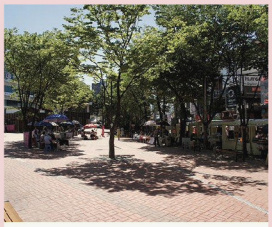
Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

1 legal restriction

Legal or regulatory constraints that directly limit the operation or practice of cultural places.

Im, E. (2017, June). Special feature: Hongdae playground returned as cultural park. *scene account about Hongdae playground*

> *According to Seoul's park classification system, neither commercial activities nor cultural events can be held in children's parks.*



2 governance barrier [NEW — add to bible]

Im, E. (2017, June). Special feature: Hongdae playground returned as cultural park. *scene account about Hongdae playground*

> *Despite repeated proposals for a joint public-private governance structure for the playground's management, none were accepted.*



SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

1 commodification

The process by which cultural places and practices are displaced by higher-value commercial uses.

Kimjakga. (2007, November 12). 'Hongdae' is not dead yet. *scene account about live venues in Hongdae*

> *Running a 500-seat venue around emerging bands who cannot draw more than fifty people is impossible. The stratification of Hongdae venues is being completed in exactly this way.*



SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

1 mainstream recognition

Gu, H., & Jeong, E. (2002, June 1). Cultural World Cup fever in Sinchon university district. *contextual record about Hongdae World Cup period*

> *The street popularity of 'Oh Pilseung Korea' was decisive in elevating Yoon Dohyun and Crying Nut from rock enthusiasts' favourites to household names.*



Song, M. (2023, June 1). 2002.06. The Korea-Japan World Cup: A turning point for music festival culture. *scene account about indie music scene*

> *Large-scale festivals had been emerging since the mid-1990s, but they targeted a limited consumer base and were consumed exclusively by them.*

1 mainstream dominance

The structural dominance of mainstream cultural industries that limits access and visibility for independent cultural producers.

Kimjakga. (2007, November 12). 'Hongdae' is not dead yet. *scene account about live venues in Hongdae*

> *These clubs were neglectful of their role in discovering new acts. Though they had their own programmed performances, these were the preserve of bands that had already gained recognition through other clubs.*

Choi, K. (2018, November 23). KT&G Sangsangmadang evolved into a 'mutual benefit space'. *scene account about buskers in Hongdae*

> *Buskers, long seen as a symbol of Hongdae, face harsh performance conditions. Noise complaints from nearby merchants cause friction, and the heat and cold often exhaust them before a performance even ends.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

3 trend shift

A change in cultural taste or social habit that reduces the audience or viability of an established cultural scene.

Kimjakga. (2007, November 12). 'Hongdae' is not dead yet. *scene account about live venues in Hongdae*

> *Where early clubs had been a ghetto for those who spent every evening there regardless of who was performing, the clubs of the 2000s drew audiences who came for a specific act and moved on to a bar when it ended.*

EFFECT

Observed outcomes of structural pressure on cultural places and their communities.



2 normalisation

Lim, J. (2008, September 11). Adieu! Ssamzie Space. *scene account about Ssamzie Space*

> *As alternative spaces multiplied and galleries began accommodating younger experimental artists, the role of spaces like Ssamzie shrank. They diagnosed themselves as having fallen into repetition — and finding a new direction proved impossible.*

Choi, J. (2012, July 11). KT&G Sangsangmadang performance team manager Kim Jinhee. *creator account of Kim Jinhee, programme manager at Sangsangmadang*

> *Similar programmes have multiplied. And finding good acts like before has become harder.*

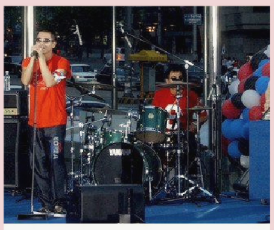
CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

2 public acceptance

Song, M. (2023, June 1). 2002.06. The Korea-Japan World Cup: A turning point for music festival culture. *scene account about indie music scene*

> *Through national events like the World Cup, people came to understand that music is fun. So beyond the cheering performances, they came to appreciate the joy of festivals themselves.*



3 tenure support

Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *During Covid, the building owner waived nine months of rent. And when we occasionally reopened, they cut the rent by 30%. Their generosity is why we survived.*





INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships and places — countering structural pressure through capital, regulatory, systemic, and contextual means.

RELATIONSHIP-FORMING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

1 open access

Im, E., & Moon, J. (2011, February). Unique clubs that show the colours of Hongdae. *participant account about Kuchu Camp*

> *Unlike most performance cafes and venues, outside food is welcome here. That freedom is the space's strength.*



Lee, J. (2012, January). Around the country — 010. Cafe Unplugged. *scene account about Cafe Unplugged*

> *Cafe Unplugged also runs a guitar class for complete beginners — divided into weekend and weekday evening sessions, with eight lessons over roughly two months.*





2 online reach out

Garamseulgi. (2010, November 13). Veloso: A music space near Hongdae where various genres can be enjoyed. *participant account about Veloso*

> *There is no special promotion or marketing. People simply check the performance schedule posted in advance on the Veloso blog and come to find the music and musicians they already love.*

Lee, J. (2012, January). Around the country — 010. Cafe Unplugged. *scene account about Cafe Unplugged*

> *For those who want to know about the various programmes at Cafe Unplugged, check the homepage.*

8 succession

The place sustains its cultural character across changes in location and ownership.

Street H. (2010, November). 12 bars of that winter. *scene account about Sugar Bar*

> *Since filmmaker Sim Jaehyeong opened it in 2004, ownership has passed through several hands, yet the romantic and free atmosphere of the place has always remained the same.*



MAINTAINING STABILITY

Deliberate actions that maintain the foundations of a place over time.

2 handover

An actor takes over a space from an acquaintance whose stable operation has already been established.

Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *Club Evans started in September 2001, when I was 39. I took over a Hongdae live club called Fade In — a place where I had occasionally performed myself.*



3 visitor control

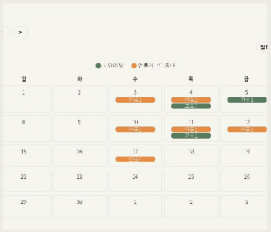
An operator controls who can enter and how they should behave, maintaining protected ground for visitors.

Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *In the early days we had trouble with audiences who drank too much and caused a scene — from the start we would simply refund their money and ask them to leave. We kept doing this, and now those kinds of people no longer come.*

STRUCTURE-COUNTERING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that directly address structural pressure on cultural places.



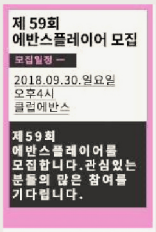
LOCAL FRIENDSHIP TIES

Findings that describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity. Each finding captures the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.

1 audition

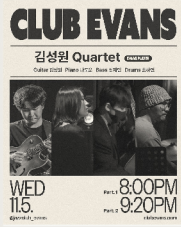
Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *I watch performance videos sent to me, and if I'm satisfied, I book them. I don't look at whether they studied abroad or how old they are. I look at the music and performance on stage, diversity of genre, and quality of the show.*



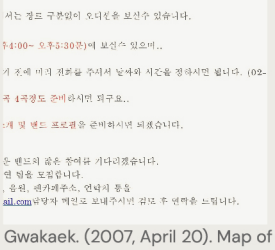
Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *In the mid-2000s, when the quarterly Evans Player audition was running, it was said that 80% of finalists at the Jara Island Jazz Festival concours were Evans Players — it was that well known as a gateway for capable new musicians.*



Han, H. (2003, October 30). Korean live clubs (5): Slugger. *scene account about Slugger*

> *One or two new bands come each week to audition.*



Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account about Slugger*

> *To raise the quality of performing bands, only those with a certain level of skill are put on stage.*

Yoon, M. (2002, March 31). Seoul Hongdae 'Ssamzie Space'. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *To perform on this stage, bands had to pass her demanding audition.*

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

2 collective funding

Members pool resources to establish a place without relying on individual capital or commercial backing.

D&Riff. (2023, January 23). Hongdae bar recommendation: Kuchu Camp. *participant account about Kuchu Camp*

> *A fan club of a Japanese band formed in 1987 collectively pooled their money to open a shop in Seoul, Korea, and have been running it since 2003.*

3 cultural patronage

A corporation directs capital toward cultural support, creating infrastructure that individual operators could not sustain alone.

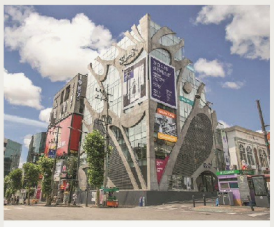
Indiecat. (2024, August 20). When Jang Kiha lifted us up. *scene account about Ssamzie Space*

> *From the 1990s, when the term 'cultural marketing' was still unfamiliar, the company pursued cultural social contribution activities.*



Ahn, J. (2010, November 16). KT&G, 'Sangsangmadang' playground for non-mainstream artists sails into its 5th year. *scene account about Sangsangmadang*

> *KT&G brought Sangsangmadang from online into the physical world, opening a dedicated space for non-mainstream art in Hongdae in September 2007.*



4 cooperative operation

A place run collectively by members who each maintain separate livelihoods.

Im, E., & Moon, J. (2011, February). Unique clubs that show the colours of Hongdae. *scene account about Kuchu Camp*

> *There is no designated owner or staff. They run on a cooperative model — eight members, each with their own careers as freelance writers, translators, and photographers, take turns running the cafe.*

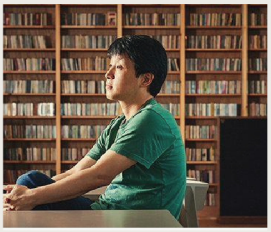
5 economy of intimacy

An operator prioritises cultural production over profit, sustaining the place with minimum or no profit.

2 talent scouting

Im, E. (2012). Street H spotlight — 026. Veloso. *creator account of Park Jungyong, owner of Veloso*

> *The principle above all is to book only acts he has seen perform live himself.*



Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *The most important thing in a live club is musician scouting — that's something I have to do myself.*



Yoon, M. (2002, March 31). Seoul Hongdae 'Ssamzie Space'. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *If word got around that a band was doing well, she would go and hear them herself.*

Seo, J. (2026, February 26). Veloso interview marking 18 years in Hongdae. *scene account about Veloso*

> *As a well-known music enthusiast, operator Park Jungyong curated performances that embraced indie musicians across genres, rather than being confined to a specific style.*

PLACE-ARRANGING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that shape the spatial ground of cultural ecology.

INITIATING ACTOR SUPPLY

Deliberate actions that shape the environment where new actors can easily enter a place.

Han, H. (2003, October 30). Korean live clubs (5): Slugger. *scene account about Slugger*

> *I have no intention of making money from the club — in fact, I bring in earnings from outside to cover the operating costs.*

Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *Running a live club is not a money-making business. I keep going because it hasn't reached the point of collapse. I've never properly taken my own salary. I do it not to make money but because I want to.*

REGULATORY

Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

1 formalising

An actor transforms a temporary collective effort into a permanent institutional structure, or demands legal recognition of existing cultural practice.

Jung, J. (2010, March). People I met — 002. Kim Yeongdeung of Club Bbang. *creator account about Kim Yeongdeung*

> *After the World Cup excitement faded and the free market risked drifting like other projects, it was Kim who held it together. He established the Ilsang Arts Creation Centre — a non-profit that also functions as a kind of secretariat — and has kept it going ever since.*

Im, E. (2017, June). Special feature: Hongdae playground returned as cultural park. *scene account about Hongdae playground*

> *Local organisations, cultural practitioners, and nearby merchants all demanded that the playground be reclassified from a children's park to a cultural park, in line with how it was actually being used.*



SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

1 open place

An operator deliberately lowers the physical threshold for entry, opening the place to a wider population of potential visitors.

Kang, M. (2012, October 25). Hongdae in 2012: Park Jung-yong. *creator account of Park Jungyong, owner of Veloso*

> *In the past, fans who loved music felt no intimidation entering a professional venue for the first time. But watching performances in a second-floor cafe removed that resistance and helped audiences get used to live music — creating a virtuous cycle where they went on to attend other performances too.*



Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account about Slugger*

> *The bar and seating are arranged so you can enjoy the music even outside of performance hours, making it a place you can drop into anytime without feeling any pressure.*

ACTIVATING CULTURAL VITALITY

Deliberate actions that generate or intensify the relational and creative exchange between actors.

2 self-making

Directly fabricating the physical elements of a space, embedding personal taste and care into its material character.

Im, E., & Moon, J. (2011, February). Unique clubs that show the colours of Hongdae. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *With no money, they built it themselves. From the sign evoking the sea to every corner of the interior, there was nowhere the owner's hand had not touched.*



3 co-design

Those who inhabit a space also shape its physical character through design, decoration, or construction.

Cha, E. (2006, November 8). 'Save and save' project to save Club Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *From the sign to the interior decoration and installation of fixtures, various bands voluntarily participated and filled the space together.*

4 utilising space

An actor activates a space beyond its designated function, generating cultural vitality where it did not exist before.

Kimjakga. (2018, April 2). Hongdae's decisive moments episode 5: No Brain — march of young rioters. *scene account about Munhwasagidan*

> *The once-quiet playground in front of Hongdae's main gate began transforming every night into Korea's Camden Town, where punk crowds gathered. Cha Seungwoo would often sit on the playground bench from quiet afternoons, writing and refining songs there.*

2 online channel

A venue or actor extends the reach of indie music beyond physical space through digital channels.

Kim, H. (2011, June 9). Goodbye SSam, thank you SSam. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *Most performances at Ssam were live-streamed online through Ssamnet. Even by today's standards this would be notable — at the time, it was genuinely groundbreaking.*

Kang, M. (2012, October 25). Hongdae in 2012: Park Jung-yong. *creator account of Park Jungyong, owner of Veloso*

> *Through Veloso and Onstage, he is actively bringing the music he loves to people.*

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso has returned. *scene account about Veloso*

> *He launched Onstage — filming talented but little-known musicians at their best and distributing the footage through Naver.*

Seo, J. (2026, February 26). Veloso interview marking 18 years in Hongdae. *scene account about Veloso*

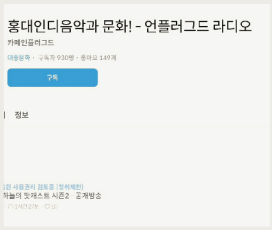
> *He recorded performances to help spread their music. This was why the latecomer Veloso gained recognition in the popular music world.*

Im, E. (2012). Street H spotlight — 026. Veloso. *creator account of Park Jungyong, owner of Veloso*

> *Performance recordings become a good reference for the musician, and help not only them but other venues including Veloso itself.*

Lee, J. (2012, January). Around the country — 010. Cafe Unplugged. *scene account about Cafe Unplugged*

> *Every Wednesday at 9pm, a live radio broadcast is held at the fifth-floor Plugged. A theme is announced each week, and stories and song requests are collected in advance.*



4 open stage

A place opens its stage without professional threshold, directly countering mainstream gatekeeping.

Im, E., & Moon, J. (2011, February). Unique clubs that show the colours of Hongdae. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Salon Badabie is a space for people who want to test and try out their work. The stage is filled with emerging bands, and even weekend shows are chosen on ability rather than name recognition.*



Lee, J. (2012, February). Around the country — 011. Salon Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Badabie was the first stage and home base for gayageum player Jeong Mina, who couldn't find a stage at any other club, and garage band Galaxy Express, tipped as the next big thing.*

Daum cafe. (n.d.). Badabie programme. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Solo concerts on Wednesdays, Thursday performances open to any musician who applies, and programmed shows Friday through Sunday.*

Im, E. (2017, June). Special feature: Hongdae playground returned as cultural park. *scene account about Hongdae playground*

> *Using the playground as a base, various programmes were proposed and carried out. The free market and hope market that continue to this day, along with various performances, all began from that point.*



Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso has returned. *scene account about Veloso*

> *Eventually he closed the original Veloso and gave the filming space the Veloso name. Season 2 had begun.*

Kim, S. (2013, February 14). Hongdae/Sangsu Bar SHA. *participant account about Bar Sha*

> *Every Wednesday there is an acoustic performance by Huckleberry Finn — the 62-week acoustic project, running since last July.*



Street H. (2010, November). 12 bars of that winter. *participant account about Bar da*

> *In the bathroom — self-proclaimed the smallest gallery in the world — you could find yourself looking at an exhibition.*



5 vertical layering

An operator stacks distinct cultural functions vertically within a single building.

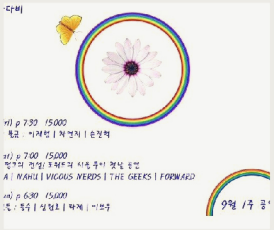
Yoon, M. (2002, March 31). Seoul Hongdae 'Ssamzie Space'. *scene account about Ssamzie Space*

> *With a performance space, a café, and various kinds of rooms layered beneath the studios, people you'd normally have to seek out you'd just run into.*

Ahn, J. (2010, November 16). KT&G, 'Sangsangmadang' playground for non-mainstream artists sails into its 5th year. *scene account about Sangsangmadang*

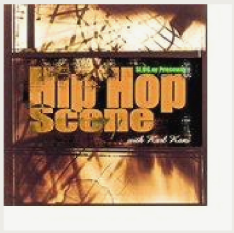
> *The space was organised around an independent cinema, a live hall for band music, a design shop, a gallery, a humanities academy, a photo studio, and a café.*





Han, H. (2003, October 30). Korean live clubs (5): Slugger. *scene account about Slugger*

> *Known as a gateway for countless new bands, Slugger is the only club to regularly give rappers a stage — every Friday.*



Lee, J. (2012, January). Around the country — 010. Cafe Unplugged. *scene account about Cafe Unplugged*

> *The acoustic night began centred on pure amateurs — an open stage where any cafe member can sing or play regardless of skill level.*

Jung, J. (2023, March). People I met — 152. Hong Sejohn, representative of Club Evans. *creator account of Hong Sejohn, owner of Evans*

> *Weekend programmed performances begin with new acts and gradually expand in scale — mainly through the programming team directly choosing acts they like, or through introductions and recommendations from acquaintances.*

5 scene infrastructure

A place offers a broader set of interconnected programmes, serving as sustaining infrastructure for the scene.

Indiecat. (2024, August 20). When Jang Kiha lifted us up. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *The Ssamzie Sound Festival hosted a talent discovery programme called Hidden Master. Every year, huge numbers of bands flocked to audition for it. What was distinctive was that the dozens of bands auditioning performed in front of a full audience. Being free, anyone could watch without pressure.*

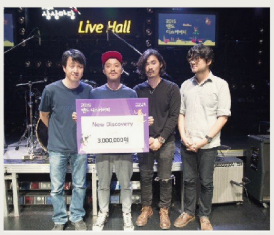
Kang, E. (2011, May 27). Hongdae live club 'Ssam' closing performance until the 29th. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *Ssam was linked to the Ssamzie Sound Festival, putting on various programmed performances and providing a stage for emerging musicians who had passed the festival's Hidden Master audition.*



Ahn, J. (2010, November 16). KT&G, 'Sangsangmadang' playground for non-mainstream artists sails into its 5th year. *scene account about Sangsangmadang*

> *Sangsangmadang runs a band incubating programme supporting talented indie bands, providing a space for non-mainstream musicians sidelined by the idol-dominated industry to pursue their work.*



6 playground for community

A group of actors with existing bonds deliberately establishes a physical place to anchor their shared practice.

Im, E., & Moon, J. (2011, February). Unique clubs that show the colours of Hongdae. *scene account about Kuchu Camp*

> *Kuchu Camp began as an online community of people who loved the legendary Japanese indie band Fishmans. Those who spent every day eating and drinking together around Hongdae and Sinchon had the bold idea of creating an offline space where they could do the same thing.*

7 investment on music

An operator strips back the space to performance alone, making the act of watching the only reason to be there.

ndiecat. (2024, August 20). When Jang Kiha lifted us up. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *Ssamzie Space Baram, which opened in Hongdae, was the first live club with a proper system in place. Cameras were mounted in front of the pillars, and performances were live-streamed to TVs at the back. Until Sangsangmadang opened, it was the only performance space with this kind of system.*



Indiecat. (2024, August 20). When Jang Kiha lifted us up. *scene account about Liveclub Ssam*

> *What set Ssamzie Space Baram apart was that while other clubs functioned as hangout spots for bands and fans because they sold drinks, this place was purely for performance.*

Han, H. (2003, October 30). Korean live clubs (5): Slugger. *scene account about Slugger*

> *A hall of 42 pyeong with 70 seats. On weekends, standing performances accommodate up to 300 people.*

Gwakaek. (2007, April 20). Map of major indie clubs. *participant account about Slugger*

> *The venue's facilities are superior to other clubs. Instruments, amplifiers and systems are installed at performance venue level rather than club level, making for a satisfying sound experience.*

Kim, Y. (2013, June 10). The living history of Hongdae live clubs. *scene account about DGBD*

> *More effort goes into the amplifiers, speakers, and other hardware than at other clubs, so that bands can put on a good show.*

Han, H. (2003, October 30). Korean live clubs (5): Slugger. *scene account about Slugger, account of Song Juyoung, vocalist of Red Cross*

> *Even without an audience, I think of it as building experience and give my best. When I feel myself improving through performing here, I think — yes, I'm glad I chose music.*

Han, H. (2003, October 30). Korean live clubs (5): Slugger. *scene account about Slugger*

> *Skilled rappers MC Sniper and MC K honed their hip hop here and went on to release albums.*

Lee, J. (2012, January). Around the country — 010. Cafe Unplugged. *scene account about Cafe Unplugged*

> *Among all musicians, those he has the most affection for are the 'Unplugged musicians' — Na Yunseong, Kang Taegu, and band Geureot, who use Cafe Unplugged as their main stage. Every Thursday night they meet their audience through the 'Between the Cafes' stage.*



Kim, Y. (2013, June 7). Neighbourhood stroll — 007. Live club Evans Lounge. *scene account about Evans*

> *Evans, which tenaciously ran a jazz club for ten years and built the history of jazz in Hongdae, expanded into a label, academy, and studio alongside the club, growing the Evans family.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

1 volume restriction

An operator limits the volume or intensity of programming in response to neighbour pressure.

Seo, J. (2026, February 26). Veloso interview marking 18 years in Hongdae. *scene account about Veloso*

> *Operating as a cafe on weekdays with performances only on Sundays, the second-floor location made loud performances structurally impossible. Nevertheless, Veloso quickly differentiated itself by curating acoustic performances in a sunlit second-floor space.*



3.4. Resisting gentrification

As Hongdae's cultural identity deepened into fields of care, the recognition it had earned also drew capital attention. The fields of care that had formed through years of inhabitation began to face a pressure that those conditions had not prepared them for. In terms of the theoretical framework, this is the resistance phase: the point at which the trajectory toward place as a public symbol begins, and actors respond to prevent it. The section begins with personal narratives of actors who faced eviction and organised resistance, before turning to the structural conditions that drove displacement at the area scale, and the instruments actors developed to counter it.

3.4.1. Narrative of resisting

Sim Cheoljong and Theatre Zero

Sim Cheoljong is an actor and performer who has been active in Hongdae since 1995, when he co-opened a rock cafe called Gompangee. His theatre, Theatre Zero, opened in 1998 as Korea's first experimental arts theatre, staging nearly 300 performances over 5 years (Street H, 2014). Located on Hongdae's main street, marked by a rooftop sculpture visible from a distance, it was a landmark most people in the area could name. It is also one of the earliest cases of forced eviction driven by capital pressure on Hongdae, and the resistance that gathered around it left traces that extended well beyond the theatre itself.

Sim Cheoljong

"It started with a rock cafe called Gompangee. A friend and I opened it together. Artists came every night. Performances happened spontaneously."



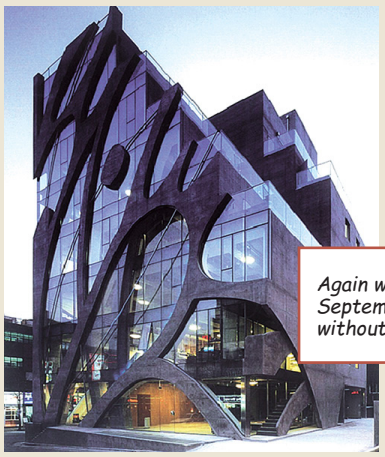
opened Theate

1995
started Gompangee
with Kim Hyungtae



"Then I wanted s
Theatre Zero,
Korea's first exp





Again we couldn't get full victory.Still, in September 2007, they opened Sangsangmadang without my theatre."

"The new owner,
building for thei
agreement with
nothing to them.

2008.03
Theater zero
reopened

2007.07
neogtiation

2007.05
second funeral

"So Theatre Zero reopened next to Hongdae Playground. We celebrated with a street performance. Four years after we first closed, we were back."

"So we went back to the streets. Another bier, the same Hongdae roads. We demanded they keep the agreement."







"But things were not the same. Hongdae had changed. The audiences were smaller, but rent was even higher. In November 2011, Theatre Zero closed for good."

2011.11
Closure of Theater zero



"The culture we made in Hongdae was real. I still believe in that."

"I left Hongdae, but I kept going, even as single performer, in a small room."





"For five years, things went well. Nearly 300 performances took place. It became a landmark of Hongdae."

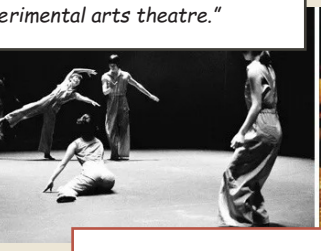
"Then suddenly, in summer 2003, new landowner told us to leave, saying that the building was going to be rebuilt."

"I refused, even went to court, claiming the compensation I was owed for giving up the space. "

1998
er Zero

2003.08
eviction notice from landowner

something bigger, so I opened
erimental arts theatre."





"But construction took longer than planned. Moreover, the building was sold again."

"I was not alone. Artists across Hongdae came together and formed a cooperative. We gathered because if Theatre Zero could be pushed out, anywhere in Hongdae could."



2004.01
cooperative formed

The following spring, the Self-Reliant Music Collective was officially launched.
Our goal was simple: make sure no musician had to quit because of money.

KT&G wanted the whole
r own cultural complex. Our
the former owner meant
"

2004.02
Funeral bier

2007.04
refused
returning

2004.07
negotiation

2004.04
displaced due to reconstruction

"But nothing could stop demolition. In April 2004, the building went into reconstruction, and Theatre Zero closed."



"Still, the fight was worth it. The district office stepped in. The new landowner signed an agreement. When the building was done in 2005, Theatre Zero would return to its basement."

Somewhere around late 2016, we stopped. We no longer exist as a collective. But each of us continues on our own path.



Vulnerability from lack of ownership What the case exposed is the structural vulnerability of cultural places that rely on rented space. When the building owner decided to reconstruct, Theatre Zero had no standing to contest the decision. When eviction followed, there was no legal ground on which the theatre could claim the right to remain. And when a mediated agreement was reached guaranteeing re-entry after reconstruction, it became void the moment the building was sold again. The new owner had no obligation to honour what a previous owner had signed (H. Lee, 2007), and the law offered no protection. Each of these moments pointed to the same condition: a cultural place operating in leased space has no claim to the building that houses it.

Setting a precedent for resistance The instruments Theatre Zero employed in response nonetheless opened pathways that others would follow. The funeral procession performance staged through Hongdae's streets established artistic action as a form of public resistance. The involvement of Mapo District Office as a mediator showed that public institutions could be drawn into disputes between cultural tenants and building owners, and that their engagement could produce a negotiated agreement (Jang, 2004). That agreement did not survive the second ownership change, but its existence, followed by suggestion from new owner, demonstrated that direct negotiation with building owners was a viable instrument. These responses served as precedent for the resistance cases that followed elsewhere in the scene.



Figure 3.48: Funeral performance as way of protest

Solidarity among cultural actors The response to Theatre Zero's eviction was made possible by a network that had formed over the years. As one account put it, people gathered simply because Sim, a brother figure in the neighbourhood, had run into trouble (Citizen's Newspaper, 2004). That instinct reflected the local friendship ties Sim had built since 1995 through sustained coexistence with other cultural actors in Hongdae. What converted those ties into collective action was the recognition that Theatre Zero's crisis was not only his. Seeing a cultural landmark threatened by commercialisation, other actors understood that the same could happen to any place they cared about. The individual crisis of one space became the concern of the scene as a whole, producing the solidarity ties that drove the formation of the Hongdae Culture Arts Cooperative in January 2004 (Street H, 2014) and the collective campaigns that followed.

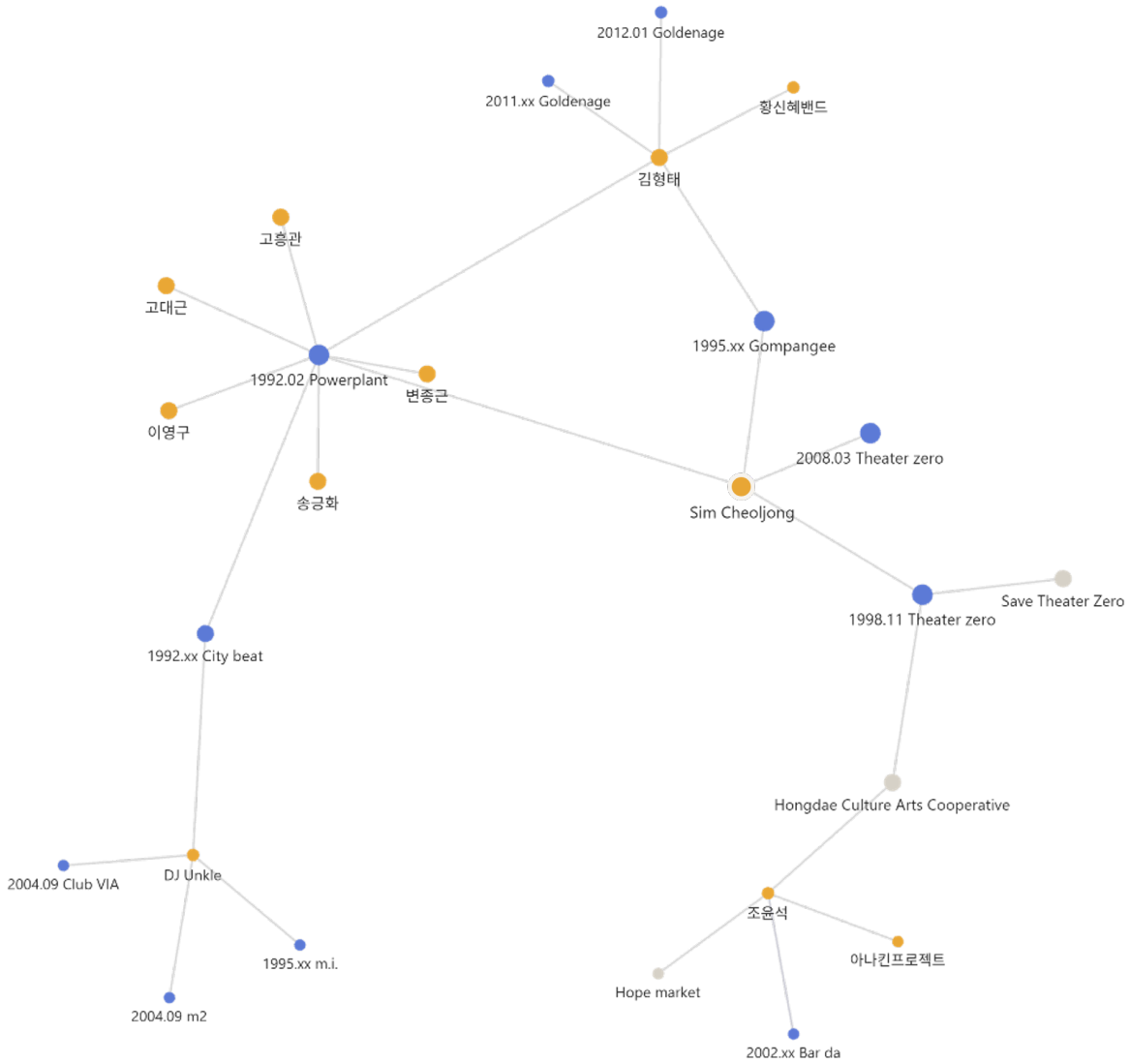


Figure 3.49: Network formed around Sim Cheljong

The place better not be moved Yet what the resistance could secure fell short of what the place needed. When Theatre Zero reopened in a new location near Hongdae playground in 2008, what had sustained it before was no longer in place. The years of interrupted inhabitation had broken the continuity of interaction that had kept the space alive. Meanwhile, the cultural vitality of Hongdae had weakened. Sim himself noted that by the time the theatre returned, the area had shifted away from art toward entertainment culture, drawing smaller audiences for the performing arts (J. Park, 2011). Rising rents added further burden to an already fragile operation. Due to these changes, Sim decided to close Theater Zero permanently after three years of struggle. The owner's original preference to keep both practice and location points to something significant: place is not only a physical container, nor merely the interaction of people within it, but an interrelated dynamic of active inhabitation and the spatial factors that support it. When either is disrupted, the other cannot sustain what they produced together.

Ujungdokbohaeng and Salon Badabi

Ujungdokbohaeng is a poet who opened Salon Badabie in Hongdae. Over eleven years, it became a place loved by artists across the scene. When financial crisis threatened its closure, the scene responded twice, in 2006 and again in 2011, with campaigns that mobilised musicians, places, and audiences across Hongdae. The two campaigns together show how solidarity ties formed around a place can counter capital pressure through collective action.

Ujungdokbohaeng

"I'm a poet, and a space owner. This is the story of Salon Badabie — a place I built, lost, and fought to keep.



"Before Badabie, I ran a tiny bar near the railway under Waubridge. I called it just 'Bar'. It was my poetry studio, and a place where all kinds of people passed through."



"In the early days, Badabie was truly a hideout for artists. They laid carpets on the stage and floor to sleep, cooked meals in a large pot, and almost every night a feast unfolded."

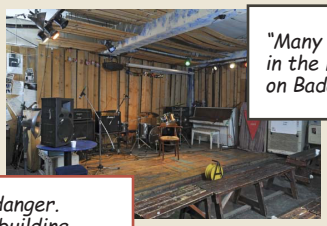
started as bar owner

2004
opened Salon Badabie

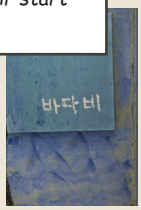


"The place, aptly named Pub, was both his workshop for writing poetry and a humble passageway to encounters with people of all kinds."





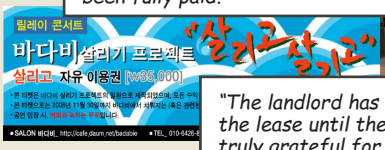
"Many artists who are now well known in the Hongdae scene got their start on Badabee's stage."



"A voluntary contribution from those of you who care about Badabee raised approximately 2 million won. With that money, all outstanding rent, including the rent due up to October 14 and any overdue payments, has been fully paid."

"The Salon Badabie is currently in danger. This is because when renewing the building rental contract, the building owner demanded an increase in monthly rent along with a double deposit increase."

2006
Deposit, rent raising







"If Salon Badabie closes, one of the possibilities that was open to you will disappear. A space for free thought, communication, and artistic exchange will be lost forever."



"The landlord has kindly agreed to extend the lease until the end of November. We are truly grateful for her generosity. I hope this opportunity leads to meaningful and worthwhile results."



2006.10
Temporary contract extend

2006.10
Badabie 'Saligo Saligo' project

"We will not let this place close."

At the performance on the 5th, audience members were forced to wait outside for an hour after the landlord padlocked the club's entrance, demanding that the overdue rent be paid."





2011.7
Door locked by landlord





"We are sorry to bring you this disappointing news.For now, Badabee must bid farewell as a physical venue."

"Even while Ujungdokbohaeng is away, let's come together and keep Badabee going."

"Going forward, rather than being run by a single individual, Badabie aims to transform into a collectively managed space."

"And so, I am now looking for someone to take over the space."

2011.8
Ujungdokbohaeng's barin surgery



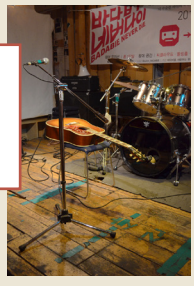
2011.9
Badabie never die

"While I am hospitalized, I urgently need help from friends who are familiar with Badabie's situation. I would also be deeply grateful to anyone who can continue helping for the next few months, as I will need time to recover even after being discharged."

2015.4
Attempt to take over

"This time we could not just leave. We formed an association with fellow merchants in Sangsu-dong, and ran a signature campaign, to take better position at negotiation."

2015.5
Establish coopera-tive project group



2015.10
cloure of Salon Badabie

Bond as ground What made these responses possible was the character of Badabie itself. The salon accepted any form of artistic practice without distinction of genre or format, and in its early years functioned as a literal refuge: artists slept on the floor, cooked communal meals, and gathered almost every night (J. Lee, 2012). After performances, musicians, staff, and audience stayed in the same room, sharing personal stories and talking about music through the night (Cha, 2006). The space was built collectively, with the interior, signage, and decoration assembled through the voluntary participation of bands who inhabited it (Cha, 2006). Through sustained shared inhabitation, Badabie accumulated a bond among those who passed through it. This bond was the ground on which both campaigns stood.

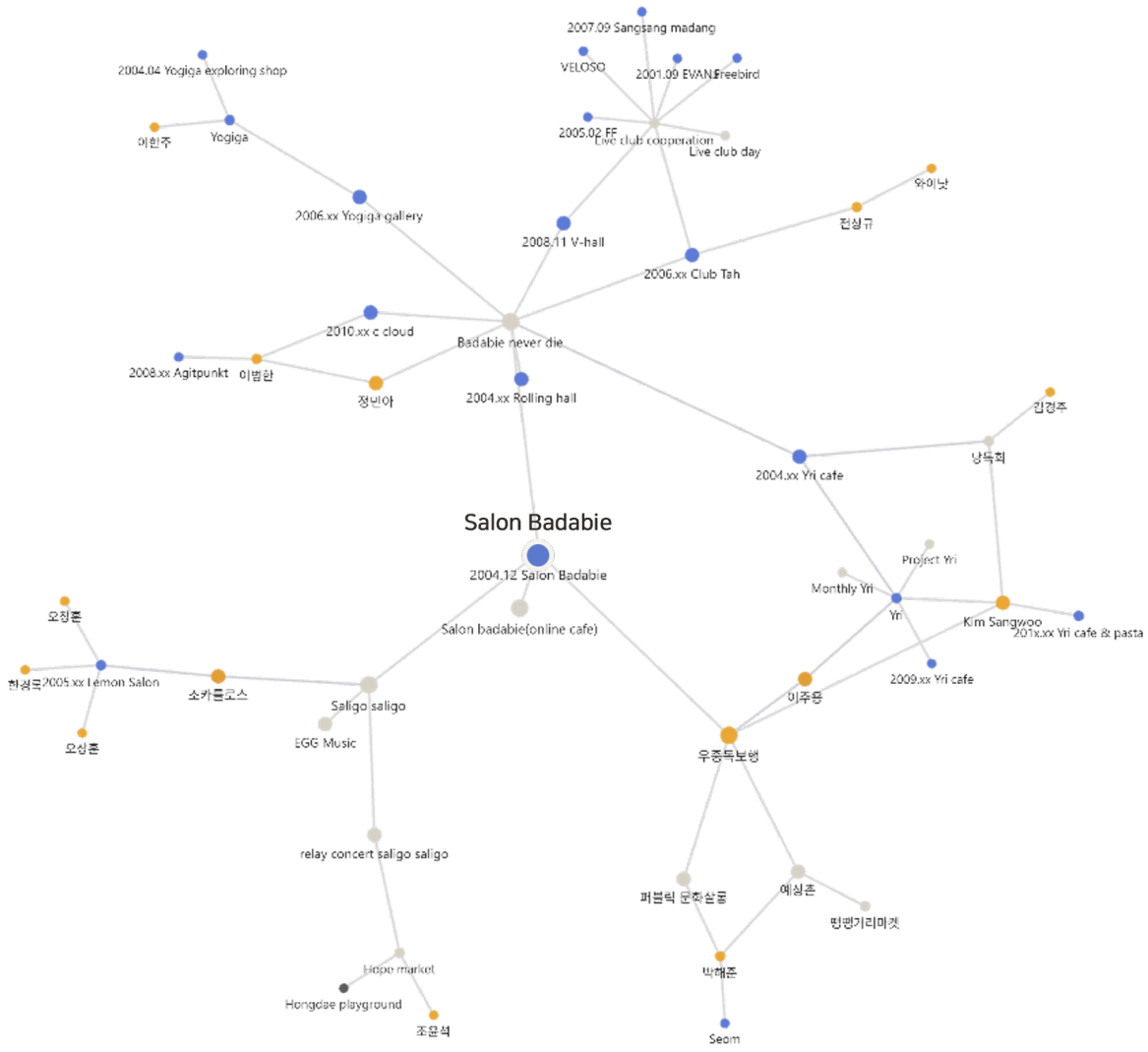


Figure 3.50: Network formed around Salong Badabie

Bond shown spatially When the crisis arrived, those already bonded through the place responded first. Some gave from their own pockets; others contributed labour, equipment, and space (Cha, 2006; S. Kwon, 2011), with venues across Hongdae offering their stages for fundraising performances (S. Kwon, 2011). From within this existing bond, each member reached further through their own network, contacting musicians and audiences beyond the community they already shared (G, 2006). Those newly reached responded with the same readiness: over 140 acts agreed to perform, and contributions came in the form of everything from vehicle support to food for performers (G, 2006; S. Kwon, 2011). What had begun among local friendship ties became solidarity ties extended well beyond the existing

community.



Figure 3.51: Spaces shared for Salon badabie

Confronting capital pressure through network What countered the capital pressure salon had met was also through solidarity ties. The salon faced a pressure it could not meet through its own operation: rent increases that exceeded what any single actor could cover. The campaigns met this first through collective fundraising, gathering money across musicians, audiences, and anyone connected to the scene (Cha, 2006; K. Jo, 2011). Beyond monetary contribution, support was explicitly invited in other forms, including performances at borrowed places, street concerts, flea markets, album sales, equipment loans, and media outreach through personal blogs and online communities (G, 2006). By distributing the ask across different forms of contribution, the campaign allowed people with different resources to participate. Capital pressure was not met by a single act but absorbed across a network wide enough to carry it.

New encounters strengthening the ground Another outcome of campaign was that it drew new people into the community. Accounts from the Badabie online cafe record people joining after encountering the street performances by chance, moved enough to seek out the community and declare their support (Nanbaegopeunjanha, 2006). When the second crisis arrived five years later, the campaign exceeded all expectations in scale, with over 130 acts performing and far more raised than anticipated (Baekja, 2011; K. Jo, 2011). The scale suggests the community the first campaign had helped build was still there when it was needed again. Solidarity ties, in this case, did not only defend the place: they reproduced the conditions for defending it again.



Figure 3.52: Response to place-saving campagin in Salon Badabies' online cafe

Yoo Chaerim and Duriban

Yoo Chaerim is a novelist who ran Duriban, a noodle restaurant in Hongdae, together with his wife, Ahn Jongryeo. Like the cases before it, the restaurant faced forced eviction following a change of building ownership. The couple refused to leave and held their ground for over five hundred days, until a negotiated settlement was reached. Unlike other cases in the scene, Duriban had no prior connection to the indie music community. Yet it became the site where the most diverse solidarity the scene had produced came together, and where the methods of resistance that had been developing in Hongdae found their fullest expression.

Yoo Chaerim
Ahn Jongryeo

"I'm Yoo Chaelim. A novelist. Together with my wife Ahn Jongnyeo, we ran a small noodle restaurant called Duribanban in Hongdae."

"We started restaurant in 2005, my wife put everything into it, and we were happy to ran noodle place"



2005.03
opened restaurant

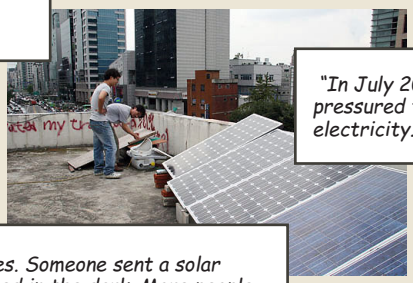
20
area designated for deelo

"But soon after, redevelopment. Developers saw



"In July 2010, the construction company pressured the power company to cut our electricity. In the middle of summer."

At some point, Duribanban appeared on the Hongdae live club map. A noodle restaurant, listed alongside music venues."



"People sent candles. Someone sent a solar panel. We performed in the dark. More people came. The more they tried to stop us, the stronger we got."

"On May 1, 2010, day. Over a thou

2010.08
external support

2010.07.21
electricity cut





"After 531 days, we reached a settlement. A new space in Seogyo-dong, as compensation. All lawsuits dropped. Duribanban opened again."

2011.06.08
negotiation happened





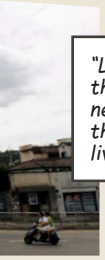
"I wrote a book about what happened to us. Since Yongsan and Duribanban became known, the violence from hired demolition crews actually decreased. That is what words can do."

We keep showing being pushed out

2011.11
Duriban relocated

"Since Duriban, young people who kept distance from old style protests started showing up. To watch, to listen, to stand together."





"Later, a construction company bought up the whole block. We only found out when the new owner filed a lawsuit. The compensation they offered was 3 million won. For our entire livelihood."



"We took it to court. We lost in 2008. We appealed. We lost again in 2009. One by one, our neighbors left. We were the last ones."

006.03
pment

2007.12
got eviction order

2008
other tenants left

the area was designated for
An airport railway was coming.
pportunity."



So on Labor Day 2010, the 51+ Festival was born. Over 1,000 people came.

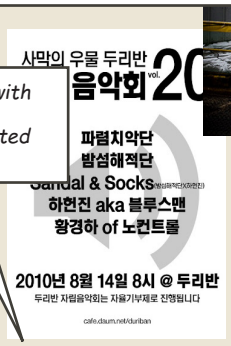


"On Christmas Eve 2009, thirty hired men came in. They threw out our furniture, pushed us onto the street, and sealed the entrance with steel plates. It took them two hours."

2011

2009.12.24
forced eviction

"They didn't come with anger. They came with guitars. And that changed everything. People who never cared about politics started showing up."



"We could not just walk away. At 2am on December 26, my wife cut through the steel plates with a saw. We went back in. That was the beginning of our occupation."

51 acts performed here in one
sand people came."

2009.12.25
occupation started

2010.05.01
51+ festival

2010.02.27
first Jarip concert

2009.12.26
witers association joined



Then musicians from Hongdae started showing up. They played concerts inside our empty restaurant, every week, for free."

"As, i was a writer. My writers' association came first."





up too. Wherever people are
, we go."









Capital backed by planning The pressure behind eviction duriban faced is same kind of other cases in Hongdae: land value increased, ownership changed, and The eviction happened. However the driving force behind case of Duriban was way bigger than others, combined with urban development. The site where restaurant sit was designated as a district unit plan area, as an airport railway station was building nearby. This mean that area was opened to large-scale redevelopment, making a construction company acquired the entire block. Again, since tenant have no right in ownership, they were notified these change only through eviction lawsuits (J. Kim, 2011). Since the expected revenue company make is huge, those who refused were met with mounting pressure. The scale of pressure is what led to forced eviction with violence, which triggered wide group of actors to 연대하다 for duriban.

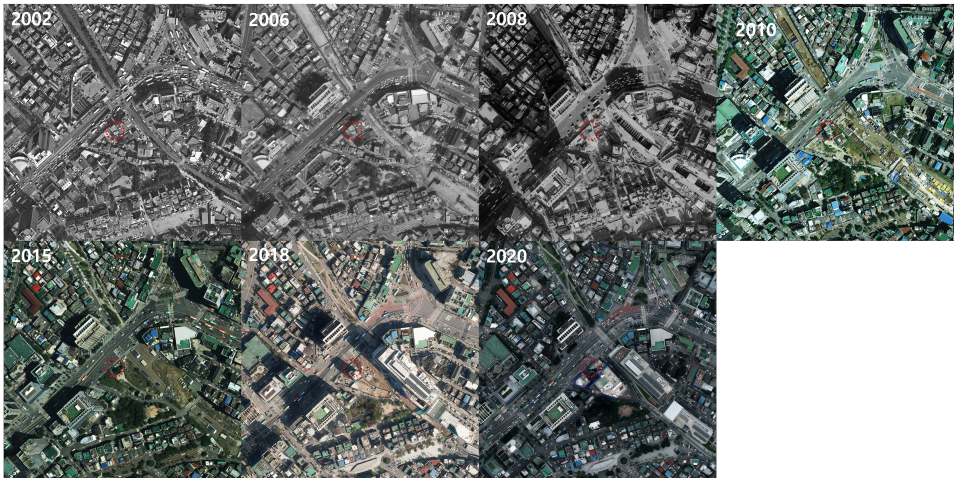


Figure 3.53: Change of surrounding around Duriban, from satelite view



Figure 3.54: Change of surrounding around Duriban, from street view

Widening the circle What the eviction triggered was a wide and diverse group of actors to join and form solidarity. The resistance began among the tenants who had received the same eviction order, forming a countermeasure committee and taking the case to court together (Oh, 2012). However, when they lost, many of the tenants withdrew, leaving Yoo and Ahn alone. Still, they could keep resisting as their own communities stepped in: writers' associations, a Christian community, and university alumni came and took turns staying through the nights (Yoo, 2010). What brought even more power to counter the pressure was indie musicians from Hongdae, whose joining shifted the character of the struggle. What had been a dispute between tenants and a developer became a social issue shared across Hongdae. As one account put it, facing a coalition of tenants, writers, musicians, and students was a fundamentally different situation for the developer than facing tenants alone (J. Kim, 2011).



Figure 3.55: Different actors joining resistance in Duriban

Culture as resistance The reason indie musicians brought more countering power was not only their presence, but what they did at the resistance site. Unlike other demonstration sites, usually marked by solemn atmosphere and desperate appeals, Duriban was filled with cultural events: performances, concerts, film screenings, and literary forums (J. Kim, 2011). This lowered the threshold to join the resistance, widening the network of solidarity ties even further. As Yoo Chaerim recalled, it was through the musicians' performances that Duriban's situation began to reach the wider public, and from that point the developer could no longer act without scrutiny (J. Kim, 2011). Moreover, these events allowed network to reproduce its connection, as each member of the solidarity used their own routes to spread the story further, and as younger participants mobilised blogs, social media, and online platforms. The reach extended beyond what any organised campaign could have planned (J. Kim, 2011), and it was culture was that allowed this to happen.

A place made by pressure As cultural events accumulated, Duriban gradually gained an identity as a ground for culture. Musicians, poets, filmmakers, and activists gathered not only to support the struggle but to produce work together, making Duriban a site of different forms of cultural production. One participant called it 'Newtown culture', a practice of cultural creation within demolition sites designated for redevelopment (M. Kim, 2010). The most intense expression of this was the 51+ event, which brought together over sixty acts and twenty-five hundred visitors, marking the point at which Duriban was recognised as a cultural place in its own right. It began appearing on Hongdae live club maps, and events unrelated to the resistance started using it as a place to showcase their work (Min, 2011).

Ironically, the conditions shaped under capital pressure were what made this intensity of cultural production possible. The vacant lots left by tenants who had withdrawn became available for use, and what had been emptied by capital was filled by culture. No commercial logic governed the space, no rent had to be met, and the concentration of different actors sharing a confined site produced an intensity of

encounter that ordinary places rarely sustain. Yoo Chaerim valued this deeply, and when searching for a relocation site he looked for a place that could hold the same conditions. After months of searching, it proved impossible to find one within the budget the negotiated settlement offered (**OhmyNews2011**). The pressure had, without intending to, created spatial conditions that cultural production needed and that the market could not reproduce.



Figure 3.56: Extensive use of space around Duriban during resistance

Beyond Hongdae The solidarity ties remained after the resistance ended, connecting even wider rang of people. For this, Yoo Chaerim wrote a book about his experience, hoping it would shift public awareness of demolition struggles (J. Nam, 2012). He also held the book launch not at ther demolition sites across Seoul, with Duriban's musicians performing in support (Han, 2012). This shows that the network formed around Duriban extended beyond the single case itself, reaching every other site where people fighting the same struggle. With this network, the instruments developed at Duriban carried into other cases across Seoul, with its actors joining to support their resistance. Resisting displacement with culture had happened earlier in other cases, but it was Duriban that settled it as a working instrument and made it replicable across different contexts.

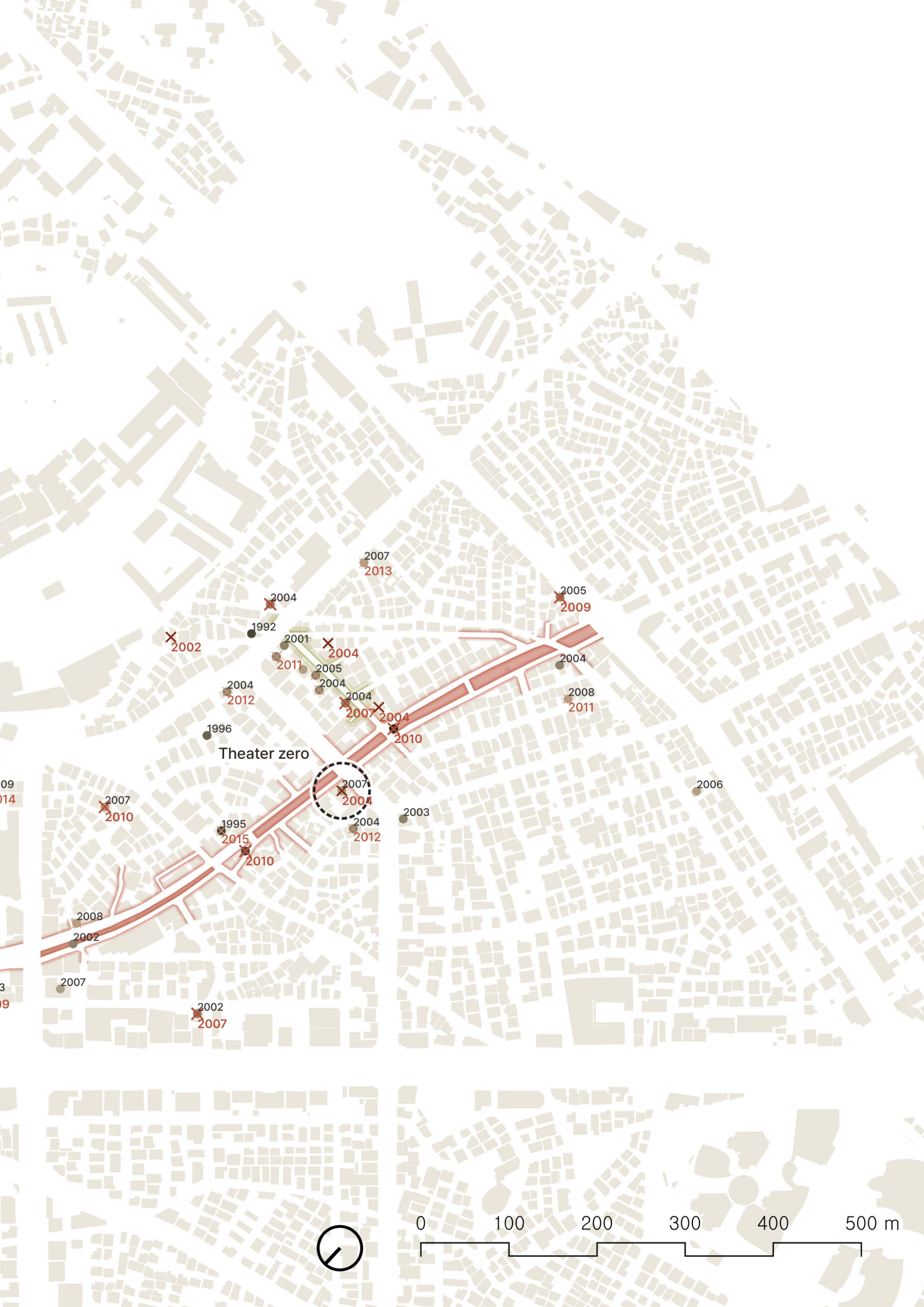


Figure 3.57: Yoo supporting other resistance sites

3.4.2. Why displacement happened

As Hongdae's cultural identity became widely recognised, it was increasingly revalorised as a marker of commercial desirability rather than a ground for cultural production. The cases examined in the previous section show this concretely: each faced capital pressure that the scene's own success had invited. This section examines what drove that pressure at area scale, how planning amplified it, and what the combined effect left behind.


2004
1996
2004
2003
1992
2003
2009
2000
2005
1998
2003
1985
Badabi
2007
2004
2004
2015
2004
2009
1996
2004
Gyeongui trainline park
airport line
2008
2009
Street you want to walk
Duriban


2007
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Theater zero
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100
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Formation of rent gap

The main threat cultural places faced was rising rent. What caused it was increased market pressure around Hongdae. As Hongdae's reputation grew, more people were willing to pay higher prices to acquire buildings there. This revealed from increased real estate agencies across the area, and franchise chains established themselves (J. Ko, 2010). Market interest increased, as well as expectation of landowner for their asset, but the income of clubs and salons did not follow. Their operation had never been oriented toward commercial return, and increased attraction from hongdae's reputation did not bring sudden increase of profit. The gap between what a building is expected to earn through commercial use got way higher than what is earned by cultural practice. This could be explained as the rent gap, which eventually threatens cultural ecology. Cultural places, structurally unable to match markets expectation were the first to be displaced, due to this gap.

Planning as accelerant

The market did not drive this alone. Urban planning amplified commercial interest, sometimes before any decision had been confirmed. When rumours spread that Seoul municipality was planning to designate Hongdae as a cultural district, rents rose sharply on that signal alone (Labour & Society, n.d.). Sim Cheoljong pointed out the irony: a designation meant to support culture was kicking out the very places that had produced it. The Duriban case shows the same logic more vividly: airport railway construction nearby brought district-unit plan designation to the site, making large-scale redevelopment inevitable regardless of who occupied it (J. Kim, 2011). The Commercial Lease Protection Act, the one legal instrument tenants could have relied on, excluded shops with monthly rent above two million won, thresholds Hongdae rents were already exceeding (Labour & Society, n.d.). In Hongdae, planning contributed to generating market pressure, even when it intended to protect culture. And where tenants might have sought legal protection, the law revealed a blindspot that did not match the situation they were actually in.



Figure 3.58: Resistance sites overlayed with urban development

Erosion of cultural ecology

Apart from direct displacement, capital pressure left a quieter effect that destroyed the cultural ecology from within. The places that survived gentrification had to face a changed area, one that made it harder to sustain what they had been. First, there was no longer space available for new cultural places to enter, as affordable and underutilised buildings disappeared from Hongdae, converted to more profitable uses or reconstructed entirely (J. Lee, 2002). Second, the accessibility that had brought various actors into the area was gone, leaving no ground for those with limited budgets. Cheap bars and diners where musicians and artists had gathered for hours closed within a year, unable to sustain operation as rents rose (J. Lee, 2002). As actors thinned and interactions declined, the places found the community around them diminished. This led to closure of clubs or shifting toward profit, compromising the musical character that had defined them (J. Lee, 2002). When a place closed and actors stopped coming, what disappeared with it was the ecosystem that had produced culture. As the spatial conditions for live cultural production were gone, what remained was the image of a cultural district.

3.4.3. Collected cases

ACTOR

Observations about how relationships among actors form within cultural ecology. Each finding captures the collective character of cultural production through the depth of the relational process.

INTERACTION

Findings that describe how actors come into contact and develop familiarity. Each finding captures the process that gives rise to different stages of connection.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

3 referenced by place

A place mediates the encounter between an actor and a wider network or audience, producing an opportunity the actor could not have initiated alone.

Nanbaegopujiana. (2006, November 11). *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *I happened to see a Saligo Saligo performance in Sinchon today and came to look it up. It was really cold and I wasn't planning to stay, but the music was great and the atmosphere was really nice. I hope Saligo Saligo does well and keeps going for a long time.*



LOCAL FRIENDSHIP TIES

Findings that describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity. Each finding captures the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.

3 place-born collaboration

Sustained co-presence in the same place draws actors into close working proximity, where personal familiarity develops into shared creative work.

Ian. (2011, June 9). Little Yongsan Duriban and the rat graffiti. Media Today. *scene account about Duriban*

> *A support event for the rat graffiti incident was held at Duriban — the space extending its solidarity beyond its own struggle.*



2 solidarity outreach

Actors who have received solidarity extend it outward to other struggles, carrying the relational network beyond its original context.

Han, S. (2012, November 15). Duriban's victory is ongoing at every demolition site. Hankyoreh. *scene account about Duriban*

> *Duriban's way of fighting had a significant influence on the resistance in Myeongdong 3rd district and Bukahyeon-dong. Even the method of breaking through the fence and staging a sit-in came from Duriban.*



Han, S. (2012, November 15). Duriban's victory is ongoing at every demolition site. Hankyoreh. *scene account about Duriban*

> *The indie musicians who had been with Duriban proposed holding the book launch event at the Mapo merchants' sit-in to show support. That, they said, is the Duriban way.*

BOND

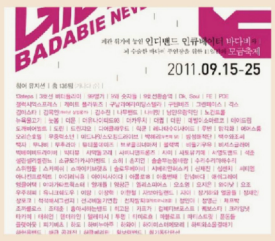
Findings that describe the depth of connection between actors. Each finding captures what a relationship has become and what it enables.

1 shared use of space

The physical space of a place is offered or used beyond its formal purpose, revealing a level of trust and care between actors that exceeds their formal roles.

Kwon, S. (2011, August 24). Hongdae musicians gather for Salon Badabi. Union Press. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Live clubs including C-Cloud, Ta, Yogiga, Iri Cafe, Auteur, V-Hall, and Rolling Hall all readily offered their spaces for the fundraising performances.*



G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *This refers to lending performance or exhibition spaces other than Badabi itself, including street performance locations. Simultaneous events across multiple spaces would amplify the effect considerably.*

Lee, J. (2012, February). Around the country — 011. Salon Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*



SOLIDARITY TIES

Findings that describe how existing bonds are activated by shared threat. Each finding captures the extension of care beyond those already connected.

1 cross-network solidarity

Actors from different fields and networks gather around a shared threat, producing solidarity that extends well beyond the scene's existing community.

Yoo, C. (2011, November 18). Even gangsters can't beat a noodle shop. OhmyNews. *creator account of Yoo Chaerim, novelist*

> *Writers and fellow artists came to Duriban. Local residents and progressive party members came. Documentary directors and indie musicians came. Christian groups came. Duriban began to reveal a remarkable power.*



Kim, J. (2011, July 1). The miracle of Duriban. Pressian. *scene account about Duriban*

> *Facing a coalition of tenants, writers, musicians, and students was a fundamentally different situation for the developer than facing tenants alone. A solidarity organised around diversity could draw continuous social attention and carry greater resonance.*

Jangster. (2011, April 20). Newtown Culture Party 51+. *participant account about Newtown Culture Party 51+*

> *Duriban's problem is not only a problem for commercial tenants. Musicians will also be pushed out of Hongdae. The countdown has already begun — small clubs will gradually close, and only a few backed by corporations will survive.*

G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *charge.*

G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *The ongoing activities include street performances, club performances, and venue rentals — but the equipment currently at Badabi is not enough to cover all of them. Microphones, mixers, speakers, amplifiers, and vehicles for transport are all needed.*

Ian. (2011, June 9). Little Yongsan Duriban and the rat graffiti. Media Today. *scene account about Duriban*

> *A support event for the rat graffiti incident was held at Duriban — the space extending its solidarity beyond its own struggle.*

2 inhabitation

Actors use a place beyond its performance or service function — sleeping, eating, working — revealing a depth of attachment that dissolves the boundary between the place and their daily lives.

Lee, J. (2012, February). Around the country — 011. Salon Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *In the early days, Badabie was truly a hideout for artists. They laid carpets on the stage and floor to sleep, cooked meals in a large pot, and almost every night a feast unfolded.*

3 bond-driven commitment

Actors mobilise their existing personal bonds to sustain or save a place under threat, converting relational depth into active care.

Citizens News. (2004, March 9). Hongdae is wild-caught flounder. Bucheon Times. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *People gathered simply because Sim, a brother figure in the neighbourhood, had run into trouble — artists, musicians, theatre people, all from different fields coming together to find a solution.*

G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *Support does not have to come only in the form of money. Total support is desperately needed across all areas.*

G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

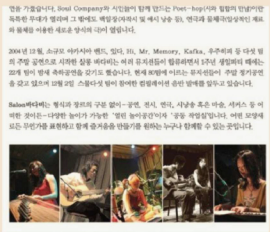
> *Bands voluntarily participated in the interior design, signage, and decoration of Badabie, filling the space together.*

Baekja. (2011, August 22). Collecting funds for Salon Badabi owner's brain surgery costs. Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *Badabie performances continue as always, sustained by the help of surrounding acquaintances and musicians.*

Cha, E. (2006, November 8). 'Saligo Saligo' project to save Club Badabi. Chung-Ang University News. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Friends doing street performances are volunteering as staff themselves, getting by on cup ramen while pouring everything into the shows. This is the first time musicians have stepped up like this to revive a club.*



PLACE

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology. Each finding captures a characteristic that enables cultural relations to emerge, accumulate, or persist.

SPATIAL FACTORS

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology.

QUALITY

Characteristics of a place that emerge through the inhabitation of cultural production.

CULTURAL VITALITY

The activeness of cultural production within a place. Each finding captures the elements that indicate the intensity of interaction among actors.

4 area identity

The degree to which a place is recognised for a specific cultural character, attracting actors who share that sensibility and reinforcing their collective presence.

Kim, M. (2010, May 5). Are they playing or protesting? Hani 21. *scene account about Duriban*

> *As performances accumulated at Duriban, it appeared on Hongdae live club maps. Cultural artists gathering in redevelopment sites, living and creating alongside displaced residents — this is the new town culture being made at Duriban.*

Kim, M. (2010, May 5). Are they playing or protesting? Hani 21. *scene account about Duriban*

> *Cultural artists gathering in redevelopment sites, living and creating alongside displaced residents — this is the new town culture being made at Duriban. We are enjoying the struggle like a festival.*

CONTEXT

The structural and historical conditions within which cultural ecology operates. Each finding captures a pressure or effect that shapes the ground on which cultural places stand.

STRUCTURAL PRESSURE

Conditions that threaten the continued existence of cultural places.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

1 ownership change

A change in building ownership that introduces new terms of tenure, often disrupting established cultural use.

Jang, O. (2004, July 9). Experimental arts theatre 'Theatre Zero'. KBS. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *Since last August, when the building ownership changed and reconstruction became an issue, the theatre has been closed while in litigation with the landlord.*

Lee, H. (2007, May 16). Saving Theatre Zero. JoongAng Ilbo. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *While the building was under reconstruction, ownership transferred to KT&G. Theatre Zero received notice a month ago that the new owner would not allow re-entry, as KT&G plans to operate the building as a cultural complex.*

Kim, J. (2011, July 1). The miracle of Duriban. Pressian. *scene account about Duriban*

> *GS construction used a shell company, Namjeon D&C, to begin acquiring properties around Duriban, and from that point eleven tenant households were forced into a gruelling struggle.*

REGULATORY

Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

1 legal restriction

Legal or regulatory constraints that directly limit the operation or practice of cultural places.

Bulkyoilbo. (2004, April 9). Hongdae's Theatre Zero to close. Bulkyoilbo. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *Following the landlord's eviction request in August of the previous year, Theatre Zero pursued civil litigation over compensation rights while working to keep the theatre open.*

Bulkyoilbo. (2004, April 9). Hongdae's Theatre Zero to close. Bulkyoilbo. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *Due to the final ruling scheduled, the building should be vacated by end of the month.*

1 mainstream dominance

The structural dominance of mainstream cultural industries that limits access and visibility for independent cultural producers.

Lee, J. (2002, November 7). Is Hongdae following Itaewon? Hankyoreh 21. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *Even when a star band emerges, once they gain recognition and sign with a major agency they no longer perform at clubs. The flow from underground to overground must keep moving, but that is no longer happening.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

3 trend shift

A change in cultural taste or social habit that reduces the audience or viability of an established cultural scene.

Kwon, H. (2024, September 29). The reason for Hongdae's live venues now. Sisaonline. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *COVID aside, there is a feeling that the venue's power to draw people has weakened compared to before. As YouTube and similar platforms emerged, the way people seek out and enjoy performances has changed.*

EFFECT

Observed outcomes of structural pressure on cultural places and their communities.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

1 commodification

The process by which cultural places and practices are displaced by higher-value commercial uses.

Lee, J. (2002, November 7). Is Hongdae following Itaewon? Hankyoreh 21. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *The commercial district around Hongdae station's main road filled on one side with sports massage parlours, on the other with sexy bars. Some clubs now operate like nightclubs, even offering matchmaking services.*

Lee, J. (2002, November 7). Is Hongdae following Itaewon? Hankyoreh 21. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *As land values rose and housing converted to commercial use, the garages and basements that had long served as studios began to disappear.*

3 planning designation

A formal planning or zoning decision that exposes cultural places to redevelopment pressure or displacement.

Labour and Society. (2013, May 12). Deceived by administration, brought to tears by money. KLSI. *contextual record about Hongdae*

> *Rumours of Seoul city's plan to designate Hongdae as a cultural district triggered a sharp rise in rents. Sim Cheoljong noted the irony: a cultural district designation was causing the very galleries and theatres that produced culture to face closure.*

Kim, J. (2011, July 1). The miracle of Duriban. Pressian. *scene account about Duriban*

> *Dongyo-dong 167, where Duriban and a cluster of small shops stood, was designated as a district unit plan area by Mapo District Office in 2006 due to airport railway construction.*

Kim, H. (2016, October 5). Memory of space, space of memory — the story of Hongdae. Chungang University Press. *scene account of Cho Han, professor of architecture at Hongik University*

> *As development around Sangam-dong accelerated for the 2002 World Cup, various projects were pushed forward to develop Hongdae as a tourist destination — the Street You Want to Walk project was one of them.*





Kim, H. (2016, October 5). Memory of space, space of memory — the story of Hongdae. Chungang University Press. *scene account of Cho Han, professor of architecture at Hongik University*

> *The 'Street You Want to Walk' project cleared the shantytown alley — a cheap food street frequented by poor artists and students — and replaced it with a widened road, new street trees, and small spaces for street performance and exhibition.*

Ye, J. (2004, March 26). Save Theatre Zero, save indie. Munhwa Ilbo. *scene account about Street You Want to Walk*

> *The street designated as Hongdae's only 'Street You Want to Walk' has become a 'Street You Want to Grill' — lined with meat restaurants and diners instead of performance venues, due to soaring rents.*

Jung, J. (2014, May). People I met — 051. Cho Yunsuk, 'thirty years a Hongdae person'. Street H. *creator account of Cho Yunsuk, architect*

> *Around 2007, Mapo district announced plans to demolish the 365번지 alley as part of the Street You Want to Walk project. From an urban architecture perspective, 365번지 was the last barrier protecting Hongdae — its narrow alley prevented large buildings from entering, which had kept land values in check.*



Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Exiles who sparked a cultural revolution next to Hongdae. Sisain. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *What displaced culture and took its place was capital and desire. Franchise chains established their forward bases in Hongdae, the hottest commercial district ahead of Apgujeong and Myeongdong.*



Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Exiles who sparked a cultural revolution next to Hongdae. Sisain. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *One day a poet went to his regular café and found the owner had changed. Without an owner who communicated with artists, the café lost its vitality. Soon the artists stopped coming altogether.*

Lee, J. (2002, November 7). Is Hongdae following Itaewon? Hankyoreh 21. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *Rent rose fifty to a hundred percent this year. When rent jumps from 1.5 million to 3.5 million overnight, even an operator who cares about musical quality ends up making compromises between money and music. As a result, DJs who used to stay at one club for at least a year are now turning over every five or six months.*

Park, J. (2011, November 16). Korea's first experimental arts theatre, Theatre Zero, closes. Kyunghyang Shinmun. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *As the area shifted toward entertainment rather than art, audience interest in performing arts declined.*

2 commercial marginalisation

The process by which rising costs exclude cultural producers from an area they helped make desirable.

Lee, J. (2002, November 7). Is Hongdae following Itaewon? Hankyoreh 21. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *Places where you could sit for hours over cheap beer without being rushed out all disappeared within the past year, unable to sustain operation as rents rose.*

Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Exiles who sparked a cultural revolution next to Hongdae. Sisain. *scene account about Hongdae*

> *Artists created the culture and were displaced. In the space they left behind, merchants made money.*

Labour and Society. (2013, May 12). Deceived by administration, brought to tears by money. KLSI. *contextual record about Hongdae*

> *Rents around Hongdae were already high, but the spread of rumours about cultural district designation sent them soaring further, pushing cultural venues that could not compete commercially toward closure.*

Park, C. (2015, August 5). What will you be doing in ten years? Maeil Business. *creator account of Cho Yunsuk, architect*

> *Mapo district planned to clear the narrow alleys full of cheap eateries and bars and turn them into a park.*

4 legal protection gap

The absence of legal mechanisms that would protect cultural places from displacement.

Labour and Society. (2013, May 12). Deceived by administration, brought to tears by money. KLSI. *contextual record about Hongdae*

> *Under the current Commercial Lease Protection Act, shops with monthly rent above two million won or deposits above fifty million won cannot receive protection — and Hongdae rents are expected to far exceed this threshold.*

Kim, J. (2011, July 1). The miracle of Duriban. Pressian. *scene account about Duriban*

> *Under the exception clause of Article 10 of the Commercial Lease Protection Act, areas designated as district unit plan zones were exempt from tenant protection — and the result was a victory for the developer.*

SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

Labour and Society. (2013, May 12). Deceived by administration, brought to tears by money. KLSI. *contextual record about Hongdae*

> *When I first opened during the IMF crisis, rent was 300,000 won a month. It went up year by year — 600,000, 800,000, 1,200,000 — and now it's 1,960,000. For an eight-pyeong shop.*

Park, J. (2011, November 16). Korea's first experimental arts theatre, Theatre Zero, closes. Kyunghyang Shinmun. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *Sim Cheoljong stated that the theatre was closing due to financial difficulties caused by Hongdae's commercialisation — as the area shifted toward entertainment rather than art, audience interest in performing arts declined, leaving the theatre with low revenue and high rent.*

Park, S. (2023, September 10). Gyeongui Line Forest Park special report ③: The other side of a vibrant street, gentrification. Sogang University Press. *contextual record about Gyeongui Line Forest Park*

> *A jewellery shop owner who had run her business in Yeonnam-dong for nine years saw her rent rise from 1.5 million to 3.5 million won after the Gyeongui Line Forest Park opened, and had to relocate four years ago. Most neighbouring merchants she had worked alongside have since left Yeonnam-dong.*

Yoo, C. (2011, November 18). Even gangsters can't beat a noodle shop. OhmyNews. *creator account of Yoo Chaerim, novelist*

> *A place that could accommodate musicians' performances, writers' readings, and documentary screenings had key money alone exceeding 200 million won. It was out of reach.*

INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships and places — countering structural pressure through capital, regulatory, systemic, and contextual means.

RELATIONSHIP-FORMING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

1 open access

Lee, J. (2012, February). Around the country — 011. Salon Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Badabie is not confined to music alone. It is an open play space and shared studio where diverse activities can unfold without distinction of form or genre. Performances, exhibitions, theatre, poetry readings, magic — all artistic acts are welcome.*

Im, E., & Moon, J. (2011, February). Unique clubs that show the colours of Hongdae. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *From the Thursday open-to-all 'Mental UP Day' to the monthly Sunday Poetry Theatre and staircase photo exhibitions — the name 'salon' suits this place perfectly.*

3 public showcase

Min, S. (2009, December 22). The great legacy Duriban left behind. Seoul National University Journal. *scene account about Duriban*

> *Cultural events expanded the agents of struggle beyond tenants and activists to artists, university students, the unemployed, and even fans of indie bands.*

Min, S. (2009, December 22). The great legacy Duriban left behind. Seoul National University Journal. *scene account about Duriban*

> *As performances by musicians spread Duriban's story, politicians, press, civic groups, and ordinary citizens began paying attention — and from that point the developer could no longer act without scrutiny.*

SOLIDARITY TIES

Findings that describe how existing bonds are activated by shared threat. Each finding captures the extension of care beyond those already connected.

1 cooperative formation

Actors with existing bonds formally establish a collective organisation in response to shared threat or for shared goal.

Seo, S. (2004, February 10). Hongdae, the mecca of indie culture — we will protect it. OhmyNews. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *A meeting was held under the theme 'Where is Hongdae culture going?', resulting in the launch of the save Theatre Zero campaign and the formation of the Hongdae Cultural Arts Cooperative.*

Street H editors. (2014, July). History of Hongdae 005. Street H. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *Cultural actors in Hongdae gathered to save Theatre Zero and formed the Hongdae Culture Arts Cooperative in January 2004.*

1 fundraising concert

Actors collectively organise a concert, directing all proceeds toward a financially threatened venue.

Cha, E. (2006, November 8). 'Saligo Saligo' project to save Club Badabi. Chung-Ang University News. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Weekly relay concerts on Hongdae streets have raised around one million won through enthusiastic band participation.*



Kwon, S. (2011, August 24). Hongdae musicians gather for Salon Badabi. Union Press. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *From September 14 to 25, musicians who voluntarily gathered from live clubs around Hongdae are set to hold relay performances to support Badabie.*



Kwon, S. (2011, August 24). Hongdae musicians gather for Salon Badabi. Union Press. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Musicians contacted their own networks, and over 140 acts agreed to participate. The number of participating musicians and live clubs is expected to grow further.*

Jo, K. (2011, September 10). An eleven-day festival bringing together over 130 indie musicians. OhmyNews. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Agreement was reached to hold fundraising concerts as a means of covering the owner's surgery, treatment, and recuperation costs, as well as Badabi's overdue rent.*

Cha, E. (2006, November 8). 'Saligo Saligo' project to save Club Badabi. Chung-Ang University News. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *The Badabi Saligo Saligo project proceeds through relay concerts, flea markets, sales of albums donated by musicians, and exhibitions.*

2 collective funding

Members pool resources to establish a place without relying on individual capital or commercial backing.

Cha, E. (2006, November 8). 'Saligo Saligo' project to save Club Badabi. Chung-Ang University News. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *At an after-party following a concert in October, Ujudokbohaeng told that Badabi was facing closure due to financial difficulties. Musicians on the spot pooled around two million won from their own pockets, proposing to save Badabi together.*

Jung, H. (2016, December 12). "Everything changing in Hongdae is because of money." OhmyNews. *creator account of Kang Jinhyeong, operator of Cafe Unplugged*

> *In 2014, Hongwuju Social Cooperative was formed with the goal of preserving the local cultural arts ecosystem and securing autonomy through policy and institutional intervention.*

PLACE-ARRANGING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that shape the spatial ground of cultural ecology.

ACTIVATING CULTURAL VITALITY

Deliberate actions that generate or intensify the relational and creative exchange between actors.

2 self-making

Directly fabricating the physical elements of a space, embedding personal taste and care into its material character.

Im, E., & Moon, J. (2011, February). Unique clubs that show the colours of Hongdae. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *With no money, they built it themselves. From the sign evoking the sea to every corner of the interior, there was nowhere the owner's hand had not touched.*

3 co-design

Those who inhabit a space also shape its physical character through design, decoration, or construction.

Cha, E. (2006, November 8). 'Save and save' project to save Club Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *From the sign to the interior decoration and installation of fixtures, various bands voluntarily participated and filled the space together.*

5 vertical layering

An operator stacks distinct cultural functions vertically within a single building.

Jangster. (2011, April 20). Newtown Culture Party 51+. *participant account about Newtown Culture Party 51+*

> *Duriban's third floor, outdoor area, basement, and the Street You Want to Walk stage were all activated simultaneously as performance spaces during the three-day event.*

Gajireunhan. (2010, April 19). 2010년 5월 1일, 홍대 앞 두리반 식당에 51밴드가 모인다. Daum Cafe. *participant account about Newtown Culture Party 51+*

> *Musicians activated the rooftop, outdoor area, and interior of Duriban simultaneously as performance spaces, turning the entire demolition site into a multi-stage venue.*



MAINTAINING STABILITY

Deliberate actions that maintain the foundations of a place over time.

3 visitor control

An operator controls who can enter and how they should behave, maintaining protected ground for visitors.

Baekja. (2011, September 24). Closing the fundraising campaign for Salon Badabi owner's surgery and recovery costs. Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *A total of around thirteen million won was raised — truly unexpected support. The surgery costs were covered with ease.*



6 negotiation

Actors directly negotiate with landlords, planning offices, or other stakeholders to secure continued operation.

Street H editors. (2014, July). History of Hongdae 005. Street H. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *In July 2004, Mapo District Office stepped in to mediate. The building owner signed an agreement to allow Theatre Zero to return to the second basement floor upon the building's completion in 2005.*

Street H editors. (2014, July). History of Hongdae 005. Street H. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *After a prolonged struggle, KT&G proposed finding a new space near the playground. Cultural figures debated whether to accept, but in the end Theatre Zero ultimately accepted the relocation offer, bringing the dispute to a close.*



7 resource mobilisation [NEW — add to bible]

G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

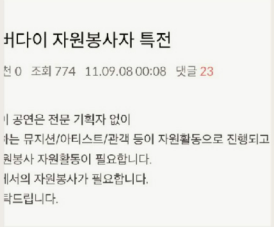
> *Support does not have to come only in the form of money — performances at borrowed places, street concerts, equipment loans, vehicle support, food for performers, and media outreach through personal blogs and online communities are all needed.*

G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *Food support is also accepted. When performances run from daytime to late evening, the artists and staff are genuinely hungry. Cup ramen, kimbap, lunchboxes, kimchi — anything helps.*

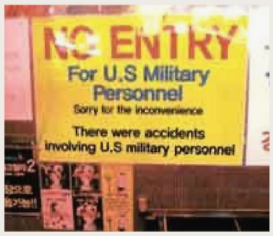
Jo, K. (2011, September 10). An eleven-day festival bringing together over 130 indie musicians. OhmyNews. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *This fundraising festival, driven entirely by the strength of musicians and audiences without a professional planning team, is in need of many volunteers.*



Lee, J. (2002, November 7). Is Hongdae following Itaewon? Hankyoreh 21. *scene account about Danceclubs in Hongdae*

> *The major clubs jointly decided to ban US military personnel from entry. New notices reading 'No US military' were posted at club entrances alongside existing warnings against fighting and harassment.*



STRUCTURE-COUNTERING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that directly address structural pressure on cultural places.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

REGULATORY

Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

1 formalising

An actor transforms a temporary collective effort into a permanent institutional structure, or demands legal recognition of existing cultural practice.

2 legal reaction [NEW — add to bible]

Bulkyoilbo. (2004, April 9). Hongdae's Theatre Zero to close. Bulkyoilbo. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *Following the landlord's eviction request, Theatre Zero pursued civil litigation over compensation rights while working to keep the theatre open.*

Oh, S. (2011, November 22). Protecting life through joyful solidarity. Hankyoreh 21. *scene account about Duriban*

> *From spring 2008, eleven commercial tenants formed a countermeasure committee and took the fight to court.*

3 institutional alliance [NEW — add to bible]

Jang, O. (2004, July 9). Experimental arts theatre 'Theatre Zero'. KBS. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

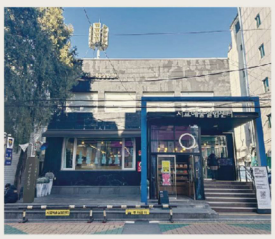
> *Mapo District Office mediated between the building owner and Theatre Zero, reaching an agreement that allowed the building to be newly constructed while securing the theatre's return.*

Labour and Society. (2013, May 12). Deceived by administration, brought to tears by money. KLSI. *contextual record about Hongdae*

> *The Mapo district office held a taskforce meeting with Theatre Zero, consulted with a livelihood protection unit in one political party, and planned to investigate rents across shops in Hongdae.*

Jung, H. (2016, December 12). "Everything changing in Hongdae is because of money." OhmyNews. *creator account of Kang Jinhyeong, operator of Cafe Unplugged*

> *In 2013, when 서교예술실험센터 faced closure due to lease expiry, cultural actors led a campaign against closure and secured a contract extension between Seoul city and Mapo district.*



Jung, J. (2014, May). People I met — 051. Cho Yunsuk, 'thirty years a Hongdae person'. Street H. *creator account of Cho Yunsuk, architect*

> *They organised under the name 서교365, ran the exhibition '365번지, I think this building is beautiful', and kept promoting its value — until Seoul city and Mapo district abandoned the demolition plan.*



Park, C. (2015, August 5). What will you be doing in ten years? Maeil Business. *creator account of Cho Yunsuk, architect*

> *Development went ahead in the end, and they had to make do with rooftop container gardens and vine walls within the 365번지 block. Instead they held the exhibition and a seminar.*

SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

1 independent label

A venue or scene actor establishes an independent record label, countering mainstream music industry dominance.

Cha, E. (2006, November 8). 'Saligo Saligo' project to save Club Badabi. Chung-Ang University News. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Badabi plans to release an album combining indie music with lyric poetry.*

4 open stage

A place opens its stage without professional threshold, directly countering mainstream gatekeeping.

Im, E., & Moon, J. (2011, February). Unique clubs that show the colours of Hongdae. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

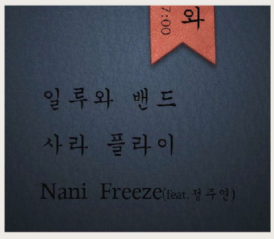
> *Salon Badabie is a space for people who want to test and try out their work. The stage is filled with emerging bands, and even weekend shows are chosen on ability rather than name recognition.*

Lee, J. (2012, February). Around the country — 011. Salon Badabie. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Not just Bbang and Skunk — Badabie was the first stage and home base for gayageum player Jeong Mina, who couldn't find a stage at any other club, and garage band Galaxy Express, tipped as the next big thing.*

Daum cafe. (n.d.). Badabie programme. *scene account about Salon Badabie*

> *Solo concerts on Wednesdays, Thursday performances open to any musician who applies, and programmed shows Friday through Sunday.*



6 fair distribution [NEW — add to bible]

Hwang, B. (2011, April 21). 2011 National self-reliant musicians' convention: Newtown Culture Party 51+ timetable released. Daum Cafe. *participant account about Newtown Culture Party 51+*

> *All proceeds from Newtown Culture Party 51+ are distributed as follows: 40% to musicians who performed on the day, 20% to staff, and the remainder after expenses to support Duriban.*

G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *Mapo FM broadcast weekly updates on the Saligo Saligo relay concert progress and Badabie musicians.*

Kim, J. (2011, July 1). The miracle of Duriban. Pressian. *scene account about Duriban*

> *Each member of the solidarity used their own routes and networks to spread Duriban's story — and as younger generations mobilised blogs, Twitter, and Facebook, the effect grew beyond anyone's expectations.*

3 cultural action [NEW — add to bible]

Lee, Y. (2007, May 15). Let us revive the dead culture of Hongdae. Kyunghyang Shinmun. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *Cultural figures carried a funeral bier around Theatre Zero — a performance declaring the death of Hongdae culture and demanding the reopening of the theatre facing closure.*

Bulkyoilbo. (2004, April 9). Hongdae's Theatre Zero to close. Bulkyoilbo. *scene account about Theatre Zero*

> *Theatre Zero director Sim Cheoljong and around ten cultural figures staged a nude performance in front of the theatre to draw public attention to the campaign to save it.*

Ko, Y. (2016, May 15). Those who plant music on barren ground without support. Seoul National University News. *scene account about Jarip music concert*

> *When the demolition crew arrived at Duriban, five or six musicians active in the Hongdae scene gathered to expose the injustice of tenants being unilaterally evicted and to resist through music — holding the Jarip music concert.*

Jangster. (2011, April 20). Newtown Culture Party 51+. *participant account about Newtown Culture Party 51+*

> *All proceeds are distributed: 40% to musicians who performed, 20% to staff, and the remainder after expenses to support Duriban. The ticket price is low because we cook together and share — not like dogs, but like people.*



CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

1 volume restriction

An operator limits the volume or intensity of programming in response to neighbour pressure.

2 media support

Actors mobilise their own media channels to spread word about a place under threat.

G. (2006, October 30). So how can you help? Daum Cafe. *participant account about Salon Badabie*

> *You can post Badabi's performance information and press releases on personal blogs and homepages, and share related articles across online cafés and communities.*

Jeong, J. (2012, April 30). Preview: 2012 Newtown Culture Party 51+. Indienbob. *scene account about Jarip music concert*

> *From February 2010, a group of musicians began producing a concert series to support Duriban. Over a year and a half, until Duriban reached a settlement in June 2011, the Jarip music concert was held a total of fifty times.*



Gajireunhan. (2010, April 19). 2010년 5월 1일, 홍대 앞 두리반 식당에 51밴드가 모인다. Daum Cafe. *participant account about Newtown Culture Party 51+*

> *Is the musician also a worker? Can struggle be transformed into a festival? Musicians gathered under one banner to support Duriban, fighting against predatory speculative capital.*

3.5. Finding adjacent ground for re-establishment

As capital pressure pushed cultural places out of Hongdae, the first movement was not far. Actors looked to areas they already knew, adjacent to Hongdae, that shared the conditions which had once made Hongdae itself possible. In terms of the theoretical framework, this is re-establishment: establishment recurring in a new spatial context, carried by the same actors and networks that had built the original scene. This section examines what spatial conditions enabled adjacent areas to receive displaced cultural practice, how cultural vitality re-formed through clustering, and what the consequences of proximity to Hongdae turned out to be.

3.5.1. Narrative of sustaining one's place

To examine how cultural places navigated displacement and re-establishment, this section follows the personal narrative of an actor who experienced it firsthand. Rather than tracing how the scene was built or sustained, it asks how a place holds onto its character when the ground beneath it shifts. By doing this, the analysis shows how the bond formed around a place can carry it through relocation and what it encounters upon arrival somewhere new.

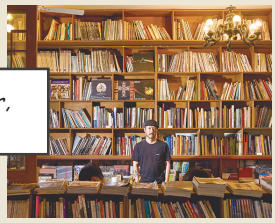
Kim Sangwoo and Yri Cafe

Kim Sangwoo is a drummer who came to Hongdae as a musician and later co-opened Yri Cafe with his friend, Lee Juyong. Being one of the salons in the early 2000s, it served as an open ground for cultural production across different art forms. It is also one of the earliest cases of a cultural place relocating out of Hongdae due to gentrification. Still, the case of Yri cafe is considered a successful relocation, having found new ground near Hongdae and established itself there. The trajectory of Yri across two locations shows how cultural places can carry their character through relocation and what they encounter in the process.

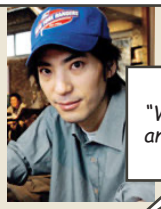
Kim Sangwoo

"I'm Kim Sangwoo. A, co-owner of Yri Cafe. This is the story of how me and my friend Juyong, kept our cafe as a place for culture."

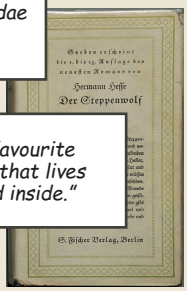




"I came to Hongdae as a musician, a drummer, playing in a band called Huckleberry Finn.



"We found an old bathhouse in Hongdae and turned it into a cafe.



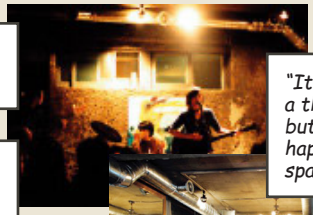
The name Yri is after our favourite novel, Steppenwolf. A wolf that lives alone, but carries the world inside."

Entered scene as drummer

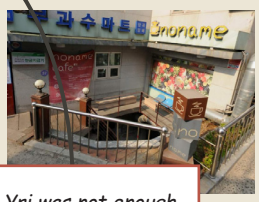
met Lee Juyong

2004
opened Yri cafe

Back then, I had a bar I always went back to, where I met Juyong."



"It was not just a cafe. It became a gallery, a theatre, a live club. Nothing was planned, but while people gathered, interesting things happened from them. We just gave them the space."

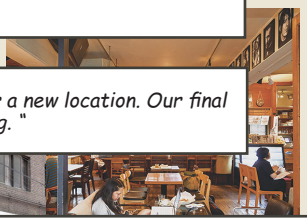


While hanging out everyday, talking about different things, we decided to do something together



"But the love people had for Yri was not enough to secure its spot. It became hard to keep the place while rent was raising every year."

"We searched hard for a new location. Our final choice was Sangsu-dong. "





"After five years, the landlord told us to leave the building, since their nephew wanted to run a cafe. We had no way to refuse."

"We liked the atmosphere, with locals who had lived there for a long time, and everyday shops like a barber, a rice mill, and laundry."

"It became place for gathering and creating again. I remember one day when an elderly gentleman walked in and asked if he could hold a calligraphy class in the cafe. That kind of thing kept happening."

2009.10
relocated to Sangsu

2009
displaced from Hongdae

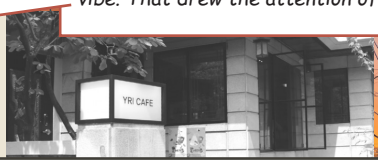


"But rising rent followed us again. As fellow artists and cafe owners joined us in Sangsu-dong, the street became known for its artistic vibe. That drew the attention of real estate."



"Both Iri cafes are still running. Almost twenty years now in one spot."
I still believe in the value of producing culture, and Yri will stay as a place for that.

2014
Sangsu got market attention

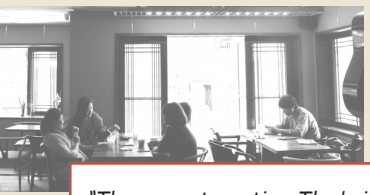




"This time we found an alternative in advance. I discovered Seokgwan-dong while coming to perform at a club nearby. Rent was way less than Sangsu-dong. And it was next to an art university."

"It succeed, and in July 2016, we renewed the contract. It was not an ideal conditions, but could stay there for five more years."

2014
opened 2nd cafe
in Sukgwan



2016
building owner
changed

"Then we got a notice. The building had been sold to a new owner. The contract was ending soon."





2016
association formed

"This time we could not just leave. We formed an association with fellow merchants in Sangsu-dong, and ran a signature campaign, to take better position at negotiation."

2016.07
negotiation



Open ground What Yri Cafe sustained across both locations was dense interaction among its inhabitants. Being open to any form of activity, the place became a ground for various collaborations between creators. Any idea was taken seriously enough to become an event, and anyone who loved culture could become an organiser (J. Ko, 2010). This drew diverse actors: poets, writers, musicians, and artists, as the cafe shared its space for readings, exhibitions, and performances at no charge (J. Jung, 2024). The same openness continued after relocating to Sangsu-dong. This time, the owners tried to extend the bond towards the local community around them, bringing rice cakes to neighbouring shops and introducing themselves (J. Jung, 2024). The effort paid off, as seen in the story of an elderly calligraphy teacher who walked in and held a calligraphy workshop (J. Jung, 2024). Through sustained presence and open access, the place accumulated a bond among those who inhabited it, which became the firm ground to sustain the place.

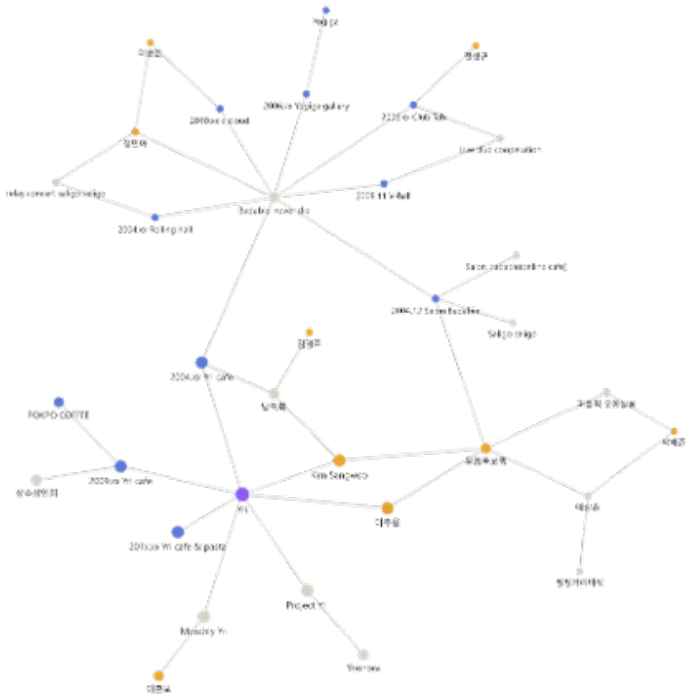


Figure 3.59: Network around Yri cafe

Network as spatial condition This bond became a factor that sustained Yri regardless of its location. Sangsu-dong, where Yri moved, had weak signals of actor supply, as it was a quiet residential neighbourhood (J. Ko, 2010). Without any existing actor supply, cultural vitality in the new location was brought by the regulars who followed. Poetry readings, chamber music, exhibitions, and screenings all resumed (Kimjakga, 2016), and culture began to be produced on the new ground. Later, the cafe itself became a signal of cultural vitality, drawing other places that had been pushed out of Hongdae to move nearby (J. Ko, 2010). Eventually, the street where Yri had taken place became a cluster of different cultural places. What allowed this was the bond Yri had built, strong enough to seed cultural vitality in an area that had none.



Figure 3.60: Street with cultural identity formed around yri

Countering capital pressure In terms of structural pressure, both locations faced the same problem: the threat of displacement from capital pressure. When they moved out of Hongdae, relocation was the only instrument available, as the five-year legal protection period had expired and the owner asked them to leave (J. Ko, 2010). However, Yri responded differently when the same pressure resurfaced in Sangsu-dong, signalled by rising rents and a change in building ownership. The owners gathered former and current staff, regulars, and neighbouring shops, and actively made their situation known (J. Jung, 2024). The story drew wide media attention as a case of gentrification, raising public scrutiny (J. Jung, 2024). At the same time, merchants in Sangsu-dong formed an association and ran a signature campaign to freeze rents (M. Lee, 2016). The combination of public pressure and collective organisation led to a negotiated contract renewal and secured five more years of staying. The bond that had formed around Yri and the instruments, the scene that had developed through earlier cases, proved strong enough to hold the place.

Pressure that remains Securing the contract kept Yri in place, but the conditions that had made it matter were shifting. Capital pressure in its early form was about displacement, and the bond around Yri was strong enough to resist it. What followed was harder to counter. As rents rose across the area and the atmosphere of Sangsu-dong changed, the ecology around Yri gradually transformed. Lee Juyong described the change as a passing trend: those who once used Yri for exhibitions and readings now built their own spaces, and the need for a salon like Yri was no longer there (J. Jung, 2024). From the perspective of this research, the same shift can also be read as the cumulative effect of capital on the ecology around the place: the people and relationships that had sustained the need for a place like Yri were themselves being eroded. Whether the cause was cultural drift or ecological erosion, the instruments that secured a single place were not enough to protect the ecology that gives it meaning. What Yri could respond to this shift by doing was to shift its operations closer to those of a cafe, focusing more on cost and profit (J. Jung, 2024).

3.5.2. Familiar ground

The capital pressure manifested as gentrification displaced cultural places from Hongdae, pushing them outward. Among the areas that displaced places headed to, those near Hongdae are worth examining together: Sangsu, Hapjeong, and Yeonnam. They shared conditions similar to early Hongdae, making them supportive environments for cultural production. This section examines what spatial conditions made those areas capable of receiving displaced cultural practice, and how those conditions enabled live cultural production to re-form.


2004
2004
2008
2005
2003
Gobchangjeongol
2015
2009
Unplugged Hongdae
2004
2014
2010
2009
2013
2009
Goldenage


Jebi dabang
Yri café
Gemunhwa dabang
Anthracite
Mudaeruk
2013
2009
2009
2002
2004
2012
2012
2012
2012
2011
2004
2010
2011
2004
2015
2010
2012
c cloud
VELOSO
2007
0
100
200
300
400
500 m

Familiar ground for re-establishment

From K. Lee, 2016's account, the areas that received displaced actors shared spatial conditions that had kept them off the commercial radar, preserving porosity for culture to take place. Across the three neighbourhoods, underutilised space was available: small factories and residential buildings that had never been converted to commercial use. Behind this, the nuisance conditions of each area had allowed these spaces to remain vacant and affordable. In Sangsu-dong, proximity to the Danginri power plant had brought dust, noise, and exhaust that kept development pressure away for decades (K. Lee, 2016). In Yeonnam-dong, narrow alleys too tight for cars had produced the same effect through different means, keeping commercial establishments out and preserving the old character of the neighbourhood (K. Lee, 2016).

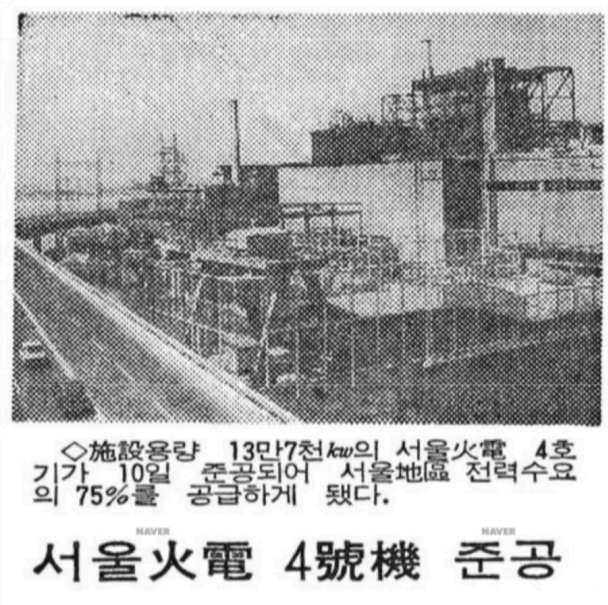


Figure 3.61: Danginri powerplant nearby Sangsu during its operation years

What this neglect had also preserved was local community. Long-term elderly residents in Sangsu-dong had maintained the neighbourhood's social fabric for decades, largely unaffected by Hongdae's commercial expansion next door (K. Lee, 2016). Yeonnam-dong retained an affordable residential character, with low-rise housing from the 1970s and 80s, cheap diners, and small Chinese restaurants run by Chinese immigrants (K. Lee, 2016). Hapjeong-dong had quiet alleyways and small bookcafes, showing a modest atmosphere (H. Jung, 2016). These were areas with their own texture, which made them legible to displaced actors as places unlikely to change rapidly, indicating stability. Moreover, the suitability was confirmed by artists already inhabiting them. Many artists and musicians active in Hongdae had long kept homes and studios in Sangsu-dong, drawn by cheap rent and proximity (K. Lee, 2016). This proved the potential for cultural vitality, with rented rooms and studios quietly taken by artists, recalling the studios that had formed in Hongdae during the 1980s.

Clustering in new ground

As suitability was confirmed, places began to cluster. J. Ko, 2010 As examined in the case of Yri Cafe, regulars followed the cafe when it relocated, then other places pushed out of Hongdae moved nearby, forming a new cluster. The cultural vitality that had been built through years of interaction in Hongdae was not lost but relocated, re-forming around the places and people that moved together. The places that clustered in each area also reflected the character of those who moved there, shaping each area's own identity. Sangsu-dong attracted bohemian cultural entrepreneurs, places oriented around cafe culture and informal creative practice (K. Lee, 2016). Yeonnam-dong drew community-oriented cultural activists, organisations engaged with local issues and participatory programmes (K. Lee, 2016).



Figure 3.62: Change in street where Yri cafe located

Proximity as threat

However, capital pressure eventually spread to neighbouring areas of Hongdae, and the condition that had once enabled relocation turned against culture. As these areas gained recognition, they were increasingly described as extensions of the Hongdae commercial district, and that description alone was enough to trigger the same pressures that had displaced actors from Hongdae in the first place. As K. Lee, 2016 argues, Sangsu-dong and Yeonnam-dong became part of the Hongdae commercial district by being called that. Behind the labelling lay clear economic interest, visible in the sharp rise in property prices that followed. The same proximity to Hongdae that had made these areas reachable for displaced actors made them legible to capital as the next frontier. What had been the instrument of re-establishment became the mechanism of a new cycle.

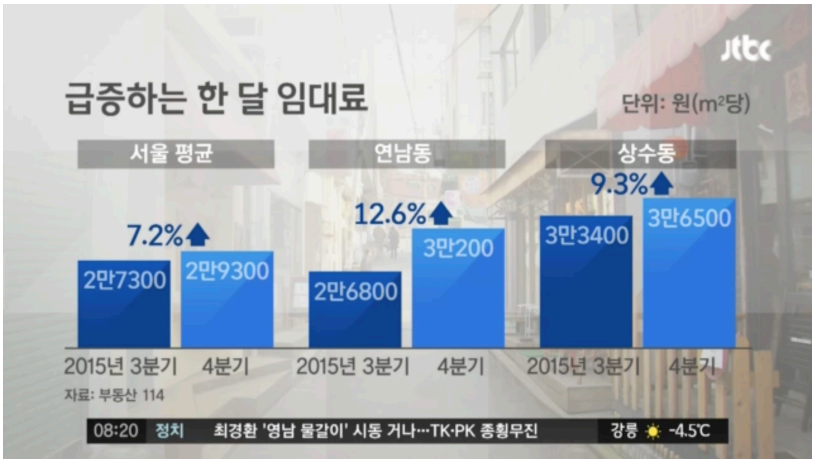


Figure 3.63: Rent increas in Sangu and Yeonnam

3.5.3. Collected cases

ACTOR

Observations about how relationships among actors form within cultural ecology. Each finding captures the collective character of cultural production through the depth of the relational process.

INTERACTION

Findings that describe how actors come into contact and develop familiarity. Each finding captures the process that gives rise to different stages of connection.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

1 scene entry

A new actor arrives at a place drawn by reputation or attraction, producing first contact with the scene without prior introduction.

Lee, B. (2013, July 24). Bar Sha. *creator account of operator*

> *Looking forward to meeting new people here, and wondering what will happen next with the regulars.*

LOCAL FRIENDSHIP TIES

Findings that describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity. Each finding captures the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.

1 familiarity through encounter

Bonds of personal familiarity that form gradually through repeated contact in the same setting, without any deliberate act of relationship-forming.

Jeong, J. (2024, July). Meeting people – 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe. *creator account of Kim Sangwoo, operator*

> *What Yri Cafe pursues is something like a communal platform. Anyone can sit down, talk, listen to others talking, and quietly join in. We want to relate and be involved with each other.*

Jeong, J. (2012). Bar Sangsuri. *creator account of Kim Myeongnyeol, operator*

> *It was not a place to make an enormously successful shop. Just a place where friends who write and take photographs come and go pleasantly, becoming small encouragements to each other's work. That was the hope.*



2 creative exchange

Sustained co-presence in shared creative practice draws actors into mutual inspiration, deepening familiarity through repeated exchange.

4 inter-place symbiosis

A bond formed between two places or their operators through sustained exchange, where the practices and outputs of one become embedded in the other.

Jeong, J. (2024, July). Meeting people – 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, operator*

> *The artist Hunbo, who had published around 100 issues of the independent magazine monthly Yri, now runs POKPO COFFEE and is responsible for the taste of coffee at Yri Cafe. The drip bag product Hwangya is his tribute to Yri Cafe.*

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *Next door Anthracite supplies the coffee beans used here, paired with an espresso machine brought from Italy.*

BOND

Findings that describe the depth of connection between actors. Each finding captures what a relationship has become and what it enables.

1 shared use of space

The physical space of a place is offered or used beyond its formal purpose, revealing a level of trust and care between actors that exceeds their formal roles.

Ha, J. (2013, June 7). Studio Zemi. *creator account of Lee Semi, operator*

> *The first thing we thought about when finding and organising the space was ourselves. What if I were using this space? So rather than being conscious of others, we focused more on the original character of the space as a studio.*



2 inhabitation

Actors use a place beyond its performance or service function — sleeping, eating, working — revealing a depth of attachment that dissolves the boundary between the place and their daily lives.

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *We were all young and poor, so we opened a studio together and gathered every day. Since we were gathering every day anyway, we decided to open a cafe. Friends who made music, wrote, painted, and took photographs naturally started holding performances and exhibitions.*

Kang, J., Lee, J. (2014). Yri Cafe. *creator account of Kim Sangwoo, operator*

> *Writer Kim Dongyeong said in an interview that his book would not have existed without Yri Cafe. Poet Kim Gyeongju also said he writes using Yri Cafe as his studio.*

Jeong, J. (2024, September 13). Space Soda 2002. *creator account of Kim Hyeongsu, operator*

> *Colleagues from fifteen years in labels and distribution have all grown and gone their separate ways, but I hope they can meet here, pass through, and devise new things together. A crossroads space.*



Kim, Y. (2013, June 11). Goldenage. *creator account of Kim Hyeongtae, operator*

> *The cafe becomes a playground of diverse colours and shapes made by the people in it — as a gallery cafe with works by artist Ryu Junhwa, as a space for impromptu sessions among friends, as a club where people dance when the mood strikes.*

Im, E. (2017, April 3). Club Sharp. *creator account of Ryu Jihwan, manager*

> *There is nothing as awful as having nowhere to perform for people who make music. For punk bands there is only GBN in Mullae-dong. Sharp opening was genuinely welcome news.*

3 place-born collaboration

Sustained co-presence in the same place draws actors into close working proximity, where personal familiarity develops into shared creative work.

Lee, Y. (2016, July 26). Yri Cafe's Kim Sangwoo. *creator account of Kim Sangwoo, operator*

> *A calligraphy teacher who ran a school in Sinchon opened the door. He had seen the young people through the window and liked what he saw. He proposed: could he teach calligraphy here for free on weekends?*

Ha, J. (2013, June 7). Studio Zemi. *creator account of Lee Jaelim, operator*

> *Diverse artists came and went naturally, and exhibitions, publication parties, music performances, and creative workshops continued steadily.*

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *A friend who had been a regular at Mudaeruk and runs a design studio proposed investing to bring Mudaeruk back. That is how Mudaeruk returned to us.*

5 shared place memory

Actors return to or gather around a place to share accumulated memories, revealing how deeply the place has become embedded in their relational lives.

Jeong, J. (2024, September 13). Space Soda 2002. *creator account of Kim Hyeongsu, operator*

> *SPACE SODA 2002 is the internal shared password of his companies Magic Strawberry Sound and Forknose. The password everyone — artists and staff alike — knew. He named the space after it, aiming for a place like those times, where anyone could come and communicate freely.*

PLACE

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology. Each finding captures a characteristic that enables cultural relations to emerge, accumulate, or persist.

SPATIAL FACTORS

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology.

CONDITION

Fixed spatial characteristics that enable cultural activity to find ground.

POROSITY

> *The old building that had served as a Japanese liquor importer's direct sales outlet became Mudaeruk. Before that it had even been a cheese factory.*

Jeong, J. (2012). Bar Sangsuri. *creator account of Kim Myeongnyeol, operator*

> *Unable to find a suitable place in Hongdae, thinking his connection with Hongdae had run its course, a space appeared in Sangsu-dong. A former hardware store, it appeared as if made for him.*

2 affordability

The degree to which the cost of occupying a space remains within reach for cultural producers, enabling them to establish their place.

Lee, K. (2016). Hongdae: Cultural refugees who cannot leave. *scene account about Yeonnam-dong*

> *The main landscape of Yeonnam-dong consists of low-rise residential buildings from the 1970s and 80s, cheap workers' canteens, and small Chinese restaurants run by ethnic Chinese residents.*

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *They secured it on good rental terms after the previous tenant relocated.*

Lee, B. (2013, July 24). Bar Sha. *creator account of operator*

> *Above all, the energy of this sunny street appealed. The decision was for a small shop on the ground floor, fulfilling the dream of a first-floor presence.*

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso is back. *scene account about Veloso*

> *Mangwon-dong, close to Hongdae but with significantly lower rent, was the optimal location.*

CULTURAL VITALITY

The activeness of cultural production within a place. Each finding captures the elements that indicate the intensity of interaction among actors.

2 sensory threshold

character, attracting actors who share that sensibility and reinforcing their collective presence.

Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Exiles who staged a cultural coup next to Hongdae. *scene account about Hongdae expansion*

> *Artists displaced from a commercialised Hongdae are building new culture next to it.*

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *Mudaeruk has aligned itself with the cultures representative of Hongdae — vegan, eco-friendly, diversity, pet-friendly, electronic music — building its own colour over twelve years.*

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *Staff who have worked here for nearly five years include someone who graduated from the sculpture department and continues their own work. All our staff have their own field and outstanding sensibility. We influence each other and grow together. That is how Mudaeruk's own colour is made.*

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *When proposals come in from outside, the criteria are whether it suits the space and whether we like it. Which means there is a high likelihood the guests will like it too.*

STABILITY

The capacity of a place to maintain its foundations over time.

1 off-centre

A location removed from the main commercial strip, where lower capital pressure and lower visibility allow cultural places to maintain their place.

3 fluidity

A spatial arrangement that dissolves fixed boundaries between roles or functions, allowing different uses and users to co-exist without hierarchy.

Kim, W. (2016, September 8). Gentrification and indie musicians. *participant account about C Cloud*

> *C Cloud is an alternative space that functions as both a cafe selling coffee, drinks, and alcohol, and as a performance venue.*



ACTOR SUPPLY

Spatial characteristics of a place's surroundings that channel actors toward it.

1 proximity to established scene

The presence of an already active cultural scene in an adjacent area, from which actors and practices can flow into a new location.

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso is back. *scene account about Veloso*

> *Mangwon-dong, close to Hongdae but with significantly lower rent, was the optimal location. He found a suitable space, signed a generous five-year contract, and carried out interior work.*

QUALITY

Characteristics of a place that emerge through the inhabitation of cultural production.

Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Exiles who staged a cultural coup next to Hongdae. *scene account about Sangsu-dong*

> *Sangsu-dong was far from what you would call a commercial district. It was a typical residential neighbourhood with small factories near the power plant.*

Jung, H. (2016, December 12). Everything that changes in Hongdae is about money. *creator account of Kang Jinhyeong about Hapjeong*

> *Around 2006–2007, Hapjeong was extremely quiet — quiet alleyways, lots of small bookcafes. I like it being this quiet around here now. If there were more people I don't think I could maintain this atmosphere.*



2 nuisance barrier

Affordability sustained by an industrial or physical deterrent that keeps development pressure away.

Lee, K. (2016). Hongdae: Cultural refugees who cannot leave. *scene account about Sangsu-dong*

> *Located next to the Danginri power plant, Sangsu-dong suffered from dust, exhaust, and noise from fuel combustion, leaving it almost entirely outside the reach of development.*

Lee, K. (2016). Hongdae: Cultural refugees who cannot leave. *scene account about Yeonnam-dong*

> *The narrow alleys branching off on either side of Donggyo-ro are too tight for cars to enter in many places — which is precisely why commercial establishments have not moved in, and the old character of the neighbourhood still remains.*

3 everyday atmosphere

Non-commercial social fabric already present before cultural actors arrive, making an area legible as ground worth inhabiting.

Jung, H. (2016, December 12). Everything that changes in Hongdae is about money. *creator account of Kang Jinhyeong about Hapjeong*

> *Around 2006–2007, Hapjeong was extremely quiet — quiet alleyways, lots of small bookcafes. I like it being this quiet around here now. If there were more people I don't think I could maintain this atmosphere.*

CONTEXT

The structural and historical conditions within which cultural ecology operates. Each finding captures a pressure or effect that shapes the ground on which cultural places stand.

STRUCTURAL PRESSURE

Conditions that threaten the continued existence of cultural places.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

1 ownership change

A change in building ownership that introduces new terms of tenure, often disrupting established cultural use.

Kimjakga. (2016, March 14). The tragedy of Hongdae culture: The fate of Iricafe. *scene account about Yri Cafe*

> *This time the building owner changed. That means either being evicted entirely, or facing another sharp rent increase. Even if the new owner has good intentions, the reality is harsh.*

SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

1 mainstream dominance

The structural dominance of mainstream cultural industries that limits access and visibility for independent cultural producers.

Kim, W. (2016, September 8). Gentrification and indie musicians. *participant account about C Cloud*

> *Although alternative spaces that allow performances alongside cafes have increased significantly, they are still insufficient to accommodate everyone who wants to perform. Open mic applications that used to be easy in early 2011 became so competitive by late 2013 that a month of slots would fill within five minutes of being posted.*

Im, E. (2017, April 3). Club Sharp. *creator account of Ryu Jinseok, operator*

> *There are plenty of stages for indie bands and musicians who have made a name for themselves, but live clubs where you can see the energy of new musicians are now few in Hongdae. Especially venues for non-mainstream genres — punk, reggae, ska, hardcore — are almost nonexistent.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

2 neighbour opposition

Kim, Y. (2013, June 11). Goldenage. *creator account of Kim Hyeongtae, operator*

> *Hongdae no longer had a space where music could be played this loud.*

3 trend shift

A change in cultural taste or social habit that reduces the audience or viability of an established cultural scene.

Jeong, J. (2024, July). Meeting people – 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, operator*

> *The atmosphere of seeing performances and exhibitions in cafes as free and hip has disappeared.*

EFFECT

Observed outcomes of structural pressure on cultural places and their communities.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

1 commodification

The process by which cultural places and practices are displaced by higher-value commercial uses.

Lee, K. (2016). Hongdae: Cultural refugees who cannot leave. *scene account about Hongdae expansion*

> *Sangsu-dong and Yeonnam-dong become part of the Hongdae commercial district by being called that. Behind the labelling lies a clear economic interest, as seen in the sharp rise in property prices.*

Jeong, J. (2024, July). Meeting people – 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, operator*

> *Accepting the change, Yri Cafe is now working to build expertise as a cafe, including its food and drink offer.*

2 commercial marginalisation

The process by which rising costs exclude cultural producers from an area they helped make desirable.

Kim, W. (2016, September 8). Gentrification and indie musicians. *participant account about C Cloud*

> *C Cloud in Hapjeong-dong and Rolailac in Sangsu-dong, spaces that had consistently planned and run performances for indie musicians, closed last year unable to sustain rising rent.*

Lee, B. (2013, July 24). Bar Sha. *creator account of operator*

> *Overcrowded competition and soaring rent in Sangsu-dong forced Bar Sha to leave behind Sangsu-dong, which it had protected for a long time.*

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso is back. *creator account of operator*

> *The money spent moving around and doing new construction over the years exceeded 600 million won. This time he wanted to stay in one place for a long time.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

1 normalisation

Jeong, J. (2024, July). Meeting people – 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, operator*

> *Those who used to love this space for exhibitions, readings, and book talks now create their own spaces to meet their audiences. The kind of need that spaces like Yri Cafe once filled has passed like a trend.*

INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships and places — countering structural pressure through capital, regulatory, systemic, and contextual means.

RELATIONSHIP-FORMING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

1 open access

Si, J. (2013, April). Yogiga expression gallery, Hapjeong-dong Seoul. *creator account of Lee Han-ju, operator*

> *It is a space that turns those who rent it into artists. Anyone who wants to express themselves — students, office workers, not just artists — can use it. Whether music, photography, theatre, or performance, anything is possible here.*

Si, J. (2013, April). Yogiga expression gallery, Hapjeong-dong Seoul. *scene account about Yogiga gallery*

> *From time to time, performances by unusual musicians hard to find elsewhere take place here. The operator describes the gallery as a place that lets people freely express desires they keep hidden deep inside.*

Si, J. (2013, April). Yogiga expression gallery, Hapjeong-dong Seoul. *creator account of Lee Han-ju, operator*

> *I wanted to create a space where people could show what they want to express without any restrictions.*

Ha, J. (2013, June 7). Studio Zemi. *creator account of Lee Semi, operator*

> *It positions itself as a shared open studio for freelancers who drift between cafes without a studio of their own.*

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *On Fridays and Saturdays, or whenever the mood strikes, indie musicians perform on the basement stage and anyone can enjoy it free of charge. Musicians who want to perform can also contact Jebi dabang directly.*

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *Anyone from suited office workers to people absorbed in work on laptops, musicians with a guitar on their back, families, people with animals, sometimes even celebrities — diverse people enjoy Mudaeruk each in their own way.*

SOLIDARITY TIES

Findings that describe how existing bonds are activated by shared threat. Each finding captures the extension of care beyond those already connected.

8 succession

The place sustains its cultural character across changes in location and ownership.

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *Books, tables, and figurines mostly brought from Lemon Salon.*

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso is back. *scene account about Veloso*

> *The space that unfolded was like Veloso season 1. A small stage at the front with a large speaker, piano, and drum set, surrounded by CDs packed tightly. Tables and chairs in front of the stage where people could sit with coffee, beer, wine, and food.*

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso is back. *creator account of music critic Kim Yunha*

> *I liked Veloso season 1 the most. This atmosphere feels like returning to that. Like a hideout where you always find people you know when you come.*

Jeong, J. (2024, September 13). Space Soda 2002. *creator account of Kim Hyeongsu, operator*

> *SPACE SODA 2002 is the internal shared password everyone at his companies knew. He named the space after it, aiming for a place like those times where anyone could come freely.*

MAINTAINING STABILITY

Deliberate actions that maintain the foundations of a place over time.

1 minimal exposure

Minimising the external visibility of a place, limiting its discoverability to those already connected to the scene.

Ha, J. (2013, June 7). Studio Zemi. *creator account of Lee Semi, operator*

> *They did not even manage proper promotion, and put up a sign a month after opening.*

Im, E. (2017, April 3). Club Sharp. *creator account of Ryu Jinseok, operator*

> *Located in a quiet alley in Mangwon-dong, not many people have come yet. Strangely though, people find it through word of mouth — especially many foreigners.*

4 relocation

An actor moves to a new location where more stable settlement is expected.

1 cooperative formation

Actors with existing bonds formally establish a collective organisation in response to shared threat or for shared goal.

Lee, M. (2016, July 12). Merchants forming cooperatives and associations. *scene account about Yri Cafe*

> *When the building owner changed and demanded a rent increase, Sangsu Merchants' Association was formed. The association is running a signature campaign to freeze rents.*

Lee, Y. (2016, July 26). Yri Cafe's Kim Sangwoo. *creator account of Kim Sangwoo, operator*

> *As the shops gathered in Sangsu alley, the rents soared so merchants in crisis formed an association to avoid being displaced.*

PLACE-ARRANGING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that shape the spatial ground of cultural ecology.

INITIATING ACTOR SUPPLY

Deliberate actions that shape the environment where new actors can easily enter a place.

1 open place

An operator deliberately lowers the physical threshold for entry, opening the place to a wider population of potential visitors.

Si, J. (2013, April). Yogiga expression gallery, Hapjeong-dong Seoul. *creator account of Lee Han-ju, operator*

> *I wanted to create a space where people could show what they want to express without any restrictions.*

Ha, J. (2013, June 7). Studio Zemi. *creator account of Lee Semi, operator*

> *It positions itself as a shared open studio for freelancers who drift between cafes without a studio of their own.*

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *On Fridays and Saturdays, or whenever the mood strikes, indie musicians perform on the basement stage and anyone can enjoy it free of charge. Musicians who want to perform can also contact Jebi dabang directly.*

ACTIVATING CULTURAL VITALITY

Deliberate actions that generate or intensify the relational and creative exchange between actors.

1 naming

Assigning a name that signals a specific cultural commitment, setting the place's unique identity.

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *The name was borrowed from Jebi dabang, the very place where poet Yi Sang clinked glasses with the artists of his time.*

Jeong, J. (2024, September 13). Space Soda 2002. *creator account of Kim Hyeongsu, operator*

> *SPACE SODA 2002 is the internal shared password everyone at his companies knew. He named the space after it, aiming for a place like those times where anyone could come freely.*

Im, E. (2017, April 3). Club Sharp. *creator account of Ryu Jinseok, operator*

> *SHARP stands for Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice. We named it Sharp because we wanted it to be a place without discrimination.*

2 self-making

Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Exiles who staged a cultural coup next to Hongdae. *scene account about Hongdae expansion*

> *Artists displaced from a commercialised Hongdae are building new culture next to it.*

Si, J. (2013, April). Yogiga expression gallery, Hapjeong-dong Seoul. *creator account of Lee Han-ju, operator*

> *When rent rose he left that space after two years and found a large basement at the end of a parking lot alley in Hapjeong-dong, naming it Yogiga Expression Gallery.*

Ko, J. (2010, July 27). Exiles who staged a cultural coup next to Hongdae. *scene account about Yri Cafe*

> *The only reason to move was that the rent had become impossible to sustain.*

Lee, B. (2013, July 24). Bar Sha. *creator account of operator*

> *Overcrowded competition and soaring rent in Sangsu-dong forced Bar Sha to relocate to Yeonnam-dong.*

Seo, J. (2017, June 14). Veloso is back. *scene account about Veloso*

> *The money spent moving around and doing new construction over the years exceeded 600 million won. This time he wanted to stay in one place for a long time. Mangwon-dong, close to Hongdae but with significantly lower rent, was the optimal location. He found a suitable space and signed a generous five-year contract.*

Jeong, J. (2012). Bar Sangsuri. *creator account of Kim Myeongnyeol, operator*

> *Unable to find a suitable place in Hongdae, thinking his connection with Hongdae had run its course, a space appeared in Sangsu-dong. A former hardware store, it appeared as if made for him.*

STRUCTURE-COUNTERING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that directly address structural pressure on cultural places.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

2 collective funding

Members pool resources to establish a place without relying on individual capital or commercial backing.

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *Kim Geon-a pooled every resource available including her room deposit. A former regular invested. Whatever it took, it somehow worked out.*

5 economy of intimacy

An operator prioritises cultural production over profit, sustaining the place with minimum or no profit.

Si, J. (2010, February). Anthracite. *creator account of Kim Pyeongnae, operator*

> *The revenue from selling beans roasted here funds the running of the cultural complex.*

Ha, J. (2013, June 7). Studio Zemi. *creator account of Lee Semi, operator*

> *Unlike other shops that make money through table turnover, no matter how many people come it is not easy to make money in this structure. People around them say they must be crazy, but they cannot give up their conviction.*

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *Prices were set at an affordable level in consideration of friends' light pockets. The goal is for this to become a playground where cultural and artistic people of diverse backgrounds can exchange.*

Im, E. (2017, April 3). Club Sharp. *creator account of Ryu Jinseok, operator*

> *We did not open the venue to make money. It is more like collecting money to keep going. The only profitable month in a year was July last year. Even then we made around 100,000 won.*

Directly fabricating the physical elements of a space, embedding personal taste and care into its material character.

Jeong, J. (2013, June 3). Anthracite. *creator account of Kim Pyeongnae, operator*

> *Initially I tried to commission an interior designer, but the designs were too formulaic and did not match my thinking. So I consulted friends who studied architecture and interior design and did the work myself.*

Jeong, J. (2013, June 3). Anthracite. *creator account of Kim Pyeongnae, operator*

> *He gave over the first floor as a gallery, joined forces with graphic designer Kim Garam, and together they scraped walls, pulled up floor tiles, and finished the urethane coating themselves.*

Ha, J. (2013, June 7). Studio Zemi. *creator account of Lee Semi, operator*

> *The first thing we thought about when finding and organising the space was ourselves. What if I were using this space? So rather than being conscious of others, we focused more on the original character of the space as a studio.*

ELLE. (2010). Yri Cafe. *creator account of Kim Sangwoo, operator*

> *It was a four-room space that we opened up to make it wider. Lee Juyong, who co-runs the cafe, studied art, so the space was composed through his sensibility. In Seogyo-dong it had more of a cafe character; here we made it more like a salon.*

Jeong, J. (2024, July). Meeting people – 167: Lee Juyong, co-director of Yri Cafe. *creator account of Lee Juyong, operator*

> *From the perspective of someone who makes art, there is nothing as enjoyable as designing a space. I tried to make it feel like a comfortable sarang-bang, through my own interpretation of something Korean.*

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *Seven years of accumulated things were used in the interior. Tiles arranged as frames, a bar table extended with wooden handles.*



4 utilising space

An actor activates a space beyond its designated function, generating cultural vitality where it did not exist before.

Si, J. (2010, February). Anthracite. *creator account of Kim Pyeongnae, operator*

> *He saw the value of the space and made up his mind when he pulled back the ceiling and found this height.*

Si, J. (2010, February). Anthracite. *participant account about Anthracite*

> *What stopped people in their tracks was the space where the large painted iron gate of the former parking lot had been transformed into a proper table.*

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *The old building that had served as a Japanese liquor importer's direct sales outlet became Mudaeruk.*

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *O Sanghun removed all the structures dressing up the brick building from the 1980s and transformed it into an open space.*

Jeong, J. (2024, September 13). Space Soda 2002. *creator account of Kim Hyeongsu, operator*

> *Normally tables and chairs are arranged, but when an event is held the space transforms completely. Tables are stored up to the ceiling, the large window shutter comes down to fully cut off the exterior. The wide floor can hold 130 standing or 72 seated.*

Jeong, J. (2024, September 13). Space Soda 2002. *creator account of Kim Hyeongsu, operator*

> *There are no rental criteria and no rental fee. For paid events some revenue share is needed, but what matters is the heart that wants to do something in this space.*

6 negotiation

Lee, Y. (2016, July 26). Yri Cafe's Kim Sangwoo. *creator account of Kim Sangwoo, operator*

> *Good news arrived this morning — the contract with the new building owner was completed four days ago. The rent went up a little, but they can stay for five more years.*

SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

4 open stage

A place opens its stage without professional threshold, directly countering mainstream gatekeeping.

Si, J. (2013, April). Yogiga expression gallery, Hapjeong-dong Seoul. *creator account of Lee Han-ju, operator*

> *My goal is to test various ways in which working joyfully and hard at one's practice results in money coming in, rather than working with the purpose of making money.*

Kim, J. (2007, November 12). Hongdae is not dead yet. *scene account about Yogiga gallery*

> *Musicians pursuing musical ideals a few steps removed from commercialism have very few places to stand. Yogiga gallery in Hapjeong-dong, where avant-garde and experimental musicians perform about once a month, is one of them.*

5 vertical layering

An operator stacks distinct cultural functions vertically within a single building.

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *The ground floor faithfully reproduces the core character of a cafe and will also hold exhibitions. The second floor, where MusicWell is based, will be divided by partitions and rented out as artist studios. The basement, formerly used for storing liquor, is where Mudaeruk's ambitious performance venue was born.*

6 playground for community

A group of actors with existing bonds deliberately establishes a physical place to anchor their shared practice.

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *We were all young and poor, so we opened a studio together and gathered every day. Since we were gathering every day anyway, we decided to open a cafe.*

Street H. (2012, August). Mudaeruk. *creator account of Kim Geon-a, operator*

> *A friend who had been a regular at Mudaeruk proposed investing to bring it back. Kim Geon-a pooled every resource available including her room deposit. Whatever it took, it somehow worked out.*

Lee, J. (2013, June 10). Jebi dabang. *participant account about Jebi dabang*

> *As CTR moved their studio from Hongdae to Sangsu-dong, they needed a second Lemon Salon. Getting older did not stop them from playing. So they opened Jebi dabang.*

Im, E. (2017, April 3). Club Sharp. *creator account of Ryu Jinseok, operator*

> *We are ten-year friends who play the same music. We wanted to make a performance venue where we could play together, and had been saying we would do it someday. The timing happened to align.*

Jeong, J. (2024, September 13). Space Soda 2002. *creator account of Kim Hyeongsu, operator*

> *Having had to step away from music-related work, he travelled with Lee Jongsu, who had also wrapped up life in Jeju, and the two established a space together last October.*

3.6. Establishing new scene

Where 3.5 examined re-establishment in areas adjacent to Hongdae, this section looks further. As proximity to Hongdae proved both enabling and threatening, some actors sought ground at a greater distance, with the ambition of establishing something new rather than continuing what had been displaced. In terms of the theoretical framework, this is a re-establishment attempted under different conditions: without the proximity that had carried cultural vitality in adjacent areas, and without the accumulated density that Hongdae had built over decades. This section examines the actors who made that attempt, the areas they moved through, and what those attempts revealed about the conditions a new scene requires.

3.6.1. Narrative of building a new scene

To examine how the attempt to establish a new scene unfolded, this section follows the narrative of the Self-Reliant Music Collective, an actor whose trajectory across multiple locations outside Hongdae makes it a fitting frame for what this section addresses. Rather than tracing a single place, it follows a collective that kept searching: for ground where musicians could sustain their practice, and where a scene could form on different terms. By doing this, the analysis shows what instruments they developed, what spatial conditions they sought, and where the limits of that search appeared.

Self-Reliant Music Collective

Beyond Hongdae, new attempts at building cultural ground were emerging. The foundation of Self-Reliant Music Collective shows this attempt through different efforts to counter structural pressures that threatened indie music culture. The collective was formed by musicians who had gathered at Duriban. The experience there had sharpened their awareness of what the indie scene in Hongdae lacked. Watching gentrification displace the places that had sustained culture, they concluded that the scene needed more than just being independent, but full self-reliance. Through this, they also searched for new ground outside Hongdae where that principle could take root, which could be a nice beginning for this section, where the potential to form a new scene distant from Hongdae is possible.

Cooperative for Self-reliant music production



"It started when we joined the demonstration at Duribanban. Seeing it threatened with forced eviction felt exactly like watching the indie scene being pushed out of Hongdae."

2010

2

Jarip music c

24 DEC
forced eviction at
Duriban

"So we started p
called it the Jar
Jarip means self
our own terms."



"Luckily, at the end of 2013, a friend offered to share his new photography studio with us. Jokwang Photography Studio + Jarip HQ opened in Chungmuro."





"We had other p
in Mullae and Kk
were displaced t



"While we were based at Chungmuro, a few new cultural spaces opened nearby. Together with two of them, we held the 5th edition of 51+ — spread across three small venues in Chungmuro and Euljiro simultaneously."

2015

13 MAR
forced eviction at
Takeout drawing

06 DEC
NEW HQ opened

04 MAY
fourth 51+ festival

28 JUN
51+ festival

"That same year, something like Duribanban happened again — this time in Hannam-dong. A café called Takeout Drawing was facing displacement by its new building owner."





29 AUG
Jaripsim festival

We also released an album recorded an album inside the cafe, to spread word of what was happening and call for solidarity.



We kept standing
displacement. Th
Muak-dong — a h
scheduled for fo



We went there to stand up. We organised two festivals — Jaripsim and Daemangmyeong

2016

07-13 DEC
The great asylum

21 JAN
Gangjae concert

09 MAR
Takeout drawing
compilation

2
Gangjae concert mo
Gubonjang



— and held regular concerts there, refusing its forced eviction.



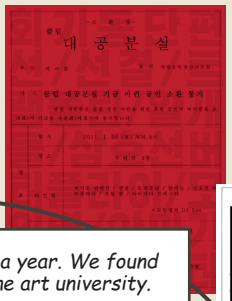
"As the demonstration went on, we wanted to do something bigger. One person suggested: what if we bring 51 musicians together for one day? "

""After the festival, we started thinking: what if we made this into something real? One month later, in June 2010, we began preparing for a formal collective."

27 FEB
oncert

01 MAY
first 51+ festival

JUN
preparatory collective





laying concerts there. We
p Music Concert. In Korean,
-reliant — in our own way, on



So on Labor Day 2010, the 51+ Festival was born. Over 1,000 people came.

We studied cooperatives for a year. We found a space in the basement of one art university.

To raise money to set it up as a proper club, we held a fundraising concert at Duriban

2011

JAN 29
club dgbs fundraiser concert



The following spring, the Self-Reliant Music Collective was officially launched.
Our goal was simple: make sure no musician had to quit because of money.



"Unfortunately, the space couldn't last long. In 2013, the student association changed, and they no longer wanted to share the space with us. Club Daegongbunsil closed."

laces to work from — Lowrise
otttang in Hannam. But both
hat same year. All in 2013."



2013

2012

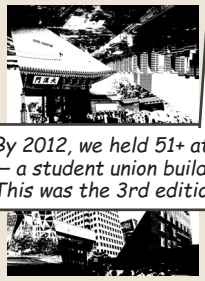
29 APR
official launch

Kkotddang,
Lowrise closed

club dgbs closed

05 MAY
third 51+ festival

01 MAY
second 51+ festival

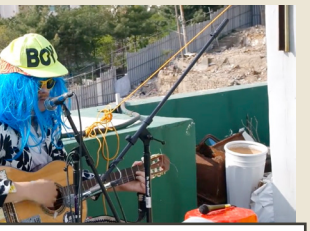




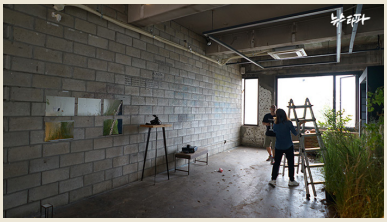
By 2012, we held 51+ at our own place — a student union building at K-Arts university. This was the 3rd edition of the festival.



Somewhere around late 2016, we stopped. We no longer exist as a collective. But each of us continues on our own path.



g up alongside places facing
e next was Okbaraji alley in
istoric alley near an old prison,
rced demolition.



25 APR
oved to
g hotel

01 MAY
51+ festival

14 MAY
Gubonjang
demolished

31 AUG
Takeout drawing
displaced

OCT
compilation album
'Gentrification'

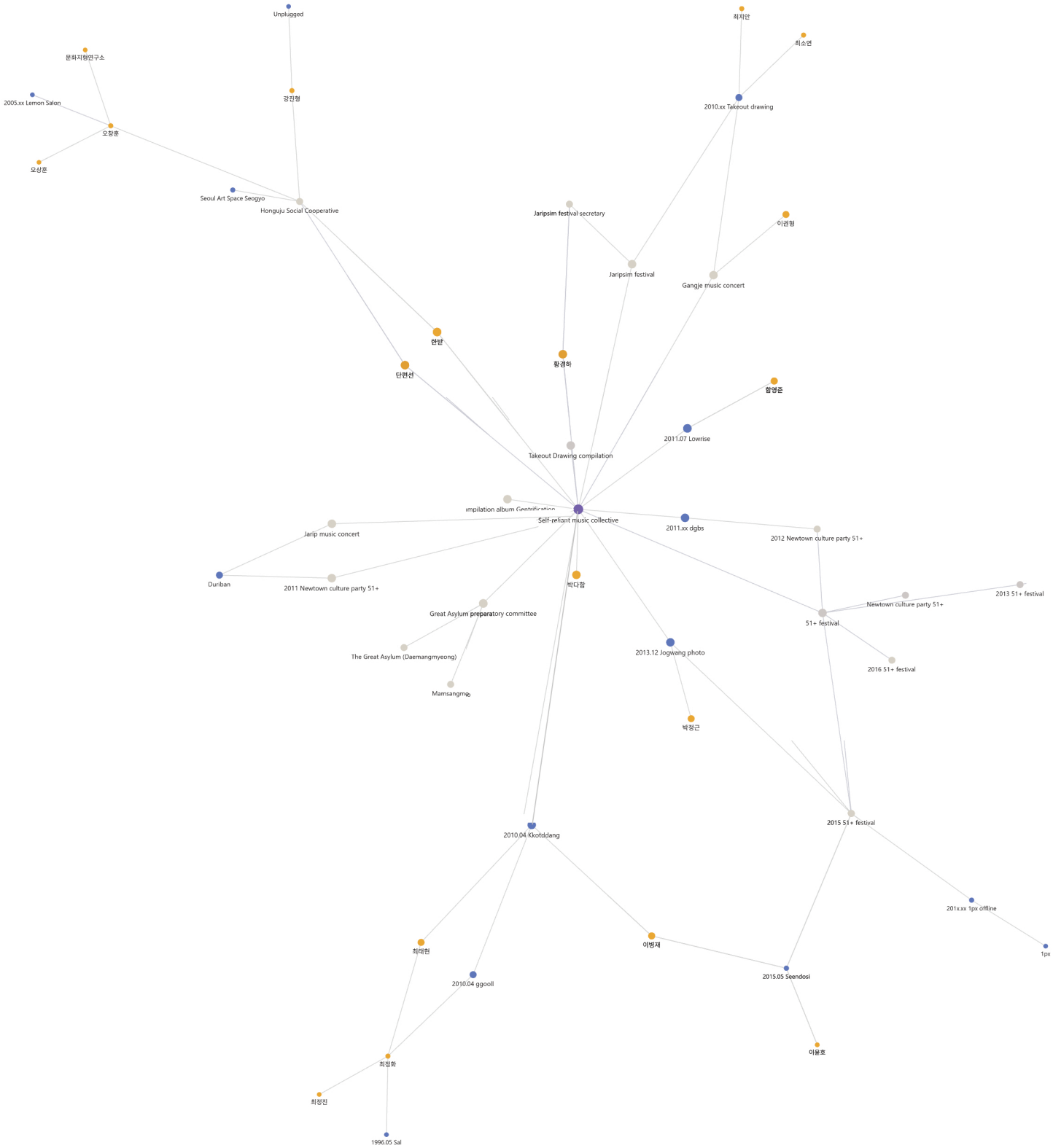




Sadly all of the places we tried to keep had to move out. We made another compilation album, Gentrification, to keep spreading the word.



Becoming each other's ground What the cooperative valued from the previous indie scene, and what they wanted to emphasise, was the relationship. Becoming a friend to musicians, and helping them make other friends, was what the collective wanted to contribute to the scene (Seo, 2015). What they observed was that it is too difficult to start producing music on one's own, even though the scene was named 'independent music'. Beginning musicians had no reliable way to enter the network, no one to connect them to the right producer, photographer, or label, and no community to fall back on when things were difficult. What the cooperative offered in place of management was each other, making peers into infrastructure. Multiple instruments were used to mobilise the network: regular gatherings created encounters between musicians who might not otherwise meet, education programmes shared knowledge about recording and production across the network, and promising musicians were actively sought out and brought in to the collective (Seo, 2015). The interdependence between musicians was what the collective pursued to make self-reliance possible in practice.


Unplugged
문화지형연구소
2005.xx Lemon Salon
오창훈
오상훈
강진형
Seoul Art Space Seogyo
Honguju Social Cooperative
최지안
최소연
2010.xx Takeout drawing
Jaripsim festival secretary
이권형
Jaripsim festival
Gangje music concert
한받
단편선
황경하
함영준
2011.07 Lowrise
Takeout Drawing compilation
ompilation album Gentrification
Self-reliant music collective
2011.xx dgbs
2012 Newtown culture party 51+
Jarip music concert
Duriban
2011 Newtown culture party 51+
박다함
Great Asylum preparatory committee
The Great Asylum (Daemangmyeong)
Mamsangmo
2013.12 Jogwang photo
박정근
Newtown culture party 51+
2013 51+ festival
51+ festival
2016 51+ festival
2015 51+ festival
2010.04 Kkotddang
201x.xx 1px offline
1px
이병재
최태현
2010.04 ggooll
2015.05 Seendosi
이윤호
최정화
최정진
1996.05 Sal

Countering systemic pressure The peer infrastructure the collective built was also their main tool against the pressure present in the music production system. As places that had incubated emerging musicians in Hongdae declined due to gentrification, the independent music production system also declined. Musicians outside mainstream industry struggled to pursue their careers, facing real costs at every stage: recording, production, distribution, and visibility all required money that most did not have (H. Jeong, 2011). The cooperative found ways to ease this burden collectively. Monthly membership fees were pooled to fund album production for members, with the cooperative taking no share of revenue (Cho, 2013). When membership fees were not enough, low-interest loans covered recording costs (H. Jeong, 2011). A regular market gave musicians a space to sell records directly and meet their audience without an intermediary (Seo, 2015). What an independent label had once offered as an alternative had evolved into a system the collective built together, forming a network and using it as infrastructure.

Resisting displacement with culture The same relational ground that sustained musicians inward also moved them outward. The cooperative stood alongside places facing displacement, claiming the right to sustain one's life under capital pressure. Marking Duriban as a starting point, they kept returning to sites of resistance, using culture as an instrument. One case was Takeout Drawing, a cafe in Hannam-dong that faced forced eviction after an ownership change. The cooperative organised festivals to raise awareness of issues in the neighbourhood, as well as held a 51+ festival in a cafe (J. Jeong, 2012). The advocacy concert at demolition sites, which started from Duriban, became a repeatable instrument, moving through the resistance sites. Throughout, members were careful to maintain their identity as musicians. As one described it, they were not a gathering of movement bands but bands that had joined a movement, and the distinction shaped how they understood their own work (J. Lee & Gu, 2014). All instruments functioned simultaneously as cultural production and solidarity toward resistance, seen in the albums produced during the resistance (Go, 2016).



Figure 3.64: Jarip music concert



Figure 3.65: 51+ festival

Finding new ground Running alongside both directions was another objective: shaping places where the cooperative could be based and lead to new cultural ground, away from the development pressures that caused displacement in Hongdae. For this, the cooperative moved through a succession of locations across different parts of Seoul, from Seokgwan to Mullae, Hannam, and Chungmuro (J. Lee & Gu, 2014). As one account described it, an exhausting journey of relocation had begun (J. Lee & Gu, 2014). Each location was chosen with care, considering spatial factors that might offer stability, followed by a promising beginning. However, different pressures emerged from unexpected directions each time, showing that avoiding one kind of threat was never enough to secure a place. What each location offered and what it could not sustain reveal further findings about the spatial factors and structural pressures that affect the persistence of cultural practice. These are examined in detail in the following subsection.

3.6.2. New ground, new vulnerabilities

Where 3.5 examined the movement of cultural places toward areas adjacent to Hongdae, this section looks at a different direction of movement. Apart from relocation to the area near Hongdae, there were attempts to form new scenes at more distant locations. The Self-Reliant Music Collective provides a useful framework, as their activities across Seokgwan, Mullae, Hannam, and Chungmuro, together with Euljiro, cover most of the areas where such attempts were made. This section examines what spatial factors were considered in choosing these areas, what forms of porosity they offered, how actors activated them, and what eventually revealed the limit of each.



Figure 3.66: dgbs, first place of Collective, in Sukgwan



Figure 3.67: Kkotddang, in Hannam



Figure 3.68: Lowrise, in Mullae



Figure 3.69: Jogwang photo+Jarip HQ, second place of Collective, in Chungmuro

Stability as added spatial factor

Seokgwan-dong was the first area the collective settled after its formation. The criteria behind that choice reveal what actors had learned from watching repeated cycles of displacement in Hongdae. The collective sought a location that was not too far from the city centre, with a sufficient potential audience of people in their twenties and thirties nearby, and with no major development planned or underway (Self-Reliant Music Collective, 2011), meaning rents were unlikely to rise for the time being. What stands out across these criteria is the explicit attention given to development pressure alongside the more familiar considerations of affordability and actor supply. Seen through the framework of this research, this reflects what the collective had absorbed from witnessing gentrification displace cultural places repeatedly. When they later settled in Chungmuro, one quality they noted was similar: that the building owner was unlikely to raise rents aggressively (D. Gu, 2016). Both considerations show that stability had become a spatial criterion in itself.



Figure 3.70: Sukgwan and its spatial condition

Diverse origins of porosity

The areas the collective moved through revealed new forms of porosity, showing different types of vacant space. The student union building in Seokgwan shared structural similarities with earlier cases: vacant space made available through network rather than market. What was different was its institutional character, a form of access that carried its own conditions and dependencies. Mullae and Euljiro offered a different kind of opening. Both were industrial areas where factories had gradually vacated, leaving behind underutilised space between and above factory floors. Occupying these spaces was a way of utilising the nuisance conditions that other uses would have avoided, which naturally kept commercial pressure away. The industrial setting also produced a specific form of temporal porosity: factories emptied at night, making the whole area available for cultural activity precisely when actors needed it. This alignment of industrial vacancy and nocturnal cultural practice was a form of porosity discovered in Mullae and Euljiro.

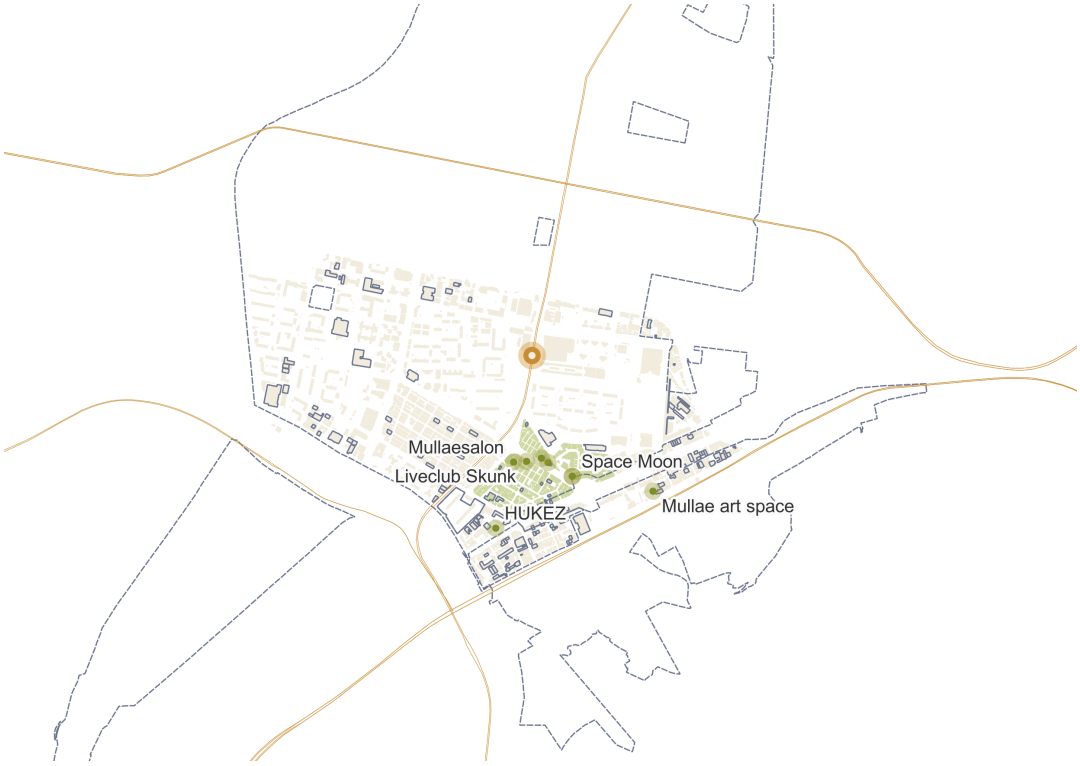


Figure 3.71: Mullae and its spatial condition

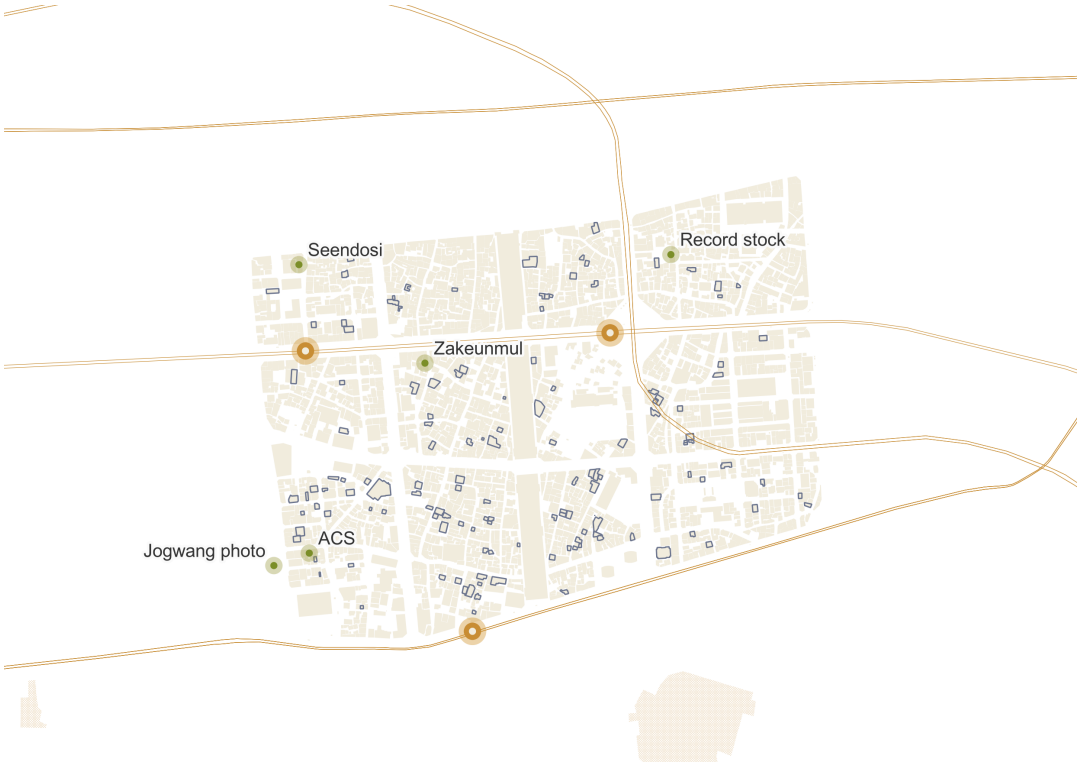


Figure 3.72: Euljiro and its spatial condition

Activating culture within porosity

The methods through which these cases acquired space are also notable. Club Daegongbunsil was made possible through collaboration with the student union at the Korea National University of Arts, which provided the space without rent in exchange for shared use (J. Lee & Gu, 2014). The conditions were strikingly similar to those of Duriban during its resistance: no rent, sustained by network, free from commercial logic. Lowrise came through a personal connection: an operator had visited an acquaintance's studio and wanted to use the building as a club. The request was refused at the time, but the acquaintance made contact when it later became available (J. Lee & Gu, 2014). Kkotddang was carved out of an underused basement floor of Kkul, a cultural complex run by the operator's father (J. Lee & Gu, 2014). Jokwang Photography Studio and Jarip HQ came about when a friend who ran the studio proposed sharing the space (A. Lee, 2016). In every case, the space was obtained through personal connection rather than market transaction, which confirmed that the stability they had been looking for was achievable outside the commercial rental market.



Figure 3.73: Park who shared space with Collective

The way these spaces were used also showed something original. Across the series of 51+ festivals held at different locations, performances shared one distinctive trait: the festival made full use of the building, spreading performances across every available level, including upper floors, lower floors, rooftops, and courtyards simultaneously. Where most performances occupied a single floor, the festival used vertical layering to produce a density of cultural activity that the space alone could not have generated. It was a way of making a modest space perform beyond its size.



Figure 3.74: Duriban during 51+



Figure 3.75: Student union building in K-Arts during 51+



Figure 3.76: Takeout drawing g during 51+

What threatened them

None of the four places remained, and the reasons for closure differed in each case (J. Lee & Gu, 2014). Club Daegongbunsil was undone not by rent but by institutional friction. Relations with the student body that shared the building reached the end of their term, and as the student union changed and opposition from students grew, there was no longer ground for the club to continue. Lowrise faced noise complaints from neighbouring factories and residents. Soundproofing work was attempted but proved insufficient, and the collective eventually had to leave (Siu, 2017). Kkotddang had a predetermined end: the operator had known from the beginning that the building was scheduled for redevelopment and planned to use the space only until the contract ran its course. The closure of Jokwang Photography Studio and Jarip HQ is not fully documented, but from Hwang Gyeongha's account, real estate interest moved into the Chungmuro and Euljiro area almost immediately after the first distinctive cultural places appeared (D. Gu, 2016). Capital had learned through Hongdae that cultural places signal rising land value, and had begun moving in anticipation rather than in response.

The limit of dispersal

Seen at area scale, the four areas ended in different phases. Seokgwan-dong never accumulated enough to form a scene, stopping before a supportive environment could develop. The collective's base did not last long enough, and few other places joined. The one that did was a branch of Yri Cafe, opened as a considered move while rent pressure in Sangsu-dong was rising. Yri has remained in Seokgwan, which suggests the stability the area offered was real. But its distance from central Seoul kept actor supply too thin for a scene to consolidate.

Mullae could go further. Artists had already begun forming studios there, several moving from Hongdae (D. Park, 2014), before clubs and salons followed. A government-supported cultural complex was also established, and a cluster of cultural places eventually formed. Whether it crossed into a reproduction phase is questionable, since capital attention arrived quite soon. Tension also emerged between artists and factory workers over noise and disruption (Siu, 2017), showing a different kind of friction from what had threatened places in Hongdae. Some places continue to operate, but the possibility that cultural production was interrupted before it could fully establish remains open.

In Hannam-dong, cultural places gathered for a period, but capital pressure arrived before the scene could consolidate. The displacement of Takeout Drawing illustrates the pattern. The cafe had secured an agreement with the landowner to extend its contract, but that agreement lost its force when the building was sold, repeating the same structural vulnerability that had appeared in earlier cases in Hongdae (J. Jeong, 2016). In Chungmuro and Euljiro, cultural places have appeared and persisted, but whether they are moving through a reproduction phase or have already been interrupted remains unresolved. Both areas face large-scale urban development, and part of Euljiro is already undergoing it, which makes the persistence of cultural production there uncertain.

The circumstances of all four areas echo one actor's observation that no alternative to Hongdae has yet emerged. Individual places have moved, but clusters have not formed at distance: there is no place where they are gathered, only points scattered outward (H. Jung, 2016). Another noted that no ecosystem in Seoul is as centred on creators as Hongdae, and that however much it has changed, it remains the last stronghold (Seo, 2026). The density of cultural places remains highest in Hongdae and its immediate surroundings. The possibility of a new scene forming further away remains open, but unconfirmed by what has happened so far.

3.6.3. Collected cases

ACTOR

Observations about how relationships among actors form within cultural ecology. Each finding captures the collective character of cultural production through the depth of the relational process.

INTERACTION

Findings that describe how actors come into contact and develop familiarity. Each finding captures the process that gives rise to different stages of connection.

ENCOUNTER

Findings that describe how actors first come into contact. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another.

3 referenced by place

A place mediates the encounter between an actor and a wider network or audience, producing an opportunity the actor could not have initiated alone.

Walsh, A. (2013, July 8). Indie music venue Powwow in Itaewon to shut down. Korea JoongAng Daily. *creator account of Alex Ameter, owner of Powwow*

> *I saw an offer from Sean Maylone. He said 'There's a music venue closing down, does anybody want this? Is anybody interested?'*

LOCAL FRIENDSHIP TIES

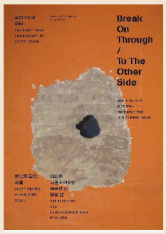
Findings that describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity. Each finding captures the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.

3 place-born collaboration

Sustained co-presence in the same place draws actors into close working proximity, where personal familiarity develops into shared creative work.

벨레매거진. (2021, April 23). 을지로의 습격. brunch. *scene account about Seendosi*

> *Before Seendosi, the founder ran Kkotddang in Itaewon. He sold drinks and held performances there, and met Lee Yoonho, a regular at Kkotddang. They naturally grew close and spent time together. After closing Kkotddang and during the break, the two of them talked about doing another bar together. Half-joke half-serious at first, the idea gradually took shape and they opened Seendosi.*





4 inter-place symbiosis

A bond formed between two places or their operators through sustained exchange, where the practices and outputs of one become embedded in the other.

이아림. (2016, October). 음악과 사진과 사람의 아지트 '조광사진관'. 문화서울. *creator account of Park Jeongguen, owner of Jogwang Photo Studio*

> *The space was wider than one person could use, so we shared it with the Self-Reliant Music Collective, who needed both a venue and an office space.*



양유경. (n.d.). 재미를 좇아서, 공연장의 대표가 되기까지. 아로리. *creator account of Lee Jaehoon, owner of Soundmind*

> *There was a venue called Powwow in the Gyeongnidan-gil area of Itaewon — now gone — and we actually took over the equipment they were disposing of.*



함영준. (2013, April 24). 문래동 예술촌은 '시한부' 성업중. 한겨레. *creator account of Lee Semi, owner of Studio Zemi*

> *What makes Mullae different from Hongdae is also the atmosphere of friendship between spaces.*



PLACE

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology. Each finding captures a characteristic that enables cultural relations to emerge, accumulate, or persist.

SPATIAL FACTORS

Spatial findings about places that support cultural ecology.

CONDITION

Fixed spatial characteristics that enable cultural activity to find ground.

POROSITY

Spatial characteristics that leave room for cultural activity to occupy. Each finding captures how a space remains open to uses that exceed its original purpose.

1 underutilised space

Buildings or land not at full capacity, available for informal conversion into cultural places at low cost.

철들지 않는 공대 교수. (2025, July 5). 문래동 철공소 골목 기록. brunch. *contextual record about Mullae*

> *From the late 1990s, empty spaces increased, and artists looking for cheap working spaces began turning their eyes toward Mullae-dong. Monthly rent there at the time was around 100,000–300,000 won.*





3 university proximity

The proximity of a university provides a steady supply of students and graduates who form an initial audience and social base for cultural places.

강진수, 이주현. (2014, April 28). 서로에게 전염되는 예술가들을 위한 평상. KARTS News. *creator account of Kim Sangwoo, owner of Yri Cafe Seokgwan*

> *The second reason was Korea National University of Arts. That's where the best artists in the country gather to study.*



양유경. (n.d.). 재미를 좇아서, 공연장의 대표가 되기까지. 아로리. *creator account of Lee Jaehoon, owner of Soundmind*

> *While planning Soundmind, I went to see what kind of music Seoul National University students were making. There seemed to be more students creating original music than when I was there. The place where we met and where we made music together was Seoul National University. I lived in Nakseongdae for about five years. So Nakseongdae as the location for our venue felt natural — it was where we met.*



자립음악생산자모임. (2011, January 16). 클럽 대공분실을 소개합니다. *scene account about DGBS*

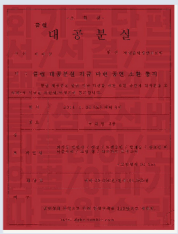
> *Not too far from the city centre. With a sufficient potential audience of people in their twenties and thirties nearby.*

안가현. (2021, May 25). 그래도 우리는 살아간다. 서울시립대학신문. *contextual record about Mullae*

> *The empty second and third floors of the iron goods buildings became excellent studios for artists displaced by high rents near Hongdae.*

자립음악생산자모임. (2011, January 16). 클럽 대공분실을 소개합니다. *scene account about DGBS*

> *We heard there was an empty space in the basement of the gifted education centre at the Korea National University of Arts — a building outside the school gate, in an ambiguous position between campus and street.*



이아림. (2016, October). 음악과 사진과 사람의 아지트 '조광사진관'. 문화서울. *scene account about Jogwang Photo neighbourhood*

> *The buildings are somewhat old but the rent is cheaper than elsewhere — so many individual practitioners have moved in.*



2 affordability

The degree to which the cost of occupying a space remains within reach for cultural producers, enabling them to establish their place.

Ham, Y. (2013, April 24). 문래동 예술촌은 '시한부' 성업중. 한겨레. *creator account of Ham Youngjun, owner of Lowrise*

> *The greatest cheerleader keeping us going was the low rent. Collecting a small daily entrance fee was just enough to keep up with it.*



강진수, 이주현. (2014, April 28). 서로에게 전염되는 예술가들을 위한 평상. KARTS News. *creator account of Kim Sangwoo, owner of Yri Cafe Seokgwan*

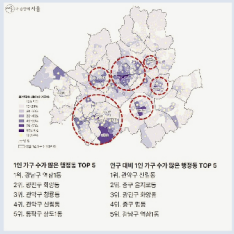
> *The first reason was rent. Sangsu-dong had become too expensive. Sangsu-dong and Seokgwan-dong differ in land price by about three times.*

정재원. (2016, September 8). 테이크아웃드로잉 폐점... 소유하지 않아도 주인이다. 뉴스타파. *creator account of Choi Soyeon, owner of Takeout Drawing*

> *In spring 2010, having lost their space again to a landlord's behaviour and unwilling to repeat the experience, the Takeout Drawing operators searched for a long time and found a building in Hannam-dong. The area had not yet been developed and rent was cheap.*

김원표. (2016, September 8). 젠트리피케이션과 인디뮤지션. brunch. *scene account about Sinlim*

> *Both spaces settled in Sinlim because of common reasoning — the area has high population density and a high proportion of young single-person households, which they thought made it a good place to start something new.*



QUALITY

Characteristics of a place that emerge through the inhabitation of cultural production.

CULTURAL VITALITY

The activeness of cultural production within a place. Each finding captures the elements that indicate the intensity of interaction among actors.

1 curatorial presence

The degree to which an operator's taste and selectivity is materially expressed in the space, signalling affinity before any word is exchanged.

과객. (n.d.). 주요 인디클럽 약도. *participant account about Led Zeppelin*

> *The first thing that catches your eye when you walk into Led Zeppelin are the many LPs. Mostly old rock and blues, plus many CDs — you can hear a lot of good music there.*



3 lived traces

The degree to which surfaces accumulate evidence of past inhabitation, making the history of a place visible and legible to those who arrive later.

이선주. (2010, December). 최정화 씨가 만든 복합문화공간 '꿀'. TopClass. *creator account of Choi Jeonghwa, owner of Ggooll*

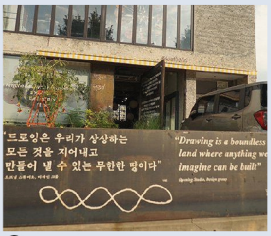
> *What I liked was the way the building loops back to itself like a Möbius strip or an Escher work. You couldn't build this even if you tried. Back then people just kept adding on as life required, and that's how it became this kind of building. The layers of accumulated time were really beautiful.*

4 area identity

The degree to which a place is recognised for a specific cultural character, attracting actors who share that sensibility and reinforcing their collective presence.

안가현. (2021, May 25). 그래도 우리는 살아간다. 서울시립대학신문. *scene account about Mullae*

> *From the mid-2000s, artists displaced by high rents near Hongdae began settling in Mullae-dong, gradually giving the district its identity as an arts area.*



3 fluidity

A spatial arrangement that dissolves fixed boundaries between roles or functions, allowing different uses and users to co-exist without hierarchy.

함영준. (2013, April 24). 문래동 예술촌은 '시한부' 성업중. 한겨레. *creator account of Ham Youngjun, owner of Lowrise*

> *While stubbornly holding on, we began to be given chances to put other things on the stage besides concerts. Independent magazine launch parties, exhibitions by young photographers, contemporary dance by choreographers all happened in our space. We made room for improvising musicians too.*

이현. (2015, July). 젊은 '자생공간' 뜬다. Art in Culture. *scene account about Seendosi*

> *When the shopkeepers leave and the sun goes down, a 'new city' really opens up at Seendosi. By reservation, you can hold all kinds of concerts, parties, workshops, pop-up kitchens — even film screenings on the rooftop.*



5 temporal vacancy [NEW — add to bible]

Gu, D. (2016, October 19). 인디 뮤지션들 홍대앞 떠나 망명했지만.... 한겨레. *participant account about Euljiro*

> *At night there are no people around, so even loud music draws no complaints.*

전호일. (2024, April 7). 서울의 마지막 공업지대. 한겨레. *participant account about Mullae*

> *The daytime belonged to the metalworkers, the night to the artists — so there was little reason to clash. It was uncomfortable, but they had found a way to coexist.*

이아림. (2016, October). 음악과 사진과 사람의 아지트 '조광사진관'. 문화서울. *scene account about Jogwang Photo*

> *On weekends many shops in the area are closed, so we can carry out various activities then. Most Chungmuro photo studios close around 8pm, and we hold our practices after 8pm.*



ACTOR SUPPLY

Spatial characteristics of a place's surroundings that channel actors toward it.



STABILITY

The capacity of a place to maintain its foundations over time.

1 off-centre

A location removed from the main commercial strip, where lower capital pressure and lower visibility allow cultural places to maintain their place.

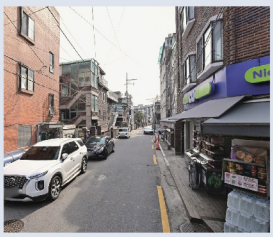
구둘래. (2016, November 14). 초기 망명지 문래동 5년새 월세 2배로. 한겨레. *creator account of Lee Seunghyuk, owner of Space Moon*

> *From the very beginning we looked for somewhere that wasn't Hongdae. Hongdae street had already become commercialised — it wasn't a place to try anything different anymore.*



자립음악생산자모임. (2011, January 16). 클럽 대공분실을 소개합니다. *scene account about DGBS*

> *No major development planned or underway — meaning rents are unlikely to rise for the time being.*



2 nuisance barrier

Affordability sustained by an industrial or physical deterrent that keeps development pressure away.

함영준. (2013, April 24). 문래동 예술촌은 '시한부' 성업중. 한겨레. *participant account about Mullae*

> *Low-rise commercial buildings no taller than three storeys, each unit housing a small metal-grinding factory. Rust-stained alleyways, the sparks of welders never ceasing.*



2 spillover

A significant event or newly established place draws new actors into the surrounding area, increasing cultural density beyond what was already there.

안가현. (2021, May 25). 그래도 우리는 살아간다. 서울시립대학신문. *scene account about Mullae*

> *From the mid-2000s, artists displaced by high rents near Hongdae began settling in Mullae-dong, gradually giving the district its identity as an arts area.*

이아림. (2016, October). 음악과 사진과 사람의 아지트 '조광사진관'. 문화서울. *scene account about Chungmuro/Euljiro*

> *The area where Jogwang Photo sits — Chungmuro 2-ga between Myeongdong station and Chungmuro station, also close to Euljiro 3-ga, stretching toward Cheonggyecheon and Iksun-dong — has had young artists' studios, small design studios, and neighbourhood bookshops settling in over the past few years. Some of these workspace-cafe-bars have gotten attention as 'rising' spaces.*

CONTEXT

The structural and historical conditions within which cultural ecology operates. Each finding captures a pressure or effect that shapes the ground on which cultural places stand.

STRUCTURAL PRESSURE

Conditions that threaten the continued existence of cultural places.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

1 ownership change

A change in building ownership that introduces new terms of tenure, often disrupting established cultural use.

구둘래. (2016, November 14). 초기 망명지 문래동 5년새 월세 2배로. 한겨레. *participant account about Mullae*

> *Three years into Mullae-dong, the building owner is changing this month. It makes me anxious beyond words.*

2 rent gap

구둘래. (2016, November 14). 초기 망명지 문래동 5년새 월세 2배로. 한겨레. *scene account about Mullae*

> *Five years ago rents were half what they are now — gentrification has arrived in Mullae-dong too.*

3 anticipatory gentrification [NEW — add to bible]

Gu, D. (2016, October 19). 인디 뮤지션들 홍대앞 떠나 망명했지만.... 한겨레. *participant account about Euljiro*

> *As soon as the Self-Reliant Headquarters and a few distinctive bars moved in, real estate agents had already caught on and started speculative property operations.*



2 neighbour opposition

이진혁, 구보라. (n.d.). 클럽 로라이즈 노이즈 컴플레인. *scene account about Lowrise*

> *The next was the Mullae-dong club Lowrise. It couldn't last long because of noise complaints. They held a social crowdfunding for about 6 million won for soundproofing, but the amount was far short of what would be needed to actually block noise complaints.*

EFFECT

Observed outcomes of structural pressure on cultural places and their communities.

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

2 commercial marginalisation

The process by which rising costs exclude cultural producers from an area they helped make desirable.

구둘래. (2016, November 14). 초기 망명지 문래동 5년새 월세 2배로. 한겨레. *scene account about Mullae*

> *Gentrification has arrived in Mullae-dong too — rents have doubled compared to five years ago.*

REGULATORY

Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

1 crackdown

Walsh, A. (2013, July 8). Indie music venue Powwow in Itaewon to shut down. Korea JoongAng Daily. *creator account of Alex Ameter*

> *When we transferred ownership it became apparent it would be impossible to renew the alcohol licence. When we went to the office they said it was not legal for us to sell alcohol, which we had been doing. Since October, Powwow has been run as a dry venue*

Kimjakga. (2016, March 14). 홍대문화의 비극, 이리카페의 운명. 경향신문. *scene account about Hannam Usan-gil*

> *Even on Hannam-dong's Usan-gil, where there is still no commercial district to speak of, the Stairs Market suspended operations indefinitely — because speculators were already manoeuvring in anticipation of the area becoming the next hot spot.*



Gu, D. (2016, October 19). 인디 뮤지션들 홍대앞 떠나 망명했지만.... 한겨레. *participant account about Sungsu*

> *They say Sungsu is the hot spot now, but the rent was higher than I expected.*

REGULATORY

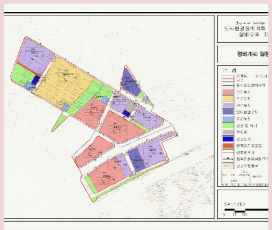
Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

3 planning designation

A formal planning or zoning decision that exposes cultural places to redevelopment pressure or displacement.

함영준. (2013, April 24). 문래동 예술촌은 '시한부' 성업중. 한겨레. *scene account about Mullae*

> *Seoul city designated the Mullae-dong area as an urban renewal zone. Once demolition begins, small factories and artists alike will have to leave.*



4 legal protection gap

The absence of legal mechanisms that would protect cultural places from displacement.

안가현. (2021, May 25). 그래도 우리는 살아간다. 서울시립대학신문. *scene account about Mullae*

> *Venues registered as general restaurants cannot access the support available to spaces registered as performance venues. All losses from the period have had to be absorbed directly.*



CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

> *— losing the revenue from alcohol sales and the patrons who wanted to drink with shows. The losses increased and I coughed up more money to counter them.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

3 tenure support

정재원. (2016, September 8). 테이크아웃드로잉 폐점. 뉴스타파. *creator account of Choi Soyeon, owner of Takeout Drawing*

> *The Japanese landlord was trustworthy. He said in Japan, tenants can renew their contract as long as they wish, and he promised long-term operation. For people looking for somewhere to stay stably for ten years or more, it was like a gift. The landlord's promise was reflected in the contract as a special clause — 'the contract is renewed annually if the tenant wishes.'*

이아림. (2016, October). 음악과 사진과 사람의 아지트 '조광사진관'. 문화서울. *participant account about Jogwang Photo*

> *Landlords here aren't the kind of upstart wealthy who push rents up unreasonably, like Hongdae landlords often are.*

INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions by actors that initiate, deepen, or sustain relationships and places — countering structural pressure through capital, regulatory, systemic, and contextual means.

PLACE-ARRANGING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that shape the spatial ground of cultural ecology.

INITIATING ACTOR SUPPLY

Deliberate actions that shape the environment where new actors can easily enter a place.

1 open place

An operator deliberately lowers the physical threshold for entry, opening the place to a wider population of potential visitors.

이아림. (2016, October). 음악과 사진과 사람의 아지트 '조광사진관'. 문화서울. *creator account of Park Jeongguen, owner of Jogwang Photo*

> *Many people want to rent the space. We lend it out at a low price to people filming videos.*

ACTIVATING CULTURAL VITALITY

Deliberate actions that generate or intensify the relational and creative exchange between actors.

1 naming

Assigning a name that signals a specific cultural commitment, setting the place's unique identity.

정재원. (2016, September 8). 테이크아웃드로잉 폐점. 뉴스타파. *creator account of Choi Soyeon, owner of Takeout Drawing*

> *The operators including Choi named the cafe 'Takeout Drawing' — meaning to enjoy artwork (drawing), normally locked inside museums, as casually as coffee.*



2 self-making

Directly fabricating the physical elements of a space, embedding personal taste and care into its material character.

이선주. (2010, December). 최정화 씨가 만든 복합문화공간 '꿀'. TopClass. *creator account of Choi Jeonghwa, owner of Ggooll*

> *They didn't do a refined renovation on the building. Just replaced broken windows, fixed the heating and electrical systems, and gave it a deep cleaning. Only a deep cleanse — leaving the traces of life carried by the building itself.*

CAPITAL

Deliberate actions that directly address economic pressure on cultural places.

2 collective funding

Members pool resources to establish a place without relying on individual capital or commercial backing.

함영준. (2013, April 24). 문래동 예술촌은 '시한부' 성업중. 한겨레. *creator account of Ham Youngjun, owner of Lowrise*

> *In summer 2011, I gathered money with friends and rented a small space in Mullae-dong.*

희원. (2014, March 6). 라운드 테이블 패널 인터뷰: 박다함. 공공그라운드. *creator account of Park Daham*

> *So I told the building owner — if you won't rent it, let me know when you leave, I'll go in. They actually called me. Right when the Duriban negotiation was wrapping up. Six of us I knew put in deposits together and went in right away. That was Lowrise.*

자립음악생산자모임. (2011, January 16). 클럽 대공분실을 소개합니다. *scene account about DGBS*

> *We later realised that to install equipment suitable for practice, performance, and recording, we would need more cash than expected.*

3 cultural patronage

A corporation directs capital toward cultural support, creating infrastructure that individual operators could not sustain alone.

천재용. (2012). 전자쌀롱 interview. 조선일보. *creator account of Cheon Jaeyong, owner of Jeonja Salon*

> *Jeonja Salon is a space prepared by the operators of the club Ssam — which ran for thirteen years in Hongdae before closing last year due to its parent company Ssamzie's financial difficulties — with the help of Yongsan Electronics Land.*

함영준. (2013). 문래예술공장. *scene account about Mullae Art Space*

> *Mullae Art Space, opened in January 2010 as one of Seoul Creative Spaces, supports the Mullae creative village and serves as a laboratory for emerging artists' experiments and production. It also runs regional research and public environment projects, an emerging artist support programme, and international exchange programmes including the International Sound Art Workshop.*



4 cooperative operation

A place run collectively by members who each maintain separate livelihoods.



오도함. (2013, November 12). 룩커 오도함이 들려주는 전설적인 술집 이야기. 네이버 블로그. *scene account about Kkotddang*

> *Originally Kkotddang was just a bar, with Choi Jeonghwa's warehouse next door. All sorts of baskets and Buddha figures were rotting away with mould inside. One day everything in the warehouse was moved out and a hole was cut through the wall with a pickaxe to make a performance space. According to the myth that gets passed around, Part Time Suite and Choi Taehyun did the pickaxing themselves — and I came to believe that was one of Part Time Suite's most beautiful works.*



4 utilising space

An actor activates a space beyond its designated function, generating cultural vitality where it did not exist before.

이아림. (2016, October). 음악과 사진과 사람의 아지트 '조광사진관'. 문화서울. *creator account of Park Jeongguen, owner of Jogwang Photo*

> *Jogwang Photo Studio functions as an actual photo studio during weekdays. On weekend evenings, performances of the kind you'd normally see in Hongdae take place here. The Self-Reliant Music Collective shares the space, and on weekends the basement shakes with concerts, workshops, and music-related events.*

함영준. (2013). 문래예술공장. *scene account about Mullae Art Space*

> *While other Seoul creative spaces concentrate on visual arts, Mullae Art Space has given generous support to unfamiliar genres like sound, media, and performance. There's a reason the 51+ Festival — which 'occupies' the entire building from basement parking to rooftop, filling it with music — is held here.*



5 vertical layering

An operator stacks distinct cultural functions vertically within a single building.

이선주. (2010, December). 최정화 씨가 만든 복합문화공간 '꼴'. TopClass. *scene account about Ggooll*

> *The semi-basement and rooftop connected to Ggooll serve as a creative residency for young artists, as exhibition space, and as a planning office. Run in collaboration with the alternative space Pool, new artists move in every six months to produce work and hold exhibitions.*

이아림. (2016, October). 음악과 사진과 사람의 아지트 '조광사진관'. 문화서울. *creator account of Park Jeongguen, owner of Jogwang Photo*

> *The space was wider than one person could use, so we shared it with the Self-Reliant Music Collective, who needed a venue and an office space. The studio operates as a photo studio during weekdays, and from evenings on becomes the collective's space.*

5 economy of intimacy

An operator prioritises cultural production over profit, sustaining the place with minimum or no profit.

Walsh, A. (2013, July 8). Indie music venue Powwow in Itaewon to shut down. Korea JoongAng Daily. *creator account of Alex Ameter, owner of Powwow*

> *Powwow is a not-for-profit music space that focuses on Korean independent music. What little profit it makes from the shows is funnelled back into the venue and used to pay bands. Ameter continued to book smaller bands that he thought deserved the exposure rather than headline acts that would draw large crowds. Our entire income was based on the door so booking small bands wasn't good for our bottom line. But it was a choice we made.*

양유경. (n.d.). 재미를 좇아서, 공연장의 대표가 되기까지. 아로리. *creator account of Lee Jaehoon, owner of Soundmind*

> *If we could run things properly with food and drinks, we could put on the shows we wanted without too much burden. If we kept relying on profitable performances to survive, we probably wouldn't have enjoyed any of it. The most important thing is fun. So we started serving alcohol and food.*

6 negotiation

Actors directly negotiate with landlords, planning offices, or other stakeholders to secure continued operation.

정재원. (2016, September 8). 테이크아웃드로잉 폐점. 뉴스타파. *creator account of Choi Soyeon, owner of Takeout Drawing*

> *The landlord's promise was reflected in a special clause in the contract: 'the contract is renewed annually if the tenant wishes.' Then they put a significant sum into renovating the two floors that had been a meat restaurant and hung up the Takeout Drawing sign again — the third start.*

REGULATORY

Deliberate actions that directly address legal or administrative pressure on cultural practices.

3 institutional alliance

Actors work with public administration or politicians to redirect institutional capacity toward protecting cultural places.

이진혁, 구보라. (2014). DGBS partnership note. *scene account about DGBS*

> *The collective made an agreement with the KARTS student council and club federation to use the empty Daegongbunshil space inside the school from 2011.*

자립음악생산자모임. (2011, January 16). 클럽 대공분실을 소개합니다. *scene account about DGBS*

> *We heard that if we negotiated with the KARTS club federation, we could use the space without too much difficulty. We opened a channel with them right away, and got back the answer: 'let's run the space together.'*

4 regulatory workaround

6 playground for community

A group of actors with existing bonds deliberately establishes a physical place to anchor their shared practice.

자립음악생산자모임. (2011, January 16). 클럽 대공분실을 소개합니다. *scene account about DGBS*

> *We came to the conclusion that it would be better for individual musicians to combine their small forces and build and use a space directly.*

7 investment on music

An operator strips back the space to performance alone, making the act of watching the only reason to be there.

피앤에이치디자인. (2017, February 3). 문래동 스컹크. 네이버 블로그. *scene account about Liveclub Skunk Mullae*

> *Max, from Texas, performs in bands and as a solo artist. He also works as a bartender at Skunk Bar.*

8 succession

The place sustains its cultural character across changes in location and ownership.

성난아재. (2022, August 10). 한국 DIY 음악의 본거지 GBN Live House가 문을 닫다. Visla magazine. *scene account about GBN Live House*

> *Alternative Space Moon 2011-2013. Space Moon 2014-2015. GBN 2016-. Folks, I've held out the longest.*



김원표. (2016, September 8). 젠트리피케이션과 인디뮤지션. brunch. *scene account about GBN*

> *Mullae-dong's GBN can be understood as a case where the flow of punk music — which started at Drug, passed through Skunk Hell — settled in.*

MAINTAINING STABILITY

Deliberate actions that maintain the foundations of a place over time.

2 handover

An actor takes over a space from an acquaintance whose stable operation has already been established.

과객. (n.d.). 주요 인디클럽 약도. *participant account about Led Zeppelin*

> *The current owner of Led Zeppelin used to frequent a music room called F-Hakjeom. He took it over in March 1990 — that became the predecessor of today's Led Zeppelin. Later in 1992, Led Zeppelin opened.*

4 relocation

An operator presents the place under a different surface identity than its actual practice, sidestepping regulation or opposition.

오도함. (2013, November 12). 록커 오도함이 들려주는 전설적인 술집 이야기. 네이버 블로그. *scene account about Kkotddang*

> *The site for Kkotddang was already scheduled for redevelopment. Bluntly speaking, the rent at Kkotddang itself was free, so they could do a lot of unprofitable things. No one is quite sure why it was free. The story goes that the landlord either suddenly got struck by lightning or was just a person of remarkable temperament.*

SYSTEMIC

Deliberate actions that directly address the dominance of mainstream culture.

4 open stage

A place opens its stage without professional threshold, directly countering mainstream gatekeeping.

함영준. (2013, April 24). 문래동 예술촌은 '시한부' 성업중. 한겨레. *creator account of Ham Youngjun, owner of Lowrise*

> *I opened Club Lowrise and held two or three concerts a month.*



이현. (2015, July). 젊은 '자생공간' 뜬다. Art in Culture. *scene account about Seendosi*

> *In just over a month since opening in May, Seendosi has already hosted the launch of the journal Wet Magazine, the album release concert of musician Weather, the third anniversary party of label Young Project, and the 5th National Self-Reliant Musicians' Conference 51+.*



5 scene infrastructure

A place offers a broader set of interconnected programmes, serving as sustaining infrastructure for the scene.

조수민. (2013). 자립음악생산조합. *scene account about DGBS*

> *The Self-Reliant Music Production Collective expresses its identity through diverse activities. Their base is Club Daegongbunshil in the basement of the KARTS student hall in Seokgwan-dong. There they hold record production workshops to share know-how on album production, and Self-Reliant music gatherings.*

함영준. (2013). 문래예술공장. *scene account about Mullae Art Space*

> *In Mullae-dong, many artists could direct toward creation the energy that would otherwise have gone toward sustaining their livelihood.*

An actor moves to a new location where more stable settlement is expected.

문래문화살롱 instagram. (2022, March). *scene account about Mullaesalon*

> *Today I have important news to share — Mullae Cultural Salon, which has continued holding performances in one location for eight years, is moving.*

STRUCTURE-COUNTERING INSTRUMENT

Deliberate actions that directly address structural pressure on cultural places.

6 fair distribution

Actors organise compensation arrangements that route a fair share of revenue to musicians and crew.

Walsh, A. (2013, July 8). Indie music venue Powwow in Itaewon to shut down. Korea JoongAng Daily. *creator account of Alex Ameter*

> *Powwow is a not-for-profit music space that focuses on Korean independent music. What little profit it makes from the shows is funnelled back into the venue and used to pay bands.*

CONTEXTUAL

Deliberate actions that directly address historical, social, or political circumstances constraining cultural production.

1 volume restriction

An operator limits the volume or intensity of programming in response to neighbour pressure.

이진혁, 구보라. (n.d.). Lowrise note. *scene account about Lowrise*

> *Lowrise couldn't last long because of noise complaints. They held a social crowdfunding for about 6 million won for soundproofing, but the amount was far short of what would be needed to block the complaints.*

4

Design exploration

4.1. Site analysis

4.1.1. Analytical framework

To apply findings from the case study to spatial design, the spatial factors identified across cases needed to be translated into mappable layers. This translation proceeded in three steps: the theoretical status of place, the key values that group spatial factors, and the spatial elements that represent those values.

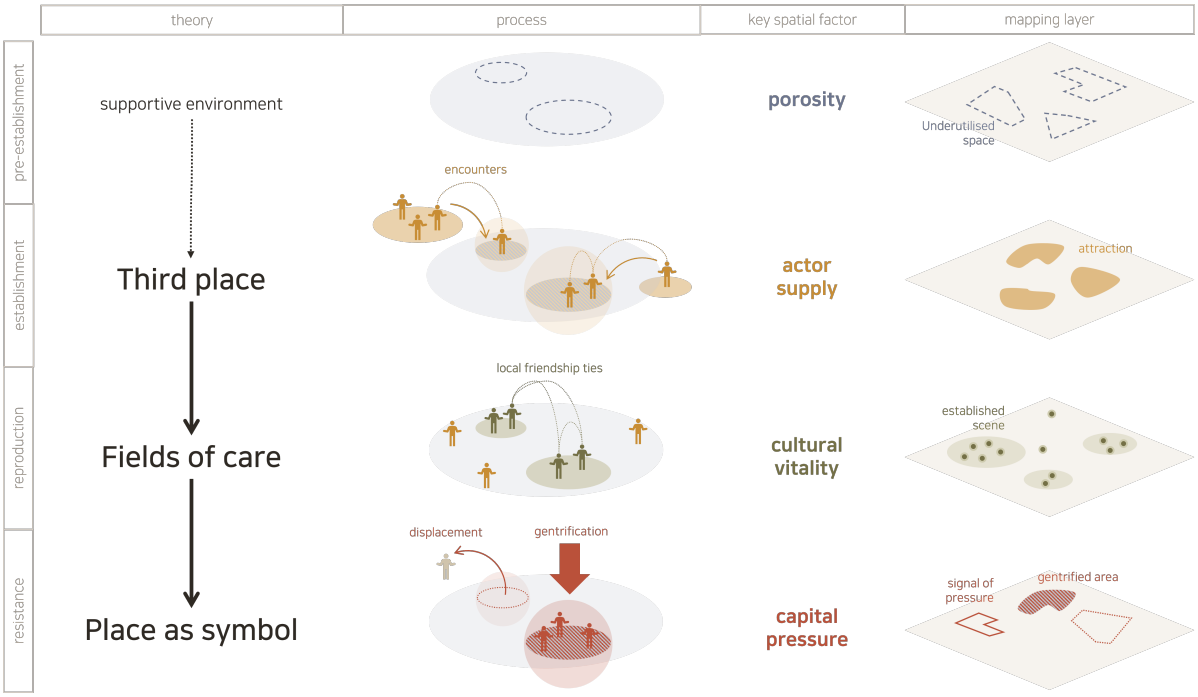


Figure 4.1: Steps to bring out relevant spatial data

4.1.2. Spatial indicators

Porosity

Porosity describes how open a space is to different uses. It is the initial condition that determines whether cultural practice can take place at all. Two spatial elements indicate porosity used for spatial analysis.

Underutilised space To show the underutilised space, different spatial data have been applied. Building age serves as one proxy, as older buildings tend to be passed over for commercial and residential investment while remaining accessible to those capable of arranging their own space. Semi-industrial land-use designation serves as another example: as seen in the cases of Mullae and Euljiro, the departure of factories from the city left behind space that cultural producers could appropriate. Vacancy rate, measured as the ratio of unoccupied commercial floor space per district, gives a more direct reading of available space. Source for spatial data is like this:

- building year: how old the building is. The start date of use per building is used.
- semi-industrial area: area designated as semi-industrial in terms of land use. land use data is used
- vacancy rate: ratio of vacant space in buildings for shops, aggregated per commercial district. Statistical data was joined with the metro station point.

Affordability For affordability, single-statistic data has been used. Since cultural practice tends to occupy small spaces, the average rent for small shops is used as the indicator. The data is organised by commercial district and joined to metro station points, visualised as a one-kilometre isochrone for each station.

Combined, the porosity of the commercial district in Seoul is shown like this:

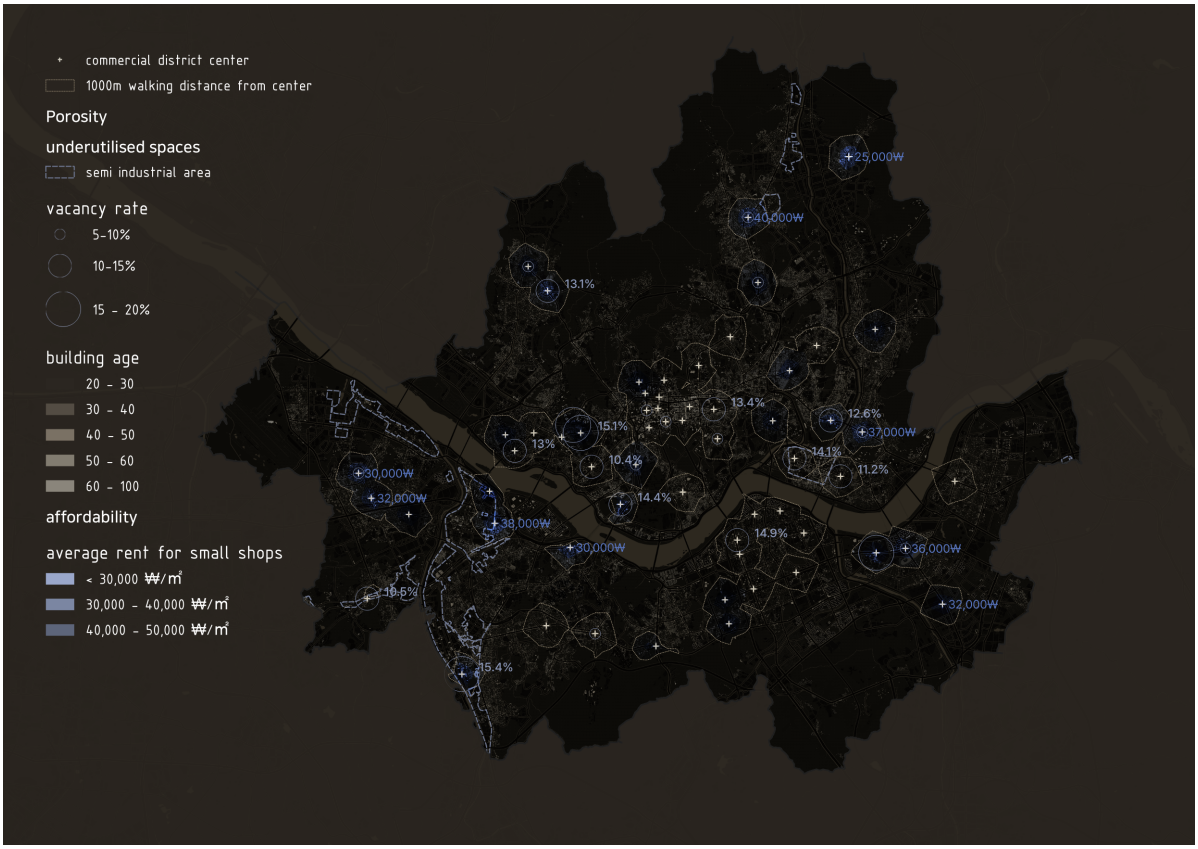


Figure 4.2: Porosity

Actor Supply
Porosity alone does not produce a supportive environment. Actor supply describes whether there is enough draw to bring people to an area who may become involved in cultural production.

University proximity As seen in the cases of Daehakro, Sinchon, and Hongdae, universities supply a large and regularly renewed population with high potential for cultural production. All university campuses in Seoul are mapped, with adjacent areas manually selected to show the range of influence.

Transit connectivity As seen in the early development of Hongdae, a new metro connection brought people from across the city and expanded the reach of the local scene. Metro station locations and line connections are used here, applied at the neighbourhood scale rather than the city scale.

Combined, the actor supply of the commercial district in Seoul is shown like this:



Figure 4.3: Porosity

Cultural vitality

Where porosity and actor supply are preconditions, cultural vitality describes what has already formed. Among the findings indicating cultural vitality, only area identity can be represented at the scale of city-wide mapping. Dense clusters of cultural practice give an area a recognisable identity. To indicate this, a publicly shared collection of active live music places across Korea is used, compiled and maintained by Christian Mata on Naver Maps, comprising 232 locations. The collection was not produced for academic purposes, but its scope and consistency make it a reliable indicator of where an established scene is present.

Combined, the Cultural vitality of areas in Seoul is shown like this:



Figure 4.4: Porosity

Structural pressure

The same rent data used for affordability is read differently here. Where low rent indicates porosity, high average rent indicates capital pressure. Areas where rent has risen signal that gentrification is already displacing the conditions that enabled cultural practice. Furthermore, Urban planning designation has repeatedly proven to drive land value increases in surrounding areas, as seen across the cases examined in chapter three. Designated areas are mapped and classified by stage of planning progress, showing both where displacement is already underway and where it may still be prevented.

Combined, the spatial structural pressure is distributed like this:



Figure 4.5: Porosity

4.1.3. Area diagnosis

Fro area diagnosis, aggregated map of different spatial indicators wil be used. The combined map of all indicators is shown like this:

Distribution of spatial factors for cultural production

commercial district center

1000m walking distance from center

Porosity

underutilised spaces

semi industrial area

vacancy rate

5-10%

10-15%

15 - 20%

building age

20 - 30

30 - 40

40 - 50

50 - 60

60 - 100

affordability

average rent for small shops

< 30,000 ₩/㎡

30,000 - 40,000 ₩/㎡

40,000 - 50,000 ₩/㎡

50,000 - 60,000 ₩/㎡

60,000 - 70,000 ₩/㎡

70,000 - 80,000 ₩/㎡

> 80,000 ₩/㎡

Actor supply

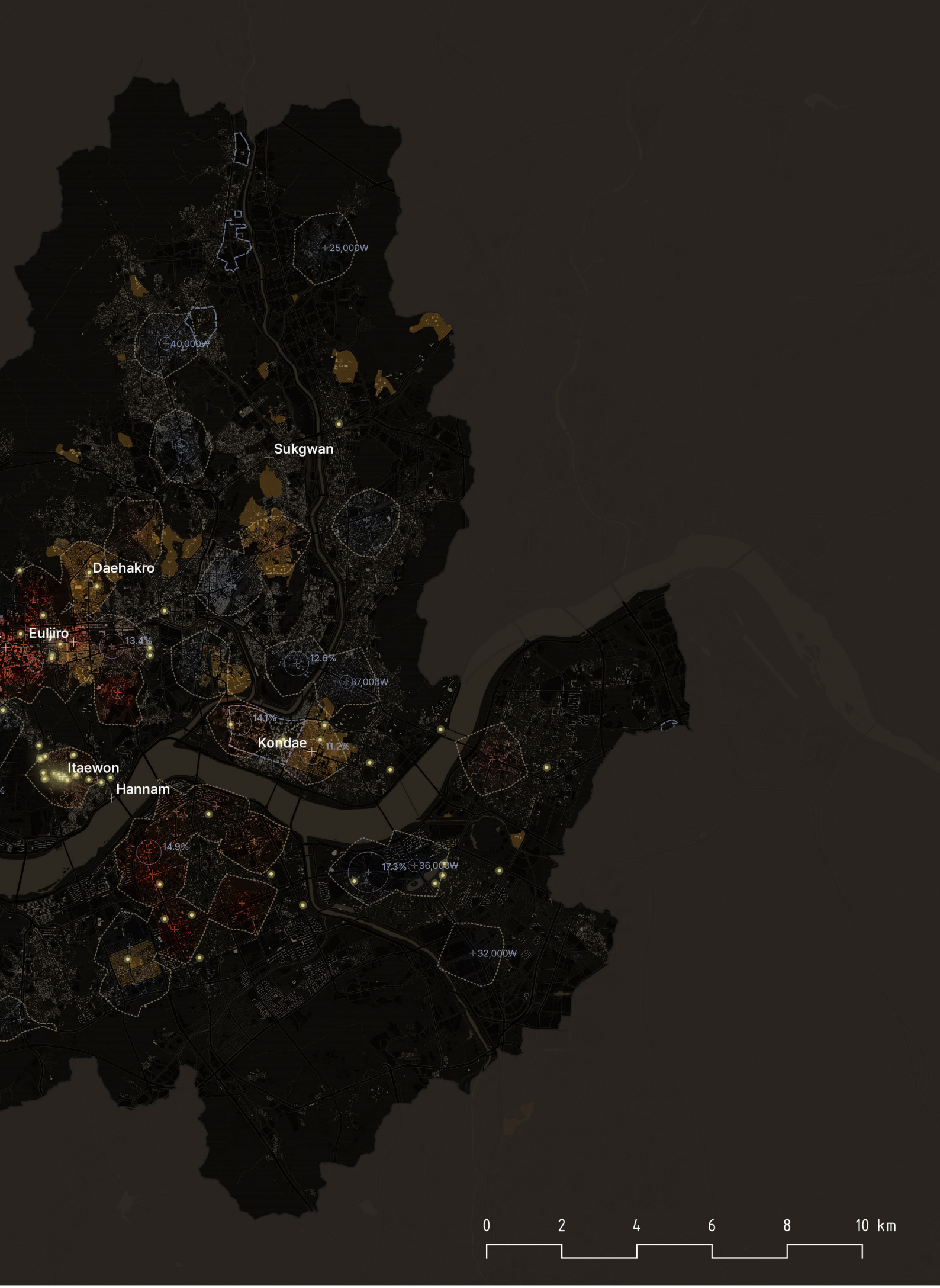
university

university town

Cultural vitality

established cultural places




25,000₩
40,000₩
Sukgwan
Daehakro
Euljiro
13.4%
12.6%
37,000₩
14.1%
Kondae
11.2%
Itaewon
Hannam
14.9%
17.3%
36,000₩
32,000₩
0
2
4
6
8
10 km

Sites under threat
Mapping cultural vitality against capital pressure reveals a consistent pattern: areas with the highest density of established cultural practice are also the areas with the highest average rent. Hongdae, Hannam, and Euljiro all show this condition. In each case, the porosity that originally enabled cultural production has largely closed, and the remaining scene is under sustained pressure.

Hongdae Among these, Hongdae shows the highest density of established cultural practice. Rent has risen substantially, and planning designations in the surrounding area add further pressure. The commercial vacancy rate remains notable, though as the accounts in chapter three make clear, whether that space becomes available to cultural producers depends on individual landlords rather than spatial conditions alone. What the analysis shows is that the physical ground is narrowing. Where nuisance barriers are still present in parts of the area, some pockets retain conditions below the threshold of capital interest. Hongdae is selected as the first exploration site, framed as a question of resistance: whether the remaining scene can be supported to persist in place.

Sites with potential
Shifting focus to porosity and actor supply, a different set of areas emerges. Low average rent combined with some established cultural practice points to areas where conditions exist but a scene has not yet consolidated.

Kondae Kondae takes its name from Konkuk University, following the same naming logic as Hongdae. The area is adjacent to three universities, giving it strong actor supply. Some established cultural places are already present in the surrounding area, suggesting the conditions for a scene are forming. The university-adjacent streets show relatively high rent, but the area immediately beyond retains low average rent and a notable commercial vacancy rate. Nuisance barriers are identifiable in parts of the area, keeping certain pockets below the threshold of capital interest. The combination of actor supply, remaining porosity, and this partial protection makes Kondae the strongest candidate for a site where cultural ecology could be supported to grow. It is selected as the second exploration site.

4.2. Instrument application

4.2.1. Kondae

Kondae was selected as the site for design exploration, to see whether spatial design can assist the establishment of cultural practice given its combination of enabling spatial factors. Looking into the area in more detail, the same indicators applied at city scale are revisited at neighbourhood scale. Affordability is read at finer grain through average rent per neighbourhood, and metro station connections are included to show accessibility within the area. Planning designation status and open land are added to show where pressure is concentrated and where common ground for occasional events might exist.


Enabling spatial factors
Porosity
affordability
average commercial rent
(by neighbourhood)
< 30,000 ₩/㎡
30,000 - 35,000 ₩/㎡
35,000 - 40,000 ₩/㎡
open land
open land
children's grand park
water reclamation center
(planned to be park)
underutilised space
building year
20 - 30
30 - 40
40 - 50
50 - 60
60 - 100
semi-industrial area
Actor supply
university proximity
university
university land
transit connectivity
subway station
subway line
Cultural vitality
establish cultural places
Potential threats
capital pressure
nuisance removal
planned to be park
average commercial rent
(by neighbourhood)
> 55,000 ₩/㎡
50,000 - 55,000 ₩/㎡
45,000 - 50,000 ₩/㎡
40,000 - 45,000 ₩/㎡
planning designation
being discussed
under planning
being implemented
29,0000/m2
35,0000/m2
32,0000/m2

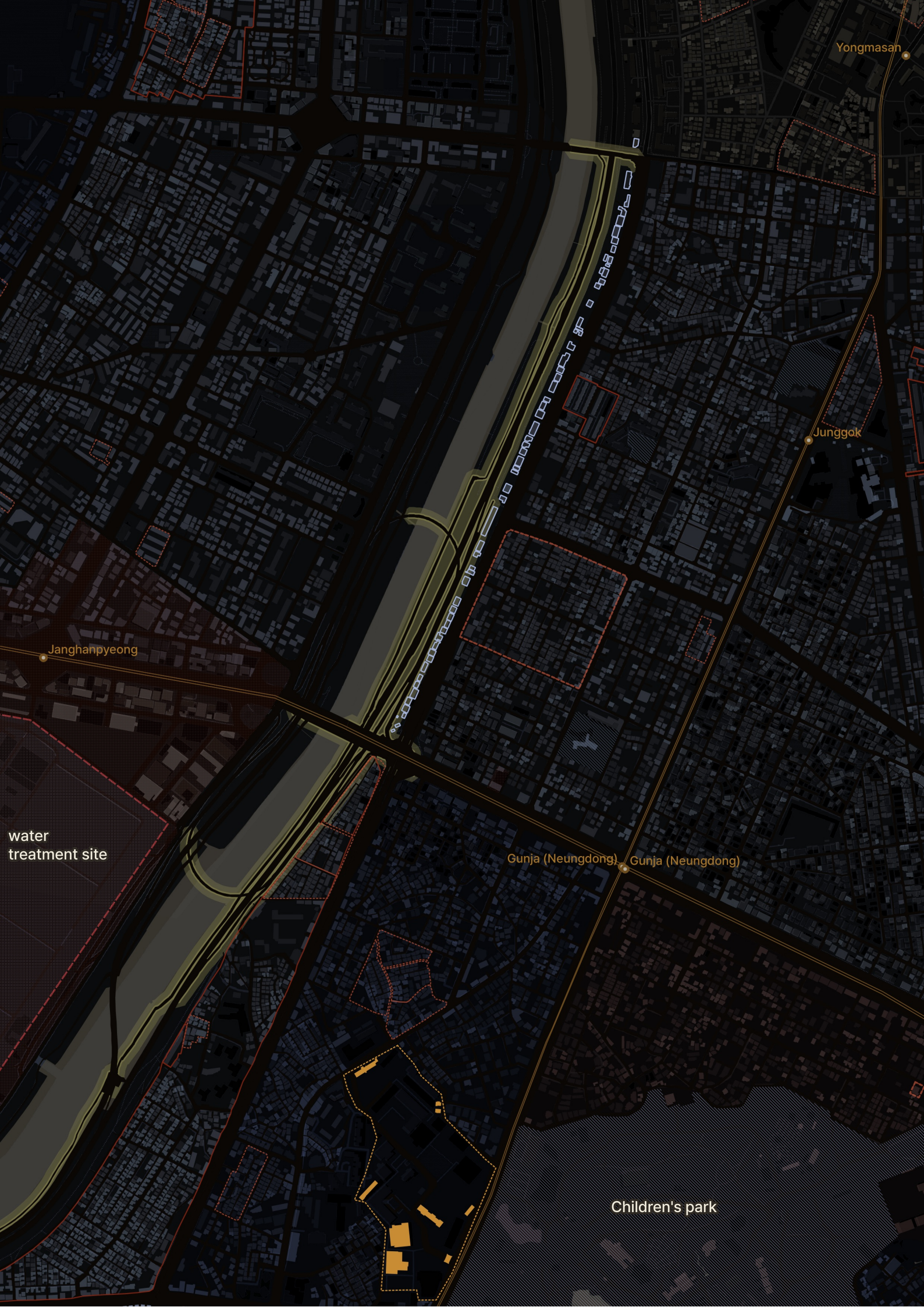

21,0000/m2
34,0000/m2
33,0000/m2
38,0000/m2
38,0000/m2
Kondae
0
0,5
1
1,5
2 km

Looking more closely at Kondae and its adjacent areas, the spatial factors read differently across parts of the area. In terms of porosity, two large open sites are present: a children's park already accessible as common ground, and a water treatment facility that has potential to become open land once its planned undergrounding is complete. That same facility, however, requires attention. As seen in section 3.4, infrastructure change of this kind has repeatedly preceded a rise in land value in surrounding areas. Beyond this, planning designations are active across several parts of Kondae, adding further pressure to watch. The adjacent area of Seongsu, once an industrial district that briefly attracted cultural practice in a pattern similar to Mullae and Euljiro, now shows the result of that pressure: heavy gentrification driven by commercial attention, with average rent reflecting how far the process has gone. Taken together, not all parts of Kondae carry equal potential. Among them, Junggok-dong shows the most stable ground: average rent remains low, and planning designation in the area is still at discussion stage, leaving a window before pressure increases.

Junggok-dong

Signs of stability Several physical conditions in Junggok-dong offer protection from the development pressure that has reached surrounding areas. A highway runs alongside a stream at the edge of the neighbourhood, and a water treatment facility sits across the stream. Together they limit the desirability of the immediately adjacent space, functioning as a nuisance barrier that could keep cultural places in the strip from being displaced by rising capital interest. The same water treatment site, however, carries the risk noted above: its planned undergrounding could remove that protection and expose the area to the pressure it has so far avoided.

Signs of porosity Within that protected strip, there is ground where cultural practice could establish itself. Parking lots, a material collection site, and a gas station occupy stretches of the strip, each offering underutilised space that could accommodate cultural use. Their position next to the highway and the narrow character of the strip also reduces the likelihood of large-scale development designation, reinforcing the stability that the nuisance barrier already provides. The strip pattern itself is familiar: Picasso Street, Club Street, and Yri Cafe Street each developed a recognisable cultural identity through a linear concentration of places along a single stretch. Junggok-dong's strip carries the same potential.


Yongmasan
Junggok
Janghanpyeong
water
treatment site
Gunja (Neungdong)
Gunja (Neungdong)
Children's park

Enabling instruments

Among the spaces in Junggok-dong, one street-level strip was selected to test how instruments can be applied in more detail. The strip concentrates several spatial conditions identified in the site reading, making it a suitable ground to explore how design can assist the establishment of cultural practice.

The strip offers several underutilised spaces that could accommodate cultural use: a parking lot, a material collection site, and a gap between buildings. Each carries different potential. The material collection site empties on a regular basis, creating periodic vacancy. Temporary use is one way this rhythm can be activated, allowing events to take place without permanent alteration to the space. The material shops surrounding the strip, including metal, glass, and timber suppliers, add another resource: raw material that could support self-making of place. Together these conditions point toward utilising space as the primary instrument for this site.

One consideration for the strip is how to bring actors to an area not yet known as a cultural destination. A waterfront path runs nearby but is not connected to the intervention site. A bike bridge crossing between the waterfront and the strip could open a route drawing actors from nearby universities and surrounding areas. This is a new instrument adapted from the transit connectivity finding, translating it into a direct physical connection at neighbourhood scale.

If actors begin to arrive and space is put to cultural use, the conditions for cultural vitality could start to form. The gap between buildings offers ground for a permanent structure that could grow incrementally, starting as storage for equipment and materials and accumulating programme over time toward scene infrastructure: a stable base that holds a growing network together and keeps the conditions for cultural practice in place.

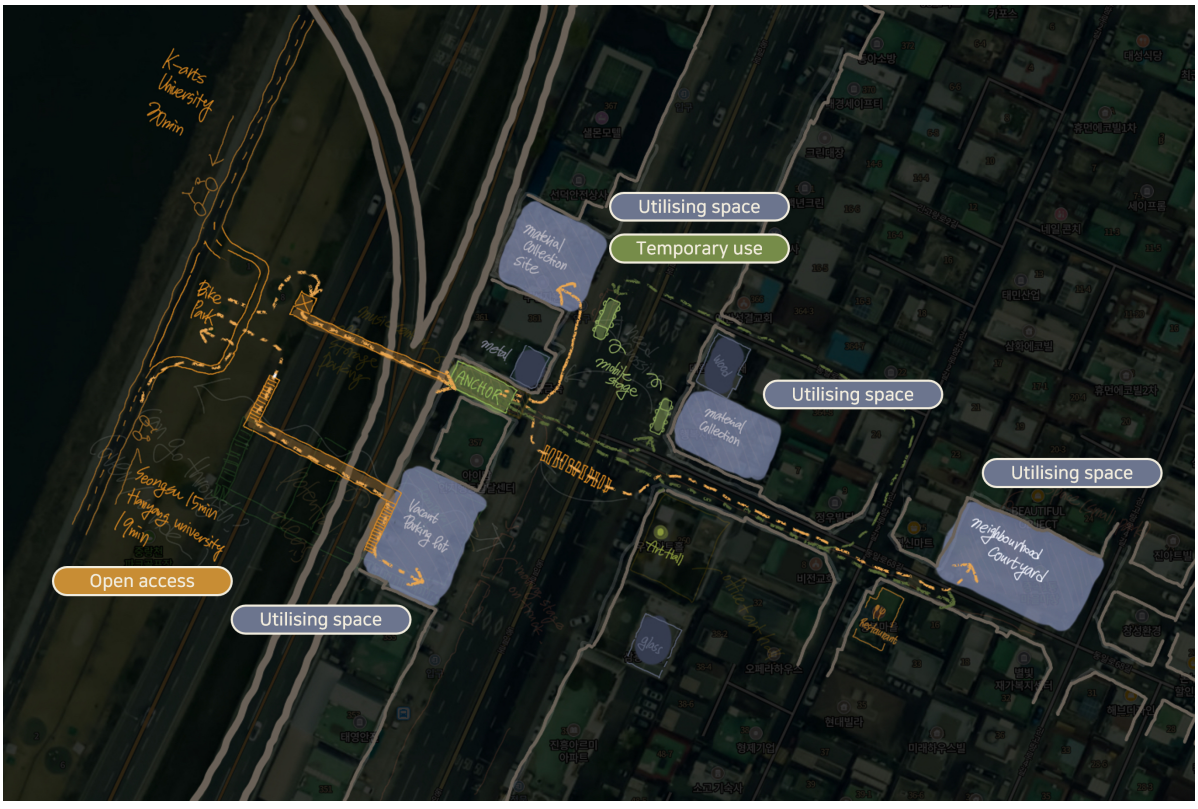


Figure 4.6: Plan for applying enabling instruments

Scenes of establishment
The following proposals are each explained through a vivid scene, showing how the instruments identified above could take form in the specific spaces of the strip.

Connection from waterfront The connection is formed through the parking lot on site, with a bridge penetrating between the waterfront and the intervention strip. An existing platform structure attached to the adjacent building provides the base for a stair. An elevator is included for those bringing bikes. What had been a disconnected edge could become an accessible public space, with the walls remaining on site left open as surfaces for inhabitation: event posters, graphics, and marks that actors leave over time.

As inhabitation builds, the space takes on character through use rather than design alone. That process can be supported from the start. As seen in the case of the Hongdae playground, where the Sinchon-Hongdae Forum co-designed a public space together with a public body, the process of establishing a new connection can itself become a site of negotiation between cultural actors, local residents, and the district office. An organisation already embedded in both the cultural scene and institutional processes, such as Ilsang Everyday Art Center, can hold that negotiation, finding common ground before conflict arises and making the case that change can be beneficial to both sides.

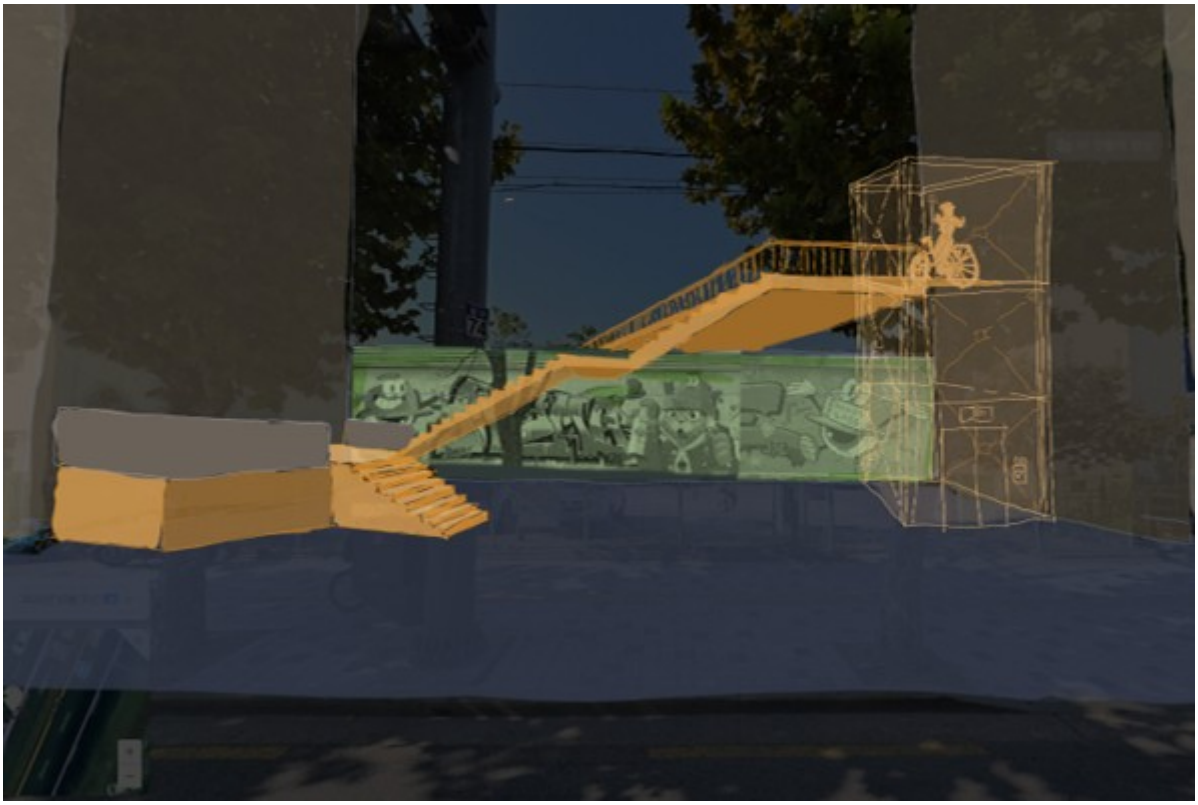


Figure 4.7: connection form waterfront

Temporary use The material collection site operates on a rhythm of emptying and filling. That rhythm is the resource. When the site is clear, a mobile stage can be brought in. The stage is contained in a truck: equipment, sound system, and platform all arrive together and leave the same way, placing no burden on the site and requiring no fixed installation. Events can take place in the open vacancy without altering the space or its function. The site remains a material collection site. It also, periodically, becomes somewhere else.



Figure 4.8: connection form waterfront

Anchor for culture The gap between buildings sits at a junction in the middle of the strip, making it the most connected point along the stretch. It is also small enough that it has not attracted development interest. These two qualities together make it the right place for a permanent structure that can grow incrementally. The gap begins as storage: musical equipment such as amplifiers, microphones, and speakers kept available for use, alongside reclaimed materials collected from the surrounding workshops. Programme accumulates upward over time, adding a recording studio and a gathering space as the network of actors using the strip grows. What starts as a resource depot could become scene infrastructure: a stable base that holds the conditions for cultural practice in place and keeps them accessible.

With public institution involvement and a formal cooperative among cultural producers and residents, the anchor could take on a further role, supporting the transition from third place to fields of care and safeguarding the area from the pressures that follow when a scene becomes visible.



Figure 4.9: connection form waterfront

Toward fields of care

The three proposals create a physical ground where cultural practice could begin to establish itself. However, spatial condition alone does not produce a scene. What the ground needs next is not more spatial design but interaction: actors inhabiting the strip, encountering each other, and forming connections through shared presence. For this, the process relies more on the actors who will inhabit and produce culture. The findings from actor dimension analysis as well as relationship-forming instruments addressed in the case studies can be provided as recommendation, giving various options to initiate and deepen connection with others.

To keep the stability of the area, those connections should extend beyond cultural producers alone. Relationships with landowners and original inhabitants would be critical, to prevent sudden rent rises, ownership change, or neighbourhood opposition that could eventually lead to displacement. Several cases from the case studies show that a deep bond with a landowner can ensure long-term stay in the original spot. Kkot, the LP bar in Hongdae that has remained in one location since 1998, is one example. The bond between the operator and the landowner has been strengthened through long-term coexistence and mutual neighbourly care.

For both of these, the proposed cultural anchor could assist. By supporting actors with different resources, it would serve as an attraction point for cultural producers, enabling natural encounters among them. With the right programmes added, this could extend into a common gathering ground for both cultural actors and locals. A co-design process that brings all inhabitants together would help shape the anchor into a facility that works effectively for the neighbourhood as a whole. One further expected function of the anchor is addressing the ongoing redevelopment discussion in the area. Although it is still in a preliminary phase, leaving it unaddressed could become a significant pressure later. If it is raised only after a cultural scene has established itself, it risks producing the same conflict seen elsewhere. To prevent this in advance, engagement of public institutions would be needed, mediating between stakeholders to find a way to avoid displacement.

4.2.2. Hongdae

Hongdae was selected as the site for design exploration at the resistance phase, to see whether spatial design can support the persistence of cultural practice already under displacement pressure. Hongdae shows the highest density of established cultural practice in Seoul, as indicated by the distribution of active live music places on the Christian Mata collection. This is further supported by interviews conducted with indie music participants and musicians in Seoul as part of this research. Across both groups, Hongdae was consistently described as irreplaceable. One participant noted that Hongdae remains ”the core and the gateway of indie culture.” One musician put it more plainly: ”venues, rehearsal rooms, studios — everything ends up in Hongdae.” Though the area has undergone significant gentrification, the vitality that remains shows that Hongdae is still in ongoing resistance.

However, that persistence exists under significant pressure. The area has been designated as a cultural arts tourism district, and discussions around expanding that designation are ongoing. While the designation signals public recognition of the area’s cultural character, it also raises land value in surrounding areas, adding to the capital pressure already reflected in average rent, which remains among the highest in Seoul. Further planning designations of different kinds are active across the area, and the ongoing renovation of the Danginri Power Plant into a culture-themed facility adds to this. Infrastructure transformation of this scale has the potential to draw further capital attention and raise land value in surrounding areas, compounding the threat to the cultural places that remain.

Still, there are small signals worth noting. A highway running through the area and the section of metro infrastructure that transitions from elevated to underground at the edge of the neighbourhood both limit development desirability in immediately adjacent spaces. The open land within the highway cloverleaf section and Mapo Saebit Cultural Forest offer pockets of open space, and Dangindong shows the lowest average rent in the area. The area also has existing precedent for a public contribution system known as gongik hwanyeon, in which a portion of space is handed over to the public when development takes place. Several cases of this have been identified in the area, suggesting a possibility of directing that contribution toward cultural spaces when future development occurs. These are modest conditions within an otherwise pressured environment, but they may offer some ground to work with.

Sangsu-Hapjeong

All parts of the Hongdae area and its surroundings are under pressure of different kinds. Among them, Sangsu-Hapjeong concentrates several conditions worth acting on: some established cultural practice remains, nuisance barrier signals are present, and planning designations are still at discussion stage, leaving a window for spatial design to intervene.

Threats to the existing scene Several redevelopment plans are active or under discussion in the area: an urban renewal district is being pursued around Sangsu station, residential redevelopment zones are designated across multiple blocks, and a small-scale housing consolidation scheme is underway in Hapjeong-dong. These smaller plans appear to be driven in part by the masterplan for the Danginri Power Plant park. As a large infrastructure transformation in the immediate vicinity, it has raised expectations of land value increase among surrounding property owners, giving momentum to redevelopment efforts that might otherwise have remained dormant. The area where landowners have already agreed to proceed with development reflects this, with one of them already under planning. Taken together, the existing cultural scene in Sangsu-Hapjeong is surrounded by planned change on multiple sides.

Room for intervention Within that pressure, there are modest conditions that offer some ground to work with. The streets and places where cultural density is still visible, including the alley around Yri Cafe, indicate where the remaining scene is concentrated and what is worth protecting. The heavy infrastructure running along the western edge of the area, including the highway and the point where the Line 2 bridge transitions from elevated to ground level, limits development desirability in immediately adjacent spaces, functioning as a nuisance barrier. Two confirmed cases of mandatory donation of

space have been identified in the area, one resulting in a youth center and one in a community center, both obtained in exchange for building permits. This suggests that as further development proceeds, there may be opportunity to direct that contribution toward cultural spaces.


Sangsu
Mapo sebit culture park
Danginli culture creating powerplant
Hapjeong
Hapjeong

Protecting instruments
Three instruments are proposed for Sangsu-Hapjeong, responding to the conditions found in the site reading. Unlike the proposals for Kondae, which focused on establishing new ground for cultural practice, these are directed at protecting what already exists and securing space before further displacement occurs.

Protection designation The first is the designation of culturally significant streets as areas to be protected from redevelopment. The alley around Yri Cafe holds strong area identity and concentrates some of the remaining cultural practice in Sangsu. Rather than waiting for displacement to occur, the proposal is to negotiate its recognition as a preservation target with the district office and relevant landowners before redevelopment plans in the surrounding area proceed. This is a new instrument adapted from institutional alliance and negotiation findings, translating them into a proactive spatial designation rather than a reactive response to threat.



Figure 4.10: plan of Sansu with protection needed streets

Mandatory donation The second instrument is the use of mandatory donation of space to secure cultural ground within future development. As confirmed cases in the area already show, building permits in Sangsu-Hapjeong have resulted in public spaces handed over to the district. The proposal is to direct that contribution toward displaced cultural places, negotiating with the district office to establish cultural use as an eligible recipient of donated space. This is a new instrument adapted from institutional alliance and negotiation findings, applying an existing regulatory mechanism toward cultural ecology.

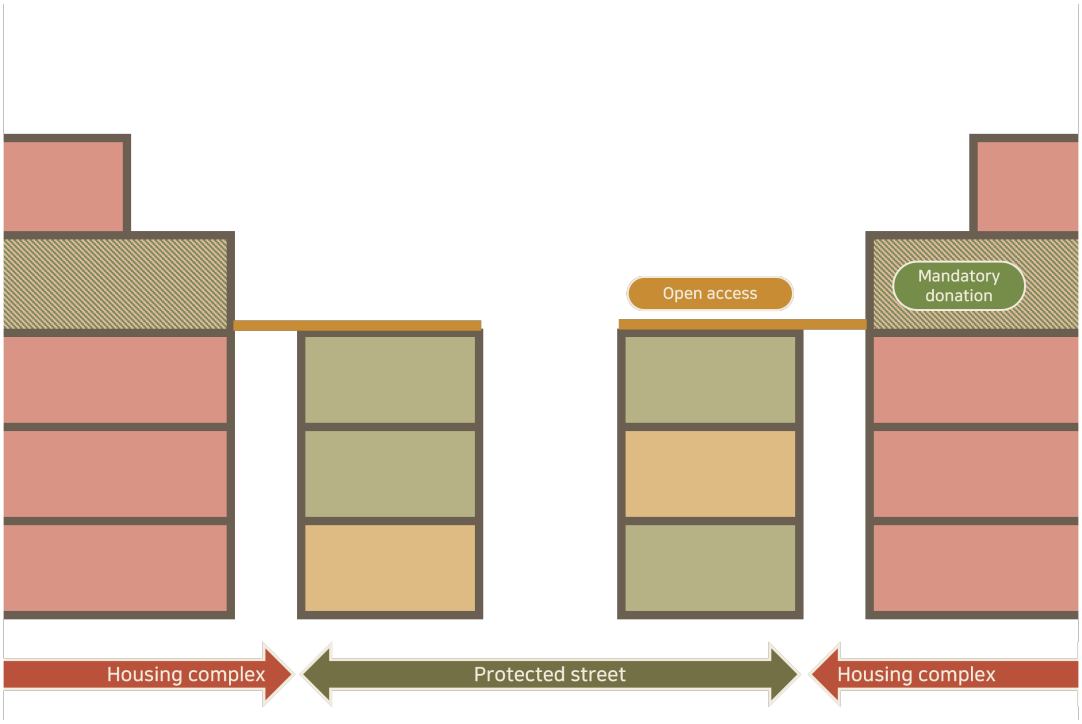


Figure 4.11: poetential section composition for housing development

Refuge for culture The third instrument operates independently of the first two. Where designation and mandatory donation of space may not be secured, an alternative is to work with what already exists. Mapo Youth Naru, already formed through a previous mandatory donation of space, offers a starting point. The vacant hotel building adjacent to it, the courtyard between them, the parking lot to the side, and the open land along the highway interchange each represent a different layer of a potential utilisation, from permanent anchor to occasional open ground. The surrounding underutilised spaces can be activated in relation to the anchor through utilising space, forming a cluster rather than a single point and giving the scene more ground to persist on.



Figure 4.12: connection form waterfront

Scenes of new ground

Among the three instruments proposed, the third is elaborated here through a scene, showing how the cluster around Mapo Youth Naru could take shape. Mapo Youth Naru is itself a product of mandatory donation of space, secured through a building permit exchange and therefore protected from the development pressure that surrounds it. That security makes it a reliable starting point: a fixed ground from which the cluster can extend outward, and a point that remains even if the surrounding moves do not all succeed. The spaces around it can gradually bringing together to form new field for culture: from the open parking lot, through the hotel, to the courtyard connection and the open land along the interchange beyond. Each layer adds capacity, and each becomes relevant only when the previous one has already found its use.

Utilisation of open land The most easiest move is to open the adjacent parking lot as ground for cultural activity. Without permanent alteration, the space can be used freely: murals on the walls, spontaneous performances, dance, gatherings. The threshold for activation is low, and what happens there is determined by those who use it rather than by programme imposed from outside. If that activation takes hold, the adjacent vacant hotel building becomes the next possibility. Through vertical layering, the lower floors could open as a salon, a space where people gather freely, exchange ideas, and bring different events and collaborations. Upper floors could accommodate rehearsal, production, or other programme as the cluster grows.



Figure 4.13: connection form waterfront

The hotel can be also considered as but supplements for Mapo Youth Naru, adding density and variety to what the anchor alone cannot hold. After hotel come into cultural use, a more deliberate connection between it and Mapo Youth Naru becomes worth pursuing. The stair structures already present on both buildings could be extended and linked, making the courtyard between them actively traversable at multiple levels. This is not a necessary first step but a possibility that opens once the cluster has enough momentum to justify it.



Figure 4.14: connection form waterfront

Holding ground

The three instruments proposed here each require negotiation with actors outside the cultural scene. Designating the Yri Cafe alley as a preservation target depends on reaching agreement with the district office and the landowners whose properties sit within it. Directing mandatory donation of space toward cultural use requires the district office to recognise cultural places as eligible recipients. Activating the hotel building depends on reaching agreement with its owner. None of these moves can be secured through spatial design alone.

What holds them together is the need to build a network that extends beyond cultural producers. The relationships that matter here are with landowners, the district office, and institutional actors who have the capacity to protect space from displacement. The ongoing transformation of the Danginri Power Plant into a culture-themed facility offers a point of leverage in those conversations. The investment already being made in the area's cultural character can be used to argue that the places where culture is actually produced deserve the same protection as the infrastructure being built to celebrate it.

Mapo Youth Naru, as a space already operating under public protection, could serve as the base for those negotiations: a place where cultural producers, residents, landowners, and the district office can meet, and where the case for holding ground can be made before displacement makes it too late.

5

Conclusion

5.1. Network between actors and its use

: answer to sub research question 1 – *How do actors in cultural ecology form networks and how do these networks respond to gentrification?*

Through the case studies, this research observed how relationships among actors form within cultural ecology. Findings from the actor dimension capture the collective character of cultural production through the depth of relational processes. The actor dimension follows the broader process of cultural production, where artistic activity enables encounters that gradually develop into culture through local friendship ties. This section describes the process through two categories: interactions among actors and signs that reveal the depth of their bonds.

5.1.1. Interaction through the transformation of relationships

Between different stages of connection among actors, various forms of interaction intensify relationships over time. This subsection addresses findings that describe how actors come into contact and develop familiarity. Each finding captures the process through which different stages of connection emerge. The findings are organised into three groups: interactions that produce encounters, interactions that form local friendship ties, and interactions that activate solidarity ties.

Encountering each other

From multiple cases of cultural producers connecting with one another, findings describing how actors first come into contact were grouped into this category. Each finding captures how one actor comes to meet another. By aggregating findings across the case studies, three recurring patterns of encounter were identified.

- scene entry: A new actor arrives at a place drawn by reputation or attraction, producing first contact with the scene without prior introduction.
- referenced through network: An existing network routes a new or external actor toward a place or person, producing an encounter the actor could not have initiated alone.
- referenced by place: A place mediates the encounter between an actor and a wider network or audience, producing an opportunity the actor could not have initiated alone.

Inhabiting while forming local friendship ties

Places allowed encounters to be repeated, gradually transforming them into local friendship ties through inhabitation. The findings below describe how encounters accumulate into personal familiarity while capturing the transition from acquaintance toward genuine bond.

- familiarity through encounter: Personal familiarity forms gradually through repeated contact in the same setting, without any deliberate act of relationship-forming.
- creative exchange: Sustained co-presence in shared creative practice draws actors into mutual inspiration, deepening familiarity through repeated exchange.
- place-born collaboration: Sustained co-presence in the same place draws actors into close working proximity, where personal familiarity develops into shared creative work.
- inter-place symbiosis: A bond formed between two places or their operators through sustained exchange, where the practices and outputs of one become embedded in the other.

Activating solidarity ties
Local friendship ties became activated as solidarity ties under pressures that threatened cultural ecology. This section describes how existing bonds responded to shared threats and how wider networks formed around them. Each finding captures the extension of care beyond already established relationships.

- cross-network solidarity: Actors from different fields and networks gather around a shared threat, producing solidarity that extends well beyond the scene's existing community.
- solidarity outreach: Actors who have received solidarity extend it outward to other struggles, carrying the relational network beyond its original context.

5.1.2. Signs of bond
Apart from patterns of interaction, specific signs were found that describe the depth of connection between actors. Each finding captures what a relationship has become and what it enables.

- shared use of space: The physical space of a place is offered or used beyond its formal purpose, revealing a level of trust and care between actors that exceeds their formal roles.
- inhabitation: Actors use a place beyond its performance or service function — sleeping, eating, and working — revealing a depth of attachment that dissolves the boundary between the place and their daily lives.
- bond-driven commitment: Actors mobilise their existing personal bonds to sustain or save a place under threat, converting relational depth into active care.
- given nickname: Actors assign informal titles to one another that signal the nature of their bond, expressing familiarity and affection accumulated through sustained shared presence.
- shared place memory: Actors return to or gather around a place to share accumulated memories, revealing how deeply the place has become embedded in their relational lives.

5.2. Spatial conditions and qualities and its transformation
: answer to sub research question 2 – *How do spatial conditions and qualities shape cultural ecology and how are they transformed under gentrification?*

The second dimension, spatial factors, concerns findings derived from places and how they support cultural ecology. Each finding captures a characteristic that enables cultural relations to emerge, accumulate, or persist.

5.2.1. Spatial conditions
Among spatial factors, fixed spatial characteristics that enable cultural activity to find ground are grouped into spatial conditions. Each finding captures what makes a place capable of holding cultural ecology, focusing on relatively pre-existing physical and spatial elements.

Porosity
A group of spatial characteristics observed during the earlier phase of cultural ecology left room for cultural activity to take place. Inspired by the definition of porosity proposed by Benjamin and Lācis (1925), these conditions are grouped under the term *porosity*. Each finding captures how a space remains open to uses that exceed its original purpose.

- underutilised space: Buildings or land not at full capacity, available for informal conversion into cultural places at low cost.
- affordability: The degree to which the cost of occupying a space remains within reach for cultural producers, enabling them to establish their place.
- fluidity: A spatial arrangement that dissolves fixed boundaries between roles or functions, allowing different uses and users to co-exist without hierarchy.
- disorder: An unpolished and unstructured physical environment that lowers the threshold for spontaneous participation.

Actor supply
Together with porosity, another set of conditions brought actors toward vacant or underused spaces. These conditions emerged through spatial characteristics surrounding a place that channel actors toward it. Each finding captures attractions that increase the possibility of cultural concentration.

- proximity to established scene: The presence of an already active cultural scene in an adjacent area, from which actors and practices can flow into a new location.
- spillover: A significant event or newly established place draws new actors into the surrounding area, increasing cultural density beyond what was already there.
- university proximity: The proximity of a university provides a steady supply of students and graduates who form an initial audience and social base for cultural places. Art and design schools, in particular, shape the cultural sensibility of those who gather nearby.
- transit connectivity: The opening or presence of a transit line brings actors into an area from beyond its immediate neighbourhood, expanding the catchment and easing the daily movement that sustains cultural activity.

5.2.2. Spatial qualities
While spatial conditions describe pre-existing characteristics that allow cultural activity to settle, spatial qualities describe characteristics that emerge through the inhabitation of cultural production itself. Unlike conditions that exist independently of cultural occupation, qualities are perceived and recognised through the experiences of actors involved in the scene.

Cultural vitality
The first spatial quality strongly related to cultural ecology is cultural vitality. These findings describe the degree to which cultural production actively generates interaction, atmosphere, and collective identity within a place. Cultural vitality emerges through the capacity of a setting to contain interaction among actors, continuously attracting new participants into the ecology.

- curatorial presence: The degree to which an operator's taste and selectivity is materially expressed in the space, signalling affinity before any word is exchanged.
- sensory threshold: The degree to which the physical atmosphere of a place produces a felt experience that signals entry into a different world, conditioning how actors inhabit it.
- lived traces: The degree to which surfaces accumulate evidence of past inhabitation, making the history of a place visible and legible to those who arrive later.

- area identity: The degree to which a place is recognised for a specific cultural character, attracting actors who share that sensibility and reinforcing their collective presence.

Stability
Beyond vitality, findings also revealed qualities related to the long-term persistence of cultural ecology. These findings describe the capacity of a place to maintain its foundations over time despite economic and regulatory pressure. Stability was associated with spatial conditions that reduced exposure to capital pressure and allowed cultural activity to persist with relative autonomy.

- off-centre: A location removed from the main commercial strip, where lower capital pressure and lower visibility allow cultural places to maintain their position.
- nuisance barrier: Affordability sustained by an industrial or physical deterrent (noise, dust, narrow access) that keeps development pressure away.
- everyday atmosphere: A non-commercial social fabric already present before cultural actors arrive, making an area legible as ground worth inhabiting.

5.3. Instruments and their complementary use

: answer to sub research question 3 – *What is the role and limit of spatial design in enabling and supporting cultural ecology, and how can it complement existing instruments addressing gentrification?*

The third dimension examines instruments: deliberate actions that enable, activate, and protect cultural ecology. This section focuses on how actors intentionally create conditions for cultural production through deliberate action. Alongside instruments related to actor relationships and spatial arrangement, the research identifies instruments that directly address structural pressures threatening cultural ecology.

5.3.1. Relationship-forming instruments

The first group of instruments focuses on how actors intentionally create and deepen relationships within cultural ecology. These findings suggest that relationships are partially shaped through deliberate acts alongside repeated inhabitation and informal interaction.

Initiating encounters
Findings related to encounter formation showed how operators intentionally made themselves accessible to broader networks.

- open access: An operator deliberately lowers the threshold for participation, making the place accessible to a wider range of actors and enabling potential encounters.
- online reach out: An actor uses digital platforms to reach out to others, initiating contact with actors not yet present and extending the scene's network beyond physical space.
- public showcase: The scene presents itself to a broader public through performance, producing first encounters between scene actors and those outside it.

Shaping local friendship ties
Other findings showed how repeated interaction was intentionally organised into deeper local friendship ties.

- audition: An operator recruits musicians based on quality judgment through direct observation or demo review, creating a formal entry point into the place.
- talent scouting: An operator actively seeks out musicians whose sensibility aligns with the place, drawing them into a sustained connection with the venue.
- house bands: An operator fixes bands to a single venue, producing sustained co-presence among musicians and between musicians and operator.

Activating solidarity ties
These instruments activate existing bonds in response to shared threats and extend networks beyond the actors already connected.

- cooperative formation: Actors with existing bonds formally establish a collective organisation in response to shared threat or shared goal.

5.3.2. Place-arranging instruments

Beyond relationship formation, the cases also revealed deliberate actions that shape the spatial ground where cultural ecology takes place. These findings describe how actors actively arrange spatial settings that enable encounter, inhabitation, and continued cultural production.

Initiating actor supply
The first group describes deliberate actions that shape environments in which new actors can easily enter.

- open place: An operator deliberately lowers the physical threshold for entry, opening the place to a wider population of potential visitors.

Activating cultural vitality
The second group describes deliberate actions that generate or intensify cultural vitality within a place. Actors repeatedly adjusted, rebuilt, and re-signified spaces in ways that embedded collective identity into the material environment.

- naming: Assigning a name that signals a specific cultural commitment, setting the place's unique identity.
- self-making: Directly fabricating the physical elements of a space, embedding personal taste and care into its material character.
- co-design: Those who inhabit a space also shape its physical character through design, decoration, or construction, embedding the community's presence into its material form.
- utilising space: An actor activates a space beyond its designated function or converts a former use into a cultural setting, generating cultural vitality where it did not exist before.
- vertical layering: An operator stacks distinct cultural functions vertically within a single building, increasing the density and variety of cultural exchange.
- playground for community: A group of actors with existing bonds deliberately establishes a physical place to anchor their shared practice.
- investment on music: An operator strips back the space to performance alone, making the act of watching the primary purpose of the place.
- succession: A place sustains its cultural character across changes in location and ownership by carrying material identity and relational continuity into a new setting.

Maintaining stability
The final group describes deliberate actions that maintain the long-term foundations of cultural ecology.

- minimal exposure: Minimising the external visibility of a place, limiting discoverability to those already connected to the scene.
- handover: An actor takes over a space from an acquaintance whose stable operation has already been established.
- visitor control: An operator controls who can enter and how they should behave, maintaining protected ground for visitors through boundary-setting.

- relocation: An actor moves to a new location where more stable settlement is expected.

5.3.3. Structure-countering instruments

The final group of instruments describes deliberate actions that directly respond to structural pressures threatening cultural ecology.

Countering capital pressure

These findings capture how actors sustain continued operation despite rising rent, financial precarity, and unequal access to capital.

- fundraising concert: Actors collectively organise a concert, directing all proceeds toward a financially threatened venue.
- collective funding: Members pool resources to establish a place without relying on individual capital or commercial backing.
- cultural patronage: A corporation directs capital toward cultural support, creating infrastructure that individual operators could not sustain alone.
- cooperative operation: A place run collectively by members who maintain separate livelihoods, sustaining the space without depending on it as a primary income source.
- economy of intimacy: An operator prioritises cultural production over profit, sustaining the place with minimum or no profit.
- negotiation: Actors negotiate with landlords, planning offices, or stakeholders to secure continued operation or favourable relocation.
- resource mobilisation: Actors gather in-kind resources such as equipment, food, and volunteer labour to sustain operation.

Countering regulatory pressure

These findings capture how actors respond to governance systems that expose cultural places to restriction, closure, or displacement.

- formalising: An actor transforms a temporary collective effort into a permanent institutional structure or demands legal recognition of existing practice.
- legal reaction: Actors take a place's case to court or formal legal dispute.
- institutional alliance: Actors work with public administration or politicians to redirect institutional capacity toward protecting cultural places.

Countering systemic pressure

These findings capture how actors create alternative infrastructures for production, performance, and distribution outside dominant institutional channels.

- independent label: A venue or scene actor establishes an independent record label outside major label infrastructure.
- online channel: A venue or actor extends the reach of indie music through digital channels.
- alternative music distribution: An established place functions as an alternative supply node for non-mainstream music.
- open stage: A place opens its stage without professional threshold, countering mainstream gatekeeping.
- scene infrastructure: A place offers interconnected programs that sustain the wider scene.

- fair distribution: Actors organise compensation arrangements that route fair shares of revenue to musicians and crew.

Countering contextual pressure
The final group describes deliberate actions responding to historical, social, and political circumstances surrounding cultural production.

- volume restriction: An operator limits the volume or intensity of programming in response to neighbour pressure.
- media support: Actors mobilise blogs, social media, and community radio to spread awareness about threatened places.
- cultural action: Actors stage public cultural performances at threatened sites, making threats visible to broader publics.

These findings suggest that cultural ecology survives through adaptation, visibility-building, and symbolic action alongside resistance.

5.4. Role of design

Based on the findings above, this research identified several roles and limitations of spatial design in enabling and supporting cultural ecology under the pressure of gentrification. The findings suggest that design operates most effectively as a supporting and mediating practice that find out supportive environment for cultural ecology, preserves stability of place by supporting inhabitation, and complements existing instruments already operating within cultural ecology.

Understanding how different dimensions operate together to keep cultural ecology

This research approached cultural ecology through three interrelated dimensions: actors, places, and instrument. Through this framework, the study examined how cultural production is sustained through interactions between relational processes, spatial conditions, and structural pressures. The findings suggest that cultural ecology cannot be understood through one dimension alone. Cultural production emerges through layered processes of forming relationship, resisting to external pressure, and holding them based on place. By identifying these processes systematically, the research reduces the gap between abstract cultural policy discourse and the actual conditions through which independent culture survives in urban space. From a spatial design perspective, this framework provides a grounded understanding of culture for designers engaging with cultural spaces and facilities. The framework allows designers to recognise relational and spatial processes already operating within cultural ecology and to support them spatially.

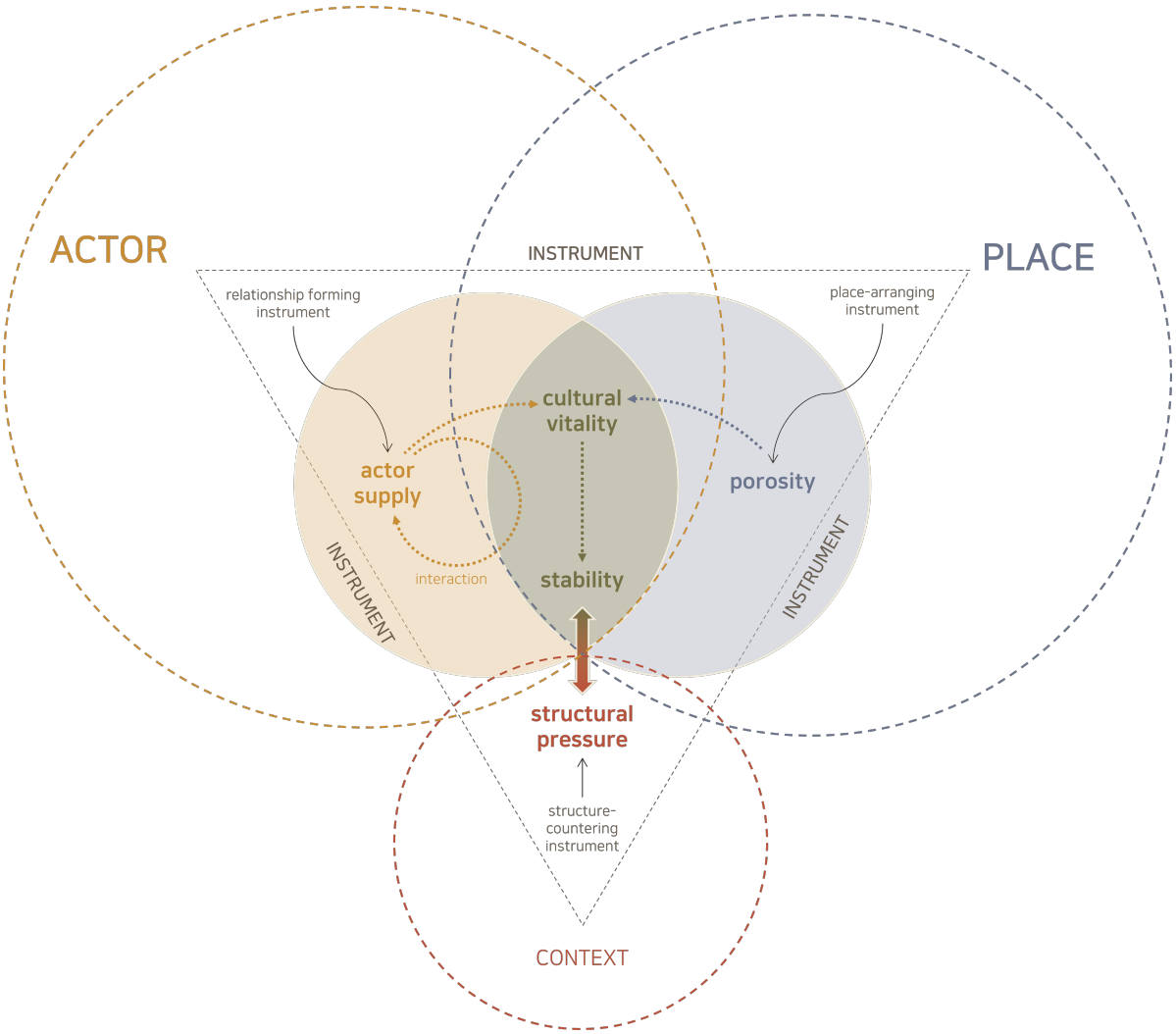


Figure 5.1: How actor, place, instrument operate together

Linking spatial factors into mappable spatial layers
Another role of design identified through the research was the translation of spatial factors into mappable spatial layers. Beyond affordability alone, the study identified multiple spatial conditions and qualities influencing the formation and persistence of cultural ecology and connected them into forms that can be spatially visualised and analysed. This approach expands the understanding of urban cultural space beyond purely economic logic. Qualities often dismissed as subjective atmosphere become expressible through more concrete spatial language. In this sense, design functions as a method of spatial interpretation. Mapping becomes a tool for recognising hidden cultural conditions that conventional urban analysis tends to overlook.

Providing diagnosis from the perspective of cultural ecology
The spatial layers and mapping methods developed through this research suggest the possibility of diagnosing urban areas according to their suitability for sustaining cultural ecology. Again, the findings reveal that cultural ecology depends on more than affordability alone. Actor supply emerged as a relational condition produced through existing networks and proximity between actors, while cultural vitality and stability revealed qualitative dimensions related to atmosphere, accumulated inhabitation, and resilience against external pressure. By incorporating these dimensions, cultural ecology can be understood as a distinct urban system with its own spatial logic, temporal processes, and relational foundations. This allows more precise diagnosis of areas capable of sustaining independent cultural production.

Furthermore, the process of diagnosing areas revealed the possibility of generating new findings through feedback. Cases such as manadory donation identified during the diagnosis process demonstrated how the diagnostic process itself can become another analytical process that continuously expands the inventory of findings. The feedback process is expected to be enriche more when ther can be involvement of broader stakeholders — including cultural producers, district officials, city administrators, and developers.

Design as the spatialisation of instruments
The findings suggest that the role of design lies in connecting diagnosis with instruments and translating those instruments into spatial form. This involves identifying how existing relational and structural instruments can be spatially supported, accommodated, or materially embedded within urban environments. The findings suggest that design often operates through subtraction and restraint. Through the concept of porosity, the research shifts attention toward what should remain open for culture to appropriate over time. Design can support cultural ecology by identifying spaces where culture can gradually settle, inhabit, and transform existing conditions. This approach aligns closely with the realities of independent culture, which frequently begins without large capital or institutional support. Excessive intervention may reduce the flexibility and openness that initially enabled cultural production to emerge.

The findings also reveal the importance of carefully calibrating actor supply. While attracting actors remains necessary for sustaining cultural vitality, excessive visibility and accessibility can intensify capital pressure and accelerate commercialisation. Lessons from the case studies showed that cultural places often developed linearly along specific streets or narrow urban corridors rather than through large-scale concentration. In this sense, design may function more effectively through small and precise spatial insertions that support hidden continuities and local concentration.

Finally, in areas where cultural ecology has already accumulated over time, the findings suggest that one of the most important design decisions may involve identifying where not to intervene. Area identity and relational networks emerge through long-term inhabitation and repeated interaction. Protecting existing porosity and relational continuity may therefore hold greater value than introducing new cultural infrastructure itself.

6

Reflection





Doubt that came from admiration

The project has began from genuine admiration for indie culture. During my bachelors in Seoul, Hongdae I was drawn to places such as Jebidabang and the independent music venues of Hongdae long before I began researching them. Studing about it in more depth, I found that they represented a kind of urban life that I found deeply compelling: places where people gathered repeatedly, built relationships over time, and collectively produced something larger than themselves. This fascination eventually led me to cultural ecology and the indie music scene in Seoul as the subject of my graduation project.

However, the deeper I went into the research, the more difficult it became to position myself as a designer within it. The findings repeatedly pointed away from physical form and toward relationships. What sustained cultural ecology was not physical space alone, but friendship ties, solidarity, inhabitation, shared memories, and long-term acts of care. The more I admired cultural ecology, the harder it became to understand what role spatial design could realistically play within it.

This tension accompanied the entire project. As someone trained in architecture and urbanism, I was accustomed to thinking through intervention, suggesting solutions. Yet many of the most important elements I encountered seemed impossible to design directly. How could friendship be spatialised? How could solidarity be drawn by urban design? How could shared memories be translated into a design proposal? At several moments during the research, I felt uncertain whether I had the legitimacy to speak about these processes at all. I was observing communities that had spent decades building relationships, while being an outsider who will never know enough about it. The project therefore became not only an investigation of cultural ecology, but also an investigation of the limits of design itself.

Assigning role of a designer

Paradoxically, it was through this uncertainty that I began to understand the role of design more clearly. The more carefully I observed the case studies, the more apparent it became that cultural ecology was not detached from space. Relationships were not produced by design, but they were constantly supported, constrained, and shaped by spatial conditions. Affordability, flexible use of space, and accumulated traces of inhabitation all influenced whether cultural practices could emerge and survive.

What initially appeared as a limitation gradually became a part of design task. Instead of asking how design could create culture, I began asking how design could recognise, support, and protect the conditions that allow culture to emerge. This shift fundamentally changed my understanding of urbanism. Throughout architectural education, I often associated design with adding, transforming, or creating. In this project, some of the most valuable design decisions involved identifying where not to involved. The concept of porosity became particularly important in this regard. Many of the cultural places I studied emerged precisely because spaces remained unfinished, affordable, flexible, or overlooked. Excessive intervention would often remove the very conditions that made cultural production possible in the first place.

The lessons of this project was therefore that understanding can itself be a design act. Mapping hidden conditions, revealing relationships between spatial factors, and diagnosing areas from the perspective of cultural ecology were not secondary activities preceding design. They became design practices in their own right. Rather than producing a fixed solution, the project developed a framework for recognising cultural ecology and identifying opportunities to support it.

Discovering commonground with indie culture: becoming a villager

While reflecting on the project, I also began to understand why I was drawn to this topic in the first place. For a long time, I assumed that what fascinated me about independent culture was the music, the venues, or the artistic production itself. Through the research, I gradually realised that what I admired most was the network of relationships behind them. The operators, musicians, regular visitors, volunteers, and neighbours I encountered throughout the case studies were all participating in something larger than individual cultural production. They were maintaining communities through repeated acts of presence, hospitality, care, and commitment. In retrospect, cultural producers appeared not

only as artists, but also as villagers, that maintains their living environment through care. Perhaps they are the most powerful villagers of all.

Around the same period, I encountered the phrase: “Everyone wants a village, but no one wants to be a villager.” The sentence stayed with me throughout the year. Initially, it reminded me of the cultural communities I was researching, made me realise why I was so fascinated by my topic. But the memorable moment was when I could relate myself to these villagers. Looking back, I realised that many of the practices I admired in cultural ecology were also present in my own life. Whether it was turning my apartment into a shared workspace for friends, organising gatherings in a neglected common room, spending years inhabiting a studio, or creating informal gathering where friends could simply spend time together, I had repeatedly sought to build small forms of community myself. The project was never only about understanding cultural ecology as an urban phenomenon. It was also about recognising values that I had long admired without fully articulating them.

Defining my position as an urbanist

The project did not resolve all my doubts about what design can do for cultural ecology. Still, it made the complexity of that relationship more visible, heling me to figure out the direction to pursue while being an urbanist. Many of the most important aspects of cultural life remain difficult to measure, represent, or translate into spatial form. Friendship, trust, solidarity, and care resist straightforward design solutions. However, this couldn’t be a reason for urbanists to withdraw from the discussion. Instead, I see a role for urbanism precisely in engaging with these complex questions.

This project has led me to view urbanism not as the production of cultural objects, but as the practice of understanding and supporting the conditions through which cultural life becomes possible. The value of urbanism lies not only in designing new spaces, but also in recognising existing ecologies, making hidden relationships visible, and protecting forms of value that are often overlooked because they cannot be easily quantified. As an urbanist, I hope to continue working at the intersection between spatial settings and human relationships. The project taught me that culture is not sustained by space alone, nor by people alone, but through the continuous interaction between the two. My ambition is to keep exploring how spatial design can help explain, support, and safeguard those relationships without reducing them to simple design solutions.

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