Taking up space: waste and waste labor in developing South Korea

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INTRODUCTION

"My life began with trash and ended with trash," recalled Kim Ki-ha, a former Nanjido landfill waste picker, as we drove back to the city from his suburban scrap yard. Born in 1948 to southern rural farmers, Kim, along with many other rural migrants, moved to Seoul in 1974, "a time when young people sold their parent's cattle and escaped to Seoul," he added. He worked different odd jobs: candy peddler, door-to-door sales person, bill collector, and local election campaigner, until he learned about the landfill in Nanjido and moved there in 1980. Kim paid a premium to buy a district truck sector position, which required both human connections and sufficient financial resources. After a year, he became a district crew leader. In 1984, he was accused of bribery regarding the landfill housing distribution and although he was found not guilty, he was still expelled from the district group. Despite losing his position, he continued working in the landfill: he bought another position in a private truck sector where he worked with his wife until the landfill closed. After a succession of odd jobs and small businesses, he returned to waste picking, which he continues to do into his seventies. "The only thing I have learned from the Nanjido years was waste picking, that's the only thing I can do. Had I had enough money, I could have contracted with factories, which required more investment, but was more lucrative."

Yi To-il, another waste picker who is about ten years older than Kim, also drifted alongside waste for most of his life. Born in 1939, he hailed from Harbin, China where he was born, fleeing south after the liberation of Korea.[1] His mother perished on a train to Korea and his father died shortly thereafter. Orphaned, Yi sought refuge from the Korean War in 1950 in Pusan and endured street life under the thumb of a gangmaster; he stole any available goods to merely survive. Only when he was enlisted into a child protection facility at the age of 15 did he obtain an elementary school education. Endemic hunger at the orphanage eventually forced him to return to a life on the street. After the war, he continued as a shoe shiner in Seoul.

[1] The biographical summary is based on his life story published in *Nŏngma*, the magazine published by the Rag Commune (*nŏngma kongdongch'e*). To-il Yi, "Sumkyŏchin nŏngmajui ŭi yŏksa I - Kosaeng kkŭte naki ittadŏnka?" *Nŏngma*, May 15 (1987): 10-20.

In the early 1960s, having nowhere to go, he admitted himself to a Work Reclamation Camp (*kŭllojaegŏndae*), a stint that opened up his career in waste. He collected straws (*chip'uragi*), straw ropes (*saekki*), and jute sacks (*kamani*) in nine garbage dumps in Seoul. As horse manure and straw, a secondary material used in paper manufacture were replaced by chemical pulp, Yi lost his livelihood and drifted. In the 1970s, he returned to the waste trade, this time opening a junk depot, a makeshift workshop space, but eventually was pushed out due to urban development. Two years later, he started another junk workshop, which he was forced to abandon over complaints filed by neighbors and the 1978 World Shooting Championship in Seoul. Despite these repeated difficulties, Yi turned to waste picking again in the 1980s. This time, he got caught in a police frame-up, and was sentenced to one and a half years in prison for police quotas.[2] By the late 1980s, he worked as a member of the rag commune, but his work became more precarious as recycling became a more widespread practice in households and the government established its own recycling corporation (*Han'guk chaesaeng kongsa*).

These two brief biographies illuminate the lives of two waste pickers and their entanglements in modern Korean history: the Japanese occupation and Liberation (1945), the Korean War (1950-1955), and the authoritarian Park Chung Hee (1961-1979) and Chun Doo Hwan regimes (1980-1988). These were periods of political, social, and economic upheaval as the country was liberated and divided after a bloody international conflict. The devastations of war were eventually overcome through rapid economic development, which saw high levels of urbanization and industrialization that was framed strategically as a model of success by the Korean government. However, behind

[2] Legal scholar Ossei-Owusu defines police quotas as "formal and informal measures that require police officers to issue a particular number of citations or make a certain number of arrests,", some of them pre-specify a quantity. Shaun Ossei-Owusu, "Police Quotas," *New York University Law Review* 96 no.2 (2021): 531.

successful stories of economic growth lay the social costs of that development. What is left unseen in most of the literature on South Korea's development are perspectives that come from the bottom rungs of society, not in hard quantitative data but in narratives of lived experience. The life stories of Kim or Yi, exemplars of the story that this dissertation will unfold, point to a broader marginalization that occurred simultaneously with rapid growth.

Kim used waste picking as a means to move up the ladder and later as a fallback strategy throughout his life. Kim experienced modest upward mobility in his waste career within the landfill, and with his acquired knowledge and skills returned to waste collection after the landfill's closure and eviction. Yi, who was orphaned shortly after liberation, was uprooted and drifted while mostly surviving off waste. His life on the streets made him susceptible to institutionalization in orphanages, protection facilities, and prison; his repeated attempts to climb the informal waste economy were thwarted by urban development, changes in material reclamation technology, and modern waste management.

The life stories of people like Kim Ki-ha or Yi To-il illustrate the common plight that those on the bottom rung of society, such as waste pickers, experienced in the midst of the social and political turmoil of liberation and the Korean War. As uprooted individuals and waste pickers, both experienced hardship–evictions and loss of waste work–because of rapid urbanization and changing patterns of waste generation. Invisible as they are in the literature, these are the individuals who transformed waste materials, extended the landfill's lifespan thereby enabling Seoul's expansion, and laid the groundwork for recycling, which is now an everyday practice in South Korea.[3]

"Taking Up Space: Waste and Waste Labor in Developing South Korea" examines informal waste labor in South Korea, focusing on the management of material waste, the work of waste pickers, and their social and spatial exclusion. It showshow the developing nation state appropriated this labor and, once it became redundant, how it was neglected and at times discarded. This study employs Liboiron

[3] South Korea has a recycling rate of 59 percent, which ranks second highest among OECD countries. OECD, *Environmental Performance Reviews: Korea 2017* (Paris: OECD, 2017).

and Lepawsky's concept of "discard studies," which tracks phenomena that are not necessarily related to waste; rather, it investigates the power dynamics at play, how dominant systems produce and reproduce power, and who benefits from specific wasting/discarding practices.[4] Drawing on their perspectives, this dissertation understands devaluing, wasting, and discarding of waste labor as "a technique of power" and asks "how (and why) all systems waste, as well as waste's relationship to power." It seeks to suggest how waste as both a material and a metaphor can reframe our understanding of South Korean economic development between the 1960s and the 1990s.

Focusing on the lived experiences of waste laborers in developing South Korea, this dissertation aims to grasp the social costs of economic development in South Korea. To analyze this question, this dissertation first provides a historical overview of waste management. Against this background, it moves on to the dissertation's second focus: how such changes were embedded in the material, discursive, and spatial dimensions of waste. Taking waste picker camps and the Nanjido landfill waste pickers as case studies, I investigate the organization of informal waste pickers and the formation of their communities between the 1960s and the early 1990s. The case studies shed light on how a developing nation-state created an urban underclass and brought them under its purview. Specifically, it asks why waste pickers as a social category came into being, why waste pickers were identified with waste and its material qualities, and how regulating waste pickers coincided with the rise of environmental awareness, the introduction of modern waste management techniques, and urban spatial politics.

By addressing waste picking as a form of labor and agent of industrialization and development, this dissertation makes three major contributions to the larger literature on South Korean development. First, by tracing the trajectories of waste pickers in varying locations, this dissertation adds to discussions of the South Korean development experience. Despite

[4] Max Liboiron and Josh Lepawsky, *Discard Studies: Wasting, Systems, and Power* (Boston: MIT Press, 2022).

extensive studies on South Korean economic growth, little is known about what happened beyond the formal realm. What has been overlooked in mainstream studies of South Korea's economic success are the different forms of the urban informal economy that not only sustained life on the fringes of society but ultimately contributed to the high growth era. By rereading the development of South Korea from the refuse level, this dissertation seeks to expand our understandings of the costs and consequences of South Korea's much-heralded economic development.

Second, this dissertation shifts attention to the lived experience of individuals. I bring in individual accounts of waste pickers through interviews and written sources produced by the waste pickers themselves. One benefit of this approach comes from seeing them as individuals who experienced the ebbs and flows of the waste economy throughout their life, rather than treating them as abstract/voiceless victims. While I do not suggest any individual account is representative, I contend that their life stories are an integral part of the shared experience of economic and social transformation of South Korea. By attending to these muted voices, this dissertation retrieves lived experiences of development from the margins of society as well as its unspoken cost.

Third, this dissertation brings a growing body of scholarship on waste studies to bear on the waste pickers' experiences of development. Most existing studies focus on the state regulation of waste pickers: they take waste less as a concern and rarely acknowledge waste picking as a mode of labor. My focus on waste offers a potential means to understand how waste bounded the lives and labor of waste pickers; how their labor was enmeshed in larger social, spatial, and environmental transformations; and how their proximity to waste interacted with their marginalization. Attention to waste can reveal the relationship between the inveterate presence of waste pickers, urbanization, and changes in waste management, which in turn can contribute more to the processes of marginalization than initial state regulation itself.

The story that follows weaves together the movement of the waste pickers, their interaction with and impact on the development of South Korea, and the waste that provided them with a living but removed their dignity. This introduction begins by situating the subject of this dissertation, waste pickers, and presenting the case studies. I bring in critical scholarship on waste and discard studies to reexamine South Korean development and show how such a perspective adds to our understanding of the other

side of development. In the final section, I explain my sources and the organization of the dissertation.

SITUATING WASTE PICKERS IN TWENTIETH CENTURY KOREA

During the 20th century, we observe the appearence, disappearence, and reappearence of waste pickers, which is intricately tied to the country's tumultous modern history. The post-1945 political disarray that ensued in the aftermath of colonialism persisted through the United States' occupation (1945-1948) and its dwindling sovereignty, as well as the three years of the Korean War (1950-1953) and the division of the country. Subsequently, South Korea's geopolitical landscape became intertwined with the power dynamics of the broader Cold War system, seeking to solidifying its standing as an independent ally of the "Free World" and a bulwark against communism.

The US's geopolitical interests explain its tolerance authoritarian regimes and their use of economic and military coercion in pursuit of the Cold War drive. Right-wing regimes in South Korea utilized anti-communism as a political tactic to instill fear and unease regarding the fictitious enemy; this ideological stance rationalized the regime's tenuous legitimacy and its violent social control. In the political milieu of postwar South Korea, post-colonial nation building and postwar recovery were intertwined, as were the internalized colonial gaze and anxieties around the Cold War competition. In the specific context of Korean division, even social unrest and postwar poverty were considered as impediments to the national development and indications of backwardness, as much as they were perceived potentially subversive to the regime that can reveal its inferiority.

Recent scholarship on the Cold War expands our understanding beyond the ideological contestation between capitalist and communist powers[5]. By showing how the establishment of a global order permeated the daily lives of individuals through

[5] See: Charles Kim, *Youth for Nation: Culture and Protest in Cold War South Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017); Youngju Ryu, *Writers of the Winter Republic: Literature and Resistance in Park Chung Hee's Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016).

discourses and practices, these works reveal various forms and experiences of the Cold War.[6] One aspect of the Cold War that relatively unexplored is its impact on marginalized populations: especially why they were considered a threat to the social order and subject to discipline, confinement, and exclusion.[7] This dissertation will analyze the historical context of waste pickers, highlighting how the consequences of seemingly global conflicts reached the ground level, including the course of street lives. It shows how the initial exclusion and marginalization of waste pickers stemmed from an ideological standpoint, although they may not have been aware of it.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, waste pickers appeared in public view in varying forms. A photo published in *Tonga Ilbo*, a major newspaper, shows prisoners wearing masks that hide their faces collecting and hauling refuse in 1908 Seoul.[8] In another instance, a Japanese journalist reports on rag pickers in 1920s Seoul, an occupation that did not yet have a name, who lived together in a hut and sold their collected material to junk dealers.[9] These anecdotal records suggest that historically

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[6] Anthropologist Heonik Kwon demonstrates the enduring effects of the Cold War through individual experiences and kinship relationships in places like Vietnam and Korea, where ideological terrains of the Cold War and postcolonial politics tore apart villages and families. Heonik Kwon. *The Other Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[7] Namhee Lee indicates that the enforcement of the National Security Law (NSL) reveals the ongoing geopolitics of the Cold War regime in South Korea. Korean sociologist Dong-choon Kim argues that global cold war politics created a war-politics in South Korea, where the NSL, the martial law, and the emergency decrees justified the state to exert violence against civilians, including student activists and protesters, workers, and the urban poor, if the state considered them to be a threat to the anticommunist order. Namhee Lee, "Social Memories of the 1980s: Unpacking the Regime of Discontinuity," in *Revisiting Minjung: New Perspectives on the Cultural History of 1980s South Korea*, ed. Sunyoung Park (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019); Kim Dong-choon, "Naengjŏn, pan'gongjuŭi chilsŏ wa han'guk ŭi chŏnjaeng chŏngch'i: kukka p'ongnyŏk ŭi haengsa wa pŏpch'i ŭi hangye [War-Politics in Korea under the Cold War and Anticommunist Order: State Violence and limit of the Rule of Law]," *Kyŏngje wa* sahoe 89 (2011): 333-366.

[8] "Hansŏnggwa Sŏul (6) chŏnjungi (suin)," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 11, 1972.

[9] Ak'ama Kihu, a Japanese journalist who published a book about Seoul's underclass life, *Taeji rŭl pora* (Look at the Earth), reports that there were approximately 50 rag pickers in the 1920s. Ak'ama Kifū, *Taeji rŭl pora: 1920-yŏntae Kyŏngsŏng ŭi mitpadak t'ambang* (Look at the Earth), trans. Sŏ Ho-ch'ŏl (Sŏul: Amorŭmundi, 2016). Oiginally published as *Daichi o miro: Hensō tanbōki* (Tairiku kyōdō shuppankai, 1924).

waste picking was (already) associated with criminality, implying that those on the margins of society engaged with waste collection.

Aside from records on waste picking itself, research has been conducted on the colonial period, particularly during the wartime mobilization.[10] The historian Kim In-ho outlines the material and metal/non-ferrous metal requisitions from the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937 to the end of the Pacific War (1941-1945).[11] The wartime salvage drive included textiles, rubber, and paper in addition to metal and non-ferrous metals, with statues, railings, and kitchen utensils among the targeted items. Although the Government-General of Korea had direct control over secondary materials through establishing regional salvage dealers' cooperatives and a state corporation, it frequently faced low participation from Koreans as well as illicit activities. While Kim In-ho identifies the role of old material/salvage dealers and their activities during the metal mobilization, his emphasis on colonial exploitation overlooks the impact of the GGK's control over the burgeoning salvage and recycling industry, particularly how its association with fraud and theft shaped post-war industrial regulations.[12] After the Korean War, and despite little data on the wartime

[10] Korea was not alone in material mobilization; it was a common phenomenon in both occupying and occupied countries during the World War II. I discuss this literature in detail in the next section.

[11] Kim In-ho, "Chungil chŏnjaeng shigi chosŏnnae komulsang pujŏng ŭi shilt'ae (1937-1940)," *Han'gung minjok undongsa yŏn'gu* 66 (2011): 127-178; "T'aep'yŏngyang chŏnjaeng shigi chosŏnesŏ kŭmsok hoesu undong ŭi chŏn'gae wa shilchŏk," *Han'gung minjok undongsa yŏn'gu* 62 (2010): 305-374; "Chungil chŏnjaeng sigi chosŏn ch'ongdokpu palp'yo p'yep'um sujip t'onggye ŭi hŏgusŏng," in *Kŭnhyŏndae hanil kwan'gyeŭi che munje*, ed. Tongbuga yŏksa chaedan, 19-59. (Seoul, Tongbuga yŏksa chaedan, 2010);. "Chungil chŏnjaeng shigi chosŏnesŏ ŭi p'yep'um hoesu chŏngch'aek," *Han'gung minjok undongsa yŏn'gu* 57 (2008): 169-235.

[12] Kim In-ho reports that the number of salvage dealers increased from 18,007 in 1935 to 18,974 in 1936 to18,800 in 1937. Kim, "P'yep'um hoesu," 203. The GGK organized them into regional cooperatives and established a state corporation, the Korean Resource Salvage Control Joint Stock Company (chosŏn hoesu chawŏn t'ongje hoesa). These dealers negotiated with the GGK in developing the salvaging framework; they were also subject to strict police control, particularly for illicit activities that were punishable under the Salvage Dealers Control Act (*komulsang ch'uich'eryong*). It is unclear whether these dealers continued to be in the business after the liberation. However, this colonial legislation continued to regulate the salvage dealers with the same police control that framed waste-related works susceptible to crime.

salvage trade, colonial legislation addressing the salvage business continued to shape the legal and institutional environment surrounding scrap/salvage dealers and waste pickers, which I discuss in detail in chapter 3.

After the liberation (1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953), peoples' efforts at subsistence and survival in postwar South Korea led to the creation of a population working in waste collection. Various types of waste work, including rag pickers, itinerant scrap peddlers (*komul haengsang*), or junk depots (*komulsang*) arose due to the need to make a living. In the 1950s and 1960s, newspapers reported on juvenile delinquents and war orphans working as waste pickers, who were frequently organized by a gangmaster and belonged to street gangs. Other waste pickers, who were not necessarily adolescents, worked for junk depots who bought their salvage in exchange for room and tools. For uprooted populations without any connections or resources, whether war refugees, orphans, or rural migrants, scavenging offered the most accessible work. The state treated waste pickers, especially adolescents and those of military age, as objects of reformation and social work.[13] They were considered "curbside occupation adolescents (*kudu chikŏp sonyŏn*)" who required regulation and protection, until they found a stable means of subsistence. Rather than seeing it as a mode of labor, the tendency was to link waste picking to vagrancy and deviance.

Another characteristic of waste pickers was their informality. Waste pickers operated within an informal waste economy in which they occupied the bottom rung. It is important to recognize that the informal waste economy operated at the margins of formal industry. Waste materials collected at the ground level (waste pickers, peddlers, old material/junk depots, scrap dealers) reached paper balers or metal smelters on the upper end of the material reclamation cycle. Although not waged or employed, the labor that waste pickers provided was the basis for the resource reclamation that later serviced manufacturers. The state frequently depicted the informality of the waste trade as inefficient and outdated, and which should be integrated into or replaced by a modern, governable economy. However, positing a

[13] Idae sahoehakhoe, "Pusŏjin kkum ŭl moŭnŭn sonyŏndŭl," *Sedae* 2, no. 17 (1964): 173-183.

rigid boundary between the formal and the informal obscures the mutual constitution of both and their respective benefit to the state. It is crucial to underline how informality is embedded within what is considered the "formal" economy.

One obstacle to studying waste pickers is their mobility, which also kept them out of the state's reach.[14] After being uprooted without a family or family network, waste pickers were socially adrift, which rendered them unreliable, if not suspicious. As detailed in chapter 3, waste pickers frequently moved around, partly due to their uprootedness, partly due to the pattern of institutionalization and incarceration that marked their lives.[15] However, another characteristic of waste pickers between the 1960s and the 1980s was their collective living arrangements, ranging from street encampments to state- or private-organized camps to voluntary moves to landfill shanty towns and then settlement areas. The tendency toward collective living is, in itself, a notable trait that set waste pickers apart as other urban underclass/urban poor groups, such that it allows to track their trajectories during the country's development era. Considering such characteristics, this dissertation chose two sites that show different forms of collective living among waste pickers between the early 1960s and the early 1990s: one is waste picker camps, primarily two police-led camps, the Work Reconstruction Camp (*kŭllojaegŏndae*) (1962-1974) and the Self-sufficiency Work Camp (*chahwalgŭllodae*) (1979-1995), as well as other privately-run camps; the other is the waste picker settlement at the Nanjido landfill (1978-1993), a city-run landfill with a hybridized labor organization that included informal waste pickers, city workers, and illicit businesses.

Through the close examination of a social group that has been treated

[14] For instance, while occasional surveys and government reports investigated the number of waste pickers housed in camps, they all estimated that the actual number of waste pickers far exceded the survey figure, indicating there were waste pickers who were outside the purview of state regulation and private institutions. I will discuss this in detail in chapter three.

[15] Many waste pickers worked alone and left little information about themselves. While some of their records could be accessible through local junk depots, they rarely left any documents.

with neglect, this dissertation seeks to reveal the dynamic between state regulation and the regulated population. On the one hand, the presence of an urban underclass and mobile population threatened the legitimacy of the military regime. The association with vagrancy and deviance not only justified the state's control over waste pickers in the guise of protection and reformation, but it also allowed the state to break up street gang groups and regulate them and their potential collective power. On the other hand, as waste pickers gathered en masse, especially in the landfill, their increased number granted them greater negotiating power as a political collective, whether in day-to-day landfill operation, the provision of prefabricated housing, or relocation and eviction procedure. The case studies highlight the relationship between the developmental state and the waste pickers on its periphery, with each appropriating and supplying cheap labor as well as propagating and partaking in developmentalist narratives and aspirations.

This dissertation focuses on household waste. One way of classifying waste is to divide it into streams, such as municipal solid waste (MSW, household waste), industrial waste (ISW), construction waste, or sewage.[16] Industrial waste is produced in higher volumes, contains more valuable as well as hazardous materials, and requires proper handling to prevent its exposure and contamination. MSW has less volume, but

[16] Waste categories (household waste and industrial waste, or consumer waste and producer waste) are not absolute and require caution. Samantha MacBride explains that modern waste differs from its predecessors in terms of its increased tonnage and toxicity, heterogeneous material composition, and its externalization of cost. The exception is organic waste which takes up one-third of the MSW stream and has existed since the premodern era. Max Liboiron brings our attention to the rest of the MSW, which largely consists of disposable objects and is synonymous with consumer waste. The producers of modern waste give little choice to individuals (i.e., packaging) and ultimately externalize costs onto the public sector via recycling, thus shifting responsibility to individuals and governments. Zsuzsa Gille acutely criticizes the categories of producer waste and consumer waste for disguising who generates garbage in the first place, obscuring the fact that the majority of what we call consumer waste actually derives from the production stages. In this sense, Liboiron argues that MSW can be categorized as ISW, and that "recyclables are just disposables by another name." Max Liboiron, "Modern Waste as Strategy," *Lo Squaderno: Explorations in Space and Society*, no. 29 (2013): 9-12; Samantha MacBride, *Recycling Reconsidered: The Present Failure and Future Promise of Environmental Action in the United States* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012); Zsuzsa Gille, "Actor Networks, Modes of Production, and Waste Regimes: Reassembling the Macro-Social," *Environment and Planning A* 42, no. 5 (2010): 1049-64.

it is a more accessible and visible type of waste. Unlike ISW, MSW is part of our everyday landscape and reveals the ways in which each society relates to garbage. Its visibility requires municipalities to implement well-functioning waste collection and disposal systems. Its accessibility gives waste pickers a means to make a living through extracting its value: collecting and transporting, or reusing and repurposing.

Throughout the dissertation, I use the term "waste picker" to refer to people who collected waste for a living in various locations. As I will explain in chapter two, Korean terms used to refer waste pickers were social rather than occupational categories. For example, *nŏngmajui*, a Korean term that means someone who collects rags, evokes deviance; the 1962 establishment of the Work Reconstruction Camp (WRC), the official waste picker camp, changed the term "rag picker" into WRC inmates (*chaegŏndaewŏn*), which became synonymous with ex-convicts; waste pickers at the Nanjido landfill were referred to as Nanjido dwellers (*chumin*). These terms appeared within specific social contexts and power relationships, which both reflect the self-identification of the waste pickers as well as their relationship to South Korean society.[17] By using the term waste picker, I seek to foreground the labor that buttressed an informal economy of waste and urban livelihood throughout the development era.

THE CAST-OFFS OF DEVELOPMENT

Following the Korean War, South Korea was a war-ravaged and impoverished nation with a per capita gross domestic product of just $79 in 1960. Within three decades, it underwent a rapid transformation to become one of the world's most prosperous economies. A recipient of foreign aid, South Korea joined the OECD in 1996 and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2010, becoming the only country to transition from aid recipient to donor since the establishment of the OECD. South Korea's donor status allows the country to promote its growth strategy through

[17] I analyze the use of these terminologies and related discourses in chapter two.

developmental assistance programs. Whether it is the *Saemaŭl* movement in rural development or the Volume-based Waste Fee System in waste management, the South Korean government presents its development experience as a model applicable to other developing countries.[18] For the purpose of this dissertation, it is useful to ask what kinds of interventions took place in the name of development, what led to different types of intervention, and how they affected the people on the ground. Two strands of scholarship–the developmental state literature and critical development studies–contribute to examining how scholars explained different kinds of development process.

The prevailing explanation of South Korean modernization revolves around "developmental state" scholarship, which emphasizes a state-centered, top-down, elitist understanding of the development process. These studies emphasize the role of authoritarianism, bureaucracy, and capitalism in achieving rapid economic growth,[19] especially the intricate relationship between the South Korean *chaebŏl* (large conglomerates) and the authoritarian government. Historian Russell Burge criticizes the developmental state scholarship tendency for reifying rather than denaturalizing the state as "the sole provider and arbiter of development."[20] He suggests that while development may have begun as a state initiative, it elicited a variety of responses from individuals and social groups, deploying them into a developmentalist framework.[21]

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[18] Jamie Doucette and Anders Riel Müller, "Exporting the Saemaul Spirit: South Korea's Knowledge Sharing Program and the 'Rendering Technical' of Korean Development," *Geoforum* 75 (2016): 29-39; Hyeseon Jeong, "Globalizing a Rural Past: The Conjunction of International Development Aid and South Korea's Dictatorial Legacy," *Geoforum* 86 (November 1, 2017): 160-68; Kwang Yim Kim and Yoon Jung Kim, *Modularization of Korea's Development Experience: Volume-based Waste Fee System in Korea* (Seoul: Ministry of Environment, 2011).

[19] Alice Amsden, *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Jung-en Woo, *Race to the Swift: State and Finance in Korean Industrialization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[20] Russell Burge, "The Promised Republic: Developmental Society and the Making of Modern Seoul, 1961-1979" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2019), 16.

[21] Russell Burge emphasizes that state-led development would not have occurred without those who shared the state's vision, which he refers to "developmental society." While he makes an important point, he also argues that social actions—protesting against the state's unfulfilled developmental promises—rarely "challenge[d] the legitimacy of the government or the notion of development itself."

Indeed, the focus on the inner workings of the "developmental state" leave us with little understanding of development experiences, whether they be of proponents for the state's vision or of those who suffered under such development paths.

Critical scholarship within the developmental state approach demystifies celebratory narratives and shifts focus to the actual causes and consequences of state-led development. The historian Park Tae-Gyun emphasizes the seemingly strong South Korean state's political weakness and lack of legitimacy.[22] The sociologist Hee-Yeon Cho argues that the growth of oppositional forces coincided with the maturation of the developmental state, resulting in the eventual diminution of state forces.[23] Another sociologist, John Lie, suggests that the success stories tend to overlook the costs of South Korea's abrupt transformation.[24] As these critiques show, rapid economic growth and repressive autocracy undermined labor rights and democracy. Additionally, it introduced the tenacious struggles of workers, evictees, and activists; geographically uneven development and a widening urban-rural divide; growing inequality and social polarization in the absence of welfare and social protection; and pollution and ecological degradation.[25]

Another body of scholarship on the development era shifts perspectives from a state-centered understanding to the experiences of those affected by state policy. Critical examinations of South Korean development have identified a range of subjects whose lives were shaped by development: for instance, the rise

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However, such a view precludes the possibility of alternative visions of development that were unheard, unrecorded, or erased. Burge, "Promised Republic," 15.

[22] Pak T'ae-gyun [Tae Gyun Park], "Pakchŏnghŭi chŏngbu sigirŭl t'onghae pon paljŏn'gukka tamron e taehan pip'anjŏk siron." *Yŏksawa hyŏnsil* 74 (2009): 15-43.

[23] Hee-Yeon Cho, "The structure of the South Korean developmental regime and its transformation-statist mobilization and authoritarian integration in the anticommunist regimentation," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 1, no. 3 (2000): 408-426; Hee-Yeon Cho, et al., eds. *Contemporary South Korean Society: A Critical Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[24] John Lie, *Han Unbound: The Political Economy of South Korea* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[25] Yi Pyŏng-ch'ŏn, ed., *Kaebal tokjaewa Pak chŏng-hŭi sidae* (Seoul: Changbi Publishers, 2003).

of the *Minjung*,[26] the consolidation of the working class,[27] military sex workers,[28] and women workers.[29] Despite their significant contributions, these studies still limit themselves to institutionalized labor and organized forms of resistance. When we shift our focus away from formal, organized labor, we discover other types of work: informal labor and mobilized labor. First, various forms of self-employed, informal labor flourished on the fringes of cities. The range of informal work not only provided income-generating opportunities but also replaced or supplemented insufficient public services. Second, there is mobilized or forced labor, which supplied essential labor

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[26] Namhee Lee, The Making of Minjung: Democracy and the Politics of Representation in South Korea (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[27] Hagen Koo, Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Seung-Kyung Kim, Class Struggle or Family Struggle?: The Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[28] Seungsook Moon, *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

[29] Sociologist Kyung-Sup Chang notes that women's labor not only generated profit for their employers but also sustained the agricultural economy by supporting family members. Yet they were rarely treated as real workers, and were rather considered temporary, inferior, and supplementary to capitalist production. In contrast, Kim Wŏn shows how the labor of women existed in a continuum across the public and private spheres, in the home and on the shop floor, which rendered their labor and struggles for rights as laborers invisible. Ruth Barraclough argues that the vulnerability and susceptibility of women workers led to new female working-class subjectivities, whose narratives inserted themselves as agents of larger social forces such as late industrialization and militarized modernization in South Korea. These works bring women's labor into the realms of the political. Kyung-Sup Chang, *South Korea under Compressed Modernity: Familial Political Economy in Transition* (London: Routledge, 2010); Kim Wŏn[Won Kim], *Yŏgong 1970, kŭnyŏdŭr ŭi panyŏksa (Sŏul:* Imaejin,2005); Won Kim, "Between Autonomy and Productivity: The Everyday Lives of Korean Women Workers During the Park Chung-hee Era," in *Mass Dictatorship in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Alf Lüdtke (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 202-217; Ruth Barraclough, *Factory Girl Literature: Sexuality, Violence, and Representation in Industrializing Korea* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012). Anthropologist Nancy Abelmann, on the other hand, attends to the stories of women, many of them housewives, who navigated social, economic, and structural changes throughout their lives. Abelmann reveals how their experiences shaped the lived sense of South Korean transformation, especially the inner class distinction and class mobility during the period of rapid development. Nancy Abelmann, *The Melodrama of Mobility: Women, Talk, and Class in Contemporary South Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).

power for industrial infrastructure projects such as road construction or land reclamation. This labor was poorly compensated and its exploitation was excused in the name of reformation. The informal and mobilized labor sectors, into which the work of waste pickers is classified, have received little attention in studies of South Korean development. Rarely has this labor been understood in relation to the economic growth model or viewed as having any structural relevance to the historical characteristics of South Korean growth.

Life on the urban margins shows how South Korean modernization coincided with what the sociologist Hagen Koo describes as "compressed processes of proletarianization."[30] Current scholarship, nonetheless, overlooks the voices and experiences of those who struggled and suffered under rapid industrialization: outcasts and outsiders whose records rarely reach the archives, people who did not attract the attention of either activists or scholars but nonetheless underpinned the era's development. They remain peripheral to stories of South Korean development.[31] This erasure is due in part to the prominence of the working class in the social movements of the 1980s, which tended to overshadowed other subclass groups, particularly the urban underclass. Their work, which did not typically involve waged labor, was not considered as labor either.[32] As a result, waste pickers encountered no awareness or solidarity as fellow members of the oppressed class, confirming their miserable social position and utter marginalization. Put differently, this erasure indicates who received

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[30] Koo, Korean Workers, 24.

[31] The kind of workers that are considered outcast or outsider often reflects dominant norms. In *Service Economy*, the literary scholar Jin-kyung Lee brings together four marginalized forms of working-class labor: military labor in Vietnam, domestic sex work, military prostitution, and immigrant labor. This labor articulates what she calls the "proletarianization" of sexuality and race, one that occupied center stage in South Korean development. By reading practices that were not considered to be labor, she shows how an array of ideologies - nationalism, anticommunism, developmentalism, and masculinism - constituted the proletarian workforce. Jin-kyung Lee, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[32] Examining how wageless life under capitalism is deemed wasted, Michael Denning argues that wageless labor or unemployment should not be treated as refusing labor, urging us to decenter wage labor in conceptualizing life under capitalism. Michael Denning, "Wageless Life," *New Left Review* 66 (2010): 79-97.

attention and visibility as an agent of development, and who did not.

Whether it is the developmental state scholarship or critical studies of South Korean development, there has been little engagement with the development studies literature (largely anthropology of development) that has emerged since the 1990s. I examine three monographs that opened up the critical scholarship of development by putting the very idea of development—the dominant development "paradigm"—into question. Frequently employing a Foucauldian framework of knowledge, discourse, and power, these studies focus on developmental interventions in the Third World since the end of World War II, analyzing international aid schemes and development assistance programs. Ethnographic accounts of development programs aim to understand how the development apparatus manifests in practice, locating development not as a constellation of globally applicable ideas and practices but a mode of producing specific knowledge on development.

In his landmark study analyzing repeated failures of Lesotho's development programs, the anthropologist James Ferguson argues that development, which is comprised of institutions, agencies and ideologies, produces a machine-like depoliticizing effect: it fails to improve socioeconomic conditions but succeeds in reproducing itself through unanticipated, unplanned consequences that arise beyond the intentions of the actors involved.[33] Similarly, Arturo Escobar demonstrates how development programs convert social life into a technical problem, one for which a team of experts developed idealized blueprints for progress and modernity. Underdeveloped countries were expected to adhere to these models, producing typologies of underdevelopment that may be effectively addressed at the political and technical levels but failed to address the fundamental problems of underdevelopment.[34]

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[33] James Ferguson, The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

[34] Arturo Escobar analyzes the historical conditions that gave rise to development since Harry Truman's 1949 inaugural address. These developmental discourses and strategies lend themselves to myriad policies, institutions, and practices that built on North American and Western European perspectives of development. Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

These two themes—the production of development-specific knowledge and the failure of developmental interventions—inform Tania Li's book, *The Will to Improve*, in which she traces the history of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia over the past two centuries.[35] Both colonial improvement schemes and contemporary development efforts attempted to enhance the lives of Indonesians but invariably failed. Nevertheless, these failures encourage new interventions to overcome previous failures. Li refers to this tendency as "the will to improve," which consists of identifying problems that need solving and rendering these problems into technical ones. These dual processes, "problematisation" and "rendering technical," convert problems into quantifiable, specifiable, and correctable (e.g., being poor, unproductive, or backward) ones, thereby making them visible and amenable to the governing authority.

While all three scholars explain development's failures and its self-referential characteristics, their positions show subtle differences. Ferguson casts the development apparatus as a series of unintended effects that imply a form of autonomous agency, without considering how other actors affect such processes. Escobar's emphasis on hegemonic discourse and a monolithic development apparatus reduces the very material realities of development into a discursive effect, precluding the possibility of resistance and counter-movement, or alternative representations and practices. For both, developmental interventions seem to operate as a self-serving system. Li, on the other hand, incorporates the reaction of the actors and how their interpretations of "unintended effects" reshape development plans, how people mobilize against "the will to improve," and the often-devastating consequences of development's impact on their lives and landscapes.

The developmental state scholarship primarily turns our attention to the source of power, whether it be authoritarian regimes or large conglomerates, and portrays development as a state- and elite-centric process. In contrast, the

[35] Tania Murray Li, The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

critical development studies literature shifts our attention to the processes that rendered development "antipolitical" or "apolitical"—mechanisms that obscured the structural predicaments of inequality. For both, it is worthwhile to rethink the questions we ask when studying development. Development necessitated chemical and heavy industries to manufacture advanced consumer and industrial goods, and elevate the general living standard of a country. Similarly, it became necessary to determine how to dispose of industrial and post-consumption waste, as well as other byproducts of the development process such as excess labor and surplus populations. Such decisions were more political than technical, and a question that has received considerably less attention. This is the inquiry that I turn to next.

REFUSE AND REFUSAL

This section builds on scholarship in waste studies and in the history of waste and recycling, a prolific emerging field that has not yet been introduced to the history of South Korean development. I provide an overview of historical scholarship on waste and recycling and their legacies during the immediate postwar period and the emergence of modern waste management systems. I discuss how waste studies provide conceptual tools to think about how surplus population and surplus matter are entangled and how labor and infrastructure are intertwined around waste, thereby reframing our understanding of industrialization, urbanization, and development.

What makes something "waste" provokes a series of questions. One might ask how it was created, and whether it was at a particular place or evolved over different periods and scales.[36] One might also ask how we define and classify waste, or how we measure its value and utility. The anthropologist Mary Douglas's seminal work

[36] Sociologist Zsuzsa Gille coined the concept "waste regime" to investigate "the changing materiality and discourses of waste," which consisted of "representations, practices, and politics of waste." A prevailing waste regime can give to another, whether triggered by pollution or contamination outbreaks, changes to the domestic economic regime or global political economy, or the rise of new technologies. Zsuzsa Gille, *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 34-35.

provides useful insight for examining *rejectamenta* of any sort.[37] Douglas explains that ideas about dirt - and waste - revolve around symbolic associations with disorder and impurity. Rather than having distinct qualities, dirt is "matter out of place," which suggests a system that renders it worthless. In his book *Rubbish Theory*, another anthropologist, Michael Thompson, similarly explains that rubbish is neither static nor has a fixed value, and that its "worthlessness" is ascribed according to an ongoing social process.[38] Indeed, various waste-related practices and institutions are typically based on and tied to certain ideas or concepts on waste in different moments and locations. The indeterminate, liminal characteristics of waste, according to sociologist Zsuzsa Gille, lead to "classificatory practices and struggles" in conceptualizing waste.[39] Since waste has no inherent value, it tells us less about its inherent quality but more about its ordered contexts—a variety of social practices that define and categorize waste materials and reveal power relations. Similarly, historian Anne Berg sees waste as "a category of the past, a fossil of the dominant social order in which it was produced, recycled, and cast away." [40] Its spatially and temporally specific meanings and practices are well-illustrated in the historical scholarship on waste and recycling.

Wartime Recycling

Examining the politics of waste and recycling in Britain, Timothy Cooper notes that the prewar development of professionalized and municipal waste disposal (the "refuse

[37] Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

[38] Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory*: *The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[39] Gille, *Waste*, 23.

[40] Anne Berg, "Waste's Social Order: A Historical Perspective," in *Perspectives on Waste from the Social Sciences and the Humanities: Opening the Bin*, eds. Richard Ek and Nils Johansson (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2020), 8.

revolution") did not entail much understanding of waste itself, whether its material composition or its utilities. Instead, it highlighted the need to dispose waste quickly and hygienically.[41] However, as wartime material needs arose during the First World War, the emphasis on rapid disposal made it difficult to promote reusing and recycling, that is, holding on to waste piles longer to extract any residual value. Contrary to the contemporary association of recycling with conscious environmental practice, the British experience suggests that waste-related practices, such as salvaging and repurposing waste materials, were not necessarily tied to notions of scarcity and frugality, value and order, pollution and conservation.

We see more organized salvage operations during WWII. In Germany, based on the success and failure of previous salvage operations, the Nazi regime centrally planned their recycling system: in Germany and its occupied territories, the main waste labor force consisted of women and children, volunteers, and forced and slave labor including prisoners, foreign prisoners of war, and Jews in concentration and extermination camps, whose participation varied from cooperation to collaboration or coercion.[42] In Britain, Hitler's invasion posed a threat to social boundaries and order that was greater than that of material waste, which allowed the government to mobilize wartime recyclers to contribute to the frontline war effort.[43] In contrast, the collaborationist Vichy authorities in France obscured their emulation of Nazi salvage

[41] Timothy Cooper, "Challenging the 'Refuse Revolution': War, Waste and the Rediscovery of Recycling, 1900-50," *Historical Research* 81, no. 214 (2008): 710-31.

[42] Salvaging, frugal housekeeping, and the urban rag-and-bone trade predate the World Wars. While they were certainly not an Imperial German invention, both Heike Weber and Anne Berg argue that Nazi Germany turned these old practices into an ideological and political vehicle. Particularly striking are its main concepts, such as total recycling and zero waste, the closed-loop economy, and circularity, both for their contemporaneous familiarity and resonance as well as their lesser-known genocidal implications. Berg, *Waste*, 9; Berg, "The Nazi Rag-Pickers and Their Wine: The Politics of Waste and Recycling in Nazi Germany," *Social History* 40, no. 4 (2015): 470-72; Heike Weber, "Towards 'Total' Recycling: Women, Waste and Food Waste Recovery in Germany, 1914-1939," *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 3 (2013): 371-97; Weber, "Unmaking the Made: The Troubled Temporalities of Waste" in *The Routledge Handbook of Waste Studies*, eds. Zsuzsa Gille and Josh Lepawsky (London: Routledge, 2022), 89.

[43] Mark Riley, "From Salvage to Recycling: New Agendas or Same Old Rubbish?," *Area* 40, no. 1 (2008): 79-89.

policy in the early 1940s during the occupation (1940-1944).[44]

In May 1938, following the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937 and the growing urgency of war material needs, imperial Japan introduced a "German-style" control system. Modeled on the Nazi scrap practice, it placed the professional scrap trade under district control and police surveillance; rather than actively relying on volunteer collection through neighborhood associations, women's groups, or party organizations, as was the case in Germany, the Japanese approach opted to incorporate existing scrap businesses by establishing centralized unions/cooperatives. Chad Denton indicates that this measure, which prioritized the national duty of waste mobilization, temporarily eliminated the stigma attached to the waste trade and assigned its workers (*bataya* rag pickers and *kuzuya* scrap dealers), which included migrant Korean laborers. Denton also suggests that this inclusion of Korean waste workers, who were seen as "potentially disloyal colonial subjects," reveals the relative lack of political or ideological foundation in the Japanese system.[45]

Japan implemented similar strategies in annexed Korea. The Korean historian Kim In-ho argues that the Government-General of Korea utilized quasi-state scrap cooperatives and, subsequently, state corporations not just for total war mobilization but also for what appeared to be voluntary or locally-initiated early collection movements.[46] Nonetheless, many local scrap merchants exploited the wartime economy and resulting price volatility for their own financial gain, jeopardizing the GGK's requisition efforts and resulting in stricter regulation over their operations. Material mobilization, particularly of copper, also changed the everyday lives of Koreans through reconfiguring material culture, such as brassware. Michael Kim demonstrates that the GGK had to develop a ceramic industry to better requisition brassware from Korean households; he argues that it ultimately transformed everyday material culture, such as dining and ritual practices, by substituting ceramics for traditionally

[44] Chad B. Denton, "'Récupérez!' the German Origins of French Wartime Salvage Drives, 1939-1945." *Contemporary European History* 22, no. 3 (2013): 399-430.

[45] Chad B. Denton, "Korean Kuzuya, 'German-Style Control' and the Business of Waste in Wartime Japan, 1931-1945," *Business History* 64, no. 5 (2022): 904-22.

[46] Kim, "P'yep'um hoesu."

valued brassware.[47]

Once the political and economic need for recycling dissipated and post-war austerity gave way to prosperity after the Second World War, wartime waste practices began to disappear. The particular wartime circumstances for salvage and recycling not only did not lead to a substantial recycling scheme, but arguably impeded its post-war development. In France, it destroyed the prewar scrap business networks,[48] and tainted recycling with Nazi association[49]; in Japan, the brief upward mobility and inclusion of Korean migrant workers and other minorities was short-lived as they were pushed out of the trade by large-scale Japanese dealers as well as by post-1945 discriminatory measures.[50] Instead, wartime recycling demonstrates that the coercion of the colonial authority was insufficient to achieve their goals. Many warring nations succeeded in reframing salvaging as a patriotic act and integrated it into domestic duties. However, once outside the household, this process confronted conflicting interests in the different distribution channels, particularly due to the need for a labor force for extraction and infrastructure, mainly stockpiling and transportation, obstacles that reflected waste's characteristics as a secondary resource.[51]

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[47] Michael Kim, "The Brassware Industry and the Salvage Campaigns of Wartime Colonial Korea (1937-1945)," *Business History* 64, no. 5 (2022): 923-45.

[48] Apart from the scrap industry, in Imperial Japan, occupied China, and annexed Korea, Paul Kreitman notes that "the unforeseen pressures of total war" resulted in near destruction of local networks of the night soil trade. Combined with the lack of urban infrastructure and sewer systems, nascent municipalization, the privatization of cleaning services that repeated trial and error, and urbanization decreasing suburban farming populations and their fertilizer needs, the manual collection of feces as well as the use of organic manure in farming gradually disappeared. Paul Kreitman, "Attacked by Excrement: The Political Ecology of Shit in Wartime and Postwar Tokyo," *Environmental History* 23, no. 2 (2018): 342-366; Joshua Goldstein, *Remains of the Everyday: A Century of Recycling in Beijing* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2020), 34-44; Ho-ch'ŏl Sŏ, "Sŏur ŭi ttong ojum sugŏ ch'egye ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa pyŏnhwa: 1890-nyŏndae huban put'ŏ 1930-nyŏndae chŏnban kkaji," *Sŏulgwa yŏksa* no. 93 (2016): 175-220.

[49] Denton, "Récupérez," 428-429.

[50] Denton, "Kuzuya," 916.

[51] Denton and Weber note that exploiting waste materials required "reverse logistics" of collecting, disassembling, and reclaiming, with each stage reverse-traveling from households, small scrap yards and

Legacies of the War and Postwar Period

Starting in the late 19th century or early 20th century, waste disposal and recycling changed from the private practice of households into public services. The most notable change was the municipalization and privatization of waste services such as collection, recycling, and disposal, which replaced the work of households (especially women and children), scavengers, rag-and-bone traders, and junk/scrap dealers. David Pellow, Carl Zimring, and Chris Hurl have documented this process in the USA and Canada, illustrating how minorities in each society took up the work of waste handling, and how they mobilized themselves to claim their access and rights to waste.[52] The struggles continue to this day in different parts of the world. Another trend was the professionalization of waste management: various technologies for waste treatment and material recovery were developed, stirring contentious politics surrounding how to define waste and what were considered to be proper disposal methods.[53] Formalizing waste practices created new ways of ordering, classifying, and governing waste, which repositioned waste as an object of techno-scientific intervention and brought changes—largely informal and invisible— to the previous arrangement of waste labor.

During the second half of the twentieth century, waste issues

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collection centers, balers, and smelters, to the site of new production. Chad Denton, and Heike Weber, "Rethinking Waste within Business History: A Transnational Perspective on Waste Recycling in World War II," *Business History* 64, no. 5 (2022): 12.

[52] David Naguib Pellow, *Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002); Carl Abraham Zimring, *Cash for Your Trash: Scrap Recycling in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Chris Hurl, "From Scavengers to Sanitation Workers: Practices of Purification and the Making of Civic Employees in Toronto, 1890-1920," *Labour / Le Travail* 79 (January 2017): 81-104.

[53] Analyzing the transition from tipping (dumping) to destructors (incinerators) during the last decade of the nineteenth century in Torquay, England, John Clark (2007) argues that destructors constituted "municipal modernity" that represented the "refuse revolution." While tipping represented the unsanitary past, destructors, with their large-scale technological solutions, embodied the ideology of progress. J. F. M. Clark, "'The Incineration of Refuse Is Beautiful': Torquay and the Introduction of Municipal Refuse Destructors," *Urban History* 34, no. 2 (2007): 255-77.

encountered three inflection points. First, mass production and consumption led to a sharp increase in both industrial and post-consumption waste generation in the developed countries. In the developed world, affluence altered people's relationship with material objects. In the USA, Susan Strasser indicates that the "stewardship of objects" was replaced by disposability and a throw-away culture.[54] In post-war Japan, Eiko Maruko Siniawer suggests that the abundance of waste also posed moral challenges. Its responses include "affluence of the heart," which turned its material affluence into a pursuit of affluence in immaterial things and values, or Toyota's lean production which equated waste minimization with scientific management of the workplace. [55] Second, the rise of environmental consciousness, and the 1972 Club of Rome report *Limits to Growth*, not only brought greater attention to finite resources but also to the growing problem of pollution. The British government's 1974

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[54] Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999). In the socialist Chinese context, Joshua Goldstein indicates that the stewardship of objects, thrift, and frugality all stemmed from the valuation of labor: while value generated from labor is a social product, this social dimension is lost when disposability dominates the recycling experience. Joshua Goldstein, "The Remains of the Everyday: One Hundred Years of Recycling in Beijing," in *Everyday Modernity in China*, eds. Joshua Goldstein and Madeleine Yue Dong (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 260-301.

[55] Eiko Maruko Siniawer, *Waste: Consuming Postwar Japan* (Ithaka: Cornell University Press, 2018), 156-157. Siniawer's presentation of postwar ideas and practices are centered on middle-class Japanese perspectives. While Siniawer briefly offers anecdotes of rag pickers (78-79), their presence was soon swept away by international events, increased consumption level, and a surge of waste. Siniawer does not connect the perception of waste work and its laborers to the wartime period, especially the total war material mobilization, its impact on the ethnic discrimination; or the relationship between post-war poverty, social work, and rag picker communities, as well as their contemporaries, such as homeless men. Denton, *Kuzuya*; Koji Taira, "Urban Poverty, Ragpickers, and Ants' Villa in Tokyo," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 17, no. 2 (1969): 155-77; Taira, "Ragpickers and Community Development: 'Ants'' Villa" in Tokyo." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 22, no. 1 (1968): 3-19; Tom Gill, "Failed manhood on the streets of urban Japan: The meanings of self-reliance for homeless men," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 10, no. 1 (2012): 1-21. For detailed criticism of Siniawer's approach isolating the post-war experiences from the prewar/wartime one, especially the relationship between the contemporary resource-poor narrative in Japanese policy, the wartime military expansion, and the Japanese empire's prewar resource preoccupation, see: Peter Wynn Kirby, "Waste: Consuming Postwar Japan by Eiko Maruko Siniawer (review)," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 47, no.1 (2021): 163-67

white paper, "War on Waste," illustrates the governmental responses to the global environmental critique. Timothy Cooper criticizes it, however, for failing to challenge high consumption levels and argues that it ultimately catered to the economic imperatives of industry, neutering the political demands of the pressing environmental concerns.[56]

Third, the 1973 Oil Crisis triggered a global resource crisis, initiating a revival of waste recovery and recycling, however temporarily. It also reorganized waste labor under new geographies of waste. Examining the emergence of waste trade markets from the late 1970s through the Basel Agreement in the early 1990s, Emily Brownell argues that the Oil Shock eventually facilitated international waste dumping, in which environmental harms and toxic hazards were legitimately commodified and exported as an international trade, frequently to developing countries. The Oil Crisis prompted a new economic order of waste that justified a new international division of waste processing labor: rising labor costs in the developed world were incompatible with tedious, high-risk, and labor-intensive waste labor. Waste reclamation, whether it is toxic, hazardous waste or more mundane plastic or electronic waste, was displaced to regions with inexpensive labor and laxer environmental regulations, reflecting how historically-constrained unequal relationships reiterated with the geopolitics surrounding natural resources, commodity production, and waste dumping after the 1970s.[57]

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[56] Timothy Cooper, "War on Waste?: The Politics of Waste and Recycling in Post-War Britain, 1950-1975," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 20, no. 4 (2009): 53-72.

[57] Brownell argues that the transnational waste trade exemplifies how international relationships in post-World War II and postcolonial contexts are reaffirmed or renewed in relation to newly emerging environmental concerns, whether between the colonizer and the colonized, developed and developing nations, or the Global North and South. However, it is misleading to view the global waste trade as a repetition of colonial ties or to emphasize just the unequal relationship between exporters and importers. This perspective disregards exchanges that occur outside of such ties, especially the inter-regional trades. See: Josh Lepawsky, "The Changing Geography of Global Trade in Electronic Discards: Time to Rethink the e-Waste Problem," *The Geographical Journal* 181, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 147-59; Josh Lepawsky and Chris McNabb, "Mapping International Flows of Electronic Waste," *Canadian Geographer* 54, no. 2 (2010): 177-95.

Both historical and ethnographic research show that waste labor occurs in both the public and private sectors as well as the formal and informal sectors, albeit in different forms. However, the dichotomy between legal and illegal, or formal and informal, overlooks the mutual constitution of both and their respective benefits to the state. Due to the characteristics of waste—geographically dispersed in small quantities, unstable supply and demand, and labor-intensive collection and logistics—unorganized informal workforces are ideally suited for the initial stage of waste collection, and their work eventually feeds into formal waste management. Ananya Roy, an urban studies scholar, argues that informality should be seen as "a series of transactions that connect different economies and spaces to one another," emphasizing the embeddedness of informality within what is often considered "formal" economy.[58] Viewed in this manner, informal waste workers operate within the continuum of the formal waste economy, bridging the formal and informal sectors.

Whether the wartime recycling of housewives, scrap processing of immigrant or ethnic minority workers, or scavenging of the urban poor, waste work was often rendered invisible without gaining necessary rights or recognition as a mode of labor. Historical accounts of informal recycling illustrate how this erasure operates over time. In his study of a century of recycling in Beijing, Joshua Goldstein indicates that the numerous attempts to eliminate informal waste pickers—hukou (household registration) restrictions, state regulations over scrap and recyclables, crackdowns on informal markets, and, most recently, rising housing prices—perpetuated the

[58] The informal economy or informal sector is typically understood in relation to the formal sector, one that will ultimately be transformed or integrated into a modern, formal, and manageable form. Rejecting the dichotomous notion of the formal and informal, Roy defines informality as "a mode of urbanization", highlighting continuity as opposed to viewing them in parallel. On informality and its connections to the formal system, see: Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71, no. 2 (2005): 147-58; Barbara Harriss-White, "Formality and Informality in an Indian Urban Waste Economy," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 37, no. 7-8 (2017): 417-34; Melanie Samson, "Accumulation by Dispossession and the Informal Economy: Struggles over Knowledge, Being and Waste at a Soweto Garbage Dump," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33, no. 5 (2015): 813-30.

informality, precariousness, and marginalization of waste pickers, resulting in the erasure of their history.[59] Informal recycling practices, despite being treated as embryonic or transitional, have often survived the introduction of formal municipal waste management and maintained a tenuous but tenacious coexistence with the formal system. In this sense, it might be more useful to study social and political strategies that keep informal arrangements well-organized and operational. [60]

The invisibility of informal waste labor often stems from the association with waste that renders either people or places worthless or equal to waste itself. Working with waste not only impairs workers' laboring bodies but also their self-image and identity,[61] which makes them subject to the language of waste such as disposability or humans-as-waste.[62] The anthropologist Kathleen Millar contends that the vocabularies of waste—whose use stretches beyond strictly waste-related work—may indeed affirm the existence of "disposable people."[63] One way of "surfacing the invisible work" of waste pickers comes from reassessing their labor.[64] Recent ethnographic studies of waste illustrate how human labor

[59] Goldstein, Remains of the Everyday.

[60] Dana Kornberg, "Competing for Jurisdiction: Practical Legitimation and the Persistence of Informal Recycling in Urban India," *Social Forces* 99, no. 2 (2020): 797-819.

[61] Robin Nagle, Picking Up: On the Streets and Behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013); Joshua Reno. Waste Away: Working and Living with a North American Landfill (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

[62] Waste-related metaphors are not limited to waste work alone but illustrate the degrading conditions of work in general. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's *Wasted Lives* uses waste metaphors to critique deteriorating conditions of surplus populations. Disposability also captures the characteristics of a contemporary labor market that displaces migrant laborers, enforces deportation, and disenfranchises laborers from their means of production. Zygmund Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (London: Polity Press, 2004); Michelle Yates, "The Human-As-Waste, the Labor Theory of Value and Disposability in Contemporary Capitalism," *Antipode* 43, no. 5 (2011): 1679-95.

[63] For a critique of this use of the waste metaphor, see Kathleen Millar, *Reclaiming the Discarded: The Politics of Labor and Everyday Life on Rio's Garbage Dump* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 6-8.

[64] Susan Leigh Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure," *American Behavioral Scientist*, no. 3 (1999): 385.

replaces or supplements insufficient or absent infrastructure, whether it is in municipal solid waste management process or waste disposal sites.

One such approach draws on "people as infrastructure," a notion that Abdoumaliq Simone coined to emphasize the significance of the labor of those "marginalized from and immiserated by urban life."[65] Geographer Rosalind Fredericks shows how municipal waste management in Dakar, Senegal functions as a mode of governing through disciplining people with different corporeal burdens and the stigma of working with waste; for the laborers, it simultaneously creates "participatory" waste infrastructures where their labor practice becomes a terrain for citizenship struggles.[66] Anthropologist Amy Zhang suggests that everyday waste infrastructure in China is comprised of waste pickers, workers at scrap workshops, and sanitation workers, whose labor practices are less embedded in the socio-technical system but more so in the workers themselves.[67] These studies understand infrastructure not simply in its physical form but in a wide array of things, practices, and relations that make up the provision of urban services, with laboring bodies crystallizing the social and material dimensions of infrastructure. [68]

Another approach draws on Marxist political economy[69] to see infrastructure as

[65] Abdoumaliq Simone, "People as Infrastructure," *Public Culture* 16, no. 3 (2004): 407-29.

[66] Rosalind Fredericks, Garbage Citizenship: Vital Infrastructures of Labor in Dakar, Senegal (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

[67] Amy Zhang, "Invisible Labouring Bodies: Waste Work as Infrastructure in China," *Made in China Journal* 4, no. 2 (2019): 98-102.

[68] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2013): 327-43.

[69] Scholarship in Ecological Marxism outlines how environmental circumstances contribute to capitalist production, and how excessive production degrades natural conditions (e.g., species loss, acid rain, soil erosion, deforestation). For instance, John Bellamy Foster argues that Marx's concept of the capitalist labor process reveals how large-scale industry and agriculture under capitalism impoverished nature (soil fertility) and worker labor power, breaking the social-ecological metabolism between humans and the environment. John Bellamy Foster, "Marx's Theory of Metabolic Rift: Classical Foundations for Environmental Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 2 (1999): 366-405.

one of the "conditions of production."[70] Geographer Vinay Gidwani expands the conditions of production to include "the labor that underwrites the production of capital's 'general' and 'external' infrastructure in urban and non-urban contexts."[71] In this vein, he conceives of the informal economy of waste transformation as an "infra-economy" and its labor as "infra-structural labor." "Infra-economy" carries two connotations: it is frequently an economy hidden or erased by state and civil society, and it is an economy that produces urban space and infrastructure (e.g., facilitates the movement of waste) conducive to capitalist conditions of production. Similar to how capital deals with its ecological dilemma by commodifying or producing nature,[72] Gidwani and Maringanti argue that capital "'solves' its waste problem through a 'spatial fix'" that moves waste to different locations, a strategy that entails the subsumption of informal waste labor as urban infrastructure, granting "infra-structural labor" to the work that transports and transforms waste.[73]

Rather than treating the invisibility of waste labor as a given condition, infrastructural labor focuses on what rendered waste labor invisible and

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[70] James O'Connor indicates that Marx identified three conditions of production: the labor power of workers (e.g., personal conditions of production); the communal and general conditions of social production (e.g., the means of communication and transport); and the "natural condition" or "external physical condition." Conceptualizing the ecological crisis under capitalism, O'Connor argues that capitalism's pursuit of surplus value and profit deteriorates its "natural condition," destroying the basis of production; in response to the crisis, O'Connor explains that capital seeks to reorganize production conditions to propel greater production and accumulation, with strategies such as land use and resource planning or the commodification of nature. James O'Connor, *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 144-177.

[71] Vinay Gidwani, "The Work of Waste: Inside India's Infra-Economy," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 40, no. 4 (2015): 577.

[72] For production of nature under capitalism, see Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 32-65; Noel Castree, "Marxism and the Production of Nature," *Capital & Class* 24, no. 3 (2000): 5-36.

[73] Vinay Gidwani and Anant Maringanti, "The Waste-Value Dialectic: Lumpen Urbanization in Contemporary India," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 1 (2016): 114-5.

unrecognized.[74] It also illuminates how waste labor as infrastructure is closely related to state power, particularly what Michael Mann has called the infrastructural power.[75] The sociologist John Lie contends that the Park regime lacked both political legitimacy and "infrastructural power"—the actual means to achieve its authority.[76] In the case of waste management, the absence of physical infrastructure was frequently compensated for by varying forms of waste labor that might be considered infrastructural labor, ranging from municipal sanitation workers toiling with daily collection and transportation with little equipment to informal waste pickers mustering the city's refuse for recycling to citizens engaged in domestic recycling practices. In South Korea, infrastructural gaps opened up spaces for informal waste labor forces; they have also served as a means for the state to manage this population directly or indirectly through waste picker camps or waste picker settlement sites.

Throughout the 20th century, waste was framed as a sanitary and

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[74] Rather than seeing invisibility as an inherent characteristic of infrastructure, Larkin suggests that we understand the invisibility of infrastructure as "a range of visibilities that move from unseen to grand spectacles and everything in between." Larkin, "Infrastructure," 336.

[75] While not discussed in detail in the above studies, it is useful to examine infrastructural labor alongside Michael Mann's notion of the infrastructural power of the state. Mann defines infrastructural power as "the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm," one of its characteristics being territoriality: creating and maintaining territorial boundaries as well as establishing territorial bounds to social relations. We may consider the territorial reach of functioning municipal waste service as an example, boundaries that demarcate inside and outside, center and periphery, and urban radius. Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 25, no. 2 (1984): 185-213; Mann, "Infrastructural Power Revisited," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43, no. 3-4 (2008): 355-65.

[76] John Lie, "Rethinking the 'Miracle'—Economic Growth and Political Struggles in South Korea," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 23, no. 4 (1991): 69. During the postwar period, other examples included refugee settlement and land reclamation projects to build infrastructure, such as houses, villages, roads, or arable land, as well as a shantytown legalization project to provide shantytown dwellers materials to improve their tenements by themselves. Yim Song-ja, "1961-nyŏn 5·16 ihu kukt'o kŏnsŏl saŏp kwa kukt'ogŏnsŏldan unyŏng silt'ae," *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndaesa yŏn'gu* 67 (2013): 900-942; Kim A-ram, "Han'guk ŭi nanmin palsaeng kwa nongch'on chŏngch'ak saŏp, 1945-1960-nyŏndae" (PhD diss., Yonsei taehakkyo, 2017); Burge, "Promised Republic," 94.

hygienic threat, a national resource, as well as a moral resource and moralizing object. New disposal technologies associated waste with ideas of modernity and progress.Simultaneously, "dirty work" was devolved to invisible laborers in largely informal arrangements. At the same time, waste pickers demonstrate their refusal to being excluded, the significance of their work diminished, and their dwelling spaces and labor practice discarded by modern waste management system and urban spatial order. On the one hand, waste's materiality, such as its known or unknown risks, treatment technologies, or its management, constituted the conditions of waste work; on the other, it was political changes, industrialization, urban (re)development, and international environmental governance that affected waste labor on the ground level. The attention on labor illuminates the social and spatial conditions in which waste labor was embedded: how waste evoked metaphors that devalued its labor and laborers or carried associations with reformation and rehabilitation, or how material forces of waste resulted in overusing or depleting laborers' bodies and their labor forces.

SOURCES AND ORGANIZATION

The data on which this dissertation is based were collected through archival research and interviews between 2014 and 2015. Archival materials are divided into public and private sources.[77] I collected official documents from public archives and other documents from individuals, including waste picker camp surveys and reports, petition letters submitted to the central and local governments, eviction records of waste picker camp sites, research reports, as well as minutes and audit records from Seoul Metropolitan Council and the National Assembly. Administrative documents include published and unpublished records produced by both the central government and local

[77] I consulted the following archives: the National Archives of Korea, the Document Depository of Seoul Metropolitan Government, the National Library of Korea, the National Assembly Library, Seoul Library, the Environment Digital Library in Ministry of Environment, and the Korea Democracy Foundation Archive.

districts, particularly eviction-related records, which reveal contradictions between relevant bureaucratic instances. While most of the data are concentrated on Seoul, I juxtapose data from other cities and regions where available. I also draw on newspapers, magazines, fiction, and non-fiction, as well as newsletters published by the Rag Commune and the Nanjido landfill volunteers.

Official archives and administrative agencies adhere to a limited record preservation period, which leads to the loss of many documents.[78] Filed complaints and petition letters are a particular case in point. Landfill waste pickers collected most of the exchanges they had with the local government and the district office; these data shed light on the interaction between the state and waste pickers. Apart from formally archived data, I obtained invaluable sources through interviews with informants and the numerous documents they provided. The resident survey reports, private memos, diaries, and resident committee records preserve the muted voices of the waste pickers and provide snapshots of landfill life from the perspective of its inhabitants.

Aside from written sources and interviews, I reviewed a large number of photographs held by the Western Park and Management Office, the majority of which have never been published on the office's website. These photos were captured by city workers while on duty at the landfill, but they lack specific information such as dates, locations, categories, or captions. These images depicted the landfill and its settlement in specific ways: a ramshackle shack built from a patchwork of metal plates and plywood; dilapidated tenements and living quarters; or a notice to vacate and a red mark in the shape of a letter x attached to each house, images that more resembled specimen. Even without a caption, these photographs revealed the organizing frames of the city's landfill management that erased the lives of people.

In contrast, photographs taken by waste pickers and volunteers, which were often retrieved from informants' wardrobes, revealed how individuals improvised their daily lives in the landfill. While I do not use photographs of waste pickers to protect

[78] Enforcement Decree of the Public Records Management Act (Article 26) designates the preservation period of records, which is classified into permanent, semi-permanent, 30 years, 10 years, 5 years, 3 years, and 1 year. Filed complaints and related correspondence between ministries or districts are categorized as records produced from daily administrative works, which is classified and preserved for one to three years.

their anonymity, these images contradicted the denigrating gaze projected on the landfill shantytown, demonstrating it was no different from any other villages and neighborhoods: children on the playground, church gatherings, women in *hanbok*, the traditional Korean dress, celebrating special occasions, and a Christmas mass in a crowded nunnery. This contrast is also reflected in the city's aerial images and a hand-drawn map of the shantytown by waste pickers. Aerial photographs were taken to control unlicensed housing, which served as a means of eradicating these shacks and their dwellers. The shantytown map, in contrast, served as the sole evidence for waste pickers to prove the existence. Where the city authorities see deprivation and the need for control measures, locals cultivate their lives and grow a village together, enriching the human geography of landfill life.

In addition to written and visual sources, I was able to document the lived experience of the landfill through interviews. Former landfill workers - twenty city employees and six waste pickers - and three religious volunteers shared their stories. Interviews with landfill employees lasted between one to four hours, based on semi-structured interview questions; some of them served as gatekeepers, introducing me to former colleagues and helping to access unarchived government documents. I conducted a life history interview with six waste pickers; each session lasted two to four hours, which was repeated three to four times for each informant. All the names of informants are anonymized. Brief life histories of the interviewed landfill waste pickers can be found in the appendix I.

In recruiting former city workers, one former landfill worker became a gatekeeper for most of the interviewed city workers.[79] I got to know him via his personal blog, where he mentioned his landfill experience through his photo in Nanjido. He worked for ten years at the Nanjido Landfill, starting his career in functional services (a blue-collar position) before being promoted to general services (a white-collar position). The duration of his landfill duty and his

[79] With the exception of three cases recruited via snowball, he introduced all the city employees interviewed for this dissertation.

affinities with both blue- and white-collar workers greatly aided my access to former landfill workers. Not only did he remain in contact with many of his former colleagues, but his introduction, in some cases as his niece, allowed me to record very candid recollections of landfill experiences, ranging from inveterate frustration with the day-to-day landfill operation to illegal dumping and bribery to fatal accidents.

Access to former waste pickers began through a pastor who volunteered at the Nanjido Landfill. After his initial introduction to two informants, I relied on them to introduce their acquaintances. However, snowballing was not very successful in recruiting landfill waste pickers, whether their family members or friends. For some, Nanjido was implicitly a forbidden topic among family members. For others, the memories and traumas of the landfill still stirred their suffering. At the same time, personal ties from the landfill days often disintegrated after they moved out of the landfill and relocated. During the interviews, a few informants recalled how they had run into former Nanjido acquaintances but mutually avoided and ignored each other. While all the interviewees helped to contact their friends or acquaintances from the landfill, in most cases their attempts were rebuked.[80]

The text that follows is organized into four chapters. The first chapter examines how waste management in South Korea evolved from a largely informal and labor-intensive practice to a public service with widespread citizen participation. I propose three significant changes that occurred during this process: the institutionalization of waste management, professionalization of disposal methods, and domestication of residential recycling. Each process involved competing claims about waste, waste labor, and what constituted a modern waste management system, which resulted in 1) changing waste's ontological status from a threat to the human environment to a resource, and 2) redefining waste labor from a subsistence activity of the urban poor to a civic, environmental, and moral duty. I argue that the state was able to domesticate recycling because of this shift in the perception of waste and waste labor.

[80] On one occasion, at the end of the interview, the informant called a friend she had not seen in several years; after briefly catching up, she mentioned the Nanjido interview. The moment she pronounced Nanjido, the other person on the phone shouted at her, and I could hear the anger and irritation even without eavesdropping. The informant switched the subject, continued catching up, and then attempted again, provoking an even angrier response.

The second chapter investigates the discursive sphere that was built around waste pickers. I examine how and why distinct classifications and meanings became associated with waste work; what prompted the appearance and disappearance of terms; and how different actors - ranging from state bodies and their administrators, social reformers and middle-class citizens, to waste pickers themselves - responded to such discourses, whether by reproducing and reinforcing, or resisting and reclaiming. I show how state discourses, which established the perceived deviance of waste pickers, brought subsequent, intertwined discourses at the vernacular level in both popular and literary interpretation. Waste pickers, on the other hand, resisted prevailing representations of their lives and sought to reclaim their agency.

Against this background, the third and fourth chapters examine how waste work–waste-picking–was organized outside of formal waste management, both coercively (chapter three) and autonomously (chapter four). In chapter three, I look closely into waste picker camps, including police-led, official camps and various rag picker groups and encampments, tracing their more than thirty years of operation before their final disbandment and eviction. Their initial submission to the police and placement in the camps resulted in social and spatial exclusion, while the camp structure exposed waste pickers to the exploitation and violence of the police and intermediary buyers, leading to their economic vulnerability. Over time, the camp's siting - occupying vacant lots on the city's margin - became incompatible with urban redevelopment. The introduction of household recycling domesticated parts of their labor into civic duty, which resulted in their economic isolation. I demonstrate how the state regulation of waste pickers, an intervention that purported to prevent and guide vagrancy, instead rendered them more mobile and unstable.

In chapter four, I examine Seoul's Nanjido landfill as a lived space, using housing as a lens to grasp how waste pickers organized their lives and labor. I take the 1984 construction of the housing complex as a focal point where the state directly intervened—as a response to the demands of the waste pickers—in what it had previously categorized as informal, unlicensed housing. Through a combined reading of sources at different scales, aerial photographs from above,

and hand-drawn shanty town maps from below, I ask how this state intervention to upgrade and regulate waste picker settlements affected the nature of their dwellings and labor practices.

In conclusion, I provide a summary of each chapter's findings and then illustrate the new waste and recycling landscape in contemporary South Korean society, focusing on institutionalized recycling and the emergence of elderly waste pickers. While discourses have become predominately empathetic and the new term has no derogatory connotations, the focus remains on who performs the work without questioning the underlying cause and how to eliminate waste pickers from view. The findings of this dissertation imply diachronic connections with the history of waste pickers, demonstrating how waste work and its workers are socially dependent and historically contingent.

Chapter 1. THE FORMATION OF WASTE MANAGEMENT IN SEOUL

This chapter examines Seoul's municipal solid waste management from the postwar period to the early 1990s, a time when the city was rapidly expanding and industrializing. I provide a historical overview of how Seoul managed its waste, tracing how a largely informal and labor-intensive practice evolved into a public service and a civic duty—a process that revolved around the institutionalization of waste management, the professionalization of disposal practice, and the domestication of household recycling.

The consolidation of municipal solid waste management entailed contested claims over understandings of waste, eligibility for waste work, and what constituted a modern waste management system. The transition from manual collection and open dumping to a more mechanized and automated process gradually detached waste from its handlers, removing the physical connection between material waste and its workers (sanitation workers or waste pickers). At the same time, the changing ontological status of waste - from a threat to the human environment to a resource - lifted stereotypes about handling waste and framed recycling as a civic duty to protect the environment as opposed to a subsistence activity of the urban poor. These changes to waste management redefined waste labor at the ground level: the work of separating recyclable materials from waste, which was stigmatized and primarily undertaken by waste pickers, was brought into the realm of everyday life. I argue that this shifting perception of waste and waste labor is what allowed the state to domesticate recycling practices.

This chapter relies on a range of archival materials: cleaning administration documents, waste management legislation, research reports on disposal methods, waste management systems, and environmental plans, as well as newspaper articles. Because different administrative authorities dealt with waste until the early 1980s, combining different kinds of sources—postwar welfare and social policy, urban land reclamation, the Oil Crisis and its attendant measures—helps to consider how the social, environmental, and administrative dimension of waste has been managed and emerged as an issue

in its own right during the second-half of the twentieth century. It starts with an overview of Seoul's urbanization and growing waste issues. It then moves on to waste generation patterns and collection processes, followed by waste disposal and recycling solutions that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Each strategy reveals different understandings of waste, reflecting the changes in the waste materials themselves, available technology for disposal and treatment, and what was perceived to be the most pressing concern in waste management.

URBANIZATION AND THE NEED TO MANAGE WASTE

Throughout twentieth century South Korea, the growth of cities, such as Seoul, introduced street cleaning and garbage collection as immediate urban problems. In early colonial Seoul, sanitary conditions, combined with rising population density, posed a direct health threat to the urban population due to dangers such as outbreaks of contagious or water-borne diseases. It was these public health concerns that propelled the pressing need to manage waste.[81]

The first organization that carried out sanitary reforms in early colonial Seoul was the Seoul Sanitation Association (SSA, Hansŏng wisaenghoe), established shortly after the 1907 cholera epidemic with an imperial donation from Crown Prince Yoshihito (1879–1926). The SSA carried out projects to improve the city's sanitary conditions and instill notions of public health and hygienic practice in the urban population. The SSA imposed sanitary regulations, with military-trained hygiene police inspecting the compliance of the colonized masses and intruding into the everyday lives of Koreans. It installed relevant infrastructure such as public toilets and sewage, organized waste collection and the disposal of human excrement, and campaigned and

[81] Cholera epidemic in the late 1880s and the early 1990s, combined with the introduction of Miasma Theory as its etiology, came to see waste as the cause of infectious diseases and a threat to the human environment. Pak Yun-jae [Yun-jae Park], "Wisaeng esŏ ch'ŏnggyŏl ro: Sŏul ŭi kŭndaejŏk punnyo ch'ŏri," *Yŏksa pip'yŏng* 126 (2019): 260-494.

inspected personal and household hygiene.[82] The SSA's new fee-based collection system interfered with existing collection systems and caused resistance - at times even refusal - from city dwellers.[83] However, lacking an adequate infrastructure or budget, and with inequitably distributed resources, the coercive, pseudo-military sanitary reform garnered little popular support."[84]

After the citywide municipal reorganization in 1914, the Metropolitan Government of Seoul (Keijo fucho) took over the sanitary responsibilities from the SSA. The city assumed responsibility for garbage collection and disposal, and the cleaning of streets and public lavatories. It directly hired excrement collectors, garbage collectors, and street cleaners either on temporary contracts or as day laborers.[85] The city's sanitary infrastructure required further improvement: there was a urgent need for additional public toilets and sewage systems, and for improved toilet facilities that did not contaminate the soil and groundwater. However, sanitary infrastructure was frequently neglected in favor of more essential urban needs such as road construction. Due to the lack of suitable disposal facilities, the collection system's labor-intensity, labor scarcity, and a growing population and its household waste, rubbish accumulated on the city's outskirts for 2-30 days.[86] While the city slightly

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[82] Ki Ch'ang-dŏk, "Chosŏnsidae mal kaemyŏnggi ŭi ŭiryo (1)," *Uĭsahak* 5, no. 2 (1995): 169-196; Todd Henry, "Sanitizing Empire: Japanese Articulations of Korean Otherness and the Construction of Early Colonial Seoul, 1905-1919," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 3 (2005): 639-75; Yun-jae Park, "Sanitizing Korea: Anti-cholera Activities of the Police in Early Colonial Korea," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 23, no. 2 (2010): 151-71; Chŏng Kŭn-sik, "Singminji wisaeng kyŏngch'al ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa pyŏnhwa, kŭrigo yusan: singminji t'ongch'isŏng ŭi sigagesŏ," *Sahoewa yŏksa* 90 (2011): 221-270.

[83] Before the SSA, local excrement collectors used to gather human waste without charge and sold it as fertilizer. The SSA charged households a monthly fee for its operation. When these requirements were not met, Koreans were fined up to five yen or detained for up to ten days. Kim Sang-ŭn, "Chosŏn omul sojeryŏng silsi chŏnhu ŭi Kyŏngsŏng-bu ch'ŏngso haengjŏng ŭi kusŏng kwa unyŏng," *Tosi yŏn'gu* 21 (2019): 71-101.

[84] Sin Tong-wŏn, *Han'guk kŭndae pogŏn ŭiryosa* (Sŏul: Hanurak'ademi, 1997).

[85] This sanitary management took up as much as 50% of the city's finances in the 1910s. Sŏ Ho-ch'ŏl, "Sŏur ŭi ttong ojum sugŏ ch'egye ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa pyŏnhwa: 1890-nyŏndae huban put'ŏ 1930-nyŏndae chŏnban kkaji," *Sŏulgwa yŏksa* 93 (2016): 198-200.

[86] Kim, "Kyŏngsŏng-bu," 91.

improved conditions by institutionalizing sanitary services (e.g., waste collection), it had little effect on the sanitary conditions of local people.

After liberation, the city was confronted with a surge of waste. Without much in the way of resources, the city assumed waste collection and disposal. Using 100 motorcars and 300 handcarts left from the colonial period, it collected 300,000 *kwan* of household waste per day.[87] During the U.S. Military administration (1945-1948) and the First Republic (1948-1960), the city requisitioned collection vehicles from the U.S. Army.[88] The city's meager resources were insufficient to dispose of its rubbish, leaving streets clogged with refuse.[89] The city's tangled urban layout hindered the circulation of waste vehicles. A modern waste management system had not yet been established and the city's makeshift collection equipment remained inadequate to deal with ever mounting waste generation.

The Korean War (25 June 1950 - 27 July 1953) further exacerbated the waste problem, reducing the city's capacity to nearly nothing.[90] As a result, in October 1953 shortly after the South Korean government returned to Seoul, the city was forced to mobilize military vehicles and private cars for waste collection. The city requisitioned approximately twenty motorcars from civilians, fifteen vehicles from the Korea Civil Assistance Command (KCAC), eighteen police vehicles, as well as 500 horse-drawn carts. These, however, were insufficient to collect the 1,500 truckloads of daily generated waste. Collection intervals were inconsistent and once-a-week pickup schedules were occasionally missed.[91] Throughout the postcolonial and postwar periods, cleanliness and hygiene - the public provision of cleaning services - became a measure of functional government. Their poor operations compelled the government

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[87] Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsisa p'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, *Sŏul 600-nyŏnsa che 6-kwŏn* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsisa p'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe , 1996). 1 *Kwan* is 3.75 kilograms.

[88] "Chŏksan pulha kuch'ean mijinbo,"*Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, August 21, 1947; "Kkaekkŭthaejinŭn Sŏul kŏri ch'ŏngso nŭn ku hal," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, December 28, 1948;

[89] "Sŏul ŭi p'yojŏng (21) kiri makhil chigyŏngŭro," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, November 6, 1946.

[90] "Unbanhal myoch'aek ŏmna iljuire han pŏnssik ch'irŭndadŏn ssŭregi," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, August 13, 1949.

[91] "Sinae ch'ŏngso chagŏp min'gan 'ch'urŏk' ch'ongdongwŏn," *Tonga Ilbo*, October 5, 1953; Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsisa p'yŏnch'an wiwŏnhoe, *600-nyŏnsa*.

to prioritize the waste problem.

CONSOLIDATING WASTE MANAGEMENT: FROM FRAGMENTATION TO CENTRALIZATION

The establishment of the SSA and the need to institutionalize its activities led to the Dirt Removal Regulation legislation. This imposed duties on the city's residents such as installing dust bins, toilets with receptacles made of impermeable materials, and sewer ditches, but did not address the city's role. The public provision of waste collection was instated in the 1936 Dirt Cleaning Law (*Chosŏn omul sojeryŏng*), mandated shortly after the legislation of the City Planning Law (*Chosŏn sigaji kyehoengnyŏng*).[92] After liberation and the Korean War, the DCL continued to be the basis for the 1961 Dirt Cleaning Act (DCA, *omul ch'ŏngsobŏp*)[93] until the 1984 promulgation of the Waste Control Act.

Administering waste management for a half century, the limitations of the DCA began to become apparent. Under the DCA, the term "dirt" (omul) included human waste, dust and refuse, sludge, and wastewater.[94] The DCA also focused on "cleaning" in order to maintain a sanitary environment. Its duties included the collection and transport of waste to distant locations and moving waste "out of sight." However, waste had become increasingly complicated both in terms of its material characteristics and its types, which necessitated adequate disposal strategies that dealt this complexity, particularly toxicity. Additionally, the growing volume of waste necessitated new approaches to waste management such as reduction and recycling. Because the DCA only dealt with waste after it was generated, it was unable to accommodate the many changes to waste during the developmental period.

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[92] http://www.law.go.kr/법령/조선오물소제령/(00914,19611230);
http://www.law.go.kr/법령/조선시가지계획령/(00984,19620120)

[93] http://www.law.go.kr/법령/오물청소법/(00914,19611230)

[94] Governing the disposal of both sewage and waste under the same law, the DCA primarily considered public health and sanitation concerns. Due to the immediate pressure to construct a modern sewage system, building sewer system infrastructure preceded modernizing street cleaning, waste collection, or disposal methods.

Over the course of the 1960s and the 1970s, there were numerous amendments to the DCA. The amount of waste from households and industrial production was growing, and the disposal of toxic and hazardous materials was on the rise. In 1963, a year after establishing the first Five-Year Plan, the government mandated the Pollution Prevention Act (*Konghae pangjibŏp*, PPA), which addressed the regulation of industrial waste discharge; its enforcement decree, however, had to wait another four years.[95] In the 1973 amendment, the DCA introduced the term "waste" (*p'yegimul*) for the first time, but it included neither industrial waste nor different treatment requirements.[96] It was the 1977 Environmental Protection Law (*Hwan'gyŏng pojŏnbŏp*, EPL) that legislated the regulation of industrial waste, shifting the sanitation focus of the PPA in an environmental direction. As a result, waste management was split between the DCA (household waste) and the EPL (industrial waste).

[95] It also took four years before its administrative body, the pollution division within the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (Pogŏn sahoebu, MHSA), was established.
http://www.law.go.kr/법령/공해방지법/(01436,19631105)

[96] Waste included refuse, ash, sludge, human excrement, and dead animals.

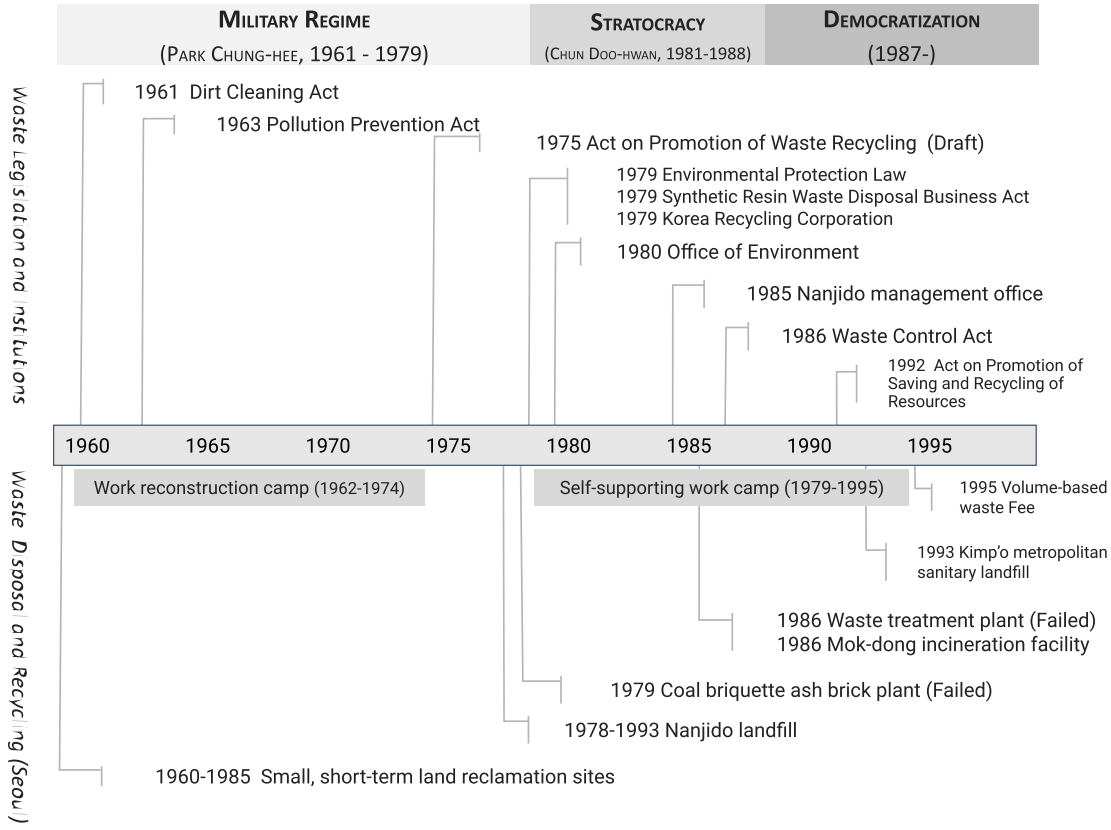

Figure 1-1 The development of waste legislation, institutions, and disposal methods

Parallel to the legislation of different types of waste, we also see an internal shift in the bureaucratic bodies that governed waste. The public provision of sanitation underwent a series of institutional reorganizations, illustrated in the proliferation of different administrative bodies engaged with waste: the Security Department of the Police (1953-1960), the sanitation department in the Bureau of Social Affairs (1960-), the Cleaning Bureau (1962-), the Sanitation Bureau, the city's cleaning department in the Environment Bureau (1973-), and the Office of Environment (*hwankyŏngch'ŏng*, OoE).[97] These shifts reflect how the perception of waste changed in each period: first it was a threat to public hygiene and sanitation, and later a source of pollution and environmental problems.

In the early 1980s, this legal and administrative fragmentation was

[97] Sŏul Taehakkyo hwan'gyŏng kyehoek yŏn'guso, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul ŭi hyoyulchŏk kwalli e kwanhan yŏn'gu* (Sŏul: Sŏuldaehakkyo, 1983), 136-137.

integrated. The 1980 establishment of the OoE consolidated environmental issues under a unified public authority, including all issues of waste, reframing them as explicitly linked to environmental concerns. In 1986, the Waste Control Act (*p'yegimul kwallipŏp*, WCA), the first comprehensive law governing the management of waste, merged together all waste-related laws. Yet, at its inception, the WCA still maintained a sanitary focus, setting the goal of contributing to "the public health and environmental conservation." It also considered waste to be "something to be disposed of" rather than something to be prevented or reused. It was only in the 1990s that the city's focus expanded beyond sanitation and approached waste problems from a precautionary perspective, such as volume reduction and recycling.

WASTE GENERATION

In the 1950s and the 1960s, most municipal solid waste was little more than dust and refuse. From the 60s onward, the country's accelerated development led to the growth of South Korea's urban population and industry. The volume of waste continued to climb exponentially as the country's population growth, with Seoul in particular undergoing radical changes (See Figure 2-2).

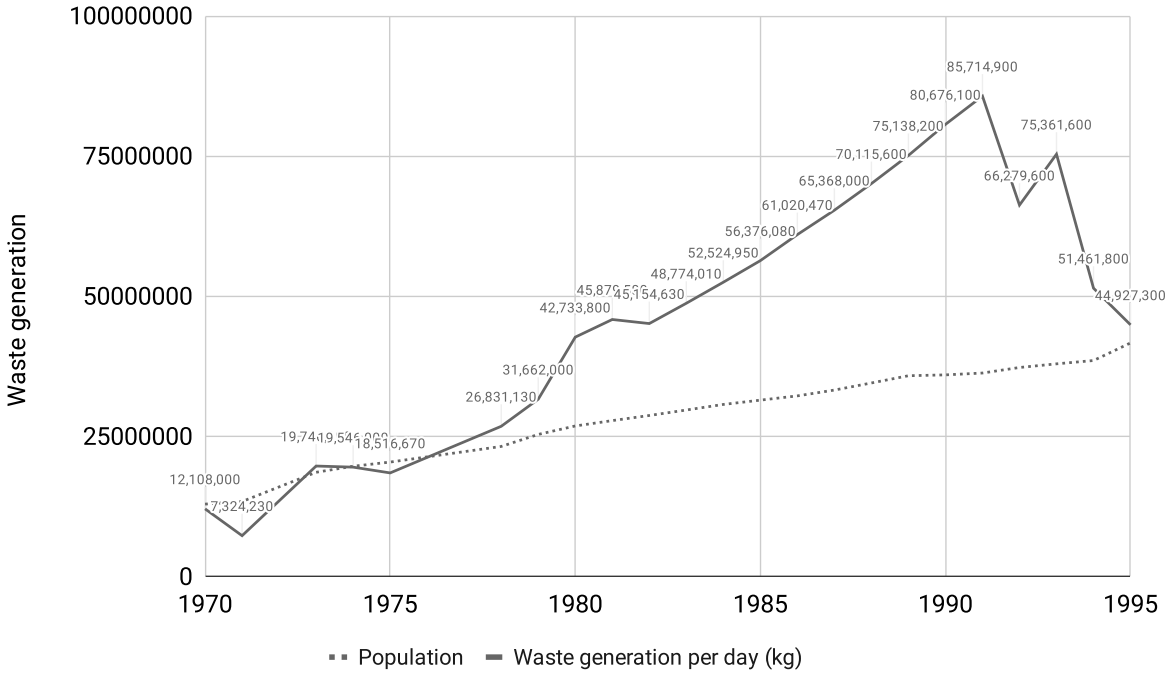

Figure 1-2 Population growth and daily municipal solid waste generation in South Korea
Source: Naemubu, Municipal Yearbook, 1970-1995.

Figure 1-2 shows waste generation until 1995,[98] indicating an incremental trend in which the year 1991 marked the peak amount of waste. Between 1965 and 1978, the waste generation rate rose by 10.7% per year, surpassing the 6.4% annual population growth rate during the same period.[99] In the 1970s, increasing production and consumption levels drove the growth in waste generation. First, the amount of waste was on the rise: throughout the 1970s, Seoul's per capita waste generation almost doubled from 1.36 kg in 1970 to 2.5 kg in 1980.[100] Second, the increasing availability of consumer products changed the composition of waste, in particular the proportion of combustible waste. Growing income disparity also affected this trend, with wealthier neighborhoods producing more burnable waste.[101]

[98] The declining trends after 1993 does not indicate a decrease in the total amount of waste generation. After the 1993 opening of Kimp'o sanitary landfill, household waste was separated at the source, and the waste generation statistics excluded the amount of recyclable materials. O Yong-sŏn, "Ssŭregi chongnyangchedo ŭi hwan'gyŏng kaesŏn hyogwa e kwanhan pip'anjŏk p'yŏngka," *Han'guk chŏngch'aek hakhoebo* 15, no. 2 (2006): 245-270.

[99] Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ŭi chut'aek mit ssŭregi ch'ŏrimunje wa haegyŏl pangan e kwanhan yŏn'gu (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1978).

[100] Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Sŏul-si p'yegimul ch'ŏri kibon kyehoek* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1988).

[101] An investigation in Seoul showed that 80% of waste generated in low-income neighborhoods was non-burnable, mostly ash, whereas approximately 70% of waste generated in high-income neighborhoods was burnable, mostly organic waste such as food scraps. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Ssŭregi*, 287.

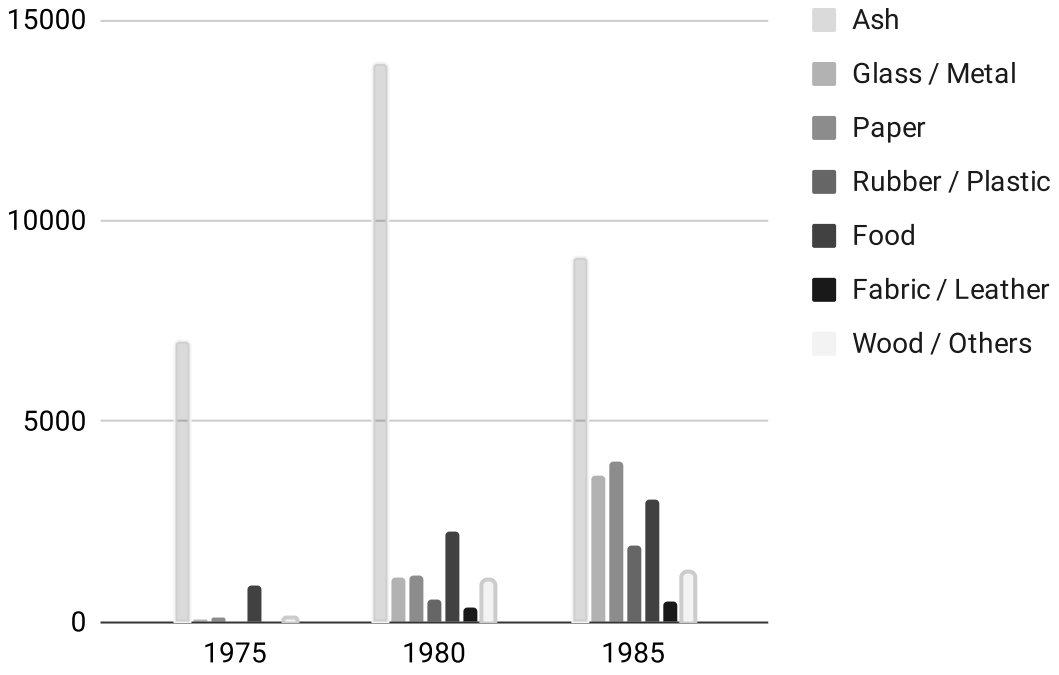

Figure 1-3 The composition of municipal solid waste in Seoul (Unit: ton)
Source: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, Sŏul-si p'yegimul ch'ŏri kibon kyehoek (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1988).

Figure 1-3 shows the composition of Seoul's waste between 1975 and 1985. In the 1970s, coal briquette ash comprised 80% of household waste generation. Between 1975 and 1985, unburnable waste decreased from 86% to 54.36%, whereas burnable waste increased from 13.4% to 45.64%. The amount of burnable waste tripled, showing steep rises in paper, glass, and metal; plastics did not yet have its own category, taking up only small proportions. The change in household heating sources reduced the amount of ash, but the total volume of waste rose significantly, especially the increased proportion of burnable waste such as glass bottles, metal and aluminum cans, plastics, and vinyl. More and more waste was the result of the increased production and consumption of mass-produced goods.

In the 1970s, the city government's sanitation concerns focused on dust and refuse, especially coal ash and food waste. Seasonal variations exacerbated municipal waste collection challenges: kimchi making increased food waste in the winter, while coal briquettes piled up during the colder months, particularly in lower-income neighborhoods. Focusing on specific waste materials within the overall waste stream did not provide a long-term solution to the overall waste problem. As shown in Figure

1-3, waste's composition changed rapidly. Few could have predicted waste generation and composition patterns. Technological advances in the manufacturing sector did not necessarily lead bureaucrats or researchers to anticipate new influxes into the waste stream or alterations in the waste's material properties.

COLLECTION

In 1970s Seoul, waste-related problems were frequently included in the city's annual commitments, reflecting the severity of urban waste issues. Newspapers regularly reported on household waste remaining uncollected for more than a week, leading to waste mountains in the street.[102] In remote areas (*pyŏnduri*) or hilly sections of the city, where houses were stacked together along narrow alleyways, residents suffered from waste piled up in the street for weeks and sometimes even months.[103] Some areas of Seoul's outskirts were designated as no-collection areas and officially excluded from the city's waste management service.

Waste collection, which comprised the majority of the city's waste management efforts, largely relied on human labor.[104] The city's solid waste management cost breakdown shows that the largest proportion was spent on labor, which amounted to 69.8% of the budget in 1981, 65.3 % in 1982, and

[102] "An ch'yŏganŭn ssŭregi [Uncollected Waste]," *Tonga Ilbo*, October 29, 1966; "Sŏul ŭi kolmok ssŭregi sat'ae [Waste Crisis in Seoul's Alleyways]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, January 10, 1967.
[103] "Ssŭregi Sŏul [Garbage Seoul]," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 15, 1967; "Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsijang kwiha [Dear the Mayor of Seoul]" *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, October 12, 1968; "1973-yŏn sijŏng myŏngam (6) omure much'yŏ sanda ch'ŏngsonan [The Bright and Dark Side of Seoul's Administration in 1973, Part 6: Buried in Dirt - Cleaning Crisis], " *Tonga Ilbo*, December 22, 1973, June 6, 1974; "Tosiŭi wŏnsijŏk ssŭregi ch'ŏri [The City's Primitive Handling of Waste]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, March 16, 1976.
[104] Koryŏ taehakkyo kiŏp kyŏngyŏng yŏn'guso, Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ch'ŏngso haengjŏng ŭi unyŏng silt'ae punsŏk kwa kaesŏn e kwanhan kibon yŏn'gu (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1975).

72.6% in 1983.[105] The number of municipal solid waste management workers in Seoul saw a threefold increase over two decades (from 4,471 in 1971 to 8,256 in 1980 and 13,006 in 1991), representing approximately 40 to 50 percent of the country's entire sanitation workforce. In contrast, little was spent to improve or invest in the waste processing infrastructure: 6.2% was spent on vehicle maintenance, 3.1% on equipment reinforcement, and 2.7% on facility reinforcement.[106]

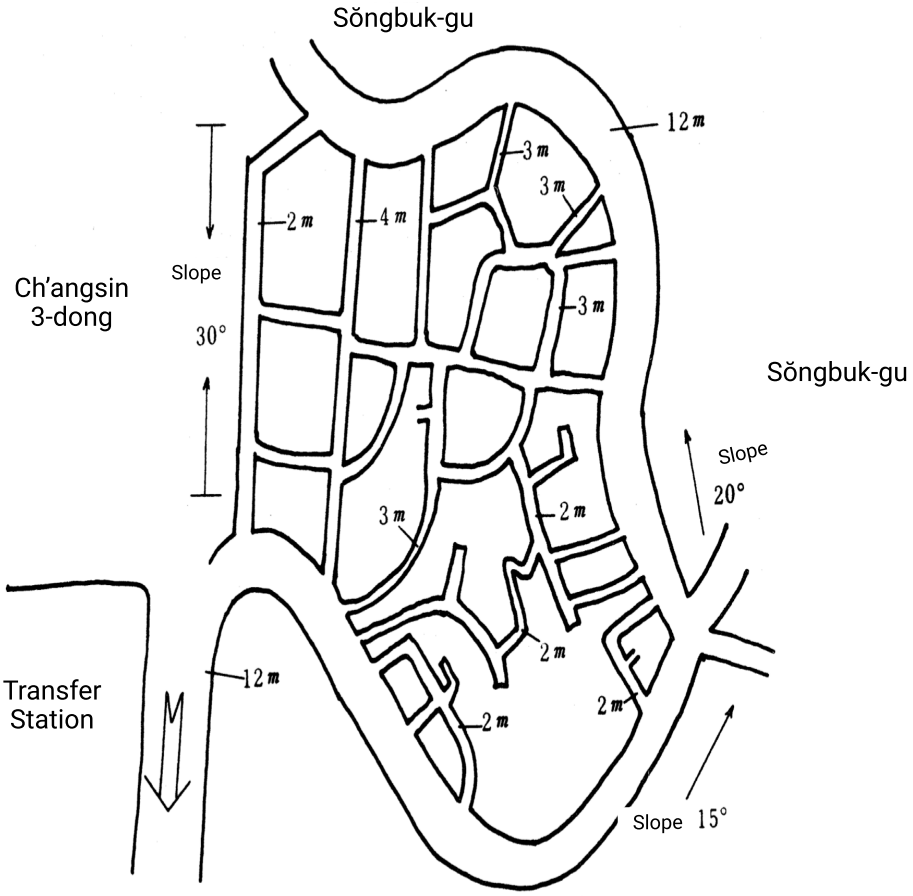

Figure 1-4 The Road Connection in Collection-Unfriendly Area: Ch'angsin 3-dong, Sŏngbuk-gu, Seoul

[105] Except for the years 1963-1964, Seoul's waste management remained a public service. Since 1979, the city has contracted out special collection areas, as well as apartment complexes, markets, or buildings, to private haulers. The city was left with the more inconvenient and labor-intensive areas. Sŏuldaehakkyo hwan'gyŏng kyehoek yŏn'gusoŏŏŏ, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 136-137; Kukt'o t'ongil yŏn'guwŏn, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul ŭi hyoyulchŏk sugŏ pangan yŏn'gu* (Sŏul: Kukt'o t'ongil yŏn'guwŏn, 1983).

[106] Kukt'o t'ongil yŏn'guwŏn, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 59.

Source: Sŏuldaehakkyo hwan'gyŏng kyehoek yŏn'guso, Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul, 127.

Both government administrators and academics voiced the need for increased efficiency and effectiveness in waste handling, and that the collection of waste required mechanization to reduce its reliance on human labor.[107] However, it was Seoul's urban topography that necessitated its "labor-intensive waste collection practices." Thoroughfares were distributed irregularly; 13.9 % of the roads were narrower than 4 meters, preventing vehicular access; steep slopes in collection areas ranged from below 15 degrees to 30-40 degrees of slope, meaning that only carriers or pushcarts could access such areas (See Figure 1-4).[108] Automating the collection process, such as by introducing forklift trucks or automated waste loaders with compactors, required developing an infrastructure that would allow waste to circulate freely (e.g., the reach of paved roads or the availability of thoroughfares). To mechanize waste collection required that it be incorporated into urban planning from the start.

For the city, its inadequate collection infrastructure and heavy dependence on human labor was a matter of operational costs. For the workers, uneven urban development and insufficient infrastructure and equipment directly affected their health and safety. Manual collection heightened the risk of accidents. In 1987 alone, of the 17 deaths among sanitation workers in Seoul, 15 died in traffic accidents, comprising 4% of the workforce.[109] In particular, overloaded collection carts often accelerated down sloping roads, sometimes overturning and killing the city's collection crews.[110] The lack of

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[107] Sŏuldaehakkyo hwan'gyŏng kyehoek yŏn'guso, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 97-103; Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *P'yegimul kibon kyehoek*.

[108] Kukt'o t'ongil yŏn'guwŏn, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 46.

[109] "Ch'ŏngsowŏn anjŏn sago tasi chŭngga [Cleaners Accidents Increasing Again]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, December 21, 1987.

[110] In one instance, a collection truck filled with garbage, weighing up to a ton, shifted onto a laborer's body. One collector, climbing a sloping road with a garbage-full cart, collapsed under his own cart; another worker, while using the cart to lift garbage into a container, was crushed by the overturned cart. "Kkŭldŏn sure e kkallyŏ ch'ŏngsowŏn sumjyŏ [A Janitor Died, Crushed Under His Cart]" *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, December 1, 1983; "Kwajŏk iŏk'a mikkŭrŏjyŏ 50-tae ch'ŏngsowŏn sumjyŏ [Overloaded Collection Cart Slipped and Killed a Janitor in His 50s]," *Tonga Ilbo*, April 22, 1989;

mechanization also increased workloads: some municipal sanitation workers - as many as 30% of them in 1990 - had their family members work with them during their shift to provide extra labor.[111] Common as it was to receive family help in garbage collection, this practice equally exposed "family crews" to injuries and accidents, and who was accountable.[112]

These accidents and casualties - the consequence of ill-suited infrastructure - periodically made sanitation workers visible. Such a situation continued into the 1980s. One commentator noted that while South Korea exported automobiles around the world, its sanitation workers were left with primitive collection carts with no brakes.[113] Others, including the municipal sanitation workers union, demanded that sanitation workers be included under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.[114] Editorials in two major newspapers, *Tonga Ilbo* and *Hangyore Sinmun*, condemned the moral degeneracy of a society in which sanitation workers died for the price of prosperity, and that their new job title, sanitation worker (Hwan'gyŏng mihwawŏn, literally translated a *person who beautifies environment*), merely embellished their title without protecting them.[115]

"Ch'ŏngsowŏn nunkil ch'ambyŏn sonsure muge mot igyŏ [A Tragic Accident of a Janitor on a Snowy Road, Unable to Handle the Collection Cart Weight]," *Han'gyŏre Sinmun*, January 23, 1990.

[111] When a worker was injured or ill, family members assisted or took over their workload. "Abŏji taesin il naon ch'ŏngsowŏn kajok ŭmjuch'ae ch'iyŏ hyŏngje chunggyŏngsang," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, March 12, 1987; "Ch'ŏngsowŏn namp'yŏn topta yŏksa [Killed by a Car Accident While Helping A Janitor Husband]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, March 1, 1989.

[112] One wife was run over by the collection cart while descending the downward slope; a wife and her children, while helping out their father, were hit by a car. "Ch'ŏngsowŏn namp'yŏn topta ch'ambyŏn [A Tragic Accident While Helping A Janitor Husband]," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 12, 1985; *Tonga Ilbo*, March 3, 1989.

[113] "Ch'ŏngsowŏn ijik … ap'at'ŭ ssŭregi subuk [Janitors Quit Their Job, Heaping Waste in Apartments]" *Tonga Ilbo*, March 11, 1989.

[114] "Ch'ŏngsowŏn to sanŏbanjŏnbŏp hyet'aek chwŏya [Occupational Safety and Health Act for Janitors]" *Han'gyŏre Sinmun*, January 5, 1990.

[115] "Ch'ŏngsowŏn sago taech'aek sigŭp: sonsure e chedong changch'i rŭl [Urgent Measures for Janitor Accidents: Add Brakes to Waste Collection carts]," *Tonga Ilbo*, November 4, 1989; "Onŭ ch'ŏngsowŏn ŭi chugŭm kwa anjŏn taech'aek: 'hwan'gyŏngmihwawŏn'iran irŭm i anssŭrŏpta [A Janitor's Death and Safety Measures: A Shame on the Name 'Sanitation Worker']," *Han'gyŏre*, November 7, 1989.

Despite occasional discussions about improving waste collection equipment (such as attaching rear view mirrors to the carts, renovating vehicles, and introducing collection carts with brakes), these efforts typically fizzled out before resulting in tangible changes to working conditions.

In situations where collection infrastructure and equipment were scant, an array of municipal waste workers - road sweepers, waste collectors, vehicle operators, among others - formed a major element in the waste infrastructure. When the city dealt with waste collection by increasing the number of workers with little investment in improving labor conditions, human labor often replaced or supplemented insufficient or absent infrastructure, especially the low-tech, labor-intensive practices of collecting, hauling, and separating waste.[116] Although this infrastructural labor played a crucial role in the city's smooth functioning and the reproduction of urban life, it was neither recognized nor fairly compensated before automation and modern waste collection processes gradually replaced it.

DISPOSAL

Urbanization, Land Reclamation, and Waste Disposal

During the 1960s and 1970s, waste disposal entailed little more than the simple dumping of waste (Figure 1-5). The city's land reclamation or readjustment sites often served as city dumps, where waste was deposited to level pits and low-lying land or to fill public waters. Land reclamation sites offered the city economically viable and spatially proximate disposal options while using waste as a substitute for fill, saving on reclamation costs.[117] These temporary dumpsites were scattered around Seoul,

[116] For works that discuss waste labor as a form of "people as infrastructure", see Rosalind Fredericks, *Garbage Citizenship: Vital Infrastructures of Labor in Dakar, Senegal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); Amy Zhang, "Invisible Labouring Bodies: Waste Work as Infrastructure in China," *Made in China Journal* 4 no. 2 (2019): 98-102.

[117] For example, at the Kuŭi reclamation site, contractors pressed the city for additional waste influx in order to complete the construction on schedule. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Chin'gae maerip yoch'ŏng* (Sŏul: Sŏul

receiving waste from nearby districts usually from within a 10-kilometer radius (See Figure 1-6). After reclamation, the sites were developed for commercial or residential purposes.

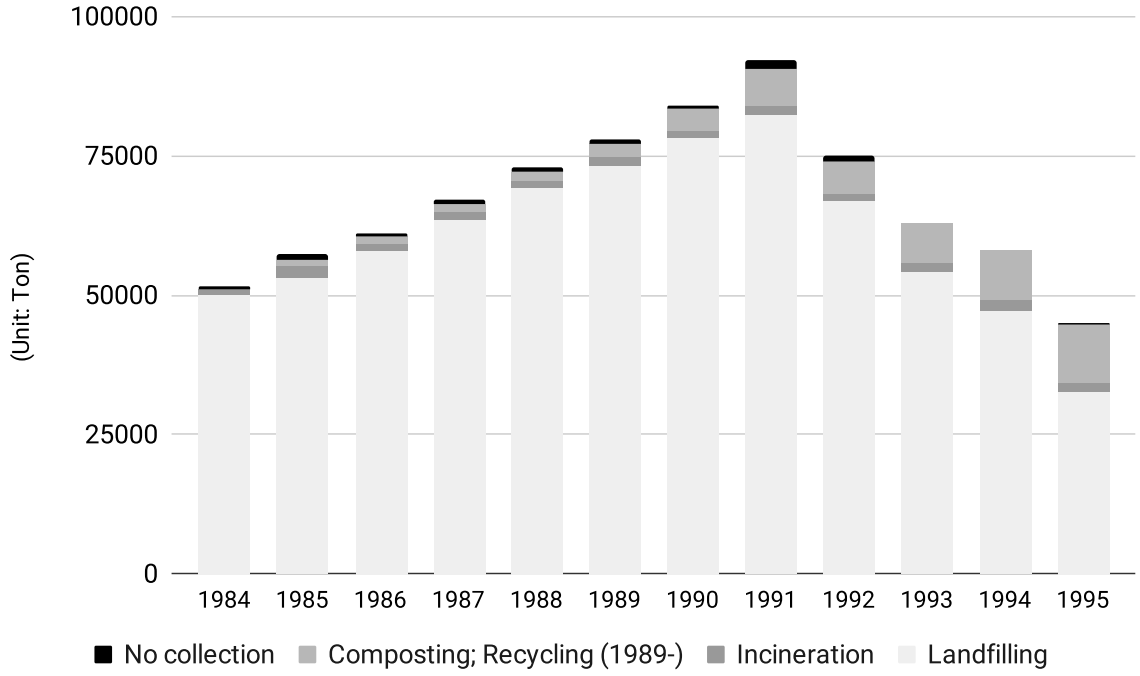

Figure 1-5 Nationwide Solid Waste Disposal, 1984-1995.
Source: Naemubu, The Municipal Yearbook (Seoul: Naemubu, 1984-1995).

These makeshift disposal solutions left the city with little need to invest in necessary infrastructure. Prior, residents living near dumpsites were frequently exposed to dust and odors. While the city occasionally urged garbage carriers and dump operators to cover the refuse with dirt and spray water and disinfectant, it only provided temporary relief. Although the city's waste management was primarily triggered by sanitation concerns, little consideration was given to the public health or environmental consequences of open dumping. Until the 1970s, dumpsites dispersed throughout the city and changed frequently, lasting anywhere from a few months and two years. (See

T'ŭkpyŏlsi Chugŏ chŏngbigwa, 1975); *Chin'gae maerip hyŏpcho* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1977); *Kuŭi ch'ŏbunjang pokt'o yoch'ŏng* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1979).

Figures 2-6).[118] By the late 1970s, the city's disposal options began to disappear: most areas for land reclamation or public water sites were developed, leaving few options for disposal (Figures 2-7).

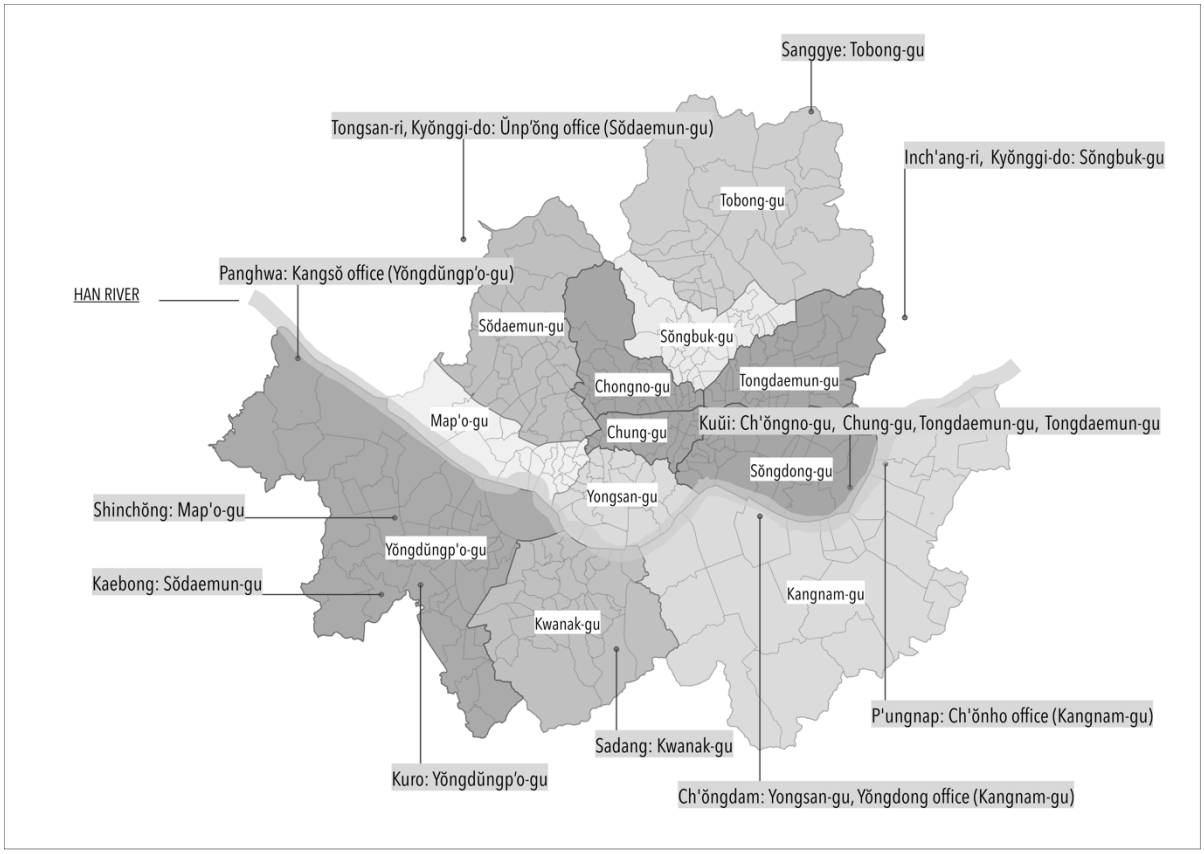

Figure 1-6 Dumpsites in Seoul, 1975

Source: Koryŏdaehakkyo kiŏp kyŏngyŏng yŏn'guso, *Ch'ŏngso haengjŏng*, 37.

[118] Koryŏdaehakkyo kiŏp kyŏngyŏng yŏn'guso, *Ch'ŏngso haengjŏng*, 38.

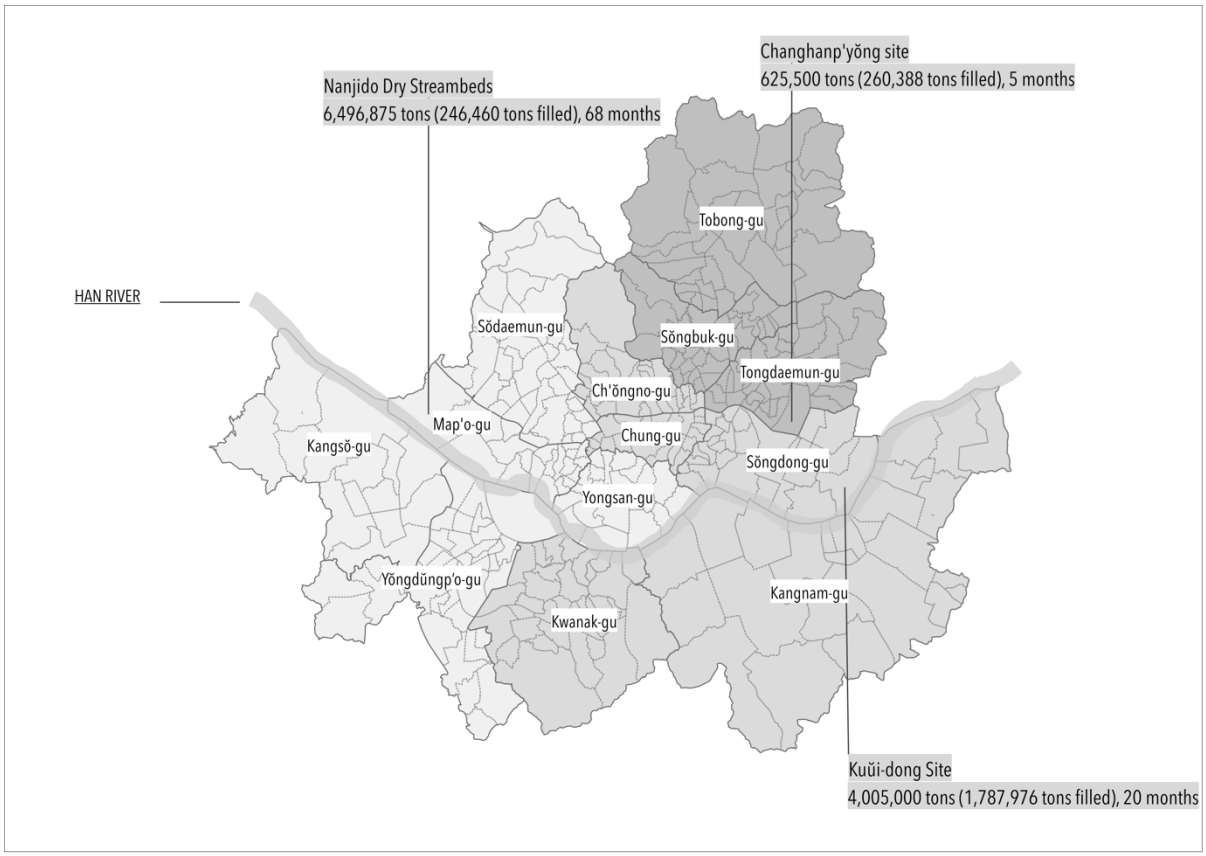

Figure 1-7 Dumpsites in Seoul, August 1977

Source: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, Nanjido ssŭregi ch'ŏbunjang hwakpo kyehoek (August 2), (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ch'ŏngsogwa, 1977).

In August 1977, the city produced a disposal plan that designated the whole Nanjido area as a waste disposal site.[119] The completion of the breakwater in July 1977 provided the city 2.9 million square meters (878,280 *pyŏng*) of land.[120] Nanjido was on Seoul's western border, tucked away from the city and distant from residential areas. Although the city considered mountain valleys or other low-lying lands outside

[119] In March 1977, the city planned to use Nanjido's Saet stream, a tributary of the Han River on the west end of Seoul (See figure 1-7 and 1-8); in August 1977, it planned to reclaim dry streambeds in Saet stream, using waste as fill.

[120] "Sŏulsigyesim nanji chebang ch'ukcho sŭngin [The Construction Approval for Nanji Breakwater in Seoul]" *Maeil Kyŏngje*, December 29, 1976; Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Ssŭregi chonghap chongmal ch'ŏrijang hwakpo kyehoek* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1977).

its boundaries, transportation costs and overall inefficiency dissuaded it.[121]

Nanjido began as a disposal site for six Seoul districts. Despite its designation as a "waste and sewage disposal facility," and its eventual use for fifteen years, Nanjdo was not designed as a long-term, primary landfill nor a sanitary landfill, i.e. equipped with a leachate liner, gas capture facilities, and daily covering.[122] Initially, there was little landfill infrastructure on site. The majority of the landfill budget was allocated for to compensate the land expropriation (76%, $5.3 million), whereas only 24% was allocated to operating costs ($2.2 million), a sum equal to the annual cost of soil covering.[123]

As Figures 6 and 7 show, until the early 1980s Seoul's disposal sites were located in each city district, divided by geographic proximity and only designed for short-term use with varying capacity. In the early 1980s, Nanjido became Seoul's sole landfill, opening a new era of large-scale and long-distance disposal, which, over the next decade, would move even further from central Seoul. Nanjido's designation was a result of authoritarian developmentalism: there was no feasibility study or public hearing for landowners. However, by the 1980s, ushered in by land development on Seoul's periphery and a growing urban middle class, such top-down siting of disposal facilities would no longer be possible. As Nanjido's capacity began to dwindle, the city confronted a staggering volume of waste, changing composition of discards, and waste disposal's environmental impact.[124]

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[121] Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Nanjido ssŭregi ch'ŏbunjang hwakpo kyehoek* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ch'ŏngsogwa, 1977).

[122] To what extent the city anticipated the use of Nanjido as a landfill remains unclear. The 1977 disposal plan shows two different estimates: one using the landfill for fifteen years, disposing garbage from six districts of Seoul; and the other six years from fifteen districts. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *ch'ŏbunjang*.

[123] The total budget was $7.5 million. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Chonghap omul ch'ŏrijang hyŏnhwang* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, n.d.).

[124] After six years of operation, in 1983, 70% of the available landfill space had already been filled. "Ssŭregi munjeŭi simgaksŏng [The Severity of Waste Problems]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, January 24, 1983.

Developing Modern Waste Disposal Strategies

Until the 1970s, few statutes or guidelines regulated waste disposal.[125] Nor was there a unified authority that governed waste-related issues. Local authorities ran their own disposal sites with little coordination. During the 1980s, the situation around waste disposal quickly changed. First, both the amount and material complexity of waste demanded appropriate disposal methods beyond open dumping. Second, experts and academics voiced concerns about the environmental consequences of then-existing landfilling practices, especially groundwater contamination and possible landfill gas explosions.[126] Third, the 1980 establishment of the OoE consolidated environmental issues under a unified public authority. The OoE framed waste management as explicitly linked to environmental concerns, elevating it to an integral element of urban planning infrastructure. As such, future disposal plans were woven into the spatial planning system and national environmental plans.[127]

In the 1980s, waste management increasingly came to be defined as a technological issue. In the Han River Basin Environmental Master Plan (1983), researchers examined various disposal technologies for Seoul.[128] An array of

[125] While the 1973 amendment of the Dirt Removal Law included a revised definition of "dirt", it did not address disposal methods. The Law rather focused more on the responsibility of the government and the cleaning duty of the citizens.

[126] "Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng hwan'gyŏng yŏnghyang p'yŏngka nanjido kongwŏn kyehoek 'wihŏm nŏmu mant'a' [The Environmental Impact Assessment of the Office of Environment: 'Too Much Risk' in the Nanjido Park Plan]," *Tonga Ilbo*, October 16, 1985; "Sŏul ssŭregi maeripchi p'okpal wihŏm [Explosion Risks in Seoul's Waste Disposal Sites]," *Tonga Ilbo*, December 9, 1981.

[127] The OoE released three regional-level environmental conservation plans—the Han River Basin (1983), the Nakdong River Basin (1985), and the West and South Sea Basin (1986)—followed by the 1986 Environmental Conservation Long-term Master Plan (Hwan'gyŏng pojŏn changgi chonghap kyehoek, 1987-2001), a national-level long-term master plan. In these plans, the OoE indicated that it sought to coordinate environmental conservation with the Comprehensive National Territorial Plan (Kukt'o chonghap kyehoek) and coastal reclamation plans—especially when designating landfill sites.

[128] The Han River Basin Environmental Master Plan was one of the first coordinated long-term environmental conservation plans published, outlining long-term policies for pollution control and environmental management throughout the period 1984-2000 Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng, Enjiniŏring saiŏnsŭ,

bureaucrats, scientists, and industry experts evaluated each stage of collection and disposal, including cadastral mapping of the city's roads and plotting the most efficient collection routes. These plans then compared optimal landfill and transfer station locations across jurisdictions, and specified the types of collection vehicles and disposal equipment required at each disposal site. This analysis was further translated into the number of haulages required per day and the number of work shifts. Pace, truck load, hauling distances—all of these minutiae of the labor process were rearranged to accommodate new disposal methods.

As for actual disposal options, the Han River Basin Plan examined three possibilities: incineration, composting, and sanitary landfilling.[129] Each scenario was simulated either on its own or in combination with the other methods, and evaluated for technological viability, economic efficiency, and environmental impact. Incineration required a fixed volume of waste and was not entirely reliable if the waste's composition changed. Composting, which was both ecologically beneficial and technologically reliable, was well suited to Seoul's waste, which contained a high proportion of compostable material (45%).[130] However, the byproducts from each method - steam energy and compost - lacked sufficient commercial value, making them less attractive. Landfilling offered the most economical and technologically stable option, and it could also accommodate any changes in the waste's composition or quantity.

Investigators recommended converting the Nanjido Landfill into a sanitary landfill while developing a new, regional landfill.[131] The OoE set out to

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Hyosŏng kŏnsŏl chusikhoesa, *Han'gang yuyŏk hwan'gyŏng pojŏn chonghap kyehoek saŏp: kohyŏng p'yegimul pumun pogosŏ* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1983).

[129] Other methods included pyrolysis, anaerobic digestion, refuse-derived fuel combustion, mass incineration, composting, and sanitary landfills with and without methane gas recovery. Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng et al., *Kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 181-194.

[130] Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng et al., *Kohyŏng p'yegimul*,185.

[131] Landfilling presented three options: converting Nanjido to a sanitary landfill, operating two landfills in Seoul, or constructing a metropolitan regional landfill in Inch'ŏn. All of them hinged on implementing sanitary landfill techniques.

find a new site in the metropolitan area.[132] Having a readily available landfill site, the city could bypass a site selection process and potential opposition from residents; it could also delay investing in an additional landfill or constructing a regional landfill. However, the site selection process took longer than the current landfill capacity due both to disagreement over disposing of Seoul's waste in surrounding jurisdictions as well as bureaucratic wrangling.[133] Ultimately, it was only in 1987 that the new regional landfill site was selected in Kimp'o.[134]

In the early 1980s, the city was also planning to construct a comprehensive waste treatment plant on the northeast corner of the Nanjido site.[135] The plant combined human and mechanical sorting of recyclable items, the incineration and manufacture of refuse-derived fuel (RDF), and composting (See Figure 1-9).[136] Waste materials were put onto a belt conveyor and passed through a trommel screen, a spinning drum with a mesh screen that mechanically separates

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[132] In 1983, the OoE assessed three potential locations in Inchŏn, a coastal city adjacent to Seoul, and issued a feasibility assessment to the government. Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng, *Sudokwŏn taedanwi p'yegimul maeripchang sŏlch'irŭl wihan t'adangsŏng chosa pogosŏ* (Sŏul: Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng, 1983).

[133] The establishment of the OoE did not imply that they were empowered to make significant changes to the disposal problem. For instance, a JICA report indicated that the new sanitary landfill plan was on hold at the Economic Planning Board. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), *Master Plan and Feasibility Study on Seoul Municipal Solid Waste Management System in the Republic of Korea* (Tokyo: JICA, 1985), 240. Another conflict arose from siting process. As of 1983, the mayor or governor of the local government or the head of the district had the jurisdiction to authorize waste disposal/treatment facilities. To avoid a potential conflict over the site of waste disposal facilities, the OoE proposed delegating permission-granting authority to them. Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng et al., *Kohyŏng p'yegimul*.

[134] "Kimp'o haeane ssŭregi maeripchang [Waste Disposal Site in Kimp'o seashore]," *Tonga Ilbo*, June 2, 1987.

[135] In 1983, a research team from the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology submitted a plan to the city for the plant's construction. In December of that year, Hyundai Engineering and Construction, a South Korean conglomerate that was also one of the contractors in the Han River Basin Environmental Master Plan, was selected as the turnkey construction contractor. Han'guk kwahak kisurwŏn, *Sŏul-si tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul Ch'ŏrijang kŏnsŏl kibon kyehoek e kwanhan yŏn'gu* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi Ch'ŏngsogwa, 1983).

[136] While the city was aware that the plant alone would be insufficient to dispose of Seoul's waste, the project proceeded as the country's first attempt to build a large-scale waste treatment plant. Han'guk kwahak kisurwŏn, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 181.

different sizes of solid waste (e.g., coal ash particles from larger debris). The residual materials discharged at the lower end of the drum went through an air classifier where compostable particles were separated. The burnable waste that could not be retrieved on its own was sent to an RDF facility to be converted into pellets. Finally, at the composting facility, a magnetic separator separated out metals. The remainder of the organic waste would be composted for 20 days before being landfilled or sold to a seedbed or plant nursery.

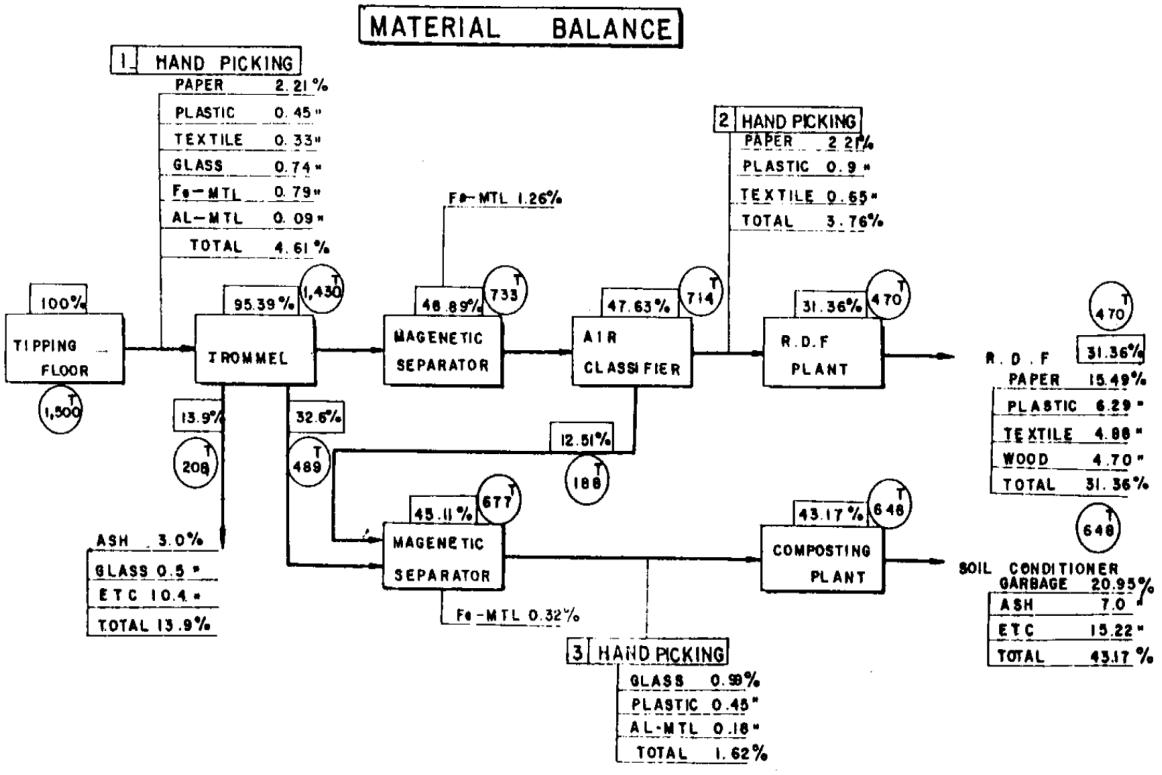

Figure 1-8 Waste treatment plant operation process

Source: Han'guk kwahak kisurwŏn, Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul, 82.

The plant, brought from Denmark, was tailored to Seoul's municipal waste situation, the most significant being the utilization of human labor in the mechanical separation process. As Figure 1-8 shows, the plant installed three hand-picking stations supplied by conveyor belts: between a feed conveyor and a trommel screen section, between an air classifier and an RDF plant, and at the composting facility. After materials were

manually separated (paper, plastic, textile, glass, or metals), they were sent to a baling machine for transportation. The additional manual labor, according to the report, would greatly improve the precision and efficacy of mechanical separation. The report recommended diverting existing Nanjido waste pickers (otherwise surplus) to the plant's mechanical process, indicating that their work would vanish after the plant's completion and the landfill's closure. More importantly, enhanced precision of material recovery resulted in a modest profit to the facility's operator.[137]

Despite two pilot tests in 1986 and 1988, the plant never became operational. Unseparated at the source, the material composition of Seoul's waste hampered the automated facilities' proper function. The trommel screen lacked sufficient centrifugal force to separate coal ash and construction debris. The air classifier was unable to process the high proportion of wet organic waste. The produced RDF pallets contained so much water and vinyl (60%) that they were unusable as fuel. The contractor repaired and reinforced additional facilities, but the second pilot test in 1988 was also unsuccessful.[138] Neither the waste treatment plant nor the regional landfill offered any viable alternative to the disposal problem.

Landfilling as a Fallback Option

As the Nanjido landfill was approaching its maximum capacity, the city resorted to converting it into a sanitary landfill. As suggested in the OoE and JICA's reports, the city produced a mounding landfilling plan in 1985 (Figure 1-9).[139] By adopting area landfilling,[140] a method that creates mounds of garbage on the previously filled and

[137] While this plan did not include any profit estimates, it planned to hire 80 workers for hand-sorting roles. Han'guk kwahak kisurwŏn, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 104; 118-119; Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng et al., *Kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 256-259 (76-79).

[138] The facility was eventually shut down in 1988, and lawsuits followed between the city and the contractor. The constructors argued that the plant required source separation for further processing of waste materials, and as such, the failure of the plant was the city's responsibility.

[139] Sŏul siriptae sudokwŏn kaebal yŏn'guso, *Nanjido p'yegimul ipch'e wisaeng maerip saŏp hwan'gyŏng yŏnghyang p'yŏngka pogosŏ* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ch'ŏngsogwa, 1985).

[140] "Nanjido e ssŭregi tongsan [Garbage Hills in Nanjido]," *Tonga Ilbo*, June 26, 1984.

leveled trench area,[141] it allowed the city to extend its lifespan.[142] The plan detailed the infrastructural investment necessary for sanitary landfilling: lining the landfill to create physical barriers against possible runoff or gas infiltration; installing pipes to extract landfill gas and constructing ignition points; collecting leachate from previously landfilled waste; and constructing anaerobic lagoons to treat the discharged leachate. A modern, sanitary landfill (infrastructure, operation, and maintenance) was costly: the initial investment required 10 billion wŏn, spread over the period between 1985 and 1994, and the annual operational costs amounted to 1.86 billion wŏn, of which 48% (890 million wŏn) was spent on maintenance costs.[143] Even with this significantly increased operation cost, it still offered a far cheaper solution than any other disposal methods.[144]

[141] Originally, Nanjido was intended to be both a borrow pit and a landfill. Dumping began with the quarry's infilling, a technique known as trench landfilling. When the quarry was filled, dumping was relocated to the landfill's northwestern region until it reached ground level. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Wŏldŭk'ŏp kongwŏn kŏnsŏlji* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 2003).

[142] At that time, Nanjido had already been leveled to a height of 20 meters. The city estimated that Nanjido could be in use for the next ten years until its height reached 60-70 meters above sea level. Sŏul siriptae sudokwŏn kaebal yŏn'guso, *Hwan'gyŏng yŏnghyang p'yŏngka*, 67.

[143] In contrast, at its 1977 inception, the city estimated that Nanjido's operation, which was largely limited to soil covering, would cost 1.7 billion wŏn during the entire planned duration between 1978 and 1984.

[144] The disposal cost per ton remained at 206 wŏn, and the maintenance cost per ton 100 wŏn. Sŏul siriptae sudokwŏn kaebal yŏn'guso, *Nanjido p'yegimul ipch'e wisaeng maerip saŏp kibon kyehoek pogosŏ* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ch'ŏngsogwa, 1985), 201.

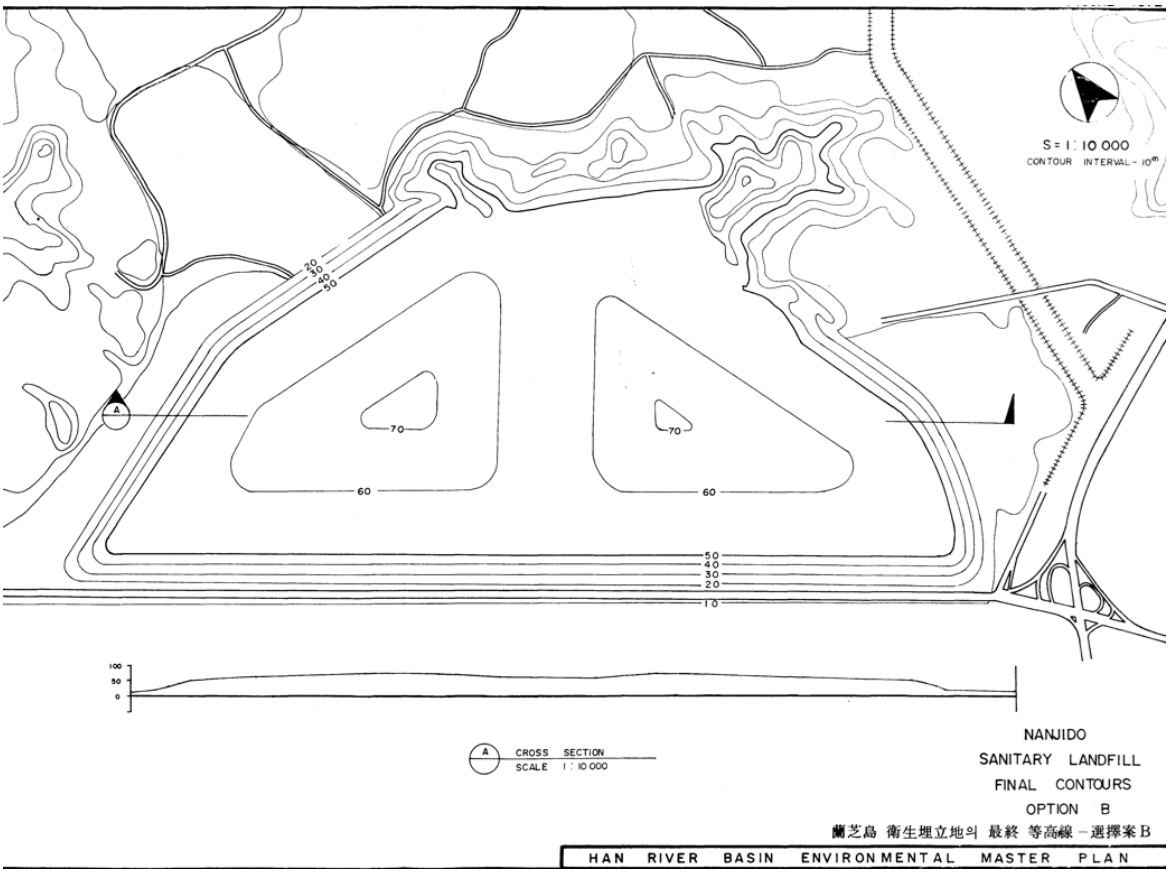

Figure 1-9 The final contour of Nanjido sanitary landfill, option B
Source: Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng et al.,Kohyŏng p'yegimul.

Despite the discussions about sanitary landfilling, Nanjido's disposal practice - and the city's waste management system - remained largely unchanged. The city did the bare minimum to construct landfill mounds, including establishing and dividing cells for waste deposition, maintaining landfill slopes, and constructing breakwaters and access roads. But it did not invest in additional landfill-specific equipment for excavating and hauling the covering materials or spreading and compacting incoming debris.[145] Waste pickers continued to reclaim recyclable materials, while covering and compacting their dumping areas with construction debris and excess soil.[146] There was no monitoring

[145] Sŏul siriptae sudokwŏn kaebal yŏn'guso, *Hwan'gyŏng yŏnghyang p'yŏngka*, 178-182.

[146] Excess soil from Seoul's construction sites was deposited in the Nanjido Landfill, which was also used as a covering material. While certain waste types can be used as daily cover or road base, it requires careful profiling and characterization of incoming waste. Nicholas P. Cheremisinoff, *Handbook*

system in place for possible sinkholes and erosion or for landfill gas generation and explosion,[147] with the risk born entirely by the workers.[148]

The blueprints for future waste disposal approached it as a professional sector that required specific expertise, imported technologies, and facilities run by trained specialists. Yet, the designs for automated sorting facilities and sanitary landfills also integrated recycling labor into modern disposal practices. It is emblematic that several policy reports highlighted the recycling labor of waste pickers and incorporated it into the disposal process: their labor's environmental and economic value and the possibility of bringing their role into formal waste management systems through institutionalizing recycling. The next section examines how this process unfolded.

RECYCLING

There was no formal recycling program in place between the 1960s and 1980s. However, a variety of actors recycled waste materials. Figure 1-10 illustrates municipal waste collection and recycling processes in the 1970s and 1980s. The grey arrows indicate recycling flows that occurred outside of formal waste management systems: note how informal recycling occurred in each stage of waste generation, collection, transportation, and disposal. This recycling economy gradually found its way into official trade and industrial output, such as paper mills or metal smelters, and diverted

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of Solid Waste Management and Waste Minimization Technologies (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003), 104.

[147] The sanitary landfill plan recommended a monitoring system for leachate generation, drainage, or composition; gas emission and its site-specific concentration behavior; compacting and settling that occurred during daily operations; and the impact of the landfill's anaerobic process on the continuing settlement.

[148] At times, sludge pits overflowed or waste collapsed along the landfill slopes. "Nanjido ssŭregi munŏjyŏ sodong [Waste collapse in Nanjido]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, April 4, 1990. At others, a garbage truck rolled over on an instable dumpsite slope while unloading, which took the lives of waste pickers. "Nanjido p'yep'um sujip pubu ummak tŏpch'in t'ŭrŏk e apsa [Waste Picker Couple Crushed to Death by a Truck]," *Tonga Ilbo*, January 17, 1990.

recyclable materials away from the waste stream.[149]

The majority of recycling work was self-employed and operated on a small-scale. The informal recycling workforce was made up of individual waste pickers (*nŏngmajui*) carrying their wooden baskets (*mangt'ae*), junk peddlers (*komul haengsang*) with the clanking sound of metal scissors, itinerant waste pickers lugging their four-wheeled carts, or the inmates of waste picker camps. They either scavenged from street litter or collected recyclable materials from residential and commercial areas, before selling them on to junk depots (*komulsang*), small neighborhood workshops that purchased recyclable materials from individual waste pickers. There were also groups of waste pickers at either waste picker camps or disposal sites, which I examine in detail in chapters 3 and 4. Only the intermediary buyers handled waste materials in sufficient quantity to supply manufacturers. This workforce, while not centrally managed, was well-suited to the characteristics of recyclable materials, which were distributed in small quantities throughout a vast geographical area.

[149] Yun Chin-ho, "Tosi pigongsik pumun," in *Han'guk chabonjuŭiron*, ed. Yi Tae-gŭn and Chŏng Un-yŏng (Sŏul: kkach'i, 1984), 251-287.

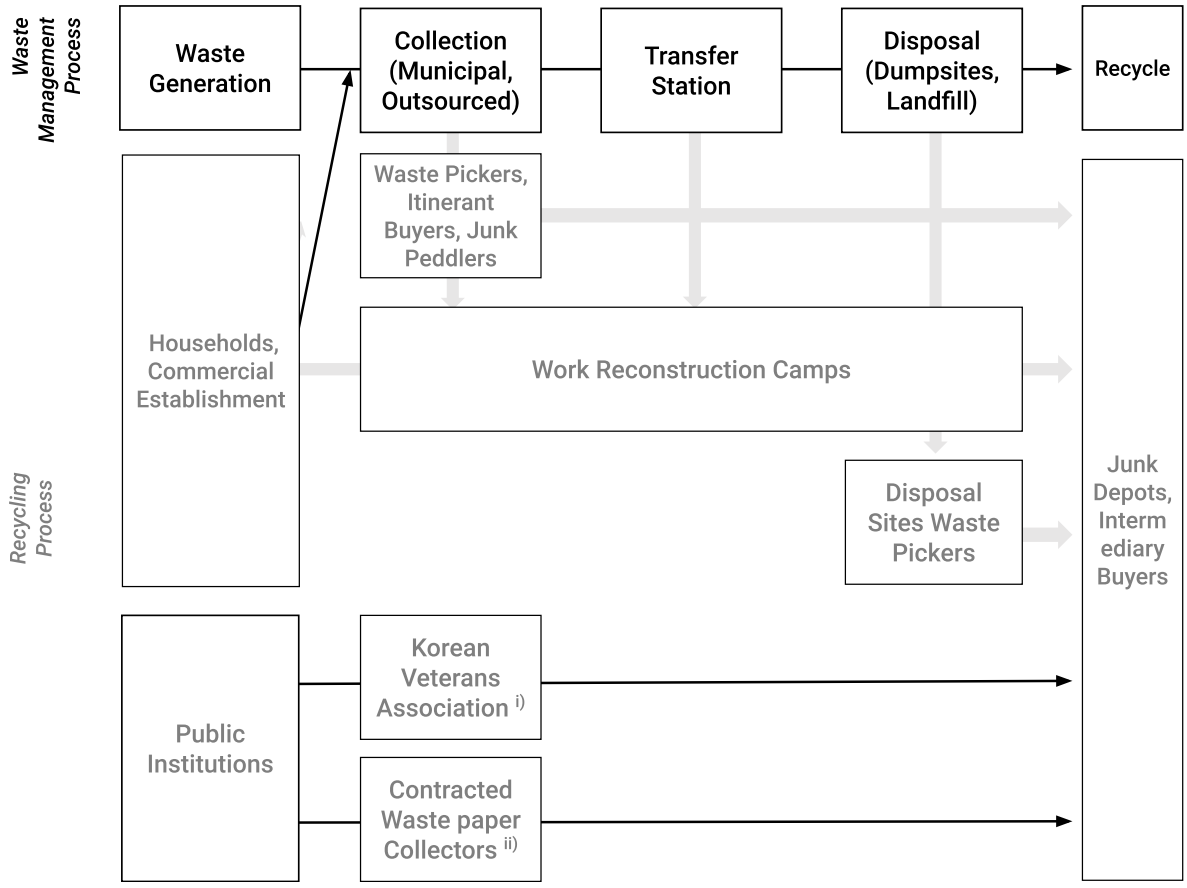

Figure 1-10 Waste management and recycling flow in the 1970s and the 1980s

Source: Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, P'yep'um, 146; Sŏuldaehakkyo hwan'gyŏng kyehoek yŏn'guso, Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul, 269; JICA, Master Plan, 95 (2-15)).

Retrieving residual value from waste items did not always remain in the hands of the urban underclass. Following postwar reconstruction, the government, facing scant resources, resorted to using waste materials to maintain patronage networks and assist certain war victims.[150] At a cabinet meeting in 1960, the ministries discussed granting "patriotic associations" the right to collect waste materials,[151] implying that the state

[150] Nam Ch'an-sŏp, a social welfare scholar, indicates that South Korean welfare policy may be traced back to war victim's relief initiatives in the 1950s. Nam Ch'an-sŏp, "Han'gugŭi 60-yŏndae ch'oban pokchi chedo chaep'yŏn e kwanhan yŏn'gu: 1950-nyŏndaewaŭi kwallyŏnsŏng ŭl chungsimŭro," *Sahoe pokchi yŏn'gu* 27 (2005): 33-76.

[151] Despite no indication that any contracts were rewarded as a result of this meeting, a list of social organizations authorized to collect waste paper from public institutions reveals who these "patriotic associations" were. The Ministry of General Affairs compiled a list of them in 1974, and half of them

owed them a debt of gratitude.[152] One such example is the Korean Veterans Association (*Chaehyang kuninhoe*, KVA), which was granted exclusive rights to collect from US and UN military bases in 1963,[153] and was named the official waste paper contractor from government organizations in 1974.[154] These contracts allowed the KVA to launch its own waste business. Once awarded as a form of patronage and nepotism,[155] neither the KVA's business nor its role as the exclusive collector was contested, even when recyclables collection was no longer done through clientelist

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were various types of veterans' organizations, including the Korean Veterans Association (Chaehyang kuninhoe, hereafter KVA), the Vietnam War Veterans Association (Wŏllam ch'amjŏn chŏnuhoe), the Association of the Bereaved of Disabled Veterans (Taehan sangŭi kun'gyŏng yujokhoe), Anti-communist League (Pan'gong yŏnmaeng), among others. Ch'ongmuch'ŏ, *Chongi sobi chŏryak undong ch'ujin hyŏnhwang pogo (Che 65-hoe)* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1974).

[152] Che 42-hoe kungmu hoeŭi, Aeguktanch'e e taehan p'yep'um purha rŭl chonghapchŏgŭro kyehoek ŭl suriphanŭnde kwanhayŏ (Sŏul: Kungmuwŏn, 1960), BA0085197.

[153] Prior to the KVA being authorized as a contractor by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in 1963, municipalities in Kyonggi Province were in charge of dirt removal in the bases and managed the tax revenue generated by dirt removal. P'yŏngt'aek-si, *P'yŏngt'aek-kun yuen'gun pudae nae omul ch'ŏri suipkŭm kwalli t'ŭkpyŏl hoegye sŏlch'i chorye* (P'yŏngt'aek: Kyŏnggi-do P'yŏngt'aek-si, 1962), BA0049008; P'och'ŏn-gun, *P'och'ŏn-gun yuen'gun pudae nae omul ch'ŏri suipkŭm kwalli t'ŭkpyŏl hoegye sŏlch'i chorye p'yeji chorye kongp'o* (P'och'ŏn: Kyŏnggi-do P'och'ŏn-gun, 1965), BA0172213.

[154] Both President Park Chung-Hee and the Prime Minister directed that wastepaper collecting rights be granted to "associations that significantly contribute to society." Taet'ongnyŏng pisŏsil, *Hyanggun p'yehyuji saŏp e kwanhan pogo* (Sŏul: Taet'ongnyŏng pisŏsil 1974), EA0004793.

[155] It is worth noting that people who had been "wasted" by society were given waste collection privileges by the military regime. As historian Hujii Takesi [Fujii Takashi] points out, returned Korean War veterans became surplus to society, posing threats to political legitimacy and social stability. Subsidizing the KVA, either directly or through income sources, was justified on the grounds that it would employ veterans who would otherwise be unemployed due to a lack of capital or skills. The KVA established a "wastepaper office" (*p'yehyuji saŏpso*), afterwards renamed the "recyclable resources office" (*chaejawŏn saŏpso*). The KVA used its own nationwide organization for its wastepaper industry, employing 112 members in regional offices. This awarding of official waste collector status bolstered the KVA's financial independence. Hujii Tak'esi [Fujii Takashi], "Toraon 'kungmin' chedae kunindŭl ŭi chŏnhu," *Yŏksa yŏn'gu* 14 (2004): 255-295; Chaehyang kuninhoe, *Hyanggun 50-yŏnsa* (Sŏul: Taehan Min'guk chaehyang kuninhoe, 2002), 136.

arrangements.[156]

The Oil Crisis and the Reevaluation of Waste

The 1973 Oil Shock prompted systematic attention to the value of recyclable materials in waste. Owing to concerns about raw material and fuel supply, prospects for the country's economic policy - the "Big Push" program of heavy and chemical industries (*chunggongŏp kongŏphwa*) - were dwindling. Faced with a global resource crisis, the authoritarian developmental state repositioned waste as a potential resource requiring state control.[157] It framed waste materials as potentially recoverable resources and, similar to coal and oil, incorporated their administration into resource management.

In its 1975 study on the effective use of solid waste, the MST criticized the then-current state of waste reclamation.[158] The recycling process - distribution - was overly complicated with petty, informal scrap dealers (see Figure 9); there were no reporting responsibilities, leaving the state with little information about the secondary materials trade; and the market for recyclable materials was too volatile, which it attributed to its distribution structure and the absence of supply and demand management, including secondary materials import.[159] Instead, the MST proposed

[156] Because the KVA's waste business was awarded on the basis of political loyalties, it was administered poorly, with allegations of corruption and inefficiency. A year after establishing the wastepaper office, it failed to pay the investment loan redemption obligation and declared bankruptcy. Chaehyang kuninhoe, *Hyanggun*, 136; Kukka pohunch'ŏ, *Chaehyang kuninhoe chŏngsanghwa rŭl wihan kaehyŏk pangan yŏn'gu* (Sejong: Kukka pohunch'ŏ, 2015), 72.

[157] The Economic Planning Board (Kyŏngje kihoegwŏn, EPB), the Ministry of Science and Technology (Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, MST), the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Sangkongbu, MCI), and the Administration Innovation Committee (Haengjŏng kaehyŏk wiwŏnhoe, AIC) developed strategies to cope with short and long-term resource supply challenges. Ch'ongmuch'ŏ, *Chongi sobi chŏryak undong chŏn'gae* (Sŏul: Ch'ongmuch'ŏ 1974), BA0139631; Kyŏngje kihoegwŏn, *Chawŏn (sŏlt'ang, chongi) chŏryak pangan* (Sŏul: kyŏngje kihoegwŏn, 1975).

[158] Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um.*

[159] At the time, the country imported 80% of its wastepaper and scrap metal for manufacture. Among 1.11 million tons of waste metal used in 1973, 0.8 million tons were imported and 0.3 million tons (37%) were sourced domestically.

establishing regulatory bodies for recyclable materials–governing the distribution and sale of waste materials[160]; creating a set of classifications; setting price standards; and developing a waste reclamation business on a corporate scale—with the goal of making the waste materials trade similar to other manufactured goods.[161]

Focused solely on bringing the informal waste economy under state control, the MST failed to recognize that the volatility of the scrap market reflected its unique position in the commodities market. This volatility was further amplified by the country's high scrap imports,[162] whose supply was dependant on the exporting country's domestic scrap market.[163] The recyclables market fluctuated according to the availability and affordability of primary and secondary materials; it was this liminality that complicated the scrap trade. In fact, the problems of the waste materials trade—the lack of predictability, regional and sectoral price variations, unstable supply and demand—were shaped less by informality than by the difference between primary and secondary materials, most notably the

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[160] The MST indicated the state subsidized waste metal imports by 174.5 million dollars, in contrast to waste material collection, which was left to petty merchants with no regulation or subsidy. Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um*, 132-136.

[161] These suggestions were drafted into a comprehensive recycling law, tentatively titled the Act on Promotion of Waste Material Resourcification (P'yep'um chaejawŏnhwa ch'okchinbŏp). The draft addresses licensing waste collection business and designating collection areas, registering waste reclamation business, establishing waste material exchange, and announcing waste material quality and price grades. Haengjŏng kaehyŏk wiwŏnhoe, *P'yep'um ŭi chaejawŏnhwa chisi chunggan pogo* (Sŏul: Ch'ongmugwa, 1975), BA0177304; "Chawŏnnan haegyŏl pangan ŭi hana ro p'yep'um chaejawŏnhwabŏp chejŏng pangch'im [Enacting Waste Material Resourcification Act as one of the Resource Crisis Solutions]," *Tonga Ilbo*, April 17, 1975.

[162] For instance, in 1973, 37% (0.3 million tons) of waste metal was sourced domestically; for wastepaper, 21% (81,600 tons) of total pulp demand was met domestically, with domestic chemical pulp accounting for only 1.6 percent (4,800 tons).

[163] The Oil Shock rekindled interest in waste recovery in both developed and developing countries. Shortly after the Oil Shock and its attendant embargo, the historian Emily Brownell notes how American scrap industries saw scrap export as wasting valuable secondary resources, arguing that "putting secondary materials on the world market was unpatriotic (266)." Because South Korea was a major importer of American wastepaper, such protectionist concerns could have caused yet another resource supply crisis. Emily Brownell, "Negotiating the New Economic Order of Waste," *Environmental History* 16, no. 2 (2011): 262-89.

possibility of mass extraction and transportation.

Notwithstanding the domestic and international environment surrounding the secondary materials market, the MST portrayed existing recycling practice—the work of waste pickers and informal scrap dealers—as merely the subsistence activities of the urban underclass.[164] In the absence of an institutionalized recycling system, it was this unorganized, informal labor force that achieved the country's meager recycling rate.[165] In 1973, the country retrieved 20.5% of wastepaper (110,000 tons out of 537,190 tons) and 9.2% of scrap metal (306 tons out of 3,292 tons) put into industrial production: among them, the Work Reconstruction Camp, a police-led waste picker camp, collected 30,000 tons of wastepaper worth 530 million wŏn.[166] Nevertheless, the state blamed the small-scale handlers and intermediaries for increasing the final purchase price,[167] depicting them as the cause of the inefficient recycling process. The state's desire for a large-scale recycling industry, combined with its disregard for informal recycling practice, led it to neglect a labor force that otherwise could have been incorporated into its goals.

Once the immediate restraints of the Oil Crisis lifted, plans for waste reclamation vanished. Neither the MST's plan or the MCI's draft legislation were

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[164] The MST denigrated waste pickers at the Work Reconstruction Camp as "socially cancerous vagrants," and that individual waste pickers were no different from taking service with a junk depot for survival. Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um*, 95-96.

[165] In 1973, there were 1,159 scrap businesses in Seoul: 885 junk depots (*komulsang*), 184 intermediary dealers, and 90 suppliers. These figures only include those who obtained a license from the local police station and did not include non-licensed establishments. Junk depots, small workshops located in neighborhoods, usually hired people to collect recyclable materials, whose number varied from 10 to 30. The Work Reconstruction Camp housed 2,000 waste pickers in Seoul. Combined, the report infers that there were at least 10,000 waste pickers in Seoul alone. Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um*, 93.

[166] Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um*, 42; 57.

[167] Waste pickers bore the brunt of the reduced selling price due to weight reduction procedures at the distribution stage (e.g., paper balers, iron mills, etc.) that ranged from 5% to 20% to 50% of the total weight. Individual waste pickers were required to pay a deposit or membership fee at some waste picker camps, which increased the profit margin. Consequently, the average profit margin for waste products were typically between 43% and 62%, significantly higher than profit margins in other industries (approximately 6% to 12.3%). This increased price prompted manufacturers to switch to cheaper imported wastepaper. Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um*, 151-157.

followed by any legislation or institutionalized system.[168] One reason was that the waste/cleaning administration was not part of these recycling discussions: extracting waste's economic value was divorced from everyday waste management. The EPB, the MST, and the MCI were centered solely on building and fostering a recycling industry rather than improving recyclable collections on the ground by implementing separate collection or utilizing then-existing recyclers. With no investment in domestic collection and distribution infrastructure, the lessons of the Oil Crisis were quickly forgotten.

Incorporating Recycling into Waste Management

In the 1980s, recycling efforts diverged in two directions. First, as noted, the city's plans began to incorporate, albeit not necessarily formalize, waste pickers' labor into its disposal policy: waste pickers' own survey report showed the economic contributions of their labor,[169] and three additional reports, produced by governmental institutions, suggested to incorporate waste pickers into the disposal process.[170] The former supported their claims to the value of their labor and fair compensation in the form of housing, while the latter argued waste pickers' recycling performance would benefit the city's waste disposal facilities.

Among the three disposal plans, Seoul City's 1985 Sanitary Mounding Landfill Plan explicitly translated the monetary value of their labor into a revenue source for the city, subsuming their labor under its management. According to the report, 1,500

[168] The legal foundation of recycling had to wait another two decades until the Act on Promotion of Saving and Recycling of Resources was mandated in 1992.

[169] Waste pickers at the Nanjido Landfill conducted their own survey and compiled a report that they used to negotiate with the city for housing. Among 802 households with 3,200 dwellers in 1983, 110 individuals participated in the survey. The average approximate monthly income was 21,000 wŏn (212,670), and the entire recyclable sales were 234 million wŏn; annual sales amounted to over 2.8 billion wŏn. Nanjido saemaul wiwŏnhoe, *Silt'ae chosa*.

[170] The rest of the reports are as follows: Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng et al., *Kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 256-259; Han'guk kwahak kisurwŏn, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul*, 118-119; JICA, *Master Plan*, 94-97. These reports also refer to figures published in the Nanjido waste pickers' survey report.

waste pickers working in the Nanjido landfill could retrieve 84,000 tons of recyclables per year (approximately 4% of inbound waste), generating 4.23 billion wŏn in annual sales. It proposed to incorporate waste pickers into the formal landfilling process and charge them a fee for access to waste equal to 20% of their sales income through which the city could generate annual revenue of 846 million wŏn, sufficient to cover 94% of annual landfill maintenance costs. Without a fee, the report estimated that a waste picker would earn 235,000 wŏn per month; the 20% fee reduced their income to 188,000 wŏn. Nonetheless, the city argued that the after-fee income was still comparable to a day laborer's wage (6,000 wŏn per day), allowing them to generate profit from their labor. Subsuming the entire workforce of landfill waste pickers presented the city with a substantial revenue opportunity that would reduce the fiscal burden for sanitary landfill operation.[171]

Once the state discovered the economic value of waste, it reacted by enclosing it. When municipal waste management was unsophisticated and there were no recycling programs, waste served as a common pool of resources for the urban poor from which they could scavenge recyclables for their livelihood.[172] Because there were no strict property rights over disposal facilities or waste materials, landfill waste pickers autonomously organized their labor and arranged the sales of recyclables without city oversight; they owned their means of production (material waste) and had collective control over their labor process. More importantly, their labor maintained the metabolic relationship between urbanites and their living environment by returning the material remnants of urban life to the production process. However, by turning waste pickers into city's contracted laborers, they would be separated from the

[171] Despite the "backwardness" of waste pickers scavenging in an admittedly sanitary landfill, the plan advised the city to keep waste pickers because their work was profitable. Sŏul siriptae sudokwŏn kaebal yŏn'guso, *Wisaeng maerip*, 199-202.

[172] Anthropologist Patrick O'Hare suggests that once the state or capital recognizes the value of waste—a value that was often discovered and defined by waste pickers-they claim property ownership over waste; it is then the enclosure of waste begins. Patrick O'Hare, *Rubbish Belongs to the Poor: Hygienic Enclosure and the Waste Commons* (London: Pluto Press, 2022).

means of production by depriving them of unfettered access to waste, dispossessing them of fair compensation for their labor, and severing their autonomy and connection to the labor process.

This enclosure of waste demonstrates how, in informal waste recycling, human labor becomes a crucial means of reproducing the conditions of capital accumulation. Geographer Vinay Gidwani refers to the informal waste transformation economy (e.g., recycling, repurposing, and reprocessing) as an "infra-economy" and its labor as "infra-structural labor": a form of economy that is critical to the production of urban space and capitalist accumulation but receives little recognition.[173] These concepts emphasize invisible or erased forms of labor that reproduce capital's conditions of production, asking how and where such (in)visibility and erasure operate.[174] In formulating disposal methods, we notice that modern waste disposal facilities, with their increased capital investment and technical expertise, complicate the question of property and ownership over waste materials. Waste enclosure and the subsumption of waste pickers raise two competing questions: does the city owe waste pickers for their recycling labor or does the city have the right to charge waste pickers a fee for access to waste? The city sought to profit from waste pickers' labor by instituting a new division of labor: the city serving as the superintending authority and waste pickers as city's contracted laborers.

Neither plan—creating a sanitary landfill or formalizing waste pickers and their labor—eventually came to fruition. However, ideas to transform waste into a profitable resource hint at the emergence of new approaches to the waste problem. During the height of the industrialization and urbanization period, waste was viewed as external to production and a hindrance to urban development and growth. When waste problems—its containment and environmental and health concerns—threatened the conditions of accumulation and urbanization, the state and capital reintroduced

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[173] Vinay Gidwani, "The Work of Waste: Inside India's Infra-Economy," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 40, no. 4 (2015): 575-95; Vinay Gidwani and Anant Maringanti, "The Waste-Value Dialectic: Lumpen Urbanization in Contemporary India," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 1 (2016): 112-33.

[174] Gidwani extends what Marx identified as the "conditions of production" to capital's "general" and "external" infrastructure and the labor that produces them. Gidwani, "Waste," 577.

waste either through appropriating informal labor or privatizing the material recovery process (ranging from mundane paper and glass to rare metals and energy). Nevertheless, exploiting and appropriating the waste pickers' labor still remained an afterthought: it was unable to address waste generation itself and its consequences.[175]

Apart from enclosing waste from existing recyclers, another recycling effort sough to incorporate citizens through pilot separation programs. In the late 1970s, source separation first was initiated for specific high-volume waste materials, starting with coal ash. The invention of ash-based brick production technologies and the 1979 establishment of a brick plant prompted the city to separate ash from other household waste for brick production.[176] In the early 1980s, pilot recycling programs were launched again, this time separating burnable and unburnable waste for incineration.[177] In both cases, the lack of separate receptacles for households or carriers for municipal waste collectors hampered separate collection, let alone the eventual failure of both the brick production plant and waste treatment plant. More efficient, well-functioning recycling efforts continued such as introducing different collection days, establishing

[175] There were, albeit infrequently, voices that raised concerns about pollution in relation to production and consumption. *Maeil Kyŏngje*, one of the economic newspapers, criticized the social cost of industrial pollution, claiming that it demonstrated the irrationality of the mode of production. *Maeil kyŏngje*, June 1, 1972. *Tonga Ilbo*, a major newspaper, also indicated the intrinsic relationship between waste and the whole process of production, consumption, collection, and disposal; and that the collection process should be designed in consultation with recycling plans. *Tonga Ilbo*, December 17, 1979.

[176] Each day, the brick factory used 100 tons of ash to produce 100,000 bricks. In addition to the inability to obtain ashes from municipal waste collection, the moisture absorbency of the bricks rendered them unsuitable for construction. Over the 1980s, the amount of coal used in domestic heating decreased, as did the need to recycle it. "Yŏnt'anjae pyŏktol kongjang chun'gong nanjido haru 5-manjang saengsan [Ash Brick Factory in Nanjido, Producing 50,000 Units Per Day]," *Tonga Ilbo* February 27, 1978; "Sŏul-si sŏ seun yŏnt'anjae pyŏktol kongjang 1-yŏn 4-kaewŏl tchae hyuŏp [Seoul's Ash Brick Factory was closed for a year and four months]," *Chungang Ilbo*, February 7, 1981.

[177] "Nanjido, kangdong, kangsŏ, tobong ssŭregi sogakchang ŭl kŏnsŏl 87-nyŏn kkaji [Constructing incinerators in Nanjido, Kangdong, Kangsŏ, and Tobong by 1987]," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 3, 1983.

collection points, or installing separate receptacles for recyclable items.[178] These recycling programs sought citizen participation to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills, focusing on housewives as the primary agents of change. Without a concrete, long-term disposal system, however, pilot programs were frequently phased out.

In 1993, the opening of a sanitary landfill transformed waste collection and disposal. Seoul selected sanitary landfilling as its primary disposal method: it opted to separate recyclable materials from household waste and sought to minimize the amount of waste sent to the landfill. At the new sanitary landfill in Kimp'o, the residents' committee inspected incoming waste and imposed penalties on municipalities whose waste contained recyclables. A legal and institutional framework followed: launching nationwide source separation in 1991; mandating the Act on Promoting the Saving and Recycling of Resources in 1992; and implementing the volume-based waste fee system (VBWF, Ssŭregi chongnyangje) in 1995, a new nationwide disposal scheme based on a pay-as-you-throw disposal system that further required individual households to recycle.

CONCLUSION

Waste was alternately deemed a nuisance to urban life and sanitation or a potential economic resource. This duality explains why managing waste was fragmented between different ministries and administrative bodies. Despite the diverse range of public authorities who attempted to grapple with waste issues, they all approached waste management as a scientific, technological, and professional matter. In the imperatives of development, waste was presented as a renewable, recoverable

[178] "Ssŭregit'ong 2-kae isang kajŏng pich'i kwŏnjangk'iro [Encouraging Households to Install Two or More Waste Bins]," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, January 19, 1985; "Ssŭregi-yŏnt'anjae kubun yoilbyŏl pulli sugŏ [Differentiating Collection Days for Garbage and Ashes]" *Chosŏn Ilbo* May 30, 1990; "Ilban, yŏnt'anjae, chaehwaryongp'um naenyŏn put'ŏ ssŭregi 3-chong pulli sugŏ [Beginning Next Year, Separate Collection of General Waste, Ashes, and Recyclables]" *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, July 24, 1990.

"resource" as recycling provided a means to save foreign currency while also alleviating the obstacles imposed by finite resources both domestic and global. In developing national and municipal disposal policies, less consideration was given to the fundamental causes of environmental degradation and resource depletion: the cost and consequences of unfettered economic growth. Waste was the epitome of the wastefulness ingrained in economic growth and the process of development.

The formation of modern waste management entailed standardizing, automating, and domesticating parts of waste labor, whether sanitation workers, informal waste pickers, or ordinary citizens who separated recyclable materials at home. During its development, day-to-day waste labor was frequently left to the city's low-rank sanitation workers or the urban poor. In the absence of adequate collection and disposal infrastructure, they served as a form of urban infrastructure. Although their labor was integral to waste management practices and urban life, it was often treated as low-tech, labor-intensive, and, to some extent unfairly, unskilled work requiring modernization through mechanization and automation. The social necessity of their labor—maintaining the conditions of urban life—was of less concern than the pursuit of a modern waste management system.

Technological solutions to the waste problem did not address the political question of what to do with the urban poor and especially their labor. Some state measures, such as waste picker camps and waste picker settlements at the Nanjido Landfill, brought the urban underclass under the state's purview while allowing the state to appropriate their labor at a low, even non-existent, cost. The discovery of waste's potential profitability, on the other hand, resulted in waste's enclosure, removing informal waste pickers' means of production and subsuming their labor to the benefit of the state and capital. Further, the institutionalization and professionalization of waste management introduced new ways of thinking about and dealing with waste and, on this basis, it integrated recycling practices into the daily lives of citizens. As a result, recycling, especially the physical handling of waste, was divided into two distinct categories: subsistence labor in the informal waste economy and civic duty in ordinary households, the latter removing the stigma associated with the

former. The chapters that follow investigate how this shift occurred between the 1960s and the early 1990s, and how such changes were embedded in the material, discursive, and spatial dimensions of waste.

Chapter 2. THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF WASTE PICKERS

"You were treated like a piece of trash in the past, but as of today, you will begin your journey of reformation," said Yu Tal-yŏng, then head of the Reconstruction National Movement (*chaegŏn kungmin undong*), to encourage residents at the 1962 inauguration of the Work Reconstruction Camp (*kŭllojaegŏndae*, hereafter WRC).[179] In his speech, Yu identified waste pickers as no different than "a piece of trash," needing reform and rehabilitation through the WRC. Similarly, Pak Sin-o, a member of the WRC Reformation Committee, made the association between waste and people more explicit: "The activities of the WRC recycle not only waste material but also human garbage (*in'gan p'yep'um*)."[180] In these two examples, "trash" refers less to material objects and more to human characteristics or social categories. As we will see in this chapter, the meanings and uses of the word "trash" unfolded on descriptive, prescriptive, and euphemistic levels, and ensuing discourses shaped and consolidated perceptions of waste pickers.

This chapter analyzes the linguistic and discursive sphere created around waste pickers. I examine how and why distinct terminologies, classifications, and meanings became associated with waste work; what prompted the increase in terminology; and how state bodies and their administrators, social reformers, middle-class citizens, and waste pickers themselves responded to such discourses, whether by reproducing and reinforcing, or resisting and reclaiming them. Focusing on waste pickers throughout the modern history of Korea, I rely on a variety of textual sources, including archival documents, newspaper and magazine articles, literary works, as well as the essays and petition letters of waste pickers and their superintendents.

After the Korean War (1950 - 1955) and throughout the second half of the twentieth century, waste pickers were entangled in two seemingly unrelated

[179] Kyŏnghyang Sinmun, 1962.05.14

[180] Pak Sin-o, "Kŭllo ro saenghwal ŭl chaegŏnhaja," *Saegajŏng* 124 February (1965), 23.

forces. On the one hand, waste pickers were subjected to state control,[181] first under the Park Chung-hee regime's (1961-1979) vagrant regulation measures, which continued well beyond the Park era.[182] On the other hand, waste was rediscovered as a resource, its management became a professional sector, and recycling practice returned to the domestic sphere. To incorporate these changes, this chapter situates waste pickers within two fields of scholarship: a broader literature on discipline and social control during the South Korean authoritarian regimes, and waste studies that question how we define waste and its attendant meanings and effects.

Scholars of modern Korea have investigated how military regimes regulated marginalized populations. These studies largely focus on vagrancy regulations, with the term "vagrant" encompassing war orphans, shoe shiners, juvenile delinquents, vagrants, and rag pickers.[183] This fluidity that predated the postwar period.[184] During

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[181] Yun Su-jong, "Nŏngmajui wa kukka: nŏngmajui chiptan suyong ŭi yŏksa," *Chinbo p'yŏngnon* 56 (2013): 265-96: 265-96; Pak Hong-kŭn, "Sahoechŏk paeje ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa pyŏnhwa: nŏngmajui kukka tongwŏn-ŭi yŏksarŭl chungsimŭro," *Sahoe wa yŏksa* 108 (2016): 227-61.

[182] Kim A-ram, "5·16 kunjŏnggi sahoe chŏngch'aek: adongbokchi wa 'puranga' taech'aek ŭi sŏngkyŏk," *Yŏksa wa hyŏnsil* 82 (2011): 329-65; Yi So-yŏng, "Pŏbi puch'akhan 'purangin' kip'yo wa kŭ hyogwa: hyŏngje pokchiwŏn kiŏk ŭi chaehyŏn kwa kwagŏch'ŏngsan nonŭi ŭi yeesŏ," *Han'guk pŏp ch'ŏrhakhoe* 17, no 2 (2014): 243-74; Chŏng Su-nam, "1960-nyŏndae 'purangin' t'ongch'i pangsik kwa 'sahoejŏk sinch'e' mandŭlgi," *Minjujuŭi wa inkwŏn* 15 no. 3 (2015): 149-85; Ch'u Chi-hyŏn, "Pakchŏnghŭi chŏngkwŏn ŭi 'sahoeak' homyŏng: hyŏngsa sabŏp ŭi hyoyulsŏng hwakpo chŏllyak ŭl chungsimŭro," *Sahoewa yŏksa* 117 (2018): 201-35; Yu Chin, "Kŏriŭi ch'ian kwŏllyŏk kwa 'sŏndo ŭi t'ongch'i kisul: 1960-nyŏndae ch'ŏngsonyŏn poho chŏngch'aek kwa puranga · ubŏm sonyŏn," *Sahoewa yŏksa* 123 (2019): 85-126.

[183] Historian Young Sun Park notes that while the lack of clarity in the term "orphan" is universal, it took on an added meaning in the 1920s in Korea and began to include delinquents and vagrants who were deemed "undesirable children." This shift in discourse not only confounded terms pertaining to orphans, but also altered the institutionalization and placement aims of orphanages. Young Sun Park, "Rescue and Regulation: A History of Undesirable Children in Korea, 1884-1961" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2018). For the changes in the term vagrant, see: Kŭn-sik Chŏng, "Nosugin tamnon kwa chedo ŭi yŏksajŏk pyŏndong," In *Han'guk ŭi nosugin* ed. Ku In-hoe, Chŏng Kŭn-sik, Sin Myŏng-ho (Sŏul: Sŏul Taehakkyo ch'ulp'an munhwawŏn, 2012), 375-410.

[184] Likewise, it is not unique to Korea. Historian A. L. Beier notes that vagrancy was more concerned with one's status than one's actions, and that the development of vagrancy demonstrated "a common response to managing poverty, labor, and social norms," Only when the category itself is fluid and

the colonial period, the term "vagrant" described a broad spectrum of individuals, from descendants of former aristocrats *yangban* to itinerant beggars, paupers, and vagabonds; its implication shifted from unwillingness or refusal to work to moral degeneracy and a threat to societal order.[185] Studies examining vagrants under the authoritarian regimes refer to its legal definition defined in the 1975 ordinance on vagrants.[186] This legal definition was, nonetheless, ambiguous, which allowed arbitrary application of the term and prompted subsequent discursive shifts. Since the term "vagrant" tends to incorporate a range of social actors into a single category, it prevents a close examination of a subset of the broadly defined vagrant population, in this, case waste pickers.

This conflation resulted in part from an emphasis on the state's role. In studies that specifically analyze waste pickers, for instance, waste pickers are portrayed as victims of state violence, collapsing them into a homogenous group.[187] This emphasis

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ambiguous is a status crime possible. In the study of vagrant figures in the eighteenth-century Anglophone world, literary scholar Sarah Nicolazzo characterizes vagrancy as a paratactic, proliferating, and expansive category; it can catalogue indefinite forms of deviance, granting the state the power to capture the urban populace under its jurisdiction. Sarah Nicolazzo, "Vagrant Figures: Law, Labor, and Refusal in the Eighteenth-century Atlantic World" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2014); Anthony L Beier and Paul Ocobock. *Cast out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008), 3.

[185] Cho Kyŏng-hŭi, "'Onjŏng' kwa 'kyohwa' ŭi singminjuŭi - 1910-yŏndae chosŏnch'ongdokpu ŭi sahoegujesaŏp kwa kŭ imgye," *Yŏksa munje yŏn'gu* 25 (2011): 235-71; Yu Sŏn-yŏng, "Singminji ŭi sŭt'igŭma chŏngch'i: singminji ch'ogi purangja p'yosang ŭi hyŏnsil hyogwa," *Sahoewa yŏksa* 89 (2011): 41-84; Ye Chi-suk, "Ilche sigi chosŏn esŏ purangja ŭi ch'urhyŏn'gwa haengjŏng tangguk ŭi taech'aek," *Sahoewa yŏksa* 107 (2015): 73-96; "Ilche ha purangja ŭi t'ansaeng kwa kŭ t'ŭkching," *Han'guksa yŏn'gu* 164 (2014): 29-58; So Hyŏn-suk, "Kyŏnggye e sŏn koadŭl: koa munje rŭl t'onghae pon ilche shigi sahoe saŏp," *Sahoewa yŏksa* 73 (2007): 107-41.

[186] Naemubu, "*Hullyŏng che 410-ho: purangin ŭi sin'go, tansok, suyong, pohowa kwihyang mit sahu kwallie kwanhan chich'im*," (Sŏul: Naemubu, 1975). Sociologist Yi So-yŏng argues that this ambiguity granted the police the authority to detain even ordinary passersby in confinement/internment facilities. Yi So-yŏng, "'Kŏnjŏn sahoe wa kŭ chŏktŭl: 1960-80-nyŏndae purangin tansok ŭi saengmyŏng chŏngch'i," *Pŏpkwa sahoe* 51 (2016): 23-54.

[187] Yun, "Nŏngmajui"; Pak, "Nŏngmajui."

on state regulation is based in a narrow understanding of the state as solely "the government," its bureaucratic organizations and associated administrative bodies. For political theorist Timothy Mitchell, the state comprises both its formal structures and institutions as well as what are commonly considered to be its effects.[188] Mitchell suggests that state power encompasses and transcends the rigid boundaries of the state, economy, or society. This conception of state power allows us to consider its effects beyond the scope of its execution and immediate reach. Indeed, state power was not confined to executing street crackdowns on "deviants" or establishing waste picker camps. It also lay in the ways in which people treated waste pickers in their everyday interactions, most notably the manner in which ordinary citizens reiterated the state's depictions of waste pickers.

While waste pickers belonged to a subgroup of the population that the state deemed "problematic," they were also distinguishable from others by their symbolic associations with waste. Recent scholarship in waste studies indicates that the ways we see and understand waste are historically and spatially contingent. The sociologist Zsuzsa Gille highlights that the materiality of waste is also constituted by social and cultural factors.[189] The lexicon of trash is not static: some terms emerge while others disappear; some take on a derogatory meaning while others are replaced by new euphemisms.[190] Trash-related terms—what Elizabeth Spelman calls "trash lexicon" and its "semantic siblings"—convey a particular relationship between trash and human characteristics and

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[188] Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics," *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 77-96.

[189] Gille suggests "waste regimes" for analyzing the production, representation, and politicization of waste. Different times, places, and material compositions may result in the production of waste, but these variables influence how waste is understood and managed. Zsuzsa Gille, *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 9, 34.

[190] In Egypt and Brazil, for instance, the reevaluation of waste pickers' labor led to the introduction of formal occupational titles, but these titles were never adopted by the workers. Jamie Furniss, "What Type of Problem Is Waste in Egypt?," *Social Anthropology* 25, no. 3 (2017): 301-17; Carolina Ana Sternberg, "From 'Cartoneros' to 'Recolectores Urbanos': The Changing Rhetoric and Urban Waste Management Policies in Neoliberal Buenos Aires," *Geoforum* 48 (2013): 187-95.

qualities,[191] for instance, the reclamation of waste materials and the reformation and rehabilitation of human nature.[192] The languages of waste also expanded waste-related metaphors to encompass other forms of precarity and dispossession.[193]

These studies show who makes and unmakes the meanings of waste and why, suggesting that waste is indeterminate. This indeterminacy, in linguistic, discursive, and cultural definitions of waste, also resonates with the material dimension of waste: they all underline the contingent nature of how waste becomes problematic. Waste pickers' identities were primarily shaped by their material livelihood—including the physical abuse of the police, the economic deprivation, and the waste heaps that surrounded their shacks. Nonetheless, their material circumstances alone tell us little about what sustained their symbolic associations with waste; it is through language and discourse that it becomes possible to understand why a certain group is labeled waste or associated with waste, as well as how such meanings and framings circulate in society.

This chapter follows the linguistic and discursive construction of waste pickers that took place in South Korea between the 1960s and 1990s, when the work itself was not perceived to be a proper occupation but rather a "deviant career."[194] It is divided into three sections: state discourse, vernacular and literary discourses, and waste pickers' self-identification. I begin by situating waste pickers in the context of the authoritarian regimes and their social controls, particularly the creation of waste picker camps, and how these camps and subsequent narratives about them helped to establish waste pickers as deviant. The following sections discuss how popular and literary interpretations

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[191] Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Trash Talks: Revelations in the Rubbish* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7.

[192] Catherine Alexander and Joshua Reno, "Introduction," in *Economies of Recycling: The Global Transformation of Materials, Values and Social Relations*, eds. Catherine Alexander and Joshua Reno (London: Zed Books, 2012), 1-32.

[193] Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (London: Polity Press, 2004).

[194] Jeff Ferrell, Empire of Scrounge: Inside the Urban Underground of Dumpster Diving, Trash Picking, and Street Scavenging (New York: NYU Press, 2006).

were intertwined with state discourse, either reacting or reproducing institutional discourses in essays and literary works written by ordinary citizens and writers. I then move on to how waste pickers appropriated or resisted the prescribed meanings of the terminology that referred to them. Through weaving together discourses generated from different positions and for different purposes, this chapter demonstrates how these distinct narratives frequently reflected each other, reproducing and reaffirming the state's disciplinary technologies and its normative ideals.

STATE DISCOURSES

Establishing the Perceived Deviance of Waste Pickers

In the second half of the twentieth century, post-war South Korea saw the rise of uprooted populations including war orphans, refugees, beggars, waste pickers, and vagrants. Becoming a waste picker was often a consequence of life on the street without a job, a home, or any close kin. Newspaper reports portrayed waste pickers as vagrants, beggars, or even members of street gangs; the Ministry of Internal Affairs, for instance, categorized waste picking as one of the street occupations (*kadu chikŏp*), which were associated with vagrancy and deviance.[195] Despite being categorized as an "occupation", waste pickers operated informally without an established waste economy or a waste management system.

The 1962 inception of the Work Reconstruction Camp (WRC, *kŭllochaegŏndae*), a police-led camp that accommodated waste pickers, reinforced existing stigmas about waste pickers. The WRC designated waste pickers as potentially harmful to the social order and in need of reform and rehabilitation through labor. It also introduced a new term, reconstruction inmates (*[kŭllo]chaegŏndaewŏn*), part of a particular vocabulary that referred to waste pickers. As a state-devised term, "reconstruction inmates" replaced the vernacular word "rag picker" and was used as a

[195] Naemubu, Kadu chigŏp sonyŏn silt'a e chonghap punsŏk kyŏlgwa pogo (Sŏul: Naemubu 1965). BA0084439.

formal occupation category: it appeared on administrative documents during the WRC's operation between the 1960s and early 1990s, only to disappear when it was disbanded. Although the state had sought to create a new occupational name, in the end it reinforced the negative associations of "rag picker."

The state's initial depiction of waste pickers as a social ill prevailed in state discourses. Despite the ostensible emphasis on seeing waste picking as an occupation, various governmental bodies reiterated pervasive stereotypes of waste pickers, rarely treating them as actual laborers. Responses to the First Oil Crisis (1973) provide one such case. Shortly after the Oil Crisis and seeking to find ways to save resources and reclaim waste materials, both the Economic Planning Board (EPB) and the Ministry of Science and Technology (Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, MST) examined the then-current recycling system. While the EPB dismissed the contribution of waste pickers as negligible,[196] the MST, in their 1975 report *A Study on the Effective Use of Solid Waste* (*P'yep'um chawŏn ŭi hwaryong ŭl wihan chosa yŏn'gu*), addressed the contributions of the "reconstruction inmates" who recycled 32,000 tons of paper in 1973 alone.[197] Regardless, the social stigma that stuck to the WRC—what the MST described as "a group that was no different from social cancer"—shadowed their crucial economic role.[198] Such pejorative characterizations of waste pickers frequently occluded the acknowledgement they deserved for their labor.

If the EPB or the MST acknowledged the work of waste pickers, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (Pogŏn sahoebu, MHSA) treated them as objects of regulation and control. In *Guidance for the WRC Waste Pickers* (*Rag Pickers*) (*kŭllojaegŏndae (nŏngmajui) sŏnto taech'aek*), its 1978 report, the MHSA described waste pickers as "vagrants who are former criminals, gangsters, or people without family or relatives." The report continued, stating that they "have difficulty finding a different job due to their weak social

[196] Ch'ongmuch'ŏ, *Chongi sobi chŏryak undong chŏngae* (Sŏul: Ch'ongmuch'ŏ 1974), BA0139631.

[197] Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um chawŏn ŭi hwaryong ŭl wihan chosa yŏn'gu* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1975).

[198] Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um*, 95-96.

standing (*sinpun*), low or almost nonexistent degree of education, and an adversarial disposition that fostered self-defeating and self-destructive attitudes." The MHSA argued that these demographic characteristics made it hard for the state to "track their identity (*sinwŏn*), take preemptive measures against their potential felonies, and prevent any permeation of 'impure elements' (*pulsun puncha*)."[199] In this narrative, the MHSA equated waste pickers' social status with their individual traits and character flaws, denouncing them as beggars, vagrants, or spies, to justify state intervention into their lives. Waste pickers were characterized through an open-ended, expandable list of characteristics and identities, unified by the notion that they were harmful to society as a whole and required regulation.

Establishing the WRC allowed the military regime to categorize and control waste pickers, but this state intervention engendered the larger discursive sphere around waste pickers, one that aligned with the authoritarian regime's desire for social control. The term "reconstruction inmates" may imply that the state intended to elevate waste pickers to the status of proper citizens. However, archives reveal the state authorities themselves rejected this idea, denouncing both their character and the value of their labor. Officially categorized as a problem population, waste pickers formed part of a marginal population outside of society requiring disciplinary control.

The Selective Institutionalization of Waste Labor

Beyond disciplining waste pickers, waste labor and its terminologies also evolved. As South Korea experienced economic development, waste management was gradually institutionalized, the waste economy expanded, and new waste-related occupations appeared in both the public and private sectors. As I explain below, this formalization of labor redeemed certain types of workers, including municipal waste collectors and truck drivers, while leaving waste pickers in the informal sector.

One way to observe institutional changes is by examining changes to occupational terminology. *The Dictionary of Occupations in Korea* (*Han'guk chigŏp sajŏn*), first published in 1969 by the Ministry of Labor's (*Nodongbu*, MoL) Human

[199] Pogŏn sahoebu, *Kŭllojaegŏndae (nŏngmajui) sŏnto taech'aek* (Sŏul: Pogŏn sahoebu, 1978).

Development Institute, offers insight into the different names of occupations and industries under the Korean Standard Classification of Occupations and International Standard Classification of Occupations.[200] As shown in Table 2-1, the Ministry of Labor published five editions between 1969 and 2012 that included waste-related occupations, providing a glimpse into what kinds of waste work were created, how they were categorized, and what changes they underwent.

Table 2-1 Waste occupation names in the Korean Standard Classification of Occupations

Year	Occupation listed in the dictionary
1969 a)	Junk depot owner (*komulsang chu*) Intermediaries (*komul chungkaein*) Old materials sorters and separators (*komul chŏngnikong*, *p'yep'um sŏnbyŏl chŏngnikong*) Old-and-waste-materials collectors (*koch'ŏl sujibin*, *komul sujibin*, *p'yemul sujibin*)
1986 b)	Wholesale waste collection and sales (*tomae p'yep'um sujipp'anmaewŏn*) Wastepaper sorters (*koji sŏnbyŏlwŏn*) Wastepaper-throwers (*koji t'uipwŏn*)
1995 c)	No self-employed occupation
2003	No self-employed occupation
2012 d)	Sanitation worker (*hwan'gyŏng mihwawŏn*) Recyclable-materials collector (*chaehwaryongp'um sugŏwŏn*)

a) Inryŏk kaebal yŏn'guso, *Sajŏn*.

b) Kungnip chungang chigŏp anjŏngso, *Han'guk Chigŏp Sajŏn T'onghappon 1 p'an* (Sŏul: Nodongbu, 1986).

c) Chungang koyong chŏngbo kwalliso, *Han'guk Chigŏp Sajŏn T'onghappon 2 p'an* (Sŏul: Nodongbu, 1995).

d) Han'guk koyong chŏngbowŏn, *Han'guk Chigŏp Sajŏn* (Sŏul: Nodongbu, 2012).

This series of terms shows how different types of waste labor were institutionalized and framed. Occupations listed in the first edition of the dictionary (1969) suggest that the waste economy primarily consisted of transactions between self-employed individuals and small businesses, rather than constituting an industry or public sector.

[200] The first edition, published in 1969, listed 3,260 occupation names. The subsequent editions included approximately 10,000 occupation names, more than triple previous editions, reflecting the rapid growth of the economy and expansion of industries. Inryŏk Kaebal Yŏn'guso, *Han'guk Chigŏp Sajŏn* (Sŏul: Nodongbu, 1969).

In 1986, in the first integrated edition of the dictionary, we observe more employed, waged jobs as well as waste processing businesses. In the second and third editions of the dictionary, published in 1995 and 2003 respectively, there were no self-employed forms of waste occupation. In 2012, waste collection and waste picking reappeared in the dictionary: their names were changed to "sanitation worker" (*hwan'gyŏng mihwawŏn*, literally translation: a *person who beautifies environment*) and "recyclable-materials collector" (*chaehwaryongp'um sugŏwŏn*).

The changes to terminology also reflect how the state sought to neutralize the negative connotations associated with waste-related occupational terms. Some changes, such as municipal waste collection, followed the institutionalization of the waste management system, while others were driven by the government. In its 1986 report, *A Report on the Improvement of Occupation Names*, the Ministry of Government Administration (*ch'ongmuch'ŏ*, hereafter MGA) named 116 occupations that needed renaming, including "rag picker."[201] The MGA advised replacing "rag picker (*nŏngmajui*)" with "waste material collector" (*p'yep'um sujibin*)," suggesting that rag picker degraded the dignity of workers and the value of their work. However, it is unclear whether terminology alone could alter popular perceptions. In 1988, Seoul changed the formal title of municipal waste collection workers (collection crews and truck drivers) from "janitor" (*chŏngsowŏn*) to "sanitation worker"; the city also promoted their status from day laborers to directly-employed functional service workers.[202] Yet, as explained in chapter 1, such changes did not necessarily coincide with changes to their labor conditions, thus rendering the new names euphemistic.

Renaming was accompanied by citywide and nationwide promotional initiatives. In November 1988, the *Taehan News* followed one Seoul sanitation worker, a man past retirement age, through small alleys to a transfer station and then to the Nanjido landfill.[203] The narrator shows his wife and son lifting garbage bags into the pushcart and explains that their heavy workloads not only led workers to frequent overtime but also required additional help from their families. The narrator

[201] Ch'ongmuch'ŏ, *Chigŏp myŏngch'ing kaesŏnan* (Sŏul: Ch'ongmuch'ŏ), BG0001328.

[202] "Ch'ŏngsowŏn myŏngch'ing pakkwŏ hwan'gyŏng mihwawŏn ŭro," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 18, 1978.

[203] "Inmul sogae," *Taehan nyusŭ* no. 1724, (November 23, 1988). https://youtu.be/EiuwYdd5tjk. (last accessed on February 24, 2023).

tells the audience that their official title is now "sanitation workers," not "janitors." In the last segment, for ten seconds, the news takes viewers to the dumping fields in the Nanjido landfill, where a district waste collection truck unloads waste and waste pickers wait between the vehicle and the bulldozer. The news does not discuss what happens in the Nanjido Landfill once municipal solid waste is disposed. Instead–notwithstanding the waste pickers and district waste collection trucks in the background–the narrator comments on "the invisible labor of sanitation workers" who keep our streets clean, leaving landfill waste pickers invisible in plain view. This footage, produced to raise awareness of the role of sanitation workers and boost their morale, demonstrates how the state selectively institutionalized and promoted waste labor.

The Work Reconstruction Camp categorized waste pickers as a socially problematic population and coined a new term for them, which helps to explain why waste picking was considered a social status rather than an occupation and why waste pickers were excluded from institutionalized waste management. As we have seen, both the professionalization of waste labor and the recategorization of their occupation occurred selectively; neither necessarily replaced existing names nor the stigmas. As I will show in the following section, this label and its discursive effects outlived the waste picker camps themselves. The state's disciplinary programs and its discursive dimensions also shaped the vernacular language.

VERNACULAR DISCOURSES

Popular Imagination

As I have shown in the case of the state's narratives, waste pickers were frequently portrayed as beggars or vagrants. Both popular and literary texts reveal how state narratives and coinages affected vernacular terms. This section examines three vernacular terms that began to appear in the 1950s and the 1960s to refer to waste

pickers. "Rag picker" (*nŏngmajui*), a vernacular term commonly used to refer waste pickers, began to appear in newspapers in the 1950s, its usage concentrated to the 1960s and 1970s. A combination of rag (*nŏngma*) and a suffix that refers to a job title ([*j*]*ui*), "rag picker" was never a benign descriptor. It always carried negative connotations due to its association with street populations as well as waste.[204] Another term, "*sirai*",[205] a shortened form of the Japanese term, *kamikuzu hiroi* (waste paper picker), was a slang expression known and used among street gangs to indicate roles within their factions. The last term, "hoodlum" (*yangach'i*), was an explicitly derogatory expression that was also used in vernacular Korean to denigrate waste pickers. *Yangach'i*, a shortened form of *tongnyangach'i* (a portmanteau of *tongnyang*, the act of begging, and *ach'i*, a derogatory job title suffix), had a direct association with beggars.[206] The meaning of "hoodlum" has shifted over time, from "beggar" to "waste-picker" to yet other identities so that by the 1990s it no longer referred to rag pickers but to bullies or hoodlums.[207]

In the 1960s and 1970s, researchers, religious reformers, and social workers who interacted with waste pickers coined new labels such as "working adolescents,"

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[204] For instance, when the term "rag picker" was used in governmental reports, there was a disclaimer that it is a vernacular term (*sokch'ing*), which meant that the term was not neutral nor formal but a slur. Pogŏn sahoebu. *sŏndo taech'aek*.

[205] Ak'ama Kihu, a Japanese undercover journalist who investigated Seoul's underclass life, suggests a possible Japanese term that would capture waste-pickers' work: *kamikuzu hiroi* (waste paper picker), a name that survived by its shortened form, *hiroi*, then *sirai* in Korean. Kifū Ak'ama, *Taeji rŭl pora: 1920-yŏntae Kyŏngsŏng ŭi mitpadak t'ambang*, trans. Ho-ch'ŏl Sŏ (Sŏul: Amorŭmundi, 2016). Originally published as *Daichi o miro: Hensō tanbōki* (Tokyo: Tairiku kyōdō shuppankai, 1924).

[206] Cho Hang-bŏm, a Korean Linguist, explains this shift as being caused by the decreasing number and visibility of waste pickers and street-based waste picker groups. Hang-bŏm Cho, "Kŏji kwallyŏn ŏhui ŭi ŏwŏn kwa ŭimi," *Urimalkŭl* 61 (2014): 26-27.

[207] The Standard Korean Language Dictionary (2009) defines the word hoodlum (*yangach'i*) as "a person who behaves frivolously and frequently commits evil conduct," thus eliminating the reference to begging. However, it should be noted that the new usage of this term still carried negative moral traits: someone rowdy and inclined to thieving and violent crime, and even belonging to a gang—similar to the moralizing narratives on waste pickers. For this new use of the term hoodlum (*yangach'i*), such as low-level thugs, bullies, or hoodlums, see: Jonson Nathaniel Porteux, "Police, Paramilitaries, Nationalists and Gangsters: The Processes of State Building in Korea," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2013).

"waste material collectors," or "unfortunate adolescents."[208] While seeking to describe the demographic traits and lifestyles of waste pickers, they either associated waste pickers with deviance and poverty, or depicted them as war orphans or juvenile delinquents in need of protection and reformation.[209] Their perspectives resonated with the state's depiction of waste pickers. Nonetheless, these reformers did seek to erase the value-laden terms and coin alternatives that reflected their own views on waste pickers, whether scholarly, missionary, or philanthropic.

Redemptive perspectives centered around sympathy for the waste pickers' positive qualities: industriousness, independence, and importance to the economy. Some writers argued that rag pickers differed from other street populations. In 1960, a *Kukje Sinbo* article, "'Hoodlums' are also sons and daughters of this country," proposed distinguishing waste pickers (*yangach'i* or *sirai*) from other street gangs (e.g., panhandling, stealing, or snatching): the work of "hoodlums" benefitted the national economy.[210] Similarly, in 1961, *Tonga Ilbo*, a major newspaper, published an investigative piece that identified waste pickers (*sirai*) as one type of beggar (*kŏji*).[211] The author then urged readers to see waste picking as an occupation, not vagrancy, because it benefitted "the poor, resource-deprived country."[212] In both examples, due to their contributions to the national economy waste pickers were deemed more deserving than other outcasts.

Second, waste pickers were seen as worthy when they demonstrated a hard-working and self-reliant demeanor—traits that the state itself highlighted. In a 1966 essay, Kim Tong-gil, a social critic and university professor, praised

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[208] Pu-ja Yim, "Kŭllon ch'ŏngsonyŏn t'ŭksu chŏndo yŏn'gu: kŭllojaegŏndae rŭl chungsimŭro," (Master thesis, Peroean k'ŭrisŭch'yan sinhak taehagwŏn, 1975); Kim, Chong-pok. Pulu ch'ŏngsonyŏn (nŏngmajui) taech'aek - Kyŏngsangbuk-to pyŏn. *Chipang haengchŏng* 25, no. 274 (1976): 86-90.

[209] Public administration, sociology or social work. Yidae sahoehakhoe, "Pusŏchin kkum ŭl moŭnŭn sonyŭntŭl: nŏngmajui e taehan siltae chosa pogo," *Sedae* 2, no. 17 (1964): 173-183.

[210] A few newspaper articles suggested distinguishing waste pickers (*yangach'i* or *sirai*) from other street gangs, as unlike panhandling, stealing, or snatching, their work benefits the national economy. "'Yangach'i to i nara ŭi adŭlttal ida," *Kukje Sinbo*, May 14, 1960.

[211] "Che 3-ŭi sahoe (1) ŏmaŏmahan hŏnpŏp," *Tonga Ilbo*, February 5, 1961.

[212] "Che 3-ŭi sahoe (8) sirai," *Tonga Ilbo*, February 14, 1961.

the waste-pickers "rummaging through all the streets and alleys of Seoul" as valuable, honest, and patriotic workers.[213] Another report on the Korea Ant Association (*Han'guk kaemihoe*, KAA), a private waste picker organization, expressed a similar viewpoint: despite being juvenile delinquents who were the target of societal contempt, waste pickers aspired to be self-reliant and led "a wholesome and rewarding life."[214] Likewise, high-school teacher Yi Ŭn-suk shared her reflections on her elderly tenant. Despite Yi's initial "unpleasant" impression of the tenant as having a "uncivilized attitude and threadbare appearance," Yi changed her mind after learning about the tenant's "job": the tenant was a rag picker who extensively saved and was self-reliant.[215] These examples, all written from the perspective of middle class intellectuals, reevaluated waste pickers primarily through the corresponding social value of their labor. However, hardly any attention was paid to why waste pickers were pushed to the edges of Korean society and how their marginality fostered inequality.

Contrary to such sympathetic approaches, negative portraits emphasized three characteristics alleged to belong to waste pickers: dishonesty, laziness, and untimeliness. Essays published in the Rag Commune newsletters (*nŏngma kongdongch'e*) reveal how middle-class individuals viewed waste pickers:[216] the Commune was located in Seoul's affluent Kangnam district, and locals contributed to a section entitled "Two Perspectives on Seeing Rag Pickers" (*nŏngmajui rŭl ponŭn*

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[213] Kim Tong-gil, "Nŏngmajui," *Saegajŏng*, no. 141 (September 1966): 60-61.

[214] The piece was published in 1977 in *Saekachŏng* (New family), a protestant-affiliated popular magazine." Nŏngmajuidŭl ŭi moim: Han'guk kaemihoe rŭl ch'ajasŏ," *Saegajŏng*, no. 262 (August/September 1977): 115-7.

[215] This essay was published in *Saemt'ŏ*, a Catholic-affiliated popular magazine in 1990. Yi Ŭn-suk, "Saemt'ŏ kajoksil: nŏngmajui halmŏni," *Saemt'ŏ* 21, no. 4 (1990): 116-119.

[216] The Rag Commune (*nŏngma kongdongch'e*) was founded by a long-term waste picker and consisted of waste pickers, a college student activist, and Yun P'al-byŏng, a patron/benefactor who himself had lived a life on the streets and established the commune. It aimed to end exploitive gangmaster-underling relationships and create a community where everyone shared the equipment necessary for their work, had equal rights and responsibilities, and was compensated fairly for their labor. Mun Yŏng-sam, "Kongdongch'e rŭl sijakhamyŏ," *Nŏngma* 1 (October 15, 1986), 3-4. Song Kyŏng-sang, a college student at the time, joined them in a managing role and edited the newsletters. The commune issued five newsletters between 1986 and 1991. Each issue has essays, commune member interviews, testimonies, and articles about recycling, the waste industry, or surveys of waste pickers.

tukaji sigak).[217] One writer, Kang Yŏng-ae, recalled suspecting that early-rising rag pickers stole rather than worked; when she watched waste pickers quarreling with neighborhood watchmen, she ascribed the conflict to the waste pickers.[218] Kim Kyŏng-ok, another contributor, similarly argued that "waste pickers are damaging the urban landscape and child upbringing." Kim then inquired: "why do we still have to deal with rag pickers when the country is rapidly becoming a developed country (*sŏnjin'guk*)?"[219] While conceding his lack of knowledge, another writer, Kim Chong-ho, voiced his astonishment: "the majority of waste pickers were lazy and lacked the willpower to live a life" because "anyone can now live more than a middle-class life with sufficient effort."[220] These writers urged the government to intervene by providing waste pickers with alternative jobs or removing them. They believed that waste pickers posed a threat to safety and well-being, and criminalized their presence. Attributing the fact of being a waste picker to the pickers' own actions, they called for waste pickers to be eliminated and rendered invisible in the daily life of the city.

Popular portrayals of waste pickers showed two dynamics. Waste pickers were tolerated–albeit ostensibly–provided they conformed to the state narratives. Complacency alone, however, could not eradicate their stigma. Antipathetic narratives recited and reinforced the authoritarian state's negative depictions of waste pickers. We also find similar processes, namely the exclusion of waste pickers, in their literary representation.

Literary Representation

[217] This series was published in all five issues of the newsletter, each including two to three contributors who wrote about their experiences or opinions of the rag pickers; most of the writers were residents who lived near the rag commune, with two exceptions of a waste-picker and a member of the neighborhood watch scheme.

[218] Kang Yŏng-ae, "Nŏngmajui rŭl ponŭn tukaji sigak," *Nŏngma* 2 (May 15, 1987), 35.

[219] Kim Kyŏng-ŏk, "Nŏngmajui rŭl ponŭn tukaji sigak," *Nŏngma* 2 (May 15, 1987), 34.

[220] Kim Chong-ho, "Nŏngmajui rŭl ponŭn tukaji sigak 2," *Nŏngma* 1 (October 15, 1986), 15.

Literary portrayals of waste pickers reveal another dimension of vernacular discourses.[221] My analysis draws on three short stories on waste workers published in the 1970s and three novels on the Nanjido landfill published in the 1980s.[222] I first examine how waste work and its workers were represented and how waste was used as a symbol to criticize modern society. I then discuss in detail four works, three short stories and one novel, that connect male waste work and female sex work: Hong Sŏng-wŏn's *Snowy Night* (1979, *Sŏrya*), Mun Sun-t'ae's *Janitor* (1975, C*hŏngsobu*), and O Yu-kwŏn's *Junk Depot* (1975, *Komulsang*), Chŏng Yŏn-hŭi's *Nanjido* (1985, *Nanjido*). While all three imply that some waste pickers can achieve reformation through working with waste, the pairing of male waste work with female sex work calls into question their prospects of social mobility.

In literary portrayals, waste workers often appear as alienated from the industrialization and economic development of the 1970s and 1980s. In Yi Sang-rak's *The Daughter of Nanjido* (1985, *Nanjido ŭi ttal*), the male narrator works with

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[221] These works can be categorized as underclass literature. Literary scholar Kim Sŏng-hwan argues that mainstream literature, be it labor literature (*nodongja munhak*) or *minjung* literature (*minjung munhak*), marginalized the experience of the underclass, who occupied an invisible social stratum. This constraint in conventional literary forms led to the emergence of reportage, *rŭp'o*, a literary genre that blended journalistic investigation and narrative non-fiction to better convey the voice of an otherwise unseen populace. In this way, representing marginalized human experiences constituted a double critique of both the brutal modernization process and a mainstream social and literary movement that failed to capture subaltern lives on the urban margins. Sunghwan Kim, "The Boom in Nonelite Writings and the Expansion of the Literary Field," in *Toward Democracy: South Korean Culture and Society, 1945-1980*, eds. Hyunjoo Kim, Yerim Kim, Boduerae Kwon, Hyeryoung Lee, and Theodore Jun Yoo (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California Press, 2021), 258-271; Kim Sŏng-hwan [Sunghwan Kim], "Hach'ŭngmin sŏsa wa chubyŏnbu yangsik ŭi kanŭngsŏng: 1980 yŏndae nonp'iksyŏn ŭl chungsimŭro," *Hyŏndae munhagŭi yŏn'gu* 59 (2016): 403-442; Kim Ye-rim, "Pinmin ŭi saenggye yulli hogŭn t'agwŏlsŏng e kwanhayŏ," *Han'gukhak yŏn'gu* 36 (2015): 51-80.

[222] Literary scholar Yi Chŏng-suk indicates that underclass narratives, which she refers to as "the genre of the 1970s", focused on the social group whose members were displaced from wage labor in capitalist or agrarian economies, and whose "jobs" were at risk of disappearing as industrialization and modernization proceeded. The underclass subjects in these literary works include vagrants, day laborers, shoe-shiners, porters, prostitutes, and rag pickers. Yi Chŏng-suk, "1970-yŏndae Han'guk sosŏre nat'anan kanan ŭi chŏngdonghwa." (PhD diss., Seoul National University, 2014), 77.

private garbage haulers to recruit day laborers from "blood-sellers lined up in the blood bank, vagrants around Seoul Station, and the like."[223] Waste picking was but one of the many odd jobs—including blood-selling, begging, peddling, panhandling, and scavenging—that the urban underclass would take on. Workers would typically move between these jobs to sustain their living. The novel's characters included subjects such as a war orphan and refugee, a disabled veteran, a war widow, a rural migrant, and an evictee. All were part of the street population and loosely categorized as members of the "urban underclass."

Occupying the lower rungs of society, waste pickers were frequently moralized by fictional characters. Take Yu Chae-sun's *Nanjido People* (1984, *Nanjido saramdŭl*), for example.[224] Yun Yŏn-ju, the novel's narrator, is a college student who fled to Nanjido after being tortured for her student activism. Working as a waste picker in Nanjido, she realized that she had thought herself superior to her fellow waste pickers whether due to education or demeanor. Despite this self-awareness, she preserved her sense of difference. When a waste picker criticized her for her elitism and hypocrisy, she brushed it off as a "poor people's complex." She depicts the Nanjido waste pickers lacking self-control including money and having no commitment or patience in their work (216-217). In *The Daughter of Nanjido*, one elder similarly criticizes the tendency to "always return to Nanjido whenever you failed in the outside world" (244-45), implying that waste picking is an improper job. While these narrators were themselves waste pickers, they reiterated typical prejudices towards the urban poor consistent with the state's justifications for controlling waste pickers. Nonetheless, their work ethic and relative moral worth allowed them to criticize others.

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[223] Yi Sang-rak, *Nanjido ŭi ttal* (Sŏul: Silch'ŏn munhaksa, 1985), 40.

[224] *Nanjido People* is a reportage novel by Yu Chae-sun, based on journalistic research and her non-fiction piece, *Searching for the Nanjido Landfill* (1980, *Nanjido ssŭregi hach'ijang ŭl ch'ajasŏ*). Yu merges fictional and non-fictional accounts, incorporating actual events and actual people, including the names of some individuals. Yu Sun [Yu Chae-sun], "Nanjido ssŭregi hach'ijang ŭl ch'ajasŏ," in *Saram wie saram itta* (Sŏul: Tongailbosa, 1982): 109-159; Yu Chae-sun, *Nanjido saramdŭl* (Sŏul: Kŭlsure, 1985).

Waste also serves as an allegory to critique the rapidly developing Korean society as well as the reformation of the individual. In Chŏng Yŏn-hŭi's *Nanjido* (1985, *Nanjido*), the protagonist of the novel, Chŏng-ki, lives with Ŭn-suk's family in Nanjido.[225] Chŏng-ki, a former gang member turned waste picker, believes that the landfill cured his dishonest and thieving character. Ŭn-suk, the female narrator, is around nineteen and lives in Nanjido with her mother, grandmother, and two younger brothers. After completing high school, she worked as a waitress at a Japanese restaurant where she also provided sexual services to a man in his seventies. Upon leaving Nanjido, Ŭn-suk learns that societal waste (i.e., extravagance and moral decay) is no better than the material discards deposited in the landfill. Reprimanding Ŭn-suk for her sexually degrading herself for seemingly selfish ends, Chŏng-ki attempts to save her as part of his romantic pursuit. However, she leaves Nanjido once again, this time seeing her job as a means to rescue the people of Nanjido. Back in the old man's hotel room, Ŭn-suk suggests him she would do anything if he promised to offer financial support for the medical needs of the Nanjido dwellers. When he dismisses her plea, she commits suicide. Here, Chŏng-ki's own rehabilitation not only aligned with the conventional reformation narrative but also provided greater moral authority to criticize Ŭn-suk's debasement. In contrast, Ŭn-suk's sexual sacrifice, without a patriarch or adult male in her family to benefit, was regarded as neither filial nor virtuous. Although Ŭn-suk decides to use her sex work to help the Nanjido dwellers, when this (ostensibly) nobler, less self-serving aim fails, her "defilement" ceases to serve any purpose and she takes her own life.

In literary works, rural migrants often portrayed as engaging in either waste job or sexual labor. In Hong Sŏng-wŏn's *Sŏrya* (1979, *Sŏrya*), a father and daughter each worked in a junk depot and a restaurant, where the daughter began working as a restaurant hostess providing sexual services.[226] Chang, a day laborer, relocated to Seoul in search of his daughter, who had disappeared in Seoul. The story sets in a junk depot where three tile setters worked there intermittently during the off-season, while the remaining four, including Chang, worked there regularly. One evening, the waste

[225] Chŏng Yŏn-hŭi, *Nanjido* (Sŏul: Chŏngŭmsa, 1988).

[226] Hong Sŏng-wŏn, "Sŏrya," *Munye chungang* 2 no.1 (March 1979): 140-154.

pickers gather at a nearby restaurant to celebrate the birthday of a worker at a junk depot. When Chang overheard the voice of a new waitress in the next room, he immediately missed his runaway daughter, whose image of scarlet lips at a drinking table came to mind—only to find out shortly thereafter that the news waitress was indeed his daughter. In Mun Sun-t'ae's short story *Janitor* (1975, *Chŏngsobu*), we follow the story of a rural migrant couple.[227] Nam-su, a city janitor, arrives in the city of Kwangju from a rural village when he lost his home and blacksmithing job due to highway construction. Sun-ja, an orphaned prostitute stricken with late-stage cancer, meets Nam-su while soliciting in a park. Using all her savings and her pimp's connection, she secures Nam-su a janitor job.[228] Nam-su, unaware of the severity of her sickness, imagines removing Sun-ja from the brothel. When his superintendent, who has been bribed by a factory owner, orders Nam-su and other janitors to unload waste next to thatched-roof houses where the poor live, the janitors acquiesce for fear of losing their jobs. Feeling as if the garbage of the rich is "bulldozing" the homes of the poor, Nam-su digs up trash mountains and dumps it next to the factory yard, an act of conscience that costs him his job. In this ending, the protagonist exploits waste to criticize the growing divide between the haves and have-nots.

Junk Depot (1976, *Komulsang*) stages intraclass gender dynamics through an episode between male waste pickers. O Yu-kwŏn's story follows three men whose lives were entangled with the Korean war: Jjakkui, a single man in his late thirties who became an orphan when his leftist parents were executed; Ttŏksoi, a veteran who became infertile during the war and was subsequently unable to restart a family; and Elder Ttogul, a man in his sixties whose life was ruined due to accusations that he was an anti-communist

[227] Mun Sun-t'ae, "Chŏngsobu," in *Kohyang ŭro kanŭn param* (Sŏul: Ch'angjak kwa pip'yŏngsa, 1975).

[228] It is worth noting that neither Sun-ja's prostitution nor Nam-su's janitor role was criticized or moralized in the story; rather, Nam-su's goal of returning to his hometown with Sun-ja indicates class-based affinities (i.e., those of rural migrants) that surpass gender differences or stigmatized jobs.

landowner.[229] Working as waste/junk collectors (*komul changsu*), they share a rented room in a junk depot, where they sell what they collect. One day, Ttŏksoi encounters a woman in her thirties who, while negotiating a price for her broken pot, playfully asks whether he would purchase human trash (*saram komul*). The woman becomes a prostitute after leaving a fraud marriage but remains determined to find someone and marry again. Back in the junk depot, Ttŏksoi explains her story and asks Jjakkui, a single man in his late thirties, if he accepts a bride if he arranged one. Ttŏksoi and Elder Ttogul encourage Jjakkui to start a married life in a similarly dingy room in the junk depot; both think they could benefit from her domestic labor. The three men in the story, who found waste work as a survival strategy, occupy the bottom of the social ladder; their social position is unlikely to afford them either wives or families. When Ttŏksoi tries to match Jjakkui with the prostitute, the men do not judge her being a barmaid and a prostitute. Instead, they support Jjakkui's marriage strictly for their own potential benefit—that the woman might fulfill their domestic needs.

The literary narratives I have examined demonstrate two characteristics. One is the way that waste work can bring repentance to and reform individuals. Whether male waste workers reflecting on their own transformation or narrators criticizing other waste pickers for their lax work ethic and moral weakness, these were all told in lay people's voices, internalizing perspectives that effectively reproduced the state's claims and narratives. The parallels made between male waste work and female sex work constitute the second characteristic.[230] This literary motif, which itself mirrors the Joint Wedding (*hapdong kyŏron*) program in the 1960s and 1970s, seems to suggest a similar uplift of their lives.[231] Although it hints at the class affinities between

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[229] O Yu-kwŏn, "*Komulsang*," *Hyŏndae munhak* 259 (July 1976): 34-53.

[230] Pairing prostitutes and other working class or underclass males in literature is not entirely new. For instance, analyzing commonalities between military labor and sex work, Jin-Kyung Lee indicates the similarity between their respective social positions. In the case of military labor and military sex work, they are both in a militarized environment and use their bodies as commodities; for both, simply having a functioning body equals their monetary value. Jin-kyung Lee, *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[231] The Joint Wedding was a state-led forced marriage scheme that matched waste pickers with Seoul's Women's Protection Facility. Historian Kim A-ram indicates that the Joint Weddings were held for disabled veterans during the 1950s and extended to rag picker camps. Kim claims that the state

male waste pickers and female prostitutes, it obscures their uneven, gendered relationships.[232] Marrying otherwise vagrant individuals could prevent potential problems related to vagrancy and reduce the state's fiscal burden, such as the operation costs of labor camps and protection facilities. This heteronormative family model serves the state's interests rather than the interests of the individual. This arranged marriage scheme did not offer real possibilities for social mobility, implicitly perpetuating their social status on the margins of the society.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION OF WASTE PICKERS

Despite difficulties uncovering the voice of waste pickers, some available sources provide waste pickers' own accounts. In petition letters written to state authorities, newspaper op-eds, essays in magazines, and newsletters for a more general audience, waste pickers identified and advocated for themselves. Through various types of written materials, waste pickers narrated themselves in three ways: their moral standing, their labor and its contribution, and their self-identification in relation to broader social and structural perspectives.

First, waste pickers portrayed a willingness to comply with dominant

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compelled them to begin new lives and ignored the fact that waste pickers had replicated "family-like" structures in their street groups. Such an interpretation not only romanticizes the exploitive and violent characteristics of street groups, but also disregards the gendered burdens of the state-led marriage and family model. In the context of the Joint Wedding, women were frequently mobilized to provide domestic labor and to "normalize" men who were otherwise deemed problematic. Kim A-ram, "Kajok i chilmŏjin kuho wa chahwal: 1950-60-nyŏndae haptong kyŏrhon kwa kŭ chuin'gong," *Yŏksa munje yŏn'gu* 33 (2015): 84.

[232] In her analysis of what she terms "poverty-affect" (*kanan chŏngdong*) in the literature of the 1970s, the literary scholar Yi Chŏng-suk suggests that prostitutes represented a distinct socioeconomic category that was uprooted by industrialization and, like many others, yearned for a better life. In the 1970s, "prostitute narratives" emphasized the agency of prostitutes, who resisted the inherent commodification of their bodies and sexuality in sex work. The similarities between prostitutes and their male customers stemmed from their shared experiences of being uprooted, desiring to escape poverty, and being constrained by capitalistic and hygienic limitations. See Yi, "*Kanan*," 77-92.

moral standards, if only to advance their own needs. For instance, they appropriated "reconstruction member," a formally devised term to replace "rag picker," to resist common stereotypes they faced. In his letter to a newspaper in 1966, Cho Sŏng-ki, an inmate of the Work Reconstruction Camp, urged an end to waste pickers being called hoodlums. Reminding readers of the new name, "reconstruction inmate," Cho claimed that waste pickers worked diligently, saved their incomes, and lived under a strict routine and schedule, arguing that "waste-pickers are not as malicious as some civilians (*sahoein*) might think."[233] Likewise, Kim, another WRC member, criticized the tendency to cast waste pickers as thieves or beggars, arguing that "rag pickers do have dignity as human beings."[234] While these claims seemed to comply with the state's justifications for establishing waste picker camps, the formal terms of their work nonetheless gave them a chance to reclaim their personhood and work ethic.

Petition letters show how waste pickers and their managers further inverted the language of the state to advocate for their needs.[235] In 1976, Pak Ha-yŏng, a manager (*kwal'lijang*) at the Korea Work Reconstruction Welfare Organization (KWRWO, *Han'guk kŭllo chaegŏn pokjihoe*), a waste picker organization run by the Police Veterans Association (*Taehang'min'guk chaehyang kyŏnguhoe*), filed a letter with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Naemubu*):

> Now, we have gained confidence as dignified members of society (*ŭijŏtan sahoein*) and as individuals with occupations (*chikŏpin*); we are grateful that we have cast off our past as ex-convicts and that we have become citizens (*simin*) collecting recyclable materials at night and catching thieves and burglars; we have grasped the spirit of New Village (*Saemaŭl*), sweeping the streets of our neighborhood in the early mornings; we have gained self-

[233] "Yangach'irago purŭji malla," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, 1966.09.05

[234] "Nŏngmajui ŭi pyŏn," *Tonga Ilbo*, 1964.04.22

[235] In the petition letters submitted by other types of waste picker camps during the mid-1970s, it was often the managers, not the waste pickers themselves, who actively positioned waste workers as repentant individuals, and thus as deserving members of society (sahoein). I was not able to confirm from the sources whether the managers were also waste workers or not.

> esteem and pride from the fact that the materials we collect will be recycled and then contribute to the national economy. We, the three thousand inmates who have grown from parasitic waste pickers to industrial workers (*sanŏp ŭi yŏkkun*), promise to become hard-working, genuine citizens.[236]

In this letter, Pak recited the state's narratives: becoming hardworking individuals, fostering "the spirit of New Village (*Saemaŭl*)," and maintaining the cleanliness and tidiness of their neighborhood. By refuting prevalent stereotypes, Pak positioned waste pickers as deserving members of society.[237] It may seem the writer merely took up the state's language, emphasizing becoming a hard-working, productive, self-reliant individual—a key tenet of the authoritarian regime. However, when the state designated waste pickers as a deviant population, and its discursive effect spanned society, waste pickers had little other option to have their voices heard than to position themselves as docile and obedient subjects. Written as a petition, their seeming conformity was a ploy to solicit financial support.

At the Rag Commune, this moral claim served to support waste pickers' autonomy. Kim Ch'a-kyun, a leader of the commune, admitted how he and his colleagues distanced themselves from past lives in which they stole or exploited others.[238] Mun Yŏng-sam, a former gangmaster who had lived off his

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[236] Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Han'gukkŭllo chaegŏn pokchihoe chiwŏn yoch'ŏng e taehan hoesin* (Sŏul: Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, 1976). BA0185302.

[237] This emphasis on cleanliness also appears in another letter published in a newsletter of the JOC (Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne, Young Christian Workers, *Han'guk Kat'ollik Nodong Ch'ŏngnyŏnhoe*) in March 1962. A WRC member writes: "[A]fter joining the JOC, we keep our bodies and garments clean, as well as our neighborhood; we have decided to clean the village we live in to demonstrate that we are not vagrants; we ensure that we plan and accomplish in our lives as JOC members by contributing to society". Waste pickers displayed cleanliness to show their reformation; by caring for their physical bodies and immediate surroundings, waste pickers were no longer a nuisance in the social landscape. Cleanliness, in this context, was employed to restore their new identity as a deserving citizen. Han'guk Kat'ollik nodong ch'ŏngnyŏnhoe, *Han'guk Kat'ollik nodong ch'ŏngnyŏnhoe 25-yŏnsa* (Sŏul: Pundo ch'ulp'ansa, 1986), 67-68; *Han'guk Kat'ollik nodong ch'ŏngnyŏnhoe 50-nyŏnŭi kirok* (Minjuhwa undong kinyŏm saŏphoe, 2009), 27-28.

[238] Kim Ch'a-gyun, "Che 2-chagŏpchang ŭl sinsŏrhamyŏ: kŭraedo saraya hagi ttaemune," *Nŏngma* 4 (1988), 4-8.

underlings' labor, pledged not exploit others' labor and to respect equal rights in the commune. He would "stop living only for himself, but for other waste pickers whose lives were as deprived as his own."[239] Such reformation and self-discipline should not be seen as conforming to the state's regulation. It primarily served to encourage waste pickers to create a community.

Second, waste pickers emphasized the value of their labor and their contributions to society. After the 1973 Oil Crisis, waste collectors realized that their livelihoods were in peril due to resource conservation campaigns and fluctuating raw material costs. Kim Ch'ang-su, the leader of the 150 waste pickers at the Hyŏpsinwŏn camp in Kwangju-si, submitted a series of petition letters in 1976, 1977, and 1978. Kim wrote that despite being "a warrior who contributes to national economic development" and a "hidden contributor to industrial development," waste pickers were excluded from economic development's benefits. Instead, they were "treated with contempt and disdain by society, abandoned as human garbage, but fighting to survive."[240]

In the 1980s, the government intervened directly to develop a waste management system, establishing pilot household recycling programs as well as the Korea Recycling Corporation (Han'guk chaesaeng kongsa, KRC). Cho Kil-sŏng, a waste picker at the Rag Commune, eloquently criticized the KRC's activities: as someone "whose life depends on old materials and whose life is synonymous with trash," he sensed a tinge of "emptiness and hollowness" upon learning of the then-emerging government recycling programs that would serve only to marginalize waste pickers further.[241] In its quest for professionalization and institutionalization, the government predictably looked down on the labor practice of waste pickers without

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[239] Mun Yŏng-sam, "Sijakhamyŏ," 3-4.

[240] In 1977, waste pickers were able to collect only roughly 19,000 metric tons (5 million kwan) of materials, compared to 30,000 metric tons (8 million kwan) the previous year (5 million kwan). Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae unyŏng hyŏpchomun* (Kwangju: Kwangju kwangyŏksi, 1980), 147-152.

[241] Cho Kil-sŏng, "Han nŏngmajui ga marhanŭn ssŭregi taech'aek," *Wŏlgan Mal* (September 1992): 200; Yun P'al-byŏng, "Yŏrŏbuni kkumkkunŭn arŭmdaun sesang, urinŭn silch'ŏnhago itsŭmnida," *Chinbo p'yŏngnon* 5 (2000): 217-249.

considering their potential role in recyclable collection. As waste pickers were not considered to be an occupation, there was no place to register their knowledge and expertise, nor their social, political, and environmental consciousness. Cho reminded readers that their waste picker status obscured their work ethic and recycling performance, staking a claim for the social necessity of their work despite the dominant narrative's disregard.

In addition to the institutionalization of recycling, scrap import also affected domestic secondary material prices and the livelihood of waste pickers. In the 1970s, in response to the Oil Crisis, the government proposed a system of centralized import control to regulate the price difference between imported and domestic recyclable materials.[242] Regardless, scrap import continued without much supply and demand management and, by the 1980s, waste pickers criticized this situation in essays or cartoons published in Rag Commune newsletters. Figure 2-1 shows a protestor on the left shouting against the import of scrap metal, while the person to the right is seated on an elevated seat, indicating their position of authority, who states they will import even more scrap metal to imprison the protestors. A satirical depiction of waste pickers who were frequently framed and imprisoned, and often subject to unfairly severe charges, this caricature critiqued both the government's scrap import policy and its unjust criminalization of waste pickers.

[242] Kwahak kisulch'ŏ, *P'yep'um*. I discussed this in detail in chapter 1.

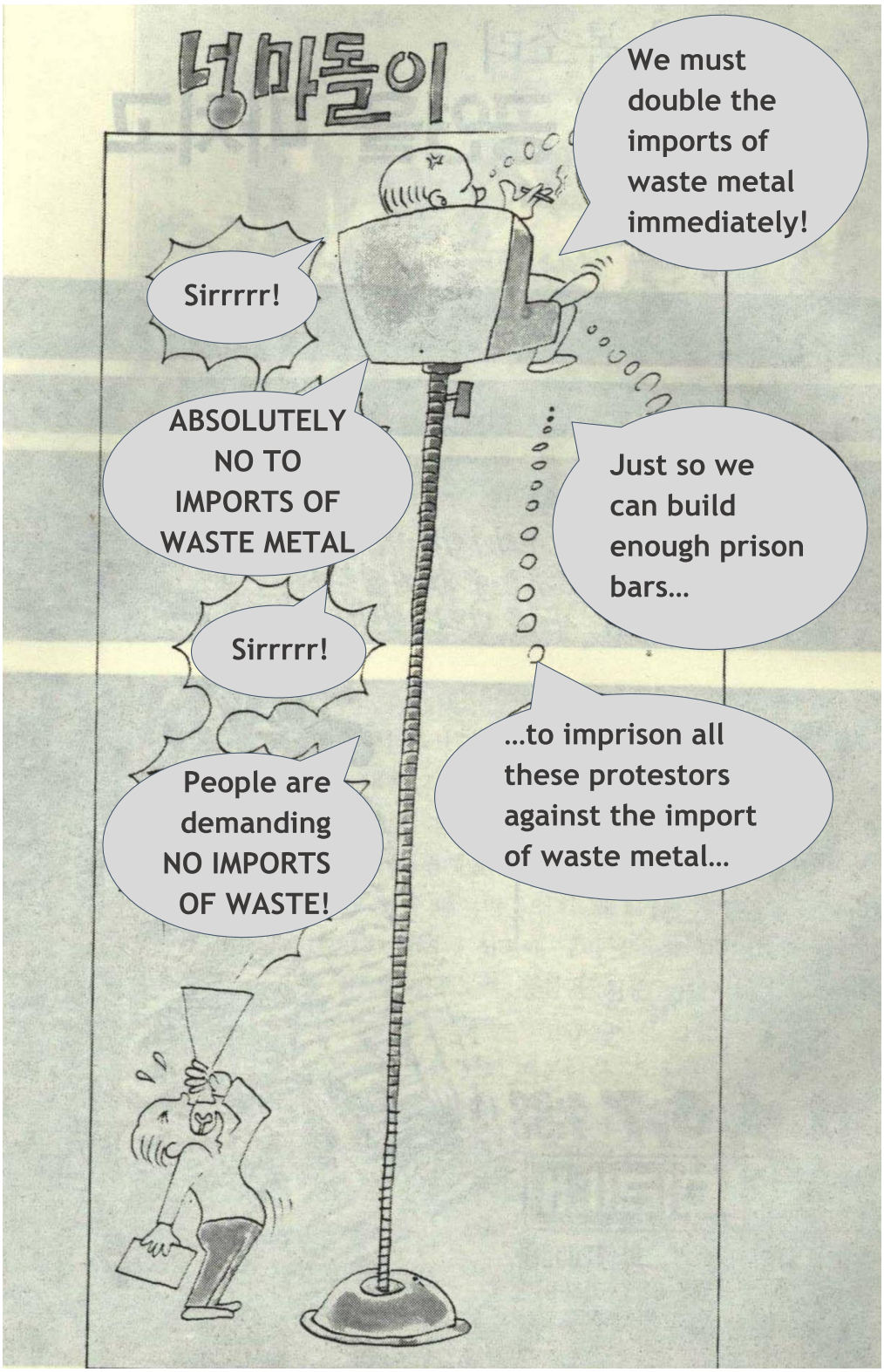

Figure 2-1 Scrap metal import protest

Source: "Nŏngmadoli," Nŏngma 4 (1988), 31.

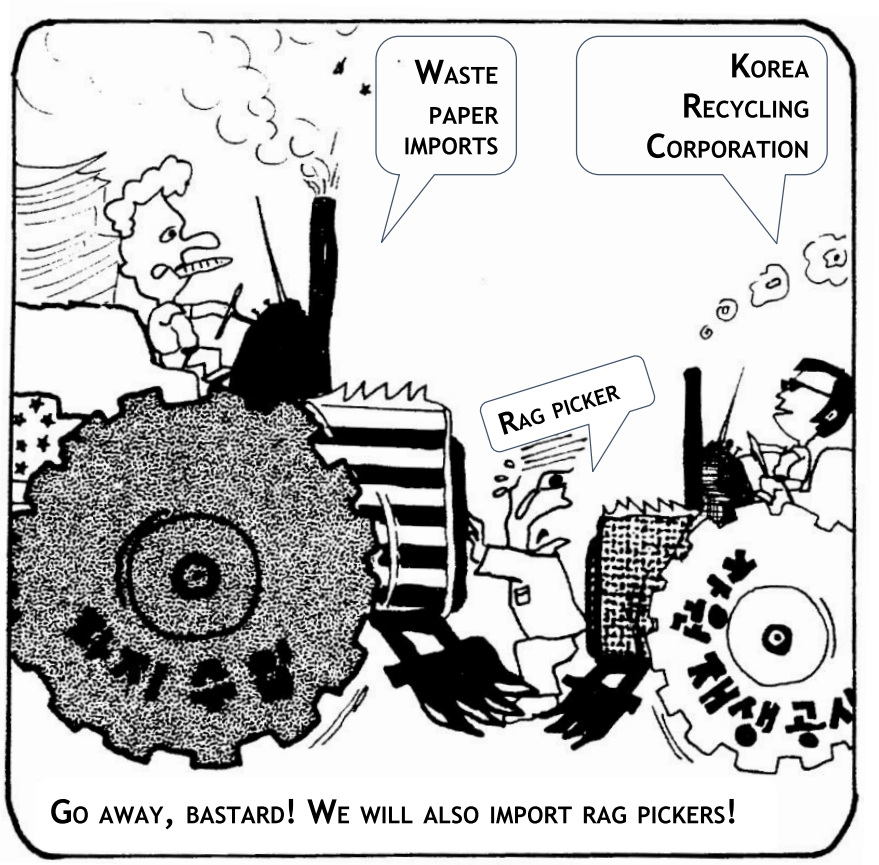

Figure 2-2 Importing Rag Pickers

Source: "Nŏngma manpyŏng," Nŏngma 5 (1991): 27.

Figure 2-2 illustrates a waste picker trapped between wastepaper import forces and the Korea Recycling Corporation. Both are depicted driving compactors, with one of the compactors bearing the Stars and Stripes, suggesting that wastepaper import was linked to anti-American sentiment. A waste picker is wedged between their wheels and excavating buckets, emphasizing the threat that waste pickers confronted. One of the compactor operators contends that they will also import rag pickers, from which we learn that this image satirizes the scrap import policy by insinuating sarcastically that the government might source waste pickers from abroad as well.

Finally, waste pickers argued their presence stemmed from social and structural causes. Yi Tong-ch'ŏl, a waste picker at the Rag Commune, indicated that many rag pickers had been orphaned during the Korean War and many more had been abandoned by their families . Given these origins, Yi argued that "rag pickers should be seen as a consequence of other people's actions, rather

than as a result of their own shortcomings, thus society must take responsibility."[243] Similarly, Cho Kil-sŏng, a Rag Commune member, stated that many rag pickers, without education and skills, lived on trash heaps because they did not want to be criminals and had few other alternatives besides death.[244] Both waste pickers attributed the prevalence of rag pickers to historical and social causes, such as being uprooted and lacking social ties, and demand that society should change the way it sees them. Being a rag picker was not entirely the fault of the individual, they argued, but instead was entwined with broader social forces, a situation that Korean society should recognize.

For some waste pickers, recognizing of their moral standing and the value of their work led them to reflect on their marginal position. Mun Yŏng-sam suggested that no one wanted to become a waste picker and that no waste pickers intended to live on the lowest stratum of society. He urged that "waste pickers have the right to live a humane life despite being abandoned and shunned by society," and that "waste pickers are no different from civilians (*sahoein*), in their struggle for living."[245] Questioning why waste pickers are never treated as human beings,[246] Song Kyŏng-sang observed that waste pickers were systemically excluded from society due to their criminal records or lack of education, reducing them to lives of vagrancy or day labor. These experiences of discrimination and exploitation came from their childhood as orphans, with no next of kin, and the stigma of life on the streets, all circumstances that were beyond their control.

Let us return to the newspaper opinion piece I discussed, which pleaded to stop labeling waste pickers as hoodlums. After more than two decades, it is noteworthy that waste pickers at the Rag Commune appropriated the derogatory term "hoodlum." Kim Ch'a-kyun recalled an anecdote during a drink with members of the commune: "We personified the term *yangach'i* as if it were a three-syllable Korean name, used the first letter *yang* as a family name, and combined it with a honorific

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[243] Yi Tong-ch'ŏl, "Nŏngmajui rŭl ponŭn tukaji sigak 1," *Nŏngma* 1 (October 15, 1986), 14.

[244] Cho, "Ssŭregi taech'aek," 200.

[245] Mun, "Sijakhamyŏ," 3-4.

[246] Song Kyŏng-sang, "Modakpulgaesŏ," *Saegajŏng* (January 1988): 100-101. Also see: Song Kyŏng-sang, "Kkaejin kŭrŭt to ssŭlmoga itta," *Nodong munhak* (April 1989): 28-30.

title *sŏnsaengnim*. …. We [the commune members] call each other 'Mr. Yang' (*Yang sŏnsaengnim*), hoping to respect one another, even if only within our world."[247] Originally, the term hoodlum denigrated an individual's personhood beyond occupation. By reversing its pejorative connotation into an honorable, respectable one, waste pickers reclaimed their self-worth.

CONCLUSION

This chapter investigated the language and discourses surrounding waste pickers. Not only did the WRC establish the perceived deviance of waste pickers, it also gave rise to associated labels and discourses. Institutional changes, especially the emergence of public and private sector waste management, spawned new waste-related occupations as well as neutralizing terminologies designed to reduce stigma. However, most of these terms were either tautological or euphemistic. This selective formalization of waste labor entailed promoting certain types of waste labor through public campaigns and news footage, which in turn reinforced the stigma associated with waste pickers. Popular and literary narratives demonstrated that the state's disciplinary programs and attendant discourses outlasted the camps themselves. The popular imagination either lauded or criticized waste pickers for their work or personhood. Whether motivated by sympathy or antipathy, lay people—scholars, social reformers, or middle-class citizens—reproduced commonly held stereotypes. In literary representations, narrators exploited both material and metaphorical waste to criticize the country's growing polarization. On the one hand, waste could bring waste pickers repentance and reformation; on the other, by pairing male waste work and female sex work, it insinuated few possibilities for uplifting their lives and social mobility. Finally, while the self-identification of waste pickers may appear to have made moral claims that subscribed to dominant normative values, by establishing their moral standing they sought to uphold their autonomy and reclaim the value of their work.

[247] Kim Ch'a-kyun, "Che 2-chagŏpchang," 5-7.

Chapter 3. THE PEREGRINATION OF WASTE PICKERS CAMPS, 1962–1995

Figure 3-1 Work Reconstruction Camp opening ceremony 1

Source: Sŏul kirogwŏn, RG5-SR77-IT9131

Figure 3-2 Work Reconstruction Camp opening ceremony 2

Source: Sŏul kirogwŏn, RG5-SR77-IT9131

The two images depict waste pickers at the Work Reconstruction Camp, a police-run waste picker camp established shortly after the military junta seized power in 1961. The first photo (Figure 3-1) provides a close-up image of waste pickers, wearing a uniform with insignia and a hat, looked only little different from the military authorities across from them. The sartorial element was not the only military-like feature. On establishing the camp, the police demanded waste pickers be registered, prohibited unregistered waste pickers from collecting waste, and designated districts to each unit, regulations that resonated with the colonial regulation of Korean salvage/scrap dealers during the total war material mobilization.[248] The second image (Figure 3-2), taken during the same opening ceremony on May 14, 1962, shows waste pickers holding panels that read "reclaiming waste (*p'yep'um chaesaeng*)," "saving foreign currency (*oehwa chŏllyak*)," and "building self-reliance (*charip kŏnsŏl*)," slogans that reflected the proclaimed objectives of the waste picker camp. Why did the military regime control waste pickers? What changes did this onset of institutionalization have on their life and work?

This chapter examines waste picker camps between the 1960s and the 1990s. I primarily focus on the Work Reconstruction Camp (WRC, *kŭllojaegŏndae*) and the Self-Sufficiency Work Camp (SWC, *chahwalkŭllodae*), two state-led waste picker camps that ran between 1961 and 1974 (WRC) during the Park Chung-Hee era, and 1979 and 1995 (SWC) during the Chun

[248] Korean historian Kim In-ho explains the range of regulations imposed on large-scale wholesalers to itinerant junk/salvage collectors, including a mandatory licensing procedure for any scrap business, wearing an armband and badge, and using a designated collection bag to demonstrate lawfulness. Kim In-ho, "Chungil chŏnjaeng shigi chosŏn esŏŭi p'yep'um hoesu chŏngch'aek," *Han'guk minjok undongsa yŏn'gu* 57 (2008), 169-235; Kim, "T'aep'yŏngyang chŏnjaeng shigi chosŏn esŏ kŭmsok hoesu undong ŭi chŏn'gae wa shilchŏk," *Han'guk minjok undongsa yŏn'gu* 62 (2010), 305-374; Kim In-ho, "Chungil chŏnjaeng shigi chosŏn nae komulsang pujŏng ŭi shilt'ae (1937-1940)," *Han'guk minjok undongsa yŏn'gu* 66 (2011), 127-178. These regulations were not entirely unique to Korea. Chad Denton suggests that Imperial Japan needed to control existing waste-related occupations to maximize material mobilization for total war. It launched a control system in Japan and in annexed Korea modeled after Nazi Germany's control system for its waste collectors and dealers. Chad B Denton, "Korean kuzuya,'German-style control' and the business of waste in wartime Japan, 1931-1945," *Business History* 64, no. 5 (2022): 904-922.

Doo-Hwan era and beyond. I examine what the state or state contractors–those who ran labor camps and institutional facilities–claimed to do, how camps were run, and what long-term consequences of these regulations.[249] Based on this line of questioning, I ask why waste pickers were labeled as a category of deviants, were reconfigured through coercive, military-like camps, and gradually pushed "out of sight."

The scholarship on waste picker camps has largely focused on state violence against waste pickers, positioning these camps alongside other vagrant regulation schemes or land reclamation camps during the Park Chung-hee era.[250] Sociologist Pak Hong-gŭn asserts that the WRC and the SWC served as "a spectacle of anomalous population," and that they provided a counterexample to the "productive subjects" promoted by the military regime.[251] However, the frequent invisibility of socially excluded groups contradicts his argument waste picker camps being a "spectacle." Korean Sociologist Yun Su-jong chronicled the history of the state's confinement of waste pickers as well as the Rag Commune, an organization created autonomously by waste pickers in 1986, with membership that fluctuated between 30 and 60 individuals from the 1980s to the 2000s.[252] Yun illustrates how the Commune adapted to structural

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[249] In his analysis of 1970s vagrant regulations, Korean sociologist Chŏng Su-nam suggests that philanthropic or outsourced welfare institutions functioned as arms of the state, characterizing them as "the state-welfare alliance of repression." Indeed, in analyzing waste picker camps, the notion of the state needs to be expanded beyond a mere bureaucratic body to one that incorporates para-governmental organizations that undertook the state's role in operating institutional facilities that targeted the "deviant" population. Chŏng Su-nam, "Kŏri wi ŭi sahoeak ilso wa ŏgap kwŏllyŏk ŭi yŏksŏl: 1970-nyŏndae purangin ŭl chungsimŭro," *Chŏngsin munhwa yŏn'gu* 41 no. 1 (2018): 308.

[250] In her analysis of social policy and child welfare during the authoritarian period, Korean historian Kim A-ram locates the WRC as part of vagrant children regulations and settlement programs. Kim A-ram, "5·16 kunjŏnggi sahoe chŏngch'aek: adongbokchi wa 'puranga' taech'aek ŭi sŏngkyŏk," *Yŏksawa hyŏnsil* 82 (2011): 329-65.

[251] Pak Hong-kŭn, "Sahoechŏk paeje ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa pyŏnhwa: nŏngmajui kukka tongwŏn ŭi yŏksa rŭl chungsimŭro," *Sahoe wa yŏksa* 108 (2016): 244-256.

[252] Yun Su-jong, "Nŏngma kongdongch'e ŭi sŏngkyŏk kwa kŭ pyŏnhwa," *Chinbo p'yŏngnon* 15 (2003): 136-162; "P'oidong 266-pŏnji: nŏngmajui maŭl kwa nŏngma kongdongch'e," *Chinbo p'yŏngnon* 29 (2006): 178-193.

changes in recycling policy such as the economies of scale in recyclable collection and improved quality of discarded materials that had higher value as used goods than scrap. Contrasting the coercive nature of state-led waste picker camps, Yun argues that despite state intervention and the removal of their autonomy, waste-pickers created their own lifeworlds. However, neither questioned the camp's relationship to waste nor the long-term consequences of its three decades of operation.

A study of Kwangju's waste pickers reveals a slightly different point of entry:[253] the role of the urban poor in the 1980 Kwangju Uprising and the undercounting of civilian casualties.[254] Korean historian Yi Chŏng-sŏn examines these two interrelated questions by focusing on three characteristics of the urban poor, particularly waste pickers: their connection to collective living in confinement facilities and camps, their lack of civil registration or next of kin, and their settlement sites on the city's outskirt.[255] Yi explains that the unregistered status of many members of the urban underclass allowed the state to deny or conceal their very presence, including their deaths, which may be one reason why Kwangju's waste pickers vanished from view after the Uprising.[256] However, the disappearance of waste pickers not only implies

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[253] Yi Chŏng-sŏn, "1980-nyŏn Kwangju hangjaeng kwa tosi pinmin: ŏdisŏ wasŏ ŏdiro sarajyŏnnŭn'ga," *Yŏksa munje yŏn'gu* 45 (2021): 49-89.

[254] The Kwangju uprising, which occurred in the southwestern city of Kwangju May 18-27, 1980, is also known as the May 18 Kwangju Democratization Movement. What began as a student protest against the imposition of Martial Law escalated into a ten-day struggle between armed citizens and military forces, which culminated in the Airborne Brigade's brutal suppression of the Citizen's Army. The uprising was an important moment in South Korea's democratization movement, shaping its broader political and social landscape. For an overview of the uprising and its contested meanings, see: Gi-Wook Shin and Kyung Moon Hwang, eds., *Contentious Kwangju: The May 18 Uprising in Korea's Past and Present* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

[255] Yi indicates that shoe shiners, who did not have any family or next of kin, took part in the Citizen's Army (*simin'gun*) against the Martial Law Command on the last two days of the Uprising; that urban underclass provided additional protestors through their street networks. Yi, "Kwangju," 67-68.

[256] This is based on the allegation that the Martial Law Command murdered and buried waste pickers in mass graves while omitting their deaths from the official death toll, which was reported in testimonials during the National Assembly Hearings and the Kwangju Special Committee investigations, as well as in popular sources and the media. Yi, "Kwangju," 78-79.

their absence but also their invisibility—a consequence for which state violence is not the sole cause. This relative emphasis on state violence obscures the social cause: urbanites' indifference towards the harsh realities of vagrant regulation and confinement schemes, as well as the expulsion of the urban underclass from the city. Yi argues that this social violence implicitly removed the urban poor from their field of vision, and that invisibility functioned as one exclusionary mechanism.

It is noteworthy that all three scholars hint at the presence of violence of and/or around waste pickers but do not analyze it explicitly.[257] Pak discusses the homicide of a waste picker by a police officer, as well as rampant violence in the SWC camp units, implying that waste picker camps may have led to police condoning violence against waste pickers;[258] Yun notes the living environment of the Rag Commune as violent, with physical assaults and child abuse, preventing the formation of a long-lasting community.[259] However, they portray such incidents as characteristic of street populations without analyzing them in terms of victims and/or perpetrators, the relationship between the various forms of violence that occurred around waste pickers, or their perpetuation.

One way of understanding the extensive violence among waste pickers is to understand different types of violence as relational. For instance, the coercive and brutal policing of the urban underclass during the military regime was connected to confrontations with state agents and the need to establish an informal social order of waste pickers (and larger street populations), which made waste pickers both victims of state violence and perpetrators of other forms of violence, including interactions among themselves, with street population, or other citizens. The reported volatility of

[257] Although the context positions the alleged violence of waste pickers—as part of the armed citizenry—during the Kwangju uprising closer to subaltern violence, Yi argues that it merits further analysis. Yi, "Kwangju," 64.

[258] Pak, "Nŏngmajui," 242, 247-8.

[259] Yun, "Nŏngma kongdongch'e," 155, 162.

waste pickers was often deemed to be temperamental, interpersonal, and apolitical.[260] Rather than moralizing about violence, it is more useful to face the chains of violence that constitute the marginalization process. Their violence was not always a cause but one of the consequences of their punishment and confinement, which gave rise to other forms of exclusionary practices, making their marginalization more complex.

Considering this complexity of exclusion and marginalization, this chapter focuses on the specific ways in which waste pickers were excluded and analyzes this process in its social, economic, and spatial dimensions. First, waste picker camps resulted in their social exclusion. This initial institutionalization often led to further institutionalization, criminalization, and pauperization, maintaining them as an urban underclass and social outcasts. Second, waste pickers were economically vulnerable both due to their subjection to the police and the emergence of waste management, which rendered waste pickers economically vulnerable even within the informal waste economy. The police or their intermediaries frequently manipulated sales prices, leaving waste pickers precarious even within the informal waste economy, while their forced uprooting and lack of financial stability contributed to their economic deprivation. Lastly, the WRC and SWC secluded waste pickers from the urban space and rendered them invisible. After a series of relocations and displacements, they were eventually driven out of the city by a combination of accelerated urban development and outdated camp siting policies that were incompatible with the increasing competition for urban space.

This chapter draws on a variety of sources, ranging from state-produced ones such as governmental and police reports and administrative documents, to civil society archives such as surveys, petition letters, and waste pickers' newsletters that make legible the waste pickers' voices. In particular, I incorporate a new series of city-level sources that reveal eviction cases, as well as the city's guideline on the relocation of and housing assistance policies for

[260] This kind of street violence differs from subaltern violence, which was used as a weapon of the weak against domination and oppression.

the SWC units. While my analysis largely focuses on camps located in Seoul, I also incorporate reports and surveys produced nationwide and in other cities. I begin by situating waste picker camps within the social control of the 1960s, looking especially at why the state identified waste pickers as disruptive to social order and in need of reformation. I move on to examine how waste picker camps led to their social exclusion, and how this initial social exclusion engendered both their economic and spatial exclusion.

SOCIAL ORDER, PERCEIVED DEVIANCE, AND WASTE PICKERS IN THE 1960S

In the early 1960s, when the junta seized power in South Korea after the May 16th coup, the military regime established a network of camps and institutional facilities. The country had endured a great deal of social and political turmoil in less than two decades including Liberation (1945), the Korean War (1950-53), and the April Revolution (1960). Legitimacy and sovereignty were the regime's foremost concerns. Key to establishing this legitimacy was establishing social order. To this end, camps gathered together segments of the population that the regime deemed problematic under its control, reduced penal costs, and made use of their labor.

Establishing camps for specific population segments was not entirely new. After liberation in 1945, the state organized a range of settlement (*chŏngch'ak*) programs that mobilized refugees for agricultural development, providing them employment and relieving the state of the need to provide costly monetary aid.[261] During the Second Republic, the Chang administration launched the National Construction Enterprise (*Kukt'o kŏnsŏl saŏp*), which put the urban unemployed to work on major public work projects (e.g., infrastructure construction and land reclamation).[262] During the First

[261] Kim A-ram, "Han'guk ŭi nanmin palsaeng kwa nongch'on chŏngch'ak saŏp (1945-1960-yŏndae)," (PhD diss., Yŏnse taehakkyo, 2017).

[262] Initially planned as a seven-month project to make use of surplus American developmental/agricultural aid (PL480), the National Construction Enterprise did not last long due both to delayed shipments of grain and to the May 16 coup in 1961. Kim, "Nanmin," 201; Yim Song-ja, "5·16 ihu kukt'o kŏnsŏl saŏp kwa kukt'o kŏnsŏldan unyŏng silt'a,." *Han'guk kŭnhyŏndaesa yŏn'gu* 67 (2013): 900-942.

and Second Republics, these camps functioned as one part of wider social work programs, providing relief to targeted populations and settling them in local communities. While the Park regime resumed the National Construction Enterprise, historian Kim A-ram suggests that the regime used it as a means of punishment, targeting street gangs, members of organized crime groups (*chojik p'ongnyŏk*), draft dodgers (*kun mip'ilja*), orphans (*koa*), and vagrants (*purangin*).

Under the Third Republic, the state's focus turned to controlling and excluding target populations. The military regime identified segments it considered to be harmful to the social order and impressed them into land reclamation camps (*kaech'ŏktan*), refugee settlement programs, or protection facilities run under military-like discipline. Targeting whomever the regime depicted to be socially deviant, some of these programs claimed to protect the targeted population, whereas others claimed to work toward their reformation and rehabilitation.[263] Waste picker camps, such as the WRC, were among the latter.

How did the military regime define "social order"? A 1962 Ministry of Justice report, "Measures for Establishing Social Order" (*Sahoe chilsŏ hwangnip ŭl wihan taech'aek*), illustrates the state's concerns: regulation of social and educational morals (*p'unggi*); promotion of orderly vehicular traffic; suppression of violent criminality, smuggling and contraband, drug addiction, theft and burglary, and perjury; the operation of reformatory and correctional facilities; reinforcement of police investigations; and anti-communist preparedness. These categories were flexible and open-ended and encompassed various characters and identities, providing the state significant latitude to catalog what might be deviant or detrimental to social order.

Looking into one aspect of "social order" - the regulation of violent criminals - we find an example of a vague, fluid category. The report gathers different kinds of "violent criminals" (*p'ongryŏk sapŏm*) that had been rounded up during crackdowns: delinquent students, school dropouts, shoe-shiners, pimps, off-duty soldiers, gangsters, hoodlums, misbehaving disabled veterans,

[263] Kim A-ram, "5·16 kunjŏnggi sahoe chŏngch'aek: adongbokchi wa 'puranga' taech'aek ŭi sŏngkyŏk." *Yŏksa wa hyŏnsil* 82 (2011): 329-65

train thugs, and rag pickers.[264] Instead of providing a specific definition of social order or violent crime, the state generates a diffuse, expandable list of identities: some broadly falling into the category of "street labor," while others shared few affinities. What tied them together was their perceived deviance and potential harm to society. By using equivocal and overarching categories, state actors could exert their discretionary power. It allowed them to abuse the power of the state and police, defining its target populations anew as needed.

Against this backdrop of social control, we can ask why the state depicted waste pickers as deviant and in need of reformation and rehabilitation. In postwar South Korea, waste picking was only one of the many odd jobs on the street, a strategy of survival for street dwellers. Often associated with war orphans or street children, or taken up under street gang oversight, it was their vagrant status—undocumented and unregistered—that turned waste pickers into a target for the regime's social control.[265]

For the state to exert indiscriminate control over its population, it needed to label them, sort them into a category, and bring them under its purview. Establishing a camp specifically targeting waste pickers delivered all three goals. The name of the WRC combines "work" (*kŭllo*) and "reconstruction" (*chaegŏn*), the two terms that illustrated how the state designed the camp. First, by deploying the term "work" (*kŭllo*) over "labor" (*nodong*), the regime sought to instill a particular work ethic and form of worker subjectivity into waste pickers. Historian Hwasook Nam explains the colonial regime's preference for the term worker (*kŭlloja*, which means "a person who works diligently") over the term laborer (*nodongja*, which means "a person who labors") was part of a wider ideological program to transform workers into "industrial warriors" who would eventually serve to build the Japanese empire.[266]

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[264] Between May 1961 and May 1962, the police rounded up 18,993 "violent criminals" or whoever it deemed suspicious. Of the total, only 3,137 were sent to work at the National Construction Enterprise sites. The report indicates that there were insufficient number of sites to put those arrested to work. Pŏmmubu, *Sahoe chilsŏ hwangnip ŭl wihan taech'aek* (Sŏul: Pŏmmubu, 1962). BA0084324.

[265] In this sense, what the regime claimed as deviant was closer to an alleged deviancy for it had not yet been established but rather remained speculative, if not purely rhetorical.

[266] Hwasook Nam, Building Ships, Building a Nation: Korea's Democratic Unionism under Park Chung Hee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 25-26.

Such linguistic shifts continued after the war and, by the 1970s, "worker" became the official term under the military regime.

Second, its use of "reconstruction" (*chaegŏn*) over "construction (*kŏnsŏl*)" indicates that the regime understood reconstruction to exceed its narrowly economic sense. Historian Yi Sang-rok suggests that the term "reconstruction" shows how the military regime denied what had been built under past administrations.[267] During the Park regime, "reconstruction" implied establishing a new nation, identity, and national subjects.[268] Subsequently established camps carried similar vocabularies in their names, such as self-support (*chahwal*), rehabilitation (*kaengsaeng*), welfare (*pokji*)—all purported to set apart and discipline waste pickers.

Waste picker camps lasted more than three decades, a period that saw recycling gradually become part of public service and civic duty, and the campsites inevitably coveted by the ever-expanding cities and their favored middle class citizens. Combined with these broader structural changes, waste picker camps prompted social, economic, and spatial exclusion of waste pickers. While these forms of exclusion occurred either simultaneously or in

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[267] The military regime claimed to be building a new nation while denigrating the previous governments, both the First (Rhee-Liberal Party) and the Second (Chang-Democratic Party) Republic, if only to justify its abrupt seizure of power. Yi Sang-nok, "Kyŏngje cheiljuŭi ŭi sahoejŏk kusŏng kwa 'saengsanjŏk chuch'e' mandŭlgi." *Yŏksa munje yŏn'gu* 52 (2010): 115-158.

[268] For instance, the National Citizens' Reconstruction Movement (*Chaegŏn kungmin undong*, NCRM), which began shortly after the coup, sought to enlighten and guide citizens as dutiful nationals (*kungmin*) subordinate to the state. The programs of the National Citizens' Reconstruction Movement regulated everyday lives of citizens and disciplined them with attributes and dispositions that would be better suited for national reconstruction. The term *chaegŏn* was attached as a prefix to otherwise vernacular words, such as chaegŏn-date, chaegŏnbok-suits, chaegŏn-exercises, or even replacing usual greeting expressions with 'chaegŏn-hapsida (Let's reconstruct),' creating the newly shared meaning of *chaegŏn* to Koreans. As a result, the military government launched the term as an overarching propaganda as well as a discourse in the 1960s. Yi, "Saengsanjŏk chuch'e," 150-153. Historian Hŏ Ŭn argues that the NCRM's moral education and disciplining programs provided an outlet for the state to intervene in people's conscience and daily lives, ultimately paving the way towards the Yushin era in the 1970s. Hŏ Ŭn, "'5·16 kunjŏnggi' chaegŏn kungmin undong ŭi sŏngkyŏk," *Yŏksa munje yŏn'gu* 11 (2003): 11-51. Also see: Charles R. Kim, *Youth for Nation: Culture and Protest in Cold War South Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017), 185-193.

phases, the initial social isolation–the establishment of the waste picker camp itself–was the precursor to their economic and spatial exclusion.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION: HOUSING WASTE PICKERS IN CAMPS

Waste picker camps varied in terms of their size, infrastructure, and organization. While camps were mostly concentrated in Seoul, there were other smaller organizations or camps nationwide. For official camps, there were the two police-led camp networks that housed waste pickers: one was "*kŭllojaegŏndae*" (the Work Reconstruction Camp, WRC) ran between 1962 and 1974, and the other was "*chahwalgŭllodae*" (the Self-supporting Work Camp, SWC), ran between 1979 and 1995. Between 1975 and 1978, the police relegated the oversight of the WRC to the Korean National Police Veterans Association (*taehanminguk chaehyang kyŏnguhoe*, KNPVA), who renamed the WRC to the Korea Work Reconstruction Welfare Association (*han'guk kŭllo chaekŏn pokjihoe*, KWRWA) and ran it between 1975 and 1978.[269] Apart from these police-led camps, there were other waste picker organizations, from sizable ones such as the Korean Industry Central (*taehan sanŏp chunganghoe*) and the Korean Ant Association (*han'guk kaemihoe*, KAA) to small encampments of fewer than ten waste pickers.[270]

[269] In 1978, following President Park Chung-hee's order, the MHSA investigated privately-run waste picker camps with the intention of taking oversight from them. This investigation became the basis of establishing the SWC. Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Chahwalgŭllodae unyŏng p'yeji* (Sŏul: Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, 1995), 131-140. BA0858826.

[270] The private organization claimed that the WRC's activities overlapped with its business and that the private sector should be in charge of managing waste pickers, while the police should only intervene when supervision was required. In 1965, the Korea Industrial Central lodged a petition with the city. Although the city referred the query to the SMP twice, in July and October 1965, the SMP did not appear to answer either of the requests. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *P'yep'um sujibin(nŏngmajui)su e taehan chirŭi* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi kajŏng pokchiguk, 1965), 6-9. BA0089634.

Demographic characteristics

For the state, the production of statistical knowledge primarily aimed to contain and curb social deviance. This is clear when we note that official statistics were compiled by the state's internal security departments. In contrast, the Rag Commune survey, conducted by a Commune activist, shifted the focus to individual experiences of waste picking, and asked about migration history, the number of waste picker camps individuals had been part of, incarceration records, and experiences with other welfare institutions or reeducation camps. I combine six surveys undertaken between 1964 and 1995 to attempt to reconstruct the demographic characteristics of waste pickers in different camps.[271] I do not suggest that these statistics and their comparisons are representative. In the absence of comprehensive or longitudinal data, these survey results only provide glimpses into waste pickers' lives.

At the 1962 inception of the WRC, the state required waste pickers register themselves with the city, which enabled the state to collect their birth data. As shown in Table 3-1, in the 1960s and early 1970s, more than fifty percent of waste pickers were adolescents and men in their twenties, most of military age (Table 3-1). The state claimed that by registering and acquiring a family registry (*hojŏk*),[272] waste pickers would eventually be counted as part of

[271] The data I used in this subsection come from the following: the 1964 Ewha survey; the 1972 report by the Seoul Metropolitan Police (SMP) on the operation of the WRC; the 1978 Ministry of Health and Social Affairs nationwide investigation; the 1980 survey of Kwangju's rag-pickers, including street encampments; the 1987 Rag Commune survey on Seoul's rag-pickers and camps; and the 1995 SMP report on the disbanding of the SWC. Idea sahoehakhoe, "Pusŏjin kkum ŭl moŭnŭn sonyŏndŭl." *Sedae* 2 no.17 (1964),173-183; Yim Pu-ja, "Kŭllon ch'ŏngsonyŏn t'ŭksu chŏndo yŏn'gu: kŭllojaegŏndae rŭl chungsimŭro" (Master thesis, Peroean k'ŭrisŭch'yan sinhak taehagwŏn, 1976); Kungmu chojŏngsil, *Nŏngmajui sŏndo* (Sŏul: kungmu chojŏngsil, 1978), 95-126. BA0883628; Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae unyŏng hyŏpchomun* (Kwangju: Kwangju kwangyŏksi sahoebokchigwa, 1980), 21-80. BA0160351; Song Kyŏng-sang, "Chahwalgŭllodae sŏlmun silt'ae chosa," *Nŏngma* 3 (December 1987), 15-23; Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Chahwalgŭllodae*, 131-140.

[272] In the 1964 Ewha survey and the 1975 SMP investigation, more than half the respondents had no living family members; in the 1979 Kwangju survey, 36% of waste pickers did not have civil registry records.

the "nation" (*kungmin*).[273] However, obtaining birth data better suited the needs of the state, allowing it to detect possible draft dodgers,[274] or capture those who otherwise would be itinerant and untraceable, likely remaining outside of its control.[275]

Table 3-1 The age of the inmates, 1963-1995

	1964 (Seoul)	1975 (Seoul)	1978 (Seoul)	1979 (Kwangju)	1987 (Seoul) 2)	1995 (Nationwide)
under 20	32.5% (26)	16.2% (58)	15% (NA)	19.1% (37)	17% (NA)	NA
The 20s	75% (60)	54.9% (196)	73% (NA)	35.2% (68)		3.3% (18)
The 30s	17.5% (14) 1)	21.6% (77)		33.1% (64)	38% (NA)	27% (147)
The 40s		7.3% (26)	12% (NA)	12.4% (24)	45% (NA)	69.6% (378)
The 50s						
Above 60						

Note: 1) The scale used in the source indicates others; the oldest age scale used in this survey is '22-26'. 2) The scale used in the source indicates the year of birth, and consists of three categories: 'Before liberation' (-1945), 'after the liberation until the end of Korean war' (1945-1953), and 'After the Korean War' (1954-), When calculated, these are equivalent to 'above 42', '34–42', and 'under 33'. These scales did not correspond to any of the other surveys; despite the vagueness, I located each data into above 40s, 30s, and under 30s for comparability.

The nationwide distribution of waste picker camps shows a concentration in urban areas, reflecting the characteristics of waste generation.[276] Among the 110 waste picker

[273] "'Nŏngmajui' edo in'gwŏn ŭn itta," *Chosŏn Ilbo*, December 13, 1961. Family registry would make those who otherwise would have remained outside the state system comply with certain civic duties, particularly military service. Confining, registering, and keeping track of men of a certain age suited the state's needs, serving to provide a labor reserve and a productive workforce. For the modern Korean household registration system and its role in wartime mobilization, citizenship, and population control, see: Kyung Moon Hwang, *Rationalizing Korea: the Rise of the Modern State, 1894-1945* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 195-219.

[274] Kyŏngsangnam-do stated that detecting draft dodgers and others avoiding duties related to military service, such as physical examinations and the training of reserve forces, formed part of the guidance for confining waste pickers. Kyŏngsangnam-do, *Kŭllo chahwaldae chŏnggi pogosŏ songbu* (Kyŏngsangnam-do: Kyŏngsangnam-do sahoegwa, 1975), 302-335. BA0177447.

[275] James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 51-52.

[276] Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Chahwalkŭllodae*.

camps nationwide with 7,357 inmates counted in the 1978 MHSA survey, half (3,093) were located in Seoul.[277] The size of waste picker camps varied. Some had hundreds of inmates, whereas others consisted of groups of as small as three;[278] some were organized by social welfare or religious organizations, others resembled small street encampments, usually organized by an experienced waste picker.[279] In the WRC, there were 1,380 waste pickers in the mid-1960s, which increased to 3,510 in 1975 when it was disbanded. The SWC started with 4,431 inmates in 1979, then gradually decreased over time: 2,367 in 1983, 1,474 in 1988, 855 in 1992, and 543 in 1995 when it was disbanded. These figures, however, fall short of the actual number of waste pickers. In its 1978 investigation, the MHSA estimated the actual number to be closer to 30,000, an estimate four times larger than its survey figure.[280]

[277] Other regions included South Kyŏngsang (794), Kyŏnggi (722), and North Kyŏngsang (618).

[278] In Kwangju, a city in South Chŏlla Province, there were six waste picker groups in 1978, with 193 inmates spread over fifteen encampments. Each encampment housed three to twenty-five waste pickers, and the leaders of each encampment were long-term waste pickers. Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae*.

[279] In 1974, in Taegu, a city in North Kyŏngsang Province, there were 826 waste pickers in 46 encampments run by two private organizations. Kim Chong-bok, "Puru ch'ŏngsonyŏn (nŏngmajui) taech'aek: kyŏngsangbukto p'yŏn," *Chibang haengjŏng* 25, no. 274 (1976), 86-90; In Masan, a city in South Kyŏngsang Province, the city housed waste pickers in street encampments under a registered organization in 1973. Since, the city had managed 488 waste pickers spread over five encampments, run by five managerial staff. Kyŏngsangnam-do, *Kŭllojahwaldae*.

[280] Kungmu chojŏngsil, *Nŏngmajui sŏndo*, 95-126.

Table 3-2 Education level of waste pickers

	1963 (Seoul)	1975 (Seoul)	1978 (Seoul)	1979 (Kwangju)	1987 (Seoul)	1995 (Nationwide)
No education	10.0% (8)	24.2% (86)	68%	53.4% (103)	21%	32.0% (174)
Elementary school	48.8% (39)	63.2% (225)	27%	34.7% (67)	36%	50.1% (272)
Middle school	25.0% (20)	9.3% (33)	5%	9.8% (19)	30%	13.3% (72)
High school	13.8% (11)	2.8% (10)		2.1% (4)	11%	4.4% (24)
University	2.5% (2)	0.6% (2)		0.0% (0)	2% (1)	0.2% (1)

Related to the lack of civil registration, waste pickers had received little education. As shown in Table 3-2, the 1978 MHSA survey (68%) and the 1979 Kwangju survey (53%) showed particularly low education levels. While the 1986 Rag Commune survey shows 84% of the respondents received vocational training, such training was mostly done in prisons. Reflecting the low education levels, literacy rates were also low, with only 47% of the respondents able to read a newspaper.[281] With little education and without civil registration, finding a regular job was not a viable option.[282]

[281] Nŏngma kongdongch'e, *Nŏngma 1* (Sŏul: Nŏngma kongdongch'e, 1986).

[282] The 1978 MHSA survey presented three categories to choose from: "difficulties of making a living" (61%), "no skills" (33%), and "family trouble" (6%); the 1980 Kwangju survey presented four categories: "no education" (97), "convict" (14), "physical disability" (7), and "others" (75). The 1980 Kwangju survey asked about prior employment, with these responses: "no occupation" (137), "day labor" (11), "orphan" (47), "office worker" (0). Kungmu chojŏngsil, *Nŏngmajui sŏndo*, 114; Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae,* 21-52.

Table 3-3 Number of years spent at the current camp

Number of years spent at the current camp	1979 (Kwangju)	1987 (Seoul)
Less than a year	10.9% (21)	18%
1-2 years	14.5% (28)	10%
2-3 years	23.8% (46)	
3-4 years	20.7% (40)	12%
5-10 years	30.1% (58) 1)	29%
10-15 years		14%
More than 15 years		17%

Note: 1) The scale used in the source indicates more than 5 years.

It is then no coincidence that many waste pickers undertook the work as a long-term income source, with many doing it their whole lives. Table 3-3 shows that waste pickers had done their work for a relatively long time. In Table 3-4, the 1979 Kwangju survey and the 1987 Rag Commune survey show that more than thirty percent of waste pickers spent more than five years in their current camp. In the aftermath of the Korean War, and during the waves of urban migration, waste picking might have been merely a survival strategy. But when individuals picked for more than a decade, it was no longer just a means to subsistence: it was their job.

Camp Operation

Looking into the management of the WRC and the SWC, the police authorities in charge reveal how the camp itself criminalized waste pickers. At the WRC, the Information Division in local police stations oversaw the WRC, appointing the head of each unit (*chidaechang*).[283] At the SWC, the Crime Prevention Division in local police stations managed the units and the head of each Crime Prevention Division, working as the head of each unit, dispatched additional police superintendents (*chidogwan*)

[283] In each unit, there was: a mid-level leader (*chungdaejang*) selected by the inmates; a leader (*sodaejang*) for each bunkhouse (*ch'ŏnmak*); and externally-hired administrative staff. The designated police authorities were given military-style titles.

across them.

The transition from the Information Division to the Crime Prevention Division reflected not just the different demographic composition of waste pickers, but also the state's perception of them. As noted, in the early 1960s many waste pickers were of military age, uprooted without civil registration or next of kin, and lived and worked on the streets, which justified the state's identification and regulation. In the late 1970s and the 1980s, as waste pickers aged past draft age, their identity became less relevant. Instead, based on documented misdemeanors and felonies, the state defined their deviance and criminality, which warranted their confinement and rehabilitation.[284] For instance, the SWC's objectives included managing biographical information (*shinsang kwalli*) and preventing crime, demonstrating the criminalization of waste pickers.

While both the WRC and the SWC were administered by the police, each claimed different objectives. The WRC claimed to make waste picking an occupation and to rehabilitate waste pickers. Accordingly, the police organized its own sales system, but it is questionable whether this system benefited waste pickers. In contrast, the SWC demanded that waste pickers find legitimate employment, claiming to facilitate their "job transition" (*chikŏp chŏnhwan*). Their programs reflected the relative difference in their emphases. For instance, the WRC oversaw a reformation committee (*kyohwa wiwŏnhoe*) responsible for the "moral education" (*chŏngsin kyoyuk*) of waste pickers.[285] The SWC prioritized skills training, job matching, and self-sufficiency guidance (*chahwal chido*). However, it is unclear whether these programs were run regularly. Other waste picker organizations, especially those led by

[284] Initially, the WRC consisted of a high proportion of men in their teens and twenties. Over time, the average age increased significantly between 1963 and 1995. In 1995, when the SWC was abolished, nearly 70% of the inmates were older than forty and 29.3% above fifty. Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Chahwalgŭllodae*.

[285] The General Provision of the WRC (*kŭllojaegŏndae saenghwal kyubŏm*) reveals how the camp intended to instill moral norms (honesty, diligence, self-reliance), ways of living (working regular hours, saving one's income, tidying one's surroundings), and discipline to prevent potential criminal behavior (those who were prone to thievery and assault, recalcitrant to labor, or avoided military duties). Yim, "Kŭllojaegŏndae."

the government, ran similar guidance and reformation programs.[286]

Neither the WRC nor the SWC had a fixed funding source. Budgetary records reveal that the police department relied on donations to cover operating costs. While there is no budget information available for the WRC, it received donations from various sources.[287] For the SWC, local governments covered the majority of the operational costs (81%), most of which came from the donation fund for the needy (*puru iut topki sŏnggŭm*) as well as security and welfare donations (*Anbo bokji sŏnggŭm*).[288] Similarly, several groups of waste pickers sought support or donations, whether to physically improve their living environments or food and other material support.[289]

The housing provision indicates that waste picker camps lacked a long-term vision. In both the police-led and private waste picker camps, pickers suffered from substandard living conditions. In the WRC, waste pickers were housed in a handful of canvas bunkhouses shared by forty to one hundred waste pickers.[290] For the SWC, local governments provided the infrastructure, including bunkhouses and work yards, while the use of prefabricated structures allowed the police to relocate the units easily if necessary.[291] In Kwangju, most

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[286] Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Chahwalgŭllodae*; Kyŏngsangnam-do, *Kŭllojahwaldae.*

[287] The camps received donations of various kinds. Protestant missionaries donated and built a bunkhouse for the WRC inmates, and several newspaper articles reported on various donations to the camp, ranging from donations from the general public to a contribution from the First Lady. "Kŭllojaegŏndae e maksa kidokkyododŭri," *Tonga Ilbo* November 25, 1966; "Yuk yŏsa tŭng chaegŏndae ch'aja onŭl ch'usŏk, kak kyesŏ onjŏng" *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun* September 29, 1966.

[288] Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Chahwalgŭllodae.*

[289] Petition letters written by waste picker camp leaders asked for more attention and support. Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Han'guk kŭllo chaegŏn pokchihoe chiwŏn yoch'ŏnge taehan hoesin* (Sŏul: Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, 1976), 226-249. BA0185302; Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae,* 113-152.

[290] "Uridŭri sŏl ttangŭn itta: ŭmji sŏ yangji ro nŏngmajui ŭi saenghwal paeksŏ," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, September 16, 1963.

[291] After the SWC's inauguration, between October 1979 and early 1980, local governments introduced their own regulations, the "Rules on the Management of the SWC Housing" (*chahwalgŭllodae sukso unyŏng kwalli kyuch'ik*). They then began to build accommodation and work yards for the SWC camps so that waste pickers could be relocated there. Songt'an-si, *chahwalgŭllodae sukso unyŏng kwalli*

of the city's encampments were shanties that consisted of plywood or galvanized iron sheets and occupied private- or city-owned land.[292] Many of these organizations lacked even the most basic management, let alone the means to achieve their alleged goals, such as protecting waste pickers and fostering self-sufficiency.

The budget shortage and absence of long-term prospects were reiterated by the siting policies of both the WRC and the SWC. Both organizations located their units on vacant lots of land, with comparable ratios of state-owned and privately-owned land.[293] When establishing the SWC, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Naemubu*, MIA) advised local governments to initially seek out state- or city-owned vacant land for campsites; if this was not possible, the MIA advised that they "look for support from benefactors."[294] By temporarily siting the camps in vacant lots, the police anticipated the camps' eventual displacement or banishment, leaving waste pickers vulnerable to the prospect of eviction. As I will discuss later, housing waste pickers in urban areas was incompatible with the speed of urban redevelopment or the transfer of land ownership.

The design of waste picker camps, whether state-led or privately-run, was concerned more with the social control of waste pickers rather than their welfare or labor. Camp infrastructure, siting guidelines, and budgetary records all demonstrate

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kyuch'ik (Songt'an: Kyŏnggi-do Songt'ansi, 1981). BA0049054; Tongduch'ŏn-si, *chahwalgŭllodae sukso unyŏng kwalli kyuch'ik* (Tongduch'ŏn: Kyŏnggi-do Tongduch'ŏn-si, 1981). BA0138357.

[292] Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae*, 53-85.

[293] In 1975, of the seventeen WRC units, eight units were sited on privately owned land. Yim, "Kŭllojaegŏndae," 16. For the SWC, 59.7% of the living quarters and 59.4% of the workspaces were located on state- or city-owned land. According to the SWC Reorganization Plan (*chahwalkŭllodae chŏngbi taech'aek*), the SWC occupied 107,534.26 square meters (1,157,489 square feet) of land in Seoul. Of this, 63,155.51 square meters (679,800 square feet) were on state- or city-owned land and 44,378.75 square meters (477,688 square feet) were on private land. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Chahwalkŭllodae chŏngbi taech'aek (Sijang pangch'im che 1461-ho)* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1987).

[294] Naemubu, *Saemaŭl chaegŏnhoe silt'ae chosap'yo chaksŏng yoryŏng* (Sŏul: naemubu, n.d.). This document, produced by the MIA, was an appendix to the Kwangju-si investigation reports. Although the Instruction document was undated and lacked a description of its production, it can be inferred that it commissioned an investigation into waste picker camps nationwide so as to reorganize them into an official camp network. Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae,* 54-61.

that the state substituted needed welfare with the self-supporting labor of the waste pickers, if it was not extracting their surplus labor. As Ch'u Chi-hyŏn, a Korean sociologist suggests, waste picker camps functioned as an "an alternative to incarceration," allowing the state to control what it designated a "problematic" population at a reduced cost.[295]

Institutionalization, Criminalization, and Pauperization

The state saw waste pickers as suspect due to their itinerancy as many lacked a stable job or fixed residence. Ironically, state regulation of vagrancy led to their recurrent institutionalization, which perpetuated the mobile population. How did this institutionalization affect waste pickers on the ground? Individual waste pickers experienced institutionalization or incarceration throughout their lives. The 1986 Rag Commune survey shows that approximately 60% of respondents had criminal records; 29% had been arrested or incarcerated as many as five times; 28% had been to the Samch'ŏng reeducation camp (*samch'ŏng kyoyukdae*). Individual life stories reveal that waste pickers had been enlisted in other labor camps and welfare facilities, such as Sŏsan reclamation camp (*sŏsan kaech'ŏktan*), the *Sŏn'gam* school (*sŏn'gam hakwŏn*), or the Brothers (*hyŏngje pokjiwŏn*), all of which were state-sponsored and infamous for their atrocious violence and exploitation.[296] Institutionalization's onset often resulted in additional institutionalization, which uprooted waste pickers, criminalized them, and left them vulnerable to other forms of state violence.

Frequently, waste pickers' criminal records were directly tied to their

[295] Ch'u argues that several camps under the authoritarian regime reduced penal system expenses, mobilized the labor of the inmates, and increased the efficiency of the criminal system. Ch'u Chi-hyŏn, "Pakchŏnghŭi chŏngkwŏn ŭi 'sahoeak' homyŏng: hyŏngsa sabŏp ŭi hyoyulsŏng hwakpo chŏllyak ŭl chungsimŭro," *Sahoe wa yŏksa* 117 (2018): 201-35.

[296] One member of the Rag Commune recalls his experience in the Brothers: Pak T'ae-ho, "Naega kyŏkkŭn hyŏngje pokchiwŏn saenghwal", *Nŏngma* 2 (May 1987), 21-26. Recently, these three cases have been investigated for their human right violation and abuse. Kukka in'gwŏn wiwŏnhoe, *Sŏn'gam hagwŏn adong inkwŏn ch'imhae sakŏn pogosŏ* (Sŏul: Kukka in'gwŏn wiwŏnhoe, 2018); Kŏmch'al kwagŏsa wiwŏnhoe, *Hyŏngjebokchiwŏn sakŏn chosa mit simŭi kyŏlgwa* (Sŏul: Pŏmmubu, 2018); Sŏsan-si, *Sŏsan kaech'ŏktan sakŏn p'ihaesanghwang silt'ae chosa* (Sŏsan: Sŏsan-si, 2019).

living and working conditions on the street. They were compelled to move around for work, which exposed them to police raids and increased the likelihood of being arrested. Further, due to the association between waste pickers and deviance, waste pickers were often falsely accused or subjected to harsher penalties. For example, once enlisted in the Samch'ŏng reeducation camp, former inmates reported that having been a waste picker and having a previous criminal record led to more severe charges and punishment.[297] In other instances, individuals were relocated from juvenile detention centers or rag picker camps to harsher camps, which suggests that the state authorities saw these facilities as carceral sites.[298] Such conviction records precluded them from securing formal jobs, leaving them few alternatives save the street life.

Waste pickers were forced by police, the state, or other agents to move between numerous institutional facilities: juvenile detention centers, orphanages, prisons, and protection facilities, among others. These involuntary moves uprooted their lives. Once institutionalized, their prison or reformatory camp records prevented them from leading normal lives, creating a vicious cycle of criminalization and pauperization. While this mobility was largely imposed by the state, which labeled them "vagrant" and "deviant," the state's narrative, with its seeming corrective focus, obscures its role in their institutionalization and their social exclusion.

ECONOMIC EXCLUSION: STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS FOR WASTE PICKERS

The labor of waste pickers was informal and irregular. Nonetheless, their submission to the police exacerbated their precariousness. Due to the police's role in mediating the collection and sales process, waste pickers were frequently relegated to an even lower position in the informal waste economy. Additionally, the emergence of public sector

[297] Waste pickers at the Rag Commune wrote about their experiences in the Samch'ŏng reeducation camp: "Naega kyŏkkŭn samch'ŏng kyoyuktae", *Nŏngma* 3 (December 1987), 25-34.

[298] As recounted in his essay, a member of the Rag Commune, Pak In-su, was displaced from the Seoul juvenile detention center to the *Sŏn'gam* school. Pak In-su, "Naŭi ŏrin sijŏl," *Nŏngma* 4 (May 1988), 38-43. Another waste picker, Yi To-il, moved from a rag picker camp to Sŏsan reclamation camp. Yi To-il, "Sumgyŏjin nŏngmajuiŭi yŏksa: kosaeng kkŭt'e nagi ittadŏn'ga," *Nŏngma* 2 (May 1987), 15.

waste management, particularly the institutionalization and domestication of recycling in the 1980s and 1990s, redefined the labor of waste pickers: recycling became a civic duty as much as a business one. Waste pickers were deprived of fair compensation for their labor, of economic opportunities, and of their very source of income.

Due to the varying quantity and quality of waste materials, waste pickers faced unpredictability and irregularity as informal laborers. Waste pickers at the WRC scavenged street litter, using tongs and a wooden basket (*ch'urŏng*) on their backs. Typically, curbside waste generated low-quality materials that fetched a lower price. In 1975, waste pickers collected ten to thirty kwan (37.5 to 112.5 kilograms) per day, sold their materials every ten days, and made 24,000-30,000 wŏn per month.[299] However, street scavenging rarely provided sufficient access to waste and a reliable income. Superintendents of the WRC or SWC units requested that other governmental institutions dispose their recyclables with them but to no avail.[300]

Access to waste caused conflicts among different waste picker camps. Either there were too many waste picker camps within a single jurisdiction or the monopolization of local waste generation caused friction between camps.[301] Yet neither the police nor the local authorities intervened or mediated to resolve the situation. Between 1977 and 1999, Kim Ch'ang-su, a leader at Kwangju's

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[299] They separated recyclable materials into paper and other categories. There were three categories of paper quality. Other materials included vinyl, glass bottles, aluminum cans, rags, leather, metals, rubbers, woods, bones, plastics, straw ropes and bags, burlap bags, and shells. Animals were fed bones and shells, while straw ropes were used to make paper. Some of the materials, such as straw bags and burlap sacks, were sold as-is. Yim, "Kŭllojaegŏndae," 19-21.

[300] In 1974, Masan's WRC units were denied permission to collect waste from the city's five institutions, including public schools and municipal garbage collection trucks. Kyŏngsangnam-do, *Kŭllojahwaldae*. In 1980, the police superintendent of Kwangju's SWC units sent a request to the city's thirty-five institutions, including government institutions, hospitals, universities, and other firms and businesses, asking them to donate their waste items or to negotiate an exclusive collection or contract. Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae*, 2-3.

[301] The MHSA investigation reported that the KWRPA had fifteen work spaces, and the KAA had nine within the authority of Seoul's West (*sŏbu*) police station. Kungmu chojŏngsil, *Nŏngmajui sŏndo*, 1975: 16-25.

Hyŏpsinwŏn camp, reported the monopoly on local transfer stations and waste collection trucks and asked that the city authorities evenly divide access to waste. Kim suggested to city officials that the city facilitate contractual relationships between the camp and public institutions or municipal garbage trucks.[302] The city showed a reluctance to intervene either by prohibiting waste picker groups from monopolizing waste from municipal garbage trucks or by granting them access to more stable income sources such as the right to collect waste from public institutions.[303] Regardless of whether they resided in state-run camps or were members of private organizations, waste pickers were forced to rely on street scavenging as their primary source of income, unable to pursue better economic opportunities.[304]

Second, at the WRC and SWC the police and intermediary buyers controlled the sales system, which disadvantaged and even exploited waste pickers. At the inception of the WRC, the police set a series of rules, including: assigning a designated collection area to each camp unit; selling collected materials directly to factories; assigning intermediary buyers via a public bidding process; and having a police superintendent organize the sale of collected materials.[305] This exclusive intermediate buyer arrangement, however, led to the mistreatment of waste pickers. In 1974, *Tonga Ilbo* reported that exclusive intermediary buyers paid lower prices to the WRC than to other junk depots in the city, and that the police appeared to conspire with these intermediaries, condoning their physical abuse and manipulation.[306] As a result, approximately five hundred WRC inmates left the camp in 1973 alone.

Similar economic exploitation occurred in private waste picker camps. The

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[302] Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae,* 113-152.

[303] Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae,* 72-73.

[304] "Chaegŏndae unyŏng sich'aek chŏnhwanŭl," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 29, 1974; "Sidŭrhaejin p'yeji hwaryong," *Tonga Ilbo*, October 16, 1974; "Mulcha chŏryak kwa p'yegi chawŏn ŭi hwaryong," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 15, 1979; Kwangju kwangyŏksi, *Chahwalgŭllodae,* 117-118.

[305] Kyŏngch'alch'ŏng, *Chahwalgŭllodae*.

[306] "Nŏngmajui yŏngsemin pohodaech'aek ashwiwŏ," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, February 20, 1974; "Kyŏngch'al chijŏng komulsang hoengp'o chaja ŭngdal sŏ sidallinŭn chaegŏndae nŏngmajui," *Tonga Ilbo*, March 6, 1974.

MHSA's 1978 investigation reported that some waste picker organizations colluded with junk depots and manipulated the actual weight of the materials collected, depriving the waste pickers of extra earnings; others sought a premium from waste pickers who had reliable and lucrative access to waste such as dumpsites or buildings.[307] The MHSA criticized the "commercializing tendency" of private waste picker groups, which had transformed the camps into profitable businesses.[308]

Third, while waste picker camps continued to operate, the waste management system began to take shape, further marginalizing waste pickers. The 1973 Oil Crisis and the resulting resource crisis prompted institutional recycling schemes and a nationwide material saving movement.[309] In 1979, the government established the Korea Recycling Agency (*Han'guk chaesaeng kongsa*, KRA), which initially focused on agricultural vinyl waste before expanding its operations to encompass a broader variety of recyclable materials. In the 1980s, household recycling programs developed in response to a lack of landfill space, ever-increasing household waste generation, and a growing awareness of environmental problems. The KRA, voluntary recycling efforts, and city's pilot recycling schemes all compromised the livelihoods of waste pickers.

What effect did these economic exclusions have on waste pickers? The combination of waste picker camp schemes and broader socioeconomic changes placed individual waste pickers and their ways of life in a precarious situation. The life history of Yi To-il, the waste picker we encountered in the introduction, illustrates such a predicament through his various waste picker positions.[310] Yi began his career in the early 1960s when he joined the WRC. Yi

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[307] The KWRWA, for instance, charged a collection premium (20,000 wŏn). Kungmu chojŏngsil, *Nŏngmajui sŏndo*, 21

[308] Kungmu chojŏngsil, *Nŏngmajui sŏndo*, 115.

[309] Ch'ongmugwa, *Chongi sobi chŏryak undong chŏn'gae* (Sŏul: Ch'ongmuch'ŏ, 1973), 502-525. BA0139631

[310] This life story is based on the essay he published in the Rag Commune newsletter, *Nŏngma*. The editor reported that he combined Yi's own writing, retaining misspelling, and interview recordings into the essay. Yi, "Nŏngmajui," 10-20.

soon became a middleman, collecting straw (*chip'uragi*), straw ropes (*saekki*), and jute sacks (*kamani*) from nine Seoul garbage dumps and selling them to a paper manufacturer's supplier, until horse manure and straw were replaced by chemical pulp. In the 1970s, he opened a junk depot, a makeshift workshop space formed simply by erecting fences along the riverbank, which he soon vacated due to encroaching urban development. Two years later, he opened a second junk workshop, but was compelled to close due to his neighbors' complaints and the 1978 World Shooting Championship in Seoul. In the 1980s, Yi worked as a waste picker in the Rag Commune, only to discover that his work had become more precarious. His numerous attempts to climb the ladder within the informal waste economy were thwarted by technological advances in manufacturing, centralized recycling policy, and urban development, changes that Yi, as a waste picker, could not foresee or navigate.

Waste picker camps did not necessarily provide waste pickers with better economic opportunities or protection against economic exploitation. Rather, one form of exploitation (e.g., extortion by a gangmaster) was replaced by another (e.g., abuse by police or intermediary buyers). At the same time, emerging waste management and recycling policies directly affected their work and further marginalized them. Nor was this coincidental: waste picker camps were premised on treating waste pickers as deviants with little value as laborers. As I will show in the next section, waste pickers' economic exclusion coincided with their removal from urban space.

SPATIAL EXCLUSION: EXPELLING WASTE PICKERS FROM THE URBAN SPACE

By design, waste picker camps produced a spatialized form of exclusion. In the 1960s, when it was first established, the WRC served as a reformatory site where the state separated and disciplined social outcasts. WRC guidelines illustrate this corrective focus: it advised a code of behavior when outside the camp unit, such as dressing neatly, wearing a name tag, and avoiding slurs, explicitly differentiating its inmates from the general population.[311]

[311] Yim, "Kŭllojaegŏndae," 17-19.

Since the state had already segregated waste pickers into camps, it could effectively exclude them from urban space as needed. For the state, waste pickers risked exhibiting the country's backwardness, and this internalized foreign gaze was projected onto waste pickers.[312] This spatial order, which erased not just waste pickers but also a range of urban underclass and shantytown dwellers, was most pronounced during the Asian Games (1986) and Olympic Games (1988).[313] By removing the unclean and unsightly elements of the urban environment, such as junk depots, waste picker encampments, or waste pickers themselves, the state sought to establish control over urban space.

Over time, the SWC itself developed into a violent and quasi-carceral space. Former waste pickers from one SWC unit, commonly known as "P'oi-dong 266," reported being subjected to frequent police surveillance, raids, and frameups.[314] Whenever a burglary occurred in a neighboring area or the police made a show of force and the SWC units became a target. In one case, the police tortured up to sixty waste pickers—or anyone carrying a rag picker basket (*mangt'ae*)—in an effort to frame them. Once segregated, the police criminalized them into a pool for police quotas.

The 1979 establishment of SWC coincided with the unprecedented economic growth and urban development of the 1980s. Not surprisingly, the

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[312] Kungmu chojŏngsil, *Nŏngmajui sŏndo*,19.

[313] A former SWC inmate recalled his P'oi unit was put under house confinement by their police superintendent during the 1988 Olympic Games because, in his words, "the state might have been ashamed of us [the SWC]." For evictions prior to the Olympic Games, see: Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Disposable People: Forced Evictions in South Korea* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1988), 14-15; The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, *Evictions in Seoul, South Korea*, *Environment and Urbanization* 1 (1989): 89-94.

[314] Scholars and activists who investigated the case produced a report titled, "The Polarization of Seoul from the point of view of Poi-dong 266" (*P'oi-dong 266 pŏnji ro ponŭn Seoul ŭi yanggŭkhwa*). My analysis draws on this report and other investigative articles. *P'oidong 266-pŏnji pogosŏ: p'oidong 266-pŏnjiro ponŭn sŏur ŭi yanggŭkhwa Pogo taehoe charyojip* (Sŏul: saram yŏndae, 2006). Also see: Yun Su-jong, "P'oidong 266-pŏnji: nŏngmajui maŭl kwa nŏngma kongdongch'e," *Chinbo p'yŏngnon* 29 (2006): 178-193; 2013, Sin Hŭi-ch'ŏl, "Hwajae wa haengjŏng p'ongnyŏk e kurhaji ank'o chaegŏnhan p'oidong chaegŏn maŭl," *Chinbo p'yŏngnon* 50 (2011): 148-161.

SWC's siting policy, taking vacant land owned by the state or city, proved to be anachronistic. Seoul's Kangdong-gu unit, which housed waste pickers in March 1980, faced eviction after only two years: the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education designated the SWC site as a public school site in 1982 and sent a notice to vacate.[315] In Seoul's Sŏngdong-gu unit, the police did not extend free land-use approval for the SWC camp sites in 1988, causing waste pickers there to become illegal squatters.[316] Other SWC sites also became targets of major urban development projects beginning in the mid-1980s: road construction for the Olympic Games;[317] the closure of the Nanji Landfill and the construction of World Cup Park in the late 1990s;[318] and the restoration of Ch'ŏnggye stream (*ch'ŏnggyech'ŏn*) in the 2000s;[319] the last record of eviction occurring in Nowŏn-gu in 2013.[320] The conflict over land use, particularly eviction proceedings, lasted from the 1990s into the 2000s.

When examining the SWC sites that survived into the 1990s and 2000s, we find that they had become more than just waste picker camps, evolving into reserves for the residual, the surplus, and the dispossessed. In the Tongdaemun-gu unit, the district office indicated that occupants ran junk depots, car repair shops,

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[315] Kangdong-gu, *Chahwalgŭllodae ijŏn taech'aek e ttarŭn hoeŭi kaech'oe* (Sŏul: Kangdong-gu,1984), 55-57. BA0025909.

[316] Sŏngdong-gu, Chahwalgŭllodae puji tosi kyehoek saŏp sihaeng mit chŏngbi chiwŏn yoch'ŏng (Sŏul: Sŏngdong-gu, 2005). July 8, 2005.

[317] Sŏngdong-gu, Chahwalgŭllodae chŏngbie ttarŭn chugŏ taech'aek chiwŏn yoch'ŏng e taehan hoesin (Sŏul: Sŏngdong-gu, 1988). June 24, 1988.

[318] Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi ŭihoe, 1995-nyŏndo haengjŏng samu kamsa: saenghwal hwan'gyŏng wiwŏnhoe hoeŭirok (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ŭihoe, 1995). November 29, 1995; 1997-nyŏndo haengjŏng samu kamsa: saenghwal hwan'gyŏng wiwŏnhoe hoeŭirok (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ŭihoe, 1997). November 22, 1997; 1998-nyŏndo haengjŏng samu kamsa: saenghwal hwan'gyŏng wiwŏnhoe hoeŭirok (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi ŭihoe, 1998), November 21, 1998.

[319] Tongdaemun-gu, *Sŏngbukch'ŏn (ku) chahwalgŭllodae isŏl ch'okkue taehan hoesin* (Sŏul: Tongdaemun-gu 2004), November 16, 2004.

[320] "Chungnangch'ŏn nŏngmajui 'chaegŏndae' ch'ŏlgŏdwae saengt'aegongwŏn chosŏngdoenda," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, November 10, 2013.

parking lots, and food stalls, to name just a few.[321] In the P'oi unit, it was the Kangnam-gu office that displaced additional evictees: in 1989, the Kangnam-gu office displaced fourteen evicted households and sixteen disabled veterans' households, and in 1996, it displaced thirty-six evicted households.[322] The SWC sites grew from the initial SWC unit to accommodate different inhabitants and their livelihoods. The city's demolition and eviction records portrayed the inhabitants and their settlements as impediments to urban development projects. Yet, it is important to recognize that waste pickers became illegal occupants and faced eviction threats while remaining in the same spaces to which they had been forcefully relocated and confined.[323]

It is unclear whether the police foresaw the city's burgeoning development needs. What we do know is that Seoul City prepared for the organization's relocation well before the police officially abolished the SWC.[324] The Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) produced the SWC Reorganization Plan (*Chahwalgŭllodae chŏngbi taech'aek*) in 1987 in preparation for relocating Seoul's SWC units.[325] The plan provided relocation or repair instructions for district offices on the existing SWC

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[321] Tongdaemun-gu, Sŏngbukch'ŏn (ku) chahwalgŭllodae hŏngbiwa kwallyŏn ŭigyŏnsahang (Sŏul: Tongdaemun-gu 2005). March 2, 2005.

[322] The district office also changed the zoning for the site without informing its inhabitants, rendering them illegal occupants subject to the land reparation fee. Dwellers at the P'oi site have since been subjected to repeated demolitions, police brutality, and hired thugs, all while being unable to register.

[323] Sŏngdong-gu, *Chahwalgŭllodae*.

[324] Incidentally, in late 1988, the police also had the SWC inmates sign a resignation document. A former inmate recalled that the police had inmates sign (or thumbprint, for illiterate inmates) a resignation document that stated, "I am leaving the SWC effective immediately." The inmate also reported that that the police stopped providing supplies - such as rice or coal briquettes - around the same time. PSTW, *P'oi-dong*. It is unclear whether the police and Seoul City worked together on the SWC relocation and reorganization or whether the police collected this resignation document from other units. However, it is worth noting that by the late 1980s the city's need to vacate SWC units and police neglect coincided. Kil Yun-hyŏng, "Chahwalgŭllodae, purangadŭrŭl chitpapta," *Han'gyŏre 21* no.573 (August 17, 2005).

[325] Seoult'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Chŏngbi taech'aek*. This document, produced by the SMG as the Mayor's Policy No. 1461, was attached as an appendix to the compensation request produced in Seoul's Sŏngdong district. It includes short-term and long-term plans for relocating or abolishing (when relocation was not a viable option) the SWC units.

site.[326] There is no available record of the plan's implementation. However, in 1990, the city increased the amount of financial compensation and granted SWC inmates access to public housing, indicating that the relocation had not gone as planned.[327]

Facing either relocation or eviction, district administrators were the first to indicate that the proposed sum of compensation was unrealistic if not infeasible. In 1989, the Kangdong-gu unit sought to evict 230 inmates and 79 households. District administrators suggested to the city that monetary compensation be increased to the same level as relocation aid for Seoul's general redevelopment evictees.[328] Given that the SWC inmates were "destitute, living in extreme poverty, and without any living blood ties," and belonged to a "socially excluded group," it suggested that the increased amount would help them to lead a "normal social life." Most importantly, it brought to the city's attention the origin of the SWC: it was the government that had "forcefully displaced and settled (*kangje iju chŏngch'aek*)" the inmates at the current site in the first place, and as such owed them extra compensation.[329] Regardless, the city declined the proposal: it indicated that waste pickers were ineligible for the same relocation assistance provided to general redevelopment evictees, distinguishing SWC units from other eviction cases.

The city's refusal placed waste pickers in a position parallel to other evictees, differentiating waste pickers from other groups at the bottom of society. However, it is important to recognize that the longest-lasting SWC units were all inhabited by

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[326] Among 65 units with 1,068 inhabitants in Seoul, 12 units with 207 inhabitants (73 lived alone and 134 lived with cohabitants) required urgent relocation. Seoult'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Chŏngbi taech'aek*.

[327] "Chahwal kŭllodae e ap'at'ŭ ipchugwŏn," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun* January 9, 1990. Relocations and evictions often took several years to resolve. In some cases, the city forcibly evicted the occupants with hired thugs and wrecking crews from private security guard companies. Tongdaemun-gu, *Chahwalgŭllodae*; Sŏngdong-gu, *Chahwalgŭllodae*.

[328] The district referred to "[T]he guideline on the special distribution of public housing to Seoul's evictees" (*Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi ch'ŏlgŏmin e taehan siyŏng ap'at'ŭ t'ŭkpyŏl punyang chich'im*). It suggested the increased financial compensation equated to three-month's rent and access to public housing.

[329] Kangdong-gu, Chahwalgŭllodae chŏngbi chich'im kaejŏng kŏnŭisŏ pallyŏ (Sŏul: Kangdong-gu, 1989). August 10, 1989.

various members of the urban underclass. While waste picker camps began as receptacles for social deviants, they eventually became a reserve for other dispossessed populations. In this sense, waste picker camps reveal how the state control of "deviant" population not only creates but perpetuates certain underclasses, and how waste pickers, as the current incarnation of a disposable section of the underclass, were erased when their value had been finally extracted.

CONCLUSION

By analyzing the two official camp networks, the WRC and the SWC, and other private camps as case studies, I have shown how the establishment of waste picker camps categorized waste pickers as a deviant social group and reinforced their marginalization. This marginalization process occurred at the intersection of the state's institutionalization of waste pickers (social exclusion), the introduction of household recycling and alienation of waste pickers from the sources of their labor (the economic exclusion), and urban development (the spatial exclusion).

Institutionalization and ensuing social exclusion brought about their economic deprivation, spatial segregation, and eventual eviction. Economic exclusion coincided with the institutionalization of waste management. Waste might have been only tangentially related to the actual inception and operation of waste picker camps. However, their subjection to the police, combined with the unpredictable and irregular nature of collecting and selling recyclables, confined waste pickers to the lowest position in the informal waste economy. Spatial exclusion occurred alongside urban development. As redevelopment and gentrification of urban areas gained steam, the confinement of waste pickers was no longer compatible with the changing use of urban space.

The establishment of the WRC and subsequent camps was concerned less with their work than their vagrant status and potential deviance. While waste picker camps were but one type of camp among many that the military regime established, their trajectory differed for three reasons: their long duration over more than three decades; their location in cities; and their association with waste. Although waste picker camps may have seen varying

degrees of coercion, from voluntary admission to confinement, their long-term operation nonetheless had consequences for the individuals who lived under police control. Lastly, the association with waste, both materially and symbolically, provides an allegory for how surplus, cast-off populations, including, but not limited to waste pickers, are marginalized and excluded from the wider society.

Chapter 4. LANDFILL AS A LIVED SPACE: SEOUL'S NANJIDO LANDFILL, 1978–1993

This chapter analyzes Seoul's Nanjido landfill as a lived space, focusing on the role of housing in organizing waste pickers' lives. Nanjido–a landfill from 1978 to 1993–has since been transformed from an "island of triple abundance" (*samdado*) (i.e. dust, odors, and flies) into an ecological park. While Nanjido was material testimony to the "rapid growth that overlooked environmental degradation,"[330] it housed thousands of waste pickers and illicit businesses related to the disposal process. All these aspects—waste piled outdoors, ramshackle shanties, gangs blackmailing garbage haulers in a city-run landfill—contradicted the image of Seoul as a modern, developed city.

The role of informality in a city-run landfill is crucial for understanding Nanjido's history. This chapter examines how these two types of informality - their labor and their dwelling - relates to each other in Nanjido. I take the 1984 construction of the housing complex as a focal point where the state intervened directly—in response to waste pickers' demands—in what it had previously categorized as informal, unlicensed housing, thereby complicated their position as laborers and residents. How did waste pickers organize their lives and labor process? What were the reasons behind the government's decision to house waste pickers and what were its consequences? What does this process tell us about the relationship between the state and the poor and how waste, both as a material object and a metaphor, interact in this process?

Previous studies on Nanjido have largely neglected the characteristics of landfill labor organization, housing history, and the role of waste. First, in describing the housing complex, waste pickers are reduced to recipients of state benevolence, disregarding their agency in claiming their right to housing.[331] Second, scholars often

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[330] Wŏldŭcŏp kongwŏn kwali saŏpso, *Nanjido kŭ hyangkirŭl toich'atta* (Sŏul: Wŏldŭcŏp kongwŏn kwali saŏpso, 1995), 13.

[331] The exception is the anthropologist Chŏng ch'ae-sŏng, whose work details the changes between the shanty town and the construction of prefabricated housing complex. Chŏng Ch'ae-sŏng, "Nanjido chuminŭi pin'gon kwa sahoejŏk kwan'gyeŭi sŏngkyŏk, "*Han'guk munhwa illyuhak* 21 (1989): 367-

portray Nanjido as an exceptional, extralegal space, for example as "an internal colony"[332] or a "Nanjido culture,"[333] without positioning Nanjido within the broader structural conditions of Korean society. Third, they do not consider waste as an object of inquiry, whether its management, symbolic associations, or material force on not just the natural environment but also the people who lived and worked around waste. Despite the precarious nature of their living and working conditions, and the unpredictability of the waste materials they handle, these circumstances were often summed up under one umbrella category of "urban poverty," which failed to encompass seemingly disparate yet interconnected forms of precarity. These studies also overlook how the lives and labor of waste pickers were critical to the city's survival.

As informal laborers, waste pickers were frequently confronted with multiple forms of precarity. Their being informal laborers is intertwined with their experiences of precarity in everyday lives. As Clara Han notes, "the notion of informal

399. Also see Yi Ho, "Nanjidowa nanjido chumindŭl ŭi chugŏgwŏn," *Tosi wa pin'gon* 21 (1996): 47-67. Architectural historian Jeong Hye Kim writes that the government "gave [waste pickers] the rights of residence," emphasizing the state's philanthropic perspective. Suggesting the influence of religious leaders on the state's decision, Kim erases the role of waste pickers in demanding and achieving their rights to housing. Jeong Hye Kim, *Waste and Urban Regeneration: An Urban Ecology of Seoul's Nanjido Post-landfill Park* (London: Routledge, 2020), 94; Pae Sang-hŭi, "Nanjido ssŭregi maeripchi ŭi hyŏngsŏng kwa chaehwaryong," (Master's thesis, Seoul National University, 2020), 31.

[332] Jeong Hye Kim contends that Nanjido existed as "an internally colonised space," their settlement area "retaining the potential to threaten the norm of the modern city." Literary scholar Yim T'ae-hun suggests that Nanjido functioned as an internal colony for Seoul's destitute. Kim, *Nanjido*, 114; Yim T'ae-hun, "Nanjido ka illyuse e munnŭn kŏttŭl," *Munhwa kwahak* 97 (2019): 131.

[333] Similarly, social scientists presume a particular "Nanjido culture", whether it resonated with South Korean society at large or created a peculiar culture of poverty, or depicted the waste pickers as occupying "the bottom of the pit" (*makjang*). Chŏn Kyŏng-su, "Ssŭregi rŭl mŏkko sanŭn saramdŭl," in *Han'guk munhwaron: hyŏndaep'yŏn* (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1995), 99; Ik Ki Kim, "Differentiation among the Urban Poor and the Reproduction of Poverty: The Case of Nanjido," *Environment and Urbanization* 7, no. 2 (1995): 194; Kim Ik-ki and Chang Se-hun, "Tosibinminŭi naebubunhwawa pin'gonŭi chaesaengsan kwajŏng - Nanjido pinminjiyŏk ŭl chungsimŭro," *Han'guk sahoehak* 21 (1987): 82.

economy…shadows the notion of precarity as a bounded historical condition."[334] Recent scholarship on precarity conceptualizes it as both an ontological and labor condition.[335] As a labor condition, precarity is frequently defined in opposition to waged labor and its attendant individual subjectivities, whose values and dispositions are conducive to industrial capitalism. Waged labor is distinguished from other forms of labor, including unpaid, irregular, intermittent, amorphous labor, which are considered precarious and associated with an informal economy. One of its characteristics is that "the uncertainty of securing a livelihood bleeds into other aspects of life," which indicates the connection between precarious labor and ontological precarity.[336] Yet, these other aspects of precarity are not entirely distinct from each other. On the contrary, Patrick O'Hare argues precarity is fundamentally relational, such that individual's past experience, forms of employment, and other dimensions of lifeworlds all constitute forms of precarity.[337]

In various historical periods and geographical locations, landfills have served as a means for waste pickers to generate income by collecting recyclable materials. However, they eventually face with the municipalization or privatization of the waste disposal process. This formalization is frequently touted as a panacea for mitigating precarity through job security and facilitating the transition from the informal to the formal economy. Generally, modernizing landfills results in reduced labor force, a property right over waste, or even access restrictions to the landfill. As an illustration of this deprivation of income source in the context of a landfill in Uruguay, anthropologist Patrick O'Hare contends that waste collectors were subjected to a "hygienic enclosure of waste."[338] Likewise, in her research on the Marie Louise landfill in South Africa, Melanie Samson argues that privatization imposes "epistemic

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[334] Clara Han, "Precarity, Precariousness, and Vulnerability," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 47 (2018): 334.

[335] Kathleen M Millar, "Toward a Critical Politics of Precarity," *Sociology Compass* 11, no. 6 (2017): e12483.

[336] Han, *Precarity*, 335.

[337] Patrick O'Hare, "'The Landfill has always Borne Fruit': Precarity, Formalisation and Dispossession among Uruguay's Waste Pickers," *Dialectical Anthropology* 43 (2019):31-44.

[338] Patrick O'Hare. *Rubbish Belongs to the Poor: Hygienic Enclosure and the Waste Commons* (London: Pluto Press, 2022))

injustice" on reclaimers: although it was reclaimers who initially recognized and established the value of waste materials, privatization appropriates and predicates on their expertise and knowledge.[339]

Formalization does not necessarily alleviate a state of precarity. O'Hare attends to the labor experiences of landfill waste pickers in three settings: wageless landfill work, vernacular cooperative arrangements, and formal labor contracts in a privatized recycling factory. For them, formal labor entails a range of precarious work conditions, including uncertain employment prospects, potential physical harm from unidentified substances (often contained in plastic bags), and the exchange of relative autonomy at the landfill for reciprocal responsibilities at the recycling facility. Instead, O'Hare illustrates how the availability of informal labor offers waste pickers a refuge that mitigates the precarious nature of waged labor.[340] Undoubtedly, diverse encounters with precarity have the potential to disrupt the prevailing narrative that associates formalization as a remedy for precarious labor.

To understand different textures of precarity, the binary of formal and informal may not be very useful. Rather than relying on these arbitrary binary concepts, Kathleen Millar proposes to see the lives of waste pickers as "forms of living."[341] Examining the comings and goings of catadores in Rio's Jardim Gramacho garbage dump, Millar argues the conditions of wageless labor, albeit substandard, irregular, or precarious, enables catadores to accommodate the fragile circumstances of everyday lives. Catadores can thereby exercise "relational autonomy" to ensure their work is compatible to the unstable, uncertain, and disruptive conditions of their lives.[342]

In Nanjido, where a landfill served as both a place of disposal and habitation, waste pickers endured precarities due to their informal position as both laborers and

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[339] Melanie Samson, "Accumulation by Dispossession and the Informal Economy: Struggles over Knowledge, Being and Waste at a Soweto Garbage Dump," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33, no. 5 (2015): 813-30.

[340] O'Hare, *Precarity*, 37-42.

[341] Kathleen M. Millar. *Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor on Rios Garbage Dump* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

[342] Kathleen M. Millar, "Precarious Present: Wageless Labor and Disrupted Life in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil," Cultural Anthropology,Vol.29,no.1 (2014): 47.

residents. In hindsight, waste pickers were not always cognizant of the fact that the numerous risks they encountered were tied to larger forces, including the development of modern waste management systems and urban spatial politics. For example, although waste pickers were periodically reminded of their precarious living condition via notice to vacate orders, they were not always informed of ongoing changes in the municipal disposal system that could have compounded the precarious nature of their work. As waste pickers carve out liminal spaces they were caught in between, these two dimensions of precarity were occasionally complement each other, but at other times, they were in conflict with one another.

This chapter draws on archival research, unexamined textual and visual sources, and interviews.[343] I obtained the bulk of my materials from the waste pickers themselves, such as hand-drawn maps, filed complaints, and petitions. Archival materials on Nanjido barely survive in official archives.[344] Stories of shanties or waste pickers were not typically deemed worthy of documentation in official archives. I compare hand-drawn shantytown maps with a series of aerial photographs of waste picker settlement areas made by the city from 1980 to 2000.[345] I retrieve their muted voices and weave them into the official narrative to establish a more nuanced portrait of Nanjido's history.

I start by providing an overview of the Nanjido site and the autonomous organization of labor. Based on these, I follow the trajectories of waste pickers: their entry into Nanjido and the formation of a shantytown in the early 1980s; the housing improvement project and the 1984 construction of the prefabricated housing complex; and the relocation and eviction that lasted from 1993 (the closure of the landfill) to 2001 (a year before the World Cup).

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[343] I conducted interviews with fourteen city workers of both "blue-" and "white-collar" backgrounds, three religiously affiliated volunteers, and six former waste pickers/Nanjido dwellers.

[344] While the record preservation period led to the loss of various documents, the absence of documents relating to Nanjido is noteworthy. Since Nanjido was managed on a district level, it can be inferred that most of the documents were not likely transferred to the National Archive.

[345] I consulted the National Geographic Information Platform (http://map.ngii.go.kr), which blocks access from foreign IP addresses. Outside of South Korea, aerial images may not be used or reproduced. Instead of citing specific photos, I provide the aerial image number.

Situating Nanjido's housing history within Seoul's urban redevelopment and disposal policy, I argue that formalizing unlicensed housing placed waste pickers in an interstitial space where their dwelling was recognized but their labor was not. This liminality made them vulnerable to other mechanisms of marginalization, ones that were not always intentional but incidental, which further dispossessed waste pickers.

THE GROWTH AND DECLINE OF NANJIDO

Nanjido was an island on the Saet stream (Saetkang), a branch of the Han River on the outskirts of Seoul (Figure 4-1, 4-2). Before the landfill, Nanjido was well-known for its natural and pastoral landscape, filled with orchids and reeds as well as peanut and sorghum fields, which provided a picnicking and leisure site for Seoulites.[346] Yet, located in the lowlands, floods often hit the 200 islanders and their crops. There was no connection to Seoul apart from a resident-run ferry to the mainland. In the late 1960s, Nanjido was still "a remote island in the modernizing city."[347] The establishment of the landfill in 1978 changed Nanjido's fate. When the city completed the breakwater and reclaimed 2.9 million square meters (878,280 *pyŏng*) of land in January 1977,[348] the real estate market reacted by doubling the price of land. When the city announced Nanjido as a waste disposal facility, the land's value immediately plummeted,[349] along with its once flourishing natural life.

Nanjido began to receive waste from Seoul in the early 1980s and quickly became the city's principal landfill. Began by filling the lowlands to sea level, a method

[346] The name Nanjido comes from *Nanji*, a combination of the words "orchid" and "fragrant plants," and *do*, or "island." Filled with orchids and reeds, as well as peanut and sorghum fields, Flower Island (*kkotsŏm*) was one of its names in earlier times.

[347] "Hŭkt'angmul sok changmul kŏdwŏonŭn nanjido chumindŭl," *Tonga Ilbo*, July 30, 1975

[348] "Sŏulsigyesim nanjidojebang ch'ukcho sŭngin," *Maeil Kyŏngje*, December 29, 1976; Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Ssŭregi chonghap chongmal ch'ŏrijang hwakpo kyehoek* (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1977).

[349] "Chebang ch'ukcho kkŭnnaen nanjido ssŭregi ch'ŏbunjang kosi," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, August 3, 1977.

known as *trench landfilling*,[350] 70% of the quarry's available landfill space had been filled by 1983.[351] Facing the exhaustion of its capacity, both the city and the Office of the Environment (OoE, *hwankyŏngch'ŏng*) looked into future disposal options: a new sanitary landfill, a waste treatment plant, and the mounding landfilling of Nanjido. First, the search for a new, large-scale, regional landfill site took longer than Nanjido's remaining capacity allowed, as was confirmed in 1987. Second, the waste treatment plant,[352] a Danish technology that combined both manual and automated sorting, incineration, refuse-derived fuel (RDF), and composting, never became fully operational due to excessive food scraps, vinyl, and plastics. Lastly, following an unsuccessful attempt to build an incineration-based waste treatment plant[353] and the delay in selecting a new landfill site,[354] the city turned to mounding landfilling in 1985.[355] Despite recommendations for sanitary landfilling,[356] Nanjido continued as an open dump collecting mixed refuse. At the time of its closure in March 1993, it left behind a former quarry and two garbage hills 90 meters above sea level.

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[350] Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, Nanjido maeripji anchŏnghwa kongsa kŏnsŏlji (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 2003).

[351] "Ssŭregi munjeŭi simgaksŏng," *Kyŏnghyang Sinmun*, January 24, 1983.

[352] Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, Sŏul-si tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul ch'ŏrijang kŏnsŏl kibon kyehoek e kwanhan yŏn'gu (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1983).

[353] "Nanjido ssŭregi ch'ŏrijang kadong mot hae," *Tonga Ilbo*, April 11, 1987.

[354] The city secured a new landfill site at Kimp'o in 1987. "Kimp'o haeane ssŭregi maeripchang," *Tonga Ilbo*, June 2, 1987.

[355] Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, Sŏul-si Nanjido p'yegimul ipch'e wisaeng maerip saŏp kibon kyehoek pogosŏ (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1985).

[356] In 1983, the Han River Basin Environmental Master Plan, one of the first coordinated long-term environmental conservation plans, concluded that converting Nanjido into a sanitary landfill using the mounding method would be the most cost-effective and dependable option. Hwan'gyŏngch'ŏng, Enjiniŏring saiŏnsŭ, Hyosŏng kŏnsŏl chusikhoesa, *Han'gang yuyŏk hwan'gyŏng pojŏn chonghap kyehoek saŏp: kohyŏng p'yegimul pumun pogosŏ* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1983); Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), *Master Plan and Feasibility Study on Seoul Municipal Solid Waste Management System in the Republic of Korea* (Tokyo: JICA, 1985).

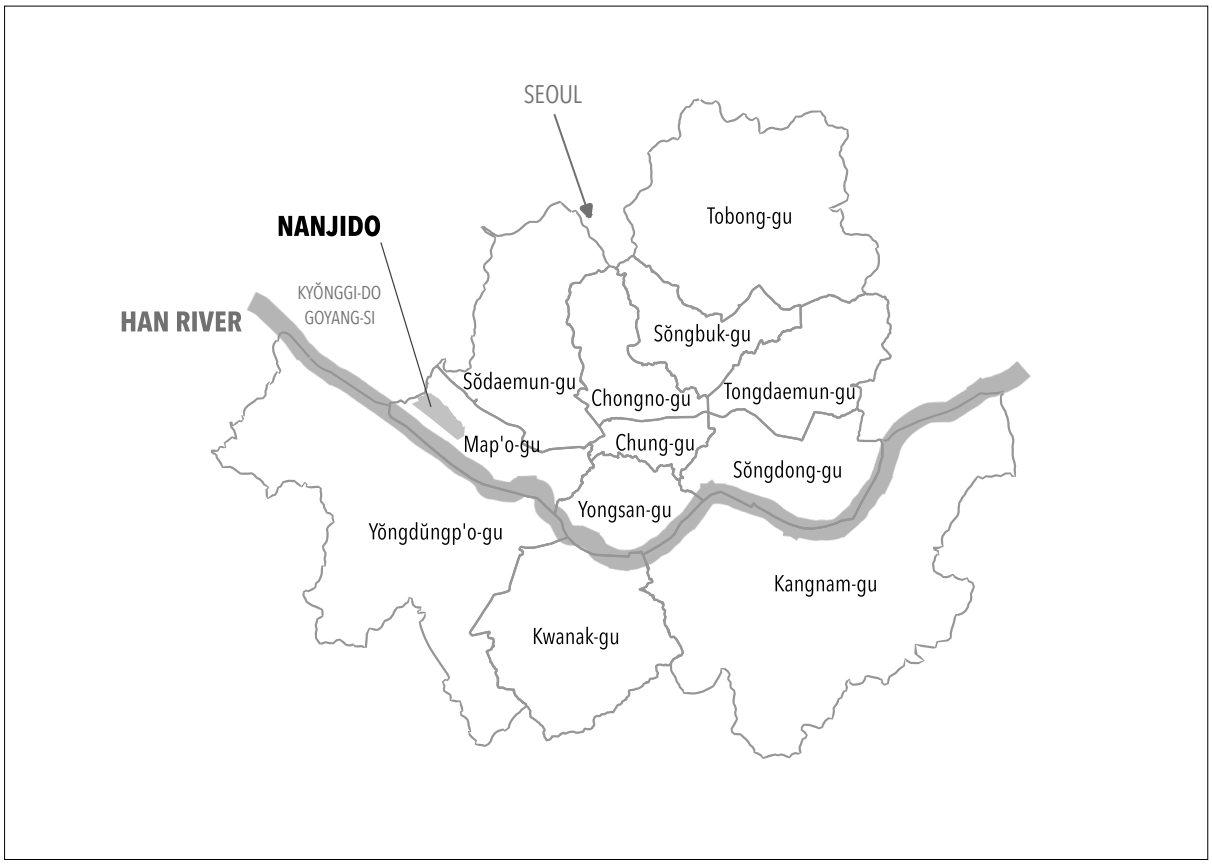

Figure 4-1 The location of the Nanjido Landfill, Seoul

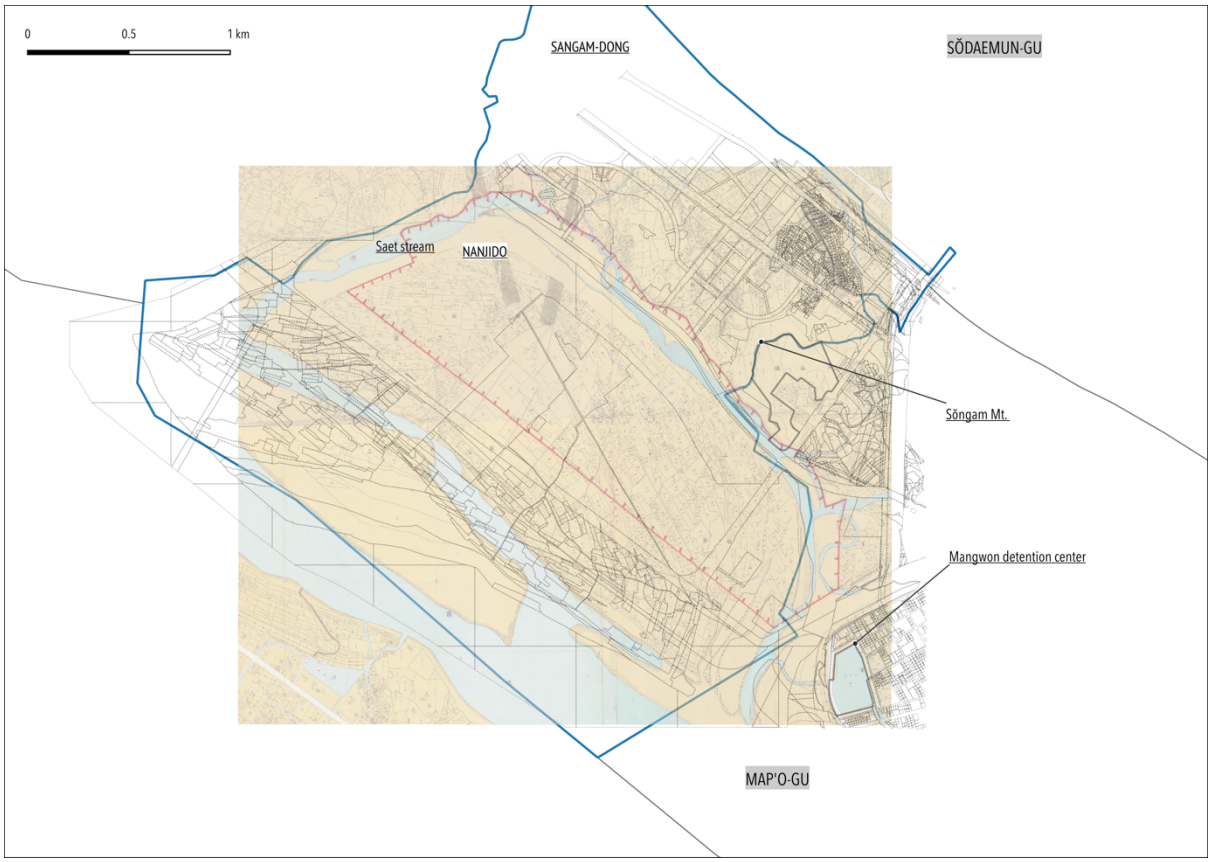

Figure 4-2 A Digitized cadastral map of Nanjido with Saet stream
Source: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi Sisŏl kyehoekkwa (August 3, 1977)

The variety of waste deposited in Nanjido reflected all facets of city life. In the late 1970s, more than 80% of the landfill's content was coal ashes, which the city focused on recycling. Waste generation rapidly shifted to combustible waste rather than ashes, and nearly doubled on a per capita basis.[357] While Nanjido was a household waste disposal site, it also received construction debris, soil from housing and infrastructure (subway) projects, waste from factories, and sludge from the city's sewage treatment facility. As illustrated in Figure 4-3, different waste streams–municipal, district (household garbage), industrial, and construction waste–occupied distinct sections within the landfill, which were organized and maintained by different types of workers. I now turn to this labor organization.

[357] The primary reason for decreased ash waste was the change to household heating sources. Kukt'o t'ongil yŏn'guwŏn, *Tosi kohyŏng p'yegimul ŭi hyoyulchŏk sugŏ pangan yŏn'gu* (Sŏul: Kukt'o t'ongil yŏn'guwŏn, 1983), 7.

THE LABOR ORGANIZATION

Demographic Overview

Official data on Nanjido dwellers are scarce. The Nanjido Saemaŭl Committee (Nanjido saemaŭl wiwŏnhoe, NSC), one of the residents' organizations, undertook an investigation in 1984 that provides a glimpse into Nanjido's demographic characteristics. Most residents arrived between 1978 and 1982 (57.7%). The majority of residents (45%) were in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, with children and adolescents (43%) making up the majority–a reflection of the physically demanding labor. Two-thirds of the residents were rural migrants, most often from the poorer Chŏlla province (36.4%), with most moving to Nanjido after having attempted other occupations first.

Table 4-1 Population trend of Nanjido dwellers, 1980–1990 [358]

Year	Number of Waste Pickers	Number of Residents
1980	550	1,000 (300)
1981	1000	N/A (300)
1983	N/A	2,000 (600)
1984.1	N/A	2,534 (640)
1984.3	N/A	3,200 (802) *
1984.12	N/A	3,973 (958)
1986	N/A	3,500 (958)
1987	N/A	N/A
1988	1,800	4,000 (958)
1989	2500	3,257 (957)
1990	800	4,000 (957) (City); 6,000 (1,500) (Residents)

[358] The population data is combined from the follows: *Tonga Ilbo*, July 15, 1980; April 24, 1981; February 11, 1983; *Kyŏnghyang Shinmun*, July 14, 1986; January 9, 1990; *Han'gyŏre Shinmun*, October 4, 1988; July 21, 1989; Nanjido saemaŭl wiwŏnhoe, *Ch'ŏngwŏnsŏ: nanjido p'anjajip ch'ŏlgŏ mit chumin ijue kwanhan kŏn* (January 11, 1984); *Nanjido silt'ae chosa pogosŏ* (March 23, 1984); Taet'ongnyŏng pisŏsil, *Nanjido chukŏ hwankyŏng kaesŏn* (Sŏul: Taet'ongnyŏng Pisŏsil, 1985). HA0005046; Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Minwŏn simŭi wiwŏnhoe simŭi charyo* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1997) March 21.

Table 4-1 shows Nanjido's population from 1980 through 1990. The population reflects the amount of waste in the landfill, with the population doubling in 1984, then stabilizing.[359] At the center of this rise was the construction of prefabricated housing in 1984, a project initiated by waste pickers themselves due to their poor treatment by the state. As we shall see, this project raises questions as to how and why the state engaged with this particular population both as a labor force and as an urban underclass.

Division of Labor

How did informal labor flourish at Nanjido, a city-run landfill? At its inception, a team from the Map'o District Office's cleaning division undertook the landfill operation.[360] This team's limited capacity, along with their unpreparedness to receive the entirety of Seoul's waste, created opportunities for waste pickers, whose presence was reported as early as 1978. Their numbers increased with the volume of waste. Daily operations in the dumping field were run by waste pickers who recycled household waste and by organized crime groups who handled construction waste and excess soil.[361] This resulted in a hybrid labor structure comprised of city workers, waste pickers, and illicit businesses, with geographical and labor divisions (see Figure 4-3).

[359] In 1978, when the Nanjido Landfill opened, Seoul's daily waste generation increased from 11,517 tons, doubling to 20,377 tons in 1980, and tripling to 30,439 tons in 1990. Naemubu, *Tosi yŏng'am* (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1990).

[360] The Nanjido Management Office (NMO) was originally established to manage the waste treatment plant in December 1985. Sŏul-si ŭihoe, *92-yŏndo haengjŏng kamsa - nanjido kwalli saŏpso ŏpmu pogo* (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1992).

[361] The Soil truck segment ran their own "business" with their own bulldozers and other landfill equipment, charging drivers landfill entrance fees. Lacking managerial capacity, the city condoned it. The city and the prosecutors filed fraud and blackmail charges against the gangs, but prosecution did not put a stop to their illegal practices. "Nanjido t'onghaengse 8-ŏk kalch'wi," *Chungang Ilbo*, May 18, 1990.

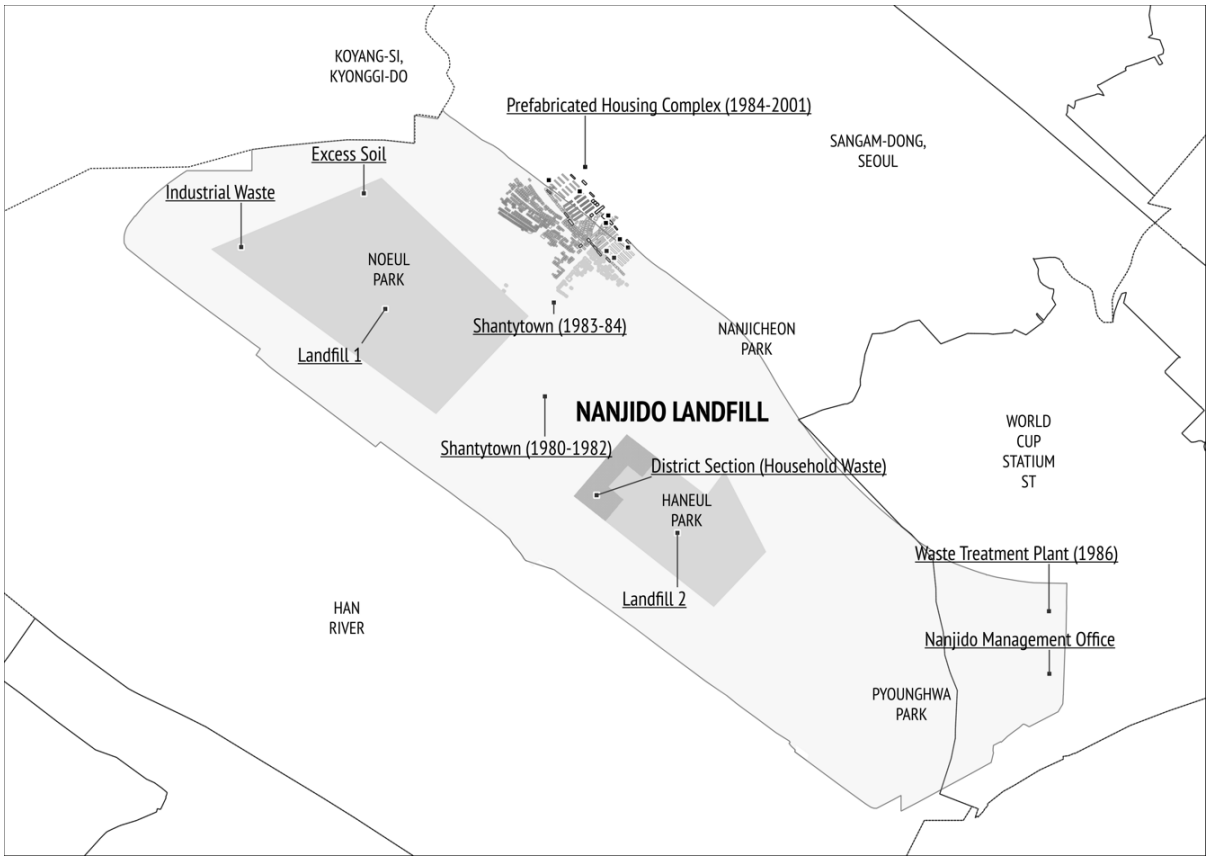

Figure 4-3 Layout of the Nanjido Landfill and the World Cup Park

This labor organization shaped power dynamics among workers. The workforce was comprised of both white-collar personnel (administrators and engineers) and blue-collar workers (bulldozer operators, incoming waste inspectors, security guards, and field superintendents). The former took charge of the landfill's overall planning, while the latter oversaw day-to-day operations at the dumpsites. However, they had conflicting interests over issues like illegal dumping. Administrators claimed that they kept crackdown schedules hidden from blue collars, implying potential corruption.

Waste pickers reclaimed household waste, working either in district or private truck segments. In the district segment, the city's garbage collection trucks unloaded their waste. There, waste pickers were categorized into first-line (*appŏri*) and second-

line (*twuippŏri*) pickers based on access to waste.[362] First-line pickers organized themselves by city administrative divisions (districts), with each district having a discrete team with its own crew leader (*ch'ongmu*), members (*taewŏn*), and regulations. District teams were sized by waste volume, typically ranging from 20-40 members; a membership fee was charged, varying by waste profitability.[363] First-line pickers had an exclusive access to waste when garbage trucks first unload waste and can enter into their dumping site. Second-line pickers collected remaining debris after the first-line pickers, working behind a bulldozer that was leveling the dump surface. There was no fee for this position.

In the private truck segment, private garbage haulers were assigned dumpsites to unload their waste, collected from apartment complexes, business districts, marketplaces, or U.S. army bases. On each site, a waste picker worked alone or alongside day laborers. Each waste picker "purchased" or "rented" the truck, with fees rising to match the profitability of the waste. Each private hauler sold an exclusive scavenging right to individuals, but most of them were not necessarily waste pickers. They hired waste pickers to work on the site; only a handful of people bought and worked there by themselves. The Korea Environment Refuse Association (Han'guk hwan'gyŏng chin'gae hyŏphoe, KERA), an association of private garbage haulers, sent staff to Nanjido to supervise the private segment.[364] Despite the competition and entry barrier, there was a degree of mobility, both inside and outside landfill waste work,

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[362] I borrowed these two terms from the English translation of *Familiar Things* by Hwang Sŏk-yong, a novel set in Nanjido. Hwang Sŏk-yong, *Nach'igŭn sesang* (Seoul: Munhak dongne, 2011; *Familiar Things*, trans. Sora Kim-Russell (Melbourne and London: Scribe Publications, 2017).

[363] A first-line picker, Kim Ki-ha, observed that waste volume was not always connected to its quality. Seoul's poorer neighborhoods had more rubbish and less recyclables; wealthy areas had more recyclables and less street sweepings. Workers in profitable districts (e.g., Yongsan-gu) were less mobile; workers in less profitable regions were more mobile (e.g., Kwanak-gu).

[364] Members in the private truck segment paid a fee to KERA, which facilitated operations, such as allocating dumpsites or mediating conflicts. Han'guk hwan'gyŏng ch'ŏngso hyŏphoe, *Han'guk hwan'gyŏng ch'ŏngso hyŏphoe sŏllip hŏga* (Seoul: Han'guk hwan'gyŏng ch'ŏngso hyŏphoe, 1980). Interview with a former KERA/Nanjido staff, June 26, 2016.

such as offering goods and services for landfill dwellers or entering into the informal waste economy.[365]

There was no city oversight of the sales process.[366] Every 10 days, after collecting and sorting recyclables, waste pickers sold them to intermediary buyers who came to the landfill to purchase the materials, which were then transported to their junk/scrap yard for additional sorting. District groups sold greater quantities of waste, which gave them leverage in negotiating prices. Some buyers paid more generously to newcomers. Others, on national holidays like New Year's Day or the Full Moon Festival, would give waste pickers small gifts like a bag of sugar much like any other workplace in South Korea.

Labor-laid Spatial Organization and Landfilling Process

In Nanjido, this labor structure established a distinct spatial organization. Landfills are situated in large areas of land divided into individual areas called "cells," a single spatial unit where waste is deposited into designated areas within the landfill site. Generally speaking, landfill cells are partitioned according to the type of refuse being disposed of; hazardous waste is typically separate from general waste in designated cells. In contrast to other landfills, Nanjido's cells were organized into three segments based on labor organization rather than waste type: district teams occupied the district segment, members of the private truck group occupied the private segment, and soil truck groups occupied the soil segment (Figure 4-3). When placed in other landfills, each segment, household waste and construction debris, would compose a single cell. In Nanjido, they were additionally divided into numerous distinct cells, each of which was allocated to a particular waste hauler, be it one from each municipal district or a private hauler from a particular location. Both waste pickers and city workers referred to these smaller chambers *tenba* (天馬, てんば), a vernacular Japanese term used in Korean construction site, specifying the primary spatial unit for day-to-day disposal.

[365] Interview with a waste picker in the private segment, April 9 and June 22, 2015.

[366] This relationship stood in contrast to waste pickers in various waste picker camps, as I discussed in Chapter 3, where police or other intermediaries profited from their labor.

Tenba represents both the labor organization and the labor process. Once tenba units were established, waste pickers (first-line pickers in each district team) assumed responsibility for its management, including daily dumpsite maintenance, particularly the soil cover (obtaining covering materials and leveling the dumpsite surface), which was supposedly the city's responsibility. Additionally, tenba represents the most distinct and significant disposal regulation in Nanjido: vehicles are restricted to unloading at a designated tenba. Consider the district segment as an example. In Seoul's Kangnam-gu tenba, only first-line pickers of the Kangnam-gu team could scavenge waste, and only vehicles from Kangnam-gu were allowed enter and unload their waste.

This disposal regulation, which was rooted in the informal labor organization itself, was strictly applied to all incoming trucks but never made explicit. Nor were there any maps or signs indicating each segment or each tenba. Nonetheless, since waste pickers invested their time and resources in maintaining their tenba, they had a greater incentive to defend waste from the district, for which they had paid varying membership fees. Municipal garbage truck drivers were the first to adhere to this regulation. Waste pickers would confront drivers if they deposited their refuse in another's tenba, "lest the dumped garbage contain any treasure."[367] Exceptions were made when landfill access was blocked or other tenba was unavailable. Even if it was for their specified district, waste pickers would sometimes deny the driver to unload if the district waste did not contain an sufficient amount of recyclables.

The landfill's disposal process and the spatial configuration led to particular politics and demands. Each stage of the disposal process, ranging from daily dumping and compacting, securing landfill access for trucks, constructing breakwater on the edges of each segment, entailed conflicts

[367] On the first day of his duty, one driver got lost inside. He arbitrarily disposed of the refuse at a nearby dumpsite and accidentally drove over a tarp-covered area, which was a sorting station for waste pickers. He quickly realized that an angry waste picker was running after him, swinging a pitchfork (*sosirang*) in one hand and holding honeycomb coal briquette ash on the other. Only after a senior driver came to explain that it was his first day on duty, was he able to find his way out.

between different actors. Each district team competed against each other to locate their tenba in a location that would be more convenient for vehicles to access, to occupy a greater area than their rivals, and to acquire additional dumping spaces. Others in the private segment would relocate or expand their tenba arbitrarily for their own benefit, thereby jeopardizing ongoing or planned construction works. Workers in the soil segment would privately dispose of surplus soil for financial gain. This conflict of interest between informal workers at each segment and city workers frequently impeded landfill planning. However, without their daily labor, the landfill would have been unable to function. City employees, despite their mixed feelings about waste pickers and workers at the soil segment, all acknowledged that they were mutually dependent on each other to ensure the seamless operation of the landfill.

This labor organization created an informal social institution that influenced the disposal practices of city workers and waste pickers alike.[368] There was no attempt by the city to overturn the labor procedure or regulation. On the contrary, the city's disposal practices were adapted to cater to this labor organization and its spatial configuration. Waste pickers established the actual disposal process: waste pickers and intermediary buyers negotiated freely without the city's intervention; waste pickers established the shift system between first-line and second-line pickers with a differentiated access to waste; they directly traded district team positions as well as scavenging rights for private hauler trucks; and most importantly, they fragmented an otherwise single landfill cell into many small disposal units (tenba) for each municipal district and private hauler, which characterized Nanjido's peculiar disposal process. Despite the precarious nature of their position, waste pickers possessed control over their own labor processes. Nevertheless, this hierarchical structure of their labor

[368] Waste pickers in a South African landfill also created a shift system, where the workers are divided into two different time shifts based on their nationality. Melanie Samson refers to this system as informal institutions forged by informal workers and argues that this self-governing of their labor processes engenders different social identities, social divisions, spatial claims, and varying forms of organizing. Melanie Samson. "Trashing Solidarity: The Production of Power and the Challenges to Organizing Informal Reclaimers." *International labor and working class history* 95 (2019): 34-48.

organization affected interpersonal relationships outside of work and the formation of a collective identity in an effort to mobilize the workforce, as I will elaborate on later.

The Valuation of Waste Pickers' Labor

How much did their labor produce? In its 1984 survey, the NSC compiled the income data of waste pickers to claim their contribution to the national economy. The average individual waste picker earned 21 thousand wŏn ($253.8)[369] per month; total monthly recyclable sales amounted to 234 million wŏn ($282,813);[370] and annual sales amounted 2.81 billion won ($3.4 million).[371] Because the city did not intervene in the sales process nor enforce property rights over waste materials or disposal facilities, landfill waste pickers could "common" their means of production (incoming waste), albeit with a varying degree of access, and autonomously organize their labor process.[372] One could argue that the city did not act as an intermediary in the sales process, but merely appropriated their labor. However, other elements of waste pickers' work, particularly daily covering, reducing the volume of landfilled waste, and increasing the landfill's lifespan, directly benefitted the landfill operation. Waste pickers returned the material remnants of urban life to the production process, and this labor maintained the metabolic relationship between Seoulites and their living environment.[373]

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[369] Income data was based on 10 days of income, the regular sales cycle at Nanjido, which was then converted to monthly income (30 days).

[370] Nanjido saemaŭl wiwŏnhoe, *Silt'ae chosa*.

[371] The conversion is based on the currency rate in 1984: 1 dollar was 827.4 won.

[372] Waste pickers arranged their work in a hierarchical and competitive manner, with teams competing for better dumpsites. First-line pickers protected their rights against second-line pickers, and second-line pickers—despite being in the lowest position in Nanjido—against newcomers.

[373] "Metabolic relationship" draws on notions in ecological Marxism and political ecology. According to John Bellamy Foster, Marx's concept of a metabolic rift suggests that "the waste of industrial production and consumption, needed to be returned to the soil, as part of a complete metabolic cycle." Political ecologist Erik Swyngedouw defines urban metabolism as "the making of the urban as a socio-environmental metabolism ," connecting material flows within the city. John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's*

We notice similar figures in the income data in governmental reports. Four disposal reports published in the early 1980s recommended the city incorporate waste pickers' labor into the disposal process. Table 4-2 compares the suggestions of four disposal reports to incorporate waste pickers into the disposal process, and Table 4-3 compares figures from the waste pickers' survey and two other reports. While they all suggested similar figures for the monthly income of a waste picker, they relied on different numbers of waste pickers and volumes of reclaimed waste materials, resulting in disparate estimates for the annual sales income presented to the city as the potential profit rate. Among these, the Japan International Cooperation Agency's report explicitly addresses the different average incomes of first- and second-line waste pickers, indicating its reference to the NSC income data. Although waste pickers' labor had gone unrecognized, this acknowledgement made clear both the value of their labor and the benefit it brought to the city, and the city's attempts to extract this labor force.

Table 4-2 Incorporation of Waste Pickers

Report	Suggestions
A Basic Study on MSW Treatment Plant of Seoul (Sep 1983)	• Incorporating waste pickers' labor into material recovery process • Installing 3 hand picking stations in between mechanical separation processes • Hiring 80 waste pickers as wage laborers (paying 200,000 wŏn / month)
Han River Basin Environmental Master Plan (Dec 1983)	• Incorporating waste pickers' labor into material recovery process • Installing 18 sorting lines on a conveyor system • Hiring 106 waste pickers as wage laborers (paying 180,000 wŏn per month)
Master Plan on Seoul's MSW system in the RoK (Jun 1984)	• Estimated average income: 250,000 wŏn / month • Specifically addressing the income disparity between first- and second-line waste pickers

Ecology: Materialism and Nature (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 163; Erik Swyngedouw, "Metabolic Urbanization: The Making of Cyborg Cities" in *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*, eds. *Heynen, Nik, Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw* (London: Routeledge, 2006): 33.

Nanjido Sanitary Mounding Landfill Plan (Dec 1985)	• Estimated average income: 235,000 wŏn / month • Incorporating waste pickers into the landfilling process • Charging a fee (20% of their income) for their access to waste (844 million wŏn of revenue)

Table 4-3 The estimated income of waste pickers and their sales profit

	The number of waste pickers	The amount of recyclable materials	Average monthly income of individuals	The total annual sales income
NSC	104 [1)]	N/A	212,680	2.81 billion
JICA	4,000 [2)]	190,512 tons	250,000 [3)]	11.9 billion
Seoul-si	1,500	84,000 tons	235,000/188,000 [4)]	4.23 billion

1) This figure indicates the number of people who participated in the survey.

2) This figure indicates both the number of waste pickers (2500) and the Self-sufficiency Work Camp (1400).

3) JICA indicated the average incomes of the front-line pickers and the second-line pickers. It estimated that the latter earned 100,000 to 300,000 wŏn.

4) The former is the estimated monthly income, and the latter is the estimated income after deducting a fee (20%).

Despite the diverse workforce, there was no overarching control. The district segment was overseen by blue-collar city workers (bulldozer operators, guards, and field superintendents), who were waste pickers' main contact with the city administration. While both the private truck segment and the soil truck segment were left to their own devices, landfill administrators occasionally interacted with the head of the groups when the need arose, such as altering dumping yards or relocating dumpsites. Due to spatial and labor divisions, waste pickers had limited interactions with one another unless they worked in the same segment or lived nearby. While the organization of the dump sites gives the impression of design and designation from above, it was also the result of competition between waste pickers for access to trucks and garbage pits, and the constraints on space with positions based on skill, networks, and resources. As such, the spatial arrangement of the dumping segments (by district-, private-, and soil-trucks) reflected the social relations and labor types at Nanjido.

Why did so many people move into the landfill knowing they would be living next to a dump? Why did the city provide housing units for waste pickers? How did the city's provision of alternative housing affect their dwelling and/or labor? To answer these questions, I examine the lived

experience of waste pickers through their housing forms in three phases: shantytowns, prefabricated housing complexes, and moving out of the landfill.

THE PROVISION OF LIFE

Organizing Housing: The Early 1980s

When waste pickers began to gather around Nanjido, they lived close to their work. They built dugouts or shacks (*p'anjajip*, 'plywood house') adjacent to, or under the brink, of each dumping site, facing the garbage mounds (Figure 4-4 and 4-5). Such housing was temporary: waste pickers described moving their house every three days, retreating backwards as the garbage heaps marched forward towards their shacks. The minimalist shacks resembled a tent, with a pole supporting an awning or a tarp. Distinguishing earlier forms of housing from more developed ones, a waste picker differentiated the former "rag house" (*nŏngmajip*, Figure 4-4 and 4-5) from the latter "shack" (*p'anjajip*, Figure 4-5). Living in the dumping fields, dwellers were unable to register and had no access to basic urban infrastructure such as water, electricity, or gas.[374]

[374] The shantytown received public telephones for the first time in 1984. More than 3,000 individuals received mail at the landfill's sole address. Nanjido saemaŭl wiwŏnhoe, *Pulgwang chŏnhwaguk kongjung chŏnhwa kasŏl yoch'ŏng*, April 10, 1984.

Figure 4-4 Shacks on the dumpsite, 1984.

Source: Sŏbu kongwŏn nokji saŏpso

Figure 4-5 Shacks on the dumpsite, n.d.

Source: Sŏbu kongwŏn nokji saŏpso

Figure 4-6 Relocated shantytown, 1984.
Source: Taet'ongnyŏng Pisŏsil, *Kaesŏn*.

From the early 1980s, the city intervened in waste pickers' dwelling, mostly through relocating their shacks. By summer 1981, the Map'o district office had fifty to sixty residents, leaders of waste picker groups or villages, sign a demolition notice agreeing to leave at the city's request. Between the late autumn of 1981 and the summer of 1982, the district office relocated the shacks to two locations: one in the center of the landfill near the dumpsite (Figure 4-7), and the other to the northwest corner of the landfill adjacent to the current site of Nanjich'ŏn Park (Figure 4-8). By 1983, all the shacks had been relocated to the Nanjich'ŏn Park site, forming a single shantytown (Figure 4-6). Following this series of relocations, the district office issued a notice to vacate in November 1983, citing the occupants' breach of land use regulation and unauthorized use of otherwise available landfill space.[375] Waste was encroaching to the north of the landfill site and the city claimed it needed to vacate the shantytown to

[375] Map'o kuch'ŏng and Map'o kyŏngch'alsŏ, *P'anjajip chajin ch'ŏlgŏ yomang*, November 1983.

make room for waste disposal. By the time the city issued the notice to vacate, 70% of the landfill had already been filled, and a new waste treatment plant was being built on the landfill's eastern edge. Waste pickers anticipated that Nanjido—both their workplace and home—would soon close.

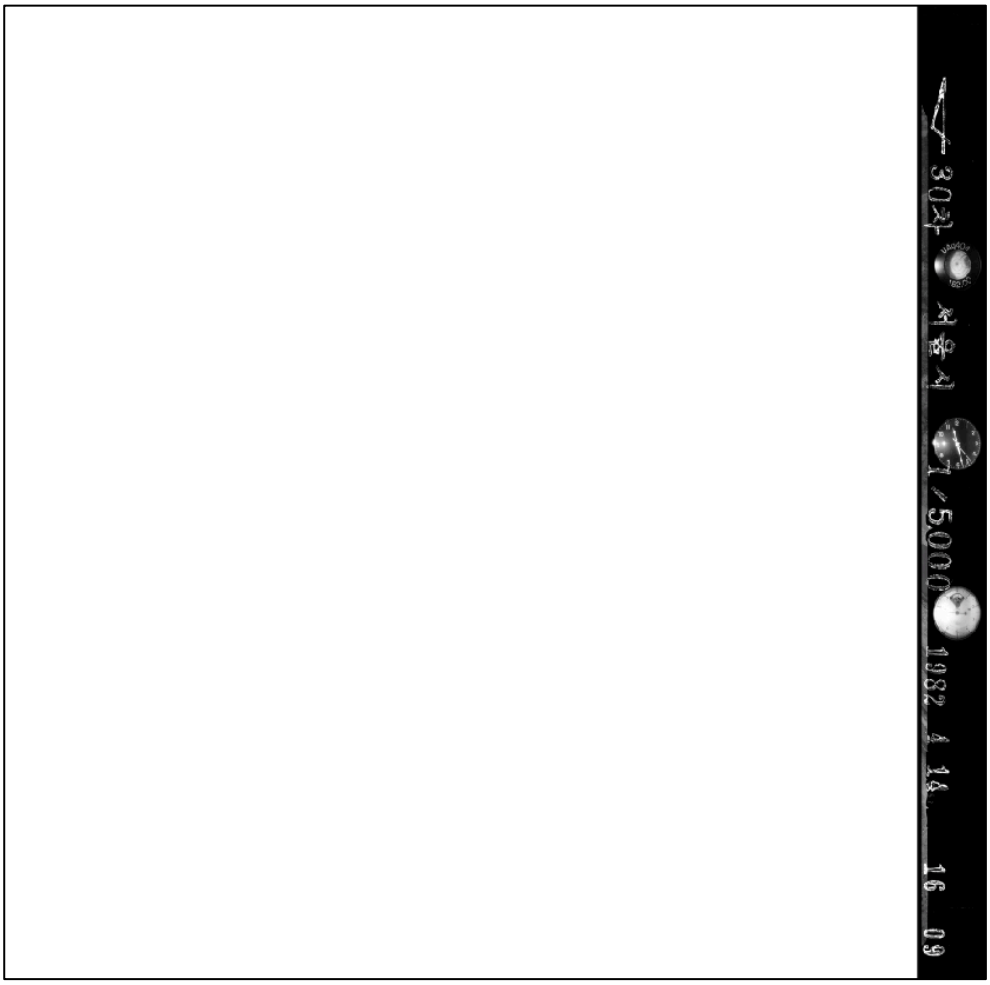

Figure 4-7 Aerial photograph of Sang-am dong area: 1982-30th. Course 40-019 (April 14, 1982).
Image description: This aerial photograph shows the Nanjido Landfill site, with the area delineated by a straight tract line bifurcating in the middle of the site. The image depicts various topographies of the site, including a landfilling area at the site's lower end, paddies covering the majority of the left side, and indications of human habitation along the right tract line. All aerial images are not displayed due to the Security Management Regulation of National Spatial Data Infrastructure (Clause 17).

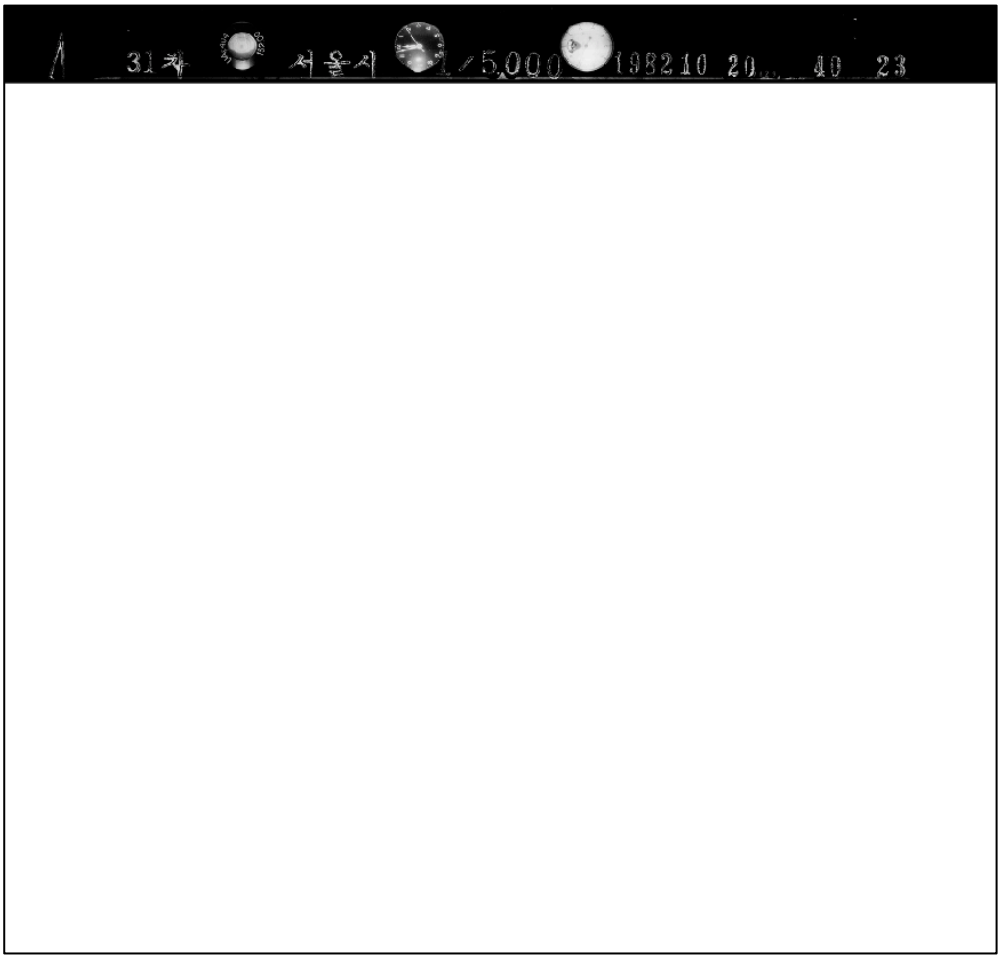

Figure 4-8 Aerial photograph of Sang-am dong area: 1982-31st. Course 40-023 (October 20, 1982). Image description: This aerial photograph shows the Nanjido Landfill site. The image outlines a landfilling area occupying one-third of the site at the lower end of the location. The previous indications of human habitation in Figure 4-7 have been diminished in scale and are now in close proximity to the vicinity of the landfilling area. A new human habitation area appears in the northeastern corner of the site, with the majority of structures located on the right side of the tract line.

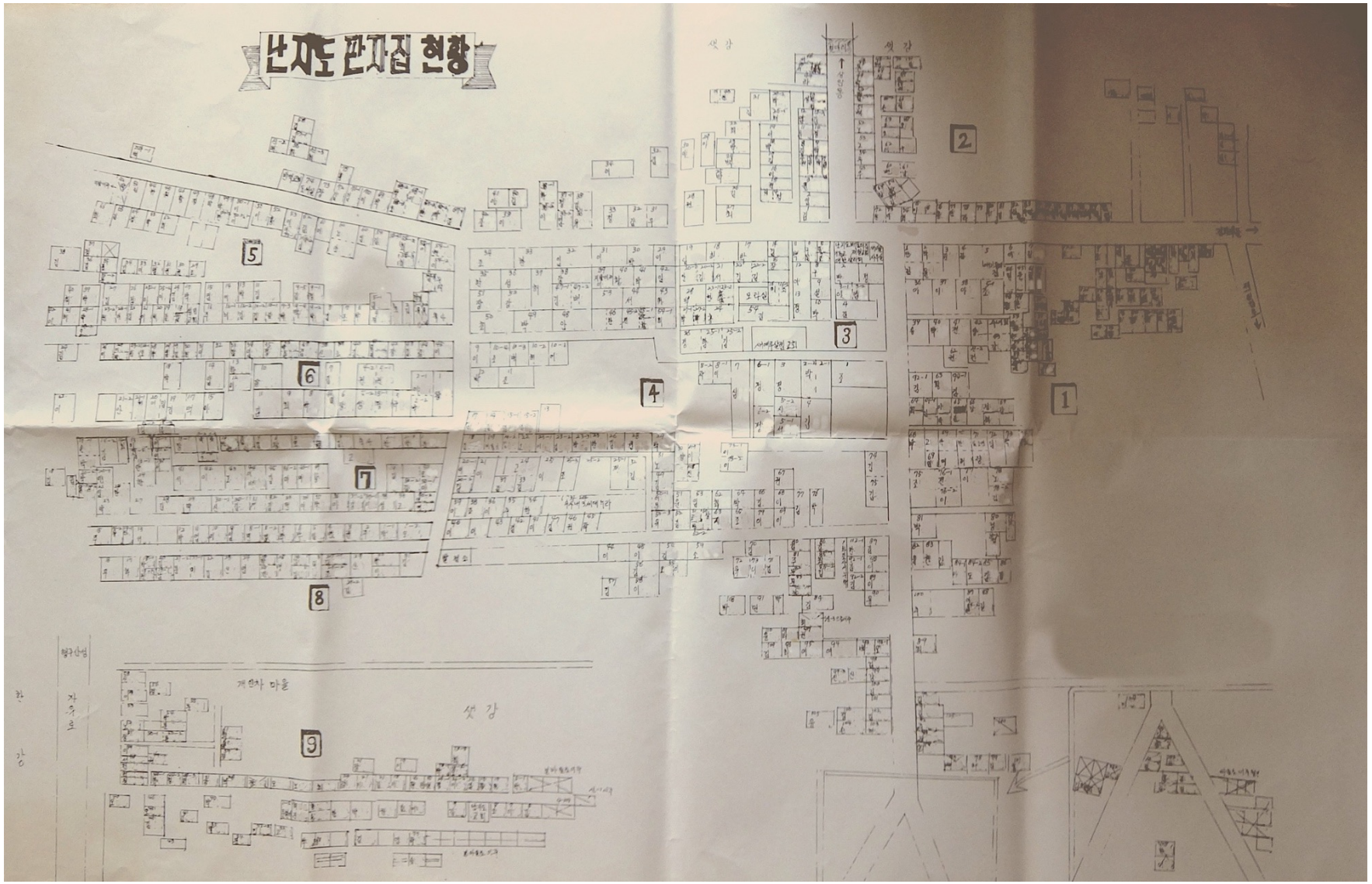

Figure 4-9 Self-drafted Map of Nanjido shantytown, 1984.

To maintain anonymity, householder names were removed. Map by Yun In-ho.

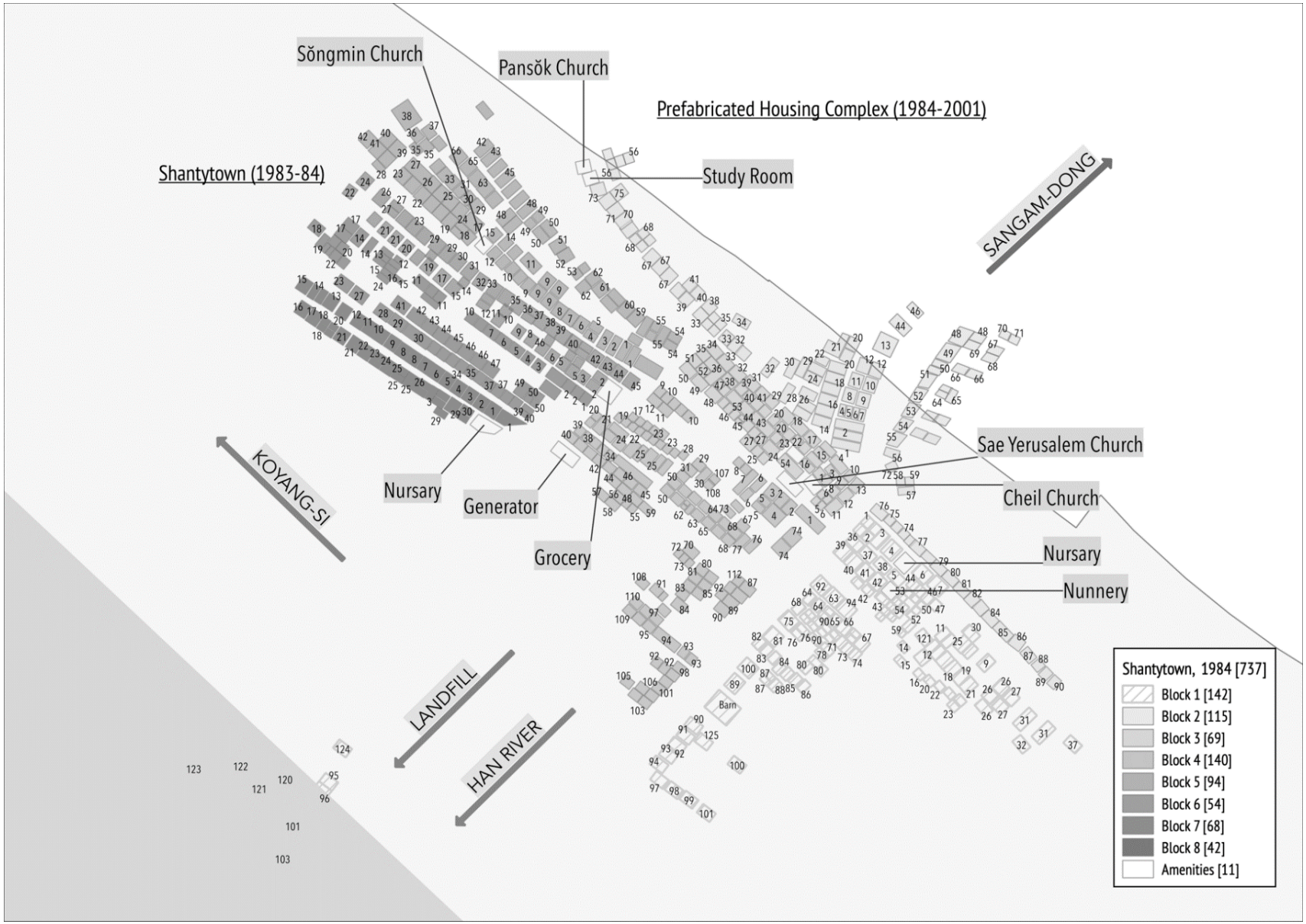

Figure 4-10 Digitized map of Nanjido shantytown, 1984. Each block number corresponds to a *t'ong*.

Figures 4-9 shows a 1984 map of Nanjido shantytown while Figure 4-10 features a geo-referenced, digitized version. The map, created between 1983 and 1984 by a waste picker, illustrates the Nanjido landfill as a lived space. Yun In-ho, the second-line waste picker who produced the map, recalled that it was "the only way to prove that we existed in the landfill" and convince the government to improve their housing conditions. Because Nanjido's population and settlement area grew over time, and unregistered waste pickers resided there, local authorities lacked control over the shantytown population. The shantytown map produced specific spatial knowledge of the landfill: shacks and outhouses in different sizes with householder's names or names of amenities; narrow, meandering pathways that were rarely straight; a village that grew without any regulation or premeditated planning. Inscribing the social organization of waste pickers' lives, the shantytown map bears the imprint of the state's negligence. After all, waste pickers used surveying and mapping—tasks that would otherwise fall to the state—as a primary means to become legible to the state, gain formal recognition and registration, and eventually obtain housing rights.

Shantytown, 1983 - 1984

The relocated shantytown (Figure 4-6) was the waste pickers' dwelling area between the 1983 relocation and the 1984 housing complex. The shantytown had grown noticeably larger in comparison to the 1982 settlement area, exhibiting the characteristics of an unplanned neighborhood.[376] Each shack was built one at a time, resulting in an unorganized, unregulated, and ever-expanding disarray. The administrative divisions (*t'ong*) reflect a sprawling population with varying dimensions and household sizes: Yun In-ho reported that more than half of the nine *t'ongs* were created during the resident investigation between 1983 and 1984.[377]

[376] The shantytown grew with each move. See Course 16-9 (April 14, 1982) and Course 16-004 (November 2, 1984).

[377] Yun In-ho reported that there were no systemic administrative divisions in the shantytown. There were one or two *pans*, after which the population increased significantly, creating additional divisions at random.

Being isolated from basic urban services and public transportation, village facilities and makeshift infrastructure sprouted locally to meet their needs. Those who were resourceful built their own shacks, while others traded with other dwellers. The price of housing reflected the size of the shack and its accessibility: the distance to the bus stop or the two bridges that connected Nanjido to the outside world. There were a few barns that housed cows, pigs, and ducks, fed with food leftovers sourced from the dump. It was not until the town bus connected Nanjido to Sangam-dong that residents could go grocery shopping in the nearby Susaek or Moraenae markets. While vegetable or fish peddlers came through the village on occasion, some dwellers ran a grocery shop (*kumŏng kage*), food stalls (*p'ojangmach'a*), or an electricity generator (*paljŏnso*) selling electricity, all started by waste pickers who found a niche market.[378]

Despite the dearth of amenities, religiously-affiliated volunteers provided essential services for Nanjido residents. There were four protestant churches and a Catholic nunnery in various parts of the village. Churches served several capacities: organizing medical volunteers, distributing donated items and financial payments, and liaising between local authorities and the dwellers, including for the housing improvement project. Two nurseries, both run by Catholic volunteers, looked after waste pickers' children. Four Catholic nuns, while working as waste pickers themselves, assisted residents with various errands: coordinating hospital appointments or matching orphans with child protection facilities. Many dwellers were illiterate, few had social networks, and most were unable to navigate the social welfare system, which included medical support or livelihood assistance for the needy (*yŏngsemin*). Under such circumstances, volunteers offered a link for those who would otherwise have had little access to the outside world.

The shantytown had both kinship and work-related characteristics. Kinship ties were common in the village: waste pickers often invited their siblings or family

[378] As necessary as these services were, being a waste picker guaranteed more voice in the village. Kang Min-gu, a waste picker who later ran a small business in the village after working in the private truck segment, continued to receive one garbage truck to preserve his "waste picker" status. "Had I not worked with waste at all," Kang explains, "I would not have been able to have a say in private truck segment meetings or anything else."

members.[379] Another social connection was cultivated through the labor organization. Waste pickers in the private truck segment developed their own segment in the village (*kaeinch'a maŭl*); district team crews (*taewŏn*), while not indicated on the map, also lived near each other.[380] Running a curb market (*kye*), a rotating credit association, was another means to establish their ties.[381]

The landfill's geography represented the labor organization of waste pickers, their living spaces, and their social relationships. Waste picker settlements had grown from shacks scattered around garbage mounds to a large shantytown, demonstrating the nature of their organization: unlicensed, unregulated, and self-contained. Simultaneously, their settlement area served as breeding ground for a reenactment of social relations that resulted in a variety of local bonds. This autonomous organization began to change in 1984 when waste pickers, threatened with eviction, demanded the right to housing.

A Temporary Resettlement: Prefabricated Housing Complex, 1984

What prompted waste pickers to voice their housing rights? In addition to the 1983 notice to vacate and the prospect of the landfill's eventual closure in the mid-1980s, two incidents motivated waste pickers. First, dwellers were frustrated by those who misrepresented or denigrated them to outsiders. During a November 1983 fire, for example, the residents had the opportunity to address their housing problem to the then-mayor of Seoul, who came to the site to offer moral support. When the mayor asked the dwellers whether they could work hard and repay loans if they were given

[379] While no list exists listing all the Nanjido residents, the householder names on the shantytown map show similarities that can be inferred as siblings.

[380] "Tasŏt pŏntchae int'ŏbyu," *Tŏk'it* (December 31, 2020), 148-149. *Tŏk'it*, a Korean magazine, published interviews with people with connections to Nanjido. This article (the fifth interview) interviewed a study room student and her parents who worked in a district team.

[381] Gerard F. Kennedy, "The Korean Kye: Maintaining Human Scale in a Modernizing Society, "*Korean Studies* 1 (1977): 197-222. When many waste pickers earned just enough for their subsistence and could not secure formal credit from places like banks, a credit cooperative curb provided them with a lending mechanism that helped them deal with large and/or unexpected expenses like weddings, schooling children or younger siblings, or paying for injuries and hospital treatment.

rights to public housing, the local pastor claimed that waste pickers did not deserve a right to housing and urged instead that he be given a relocation site.[382] Thirty villagers who witnessed the conversation were enraged, and Yun In-ho recalled that the residents wanted to tell the city what they actually desired.

Second, not only did the absence of necessary urban services leave the dwellers exposed to numerous disasters, but the government's response to these disasters sparked outrage. In particular, the September 1984 flood exemplified this neglect. When the flood swept down the entire shantytown, the dwellers were evacuated to Sangam elementary school until the village was recovered; up to 140 people were crammed into a single classroom. After a week of inaction, 200 dwellers occupied the nearby Moraenae market, the Sŏngsan Bridge, and the Map'o district office on September 7. The protesters demanded that the city provide disaster compensation, a fair distribution of donated funds, and an explanation for the shantytown's recovery delay, if not neglect. The city forcefully repressed the protest with tear gas and riot police, arresting 37 people and injuring 42 others.[383] Neither the intensity of the protest nor its harsh repression was reported in the mainstream media.[384] Despite the damage, the protest resulted in more realistic compensation for the residents, such as food and emergency cash handouts.

The prospect of eviction and misrepresentation prompted residents to demand their rights. The NSC conducted a resident survey, created a map of the shantytown

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[382] Rev. Kim, a self-described reformist, claimed Nanjido residents could not maintain a self-reliant life. He portrayed himself as a savior figure who could guide the landfill workers and demanded a new site. The waste pickers I interviewed all expressed frustration, particularly at Rev. Kim's "commercialization" of waste pickers to the outside world for his own gain. "Minjung sogŭi sŏngjikchadŭl (21) 't'allanjido' kkumkkunŭn Kim Hŭng-su moksa," *Donga Ilbo*, Feb 11, 1983; "Kananhan moksa ŭi p'yŏnji," *Donga Ilbo*, Aug 28, 1984.

[383] For shantytown development, anti-eviction protest, and violent suppression in South Korea, see Jonson N. Porteux and Sunil Kim, "Public Ordering of Private Coercion: Urban Redevelopment and Democratization in South Korea," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 16, no. 3 (2016): 371-90.

[384] The protest was covered in-depth by a university newspaper and magazine. "Nanjido nongsŏng hyŏnjang ŭl kada," *Sŏnggyun'gwandaehakkyo minjuhoebo*, 3 (1984): 12-15; Chŏng Yong-hwa, "Uĭyok kwa kyuje-suhae pokku hyŏnjang ŭl tanyŏwasŏ," *Sŏuldaehakkyo taehaksinmun*, September 17, 1984, 4; "Nanjido sujaemin nongsŏng," *Tonga Ilbo*, September 8, 1984.

between December 1983 and January 1984 (Figure 3), and submitted a petition. In the petition, Nanjido dwellers emphasized their contributions to the national economy through waste reclamation. Despite their wish to continue working as waste pickers, whether in Nanjido or elsewhere, they were aware of the landfill's impending closure. As long as they could avoid forced eviction in front of their children, they wrote, they would comply with the city's eviction procedure. Although they believed they "were not in a position to demand the government for anything," they asked for a humble place to live: they highlighted that "they wanted to be part of society, and there should not be a social outcast settlement (*ch'ŏnmin purak*) by the dump."[385] Based on the foreseeable demolition, this petition was primarily focused on locating resettlement alternatives in the city, particularly public rental apartments.

In 1984, shortly after the flood disaster, the city started to build prefabricated housing units for Nanjido dwellers. The landfill's capacity was approaching and the city intended to accommodate waste pickers temporarily while the landfill was filling up. The housing complex was made up of 40 tenements, each of which had 20 units and two communal kitchens at each end of a building, taking up the space of two housing units each. Each housing unit was 12 meters square (4 *p'yŏng*) and divided by sandwich panels with no water or heating. Housing units faced each other, with all doors opening onto a single 1.2-meter corridor, which increased fire risk and reduced privacy (See Figure 4-11). Temporary as they were, the original building plan incensed the waste pickers, who preferred to remain in their shacks rather than move into a 12-square-meter space they likened to a "pig barn."[386]

The Map'o district office declined to increase the size of each unit, denying the residential purpose of the housing complex: it was intended as "temporary, makeshift tenements for waste picking," not as "regular housing where an entire family resides."[387] However, it agreed to remove the communal

[385] Other demands include basic infrastructures such as water and sewage connection, public toilets, and access roads for fire trucks. Nanjido saemaŭl wiwŏnhoe, *Silt'ae chosa*.

[386] "Nongsŏng hyŏnjang," 14.

[387] The official name of the project, as reported to the President, was "Nanjido Living Environment Improvement Project" (Nanjido chugŏ hwankyŏng kaesŏn saŏp). This denial can be interpreted as a desire not to set a precedent for future evictees. Taet'ongnyŏng Pisŏsil, *Hwankyŏng kaesŏn*.

kitchens. Each of the building's two kitchens were converted into four housing units, creating 160 additional units in 40 tenements, allowing more households to move in. In the end, 3,973 people from 958 households moved into the housing complex between December 1984 and February 1985. The 12-square-meter unit was, as many had feared, too small to house a family, lacked a kitchen and floor, and the dwellers had to request connections to electrical, water, and sewage facilities.[388] Yet, it felt like a "hotel room", former waste pickers recalled.

Figure 4-11 Nanjido prefabricated housing complex, tenement 39

Source: Sŏbu kongwŏn nokji saŏpso.

[388] "Sebŏntchae int'ŏbyu," *Tŏk'it*, December 31, 2020, 97. The article (the third interview) interviewed a study room teacher. Also: "Tasŏt pŏntchae int'ŏbyu," 157.

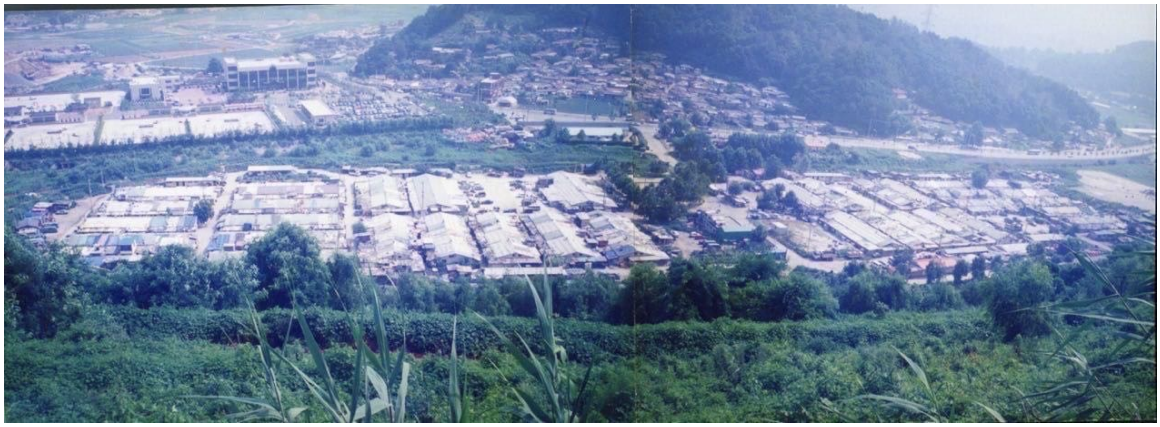

Figure 4-12 Nanjido Prefabricated Housing Complex, 1995.
Source: A city worker.

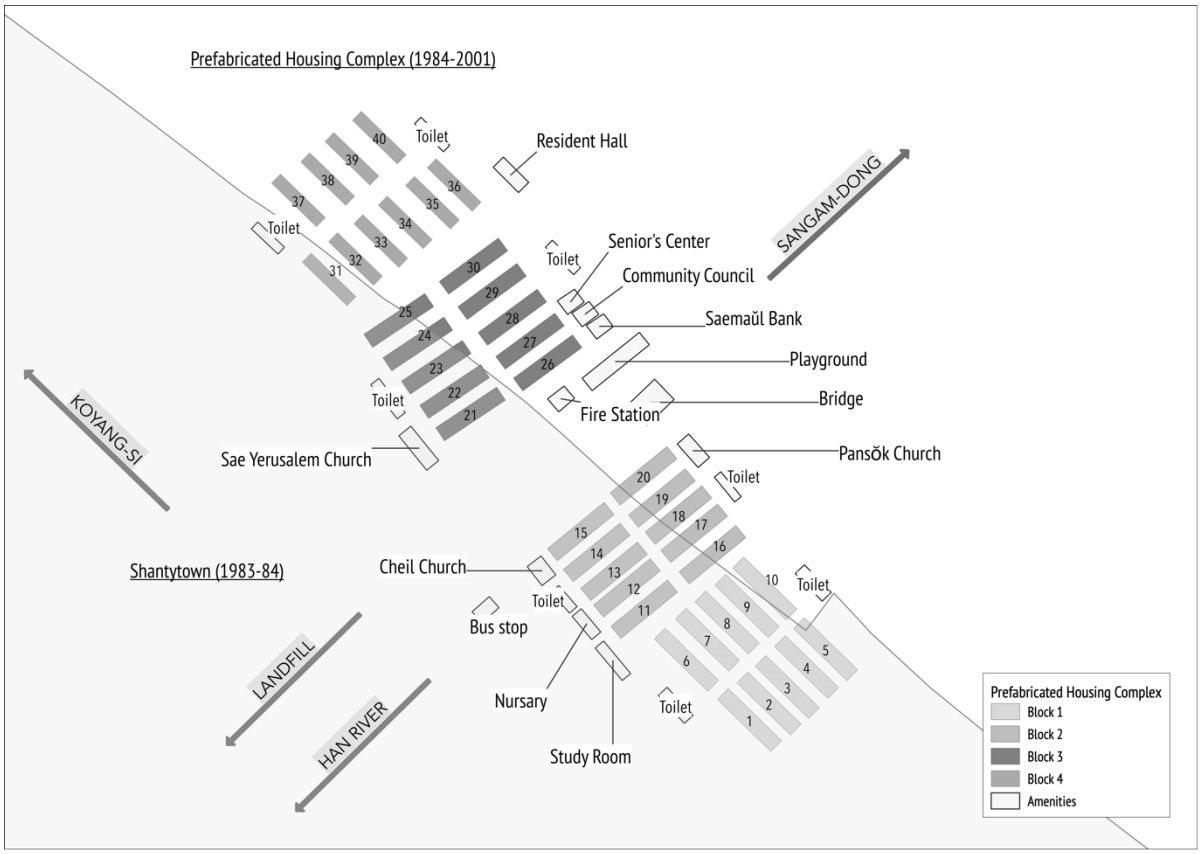

Figure 4-13 Digitized prefabricated housing complex, 1984

Figure 4-13 shows the prefabricated housing complex and Figure 14 shows an aerial photograph capturing both the the shantytown and prefabricated housing complex. With rectangular-shaped structures set beside one another, the housing complex resembles a typical planned neighborhood (Figure 4-12). Each of the four blocks (*tanji*) contained ten tenements. There were 35 tenements built for residential use and

12 for community use. Looking into living conditions, the settlement site's structure and housing more resembled barracks than living quarters intended for temporary purposes (Figure 4-11).

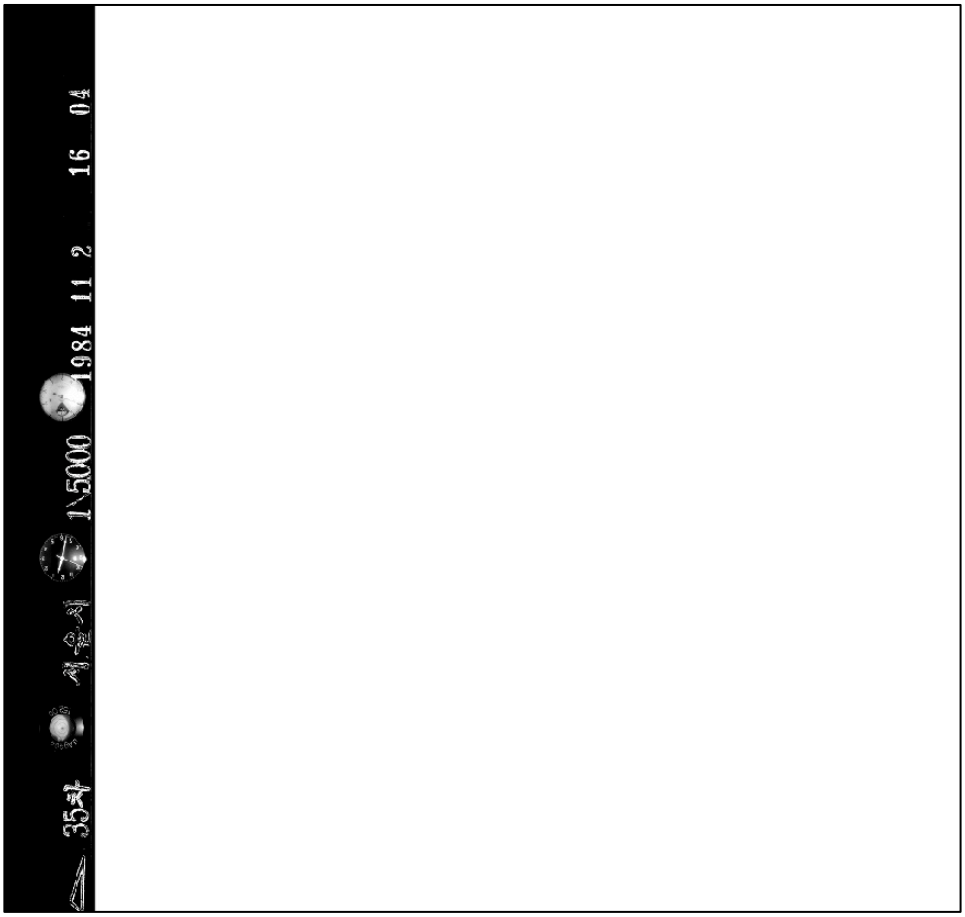

Figure 4-14 Aerial photograph of Sang-am dong area: 1984-35th. Course 16-004 (November 2, 1984). Image description: This aerial photograph shows the Nanjido Landfill site. The image depicts two human habitation areas along the diagonal line in the image's center that slopes from upper left to lower right. Below the diagonal line is the settlement area in Figure 4-8, with a higher density of structures observed on the right side of the tract line. Above the diagonal line are 40 long rectangular structures arranged into 4 sections, with each section consisting of ten structures. Landfilling areas have replaced the majority of the paddies illustrated in Figure 4-7. They have moved northward and are in close proximity to human settlements.

This state intervention changed Nanjido's living condition. First, the housing complex separated living and working space, changing forms of social relationships. Instead of previous neighborhood/work-based ties, new relationships arose such as ties between

people living in the same tenement or administrative unit.[389] Second, the housing complex allowed more time, space, and stability to grow as a community: amenities including a playground, a neighborhood committee hall, an elder hall, and businesses catering to dwellers' needs such as grocery stores, a butcher, a hair salon, a public bath, and a laundromat. Third, the dwellers were all registered and integrated into the local administrative system, gaining formal recognition from the city.[390] Neighborhood leaders formed a resident committee to serve as a liaison between administrative bodies (*tong* or *ku* office) and residents.

This acknowledgment of their residence was conditional. The new settlement area was maintained as a segregated residential quarter where only waste pickers were allowed to live. The city prohibited anyone else moving into the housing complex or trading housing units, so that waste pickers were all visible, contained, and unchanged. By segregating waste pickers into a single location, the city established oversight and control over the waste pickers and their labor. Upgrading unlicensed housing was not state benevolence; it benefitted the state. State intervention formalized what it had previously categorized as unlicensed housing, but it left the labor of waste pickers unrecognized, rendering them vulnerable to marginalization.

Nanjido dwellers formed a community that created its own self-sustaining structure, which might have been invisible from the outside. Nonetheless, there was no overarching leadership, representation, or unified community of all residents. Rather, they were frequently divided into different

[389] Prior work-based social ties overlapped with neighborhood-ties, such as waste pickers at the district and private truck segment forming small neighborhoods. According to Korean anthropologist Chŏng Ch'ae Sŏng, following the construction of the housing complex, new neighborhood-based ties arose. Chŏng, "Nanjido," 367-399. However, this should not be interpreted as implying that work-related ties were weakened or disintegrated completely; regardless of where one lived, work-based district units and private truck segments had a vested interest in maintaining close relationships due to the nature of their work.

[390] Only those who moved into prefabricated housing in December 1984 were eligible for registration. Anyone who moved into the housing complex after 1984, or those who lived in a shantytown that sprung up after that, were all unregistered until 1993 when the landfill was closed down.

groups, some more organized than others.[391] The explanation can be found in Nanjido's labor structure: different ranks in the landfill resulted in internal stratification among waste pickers. Despite the structural limitations, the residents were linked by numerous social relationships. These social ties, which are common in poor neighborhoods and shantytowns, became crucial when waste pickers lost their jobs and were forced to relocate to different segments of the city.

Post-landfill Resettlement, 1993 - 2001

Nanjido landfill closed in 1993. Between 1985 and 1992, 146 households had already left, most of them classified as "needy" (*yŏngsemin*) and qualified for permanent rental housing. In 1993, the city commenced its relocation efforts. To encourage waste pickers to leave the landfill site, the city offered moving assistance and then the right to public housing and new apartment complexes.[392] During the early and mid-1990s, the government constructed its first major public housing projects,[393] allowing the city to offer Nanjido residents the right to permanent rental housing (*yŏng'gu yimdae chut'aek*) or a newly-built apartment at cost. The city recognized Nanjido residents as unlicensed housing owners, granting them housing rights. Despite the fact that only 60% of the dwellers had civil registration, they filed an administrative appeal,

[391] Even when the NSC served as the official liaison between the city and residents during the 1984 housing improvement project, it faced opposition from some residents and their organizations.

[392] Map'o district office relocated the residents respectively between November 23, 1993 and June 27, 1994, and June 10, 1995 and October 19, 1996. Since November 7, 1996, Seoul City issued relocation guidelines for the Nanjido prefabricated housing complex. Map'o-gu, *Nanjido choripsik chut'aek chumin iju taech'aek* (Sŏul: Map'o-gu, 1994) June 13; Map'o-gu, *Nanjido choripsik chut'aek mit chahwal kŭllodae chŏngbi e ttarŭn posang kyehoek konggo (konggo che 1996-132-ho)* (Sŏul: Map'o-gu, 1996) June 10.

[393] In 1989, the government introduced permanent rental housing, a new public housing scheme for the needy. Kim Su-hyŏn, an urban planning scholar, contends that the public housing plan, part of the 2 million housing construction plan (1988-1992), arose from the political instability of the late 1980s. Kim Su-hyŏn, "Konggong imdae chut'aek chŏngch'aek ŭi munjechŏm kwa palchŏn panghyang," *Tosi wa pin'gon*, 1 (1993): 1-13.

negotiated with the district office, and were able to register themselves in June 1993.[394] As exceptional as these measures were, Nanjido residents lost their work, their homes, and, as a result, their community.

After the 1993 fire that destroyed five residential tenements and one community tenement, residents formed the Nanjido Relocation Committee (Nanjido Iju Taech'aek Wiwŏnhoe, NRC) in March 1993 to negotiate with the city.[395] The NRC's report directly claimed their rights based on their contribution to landfill management[396] and to society at large. It reminded the city that waste pickers helped to reduce landfill operation costs, which extended its life by five years. Admitting that waste labor was the only viable work they could do, they asked the city to allow them to continue their work either by securing jobs with the Korean Recycling Corporation, whose yard was located in the Nanjido site, or providing them a resettlement site where they could build collective housing and a recycling cooperative.[397] Neither materialized. In the case of the latter, waste pickers suspected that the city might be unwilling to relocate them all to a single location, an observation that proved prescient.[398]

[394] 370 households moved to Nanjido between 1985 and 1993 after housing was built and were thus unable to register as residents and were denied relocation benefits. Yi , "Chugŏkwŏn," 58.

[395] In 1994, it was renamed the Nanjido Housing Committee (Nanjido Chugŏ Taech'aek Wiwŏnhoe, NHC), emphasizing their right to housing. Nanjido chugŏ taech'aek wiwŏnhoe, *Chugŏ taech'aek wiwŏnhoe ch'onghoe mit nanjido kongdongch'e sasudaehoe*. (April 10, 1994).

[396] This contrasts with the NSC's 1984 report primarily centered around housing alternatives, reminding the city of their modest contribution in a humble, pitiful, and self-abasing tone.

[397] During relocation negotiations, residents organized various committees and presented petitions. They all proposed forming a recycling cooperative and constructing social housing for Nanjido inhabitants. To do so, they requested substitute land.

[398] Their reservations were not entirely unfounded. Korean scholar Song Un-yŏng suggests that during the Kwangju Complex Incident, the state realized that the collective relocation of evictees posed a potential political threat to the regime. Song Un-yŏng, *Sŏul t'ansaengi* (Sŏul: P'urŭn yŏksa, 2018), 315.

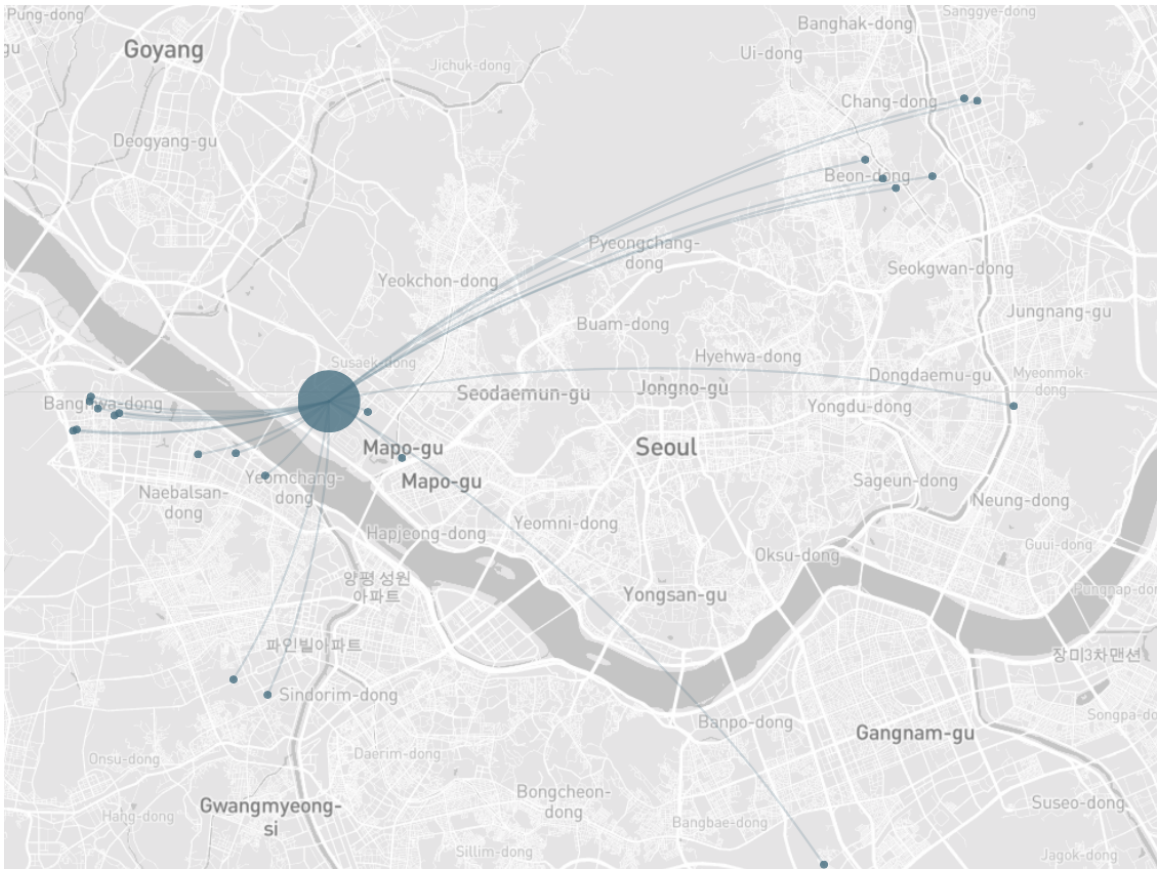

Figure 4-15 Relocation sites of Nanjido dwellers in the 1990s

Concerning relocation, different positions in the landfill led to competing interests over relocation measures. According to the NRC's 1993 survey, 46% preferred a substitute plot in Nanjido or at an adjacent site, 30% wanted a right to an apartment (*punyang*), and 10% sought public housing.[399] Cho Chin-su, who grew up in Nanjido and formed the NRC, explained that the dwellers were separated into three groups based mostly on their strata within the landfill. Those with lucrative positions in Nanjido wanted to migrate to the new sanitary landfill in Kimp'o, which was not an option. Others wanted to move out with governmental assistance.

Figure 4-15 shows the relocation status of Nanjido dwellers in the 1990s. The residents were relocated far from their homes and each other to more than 10 separate areas. The NRC survey and other petition letters record the waste pickers' socioeconomic statuses following the landfill's closure.[400] The inhabitants

[399] Nanjido Iju taech'aek wiwŏnhoe, *Nanjido chumin sŏlmunjosa pogosŏ*, June 10, 1993.

[400] Nanjido chugŏ taech'aek wiwŏnhoe, *Ch'onghoe*.

(householders) were mostly in their 50s, with half unemployed or day laborers. After the landfill closed, respondents had few job prospects. Five alternatives opened up: driver, construction day laborer, itinerant waste collector, building caretaker, or sanitation worker. None were feasible: few had a driver's license or a vehicle, and most were too old to secure a steady job anywhere, let alone on construction sites. Indeed, for many waste pickers, public rental housing was not always ideal: moving out meant forfeiting one's rights over the public housing, which limited their mobility and career prospects. Without a job, monthly rent and upkeep fees became a substantial burden.

After more than a decade in the dump, those who moved out early reported that they faced "the fundamental fear of life," as well as unpredictable and precarious job prospects.[401] Furthermore, because residents were relocated to different parts of Seoul, they were unable to maintain their network, particularly in terms of trading job opportunities and supporting one another as neighbors. Despite several petitions with proposals for land usage and a recycling cooperative, the city refused to provide them with other land.[402] Of the 810 households in 1993, 407 had left by 1995, 218 by 1997, 150 by 1999, and all had relocated by 2001. Those who persevered until the very end were eventually confronted by eviction thugs.

After the landfill closed and the city no longer required the waste pickers' labor, the city positioned itself as benefactor to the Nanjido residents. In a 1996 note to the dwellers, Seoul's mayor urged them to relocate, claiming credit for allowing the waste pickers to "live in the prefabricated housing complex for free for thirteen years" and providing them "unconditional support" during their time there, including "maintaining electricity and breakwater for fire and flood prevention, restoring fire-damaged buildings, provisioning subsidies for fire victim and moving-out expense."[403] Most of these are standard administrative responsibilities for residents under its jurisdiction.

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[401] Sŏulsijang ch'ŏngwŏnsŏ: nanjido chumin mit ijuja chugŏdaech'aek e kwanhan kŏn, June 1996.

[402] Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi minwŏn ch'ŏri sŏryu chunggan hoesin* (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1997a), August 1997.

[403] Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsijang, Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsijang annaemun - choripsik chut'aek ch'ŏlgŏ (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1996)

In alleging this as extra favor bestowed on Nanjido dwellers, authorities implied a magnanimity deserving of the recipients' gratitude. In so doing, the city disregarded the 15 years of labor that went into the landfill operation.[404]

FORMAL DWELLING, INFORMAL LABOR, AND PRECARITY

The development of the housing complex captures the contradictory position waste pickers occupied in the state's perspective. While the state's intervention recognized the presence of waste pickers, it remained ambiguous about their labor. To understand how this liminal state affected waste pickers, we must place Nanjido within two larger contexts: one, Seoul's urban development, particularly the lack of adequate housing and the need to contain urban labor forces; and two, the formation of a nationwide waste management system and its impact on Seoul's waste disposal policy.

First, the construction of prefabricated housing distinguishes the Nanjido shantytown from other eviction/redevelopment cases. During the 1960s and 1970s, the state frequently tolerated informal, inadequate housing to meet its demand for cheap urban labor.[405] Until the 1970s, housing was considered as part of social welfare, and one of the solutions to eviction was relocation or resettlement of evictees.[406] However, the last evictee resettlement case occurred in 1972. After the 1973 Kwangju Complex

[404] Similarly, waste pickers and their actions were blamed for the city's inability to run a sanitary landfill. In this narrative, they were portrayed as a nuisance to landfill operations, erasing their contributions to the city and its residents. Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Nanjido maeripchi hwan'gyŏng oyŏm pangji mit anjŏnghwa taech'aek kibon kyehoek pogosŏ* (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1992): 9; Yi Sŭng-mu, "Nanjido maeripchi kulch'ak e issŏsŏŭi hwan'gyŏng oyŏm kwa kŭi taeŭng chŏllyak," *Hwan'gyŏng pojŏn* 17, no.7 (1995): 3.

[405] In Seoul, the proportion of residential units to households declined from 50.1 percent in 1966 to 45.7 percent in 1972. Kim Myŏng-su, "Pakchŏnghŭi chŏnggwŏnŭi sahoe kaeip kwa yuyedoen hyŏndae: 1960~70-yŏndae sahoe kaebal chŏngch'aek kwa sobijŏk sam ŭi munje," *Sahoewa yŏksa* 127 (2020): 129-183.

[406] Shin Na-ri, "1950- nyŏndae mal – 1970- nyŏndae ch'o sŏul chŏngch'ak saŏp e kwanhan yŏn'gu ," *Taehan kŏnch'uk hakhoe nonmunjip* 38, no.9 (2022): 191-200.

Incident,[407] the state realized that the collective force of urban poor posed a potential political threat to the regime and refrained from relocating policy.[408] In that sense, the state's decision to relocate 4,000 of waste pickers and their families into temporary dwelling might have been motivated by short-term considerations. Neither the city nor waste pickers expected Nanjido to last another decade or that waste pickers would continue to work at the landfill and live in the same prefabricated buildings—built for a temporary purpose—for more than a decade, much less in the same manner. What began as a provisional resettlement, however, provided the state a stable source of labor for landfill operation. Unlike other resettlement cases, this case cannot be seen entirely as welfare measure.

Second, Seoul's waste disposal policy was in flux during the 1980s, and the city benefited from the pickers' unpaid labor. Waste pickers achieved a provisional agreement for resettlement after they demonstrated their presence and contribution through self-drafted community maps and self-enumeration surveys, including their income data. They provided their annual income to claim the value of their labor and

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[407] The Kwangju Complex was planned to relocate up to 350,000 Seoul evictees to Kwangju County, a township 26 kilometers southeast of Seoul, and construct a residential complex on approximately eight million square meters (two-and-a-half million *p'yŏng*). Coercive urban removal or relocation processes, the state's unfulfilled promises for land ownership rights exacerbated by a speculative real estate market on the very place where displaced people were supposed to live, the city's neglect of basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, and sanitation, with outbreaks of water-borne disease—all of these led to frustration and rage of the displaced population, culminating in mass protests and rioting on August 10, 1971. Sociologist Kim Dong-choon (Kim Tong-ch'un) claims that the resistance at the Kwangju Complex was a result of Seoul's excessive urbanization and the city's desire to establish a mass residential complex to house its poor urban population without having the financial resources to do so. Historian Russell Burge suggests that the Kwangju Complex Incident encapsulates developmentalism under the Park Chung Hee regime, which was simultaneously a material as much as a moral undertaking: it was the tension and discrepancy between the two that gave rise to the volatile social action. Kim Tong-ch'un, "1971-nyŏn 8·1 kwangju taedanji chumin hanggŏ ŭi paegyŏng kwa sŏngkyŏk," *Konggan'gwa sahoe* 21, no. 4 (2011): 5-33; Russell Patrick Burge, "The Promised Republic: Developmental Society and the Making of Modern Seoul, 1961-1979," (Ph.D diss., Stanford University, 2019).

[408] Shin Na-ri. "1957~1973-nyŏn soul-si chŏngch'ak saŏp chŏn'gae kwajong kwa tosi hyŏngt'ae" (Ph.D diss., Kyŏnggi University, 2020), 57-65.

its economic contribution, and based on these, they claimed their rights to housing. These strategies formalized their dwelling and established their citizenship status. But it nonetheless left their labor unrecognized. Rather, this data presented the state with an opportunity to effectively extract their labor and generate more revenue. The state could register the monetary value of their labor and produce plans that could subsume the informal workforce under its control, whether by referencing the data or by approximating using a comparable income figure (See Table 4-2].

These attempts to subsume waste pickers also neglected the informal, hybrid, hierarchical labor structure as well as its strict disposal regulations. In particular, the city's proposal to charge waste pickers 20% of their annual sales income (846 million wŏn) for their access to the landfill would have disrupted the social institution of waste pickers.[409] Had waste pickers been required to pay an equal entrance charge capable of overturning their internal order, it is highly unlikely that they would have taken part in collective action or established solidarity. In hindsight, waste pickers were not necessarily aware of ongoing discussions of disposal policies and their consequences. In the end, it was the state's failed efforts rather than waste pickers' collective resistance that prevented them from losing their work.

After 1985, the extended operation of Nanjido further stabilized the lives of waste pickers. But it had no effect on their labor, labor organization, or labor situation. Not only did the city never adequately compensate them for their labor, but it also did not provide adequate safety and sanitary measures despite the fact that open dumping methods were prone to sinkholes, slope slides, and methane gas leaks and fires. Rather, the fact that waste pickers opted to work in the landfill obscured the city's responsibilities, implicitly apportioning blame to waste pickers themselves.[410]

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[409] Seoul-si, *Ipch'e wisaeng maerip*.

[410] Similarly, waste pickers and their actions were blamed for the city's inability to run a sanitary landfill. In this narrative, they were portrayed as a nuisance to landfill operations, erasing their contributions to the city and its residents. Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, *Nanjido maeripchi hwan'gyŏng oyŏm pangji mit anjŏnghwa taech'aek kibon kyehoek pogosŏ* (Sŏul: Sŏult'ŭkpyŏlsi, 1992): 9; Yi Sŭng-mu, "Nanjido maeripchi kulch'ak e issŏsŏŭi hwan'gyŏng oyŏm kwa kŭi taeŭng chŏllyak," *Hwan'gyŏng pojŏn* 17, no.7 (1995): 3.

This tension between formal dwelling and informal labor rendered waste pickers vulnerable to precarity in three ways. First, it illustrates that alleviating one type of precarity (e.g., living conditions) may not mitigate other types of precarity (e.g., precarious labor). Second, it demonstrates that informal people's strategies to alleviate their precarious circumstances are vulnerable to state appropriation, which may conversely exacerbate their precarity. Lastly, it indicates that this selective formalization of waste pickers might not be entirely incidental.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown how waste pickers organized their lives around the Nanjido landfill and how the state's intervention in their settlement resulted in the appropriation of their labor. By locating Nanjido's housing history within the formation of waste management and urban development in the 1980s, I discussed the soaring amounts of household waste throughout the 1980s, the failure to successfully adapt waste treatment technology originally suited to a Western context, and bureaucratic conflicts in securing an alternative landfill site. All led to the prolonged use of the Nanjido landfill, which was itself the result of the waste pickers' labor, providing them a stable job for longer than anyone could have anticipated.

Waste pickers claimed urban citizenship by producing self-enumeration surveys and self-drafted neighborhood maps by articulating their presence, demographic details, labor, and land-uses. By "seeing like a state" through surveying and mapping, waste pickers developed a language that complies with the state. But they contested the state's knowledge production and its conceptualization of them as illegal occupants. These strategies provided them with spaces of engagement with the state in housing negotiations and concession regarding their dwelling and their citizenship status (e.g., civil registration), which eventually granted them legal recognition from the state.

The Nanjido dwellers created a self-sustaining community with its own provision of community, makeshift infrastructure, and goods and services. Despite their demographic similarities, the dwellers were not entirely homogenous. One of the dividing lines was the labor organization that stratified waste pickers. In the 1983

housing demand, waste pickers were not motivated by political ambitions, but rather by the urgent need to survive. Despite the hierarchical labor structure among waste pickers, they were all placed in a similar position by an imminent eviction threat. As such, waste pickers presented themselves the collective identity of the "Nanjido people" and effectively united their voices to secure housing. Their sheer number, 4,000 individuals at its peak, also turned them into a potential social force. As a result, they avoided immediate threats of eviction and alleviated the precariousness associated with an unstable living environment.

Unlike housing, waste was a contentious issue among waste pickers. After the landfill's closure, while all faced joblessness and homelessness, each coped differently. Although the dwellers organized themselves to better negotiate with the city, most notably finding ways to continue living together, the internal stratification ultimately hindered them in presenting their demands in a unified and cohesive way. In fact, following the 1993 closure of Nanjido, first-line pickers desired to negotiate with the city regarding the possibility of working as a waste picker in the new sanitary landfill. For many individuals, particularly second-line pickers, housing was a more pressing concern than maintaining their position as a waste picker. The stratification and intergroup competition fragmented waste pickers into distinct factions with divergent interests, which diminished their ability to mobilize and alleviate their precarity. In the end, the community was broken up and resettled across more than ten different locations, most in permanent rental housing on Seoul's periphery.

Looking back, the city never showed a genuine concern for waste pickers, their dwellings, or their labor practices. The city could maintain the urban landscape and thus save face at international events by physically improving the settlement; it could also reduce the landfill's operational costs by mobilizing this pool of labor. As long as the landfill remained operational, the city had an incentive to keep waste pickers on site. When the city decided to build the housing complex, there might not have been any deliberate intent other than providing temporary housing. Rather, it was a series of events in Seoul's disposal policy that resulted in the housing complex surviving far longer than anyone anticipated, ultimately serving as a means for the state to contain and control waste pickers and their labor. This liminality rendered them vulnerable to

other marginalization mechanisms, which were sometimes intentional and at other times incidental, but which contributed nonetheless to their precarity.

CONCLUSION

By positioning waste pickers within the broader socioeconomic environment of South Korean development, this dissertation has shown how a developing nation-state produced and maintained an urban underclass. Addressing waste picking as a form of labor and an agent of industrialization and development, the case studies—waste picker camps and the Nanjido landfill—demonstrate how labor forces outside the formal, organized, or institutionalized sector—albeit rarely recognized as such—bore the brunt of the country's high-growth era. Yet, the combination of modern waste management, growing environmental awareness, and urban development alienated waste pickers.

The case studies demonstrate how a developing state appropriated the labor of the urban poor at little or no cost, labor that was frequently disregarded and forgotten. Each chapter examines the ways in which waste pickers were pushed out of society: institutionally (i.e., modern waste management), socially (i.e., discursive effects), economically (i.e., mandatory domestic recycling), and spatially (i.e., urban redevelopment). Each chapter reveals how waste pickers endured and navigated violent development processes while knee-deep in waste, without being necessarily rewarded by the state's version of development. Rather, what arose out of development—intensified urbanization and professionalization of waste management—alienated them from their place of living and their source of labor.

Throughout the development of municipal solid waste management from the postwar period to the early 1990s, we saw that handling waste evolved from a largely informal and labor-intensive practice into a public service and a civic duty. This reconfiguration was tied to the contradictory characteristics of waste as both nuisance and resource. The changing status of waste redefined recycling labor: what used to be the subsistence activity of the urban poor was transformed into a professional sector that required technical expertise, while household recycling was domesticated and undertaken by citizens.

Bureaucratic and technological approaches to the waste problem paid little attention to the urban poor and especially their labor. The discovery of waste's

profitability resulted in waste being enclosed, removing informal waste pickers' means of production and subsuming their labor to the benefit of the state or capital. Furthermore, institutionalization and professionalization of waste management introduced new ways of thinking about and dealing with waste and, on this basis, it integrated recycling practices into the realm of daily life.

Institutional changes coincided with the discursive sphere, which helped expand and reinforce stigma around waste pickers and their labor. The initial subjection of waste pickers engendered different terms, categories, and meanings that spanned the state, the public, and waste pickers themselves. Once waste pickers were associated with ideas of deviance, their labor practices were imbricated with their social standing, generating narratives anchored in moralizing. We saw that these narrative threads were all interwoven in state discourses, popular and literary representations, and, to a certain extent, waste pickers' self-identification, if only to appropriate and resist the prevailing representations imposed on them. With redefined notions of waste and its management, the discursive sphere gradually shifted away from ideas of social deviance and moral personhood toward recycling and environmentalism, a new set of narratives around recycling that further marginalized waste pickers.

The collective living of waste pickers between the 1960s and the early 1990s, whether coercive or autonomous, illuminates the relationship between state regulation and the regulated population. From the perspective of the state, it could control their collectivity and conceal the existence of the urban underclass. In some instances, their communal living made them more susceptible to false indictments and other abuses, while in others, as the number of waste collectors rose, particularly in the landfill, they gained a voice and negotiating power. In both cases, dwelling frequently in unlicensed tenements in empty lots rendered them subject to eviction.

The establishment of the Work Reconstruction Camp and subsequent camps imposed a series of exclusions on waste pickers: housing waste pickers in camps (social exclusion), isolating them from the changing economies of waste due both to the police and intermediary buyer exploitation and the emergence of household recycling (economic exclusion), and urban development and eviction (spatial exclusion). In the veneer of vagrant regulation and its seemingly corrective focus, waste might have been only tangentially related to the actual inception and operation of waste picker camps.

However, their subjection to the police, combined with the unpredictable and irregular nature of waste work, rendered waste pickers vulnerable within the informal recycling economy. By the late 1980s, as redevelopment and gentrification of urban areas gained steam, waste picker camps were no longer compatible with the changing use of urban space. What remained after years of police control was a cycle of criminalization, displacement, and pauperization. Despite the guise of protecting waste pickers, state intervention ironically led to a yet more mobile population that reproduced and perpetuated the peripheral population.

In contrast to waste picker camps, in Seoul's Nanjido landfill waste pickers autonomously organized their labor and dwelling. The Nanjido Landfill was operational from 1978 to 1993, spanning both the expansion of Seoul and the creation of a modern waste management system. The changes in landfill housing, from shacks dispersed around dumpsites to a few shanty communities to the prefabricated housing complex, reveal why the state intervened in an informal, unlicensed housing and what were its consequences. On the one hand, formalizing unlicensed housing allowed the state to appropriate waste pickers and their labor, especially when the city lacked an immediate solution to its disposal problems. On the other hand, it placed waste pickers in an interstitial space where their dwellings were recognized but their labor was not. This liminality made them susceptible to other mechanisms of marginalization, ones that were not always intentional but incidental, which further dispossessed waste pickers.

Waste pickers may comprise a small segment of the urban poor, and waste picking was merely one of the odd tasks undertaken by the urban underclasses However, their collective living arrangements allow us to track their trajectory—the drags of development—over three decades during the country's development era. It reveals how their lives intertwined with everyday material practice, the social process of disposal, and development's inevitable social, economic, and spatial inequalities. It advances our understanding of how marginal populations were created and erased from society, an erasure that extends beyond the literal demolition of their living quarters. What remains, however, is the incessant production of waste. And this history is being reiterated with a different demographic in the very place where waste pickers were once made to disappear.

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What transformed South Koreans' everyday waste practices was the 1995 implementation of a volume-based waste fee system (VBWF, *ssŭregi chongryangje*). This pay-as-you-throw disposal scheme required the purchase of standardized garbage bags and the source separation of recyclable materials, thereby mandating household recycling. By the 1990s, mandatory household recycling appeared to obscure the presence of waste pickers. When they reappeared in the mid-2000s, their demographics changed: the majority were elderly.[411] Some competed for free newspapers in Seoul, Incheon, and Pusan subway stations, snatching newspapers and stuffing them into polypropylene woven bags, taking advantage of free subway rides for the elderly.[412] The elderly newspaper collectors at metro stations evoked pity for their advanced age and dire poverty, they also prompted complaints from and conflicts with passengers. In its 2007 raid, the Seoul Metro inspected 191 collectors.[413] Yet, when their working area was confined to subway carriages, their labor intensity was lower than street collection. Their sales system also reduced the burden of their backbreaking labor and public exposure: local junk depots waited for the collectors and purchased materials at the station's exit. By the early 2010s, their subway stint gradually vanished with the expansion of smartphones that contributed to the decline of newspapers.[414] As these recyclers have moved above from the underground, they

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[411] These reports appear more frequently in local newspapers nationwide: "Kyŏngjenan-.toesaranan sonsure haengsang," *Maeil sinmun*, October 3, 2001; "P'yejirado chuwŏya yŏnmyŏnghaji …," *Chŏnbuk tomin ilbo* September 24, 2005; "P'yep'um sujip 'himgyŏun hwanghon' kalsurok chŭngga," *Kangwŏn tomin ilbo* November 23, 2005; "Haru 5000 wŏn wihae… himgyŏun 'insaeng sure'," *Ch'ungbuk ilbo* November 24, 2006; "P'yeji chumnŭn noin manajyŏ kyŏngjaeng ch'iyŏl," *Yŏngnam ilbo* July 30, 2008; "Uri kyŏt'ŭi t'umyŏng in'gan 1. p'yeji chumnŭn noindŭl," *Chemin ilbo* January 26, 2011.

[412] "Chihach'ŏl yŏksa p'ye chisujip silbŏ ilkkundŭl k'ŭge chŭngga," *Tonga ilbo*, February 18, 2005; "Chihach'ŏl mugaji chumnŭn noindŭl kŭ kodalp'ŭn haru," *Chungang ilbo*, December 23, 2006.

[413] "Chihach'ŏl muryo sinmun p'yeji sujip tansok? simindŭl ch'anban ŏtkallyŏ," *Kyŏnghyang sinmun*, May 5, 2007; "Muryo sinmun p'yeji sujip mothandago?," *Chungang ilbo*, April 28, 2007.

[414] "Kŭ mant'ŏn sinmun chuptŏn noinŭn ŏdiro kassŭlkka," *Sŏul kyŏngje TV*, August 26, 2015.

have became more visible. More and more elderly waste pickers hobbled around the streets, hoisting loads of various recyclables or dragging carts filled with cardboard boxes; it created a new urban landscape of waste.

The presence of elderly waste pickers is not new. While the elderly have always been a part of waste picker population in South Korea and elsewhere, whether for their thriftiness and frugality or making a living, it is worth asking why they have emerged as the majority of waste pickers, what kind of attention they have received, how it varies from other demographics, and what it implies. In South Korea, the OECD country with the second-highest recycling rate and highest relative elderly poverty, the elderly found waste-picking as a last resort to survive.[415] Without a substantial state pension or social welfare, impoverished elderly had no choice but to scavenge recyclables, if only to earn meager, instable, insufficient income for their living.

The visible dominance of the elderly population in the informal waste economy brought yet another moniker and changed the contents of the attention. Unlike waste pickers in the past, this new name, wastepaper/wastepaper-collecting elderly (p'yeji sujip noin or p'yeji noin/ŏrŭsin), does not seek to tame the concerned population. Rarely were they openly criticized for potential deviance (e.g., being thievish), stigmatized for their work, moralized for their poverty or their inability to assist themselves. Instead, we saw extensive discussion over the extreme poverty of the elderly population, the dearth of other opportunities suited to their physical abilities, and insufficient and inadequate social welfare schemes, criticism that pointed towards society at large and the government rather than individuals.[416]

Newspapers periodically published investigative reports on elderly waste

[415] OECD Environment Statistics Database (Waste: Municipal Waste, Edition 2020; accessed on 24 May 2023), https://doi.org/10.1787/52fe37f0-en; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Pensions at a Glance 2021: OECD and G20 Indicators* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).

[416] These criticisms align with the elderly poverty and the precariousness of elderly jobs. Yun-Young Kim, Seung-Ho Baek, and Sophia Seung-Yoon Lee, "Precarious Elderly Workers in Post-Industrial South Korea," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 3 (2018): 465-484.

pickers, most of them collecting street refuse and curbside recyclables.[417] Institutional attention followed suit. From the mid-2010s, local governments, including Seoul, P'yŏngt'aek, Pusan, Inch'ŏn, and Kyŏnggi-do, as well as a governmental institute, produced reports exploring relevant policy options in their respective jurisdiction.[418] Their recommendations are summed up as follows: providing short-term safety measures, and for only those who work solely for subsistence, compensating their income through subsidy arrangement or social enterprise cooperation. The key to these measures is categorizing elderly waste pickers into those who are destitute and those who use waste-picking as a supplement to their income; only the former are eligible for assistance.

The reappearance of waste pickers was hardly novel, nor were the responses. Whoever dealt with waste pickers, regardless of their motivations, we observed striking similarities in their interactions with waste pickers: the contestation between sympathy and antipathy, the distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" waste pickers, and the impulse to eliminate waste pickers. This desire for erasing waste pickers from the urban landscape implies both their absence (making them disappear) and their invisibility (masking the urbanites' view). Both engage in discursive violence that eliminate their presence and contributions literally and figuratively.

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[417] For English reports, see Darryl Coote, "For South Korea's poor, cardboard is big business," *The Korea Observer*, July 28, 2014. http://www.koreaobserver.com/for-south-koreas-poor-cardboard-is-big-business-darryl-coote-22516/; Se-Woong Koo, "No Country for Old People," *Korea Expose*, September 24, 2014. http://www.koreaexpose.com/voices/no-country-for-old-people/

[418] Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *P'yeji sujip ŏrŭsin tolbom chonghap taech'aek* (Sŏul: Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, 2018); Pyŏn Kŭm-sŏn, Song Ki-yŏn, Yun Myŏng-ho, *P'yejisujip noin silt'aee kwanhan kich'oyŏn'gu* (Koyang: Han'guk noin illyŏk kaebarwŏn, 2018); Kim Hyo-il, Sŏ Po-ram, Kim Hŭi-jŏng, *P'yŏngt'aek-si p'yejisugŏnoin saenghwalsilt'ae mit taeŭngbanganyŏn'gu* (P'yŏngt'aek: P'yŏngt'aek pokchi chaedan, 2018); Yi Chae-jŏng, Kim T'ae-ran, Pak Sŏn-mi, *Pusan Kwangyŏksi p'yejisugŏ noin chiwŏnbangan maryŏn yŏn'gu* (Pusan: Pusan pokchi kaebarwŏn, 2019); Kim Ch'un-nam, Nam Il-sŏng, Pak Chi-hwan, Chang Paek-san, *P'yeji chumnŭn noinŭi saenghwalsilt'aewa chŏngch'aektaean yŏn'gu* (Suwŏn: Kyŏnggi pokchi chaedan, 2020); Yang Chi-hun, Ha Sŏk-ch'ŏl, *Inch'ŏn-si chaehwaryongp'um sujimnoin mit changaein silt'ae chosa* (Inch'ŏn: Inch'ŏn Kwangyŏk-si koryŏng sahoe taeŭng sent'ŏ, 2021); Pae Che-yun, Kim Nam-hun, *P'yejisujip noinŭi hyŏnhwanggwa silt'ae: GPS-wa iŏk'a, p'yejisujip nodongsilt'ae pogosŏ* (Koyang: Han'guk noin illyŏk kaebarwŏn, 2022). Korea Labor Force Development Institute for the Aged is a quasi-governmental research institute under the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

The suggested solution, especially that of removing elderly from waste picking, fails to see them as a vital part of urban waste ecology as well as the potential impact of removing their labor would be. In their 2022 report, Korea Labor Force Development Institute for the Aged (Han'guk noin illyŏk kaebarwŏn) estimated the number of elderly waste pickers at approximately 15,000 nationwide, whose labor retrieved approximately 60% of waste paper in urban residential areas.[419] They sell their materials to nearby junk depots (*komulsang*) accessible on foot, who typically purchase from 20 to 40 elderly waste pickers on average.[420] The proposed solution could bring about significant changes to the current urban waste economy, which currently recovers more than half of the recyclables. What would happen to the livelihood of small junk depots if elderly waste collectors were no longer available? Who would collect recyclables from the streets? And will local recycling facilities be able to manage the increasing volume?

As long as we continue to generate waste, there will be individuals willing to work with waste for their survival. We saw marginal population in different period took up the job, such as war orphans, rural migrants, urban poor, and the elderly poor, whether as a ladder up, a supplementary income source, or a survival strategy. The recent shift towards the elderly again demonstrates the parallels between material discards and socially excluded, as well as their connection to waste through their labor and symbolic associations. This social process that define and redefine the (material) refuse and the (socially) refused highlights the contingent nature of how waste becomes problematic. Current responses to waste, however, disregards its political character, be it urbanization and industrialization, capitalist production and its externalities, public or private provision of waste management, or the margins of societies that frequently linked with waste by laboring them or disproportionately bearing its harms—reasons that demand us to redirect our attention.

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[419] In the Seoul Metropolitan Government's investigation, there were 2,417 elderly waste pickers in 2017. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *P'yeji sujip ŏrŭsin*.

[420] Junk depots often maintain a list of their customers, including elderly waste pickers in their area. It is also a place where they gather to sell their materials and take a brief break. In its first comprehensive investigation in 2017, the Seoul Metropolitan Government visited each junk depot and surveyed elderly waste pickers under its jurisdiction. Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi, *P'yeji sujip ŏrŭsin*.

Ironically, the relative focus on the demographic characteristics of waste pickers—a tendency that continued from the 1960s onwards—takes our attention away from the structural causes. The continued reproduction of waste pickers signals the ever-increasing amount of recyclables, which, according to Max Liboiron, "are just disposables by another name."[421] The overwhelming emphasis on the current iteration of waste pickers, as well as its discursive effect, silences questions of waste generation that must be addressed first: what to do with waste and recyclable generation, who would engage in waste labor through what kind of arrangements, what labor conditions they would require, and most importantly, the social provision of waste disposal and recycling.

[421] Max Liboiron, "Modern Waste as Strategy," *Lo Squaderno: Explorations in Space and Society*, no. 29 (2013): 9-12.

APPENDIX I. LIFE HISTORY OF THE INFORMANTS

Kang Min-guk (1951) was introduced to the landfill by a relative who operated a public bath in the landfill after his business failed in 1981. He began his landfill career in the private truck segment (*kaeinch'a*), quit waste-picking and opened a food stall in the landfill. He also briefly worked as a middleman selling plastics to a recycling factory, utilizing his knowledge and connections at the landfill, but he quit soon due to a lack of funds for purchasing. After that, while he remained in Nanjido until 1992, he worked alongside his sibling outside of the landfill. Interviewed on April 9, June 22, June 23, 2015.

Yun In-ho (1947 [1945]) moved to the landfill in 1979 after working as a carpenter in Sadang-dong, a notorious Seoul shantytown at the time. He learned about Nanjido from his aunt, who worked there as a first-line picker; he moved there with his wife and worked as a second-line picker in the district truck area. He initiated the investigation of the Nanjido dwellers, produced a map of the landfill shantytown, and negotiated with the city authorities regarding housing development. In the mid-1980s, his health deteriorated, which prevented him from working as a waste collector. In 1991, when the city offered landfill dwellers the right to public housing (permanent rental apartment), he moved out of the landfill to protect his children from the health hazards. Immediately following his departure from Nanjido, he was diagnosed with a terminal illness, which he survived. Interviewed on April 10, April 27, May 2, July 14, 2015.

Min Su-ja (1947) was kidnapped from her childhood home in Chŏlla province when she was approximately nine years old and forced to work as a domestic servant in Seoul. She was in her mid-20s when she married Yun In-ho and moved to Nanjido with him, intending to build a home there, only to discover it was a shack. She began working as a second-line waste picker, but was soon offered a waste sorting position in the private vehicle segment, where she worked as a day laborer segregating recyclables. Since leaving the landfill, she has been supporting her family working as a janitor. Interviewed on May 2, July 14, 2015.

Kim Ki-ha (1950 [1948]) moved to Nanjido in June 1983. Since moving to Seoul in his twenties from his hometown in Kyŏngsang province, he worked as a seasonal toffee vendor, a domestic electronic appliances merchant, a local election campaigner, and a debt collector, among other jobs. He learned about Nanjido from a neighbor, paid a premium for the position of front picker, and commuted to the landfill without telling his family; when his wife found out, she followed him and left their children in the care of their elders. He was a district team leader, but when he was expelled by other members for his alleged involvement in corruption. He then relocated to the private truck segment and rented several trucks. After the closure of Nanjido, he continued to reside there but worked outside, failed at a few jobs, and returned to work with garbage. He collected non-ferrous metal from factories, a task he learned in Nanjido and for which he required little capital at that time. Interviewed on May 15, May 21, May 25, 2015.

Yim Mi-suk (1954), who was married to Kim Ki-ha, moved to Nanjido in 1983, and worked as a second-line picker. She worked alongside her husband as a neighborhood leader (panjang), assisting her neighbors; she also volunteered at a local nursery. A After Nanjido's closure, she utilized her personal network in Nanjido to get contracted work at a garment factory, which she then subcontracted to other neighborhood women. When her husband's business failed, she collected recyclables alongside him. Interviewed on May 15, May 21, May 25, 2015.

Cho Chin-su (1967) and his mother moved to Nanjido in 1980 after his father's passing. After a few years, he learned what Nanjido was and what his mother did: she began as a scond-line picker, settled in the private truck segment, and left the landfill when she had saved enough money to begin farming. Unable to adapt to the environment, he dropped out of middle school, occasionally worked at the landfill to earn money for a camera, and documented the dwindling life there; after renting all his photographs to landfill volunteers, he never received them back. When the landfill was closing in the early 1990s, he convened the housing committee with Nanjido residents. When he started a family in the mid-1990s, he left Nanjido and the housing committee. Interviewed on July 29, 2015.

Table I- 1 List of key informants

No.	Sex	Year of Birth	Type	Affiliation	Title	Period in the landfill	Interview Date
01	M	1951	Waste picker	Private truck section	Owner	1981-1992	April 9, Jun 22, 23, 2015
02	M	1945 [1947]	Waste picker	District truck section	Second-line picker	1979-1991	April 10, 27, May 2, July 14, 2015
03	F	1947	Waste picker	District truck section	Second-line picker	1979-1991	May 2, July 14, 2015
04	F	1953 [1954]	Waste picker	Private truck section	Second-line picker	1982-2001	May 15, 21, 25, 2015
05	M	1950 [1948]	Waste picker	District truck section	First-line picker	1982-2001	May 15, 21, 25, 2015
06	M	1967	Nanjido dweller	Private truck section (mother)		1980-1994	July 29, 2015
07	M	1960s	City worker	Nanjido management office	Administrator	1987.8-1990.1	March 20, 2015
08	M	1942	City worker	Nanjido management office	Field superintendent	1988-2002	March 23, 2015
09	M	1960	City worker	Nanjido management office	Industrial waste inspection	1990.3-1994.11	May 14, 2015
10	M	1960s	City worker	Nanjido management office	Construction engineer	1985-1991	May 16, 2015
11	M	1954	City worker	Nanjido management office	Construction engineer	1986.12-1989.3	June 11, 2015
12	M	1955	City worker	Nanjido management office	Construction engineer	1980-1983	June 15, 2015
13	M	1951	City worker	Nanjido management office	Bulldozer operator	1978.5-Present	June 29, 2015
14	M	1956	City worker	Nanjido management office	Facility maintenance	1985-1993	Jan 28, Mar 12, Apr 30, May 16, July 1, 25, Aug 20, 2015
15	M	1955	City worker	Nanjido management office	Administrator		July 10, 2015
16	M	1964	City worker	District offices	Municipal garbage truck driver	1989-1993	July 15, 2015
17	M	1958	City worker	District offices	Municipal garbage truck driver	1985-1993	July 15, 2015
18	M	1961	City worker	District offices	Municipal garbage truck driver	1986-1993	July 15, 2015
19	M	1943	City worker	Nanjido management office	Administrator		July 26, 2016

20	M	N/A	Field manager	The Korea Environment Refuse Association	Field manager		July 26, 2016
21	M	1955	Volunteers	Landfill churches	Missionary/Student activist	1982-2000	April 6, 2015
22	F	N/A	Volunteers	The Fraternity of the Little Sisters of Jesus	Second-line picker	1984-1986, 1990-1991	April 13, 2015
23	M	1959 [1958]	Volunteers	Landfill churches	Missionary/Student activist	1980-1985	July 17, 2015

APPENDIX II. DIGITIZATION OF THE SHANTY TOWN AND THE PREFABRICATED HOUSING COMPLEX MAPS

Using both hand-drawn maps and aerial photographs, I produced a digitized map of historical landscape of waste pickers' settlement area. Building on a body of literature on historical GIS, this method enables to integrate both digital and traditional sources to gain a better understanding of historical processes.

For historical maps, I used a hand-drawn map of the shanty town in 1984, as well as a map of the prefabricated housing complex, both of them drawn by a waste picker. I digitized both maps and geo-referenced them to base maps. One of the challenges to create a GIS of hand-drawn maps is the lack of geographic references between these maps and current spatial data. Both the 1984 shanty town and the prefabricated housing complex site were located adjacent to Saet stream, most of which had been reclaimed, leaving few geographic references.

To find geo referencing points, I draw on current map layers and a 1977 cadastral map that indicated the location of the Nanjido landfill and the Saet stream which was yet to be reclaimed. For contemporary maps, I used a continuous cadastral map base supplied by the Korea National Spatial Data Infrastructure Portal (NSDI), a base map of Seoul's administrative divisions supplied by Seoul Metropolitan Government, and a Google street map layer. After comparing these maps with the 1977 cadastral map, I chose two geo-reference points: Mangwŏn Detention Center and Sŏngam Mountain, which had exactly matching lot/tract lines. Once I geo-referenced Nanjido's map in the 1970s, I was able to use matching field lines around Saet stream to locate both the shanty town and the housing complex.

The shanty town map was not produced with any coordinate system in mind. However, it aligned closely with aerial images as well as modern GIS data. The housing complex map and its related sources also contained the dimensions of the site and the size of the area, which I used to calculate geometries on the current map. Each shack, house number, householder names, amenities, and other facilities were all geo-coded and converted to vector-based attributes.

I also examined aerial photographs of the Nanjido site, ones that captured waste pickers' settlement sites between 1980 and 2001 (course 16 and course 40). Aerial images documented shifting morphologies of Nanjido, providing a reminder of the landfill geography that had been disappeared through reclamation. I also used them as a grid to achieve spatial accuracy.

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SAMENVATTING

'Ruimte Innemen: Afval en Arbeid in de Afvalverwerking in Ontwikkelend Zuid-Korea' onderzoekt de ervaring van Zuid-Korea tijdens de ontwikkeling door de overblijfselen van zijn industrialisatie- en moderniseringsprocessen te analyseren, met de focus op de sociale- en milieukosten en gevolgen op het milieu. Met dit doel, plaatst dit proefschrift de ervaringen van vuilnisophalers in de periode van de jaren 1960 tot het begin van de jaren 1990 tegenover de transformatie van afvalbeheer en de herindeling van de bijhorende arbeid. Door de materiële, sociale en symbolische dimensies van afval en vuilnisophalen met elkaar te verbinden, bevestig ik dat vuilnisophalers spelers van industrialisatie en ontwikkeling zijn en hun werk als een vorm van arbeid. Dit onderzoek toont aan hoe de vorming van gemarginaliseerde bevolkingsgroepen en het negeren van hun arbeidsomstandigheden hebben bijgedragen aan het voortbouwen van de zich ontwikkelende natie-staat en zijn burgers uit de middenklasse.

Het eerste hoofdstuk onderzoekt hoe afvalbeheer in Zuid-Korea zich ontwikkelde van een grotendeels ongeorganiseerde en arbeidsintensieve praktijk naar een publieke dienst met burgerparticipatie. Ik draag drie significante veranderingen aan die zich tijdens dit proces hebben voorgedaan: de institutionalisering van afvalbeheer, professionalisering van verwijderingsmethoden en het verplicht recyclen van huishoudelijk afval. Elk proces omvatte concurrerende claims over afval en de gerelateerde arbeid, en wat een modern afvalbeheersysteem omvat. Dit resulteerde in 1) een transformatie in de ontologische status van afval van een bedreiging voor het menselijk milieu naar een hulpbron, en 2) een herdefiniëring van afvalarbeid als een bestaansmiddel van de armen in de stad naar een burgerlijke en milieuplicht. Ik betoog dat de staat het mogelijk heeft gemaakt om huishoudt recycling verplicht te stellen vanwege deze verschuiving in de perceptie van afval en afvalarbeid.

In het tweede hoofdstuk onderzoek ik de discursieve sfeer die is opgebouwd rond vuilnisophalers. Ik bekijk hoe en waarom verschillende classificaties en betekenissen geassocieerd raakten met vuilnisophalers; wat leidde tot het verschijnen en verdwijnen van termen; en hoe verschillende actoren—variërend van staatsorganen en hun administratie tot sociale hervormers en burgers uit de middenklasse—tot dergelijke discussie leiden, en hoe vuilnisophalers zelf reageerden door zich te verzetten

tegen overheersende opvatting van hun leven en hun agentschap terug te vorderen. Ik laat zien hoe discours van de staat de algehele opvatting van vuilnisophalers vestigden en daaropvolgende, verstrengelde discoursen naar het alledaagse niveau brachten.

De derde en vierde hoofdstukken onderzoeken hoe vuilnisophalers zich organiseerden buiten het formele afvalbeheer. In hoofdstuk drie volg ik de trajecten van vuilnisophalerskampen, inclusief de door de politie geleide, officiële kampen en andere vuilnisophaler groeperingen. Hun aanvankelijke overgave aan de politie resulteerde in sociale uitsluiting, terwijl de sructuur van het vuilnisophalers kamp kwetsbaar maakte voor prijsmanipulatie en economische uitbuiting. De locatie van het kamp—het innemen van lege percelen aan de rand van de stad – kwam in strijd met stedelijke herontwikkeling, wat leidde tot hun ruimtelijke uitsluiting. Ik toon aan hoe landelijke regulatie van vuilnisophalers, een interventie die bedoeld was om dakloosheid te voorkomen en te regelen, hen in plaats daarvan mobieler en instabieler maakte.

In hoofdstuk vier onderzoek ik de Nanjido-vuilstortplaats in Seoul als een geleefde ruimte, waarbij ik huisvesting gebruik als een lens om te begrijpen hoe vuilnisophalers hun leven en arbeid organiseerden. Ik analyseer hoe vuilnisophalers een voorlopige huisvestingsovereenkomst bereikten via de bouw van het huiscomplex in 1984, wat hun verblijf formaliseerde maar hun arbeid nog steeds ongerechtvaardigd liet, of zelfs werd uitgebuit door de staat. Ik betoog dat deze spanning tussen formele huisvesting en informele arbeid leidde tot onzekerheid, waarbij ik aantoon dat 1) het verlichten van één type onzekerheid (bijv. levensomstandigheden) niet noodzakelijkerwijs andere vormen van onzekerheid (bijv. Precair werk) vermindert, 2) strategieën die informeel worden toegepast door mensen om hun precaire omstandigheden te verlichten kwetsbaar zijn voor gedoging van de staat, en 3) deze selectieve formalisering misschien niet geheel toevallig is.

Na een samenvatting van de bevindingen in elk hoofdstuk, sluit ik af met de prevalentie van oude vuilnisophalers in het hedendaagse Zuid-Korea te illustreren. Terwijl het populaire beeld vaak empathie toont, is er weinig discussie over waarom deze specifieke vorm van arbeid voortzet. Zonder de onderliggende oorzaak van dit fenomeen in twijfel te trekken, namelijk de onophoudelijke productie van recyclebaar materiaal, blijft de primaire focus gericht op het identificeren van vuilnisophalers als

een sociale categorie en het elimineren van hun aanwezigheid uit het zicht. Dit proefschrift heeft aangetoond dat vuilnisophalers dienen als een precedent voor precaire vorm van arbeid in modern Korea, waarvan de arbeidspraktijken vatbaar zijn voor verschillende sociale prioriteiten. In plaats van verborgen te zijn in de geschiedenis, blijven huidige vuilnisophalers in Zuid-Korea een vorm van precaire arbeid in stedelijk gebied creëren, waardoor de verborgen verbindingen tussen de arbeid van gemarginaliseerde groepen en de levens van andere bevolkingsgroepen aan het licht komen.

Curriculum Vitae

Hyojin Pak (1983) is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Area Studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands. After graduating from high school in 2001, she earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Seoul and her master's degree from the Graduate School of Environmental Studies at Seoul National University. In September 2013, She started her PhD program at Leiden University as part of the NWO-supported project "Garbage Matters: A Comparative History of Waste in East Asia." Her essay "Between Memory and Amnesia: Seoul's Nanjido Landfill, 1978-1993" appeared in *Forces of Nature: New Perspectives on Korean Environments* (Cornell University Press, 2023)