

The Political Efficacy of Local Governments and the Community Welfare: A Cost-efficient Social Innovation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the contribution of the local government's policy experiments to the development of community welfare, focusing on the political efficacy of local governments: When attempting innovative policy experiments, the cost of failure is small while the ripple effect is large. In particular, from the perspective of 'cost-efficient innovation', this paper analyzes the mechanism of local government's welfare politics (i.e. policy experiments of local governments → improving efficiency and effectiveness of community welfare → local social innovation → enhancing citizens' quality of life). Through these analyses, this paper argues that the welfare politics of Local Autonomous Entity, including local governments, should be activated in order to continuously develop South Korea's community welfare. This is because it is politics that can change a series of systems and culture that surround us. This paper is divided into three parts. First, a review on the basics needed to politically understand South Korea's community welfare. Second, an exploration on how the local government's 'innovative policy experiments' are developing community welfare. Third, an emphasis on the significance of politics in the development of community welfare, and some suggestions for vitalizing the welfare politics of local governments in South Korea.

Key Words: Local Autonomous Entity (LAE), Local government, Innovative policy experiments, Community welfare, Cost-efficient social innovation, Welfare politics

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INTRODUCTION

W.H.O. declared a global pandemic of COVID-19 on March 12, 2020. South Korea is becoming a global role model with its transparent and innovative preventive measures against COVID-19. In this pandemic, state institutions, which usually are invisible to us, are appearing in the media every day. They are Local Autonomous Entities (LAEs).¹⁾ LAEs, along with KCDC (Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), are taking the lead in protecting and reassuring citizens in their jurisdictions at the forefront of prevention. That is, the role of LAEs is not small. As a result, a world-class preventive agency such as CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) in the United States is making every effort to check the preparedness and responsiveness of local governments in the event of a public health crisis (Weekly Sisa IN, Feb. 19, 2020).

In this way, the LAEs including local governments are the front-line administrative and state institutions responsible for the safety and welfare of citizens in the area where we live. Even if we do not mention laws such as the Constitution or Local Autonomy Act, it is clear that our daily lives have a very close relation to local governments. For example, when we apply for welfare benefits such as basic living security, childcare/children's allowances, basic pensions, youth allowances, and public postpartum care, we should go through the community service center in the area where we live.

As we can see from the example just mentioned, among local government's policies, social welfare is the policy area with the most contact between citizens and local governments. In terms of the frequency and intensity of contact, social welfare outperforms other policy areas. That is, the area in which local governments play the most prominent role is the area of social welfare. In particular, 'community welfare' is important for local governments. This is because the purpose of the local governments is to "improve the convenience and wellbeing of (local) residents". In addition, in general, community welfare is defined as "a collective effort (i.e. organizational/professional activities of governments or private organizations) to solve problems in the community and meet the welfare needs of the residents with the goal of

1) In South Korea, Local Autonomous Entities include not only 'local governments' but also 'local councils'. However, in reality, it usually means a local government. In this regard, please refer to the section titled "Authority and Role of Local Autonomous Entity" in this paper.

improving the quality of life of local residents” (Jo Woo-hong, 2014b; Park Yong-soon, 2006). The purpose of the local government and the definition of community welfare are almost exactly the same.

Nevertheless, local government’s activities to drive the development of community welfare are very insufficient. There are many reasons for this, but in my view, the lack of community welfare politics is probably the biggest cause. One of the primary functions of politics is to allocate limited resources, and to mediate and manage conflicts. In this regard, the political will and capacity of local governments for the development of community welfare are very important. This is because if the local governments, which have less available resources than the central government, allocate resources to social welfare first, the reaction will be very huge. Many local governments in South Korea have been engaged in civil engineering & construction projects, which have had a great exhibition effect. If the local governments deviate from this practice and change the policy priority significantly, those with vested interest in the region, which enjoyed economic gains in the past, will greatly resist it. In order for local governments to overcome these obstacles and realize the public good of “enhancing the quality of life of residents through the development of community welfare,” the local governments should actively engage in welfare politics that mobilizes and organizes political supports from residents and local civil society.

This paper aims to examine how the welfare politics of local governments contributes to the lives of citizens, and how it affects the development of community welfare policy. In particular, from the perspective of ‘cost-efficient innovation’, this paper seeks to understand the welfare politics of local governments, and capture the ‘unique political mechanisms’ of community welfare (i.e. local government’s policy experiments → improving efficiency and effectiveness of community welfare → local social innovation → enhancing citizens’ quality of life).

This paper is divided into three parts. First, we will look at the basic grammar needed to understand South Korea’s community welfare. This is part of the preliminary work for an analysis of the community welfare in South Korea with its focus on the welfare politics of local governments. Next, we will explore specific examples of how the local government’s ‘innovative policy experiments’ can drive the development of community welfare. Lastly, we will examine the importance of welfare politics as a ‘necessary and sufficient condition’ for the sustainable development of commun-

ity welfare, and at the same time, suggest what measures are needed to activate the welfare politics of local governments in South Korea.

THE POLITICAL GRAMMAR OF COMMUNITY WELFARE IN SOUTH KOREA: LOCAL AUTONOMOUS ENTITY AND COMMUNITY WELFARE

Concept and Legislation of Local Autonomy

Local autonomy means that local residents form organizations themselves, elect representatives through elections, and handle and solve local common problems at their own expense (Choi Chang-ho and Kang Hyeong-ki, 2011: 39). This is an academic concept, and in order to understand the reality of local autonomy more clearly, it is necessary to look at the Local Autonomy Act. According to the Local Autonomy Act, local autonomy could be considered synonymous with the ‘Local Autonomous Entity (LAE)’, and in Local Autonomy Act, LAEs is defined as five items (Jeong Hyeon-joo, 2019: 80-83; Ministry of Government Legislation’s National Legal Information Center website).

First, LAEs refer to ‘administrative districts’ such as the special metropolitan city, metropolitan cities, provinces, cities, counties, and *gu* (districts). According to Article 2 of the Local Autonomy Act, the types of LAEs in South Korea are divided into ‘Metropolitan LAEs’ (i.e. the special metropolitan city, metropolitan cities, special autonomous city, provinces, and special autonomous province) and ‘Basic LAEs’ (i.e. cities, counties, *gu*).

Second, LAEs are institutions dedicated to office work and administration with the objective of promoting residents’ convenience and local development within a certain area. According to Articles 3 and 115 of the Local Autonomy Act, LAEs have the status of a corporation, and aim to promote the convenience of residents and the development of the region.

Third, in accordance with the principle of ‘representative democracy’, LAEs elect their representatives through elections. Articles 31 and 94 of the Local Autonomy Act stipulate that residents elect local government heads and local councilors through

universal/equal/direct/secret elections.

Fourth, LAEs deal with common local problems and this is by residents through 'self-pay'. That is, based on the 'subsidiarity principle', the residents themselves provide the necessary resources to deal with local issues. Article 20 of the Local Finance Act, in principle, requires that LAEs bear all expenses necessary for the autonomous affairs.²⁾

Fifth, LAEs 'cooperate' with the central government to handle and solve common local problems. LAEs, not the central government, are responsible for handling various issues related to residents' lives. To this end, LAEs conduct 'autonomous affairs' or 'autonomous administration'. According to Article 8 of the Local Autonomy Act, LAEs are required to conduct autonomous affairs for the convenience and welfare of residents.³⁾ Meanwhile, LAEs need cooperation with the central government for the smooth execution of autonomous affairs. Articles 166 and 167 of the Local Autonomy Act stipulate that the central government should provide direction and support for the affairs of LAEs, and instruct/supervise the handling of affairs delegated by the central government. In addition, Article 168 of the Act stipulates that the 'Administrative Consultation & Conciliation Committee', which is a non-standing consultative committee, be established under the Prime Minister's Office for conciliation between the central government and the LAEs.

Based on this definition, the components of local autonomy could be summarized as shown in 'Table 1' below.

2) In reality, many LAEs in South Korea have very low fiscal independence, and they rely heavily on the central government (Choi Chang-ho and Kang Hyeong-ki, 2011: 540).

3) The affairs of LAEs are divided into three categories: autonomous affairs, delegated-to-LAE affairs, and delegated-to-local government affairs. First, 'autonomous delegated affairs' are the LAE's own affairs, which handles local public affairs to improve the wellbeing of residents. This includes, for example, the LAE's own social welfare programs. Autonomous affairs are carried out under the responsibility of the LAE. In principle, the entire budget is paid by the LAE. Second, 'delegated-to-LAE affairs' are work delegated by the central government (or Metropolitan LAE) to the LAE (or Basic LAE) in accordance with laws and regulations. It has both local and national interest. This includes, for example, taxation, utility bills collection, river maintenance, and public assistance. In principle, the budget for carrying out delegated-to-LAE affairs is shared by the LAE and the central government. Third, 'delegated-to-local government affairs' are work delegated by the central government (or Metropolitan LAE) to the head of local government (or head of basic local government). They are affairs with greater national interest than the local one. In the past, public assistance affairs were included in this, but the related regulations are now abolished. In relation to the welfare system, social insurance affairs are included. In principle, the budget for carrying out delegated-to-local government affairs is paid in full by the delegating institution (i.e. central government or Metropolitan LAE) (Jin Kwang et al., 2008: 166-167; Jeong Hyeon-joo, 2019: 82-83).

Table 1. The Components of Local Autonomy

Components	Terminology	Meaning
Local Autonomous Entity	Autonomous District	Independent and public corporations collectively established by residents within the administrative districts of designated areas
Common Problems	Autonomous Affairs	To jointly solve the problems that residents have to deal with
Subsidiarity	Independent Finance	To handle the common problems as the burden of the residents
Self-handling	Residents' Participation	To solve the common problems according to the decision of the residents
Joint Cooperation	State Intervention and Local Participation	To seek the close cooperation through appropriate role-sharing between central and local governments

*Source: Jeong Hyeon-joo (2019), p. 85

Authority and Role of the Local Autonomous Entity

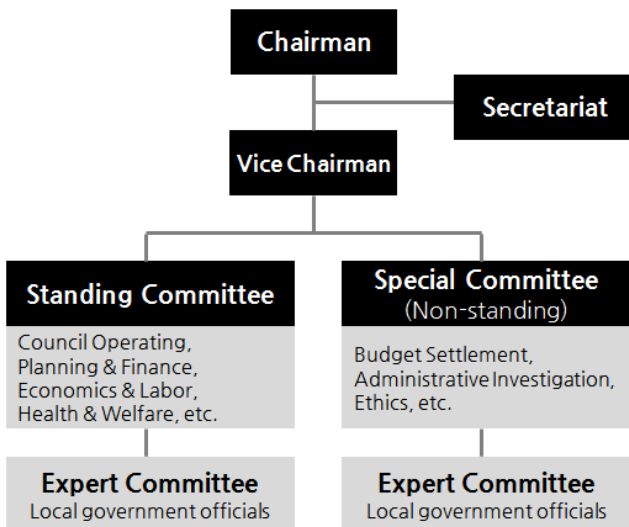
LAEs in South Korea are composed of ‘councils’ and ‘administrative governments’, and both institutions have the characteristics of a check-and-balance system. That is, local councils and local governments perform local autonomy under mutual check. Local Councils as a legislative institution enact the autonomous laws and regulations on behalf of their residents, and the local governments are executives and administrations that carry out local affairs in accordance with the autonomous laws and regulations. The specific range of their authority and their roles are as follows (Jeong Hyeon-joo, 2019: 109-127; Ministry of Government Legislation’s National Legal Information Center website).

First, the local council is composed of local councilors elected directly by residents, and deliberates and votes for the decision making of local governments. Local councilors act in accordance with laws and ordinances, and conduct legislative activities by collecting opinions from residents. Residents can petition the local council for any matter, as long as they do not violate the law. Article 39 of the Local Autonomy Act provides for the voting of local councils as follows.

- ① Enactment, revision, and abolition of the ordinance;
- ② Deliberation and confirmation of the budget;
- ③ Approval of the settlement of accounts;
- ④ Imposition and collection of royalties, fees, contributions, local taxes, etc.;
- ⑤ Establishment

and operation of the funds; ⑥ Acquisition and disposal of the important assets; ⑦ Establishment and disposal of the public facilities; ⑧ Abandonment of obligatory burdens or rights other than budget; ⑨ Accept and handling of the petitions; ⑩ Exchange and cooperation with foreign local governments; ⑪ Other authorities guaranteed by the law (e.g. right to request documents, right to review administrative affairs, and right to investigate, etc.). In short, the local council has the authorities to perform voting, legislation, and administrative monitoring. That is, the local council has the authorities to judge and confirm all the administrative matters such as the policies, legislation, and finances of local governments.

The local council is generally composed of a chairman, vice chairmen, standing committees, special committees, and a secretariat (see Figure 1). The chairman, vice chairmen, and the standing committee's chairman are elected by anonymous vote of councilors. The standing committees are permanent committees to handle common agendas (e.g. committees for council operating, planning and finance, economy and labor, health and welfare, etc.), and could be involved in all administrative processes. The special committees are non-standing committees that operate only at specific



*Source: Gyeonggi Provincial Council, <http://www.ggc.go.kr/>(Updated as of 15:21 KST, Mar. 8, 2020)

Figure 1. Organization of the Local Council

sessions (e.g. committees for budget settlement, administrative investigation, etc.) to resolve specific local issues. Each committee could have an expert committee of local government officials from each field (Gyeonggi Provincial Council website).

Next, the local government is an institution that implements public affairs (local affairs and administration) in order to “handle the affairs of the welfare of residents and manage the property” as specified in Article 117 (1) of the Constitution. According to Article 9 of the Local Autonomy Act, the local government is responsible for the affairs of LAEs, and the scope is as follows.

① Affairs on district, organization, administrative management, and the like of Local Governments; ② Affairs on the promotion of the welfare of residents⁴⁾; ③ Affairs on the promotion of agriculture, commerce, and industry; ④ Affairs on the local development and the installation and management of the residents’ living and environmental facilities; ⑤ Affairs on the promotion of education, physical education, culture, and arts; ⑥ Affairs on local civil defense and fire fighting.

It is the heads of local governments that oversee the affairs of the local government. The heads of local governments are directly elected by residents, and have a term of four years. The head of a local government is the head of the jurisdiction and the head of the administration representing the LAE. And he/she is the head of the lower administrative institutions of the central government, which handle the affairs delegated by the central government. The head of a local government has a broad range of authority. This is because the heads of local governments represent the LAE and oversee the affairs. The heads of local governments have the right to direct and supervise the affiliated administrative agencies and the jurisdiction of self-governing organizations, and have the right to appoint, direct, and supervise the staff.

In addition to overseeing the administration of local governments, the heads of local governments have a number of authority rights related to the authority of

4) There are roughly ten affairs on “the promotion of the welfare of residents” as specified in Article 9 of the Local Autonomy Act. ① Projects on the welfare of residents; ② Installation, operation, and management of the social welfare facilities; ③ Protection and support for those in need; ④ Protection of the elderly, children, mentally and physically disabled people, youth, and women, and the promotion of their welfare; ⑤ Installation and operation of the health care institution; ⑥ Prevention of infectious diseases and other diseases; ⑦ Operation and management of the cemeteries, crematoriums, and enshrining houses; ⑧ Direction to improve the hygiene of hospitality industry; ⑨ Collection and treatment of cleaning and dirt; ⑩ Establishment and management of the Local public enterprises.

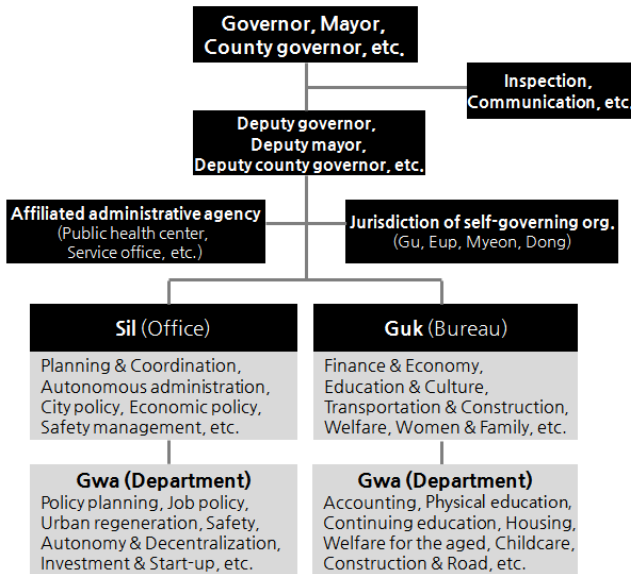
‘autonomous legislation’. They are roughly divided into nine as follows.

- ① Authority to speak at the local council;
- ② Authority to submit ordinances and budget proposals;
- ③ Authority to suggest legislative bills;
- ④ Authority to enact office rules;
- ⑤ Authority to convene temporary meetings of local councils;
- ⑥ Authority to propose legislative bills and budget proposals;
- ⑦ Authority to promulgate ordinances;
- ⑧ Authority of reconsideration and lawsuit;
- ⑨ Authority of urgent action.

Local governments are generally organized in the form shown in ‘Figure 2’ to implement the administrative affairs.

History of Local Autonomy in South Korea: Development and Status

In terms of local autonomy, South Korea has a shorter history than the West. After the liberation in 1945, the local autonomy system was introduced in July 1948, promulgating the implementation of local autonomy in the First Constitution. Article 96 of the First Constitution stipulated that “LAEs handle administrative affairs related



*Source: Gyeonggi Provincial Government, <https://www.gg.go.kr/>(Updated as of 20:31 KST, Mar. 8, 2020)
 Seoul Metropolitan Government, <http://www.seoul.go.kr/>(Updated as of 21:26 KST, Mar. 8, 2020)

Figure 2. Organization of the Local Governments

to autonomy and administrative affairs delegated by the state within the scope of the laws.” Article 97 of the Constitution stipulated the establishment of ‘local councils’. However, local autonomy in South Korea was suspended for 30 years from 1961 to 1990, and then was revived in 1991 after the 1987 democratic amendment.⁵⁾

With the outbreak of 5.16 (May 16) military coup in 1961, local autonomy in South Korea was brought to a catastrophe. Park Chung-hee, who took power in the 5.16 military coup, dissolved the local councils and ended local autonomy. Then, he brought down the elected heads of local governments, and implements the appointment system of the heads of local governments.

The Park Chung-hee government (1962-1979), which took power through a military coup, amended the Constitution in December 1962. The revised Constitution stipulated that “The time of the first local council under this Constitution is determined by law” (Article 7 (3) of Additional Rules). This amendment marks the starting point of the suspension of local autonomy in South Korea that lasted 30 years. In 1972, the Park Chung-hee government enacted the Yushin Constitution, and Article 10 of the Yushin Constitution’s Additional Rules stated that “Local councils under this Constitution will not be formed until the reunification of the country is achieved,” thus strangling the local autonomy in South Korea. The Park Chung-hee government, which lacked political legitimacy, tried to establish a developmental dictatorship regime with anti-communism as a national policy, and in the process, local autonomy was naturally dismissed.

After President Park Chung-hee was assassinated on October 26, 1979, Chun Doo-hwan’s new military group prolonged the military dictatorship by launching the 12.12 (December 12) military coup in 1979. The Chun Doo-hwan government (1980-1987), which took power in 1980 after the coup, amended the Constitution. Article 10 of the revised Constitution’s Additional Rules stipulated that “Local councils under this constitution be formed gradually in consideration of the fiscal independence of local autonomous entity, but the time of their construction is determined by law.” That is, the Chun government indefinitely postponed the implementation of local autonomy under the pretense of local fiscal independence.

5) The following contents were referred to: Jeong Hyeon-joo (2019), *Citizens’ Action* (2007), Jeong Soon-kwan (2017), *Committee for Government Innovation & Decentralization* (2005), and the *Blue House* (2018).

The Constitution was amended immediately after the June Democracy Movement in 1987, and as a result, the norms of local autonomy were restored. The constitutional amendment in 1987 removed the clause linking local fiscal independence to the implementation of local autonomy. However, the constitutional amendment in 1987 was criticized for having no concept or vision for the 'autonomy and decentralization'. With regard to local autonomy, it was merely a return to the First Constitution. In addition, the constitutional amendment in 1987 had a limitation that it did not lead to the implementation of local autonomy.

After the suspension of local autonomy in 1961, South Korea gradually became the 'Seoul Republic' in the midst of the centralized military dictatorship, which lasted for 30 years. The provinces were politically and economically subordinated to the central authority, and the social structure was formed in such a way that the central government controlled and mobilized the local government. As the central authorities appointed the heads of local governments such as mayors and governors, anyone could become the head of local government only with the appointment of the central authorities without the political consent of citizens. The appointed head of local government did not need to pay attention to the residents' sentiment nor respond to their demands. As a result, the local autonomy disappeared, and the local government became a branch of the central government.

It was former President Kim Dae-jung, the opposition leader in 1990, who stopped this situation and 'revived' local autonomy. In October 1990, Pyongmin Party President Kim Dae-jung went on a hunger strike for 13 days, demanding "The full implementation of local autonomy" as an opposition leader. As a result, local council elections could be held in 1991. Although the election for heads of local governments was suspended and only the election for local councilors was held, the local autonomy system was revived after the 30-year-suspension of local autonomy imposed by the 5.16 military coup in 1961.

The local autonomy system has been in full swing since 1995 when the elections for local councilors and heads of local governments were held at the same time. Former President Kim Dae-jung, the top contributor in the revival of local autonomy, made the first peaceful regime change in the history of the Korean constitutional government in 1998. The Kim Dae-jung government (1998-2003) is regarded as the 'developing period (institutionalization)' of local autonomy in South Korea. The

Kim government focused on balanced regional development. Former President Kim Dae-jung revised the Local Autonomy Act to give autonomy to the organizations and personnel affairs of LAEs. For example, in 1999, the Act on Promotion of the Transfer of Central Administrative Authority to Provinces was enacted, and a total of 232 cases of the central government affairs were transferred to the local governments.

The Roh Moo-hyun government (2003-2008) was the first government in South Korea to have both vision/will and executive power, and is considered to have led the 'jump-up period' of local autonomy. Former President Roh Moo-hyun was the first president of South Korea to make decentralization and balanced regional development the top priority of the government. For example, the Roh government enacted three laws of decentralization, including the Special Act on Decentralization, Act on Special Measures for the Construction of New Administrative Capital, and Special Act on Balanced National Development. And the Roh government established the 'Committee for Government Innovation and Decentralization', a presidential advisory body, and the President Roh personally took care of the decentralization policy. In addition, the Roh government introduced the concept of 'decentralization-participatory governance' to transfer the authorities of the central government to the provinces. Under the Roh government, a total of 987 cases of the central government affairs were transferred to the local governments.

The Lee Myung-bak government (2008-2013), which had a different ideology and stance from the Roh Moo-hyun government, showed a relatively lukewarm attitude toward the autonomy/decentralization policy. The Lee government implemented policies similar to the decentralization policy of the Roh government through the 'Committee for Decentralization Promotion'. The Lee government focused on improving the administrative efficiency (e.g. reorganizing administrative system and expanding local fiscal independence) rather than autonomy/decentralization. For example, the Special Act on Reorganization of Local Administrative System (2010) was enacted to integrate Changwon, Masan, and Jinhae, and 5% of the VAT was converted into local consumption tax.

The Park Geun-hye government (2013-2017) is regarded as the government that brought the 'recession' or 'dark age' of local autonomy in South Korea. The Park government launched the 'Committee for Local Autonomy Development' and established the Comprehensive Plan for Local Autonomy Development. However, most

of its plans never saw fruition. The problem is that the Park government had a great conflict with the local governments and damaged the local autonomy. For example, the Park government attempted to pass the budgetary burden to the local offices of education without securing the national budget for the ‘Nuri Course’ (i.e. education/childcare courses for children aged 3 to 5) from 2014 to 2015.⁶⁾ Besides, it attempted to abolish and undermine the welfare programs of local governments⁷⁾, and it also tried to deprive them of local tax investigation right.

The current government (Moon Jae-in government), which came to power in 2017, succeeded the Roh Moo-hyun government’s autonomy/decentralization policy under the nickname ‘Roh government Season 2’. What distinguishes the Moon government from other governments is that it promotes the ‘constitutional amendment for autonomy/decentralization’. In March 2018, the Moon government announced the Constitutional Amendment Plan with three main points. ‘Strengthening autonomy/decentralization’, ‘Pursuing a decentralized state’, and ‘Using the term Local Government instead of Local Autonomous Entity’. In September 2018, the Moon government established a ‘Comprehensive Plan for Autonomy/Decentralization’ to present the vision for “Autonomy/decentralization that changes our lives” and to suggest six major strategies and 33 detailed tasks for realizing autonomy/decentralization. In addition, the Moon government transferred a large part of the central government’s authority to local governments by revising the Local Autonomy Act in December 2018, and made obligatory the establishment of the Participatory Budgeting Organization by revising the Local Finance Act in March 2018.

6) Given the fact that the fiscal independence of local governments in South Korea is lower than 60%, it was a serious problem to pass the total amount of childcare budgets to local governments (Jeong Hyeon-joo, 2019: 69).

7) A good example of the Park Geun-hye government’s attempt to damage the autonomy of local governments is shown in a change in the Enforcement Decree of the Local Finance Act regarding the local grant tax in 2016. In June 2016, the Park government tried to amend the Enforcement Decree of the Local Finance Act as a justification for strengthening equity between local governments. The central government planned to redistribute the budget worth 800 billion won from the six local governments in Gyeonggi Province with higher fiscal independence (Suwon, Goyang, Seongnam, Yongin, Hwaseong, and Gwacheon) to other local governments. In a word, the central government would redistribute part of the budget of the six local governments in Gyeonggi Province to other local governments with lower fiscal independence. At the time, Seongnam Mayor Lee Jae-myung went on an indefinite hunger strike to oppose the local autonomy policy of the Park Geun-hye government. Eventually, the Park government’s plan was abandoned due to the fierce opposition and resistance of the six local governments (Newsis, June 10, 2016; Jeong Hyeon-joo, 2019: 69-70).

Table 2. History of Local Autonomy in South Korea

Sort	Introducing Period (1948 ~ 1961)	Suspended Period (1961 ~ 1990)	Revival/Developing Period (1991 ~ Present)
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan LAEs: Seoul Special Metropolitan City, provinces • Basic LAEs: city, eup, myeon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan LAEs: Seoul Special Metropolitan City, direct-controlled cities, provinces • Basic LAEs: city, gun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan LAEs: special metropolitan city, metropolitan cities (special autonomous city), provinces (special autonomous province) • Basic LAEs: city, gun, gu, autonomous district
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-and-balance system (Council+Administration) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated system (*Abolishing council) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-and-balance system (Council+Administration)
Election	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st (1952) ~ 3rd (1960): 'Direct election' - Councilors in Seoul, province - Councilors in city, eup, myeon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolition of councils - Councilors in Seoul, province: approval by the Minister of the Interior - Councilors in city, gun: approval by the governors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st (1991) ~ 8th (2018): 'Direct election' - Councilors in metropolitan city, province - Councilors in city, gun, gu

*Source: Jeong Hyeon-joo (2019), p. 36

Local Autonomy, Decentralization, and Community Welfare in South Korea

The local governments in South Korea implement autonomous affairs of 'promoting the convenience and welfare of residents' according to the Constitution and the Local Autonomy Act. For example, the Constitution and the Local Autonomy Act stipulate four key affairs of local governments (i.e. the services related to the welfare of residents; the installation, operation, and management of social welfare facilities; the protection and support for the poor; the protection and welfare promotion of the elderly, children, physically/mentally disabled, youth, and women). That is, it is assumed that local governments are an advance guard and a bastion of community welfare.

The role of local governments is increasing as 'autonomy/decentralization' is being strengthened. Autonomy/decentralization is about fostering autonomous capacity and promoting local community developments by transferring the centralized resource allocation power to the provinces (Baek Jong-man, 2007; Lee Jae-wan, 2006; Jo Woo-hong, 2014a). Autonomy/decentralization basically seeks to share roles between the

central and local governments, and the roles between the public and private sectors. That is, it seeks development of local communities through the functions and roles of the central government, by strengthening the authority of local governments, and through the partnerships with various private actors in the local community.

There are conflicting views regarding autonomy/decentralization. Advocates of the welfare state view decentralization as a process in which the welfare state adapts to the needs of diversified welfare consumers. On the other hand, neoliberalists see decentralization in terms of the freedom of choice, the personal responsibility, and the fiscal reduction. In South Korea, as it has a strong tendency toward 'financial conservatism', more emphasis tends to be put on the neoliberalist's view (Park Bo-young, 2017). Thus, some are concerned that over-emphasizing autonomy/decentralization could lead to the polarization of community welfare, with fiscal gaps between regions. Autonomy/decentralization could result in shifting the central government's responsibility for social welfare development to the local government.

In any case, the role of local governments in community welfare is becoming increasingly important in South Korea in conjunction with the strengthening of autonomy/decentralization. However, here we should never miss the welfare-political context of autonomy/decentralization. The gap between the Seoul metropolitan area and the provinces is serious—so serious that the country itself has become to be called 'Seoul Republic'. Decentralization emerged as an alternative to this very problem. That is, decentralization was promoted as a means to bridge the gap between the metropolitan area and the provinces and to promote the balanced national development. However, in the late 1990s and 2000s, when decentralization began in earnest in South Korea, the social welfare paradigm was also shifting significantly (Yoon Chan-young, 2003). Since the 1980s, the western welfare states have faced serious financial difficulties, and as a result, have reduced welfare programs based on neoliberalism (Park Bo-young, 2015). Then, the ideas to mobilize the resources of the local community as much as possible emerged in order to ease the burden of central government on welfare expenditure. These ideas are about localization, welfare pluralism, privatization, and private-public partnerships. In short, it is no coincidence that there has emerged the trend of strengthening community welfare centered on autonomy/decentralization.

In addition to the welfare-political context, there are quite practical and existential

reasons why the role of local governments is emphasized in community welfare. Local governments are inextricably linked to 'local community' in that they are institutions that exist for 'local residents'. Local communities are geographical boundaries and communities, and local governments have the responsibility to support them. In particular, local governments have a legal obligation to develop community welfare in order to promote the wellbeing of local communities. For example, local governments gain a profound understanding of the needs of the local residents, and mobilize and develop resources to meet them. And, they are in charge of and manage the public welfare delivery system, which is a necessary and sufficient condition for effectively addressing the needs of local residents. In addition, they act as leaders in social work, community care, community development, and social planning, which are key elements of community welfare (Jo Woo-hong, 2014a, 2014b; Kwon Mi- young, 2019).

THE INNOVATIVE POLICY EXPERIMENTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY WELFARE: A COST-EFFICIENT SOCIAL INNOVATION

Community Welfare Politics: Local Elections and Social Innovation

Modern society suffers from various social problems such as aging population, economic polarization, social exclusion, and environmental pollution. Thus, various ideas and alternatives are being sought to solve them. Among them, 'social innovation' is receiving great attention in that it aims to solve social problems through innovative activities. Social innovation is defined as "an activity that develops and realizes 'new ideas' to achieve social goals in social welfare, healthcare, education, health and hygiene, environment, safety, and the like", and its evaluation is based on how much social value and effectiveness the activity produces (Song Wi-jin, 2010: 70-71).

The most representative social innovation is an activity that increases the efficiency and effectiveness of social services. This is because not only social services are the most accessible in our daily lives, but they also have the greatest impact on our daily lives. Local governments are regarded as one of the most important social innovation actors in relation to social services. Usually, local governments are a provider and

administrator/coordinator of social services. That is, local governments are attracting attention as a representative agent that can trigger, lead, and accelerate the social innovation.⁸⁾

In particular, local governments could be a 'laboratory' for innovative policies. Unlike the central government, which is large and has a heavy burden of failure, local governments can experiment with a variety of innovative policies without burden. If a local government's innovative policy experiment fails, it disappears unnoticed without causing a major impact on society. However, successful policy experiments spread through the unique policy diffusion mechanism of local governments. Failure cases are filtered at the regional level, while success cases spread across the country. This asymmetric structure is the reason why local governments have a 'high returns' of innovative policy experiments.

The widespread diffusion of innovation of a local government is a good example of local autonomy truly exerting its power. When a small experiment tried by a local government changes our life through the local government's unique policy diffusion mechanism, we experience the efficacy of local governments.

The driving force for the diffusion of innovation is 'election competition'. The heads of local governments, who have to run for elections every four years, feel the need to replicate and introduce innovations from neighboring local governments. Elections dramatically increase the intensity of the head's response to voters. In the past, before the implementation of the local autonomy system, the heads of the appointed office would respond preferentially to the demands of the Minister of Interior of the central government with personnel authority rather than those of residents. Thus, without election competition, 'safe operation', not 'innovation' would become a virtue.

The political mechanism of this innovation diffusion is confirmed by three representative examples. The first example is the 'childbirth incentive scheme'. When local governments in neighboring regions introduce the childbirth incentive scheme, few local governments would be able to ignore the voice of local voters demanding the introduction of the same scheme. Since the direct comparison between local governments is possible if the voter's living areas are close to each other or overlapping,

8) The following contents were referred to: Cheon Kwan-yul (2015) and Kim Tae-il & Center for Good Budget (2014).

the closer the neighboring regions to each other, the stronger the effects of imitation as a result of election competition become. For example, Hampyeong-gun, a small county that suffered from population outflow and aging population, for the first time in South Korea, introduced the childbirth incentive scheme in 2002. Over the years, this scheme spread to neighboring local governments. Starting with 8 regions in 2004, 29 in 2005, 30 in 2006, 43 in 2007, and 48 in 2008 introduced the childbirth incentive scheme (Lee Jeong-cheol & Heo Man-hyeong, 2012). Now there are over 200 Basic LAEs that give the childbirth incentive scheme.

The second example is the 'free school lunch program'. It is commonly known that the free school lunch program was initiated by Kim Sang-gon, who was elected Superintendent of Education of Gyeonggi Province in 2009. However, this program had already been in operation in Gwacheon, Seongnam, and Gunpo in Gyeonggi Province even before the launch of Kim Sang-gon's Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education. Superintendent Kim Sang-gon picked up this program and spread it throughout Gyeonggi Province, and after the local elections in 2010, he spread it nationwide.

The third example is the 'welfare hubification' of the community service center. In February 2014, the 'Mother and Two Daughters in Songpa-gu' incident occurred, showing the shameful current situation of the South Korea's welfare delivery system. After this incident, the discussion emerged rapidly that social services should be provided by administrative units closest to the residents. At the time, the two Basic LAEs of Seoul, Nowon-gu and Seodaemun-gu Offices, launched an innovative policy experiment that converted the local community service center into a 'welfare hub'. After significantly reducing the general administrative workload of community service centers through computerization, automation, and the like, the surplus manpower secured in this way was concentrated on the welfare work. The innovation that put the community service center at the center of the welfare delivery system spread to the higher governments (i.e. metropolitan governments and the central government), then back to lower governments (i.e. basic local governments). The Seoul Metropolitan government announced a plan to convert the existing community service centers into 'welfare centers', and the Ministry of Health and Welfare promoted the policy of 'hubification of the community service center' by creating and distributing the Best Practice Manual for Reorganizing Welfare Delivery System.

Community Welfare Policy: Experiments of Political Party Policy

The 7th Local Elections held on June 13, 2018 ended with the victory of the ruling Democratic Party of Korea. The Democratic Party accounted for 165 of the total 243 heads of local governments, and 2,290 of the total 3,750 local councilors (Online Encyclopedia Namu Wiki, Mar. 13, 2020).⁹⁾ The Democratic Party accounted for 67.9% of the total heads of local governments and 61.1% of the total local councilors. This means that the ruling Democratic Party won two-thirds of the local governments. In fact, the Democratic Party won in most local areas in South Korea.

In this regard, the 2018 local election pledges of the ruling Democratic Party have a very important meaning. As mentioned earlier, local governments function to experiment and spread the innovation through election competition. The fact that the Democratic Party won a huge number of seats in such local governments means the establishment of the following two equations. ‘Democratic Party \rightleftharpoons Local Governments’, ‘Democratic Party’s Welfare Pledges \rightleftharpoons Local Governments’ Policy Experiments (Community Welfare Policy)’. From this point, it would be very appropriate to understand the current status of the South Korea’s community welfare policy through the 2018 local election pledges of the Democratic Party.

Among the 2018 local election pledges of the Democratic Party, there were approximately ten related to major welfare (see Table 3). ① Diffusion of the labor-management win-win model for creating jobs such as Gwangju-type Job; ② Expansion of the public workplace nursery as a local hub; ③ Diffusion of the living wage scheme to local governments; ④ Enactment of the three Social Economy Acts to promote local social economy; ⑤ Expansion of the schoolchild care service (village care service) and the establishment of the village community for education; ⑥ Enactment of the Framework Act on Village Community and the activation of village enterprises; ⑦ Establishment of social service corporation in metropolitan governments; ⑧ Establishment of dementia relief centers in all basic local governments; ⑨ Diffusion of the New Deal Project for urban regeneration; ⑩ Free school uniform support for middle/high school freshmen.

9) In the 7th Local Elections in 2018, the ruling Democratic Party produced 14 heads of metropolitan governments, 151 heads of basic local governments, 652 metropolitan councilors, and 1,638 basic councilors.

Table 3. The 2018 Local Election Pledges of the Democratic Party: Major Welfare-related Pledges

Pledge	Provider	History
Diffusion of the labor-management win-win model for job creating such as Gwangju-type Job	Central gov., Gwangju Metro. gov.	Introduced by Gwangju Metro. gov.
Expansion of the public workplace nursery as a local hub	Central gov., all local gov.	Pilot project in 2018
Diffusion of the living wage scheme	All local gov.	Introduced by Kim Young-bae (former Chief of Seongbuk-gu Office, Seoul) and Kim Seong-hwan (former Chief of Nowon-gu Office, Seoul)
Enactment of the three Social Economy Acts (Framework Act on Social Economy, Framework Act on Social Values, Act for Promotion to Purchase Social Economic Enterprises' Products)	Central gov., Nat'l Assembly	Pres. Moon Jae-in's pledge
Expansion of the schoolchild care service (village care service); Establishment of the village community for education	Central gov., Seoul Metro. gov.	Introduced by Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon
Enactment of the Framework Act on Village Community; Activating village enterprises	Central gov., Nat'l Assembly, Seoul Metro. gov.	Introduced by Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon
Establishment of social service corporation in metropolitan governments	Central gov.	Pres. Moon Jae-in's pledge
Establishment of dementia relief centers in all basic local governments	All local gov.	Pres. Moon Jae-in's pledge
Diffusion of the New Deal Project for urban regeneration	Central gov., Seoul Metro. gov., Busan Metro. gov.	Introduced by Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon
Providing Free school uniforms for middle/high school freshmen	Gyeonggi Prov.	Introduced by Seongnam Mayor Lee Jae-myung (currently Governor of Gyeonggi Prov.)

*Note: Created by referring to the Democratic Party of Korea (2018).

Among these pledges, the most important are ‘Diffusion of the labor-management win-win model for creating jobs (Gwangju-type Job)’ and the ‘Diffusion of the living wage scheme to local governments’ are the most important pledges. This is because both of these pledges are in line with the key policy objectives and strategies of the Moon Jae-in government. The Moon government has set a key policy goal of the ‘Economy to Live Well Together’, and has used ‘Job Economy for Income-led Growth’ as its main policy strategy (Prime Minister’s Government Performance Evaluation Committee website). That is, the labor-management win-win model for job creating and the living wage scheme are policies that are exactly in line with the policy ideas and directions of the Moon government.

First, the labor-management win-win model for job creating represented by the ‘Gwangju-type Job’ is a pledge to create the local-customized jobs based on social pacts. This is intended to develop and spread the local-specific employment policy by vitalizing the Local Labor-Management-Community-Government Council, a social dialogue organization.¹⁰⁾ Labor-management win-win model for job creating is spreading to other regions such as Ulsan, Gunsan, and Gumi thanks to the full support from the Moon government and the keen interest of the heads of local governments belonging to the Democratic Party (Democratic Party of Korea, 2018: 62, 83, 301; Daily Kyunghyang Shinmun, Mar. 12, 2020).

Next, diffusion of the living wage scheme among local governments is a pledge to spread an already-existing, successful policy nationwide. The living wage scheme stems from the critical mind that it is impossible to lead a decent life with the minimum wage alone. Thus, the purpose of the scheme is to pay the appropriate level of wages to employees at public institutions to begin with. In order to induce policy diffusion, when choosing private companies for various projects, additional points are given to those companies that comply with the standard of living wage. 50%

10) On December 26, 2019, the construction of an automobile factory of Global Motors began in Gwangju Metropolitan City. This factory is the first place of business in South Korea to apply the four principles of the Gwangju-type Job called ‘reasonable wages’, ‘reasonable working hours’, ‘responsible business administration of labor and management’, and ‘better relations between original contractors and subcontractors’. The first largest shareholder, Gwangju Metropolitan City, invested 48.3 billion won (21% stake), and the second largest shareholder, Hyundai Motors, invested 43.7 billion won (19% stake). From the second half of 2021, it will produce 70,000 small-sized SUVs (Sports Utility Vehicles) of less than 1000cc per year. It is expected that this will create more jobs and strengthen the competitiveness of company through the win-win relationship between labor and management.

of the average wage of workers is set as the baseline, and the living wage is calculated by taking into account prices and living expenses in each region.

The living wage scheme was a pledge of the New Politics Alliance for Democracy (NPAD), the predecessor of the Democratic Party, during the 2014 local elections. At the time, there were 10 local government-related pledges among the local election pledges of NPAD. The key pledges were; the living wage scheme, regularization of irregular workers in local governments, and patient safe hospitals even without guardians. However, these pledges were not planned by the NPAD Central Party. Among the 5th local government's policy experiments (2010-2014), the innovative cases, those evaluated as successful, were melted into the election pledges of the NPAD Central Party. In fact, the living wage scheme was already implemented in 2013 by the heads of basic local governments belonging to NPAD (e.g. Chief Kim Young-bae of Seoul Seongbuk-gu Office and Chief Kim Seong-hwan of Seoul Nowon-gu Office) (Cheon Kwan-yul, 2015).

Threats to the Development of Community Welfare: The Local Government's Bad Experiments and the Central Government Interference

Through the earlier discussions, we looked at the political mechanisms of the innovation of local governments, and how they contribute to the development of community welfare policy. This could be summed up as a 'cost-efficient social innovation'. However, we may have one question here. Has the local government's choice always resulted in desirable outcomes? This question could be replaced with the following question: What are the factors that hinder the efficacy and performance of local governments in relation to community welfare? That is, in terms of welfare politics, what are the factors that inhibit the development of community welfare?

The factors that inhibit the development of community welfare could be divided into internal factor and external ones. First, as an internal factor, local governments could fall into the temptation of 'bad experiments'. The pursuit of innovation is a 'good experiment', while pursuing short-term benefits through big events such as hosting international sports events could be a 'bad experiment'. For example, the 2014 Incheon Asian Games that left only astronomical deficits is a representative example of a bad experiment.¹¹⁾ Incheon Metropolitan City built 16 stadiums, includ-

ing the main stadium, and constructed the Incheon Metro Line 2, and also spent an additional \$20 million in support for the weakest sports nations that the city had promised during the campaign to host the Asian Games. As a result, Incheon Metropolitan City suffered from huge debts and deficits after the Asian Games. Despite receiving 61.5 billion won as central government subsidies for the construction of the main stadium, there still were debts over a trillion won. And, 16 new stadiums are reporting a deficit of 10 billion won annually. From the time when it was chosen as the host city of the Asian Games, there were many criticisms that it was an unreasonable project. But, at the time, Incheon Mayor Ahn Sang-soo pushed ahead to host the event (Online Encyclopedia Namu Wiki, Mar. 14, 2020).

Politically, hosting international sports events increases the pride of local residents and strengthens the support for the heads of local governments. In addition, because money is released in the region, it has a short-term economic recovery effect. However, in the long run, it places a heavy burden on the local government's finances. The problem is that by the time when long-term losses are revealed, the head of local governments, who make decisions and later enjoy short-term benefits, will have already completed his/her term. In this case, the heads of local governments are insensitive to long-term losses and only sensitive to short-term benefits (Cheon Kwan-yul, 2015; Kim Tae-il & Center for Good Budget, 2014).

Next, as for an external factor, there may be 'central government interference'. The Park Geun-hye government unilaterally passed the budget of the 'Nuri Course' to the local offices of education without securing the national budget. In addition, the Park government undermined various welfare programs of local governments on the grounds that the welfare programs of local governments were inefficient and populist.

For example, the Park government stopped the Youth Activity Support Program (youth allowance) of Seoul Metropolitan government and the public postpartum care service of Seongnam government. In addition, the Park government 'overhauled' 1,496

11) Besides the 2014 Incheon Asian Games, Southern Jeolla Provincial government's F1 (FIA Formula One World Championship) event is also a typical example of a 'bad experiment'. The F1 event held in Yeongam in 2006 left only an astronomical deficit. Excluding the cost of infrastructure construction such as stadiums, the net operating deficit amounted to 190 billion won. Many criticized that there was no business from the time of hosting the F1 event. However, Park Jun-young, the Governor of Southern Jeolla Province at the time pushed ahead to host the event (Cheon Kwan-yul, 2015).

welfare programs of local governments saying that the local government's own welfare programs could be similar to or overlapping with those of the central government. And, the Park government evaluated the performance of the 'efficiency of welfare finance (i.e. a newly established indicator)' when evaluating the local welfare programs. In addition, the Park government implemented strong sanctions using money as a tool. It revised the Enforcement Decree of the Local Finance Act. If any local government did not follow the guideline of the central government, the Park government reduced the local grant tax in proportion to the amount the local governments spent on their welfare programs. The intention of the Park government was to take full advantage of the weaknesses of local governments, which had to depend heavily on the local grant tax due to their low fiscal independence. In short, the Park Geun-hye government actually decided to take control of the local government's decision-making (Jeon Hye-won, 2015).

The fundamental reason why these abnormal measures were possible in a country like South Korea, which adopted the local autonomy system, lies in its Constitution, the Local Autonomy Act, and the Framework Act on Social Security. Article 117 (1) of the Constitution and Article 22 of the Local Autonomy Act stipulate that "LAEs could enact the regulations (ordinances, etc.) on autonomy within the scope of the law." And, Article 20 (4) of the Framework Act on Social Security stipulates that "Heads of the central administrative agency and heads of the local government should operate or improve the social security system to reflect the deliberation and conciliation of the committee." Also, Articles 26 (2) and 26 (3) of the Act stipulates that "heads of the central administrative agency and heads of the local government should consult with the Minister of Health & Welfare when establishing or changing the social security system (Article 26 (2)), and the Social Security Committee will reconcile it if the consultation is not made (Article 26 (3))" (Ministry of Government Legislation's National Legal Information Center website). That is, in accordance with the Constitution, local governments are required to implement welfare programs only as stipulated by the Local Autonomy Act and the Framework Act on Social Security Act. And, local governments cannot establish or change welfare programs without consultation and consent from the heads of the central administrative agency (particularly the Minister of Health & Welfare) and the central government's Social Security Committee.

As previously discussed, as the constitution and laws in South Korea do not guarantee the relative autonomy of local governments, local governments must obtain the consent from the central government even when they use their own budget to implement welfare programs. In fact, many of the local government's welfare policies are the programs that fill the gaps in the central government's welfare policy (Oh Keon-ho, 2015). South Korea still has poor state welfare, and there are many welfare 'blind spots'. Thus, free school lunch, free school uniforms, public postpartum care, and youth allowances are necessary. These programs are not similar/overlapping programs that make local governments waste the taxpayer's precious money. Rather they are carried out to take care of the daily lives of the socially disadvantaged (e.g. teenagers, women, young people, etc.) that the central government's policy cannot cover. Moreover, local governments use their own budgets for these programs. If local governments implementing these programs should be disadvantaged, the innovative policy experiments of local governments would decrease sharply, and the policy diffusion mechanism of the local autonomy system would not work. And the resulting damage would go directly to the vulnerable groups with low income in the region.

HOW TO VITALIZE THE WELFARE POLITICS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

This paper argues that welfare politics is the most important for the sustainable development of community welfare in South Korea. This is because it is politics that can change a series of systems and culture that surround us. In this regard, this paper would like to make three suggestions as follows.

Firstly, political efforts are needed to amend the current legislations related to the local autonomy. Legislations are the principle of operation and the rule. However, the current legislations are hindering the development of local autonomy, not vitalizing local autonomy. The Constitution is said to be the fundamental basis for the implementation of local autonomy, and the Local Autonomy Act defines the purpose, authority, and role of LAEs. Nevertheless, the Local Autonomy Act, as well as the Constitution, tends to view local autonomy as a 'variable', not an invariable in the

state management. For example, even if local councils enact ordinances to promote the convenience and welfare of citizens, the ordinances are often blocked by high-level laws. The reason is with some provisions of the Constitution and the Local Autonomy Act. Article 117 (1) of the Constitution allows the enactment of the autonomous laws and regulations within the 'scope of the laws', and Article 22 of the Local Autonomy Act also allows the enactment of the ordinances on local governments' administrative affairs within the 'scope of the laws'. If the provisions of the Constitution and the Local Autonomy Law were changed from 'within the scope of the laws' to 'within the scope of not violating the laws', many aspects that are currently hindering the development of community welfare could be resolved to some extent (Lee Sook-yi, 2017).¹²⁾

Secondly, in order to strengthen the welfare legislations of local councils and vitalize the community welfare politics, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of local councilors and support them systematically. Local councilors are elected by residents, and have the authority to get involved in the overall administrative affairs of local governments. In addition, they play a variety of roles such as counseling residents, monitoring/criticizing the administration, making/deliberating policies, and promoting public relations. So, the Local Autonomy Act prohibits local councilors from holding concurrent positions and participating in profit-taking activities. The local councilors are the 'realizers of life politics', and are at the forefront of the community welfare politics. For example, the agendas addressed by basic councilors are issues that determine the everyday life of citizens. That is, the daily life of residents varies greatly depending on how local councilors legislate the community welfare system (Jeong Hyeon-joo, 2019: 112-114).

Despite the importance of local councilors, the systematical support is very poor. National assemblymen can have nine paid aides, while local councilors can have none. Local councilors have to play several roles on their own, such as providing counseling for complaints, attending events, and meetings. As a result, there is not enough physical time for them to review the policies and budget. In the case of

12) The limitation of the authority of ordinance enactments such as 'within the scope of the laws' is due to the fear that local governments might jump on the bandwagon. But, if a local government has a pending issue to solve in a certain region, this may cause the local government to lose the opportunity to implement the countermeasures quickly (Jeong Hyeon-joo, 2019: 117-118).

Seoul Metropolitan City, the largest LAE in South Korea, the annual budget reviewed by a local councilor (Seoul Metropolitan councilor) is about 240 billion won. Nevertheless, they are in an environment that makes it impossible for them to do their best when reviewing the budget. In this regard, the way to truly prevent the waste of the taxpayer's money would be to systematically support local councilors to ensure proper legislative activities (Lee Sook-yi, 2017).

Thirdly, it is necessary to support and monitor local governments, which have administrative authority and manage overall community welfare affairs, to perform their functions properly. First of all, it is urgent to legally guarantee the relative autonomy of local governments. According to Articles 166 and 167 of the Local Autonomy Act, the central government is responsible for instructing/supervising metropolitan governments, and metropolitan governments are responsible for instructing/supervising basic local governments. In reality, however, it is a vertical and hierarchical administrative system that operates under the command and control of the central government. Article 168 of the Local Autonomy Act stipulates the operation of the 'Administrative Consultation & Conciliation Committee'. But, it is very difficult to reflect the intentions of local governments in the policy implementing process through a temporary non-standing consultative committee (Jeong Hyeon-joo, 2019: 83). Given that the lives of residents cannot be generalized due to local differences, it seems urgent to prepare a legal mechanism to ensure the relative autonomy of local governments.

Meanwhile, we should not neglect the surveillance on local governments. As discussed earlier, local governments and their heads are likely to be tempted by 'bad experiments'. Monitoring local governments not to be attracted to bad experiments is a key variable that determines the success or failure of local governments. Politically, 'good experiments' that bring about a cost-efficient social innovation tend to take a long time and are less visible. Also, the election is once every four years, so it is easy to hide traces of bad experiments. Thus, the heads of local governments tend to cling to projects that can have great political publicity (e.g. hosting international sports events, constructing light rails, and the like) even at the expense of long-term financial losses (Cheon Kwan-yul, 2015). The only way to control this behavior would be to strengthen the monitoring of civil society and the check of local councils. In particular, the local council needs to check the heads of local governments to

prevent them from exercising their regal power. To this end, it may be necessary to give the personnel authority of the local government head regarding local council employees to the chairman of local councils, and to introduce a personnel hearing on the heads of public organizations appointed by the head of local governments (Lee Sook-yi, 2017).

CONCLUSION

So far, this paper has examined the current status and characteristics of South Korea's community welfare from the welfare-political perspective. In particular, this paper has analyzed the contribution of local government's policy experiments to the development of community welfare, focusing on the political efficacy of local governments so-called 'cost-efficient innovation'—the cost of failure is small while the ripple effect is large when attempting innovative policy experiments. Specifically, because local governments are sensitive to the residents' preferences and are aware of competition with other local governments, they attempt the innovative policy experiments. The local government's policy is small in scope and application, so various attempts are possible, and if successful, they easily spread to other local governments. Sometimes, due to the personal desires of the head of local governments, policies that are less relevant to the welfare of residents are promoted (Kim Tae-il & Center for Good Budget, 2014). However, it shows that the policy experiments of local governments drive local social innovation. This also shows the fact that local innovative cases spread to other local governments through the electoral process—a kind of the political mechanism of community welfare development.

Today, the world is in the midst of decentralization, and the new governance so-called 'public-private partnership' is in the spotlight. We are living in an era where an interdependent and cooperative social network is needed to be able to respond to the demands of citizens with complex and diverse needs. In other words, unlike in the past, the system in which the central government has all authority and gives orders and instructions can no longer work (Kwak Byung-hun & Park Bo-young, 2011).

Local governments, unlike the central government, do not monopolize the violence or mobilize all material resources. And their scope of administrative affairs is limited

to the convenience and welfare of the residents. In this respect, for local governments, horizontal leadership and new governance are not optional but essential. In the case of basic local governments that make up the majority of local governments, the discretionary budget is less than 10 billion won. In order to achieve performances in this environment, local governments have to make the most of their local human resources and actively develop and implement new ideas. This is, after all, a matter of politics. This is because drawing trust-based cooperation/collaboration and turning it back into an engine for local social innovation is impossible without the political efforts of local governments (e.g. social dialogue, compromises, conciliations, and the like).

Currently, it is a 'right time' for South Korea to promote the development of community welfare through autonomy/decentralization. This is because there are two nodal points related to community welfare politics (Cheon Kwan-yul, 2015; Lee Sook-yi, 2017). First, the citizens' perception of local autonomy has changed. Since welfare programs such as free school lunch began in earnest in 2010, many local governments have been focusing on life-based welfare programs rather than civil engineering & construction projects. As a result, many citizens, who had previously been interested only in central politics, came to think, "Something directly related to my life is being carried out in the units of city, gun (county), and gu (district)." Second, starting from the local elections in 2010, young talented people who have gained policy capabilities at the Blue House and the National Assembly have advanced into local governments and councils. They are introducing innovative welfare policies through individual capability and political solidarity, transforming local governments and councils formerly grabbed by those with vested interest in the region.

According to an old saying, one of the greatest opportunities is the 'timing (時運)'. In other words, no matter how excellent and well prepared you are, if you do not meet the timing, achieving success is difficult. It is believed that South Korea now has the most important opportunity (timing), the opportunity to promote the rapid development of community welfare. What it needs now is political will and actions to seek to "enhance the quality of life of citizens through autonomy/decentralization."

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