

A Study of Methods to Use Local Communities through Book Cafes*

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Abstract

This study looks into cultural characteristics of book cafes emerging in the Hongdae area and methods for the effective use of cultural space through the cases of Potato Flower Studio in Gangwon-do and of the changes of two markets ‘Gwangjang Market’ and ‘Tongin Market’ in Seoul. The cultural space is generally acknowledged as a place or facility where citizens can appreciate culture and arts or they can create or educate cultural products in life. As a potential space in the cultural space of a city, book cafes should be developed into a cultural space which can be easily accessed by publishers, Korean readers, and foreigners. It is required that a book cafe acts as a local community space with its characteristics, that is, a complex culture space. To find a utilization plan for book cafes, we conducted a comparative study with ‘Potato Flower Studio’ in Pyeongchang, Gangwon-do which is the place connecting successfully with regional culture of the area. The cultural space should be changed to meet the needs of the time. This study investigates various methodologies to create a cultural space.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Objective of Study

Recently, there has been a growing interest in positional characteristics of a local place and its cultural value. ‘Potato Flower Studio’ in Pyeongchang, Gangwon-do is one of the most representative cases of successful coexistence of a local place’s development and culture. In addition, ‘Gwangjang Market’, which is located in Yeji-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, has a history of one hundred seven years and is one of the oldest market in Korea; it is living proof showing what effect is produced by creating stories about a local place.

It can be drawn from the two cases ‘Potato Flower Studio’ and ‘Gwangjang Market’ that it provides opportunities to vitalize the economy of a local place and further to improve the quality of lives of its residents that the local place is recreated as a new space for arts and culture by the effective reflection of its own unique culture and characteristics.

The Hongdae area, a region surrounding Hongik University, is a representative case where a local place was recreated as an art area by cultural diversity. Hongdae is originally an Korean abbreviation for Hongik University. However, it has become a term that indicates the ‘Hongdae area’, which covers a region within 200-meter radius from the gate of the university to Yang-Hwa riverside road. The HongDae area are widely divided into Wa-Woo Mountain Road, Picasso Streets and a parking lot alley. Wa-Woo Mountain Road starts from

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the gate of Hong-ik University to Sanwoolim Theater and on both sides of this road, there are art institute, galleries and painting shops. This road best represents the image of the university as the second largest art school in the world. Around the Picasso streets and parking lot alley, there are many restaurants, performance theaters and cultural spaces like Sangsang-madang. Exploring around the area, which has now become a true attraction, will easily take a whole day [1].

At the instigation of the Hongik University student union, in 1993 'Street Art Festival' was launched to recreate the area as a street filled with arts. Since then, its unique sensibility has been found. The following two points enabled young artists to gather and open a variety of craft workshops or characteristic shops with their unique items and sensitivity in the area. One is that the area's convenient transportation system gives people easier access to it. The other is that the rent of the area is more reasonable, compared to the neighboring large sub centers including Sinchon and the Idae area, a secondary center located outside the main business area of a large city (*e.g.*, the Yeongdeungpo are in Seoul, *etc.*). As a result, much younger talents have flocked into the Hongdae area. In the area, there is a flea market for those artists. The market takes place every weekend and their hand-made goods are sold in the market. Amateur musical bands crowd onto the area to create their culture of enjoying music and dancing.

As mentioned above, the Hongdae area departed from the uniform pattern of other university areas; hence, people have experienced diverse cultures and felt its unique atmosphere. This has continued to attract visitors with free, liberal ways of thinking and enabled the area to be a cultural representative, that is to say, a mecca of street arts, club cultures and arts festivals. There have been large and small arts festivals held in the area: Seoul Fringe Festival [2], Korea Experimental Art Festival[3], HongDae Street Arts Festival, Arts Plea Market and Club Day.

There has been a gradual rise in foreign tourists visiting the Hongdae area since the Hongdae University Station was recently opened by the Airport Railroad. An increase in users of guest houses in front of, and near, Hongik University improved greater accessibility of foreigners to this area. Guest houses were opened in and around Jongno and Myeong-dong in Seoul, close to tourist attractions frequented by foreign tourists, between 1997 and 2000. However, the hub of guest houses started to be transferred to the Hongdae area due to its convenient transportation system and the increasing number of foreigners who want to enjoy its unique cultures, such as street culture or club culture.

The point (*i.e.*, that there are a multitude of characteristic shops with brilliant ideas and specialty and cafes created by various themes) became the prime mover in young people's gathering in the Hongdae area. Now, the so-called 'the fellowship of Hongik University', organized by young people living in the countryside as well as foreign tourists, explores the whole of it.

This popularity caused an uncompetitive or featureless shop to survive no longer in the Hongdae area. Shops went out of business due to increase in rental price in the area. Nonetheless, the area's cultural space is expanding as the business district in it extends to the surrounding areas.

A free, artistic atmosphere created mainly by College of Fine Arts, Hongik University became an agent for attracting professional workers such fields as various genres of music, design, advertisement and publication. Among them, publishers have a key role in forming the unique local culture of the Hongdae area differentiated from other areas'. The Hongdae is an area where publishing companies are concentrated, together with Paju Book City in Gyeonggi-do. These publishing companies have opened a book cafe as well as an office to contribute to the formation of the culture of the Hongdae area since the 2000s.

This study adopts as a scope book cafes in the Hongdae area which have contributed to forming its unique culture. It aims to suggest a method for the effective use of cultural space by a comparative analysis of ‘Potato Flower Studio’ in Pyeongchang, Gangwon-do and two markets ‘Gwangjang Market’ and ‘Tongin Market’ in Seoul.

1.2. Previous Studies

According to Shin and Choi, the Hongdae area is a complex cultural area formed mainly by Hongik University based on painting, arts and club culture. They defined this area as the one which has unique human foundations (e.g., artists, professional workers in the field of culture, foreigners, etc.) differentiated from other areas in Korea [4].

Lee argued that the Hongdae is developed through the five states: (1) general residential area in the 1950s to the 1960s, (2) art cultural area in 1970s to the 1980s, (3) up-scale cafe cultural area in the early 1990s, (4) club cultural area in the middle and later 1990s, and (5) complex cultural area stratified by the previous cultural elements in the 2000s. He suggested indices of cultural diversity of this area, that is, various cultural spaces including 10 alternative spaces (i.e., galleries and small theaters), 30 art supply stores and crafts shops, 70 publishing companies, 70 unusual consumer cultural spaces and 50 clubs. He summarized that greater expansion of the area’s business district due to the concentration of publishers in it caused a new phenomenon that multitude of book cafes were opened at the same time [5].

This study adopted Lee as an evidential material for a method to use regional communities through book cafes in Hongdae area. Lee (2006) provided a source for a method to use regional communities through book cafes in Hongdae area. Lee (2006) suggested as the most important regional strategy the regional mix strategy performing a place marketing in connection with spaces in the city or other cities [6].

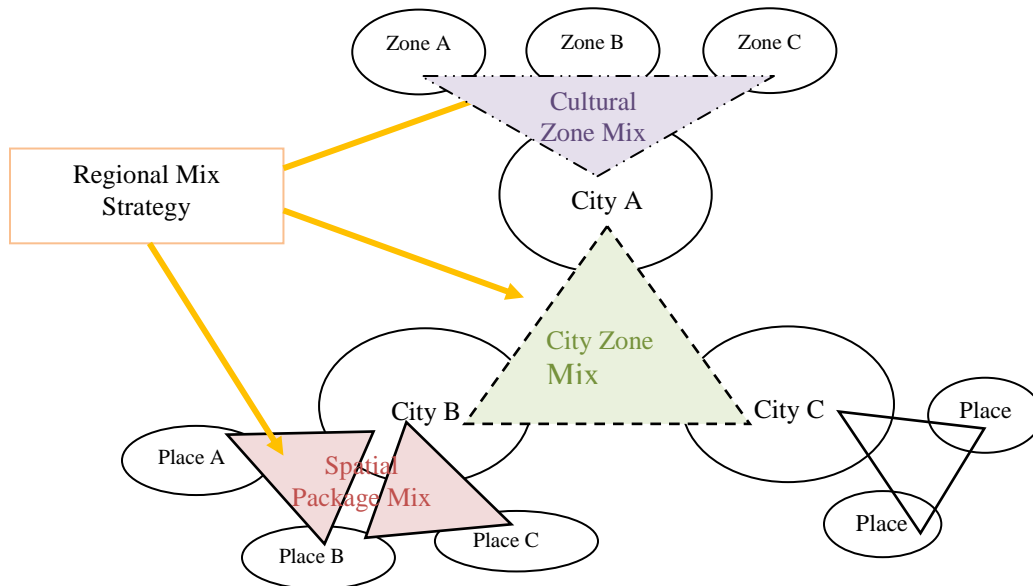


Figure 1. Regional Mix Strategy

A book cafe is a case showing the regional mix strategy most effectively in the region the Hongdae area and its cultural characteristics. The regional mix strategy is not only a method for reviving its local economy. Also, it can be applied to other areas.

Yang investigated effects of cultural spaces on urban regeneration, focusing on cultural facilities. He suggested an issue of cultural facilities for urban regeneration. Cultural space is acknowledged cultural space as a place or facility where generally citizens can appreciate culture and arts or they can create or educate cultural products in life[7]. Cultural space is a concept which includes 'cultural facilities'[8] classified by legal standards and 'potential spaces'[8] which are not designated as cultural facilities by laws and where cultural activities can be performed. As a potential space in the cultural space of a city, book cafes should be developed into a cultural space which can be easily accessed by publishers, Korean readers and foreigners, in compliance with characteristics of the area aiming for diversity and multiple cultures.

2. Cases of the Use of Cultural Space

2.1 Case 1 of the use of cultural space; 'Book cafes in the Hongdae area'

Let us look into cultural characteristics of book cafes emerging as a fast-growing field in the Hongdae area and examine a method to use book cafes as an effective cultural space in the city.

The Hongdae area has formed a unique atmosphere by fusion of human fundamentals of professional workers in fields such as music, design, advertisement and publication introduced in search of free, artistic atmosphere of Hongik University created mainly by its College of Fine Arts.

Also, Korean leading publishing companies are centered in the Hongdae area. It is within bounds to say that most of Korean publishers gathered into this area. The concentration of them in the area expanded its business district. This led to a new phenomenon that multitude of book cafes were opened at the same time.

Let us look into several book cafes which started to show their unique characteristics in these backgrounds.

The book cafe 'Cafe Comma', run by the publisher Munhakdongne, is frequently used as a place where authors of the publisher meet or for its literary event (*i.e.*, meeting the readers held by Dongsuh Coffee Literary Award). The 15 layer bookshelf on one wall into which two stories was converted creates an atmosphere of luxury and improves the dignity of the event. This book cafe was used not only as a background for the commercial film of Maxim where Yu-Na Kim appeared but also as an interview venue for magazines and newspapers recently; so, the cafe became one of the famous places in Hongdae area where famous actors or actresses can be frequently seen. Drinking a cup of coffee, the customers can read books published by Munhakdongne and purchase these books at 50% discount in the book cafe. Its second branch opened recently supplies a desk to study like a library to become a working space as well as a meeting place for young cultured people.

Changbi Publisher's 'Humanities Cafe Changbi' holds two cultural events mainly on books published by it two or more per week. An average of 80 readers is invited to the event where drinks are offered free to them. Actually, the book cafe was opened not to generate revenue but to offer a service for readers.

'KAMA' is a book cafe operated by the Moonji Publishing Company. The company opened a book cafe in the archive of interdisciplinary art (Interdisciplinary art is one which is combined with various art forms such as music, painting and literature) in October in 2011. The book cafe exhibits works of art experts in all sorts of fields, 50 research materials of performances, 1,000 books published by Moonji Publishing Company, collaboration exhibits of writers, critics and painters. Further, the cafe holds five to six events of interdisciplinary art in a variety ways every year.

Hongik Designbook, which does not publish books but imports and sells books in the field of design, operates the book cafe 'Bookcafe Jungle'. The first floor of the cafe sells books in the fields of fine arts and design. The second and third floors of it are used as a cafe and are filled with books in the field of design.

There is a unique type of book cafe. 'Bookdabang Humanitas' is famous as a book cafe in which a publishing company is located. If a customer enters the book cafe, he or she can find employees of the company. This company notifies a reading party on a new book on its web site, when it is published. Also, it holds frequently a meeting with author.

As mentioned above, a book cafe managed by the publisher has three purposes: (1) a place promoting a new book, (2) a place attracting devoted readers, and (3) a place meeting its editors and authors. The book cafe run by a publisher provides readers with various advantages. First, customers can find a famous writer sitting at the table next to them. Second, they can purchase returned books at a substantial discount. Finally, they can participate in an author's reading party or book concert held by the book cafe through the web site of the publisher.

Book cafe refers to a coffee shop with books as interior decorations where a customer reads books and drinks a cup of tea. At first the book cafe was not connected with a publishing company. With the specialty of the Hongdae area (i.e. that publishers are centered in the area), the concept of book cafe extended to 'book and store' operated by a publishing company, that is, the place where books published by them are read or purchased. Now, a book cafe developed into a unique cultural space to promote books of its publisher and to directly connect books, readers and writers.

These phenomena of book cafes did not arise recently. Publishing companies have run their book cafe since the early 2000s, although some of those cafes are closed up now. Around the playground in the Hongdae area, there was 'Cafe Libro', which was operated by 'Sigongsa'. A cafe and a bookstore, a music store, and 'Artinus', a art bookstore, were opened in the first floor, the second floor, and the basement, respectively.

There was no necessity for people to go to a book cafe in that it was one of marketing strategies of publishers in those days.

What is the reason why recently more publishing companies have opened a book cafe aggressively and managed it directly? This is because a book cafe functions as the following cultural spaces as well as a coffee shop.

First of all, a book cafe has not only a basic function of serving coffee but also a service of selling a new book or a returned book (Inventory returned to its publisher due to the fact that it has been too long since these books are delivered to the bookstore). Window shopping in a book cafe will naturally lead to book purchase.

Then, a book cafe enables a publishing company to arrange a meeting place for readers or author(s) or to promote its books. Actually, a publishing company which operates book cafe(s) at present freely holds a meeting between readers and author(s), regardless of place. That is to say, a book cafe owned by a publisher enabled the publisher to freely communicate with its readers instead of relying on other bookstores or media and finally to attract potential readers. It can be drawn from this that cultural events, such as book concert and public reading, are created by a new advertising marketing strategy.

Let us consider cases of various events and spaces related to books, other than book cafes operated by publishing companies.

1) Seoul WowBook Festival

Seoul WowBook Festival, an outdoor book fair event, is a comprehensive book culture festival (i.e., a multiple art concept) where publishers, writers, cultural organizations, public

institutions and ordinary citizens merge into one through books by using the Hongdae area as a strategic position. The festival includes a lot of interesting events: (1) the so-called 'Book Play Program', which opened a new prospect in enjoying reading books, (2) a meeting between readers and authors outside the text, (3) a public reading at night, and (4) forums, lectures and symposiums dealing with issues on book culture in depth.

2) Bookstore 'Thanks Books'

The opening of 'Thanks Books' near Sangsangmadang in the Hongdae area is to be welcomed. It is a bookstore which mainly exhibits and sells books that can be preferred by 'Residents of the Hongdae area' by highlighting the regional characteristic of 'Hongik University'.

The appearance of specialist bookstore which made the best use of this regional characteristic is considered as creating another meeting place between a publisher and readers from publishers' standpoint. The external appearance of the bookstore is seen as a gallery which exhibits books. Also, it has an atmosphere of book cafe. 'Thanks Books' does not only exhibit books written by the Hongdae area-based artists in various fields but also it holds different kinds of events where readers can meet these authors.

3) Complex cultural space

There are multitudes of complex cultural spaces which have a unique atmosphere different from the existing cafes and open various cultural events such as exhibit and performance. 'Cafe Yri', a book cafe specialized in art, is equipped with books in the fields of design, photograph and fine art which are rarely seen in Korea. Also, it holds all sorts of cultural events, such as play, performance or exhibit.

'Annyeong Bada' claims to advocate independent cafe, and it is loved as an alternative space where people can enjoy independent cultures in the Hongdae area which vanished and disappeared because of the commercial viability. It holds a free performance of independent musical bands every weekend and opens art exhibits of independent artists.

2.2. Case 2 of the use of cultural space; 'Potato Flower Studio'

'Potato Flower Studio', located in Pyeongchang, Gangwon-do, is a cultural space as which a closed school in a rural village was reused and it has led various a variety of activities of cultural art and education and cultural events for the last 10 years. This studio was opened by CEO Sun-Chul Lee, who organized performances and albums in the Hongdae area. In 2004, Lee purchased a closed school to remodel it into a new complex cultural space.

'Potato Flower Studio' shows its philosophical direction clearly from the perspective of architecture in that this old building was not destroyed to build a new one but rather it was reused. On the first floor of 'Potato Flower Studio', there is a small classroom where the closed school was reproduced. This classroom exhibits old items showing the history of the school and the local calendar which contains the landscape of the area and is created annually.

'Potato Flower Studio' performs two types of projects: internal and external ones. First of all, its internal projects include programs by season (*i.e.*, spring excursion, summer camp, fall field day and winter Christmas drama). The four programs are created in collaboration with local residents; for the programs they use performances of activities of education and culture or contents obtained from those performances. Then, its external projects are auxiliary ones which are carried forward by outside institutions. The 'Munjeonseongsi' project, a Korean abbreviation of Traditional Market Revitalization Project through the Culture, is a representative one of its external projects. This project is subsidized by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. The contents of the two types differ from each other.

However, they have two similarities. One is that they are based on the area. The other is that they vitalize the economy of the area through the culture. So, local residents actively participate in all projects. When CEO Lee visited this area at first, there were no young adults and middle-aged people except for the pastor of the local church. This motivated Lee to start to teach music to middle and high school students. As a result, the music lessons established a circulation system where the students who grew into adults come back to the area to serve their communities in cultural art and education. The cultural space 'Potato Flower Studio' has grown with local residents by involving them in various activities of education and culture. This enabled it to play an important role in reviving its local economy. Therefore, it is the chief element of its success that it did not change the area by forcing local residents to have a certain characteristic or planting the characteristic among them.

2.3. Case 3 of the use of Cultural Space; 'Gwangjang Market' and 'Tongin Market'

Recently, Gwangjang Market is emerging as a 'hot place' among foreign tourists. It is not a shopping plaza preferred by foreigners or a place with an attraction of tradition.

Gwangjang Market is located at Yeji-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul. It has a history of one hundred seven years and is the oldest market in Korea. In 1905, it was opened by the permission of Hanseongbu in the Korean Empire. It was named after the before letter of the two places 'Gwang-gyo' and 'Jang-gyo' in that the market was located between these two places when it was established.

Gwangjang Market did not come into being spontaneously. It was a permanently established market held by Emperor Kojong so that he could revive the economy of Korea in the times when Korea's power was decreased due to Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905; hence this market has a great historical significance. Gwangjang Market was created to protect Jongno (*i.e.*, the last business district of Joseon) when Japan's business district extended into Namdaemun in 1905, just before Japan's occupation. Korea was colonized by Japan in 1910, but Gwangjang Market in and around Jongno and Dongdaemun stood its colors against 'Honmachi (Japanese Street)' at Myeong-dong[9].

Gwangjang Market was recreated as a cultural space by a combination of the historical story, foods and a traditional market's unique human affection. In 2012, Movie Director Tim Burton repeatedly let out "Wonderful!" drinking 'makgeolli (Korean raw rice wine)' with 'bindaettok (Korean mung-bean pancake)' when he visited this market. Also, he left small graffiti on the wall of the market. So, it became a cultural space Korean or foreign tourists visit more often to see the graffiti.

Together with Gwangjang Market, 'Tongin Market', located at Ogin-dong, Jongno-gu, is emerging as a cultural space recently. Tongin Market is famous for 'Lunch Box Cafe' where customers enjoy eating foods putting their favorite side dishes in a lunch box and wandering in the market. 'Lunch Box Cafe' can be called a kind of buffet. A customer does not choose foods arranged in a particular space but eats them wandering around the whole of the market. This is a change which happened one year at this market after April, 2011.

Tongin Market was chosen as a 'culture market' by 'The Project of Seoul Culture Market Creation' which aims to revive the economy of traditional markets through various culture programs; it was recreated as a cultural space in collaboration with local residents[10]. culture planner AEC BBPUM, which carried out this project[11], conducted a survey of 60 participants, two thirds of the whole of merchants of the market; most of the participants responded "Tongin Market obtained better image and became more famous." Another survey for 80 visitors to the market showed that for the reason for revisit among the responses of visitors responded that they would revisit the market, the percentage (45%) of 'participation

in cultural events' and 'tourism' was greater than the percentage (36%) of 'shopping.' It can be drawn from that the awareness of the market is changing.

The two things revive the economy of traditional markets which lose their competitiveness gradually. One is to attach cultural values to those markets. The other is to add storytelling to them. The direct participation of local residents (i.e. merchants) enabled the market, a base of simple cultural life, to play a role as 'cultural tourist spot' and to vitalize the economy of the local community.

As mentioned above, the paradigm of cultural space is changing. A simple artificial change in space cannot lead to vitalizing the area. The grafting of contents and cultural values onto the area enables it to be recreated as a true cultural space.

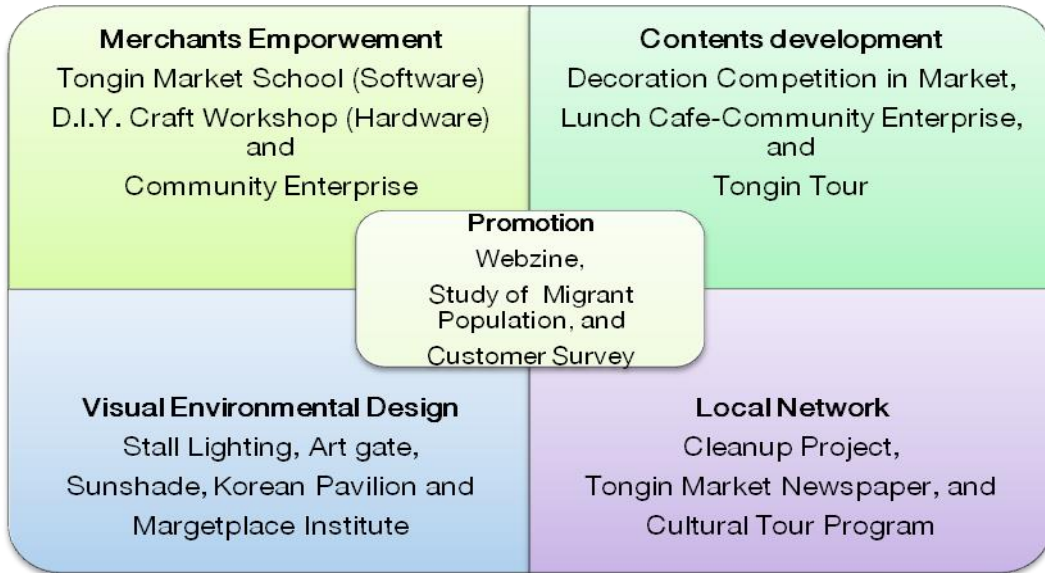


Figure 2. Concept Map of Market [12]

3. Conclusion

This study looked into the cultural characteristics of book cafes emerging in the Hongdae area. It also contemplated methods for the effective use of cultural space through the cases of Potato Flower Studio in Gangwon-do and of the changes in the two markets 'Gwangjang Market' and 'Tongin Market' in Seoul.

The Hongdae area has been filled with painters and artists in every street and frequented by young people who enjoy dance and music constantly – it is virtually a Mecca of club culture. The Hongdae area became a land mark of popular culture. Since the 2000's, publishers have gathered around this area and the book cafes operated by these publishers spring up in the Hongdae area. Many publishers manage their own book cafe: Munhakdongne's 'Cafe Comma', Changbi Publisher's 'Humanities Cafe Changbi', Moonji Publishing Company's 'KAMA' and Humanitas' 'Bookdabang'. Why do they run book cafe of their own? One of reasons is considered as that a book cafe enables a publishing company to arrange a meeting place for readers or author(s) or to promote its books. In other words, book café originally opened as a marketing strategy.

The cultural characteristic of the Hongdae area has continued to prosper. It is feared that the development direction of the character might be degraded to only a simple way of getting money and finally to be lost. Through the gigantic capital, a lot of multinational companies

have already changed the characteristic from a place of origin of continuous cultural art creation to an area mainly for consumption and pleasure. However, the book cafes in the Hongdae area can be one axis of making the most of the area's characteristic as a cultural space continuously by diverting a part of the degraded direction. This invites us to suggest methods to more effectively use book cafes which make the most of the Hongdae area's unique cultural atmosphere and create a cultural space suitable for this area.

First, book cafes operated by publishers should supply more services for citizens. We suggest that they should create open cultural spaces to take the place of bookstores: (1) holding a common book outlet market, (2) establishing a secondhand book bazaar in which citizens can take participate, and (3) opening a symposium on reading culture

Second, book cafes should be developed into a complex cultural space for foreign tourists visiting the Hongdae area. It is important that the regional characteristic of an area is developed so that the area can survive as tourist attraction with a cultural characteristic. To do this, the area should be equipped with the relevant facilities. For example, a book cafe is equipped with information leaflets about it and brochures introducing the Hongdae area written in many languages, so that the book cafe can be the medium that invites foreigners to taste the culture of the Hongdae area to introduce. Further, a multicultural book café should be opened as a field of education and communication for foreigners, in collaboration with local center(s). In particular, a Korean language center for foreigners should be established. These will enable book cafes to be a new community space suitable for the Hongdae area's regional characteristic where multiple cultures conflict with each other every day, in addition to a space of book cafe.

Third, a book café should develop into 'a space of local communities' by making the most of complex cultural space, one of characteristics of book cafes in the Hongdae area. Book cafes in the Hongdae area should grow into a local community mingled with local residents, as shown in 'Potato Flower Studio', which was effectively connected to cultures of the area. To do this, various cultural events with local residents should be more revitalized.

Finally, a paradigm of cultural space should be changed, as mentioned in the cases of Gwangjang Market and Tongin Market. Book cafes should aim for a local community with stories by making the most of regional characteristics of the Hongdae area, rather than a concept of artificial space.

In conclusion, a cultural space should change in tune with the times and on occasion demands. It can be inferred from this that it will be more required to study various methods of using a cultural space. This study suggested methods for revitalizing cultural spaces of the Hongdae area. For the future study, we will leave the utilization of book cafes as a community space in other areas other than the Hongdae area.

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