

Understanding Contextualised Liveability from the Bottom Up: A Qualitative Analysis of the Participatory Planning Proposals in Daegu, South Korea

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Abstract This paper takes a qualitative approach to examining liveability by analysing the participatory planning proposals delivered by the local residents in Daegu, South Korea. Drawing on the textual resources of the proposals and interview data, the perceived liveability was found to vary across different neighbourhoods, and community cohesion and community capacity building were found highly valued in the liveability discourses in the Korean context. The paper argues that our understandings of liveability should be localised and contextualised at a sub-municipal level. It also highlights that participatory planning can be useful in articulating local communities' perception and experiences of liveability of their immediate localities, particularly in the less attractive and less affluent neighbourhoods in the city.

Keywords: Liveability, neighbourhood revitalisation, participatory planning, qualitative analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban liveability has emerged in the late 20th century as an umbrella concept to address the issues related to the quality of life in cities (Pacione, 2003; Hankins & Powers, 2009). Especially in the last two decades, this notion has been widely referenced in city ranking or benchmarking systems, such as Global Liveability Index of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Mercer Quality of Living Survey, and Monocle Quality of Life Index, in the context of globalisation and the subsequent intercity competition (Kaal, 2011; Teo, 2014). Hence, highly ranked cities are generally regarded as good places to live, whereas those with low ranks are considered less liveable in the international standards.

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While these liveability-ranking systems allow for systematic international referencing in examining the overall quality of life across different cities in a comparative manner, they tend to provide limited knowledge about the socio-spatial diversity within a city (Ryan & Selim, 2018). The images of so-called world's liveable cities are usually associated with the orderly, pleasant urban spaces where middle class, affluent communities prefer to live, but rarely present what the quality of life in socially and environmentally dilapidated areas looks like. The context in which the characteristics of liveability are understood is often closely linked with the issue of 'in whose eyes' they are interpreted (Ryan & Selim, 2018). Therefore, urban researchers and commentators have urged more participation from local communities in incorporating end-users' perspectives in the liveability discourses (Hankins & Powers, 2009; Woolcock, 2009). This bottom-up approach is expected to provide a more contextualised understanding of urban liveability which encompasses the experiences of the relatively worse-off and marginalised communities (Ley, 1990). Especially when it comes to liveability being a political ideology, the voices of local communities would be foundational to create a liveable city, contributing to achieving 'direct democracy and active citizenship' (Kaal, 2011).

From this perspective, this paper explores how local communities perceive and interpret liveability with a reference to the participatory planning exercises for neighbourhood

revitalisation in Daegu, South Korea (Korea hereafter). Over the past decade, Korea's traditional top-down hierarchical planning has substantially changed in the context of decentralisation and democratisation that began in the 1990s. The Korean Government has been aware of the increasing public discontent with the loss of traditional community spirit resulting from the rapid urbanisation and market-driven wholesale (re) developments. Therefore, it has redirected the national territorial policy goal from 'developmental urbanisation' towards 'building liveable communities' since 2006 (Hong et al., 2013). Accordingly, a greater emphasis has been placed on community participation in revitalising the neighbourhood environment since then.

By taking a social constructionist approach, this paper examines how local residents define 'a good place to live' and in what ways they believe it can be achieved, and more importantly, whether their views divert according to the local context. Applying this method is premised on the belief that participatory planning outputs delivered by local residents encapsulate the communities' efforts to identify what liveability means to them and how to achieve it. This bottom-up approach is expected to counter the neoliberal outlook which emphasises the viewpoint of the profitable global firms, urban elites, and better-off expatriates (Ley, 1990; Kaal, 2011).

Following the introduction, the paper reviews the contested debates on the liveability issues in the literature and draws attention to the possibility of participatory planning as a platform to concretise local communities' aspiration of liveable cities. It then presents and discusses the findings drawn from the analysis of the planning proposals submitted by the participants in the participatory planning workshops and interview data. Finally, the paper concludes with some implications for the benefits of the bottom-up approach to understanding urban liveability.

2. PLANNING FOR LIVEABILITY FROM THE BOTTOM UP

The notion of urban liveability generally addresses all-encompassing dimensions of the city. Hence, there is neither a single definition of the term, nor one-size-fits-all indicator sets to measure it in different regions (Pacione, 1990, 2003; Woolcock, 2009). Liveability is regarded as a concept capturing the citizens' quality of life in a broader sense and sometimes refers to specific aspects of what a good city is expected to be in a narrower sense (Wetzstein, 2010). Essentially, the term 'liveability' is associated with a specific spatial setting. The literature on how to operationalise the multidimensional concept of liveability and how to measure the degree of liveability has predominantly focused on the functional characteristics of the city, such as infrastructure, housing affordability, safety, cleanness, service provision, and economy, which can be objectively measured (Pacione, 1990, 2003; Balsas, 2004; Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2013). For a practical purpose, liveability has been measured mainly quantitatively based on the pre-determined objective indicators, which allows for international or intercity referencing.

However, the rankings or scores drawn from the indicators, more often than not, produce limited implications for how urban liveability can be enhanced for the benefit of local communities (Ley, 1990; Woolcock, 2009; Wetzstein, 2010; Kaal,

2011; Kashef, 2016). This constraint is grounded in two primary features of the existing liveability literature. First, studies on urban liveability have tended to lack the account of 'from whose perspective' the city is liveable. In effect, some of the well-known liveability indices have been utilised for international companies to decide on the amount of allowances given to their relocated employees, which cannot adequately represent the diverse viewpoints of various socioeconomic groups (Pacione, 2003; Rozek et al., 2018). Especially, when the reflection on liveability is aligned with the city government's policy agenda to make the city more global, the worse-off groups' perception of urban liveability is likely compromised and unrepresented (Woolcock, 2009; Saitluanga, 2014; Teo, 2014).

Second, although some of the composite indicators of liveability consider intangible components such as housing affordability, economy, health, and safety, the social dimension of liveability, such as social cohesion, social interaction, and community capacity, has been rarely addressed in the liveability discourses (Lloyd et al., 2016). This relational aspect of liveability is important especially when the spatial scale of liveability is focused on a neighbourhood. Despite the eroding place-based social relations in the contemporary society (Fukuyama, 1999), geographically defined social relationships are still meaningful particularly to less privileged groups who tend to have relatively limited social networks and resources to mobilise in optimising their quality of life (Mullins & Western, 2001; Lloyd et al., 2016). Therefore, the discussion on urban liveability should be extended to the reflection on the social dimension of people's daily lives (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2013).

In order to deepen our understanding of liveability beyond the quantified measurement of urban functionality, the existing conceptual framework of liveability should be realigned with the actual experiences of local communities. Lloyd et al. (2016) maintain that this process is accompanied with 'a paradigm shift to a qualitative understanding and interpretation of these social experiences as described by the residents (p. 352)'. As a certain locality, particularly a residential area, is experienced in different ways by different people (Chaskin, 1997), a heuristic approach incorporating local residents' subjective appreciation of urban life seems necessary to yield valuable implications for the question 'what should we do then' (Wetzstein, 2010; McCrea & Walters, 2012).

The local residents' interpretation of liveability is closely related to how they envision a more liveable place (Lloyd et al., 2016). People may be discontent with certain aspects of their cities, and their awareness of the problems may intensify the demand for adequate solutions. Then, people's pursuit of liveable cities can be concretised into civic movements that fight for, or against, particular urban issues. In effect, the attempts to envisage an 'ideal city' have emerged from the belief that building a utopian society is achievable when people participate in canvassing their desires and demands together and are empowered to influence decision-making (Fainstein, 2005; Friedmann, 2000; Douglass, 2016). This view is well-aligned with the 'right to the city' ideology in urban planning. The progressive urban thinkers have advocated for the empowerment of the grassroots to make decisions that are deemed to determine their future and have argued that we should enforce the desires of the general public,

not only those of the limited number of urban elites (Lefebvre et al., 1996; Harvey, 2003). In this regard, participatory planning can be a social platform on which the underprivileged are empowered in the urban politics to exert rights to influence creating a liveable city (Clavel, 1986).

While participatory planning takes place at various spatial scales, building a liveable city is often based on neighbourhood-based or community-based interventions. Despite unclear delineation of neighbourhood boundaries, neighbourhoods remain as viable social and spatial units of shared identity that form the basis of collective actions to solve urban problems (Chaskin, 1997; Peterman, 2000; Looker, 2012). Community participation has thus been widely adopted in neighbourhood revitalisation in the U.S. since the 1970s based on the premise that citizen empowerment at a street neighbourhood ensures greater community power over the city politics (Keating et al., 1996). From this perspective, participatory planning for neighbourhood revitalisation is seen as reified collective efforts to identify and improve neighbourhood liveability, which may diverge in different places (Vine, 2012). Then, liveability is indeed “a statement of desires related to the contentment with life in a particular location of an individual or set of individuals” (de Chazal, 2010).

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to better understand end-users’ nuanced perceptions of and aspirations for urban liveability, this paper adopts an interpretive approach based on social constructionism which considers the social reality as being constructed from human interaction through interpretive processes (Clapham, 2012). Interpretive inquiry is a relevant method for this research as this paper explores the meanings of liveability interpreted by citizens without imposing researchers’ knowledge of theories on the analytical framework. In this viewpoint, we analysed the final outputs of the participatory community workshops for neighbourhood revitalisation in Daegu, Korea to understand how local residents interpret neighbourhood liveability.

The city government of Daegu, the fourth largest city in Korea, has been organising a studio-based participatory planning workshop, namely Community Participatory Planning School, since 2009. The Daegu Creative Urban Regeneration Centre (DCURC), an intermediary public agency established by the local government, has been hosting and coordinating this exercise. Under the guidance of local urban professionals and with the aid of local college students, individual studios of seven to ten people comprising local residents, civil servants, and community activists undertake site visits, site analysis, group discussions, and surveys with the residents and finally suggest their ideas on how to improve their neighbourhood at the end of the seven-weeks workshop. While the proposals were not entitled to legal rights or formal authorities yet at this stage, many of them are to be further developed and amended in collaboration with the respective district governments, so they could be submitted to the central government in bidding for revitalisation funds in the later stage.

The proposals drawn from the workshop were formulated based on a neighbourhood unit that has distinctive characteristics, and thus the heterogeneity of urban liveability according to geographical subdivisions are presumably identified. In addition, the participants are allowed to address any issues they want, including community activities and social inclusion. Therefore, the proposals seem suitable sources to grasp the residents’ perception of the neighbourhood liveability in line with the perspective of this paper. From 2009 to 2016, a total of 437 people participated in the workshops and drew 57 proposals, of which 46 proposals were archived by DCURC. Among the 46 proposals, 26 proposals focusing on the residential neighbourhoods were selected for analysis in this study, because the remaining 20 proposals targeted purposively developed non-residential areas, such as central business district, special commercial zones, local universities, and industrial complexes. These proposals were made in the format of presentation files (e.g., PowerPoint or PDF), and the contents comprise texts, maps, site photos, rough drawings, and reference images.

Based on these 26 proposals, a qualitative content analysis, ‘a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2019)’, was conducted in line with the research questions: 1) how local residents define a liveable neighbourhood; 2) how they believe it can be achieved; and 3) whether their views differ across different contexts. While the first two research inquiries are answered by qualitatively analysing the content in the ‘planning goals’ section and ‘strategies’ section in the proposals respectively, the third research question is considered by identifying the heterogeneity and subjectivity (i.e., neighbourhoods in the inner districts vs. those in the outer districts, different age groups, different length of residency) underlying the analysis result for the first two inquiries.

We analysed the textual content primarily and used visual references as supplementary materials that can help our understanding. We used NVivo 12.0, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package, to code the textual information, to link coded data in different themes relevant to this study, and to address explorative questions within multiple data by using the search tool with ease (Bazeley, 2000; Welsh, 2002). While there is an automatic coding function in NVivo, we nonetheless coded the texts manually given the manageable size of the documents (each proposal had about 30 pages on average). The coding was done by one of the authors three times, in which process unnecessarily repeated text within the same proposal but referring to the same concept has been sorted out, the accuracy of matching the original wordings with the relevant theme has been improved, and the initial themes have been renamed and reorganised. The analysis result was reviewed by the other author to enhance reliability and validity of the analysis. However, as we used qualitative content analysis, not quantitative one, we do not intend to report or compare the exact numbers or percentages of coding references in great detail. Instead, we rather focus on the interpretive meanings of the textual content and the overall tendency that particular views appeared in the proposals.

In addition, one of the authors participated in these workshops during the study period, observed the key discourses emerging among the participants, and had conversations with the staff of the host institution, which enabled us to provide contextual accounts of the content analysis result. We also used some of the information of the participants reported through the post-event survey and face-to-face interviews with the participants conducted by DCURC. As the primary purpose of this survey and interviews was for internal use of the host institution, the analysis in this paper is only based on the information directly related to the coding result.

4. FINDINGS

(1) Overview of the selected neighbourhoods and the workshop participants

The 26 proposals selected for this study concerned the neighbourhoods that were generally characterised as socioeconomically declining and physically deteriorating. According to the ‘Urban Decline Index’ developed by the Daegu Metropolitan Government (2016), 22 out of 26 neighbourhoods were found to fall into at least two categories of decline (Table 1). Ten neighbourhoods were experiencing relatively a higher degree of decline (** in at least one of the decline categories), nine of which were situated in the inner city districts. Overall, these areas have suffered population decline, building deterioration, and loss of local businesses over the past twenty years.

Table 1. The characteristics of the 26 neighbourhoods selected for this study

District	Neighbourhood	Population decrease & social decline	Local industry & economy	Physical deterioration	
Inner district	Jung-gu	Dongin	*	-	*
		Seongnae 3	**	-	**
	Seo-gu	Bisan 1	*	**	*
		Bisan 2&3 (2011)	**	**	***
		Bisan 2&3 (2016)	**	**	***
		Bisan 5&7	*	**	*
		Naedang 2&3	*	**	**
		Wondae	**	**	*
	Nam-gu	Icheon	-	*	**
		Daemyeong 6 (2013)	*	*	-
		Daemyeong 2&3&5	**	*	**
		Bongduk 2	*	-	*
		Daemyeong 6 (2016)	*	*	-
Outer district	Dong-gu	Ansim (2012a)	*	*	*
		Ansim (2012b)	*	*	*
		Dopyeong	*	*	*
		Hyomok 2	-	*	*
	Buk-gu	Daehyun	*	*	*
		Goseong 2&3	**	*	***
	Dalseo-gu	Duryu 1&2 (2013)	*	-	*
		Duryu 1&2 (2014)	*	-	*
	Suseong-gu	Manchon	-	*	-
		Dusan	-	-	-
		Sang	-	*	-
	Dalseong-gun	Hwawon	-	-	*
		Okpo	*	*	*

Note: * declining, ** relatively more declining, *** seriously declining

According to the data provided by DCURC (Figure 1), the participants consisted of diverse age groups ranging from 20s to 60s or above, and those in the 40s and 50s accounted for 60%. As the workshops were held on Saturdays, the participants consisted of not only retirees, homemakers, and college students, but also the employed and professionals. While the analysis of the participatory planning proposals has values in examining neighbourhood liveability, this approach needs to be grounded in the premise that the workshop participants should represent the interests and experiences of their neighbourhood communities.

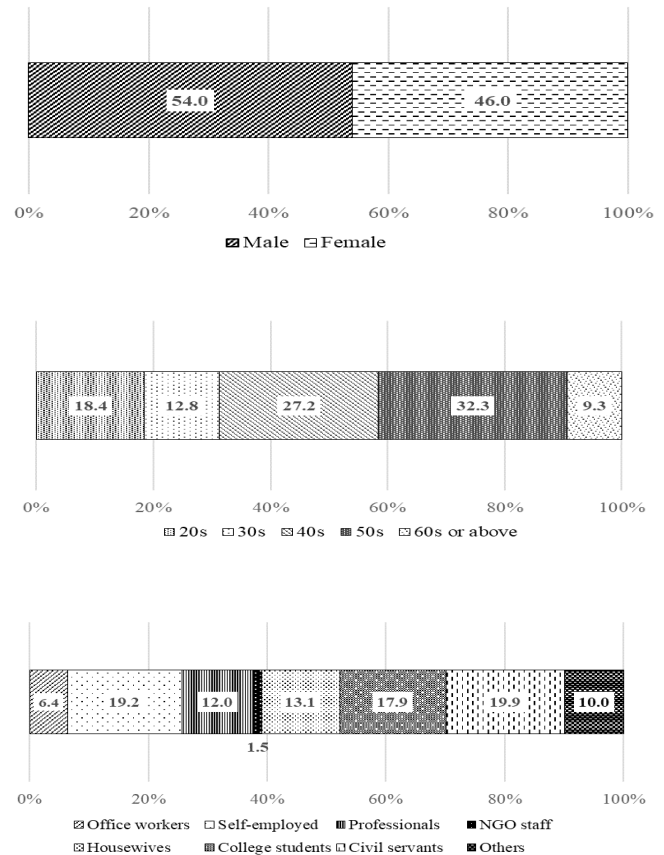


Figure 1. The characteristics of the workshop participants, 2011-2016 (n=437)

Otherwise, their proposals are likely to be beneficial only to a small group of people. The data showed that more than 40% of the participants have resided in the current neighbourhood for 20 years or longer. While a handful of the participants were allocated to the studios concerning the neighbourhoods which they did not inhabit due to the insufficient number of participants from their own neighbourhood, the generally long residency of the participants in the current neighbourhood implies that most of the participants were fairly knowledgeable about the conditions of their neighbourhoods and the needs of their communities. In our interview, a DCURC staff stated:

“When the proposals drawn from this workshop are implemented as the official neighbourhood revitalisation projects later, there is usually no major dispute among the local

residents because the interventions suggested in the planning proposals were generally about the issues on which the local residents have already reached a consensus.”

Therefore, the ideas suggested by the workshop participants in the planning proposals seem to reflect the reality of the current neighbourhood conditions and the aspirations of the local communities for liveable places.

(2) The Perceived Neighbourhood Liveability

We examined how the participants perceived the liveability of the current neighbourhoods by analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the neighbourhoods articulated in the proposals. As a result, 326 coding references were identified as the strengths. Overall, the participants noted the vibrant market places, historic and cultural sites, beautiful natural landscape, good accessibility, proximity to local landmarks, and active community activities as the assets of their neighbourhoods. Some of the groups tended to associate historic narratives with the specific places in the neighbourhoods and render them the neighbourhood's distinctive characteristics. Some of the examples include:

- This park [Gukchae-bosang Memorial Park] was made to commemorate the country's bond compensation movement that started from here in 1907 during the Japanese occupation. (Seongnae 3)
- The memory of the red brick house—there is a folk tale that whoever enters this house fulfils his or her wishes, which can also happen to us today. (Wondae)
- The name of our neighbourhood stems from the fact that this area had been rich in clear water from old times. (Icheon)

It was also noted that community activities in the neighbourhoods were highlighted as strengths, and this tendency was more clearly observed in most of the inner districts and relatively older neighbourhoods in the outer districts. For example:

- The senior club in our neighbourhood currently operates a restaurant, car wash, laundromat, and café. (Icheon)
- The Cherry Blossom Festival [in our neighbourhood] has been the oldest community festivals in the district. (Goseong)
- We have a community enterprise called 'Happy Network' and community tuition centre called 'Doongji' to help community members. (Ansim 2012a)

According to the 120 coding references on the weaknesses, the participants were generally discontent with the rundown buildings, shortage of parking lots and community spaces, and improper management of garbage disposal in the neighbourhood. They were also wary of a continuous drain of younger generation, thinning job opportunities, fear of potential crime, and population ageing. The workshop participants noted in the interviews that:

“There is no vibrancy in our neighbourhood. It is always dark and dull. I want the atmosphere of my neighbourhood to be brighter than now.” (Interview with a participant from Seo-gu)

“We don't have community spaces where I can meet with my neighbours and chat. If there are such places, we would gather more often and have more chances to contact one another.” (Interview with a participant from Dong-gu)

In short, although the socioeconomic and physical decline of these neighbourhoods has contributed to the deterioration of the area in general, the historic value attached to the areas, distinctive neighbourhood identity, and community cohesion seem to have had important meanings to their experienced liveability.

In general, the participants' concerns were focused primarily on the physical deterioration. However, the participants often addressed the loss of the neighbourhood identity and potential conflicts among the community members with different characteristics caused by the new housing developments nearby, particularly in the suburban areas of the city. For example, a few groups concerning the suburban neighbourhoods identified the followings as the threats to their neighbourhoods:

- Increasing gap of development between our neighbourhood and the adjacent areas (Dopyeong)
- Influx of people with different characteristics (Hwawon)
- Conflicts between the original residents and the new residents (Okpo)
- Disputes between high rise housing residents and detached housing residents (Ansim)
- Increasing gap between new younger residents who have limited knowledge about the neighbourhood history and older residents who have lived here for long (Icheon)

Our interview with a DCURC staff provided an additional account regarding this issue.

“Although the workshop participants were highly discontent with the physical deterioration of their neighbourhood, their perception seems relative. When there are new developments of residential complexes nearby, they often felt more socially and spatially disadvantaged and were highly motivated for revitalisation.”

Meanwhile, the result of the survey conducted by DCURC revealed variances in the participants' perception of neighbourhood liveability. Given the generally declining socio-spatial conditions of the areas that the workshop participants inhabited, the higher proportion of the respondents indicating 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with their neighbourhoods (36%) than those indicating 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' (27%) was predicted result. However, it is interesting that the respondents' satisfaction was varied across different age groups and different lengths of residency (Figure 2). The respondents in their 20s and 50s showed relatively stronger dissatisfaction than other age groups did, and those who have lived in the current neighbourhood for one year or less tended to be less satisfied, compared to those whose residency was longer. Unfortunately,

this anonymous questionnaire survey did not reveal the information about where the respondents resided and which neighbourhood they worked on in the workshop, and thus, it was not possible to identify the variance of the respondents' satisfaction across different neighbourhoods or districts. Nevertheless, given that many of the neighbourhoods concerned in the workshops generally share common phenomenon of deterioration, the result signifies that how the residents perceive the liveability may differ among different groups. Yet, the detailed accounts of these variances would need further studies involving more systematic investigations.

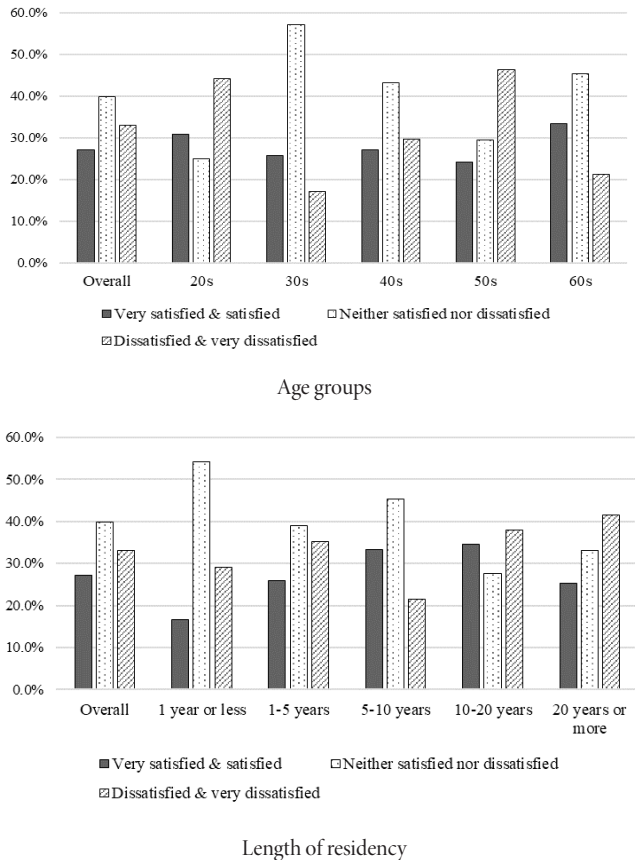


Figure 2. Respondents' satisfaction with the current neighbourhood

(3) Aspirations for a Liveable Neighbourhood

In order to identify how the participants envision a liveable neighbourhood, we analysed the goal statements of the proposals. Drawing on 116 coding references, we found that the participants' most popular description of the liveable neighbourhood they wish to create was 'a safe and pleasant neighbourhood with plentiful social interaction among residents.' Other major comments include the terms such as 'strong community capacity', 'cultural revitalisation', 'environment-friendly', and 'healthy community.' While the public concern on decaying old residential areas was the foundational rationale of Korea's urban regeneration policy, it is notable that people's conception of a liveable neighbourhood did not only concern the physical conditions of the area, but also considered social aspects in place (e.g., good relationships with neighbours, a strong sense of community, culture and arts).

While the goal statements in the proposals were rather abstract and conceptual at large, one third of the proposals had their goals of revitalisation in relation to the existing conditions and distinctive characteristics of their neighbourhoods. The residents living close to the hills, river, and streams—especially in the outer districts—tended to link the neighbourhood revitalisation with the concept of 'relaxation in the natural environment' (e.g., Dopyeong, Daemyung 6, Okpo, Ansim). In addition, those whose neighbourhoods were known as old detached single-family housing areas tended to highlight the significance of this traditional residential landscape of the city (e.g., Dusan, Manchon). Moreover, the participants from the neighbourhoods near the city's downtown focused on the revitalisation of the historic and cultural resources in their areas (e.g., Seongnae 3, Bisan 2&3). The workshop participants also pointed out the importance of utilising the existing neighbourhood resources by stating that:

"I do not agree that we should always make something new. Rather, we need to consider the resources that exist and utilise them wisely, so that what is to come in the future could be in harmony with what we already have here." (Interview with a participant from Dalseong-gun)

We also examined how the workshop participants planned to improve neighbourhood liveability by analysing the 'strategies' section of their proposals. This analysis produced total 366 references coded in two dimensions: hardware (strategies focusing on the physical improvement) and software (strategies focusing on the socio-economic revitalisation). Under the hardware theme (209 coding references), the strategies were categorised again into four sub-themes: 'improvement of public spaces', 'expansion of community facilities', 'housing refurbishment', and 'enhancement of public transport'. The result showed that the majority of their strategies on the hardware aspect was associated with the improvement of communal spaces (i.e., public spaces and community facilities). Only marginal suggestions pertained to housing refurbishment and public transportation (e.g., repainting the walls and entrances, neighbourhood shuttle bus operation). The workshop participants stressed the importance of community facilities in the interviews.

"There are many vacant houses in our neighbourhood. We could renovate some of the empty properties to be used for community activities or community cooperative businesses." (Interview with a participant from Dong-gu)

"Perhaps creating community spaces would not make a significant difference right away, but it will bring opportunities to revitalise the community in the near future." (Interview with a participant from Suseong-gu)

The significantly high proportion of the strategies regarding communal spaces may be partly because the national funding for neighbourhood regeneration is not allowed to be spent on refurbishing private properties (Interview with a DCURC staff). Nevertheless, it is remarkable that all the proposals considered the communal spaces to be used not only for relaxation, exercise, and social interaction, but also for disadvantaged

community members, such as kids from low-income families and single elderly households. The workshop participants tended to have very detailed ideas about how those community facilities and public open spaces could be improved. They even pointed out specific idle public buildings and old vacant houses in their neighbourhoods as the potential locations to be utilised for this purpose.

The software dimension with a total of 157 coding references was also broken down into three sub-themes: 'economic activities and governance', 'community activities for social interaction', and 'organisation of cultural activities'. Some of the references under 'economic activities and governance' would have been categorised under 'community activities for social interaction' in a broader sense. However, we deliberately made a clear distinction between them because the former involves more systematic arrangements for profit generation. The result revealed that more than half of the coding references (85 references) concerned the ideas to promote economic activities and governance (e.g., community cooperatives, neighbourhood branding, handcraft shops, community farming), and about a third (48 references) were suggested for facilitating community activities for social interaction (e.g., community radio broadcasting, seasonal festivals, intergenerational aids). Due to the lack of opportunities to appreciate culture in the neighbourhoods, some participants suggested to organise regular cultural events (e.g., music concerts, art exhibitions, painting/music lessons) in collaboration with local artists and non-governmental organisations.

The fact that a great deal of ideas focused on community's economic activities reflects inactive local economy and relatively unfavourable economic conditions of the residents in these neighbourhoods. The income generated from these activities was designed to be channelled to the community organisation and used for community events and maintenance of community facilities in the future. However, like the hardware aspect above, some proposals suggested the profits to be spent on supporting single elderly residents and young people in the neighbourhoods (e.g., job training programs, health check stations for the elderly), especially where population aging and outflow of younger generation has been serious social problems (e.g., Duryu, Hwawon, Bisan 1).

It is noted that the value of 'community benefit' takes a large account of people's aspirations of a liveable neighbourhood. Some proposals actually went beyond merely suggesting the types of community activities and specified the details of appropriate governance models for it (i.e., who takes responsibilities for what), being aware that it needs the support from the city and district governments and local social organisations. These proposals were readily developed into more mature plans in the project bidding stage and, in effect, have actually won the national funds for neighbourhood revitalization. (e.g., Duryu, Dongin, Icheon)

"After the workshop, I, together with other participants from my neighbourhood, set up a community cooperative through which we collectively purchase food products at a discounted

price and sell handcrafted soaps in collaboration with a local university. We use the sale profits to refurbish the streets in our neighbourhood." (Interview with a participant from Dong-gu)

The participants' efforts to seek community benefit are, in fact, well aligned with the objective of the workshops. When the participatory workshop was initially designed and launched, the city government implicitly aimed to identify 'collective aspirations' of the local communities through the engagement activities based on their rich knowledge about the local context. Although some of the proposals apparently represent biased interests of a small group of people, or the proposals address only general issues that are unlikely to have much practical implication, the government has believed that local residents' experiences of envisioning a more liveable neighbourhood can motivate them to actively engage in the revitalisation project later on (Interview with a DCURC staff).

Meanwhile, in the 'strategies' section, the participants from the inner city districts showed slightly different focuses from those from the outer districts. While the 'improvement of public spaces' and 'economic activities and governance' were highly sought for by both groups, 'expansion of community facilities' was suggested by the proposals for the inner city districts more frequently than those for the outer districts.

"The participants from Nam-gu, Seo-gu, and Jung-gu are usually passionate to improve the physical environment. Almost every proposal focuses on the expansion of community facilities in the neighbourhood. But, spaces are normally not a problem to those from other districts, because they can just use the existing community facilities in the neighbourhoods, such as a community centre and a church. Rather, they are more interested in setting up social entrepreneurs or community cooperatives to generate economic profits." (Interview with a DCURC staff)

It implies that how people make their own neighbourhoods to be more liveable appears to be shaped by the socio-spatial circumstances of the area in which they currently reside.

(4) Planning implications

Our findings identified that the categories of neighbourhood liveability discussed among the local residents in the participatory planning workshops clearly differ from the categories of urban liveability (Table 2). While Global Liveability Index concerns the availability of the (in)tangible infrastructure that supports citizens' overall quality of life which can be readily quantified on the city scale, the liveability themes emerged from the participatory workshops encompass the microscale spatial elements and management issues, social relationships, and local economic conditions on the neighbourhood scale, some of which cannot be measured applying universal standards. This result suggests that practical discussions on how to enhance liveability should not be constrained to improving or maintaining the urban environment at the city level, but should be extended to reinforcing community conditions and mobilising the resources at the sub-municipal level.

However, it is often not feasible for the city governments to

Table 2. Liveability categories: International liveability index vs. participatory planning

Global Liveability Index (City scale)		Participatory planning (Neighbourhood scale)	
<i>Stability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Prevalence of (pretty/violent) crime · Threat of terror · Threat of (military/ civil unrest) conflict 	<i>Physical environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Good accessibility by public transport · Availability of sufficient community spaces · Historic and cultural sites · Natural landscape · Availability of vibrant commercial area · Proximity to local landmarks · Overall building conditions · Availability of sufficient parking lots · Management of garbage disposal
<i>Healthcare</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Availability & quality of private & public health care · Availability of over-the-counter drugs · General healthcare indicators 	<i>Socio-economic environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Social interaction & cohesion · Community empowerment · Population ageing · Neighbourhood identity · Economic vitality · Local job opportunities · Fear of potential crime
<i>Culture & environment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Humidity/temperature · Discomfort of climate to travellers · Level of corruption & censorship · Social or religious restrictions · Sporting & cultural availability · Food & drink · Consumer goods & services 		
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Availability & quality of private education · Public education indicators 		
<i>Infra-structure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Quality of road network, public transport, & international links · Availability of good quality housing · Quality of energy provision, water provision, and telecommunications 		

adequately tackle the issues related to neighbourhood liveability, particularly its social dimension.

In this sense, the role of sub-municipal governance seems important. While residents can easily assess what is good or bad about their neighbourhood, it may be difficult for them to concretise their ideas into implementable solutions without institutional assistance. In particular, given the strong aspirations for community businesses to revitalise the neighbourhood economy in place, the local residents need to acquire the capacity for securing funds and operating a business. Therefore, a community planning exercise should be tied to the sub-municipal governance structure for implementation. The participatory planning workshops in Daegu are organised by DCURC, a public institute set up by the city government, and the workshop outputs are upgraded to the formal planning proposals and submitted to the central government for urban regeneration funding. In this process, the city and district governments provide necessary administrative assistance and educate the local communities on the policy direction of urban regeneration to increase the quality of the proposals. Accordingly, the participation in the workshop is highly linked to the implementation of the participants’ ideas once they are recognised by the governments.

“A lot of participants form their own studio members by themselves before applying for the workshop, because they already have a strong and clear goal of participating in this workshop, which is getting the state fund and accessing public resources for improving their neighbourhoods.” (Interview with a DCURC staff)

“Revitalisation is a decision-making process among diverse people. [...] It is important that the residents identify the

potential of their neighbourhood; the experts seek professional ways to mobilise it; and the state incorporate the ideas into policy-making.” (Interview with an urban expert who participated in the workshop)

It indicates that while participatory workshops help understand the contextualised liveability, the relevant institutional framework at the sub-municipal level helps achieving the neighbourhood liveability, particularly its social dimension, such as community capacity building and strengthening social solidarity.

Meanwhile, understanding liveability itself seems to facilitate achieving it. According to the DCURC’s survey result, 88.6% of the respondents stated that the participatory planning workshop has increased their awareness of and concerns to the neighbourhood matters. In addition, while only 27.6% of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with the current neighbourhood before the workshop, their satisfaction significantly increased to 43.3% after the workshop.

“While participating in this [workshop] program, I have thought a lot about what can be improved in my neighbourhood in my daily life. Now I am more interested in the community matters than before. I think this is an important starting point for our community revitalisation.” (Interview with a participant from Dalseong-gun)

It was also found that the ‘strategies’ section in the workshop proposals illustrated a range of ideas that the local residents can voluntarily practice in daily lives without the government’s assistance, such as putting a flower base by the entrance of their house to cleaning the street in front of the gate. Therefore, it is likely that exploring liveability through the bottom up approach

improves residents' perception of the neighbourhood liveability and promotes more active, voluntary engagement of the local residents in improving it.

5. CONCLUSION

Liveability is a multifaceted concept attached to a specific spatial and socioeconomic setting. Therefore, the notion may not be understood identically across different localities. Liveability in the local context then needs to be reconstructed and reinterpreted by local residents who actually live in and use the place, and such a social constructionist approach allows for more practical discussions regarding the issues of how to improve urban liveability. From this viewpoint, this paper identified how local residents perceive liveability at the neighbourhood level and how they envision a liveable neighbourhood by exploring the local residents' proposals for neighbourhood revitalisation drawn in the participatory planning workshops in Korea.

Overall, this paper explores the relativity and subjectivity of local communities' perceived liveability, as McCrea and Walters (2012) suggested. It demonstrates that local residents' perceived liveability varies across different neighbourhoods—particularly between those in the inner city and those in the outer districts, age groups, and length of residency, and that how they envision a more liveable community is largely influenced by the existing neighbourhood conditions. The paper also argues that liveability is shaped not only by the physical environment and urban functionality, but also by the social dimension, such as social relationships with neighbours and social solidarity, which contrasts what global liveability indicators have framed. Specifically, a great emphasis was placed on the capacity building for community benefits in the Korean context. Therefore, in planning for liveable cities, we should consider to what extent the city-scale liveability discourse would mean to the local communities whose quality of life is greatly influenced by the sub-municipal context.

In the Korean context, the neighbourhoods concerned in the participatory workshops for revitalisation are normally the areas that have failed to attract private capital to redevelop the residential complex, arguably due to the expected low profitability and have limited channels to voice out with the views of the reality and aspirations of a more liveable neighbourhood. Thereby, community planning workshops can be one of the platforms where local communities diagnose and appreciate the liveability of their neighbourhoods and search for the ways to improve it from the end-users' perspectives. Given that liveability is a value-laden concept in nature, the planning proposals seem useful in the first step for the local communities to formalise their own thoughts on a better place to live. Although the participatory planning proposals were not devised explicitly to measure neighbourhood liveability *per se*, we note that from the 'right to the city' perspective they still have significant values which enable to discover the voices of the populace from less attractive neighbourhoods and less affluent

communities. The strategic governance at the neighbourhood level that empowers local residents to materialise their ideas for a better place to live would help achieve the liveability for which they desire.

Despite the benefits of the qualitative approach to understanding contextualised liveability, this methodology needs to be adopted with caution. The proposals, the primary data sources of the analysis in this paper, were formulated during the participatory planning workshops organised by the public sector, and hence, some of the citizens' ideas were likely customised to suit the application for the state's funding for neighbourhood revitalisation. While this fact does not seem to detract from the value of citizens' voices for liveable community substantially, a depoliticised platform for public participation where local residents can freely express and share their views without much government involvement could help encapsulate the 'genuine' perspectives of the end-users.

Perhaps a quantitative measurement would still be fundamental to gauge urban functionality which is a critical factor of liveability. Nevertheless, this qualitative analysis of urban liveability would supplement the widely used international liveability index and help balance local governments' struggles to position themselves in the map of world's liveable cities, which are often facilitated overtly by the desire to outstand in the neoliberal intercity competition, by incorporating the perspectives of the city's end-users from the bottom up.

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