TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S): AN INTERPLAY OF DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Urban Imagination and In/Tangible Heritages in the Just City Agenda: Case in Seoul

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• Presentation Method. I would like to:
  i. present in person (with/without a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):
In this paper, I offer a conceptual framework to study local artists’ imagined urban past, present, and future (the urban imagination) that guides the call for change in urban policy and planning in Seoul, South Korea. In less than a decade, the urban development scene in the city has gone through notable changes. On the ground level, there is a heightened public awareness about the phenomenon of gentrification and inequalities embedded in urban (re)development. On the local level, the Seoul Metropolitan Government is promoting a participatory urban regeneration approach in lieu of the top-down, demolition-based redevelopment of the past, which is going to be expanded to a nationwide scale. Such shifts are taking place against a backdrop of a more recent national-level call for justice in higher-level authorities and institutions. In each context, artists and creative/cultural producers are significant actors in
characterizing the movement for change. The paper will introduce selected cases of artists involved in city-led projects and grassroots-level efforts, particularly around the city center, to provide preliminary insights into how notions of creativity and justice interplay around urban change based on the artists’ positionalities. I focus on their urban imagination behind community and place that is contributing to the (re)construction of in/tangible heritages, and how they are manifesting in the built environment of Seoul. The research agenda will consider how the Seoul context could be studied as an exemplar of a “creative just city”, contributing to broader discussions around the role of art/ists in equitable development and the social turn, or “just turn”, in both art and urban planning.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Soyoon Choo is a PhD Candidate in Urban Planning & Development at the University of Southern California (Los Angeles, United States). She received her BA in International Studies at Ewha Womans University (Seoul, South Korea), and her Master in Public Administration at the University of Southern California, in which she focused on nonprofit management and especially in the arts and cultural sector’s community outreach programming. Before starting her PhD program, Soyoon has worked in the nonprofit sector in various capacities, from fundraising to communications. Her current dissertation research looks into city and grassroots-level urban regeneration efforts in Seoul, focusing on the imagined urban past, present, and future (the urban imagination) that guides the call for social and urban change through the lens of socially engaged artists. Her research interests lie on equitable development, socio-spatial justice, the intersection between socially engaged art and advocacy planning, and historical/sociopolitical forces in urban and community development. She is a Graduate Affiliate with the USC Korean Studies Institute and contributing writer for the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements.