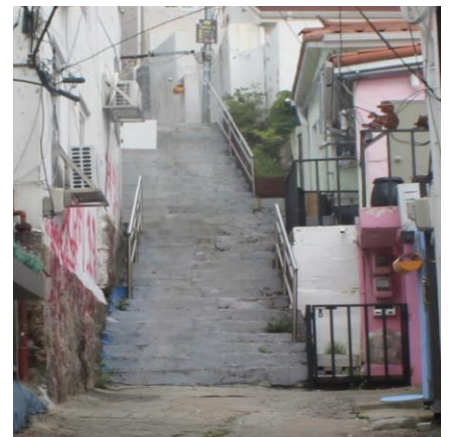


Public Art : the Social and Economic Effects

Nalishuwa Ikachana
International Development

I undertook fieldwork in South Korea during my exchange program in 2018. Fortunately, I was granted the Nicola Anderson Bursary that allowed me to conduct this research in Seoul and Busan. Using semi structured interviews, with the help of a translator. I wanted to see the effect of art projects that aimed to revitalize disadvantaged communities. The study was conducted in Ihwa Mural village, Seoul and Gamcheon Cultural Village, Busan. Which are two villages that were underprivileged communities in the midst of urbanized cities.

In Ihwa Mural Village, it was found out that after the public art projects, there was an influx of tourists that in a residential community that comprised of mostly the elderly population. The public art initially brought economic growth to the community. However, with the increased number of



tourists especially around the two-staircase mural, there was the disturbance of the space due to noise. The two murals were erased by two residents. As a result of the erasure of the murals, the economic growth in Ihwa was cut short. It was found that lack of participation and decision-making power from residents added to the tension that led to the destruction of the murals. Placement of the mural was important. The murals were installed in a location that was not fully agreed upon by the residents.

On the other hand, in Gamcheon Cultural Village, local residents seemed to have benefited more from public art. When the art installations and murals began to attract tourist, local government saw the popularity of the public art among tourists, and so began to give funds for empty homes to be used for commercial purposes such as art galleries run by the community. The residents took up key positions in a number of community start-ups. Jobs were created for the locals, especially the elderly population. The residents in Gamcheon were active participants in the beginning stages of the art projects. It was only after their participation that the government became involved. The support from the government strengthened the artists' and residents' efforts.



