

# Saemaul Undong: South Korea's New Village Movement

Rural Village Transformation through Collective Action from 1970 to the Present



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IMG. 01

### Village Entrance Construction

Villagers are gathered to pave the entrance for their village along the Saemaul Undong Flag.







In South Korea, the new village movement that started in 1970 sought to revitalize and renew communities in rural areas as migration to big cities, that is, Seoul. How could government policy respond to shrinking rural life: The new village movement (Saemaul Undong) provided basic support, in materials like cement and steel by the government, to make their own villages more livable. Each village could decide what to build, such as roads, bridges, and irrigation system to reflect their own needs, but they all built Town Halls (Maul Hoegwan) to have meetings. What made this movement successful was the collective social action, which played an important part in community identity for their own well-being.

This project entails visiting five very different villages in rural South Korea to study how the New Village and Town Halls were built, how they affected residents, and how they enabled a rich social life outside the big city. Nowadays, the role of town halls in rural villages is more than just a place for meeting. The town halls offer a variety of public and community services — from education to elder care to political meetings. Work includes interviews at each town hall — all still functioning — and archival and photographic documentation to find unforeseen possibilities and new roles of these town halls in the future.

IMG. 02

## Villagers Moving Rocks for Agriculture

During their work, people were wearing the Saemaul Symbol hat, creating the collectivism towards the same goal; trying to make their own lives better.



IMG. 03

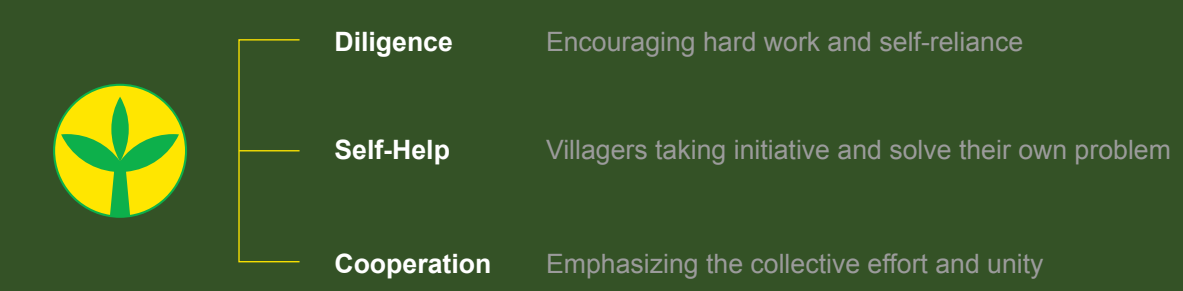
Official Flag of the Saemaul Undong

The symbol represents the sprouts colored in green, representing the green revolutions. The yellow represents the cooperation and endless oppourtunity. Below the symbol, Saemaul (New Village) is written in Korean.

The Saemaul Undong, or New Village Movement, was a rural development initiative launched in South Korea in 1970 by President Park Chung-hee. Its goal was to modernize the rural villages through 3 core values: diligence, self-help, and cooperation. At the time, South Korea faced a significant gap between urban and rural development, with many villages lacking basic infrastructure and finding hard to even feed themselves. Through Saemaul Undong, the government provided initial resources to each of the 33,000 villages—335 bags of cement—but didn’t specify how to use it. Villagers were supposed to build their village on their own through community meetings in town halls; the Maul Hoegwan. Those who showed significant improvement received further support, fostering competition and motivation among villages. The movement led to improve roads, bridges, irrigation systems, and housings, significantly enhancing living standards in rural areas.

Through Saemaul Undong, the rural electrification increased from 12% in 1970 to 98% in early 1980s and over 200,000 kilometers of village roads were built or improved. Maul Hoegwan (Town Halls) were also built across villages and served as spaces for community meetings, education, and public communication—often through a large speaker mounted on the roof. Through the speaker, they announced important messages like the work schedule, administrative notices, and events. It quickly became the core space within the village.

Nowadays, the town halls are used not only as meeting space but also a place for social events, elder care, and even winter shelter. Architectural typologies has been developed accordingly to accommodate its extended uses.





# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Archiving Spatial / Experiential

IMG. 04



## Spatial

Unique architectural development of town hall building will be documented and asked through the local people to understand the process of the evolution. Features like speakers, dimensions of the building will be recorded, along with new additions according to technological improvement, such as telecommunication devices.

IMG. 05



## Experiential

Current use of the town hall will be carefully documented by attending community events through the local mayor by spending 3 days within the village. By interviewing villagers, their thoughts on reasoning towards current use and future needs will be recorded. Then, archived materials will be shared with mayor to communicate the findings.

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## Town Hall Typologies



- 1

Sanglim Town Hall

Increasing Population  
Renovated Building
- 2

Gahak Town Hall

Heavy Agricultural Village  
Typical Town Hall Construction
- 3

Anseong Town Hall

Under Utilized  
Storefront
- 4

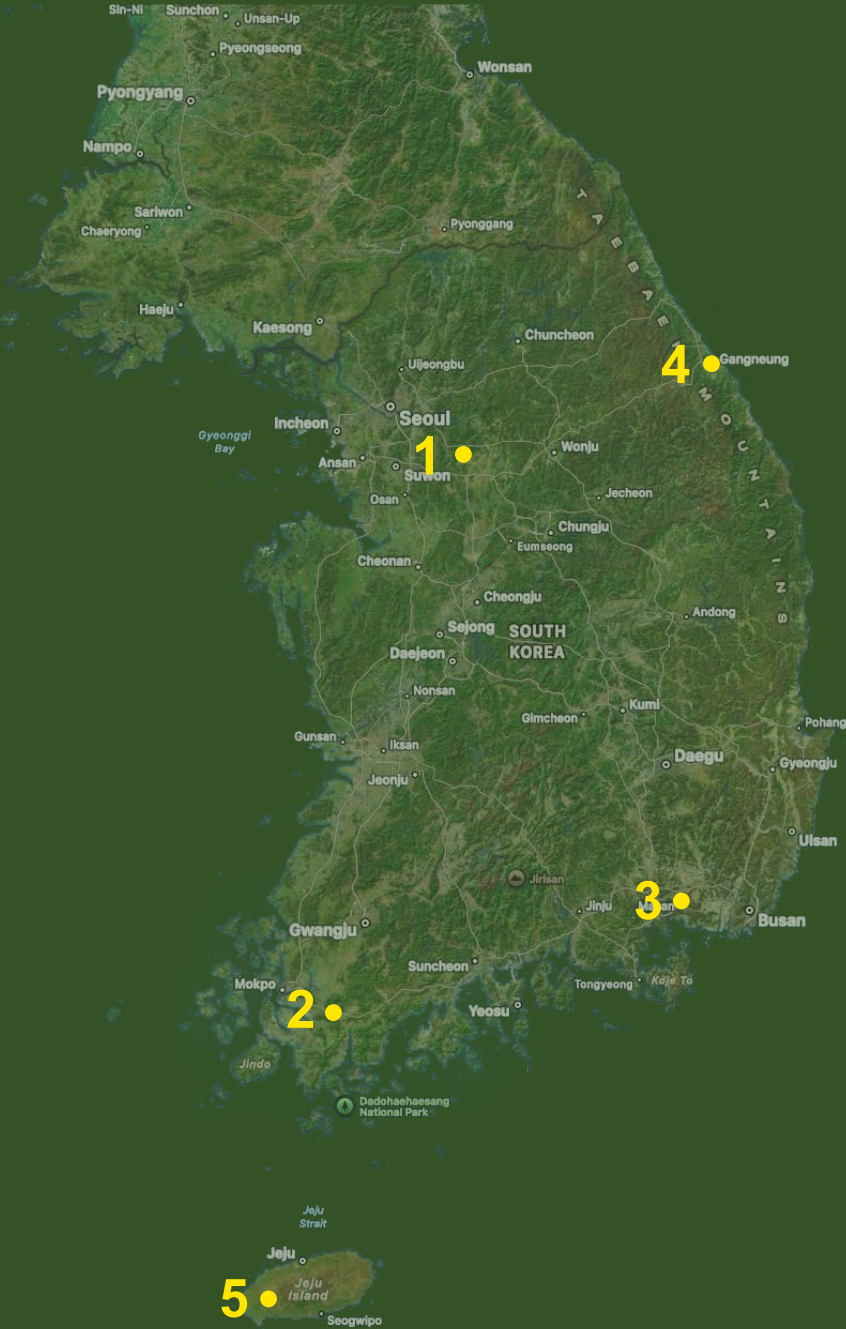
Gangneung Town Hall

Bigger Municipal Town Hall  
Mountain Area
- 5

Deoksu Town Hall

Island  
Integration of Technology

Each selected town hall represents a different facet of civic life—from mountainous rural villages to urban peripheries—revealing the regional variations in architectural style, materiality, and social use. By studying multiple examples, the project resists a singular narrative and instead builds a comparative, multi-vocal archive that honors the complexity of these fading civic typologies. Some of the criteria were building typology, population status, political region, geography, and culture. Archiving different and unique town hall will be important, as the finding towards new role of town hall will be reflected.





호당 소득 내역 (분야별)					(80년도)
소득종목	물량	총소득액	호당소득액	비고	
계		273304 <sup>원</sup>	2152 <sup>원</sup>	100%	
미곡	100 <sup>ha</sup>	128250	1009	4.8%	
비옥우	140 <sup>두</sup>	28000	221	11%	
호포	38 <sup>ha</sup>	8299	65	3%	
연초	8.6 <sup>ha</sup>	16598	129	6%	
잡업	45 <sup>정자</sup>	2733	22	1%	
전직	53 <sup>ha</sup>	54661	430	20%	
기타	28	30063	237	11%	

4. 새마을사업실적

년도	사업명	사업량	사업비			비고
		계	정권	주민		
계		255 <sup>3</sup>	177640	95350	82290	
기	도수로개설	1개소 2000 <sup>m</sup>	5000		5000	자력
·	농로개설	1개소 2000 <sup>m</sup>	2000		2000	·
·	도정증강	1동 22정	2000		2000	·

IMG. 11

Village Overview (Chart)

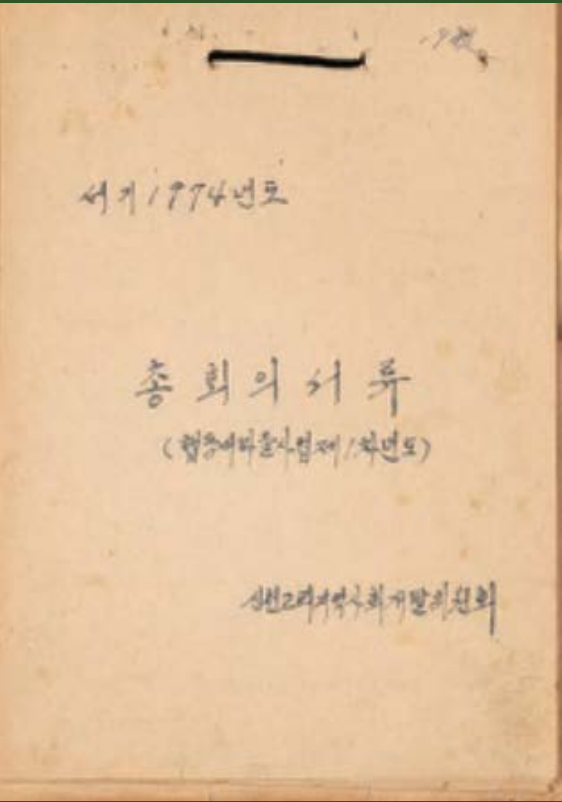
This document summarizes the accumulated outcomes and current status of various Saemaul projects.



IMG. 12

Blueprint of Saemaul Warehouse Construction

This is a blueprint and explanation that were created by Subaek-ri for the construction of a Saemaul Warehouse.



IMG. 13

General Assembly Documents

This is a collection of meeting minutes for assemblies held in the first year of a Saemaul Project.

The project treats the town hall not just as a built form, but as a vessel of intangible civic memory, shaped by local rhythms, cultural practices, and evolving uses. This has been documented through the lens of historians but not from an urban design perspective. Through fieldwork and archival methods, it produces a layered record of these spaces—both as they are and as they were—before they disappear. The archive will be presented as an immersive collection of images, sound, and spatial mappings.

# EXPECTED BENEFITS

Preserving Civic Memory + Response to Hyper-Capitalism



IMG. 14

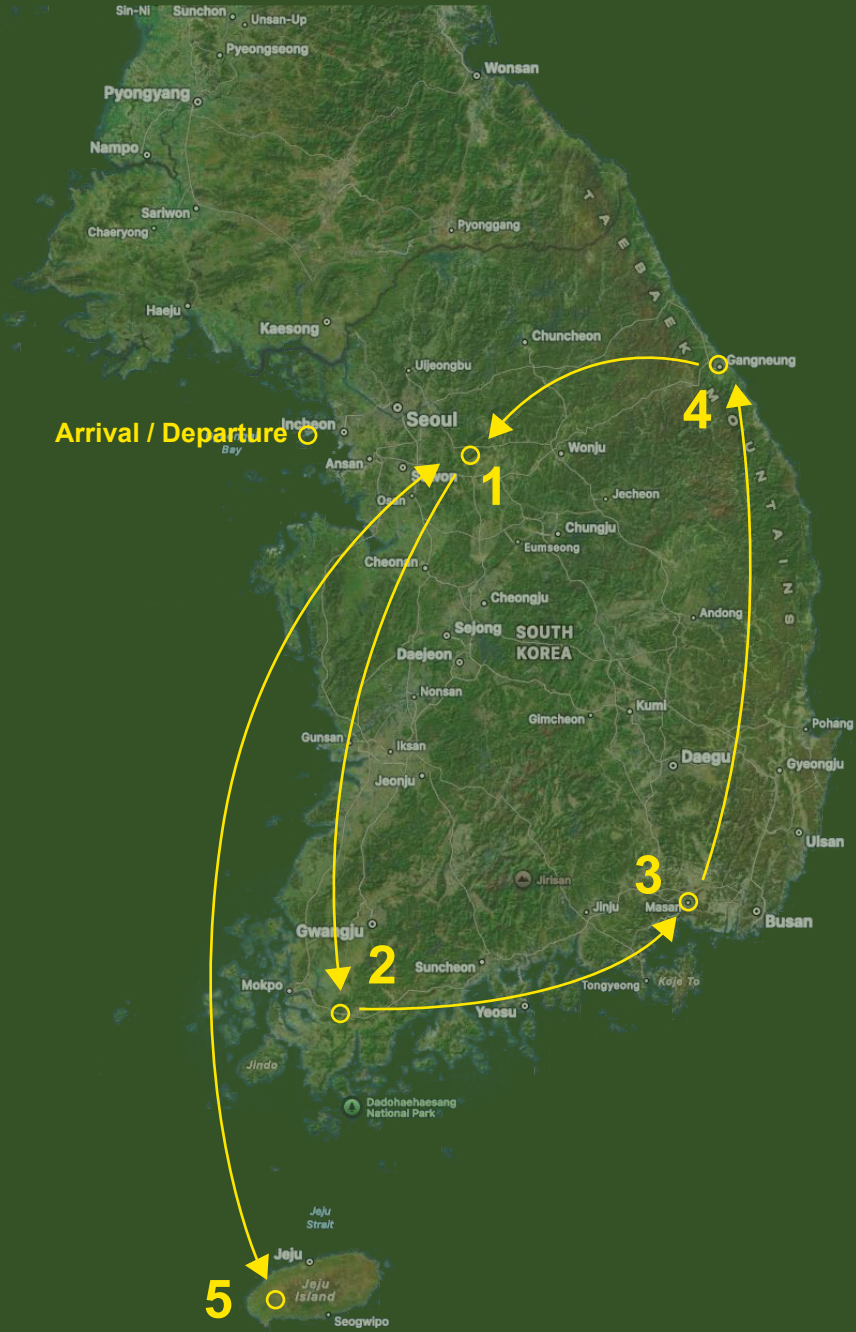
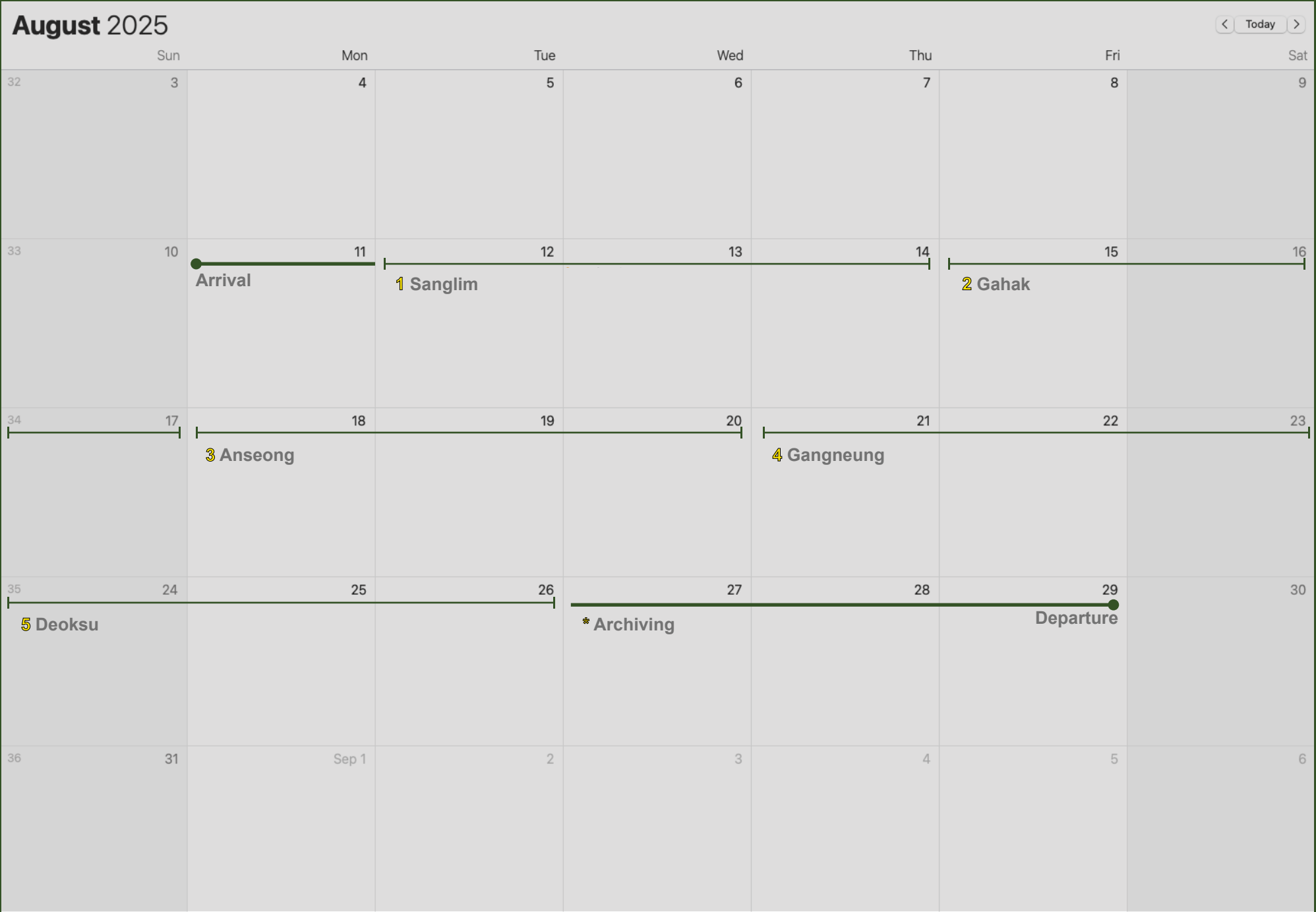
**Telecommunication Device on Top of the Town Hall**

The larger speaker that once dominated the town hall roof has significantly shrunk in size, replaced by the prominence of cellular towers.

By documenting both the physical structures and lived experiences of Maul Hoegwan, the project preserves a disappearing layer of Korean civic history often overlooked in dominant narratives of urban development. Creating a rich multimedia archive—photography, audio, oral histories—lays the foundation for future research, exhibitions, or participatory design processes grounded in everyday spatial practices. By highlighting what is lost or at risk under hyper-capitalist urbanization, the project prompts reflection on how cities can develop without erasing communal, intergenerational spaces of care and governance. Elevating these town halls as meaningful civic typologies can reignite public dialogue on the importance of small-scale, local gathering spaces in contemporary urban life, especially in the context of aging populations and rural decline.



ITINERARY + BUDGET



Travel Expense - \$7,086

Flights: International (\$1,771 Round Trip) / Domestic (\$235 Round Trip) = \$2,006

Car Rental: (17 days + Gas) - \$1,952.4

Accommodation: (17 days) - \$2,448.5

Food: (34 Meals) - \$680

Equipment Expense - \$9,350

Video + Audio Rentals: DSLR + Voice Recorder (17 days) = \$6,800

Drone: (17 days) - \$2,550

Locations

1 Sanglim Town Hall - Gwangju-Si, Gyonggi-Do

2 Gahak Town Hall - Haenam-Gun, Jeollanam-Do

3 Anseong Town Hall - Changwon-Si, Gyeongsangnam-Do

4 Gangneung Town Hall - Gangneung-Si, Gangwon-Do

5 Deoksu Town Hall - Seogwipo-Si, Jeju-Do

Total: \$16,436

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