

Community Learning and Self-generated Communities of Practice: The Case of Jangheung School

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Introduction

The origin of Korea's Community of Practice (CoP) goes back to the 14th century Seowon (educational institution), Hyangyak (village codes), Gye (mutual financing societies), Doorye (farmers' cooperative groups), and Poomasi (labor sharing) of the Joseon Dynasty. Through farmers' cooperative groups and exchanges of labor, a variety of local communities were formed. Village codes and mutual financing societies allowed associations to be created for various purposes and regulations were set up to promote mutual interests. Seowon was a nationwide private institution established to foster outstanding scholars during the Joseon Dynasty. It soon became the foundation of learning communities within each village. A learning CoP was created through exchanges of knowledge and it promoted the self-development of its residents and community. Seowon not only allowed residents to deeply understand their nation and the local community life but enabled them to participate, providing many implications in the process of voluntary participation and democratic movements (Kee 2011).

In Korea, the Local Assembly was formed in 1952 and was suspended temporarily under the military takeover of 1961. In 1995, with the first election of local government mayors, the official era of localization began. The history of these

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events have unfolded in such a way that community development and the learning of local residents became inseparable, for learning was the mechanism that led to a sense of ownership and the power to solve various community problems. The various community activities encouraged residents to participate voluntarily and experience discussions and negotiation processes, which became the paths of intervention towards enhancing the community's wellbeing (Lee 2011). In addition, there have also been demands of change from the top-down policy to a system that is led by residents and the spontaneity of the local community. As such, efforts to seek individual progress and local community changes through CoP are being made. As communities get bigger and more complex, the role of CoP that could change fragmented relationships into communal relationships has become crucial. In other words, with reciprocity as the basis, members need to establish CoPs that will allow residents to cooperate in achieving mutual goals. Overcoming the rift between knowledge and practice is what Wenger et al. was referring to by CoP where local residents are the main agents. Here, through voluntary participation and sharing learned topics, insight, and experience, mutual interaction and knowledge creation becomes possible (Wenger et al. 2002).

However, there has been little interest in the spontaneous CoP activities by local residents acting as main agents, which serves as a foundation for individuals and community development. Furthermore, civic movements based upon regions and led by institutions have been discussed but thorough examination of the formation, composition, and maturation process of CoP that developed through voluntary participations of the residents has not been carried out.

Accordingly, this study searched for cases of spontaneous CoP established by local residents as a result of education integrated into the communities. In particular, we were interested in a public policy approach to CoP. We chose Jangheung Hakdang, which is located in Jeollanamdo province, Korea as our case because it is focused on learning and based on voluntary actions. Since its voluntary establishment by local residents in 1994, Jangheung Hakdang has been changing community members' frames of thinking and perspectives and striving to search for a new paradigm for local development. This CoP is well-known for its autonomous operation and is still being maintained today. The idea of Jangheung Hakdang all started from a retired high-ranking government official returning to his home village and Jangheung Hakdang is now serving as a place for democratic participation and academic pursuits.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the process of local residents voluntarily organizing groups to change their own lives and the local communities around them, and as a result creating a CoP. The study aims to find implications to assist the successful operations of spontaneous CoP. The research question is how was this spontaneous CoP of local communities formed. The findings of this research, involving the role of local governments, democratic participation of residents, and transition process of spontaneous CoP can be applied to finding effective strategies to encourage local participation. Moreover, it is expected that this research can provide a model of CoP development that is based on increased participation of residents.

Theoretical Background

Community of Practice

Previous Literature

CoP is a group of people who share mutual interests, a series of issues, and specific topics, and through constant interaction, collectively gain more knowledge and professionalism of a certain field (Wenger et al. 2004). That is, a learner in the community may acquire social practice through an informal situated learning called 'Legitimate Peripheral Participation'. Hereafter, CoP gradually develops into a community concept where members carry out joint duties for the creation of knowledge. According to Wenger (1998), a CoP has a fluid characteristic. In order for a CoP to change, the increased participation of its members is crucial. For a beginner, strained relations exist in the process of participating in a CoP. This is due to the existence of conflicts around allocations of learning opportunities, the continuation and maintenance of CoP, and replacement and renewal as well. After repeated changes and creations, a CoP is newly constituted in the process of a beginner overcoming conflicts and strains, and becoming a complete participant of a community. This is the relational context that Lave and Wenger (1991), and Wenger (1998) was referring to, in which situated learning in a CoP takes place. Thus, a CoP is not stagnant, but possesses a dynamic attribute that constantly changes according to the increase of legitimate peripheral participation.

Previous research on CoP can be classified into two kinds. One type of research sees CoP as a crucial element for organizational vitalization and improvement of the power of execution. These studies focus on the strategies and effects of CoP. Some examples of these studies are Jeong (2008), Jang et al. (2010), Kim (2008b), Ham (2008), etc. Jeong (2008) conducted a comparative analysis on factors that influence the vitalization of public organizations and profit-making organizations. Jang et al. (2010) analyzed the effects of CoP participation types regarding organizational commitment of members and Kim (2009) analyzed the methods in which a CoP can be developed for the success of knowledge management system of government organizations. Kim et al. (2009) conducted an empirical analysis on the relationship between the nature of CoP of small and medium enterprises and citizen's action of organizations. Ham (2008) analyzed the importance of performance factors of public sector CoP.

Another type of CoP research is on the creations of knowledge and the effects of knowledge management through CoP in terms of creating, sharing, and distributing knowledge. These include the researches of Ku and Song (2011), Jang et al. (2009), Lim and Kim (2009), Kim (2008a), Baek and Kim (2008), Lee and Jung (2008), Choi and Yoo (2003), Bang and Lee (2000). Ku and Song (2011) conducted a study on the relationship between CoP participation willingness and commitment. Jang et al. (2009) analyzed the effects of CoP formulation on the vitalization of organizational learning. Lim and Kim (2009) carried out an analysis study of the effects

of organizational culture in public agency on CoP activities, the types of organizational learning, and organizational performances. Through the case of a network-based community for teachers, Indi-School, Kim (2008a) analyzed the developmental process of network-based CoP established for the purpose of knowledge sharing and improvement of professionalism of teachers. Moreover, Baek and Kim (2008) analyzed the influence factors of CoP knowledge sharing and Lee and Jeong (2008) conducted an empirical analysis on the impacts of CoP on community spirit, organizational commitment, and knowledge management activities. Choi and Yoo (2003) analyzed a real case of developmental process of CoP as a knowledge creation and sharing strategy. Bang and Lee (2000) suggested a management strategy of CoP towards a more successful knowledge management.

In short, most of the preceding researches of CoP are closely related to the effects of CoP on improvement of organizational performances, CoP vitalization measures from an organizational performance approach, and strategies for CoP vitalization from a knowledge management approach. Yet, these researches set the relationship between the components of CoP and other components as a passive factors and analyze the relationships instead of seeing members of organizations as independent and autonomous beings, and accordingly analyzing the independent interaction processes or learning practice processes of each member.

Components of CoP

CoP is defined in many perspectives, but there are common components of CoP. According to Wenger et al. (2004), CoP consists of ‘the domain’ of knowledge where issues are defined, ‘the community’ of people interested in a certain domain, and ‘the practice’ that develops and shares for the purpose of one’s ability being guaranteed in a certain field. Wenger (2007) viewed CoP as consisting of ‘reciprocal participation’, ‘joint domain’, and ‘joint practice’. Though the terms differ, the components are the same (Yang 2011).

First of all, ‘the domain’ is the scope of knowledge or a series of key issues relevant to the common issues, interests, and topics of CoP members. According to Wenger et al. (2004), a desirable and effective domain does not relate to abstract areas of interest. Rather, it is related to complex and long-range issues and requires constant learning of its members, and consists of primary issues and matters that are commonly experienced by members. That is, it is not merely fixed by duties but is a range of knowledge that must be explored and developed (Wenger et al. 2002). A well-prescribed domain unites members and provides a mechanism to legitimize the purpose and the value of the CoP to the outside (Wenger et al. 2002). In other words, it ascribes meaning to the existence and actions of members (Wenger et al. 2002).

Secondly, another component of CoP is the community itself. According to Wenger et al. (2004), a ‘community’ is a group of people who interact, learn together, form relationships, and in the process a sense of belonging and reciprocal commitment becomes a bond that ties the people together. This is a necessary and

crucial component of an effective knowledge structure. This component allows a CoP to become a place that contributes not only to personal intellectual competence, but to the formation of social capital (Kim and Kim 2005; Lesser and Prusak 1999).

Thirdly, ‘the practice’ is a chain of methods socially defined in a specific domain. According to Wenger et al. (2004: 21), practice is the way tasks are carried out in a certain area, and this practice is socially defined. It signifies a shared standard set and a common approach that forms the basics such as behavior, communication, problem-solving, performance, responsibility, etc. The resources of a community includes examples and stories, theories, regulations, frames, models, principles, tools, professional knowledge, theses, lessons from experience, best practices, assessment guidelines, and also explicit and implicit sides of a community’s knowledge. In other words, practice is the intangible and tangible knowledge that was developed, shared, and accumulated with the joint domain placed in the center of the mind of the members. It reflects the history of a CoP.

Besides the three components of domain, community, and practice, depending on the analyzing fields of CoP and the purpose of a CoP, other components have been identified (Wenger et al. 2004). This research is based upon the previous finding that when all the suggested components operate successfully, a CoP can become the ideal knowledge-based structure, that is, a social structure that carries the responsibility of developing and sharing knowledge (Wenger et al. 2002).

Types of CoP

There are various types of CoP depending upon the scale, duration, compactness, homogeneity, boundary, spontaneity, artificial organization, visibility, etc. (Lee 2008). Andriessen et al. (2004: 15–16) suggest five types of CoP according to the standards of its purpose, whether its boundary is open or closed, composition, interaction, and scale.

The first is a daily CoP where people with experiences and new people jointly participate. It focuses on the discussion of daily business experience through periodic face-to-face contacts. The second is a CoP of official experts. As a group consisting of selected experts with local or systematic representativeness, the main focus is on the exchange and development of knowledge. The third type is an informal network CoP. This type is formed to discuss common issues and interests of people who approach each other informally and freely. The fourth CoP is a problem-solution CoP. Workers in certain fields interact on and offline to obtain solutions to specific problems that arise in the process of job performance. The fifth is a potential network CoP. It is a group formed for the common interests of people in differing organizations and fields such as committees or associations of government ministries. Here, CoP is introduced in an organizational leading method, which is the main interest of this research, and the next paragraph examines related classification types of Nickols (2000).

Nickols asserts CoP into a self-organizing CoP that is created by the members themselves and a sponsored CoP which is designed and sponsored by an organization. The main focus of a self-organizing CoP is the pursuit of individuals' common interests. Yet, these types of CoP also have value from an organizational aspect since many best practice cases or important cases are self-organizing CoP types. Meanwhile, productions of scalable outcomes that are beneficial to organizations are expected from a sponsored CoP. In these types of CoP, the necessary resources and official roles or responsibilities are granted by organizations.

The Stages of CoP Formation

CoP is viewed as an organism that is consistently experiencing ecological changes such as birth, maturation, and dissolution. The formation and development of CoP will be discussed through a life cycle model and function-oriented model.

Life Cycle Model

The life cycle model describes the development of CoP in comparison to the developmental cycle of an organism. In other words, a CoP is assumed to be equal to organisms, growing and becoming extinct, and its typical types of activities, challenges, and changes of activities that appear throughout the maturation process are captured.

Wenger (1998: 2–3) and Wenger et al. (2002: 93–111) describe the expansion of a CoP in five stages: potential, coalescing, maturing, stewardship, and transformation stage. The potential stage is where potential members who feel the necessity of association and collaboration prepare and plan. The second stage is the coalescing stage where a CoP is established; members select specific topics that accords with their knowledge domains, plan and develop activities, and begin the process of carrying out such plans. Bettoni et al. (2002) combine this coalescing stage with the potential stage, naming it a formation stage. The main activities of a formation stage are to unearth common footing between the existing network and potential members, and devise an opportunity for the creation of new values. The third stage is the maturing stage where the CoP establishes its role in the relationship with the organization, actively shares the knowledge, and creates new knowledge based upon the shared knowledge. In the fourth stage, the stewardship stage, the activities of a CoP are maintained, but the interests of members are decreased and activities become stagnant. Bettoni et al. (2002) viewed the maturing stage and stewardship stage as an integration stage where the main activity of a CoP is to introduce and create new knowledge and ideas. The last stage is the transformation stage where activities are terminated or new changes are sought out, for a CoP can no longer fulfill its role as the center of knowledge activities.

Like Wenger (1998) and Wenger et al. (2002), McDermott (2000) explains the unfolding process of a CoP through a life cycle perspective. According to McDermott, a CoP goes through planning, establishment, and closure stage. Each stage corresponds with the potential, coalescing, maturing, stewardship, and transformation stage of Wenger et al. (2002) and its contents are similar. Wenger et al. (2002) combined the model of McDermott and proposed the stages of CoP. According to them, the visibility and energy of a CoP generally increase from the potential stage to maturing stage, and then begin to decrease in the maintenance stage, and rapidly decrease in the conversion stage.

Function-Oriented Model

Gongla and Rizzuto (2001) viewed the life cycle model as insufficient to portray all the various unfolding aspects of a CoP that appear in reality. Gongla and Rizzuto regard the fundamental functions that characterize the activities of CoP as connection, context creation and memory, approach and learning, collaboration, innovation and production. The conditions where these functions appear are suggested through potential, composition, participation, vitality, and adaptation stage. The potential stage is the stage where a CoP begins to formulate. In the second, the composition stage, a CoP is formed with its general operations established. With its vital members as the center, experiences and knowledge are shared and these activities begin to be documented. Thirdly, in the participation stage, plans from the previous stage are carried out, and all the members contribute to the sharing and extension of knowledge, and thus maintaining and managing the knowledge system. The fourth stage, the vitality stage, with cooperation as the foundation, knowledge creation activities are actively developed and this becomes further linked to problem-solving of members, organizational solutions to pending issues, and expansions of businesses. Lastly, in the adaptation stage, new knowledge is consistently being created and the environment is redefined and expanded; ‘innovation’ and ‘production’ become the two key functions in this stage.

Table 1 shows the developmental process suggested in common by both models and the primary activities of each stage.

Methodology

Case Selection

The purpose of this study is to investigate the formation process of CoP where the activities are unfolded. Thus, in order to examine the developmental process of a CoP developing amid the intentions and actions of members, instead of measuring the performance of CoP, this research selected a case where researchers are able to directly observe the interactions between the community and the individual members.

Table 1 The primary activities of each developmental stage of CoP

Developmental stage	Primary activities
McDermott (2000), Planning stage Gongla and Rizzuto (2001), Potential stage Wenger et al. (2002), Potential stage	Unearthing potential network and issues Contacting and connecting to potential members Setting main purpose and goals of CoP
McDermott (2000), Establishment stage Gongla and Rizzuto (2001), Composition stage Wenger et al. (2002), Fusion stage	Selecting a desirable leader Confirmation of the domains of knowledge and the scope of roles Organizing basic framework such as arrangement of managerial regulations
McDermott (2000), Growth stage Gongla and Rizzuto (2001), Participation stage Wenger et al. (2002), Maturation stage	Selection or development of specific topics Development of unique methods, tools, terms Sharing of experiences and knowledge through conversations or discussions Documentation, recording, or management of activities and shared knowledge Management of new or withdrawing members and the scope of activities
McDermott (2000), Growth persistent stage Gongla and Rizzuto (2001), Vitality stage Wenger et al. (2002), Maturation management stage	Development and sharing of phronesis of the highest degree Arrangement of optimum application plan for the organization regarding results of the activities Application of results of the activities to solve individual and organizational problems Measurement of activity performance and visualizing its application Maintenance or renewal of the most advanced phronesis Member management as well as association with and sponsoring other CoP Formation of relations with external Organizations

Source Choi Eunhee and Kwon Daebong (2007). Developmental aspects of local education offices CoP (revised)

A CoP operates in a complex and intrinsic context and it is difficult to grasp what is truly happening from limited anecdotal observances. Therefore, an open case approach where the purposes and intentions of introducing a CoP, the operation methods, and the culture of the CoP can be directly observed was necessary. Jangheung Hakdang, which was established in 1994 by the residents themselves and is still being operated independently, was chosen because it fulfilled these requirements. Not only did Jangheung Hakdang reject every sponsorship offered by the district and is currently operating solely on voluntary dues of members and donations, but also the dedication and interest of Jangheung residents has been sustained. In fact, Jangheung Hakdang has received much attention from local governments and is becoming a benchmark for community development initiatives.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected and constantly triangulated through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Since this research intended to investigate the developmental progress aspects of CoP activities, data collection was carried out from 2010 to 2012 at regular intervals. We began data collection with a tentative design, and when a valued topics newly emerged in the process, the next stage of data collection was revised to accommodate further exploration of these topics.

The characteristics of the collected data and the collection process are as follows. First, through the managing director and general affairs manager of Jangheung Hakdang, the contour of the organization, purpose and activity outline, the performances are assessed. In addition, all related documents such as promotional pamphlets, articles of the association containing the regulations of Jangheung Hakdang, a certified copy of the register as a corporate body were collected.

Secondly, data were collected by observations. Participant observations were conducted twice on July 16th, 2010 and August 18th, 2012 along with the study meetings. From the welcoming of lecturers that occur the day before the study meeting to separate meetings held after the study meeting by the participants themselves, the complete and overall progress was observed through participation observation. On the night before the study meeting, primary members including the head of Jangheung Hakdang meet with the lecturers and have dinner together. During this occasion, news of the Jangheung area and various talks from the perspectives of the lecturers naturally come into view. On the day of the study meeting after arriving at 6:30 a.m., the participating residents were observed through eating meals together and conversing. Jangheung Hakdang makes nametags with each name of the participants written in Chinese characters. Throughout the study meeting, the materials that were distributed in advance were referenced, notes on significant aspects were taken down, and photos were taken. After the study meeting, the primary members gathered for lunch and feedbacks on the study meeting were provided. During this, two people were interviewed and tape-recorded but due to the noise of the dining hall, we failed to transcribe these recordings. Furthermore, main cultural heritage sites within the jurisdiction, five industrial settings, and two sites that were discussed as pending issues in the presentation debates were surveyed.

Thirdly, in-depth interviews were used as the primary resource of the case. The method of in-depth interviews was adopted through considering the suitability to the research topic and access possibility to the research field. During the case observation period, semi-structured in-depth interviews of seven people were conducted. Apart from the official interviews, conversations frequently occurred throughout the observation process and brief interviews and conversations took place on the phone and through messages and e-mails.

Fourthly, the 17 years of Jangheung Hakdang's annual journals containing the data of study meetings, workshops, and presentation debates and the related lecture data were collected as well. Lastly, external assessments and press articles on Jangheung Hakdang were used as references for secondary analysis.

The unit of analysis for this research is the transitional process of the CoP, Jangheung Hakdang. In order to achieve this, materials and data were examined thoroughly to identify and interpret their meanings. Likewise, until the research results were fully comprehended, constant collections and analyses of data took place, and the information gleaned from the data collections were selected, classified, and systematized. In addition, efforts were put into evince the qualitative traits by making frequent contacts with the participants. Afterwards, the analysis and interpretations underwent the process of materialization in the course of writing the research paper and forming the question at issue. During the writing process and among the diverse aspects of the case, the focus was on education theses, especially lifelong education. These portions combined with terms that appear in the case and that are used academically were used in conjunction to explain and interpret the results.

Accountability and Ethical Considerations

This research made the utmost effort to secure objectivity and accountability through the reliability criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985): truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. To accomplish this, first of all, raw data that did not undergo artificial processes were collected. Written sources, participant observations, in-depth interviews, field notes, and additional notes were used multilaterally to compose the data and supplement the interpretations. Secondly, reviewing process through peer debriefing followed. In the process of the research, the research was motivated to remain honest and the researchers made efforts to secure reliability of the research in the discussion process as well. The third was the use of member checking by the research participants themselves. By confirming the contents and the results of the research with the participants, the research aimed to ensure validity. Furthermore, seeking prior consent regarding information offering was included in the process and principles of secrecy and anonymity were complied with. By keeping an adequate distance between the participants and the researchers, relationships were maintained at an appropriate level to ensure that the focus of the research was in complete form and to prevent the exposure of unexpected information and sensitive issues which may upset the participants. In terms of participant interviews, decision to participate was made independently according to one's individual choice. In the case where the informer did not want disclosure, the interview would not be recorded, and in case where it was recorded, after the participants viewed the recorded materials, the contents were expunged upon the request by the participants.

Table 2 Characteristics of the research participants

Number	Name	Sex	Age (as of late 2011)	Position and role
1	Ko	Male	50s	Member
2	Yoon	Male	70s	Founding member
3	Kim	Male	60s	Founding member
4	Choi	Female	40s	Member
5	An	Female	50s	Member
6	Park	Female	40s	Member
7	Wi	Male	80s	Founding member

Research Participants

In the process of selecting research participants, to ensure that there would be a variety of participants in the research group, participants were divided into junior members and founding members according to their membership terms. Among the members, the criteria selected for persons who are able to recount their own stories with open minds, can simultaneously participate actively in the activities, and are willing to adapt to new changes. Table 2 contains brief information of the participants.

The Development Process of the Spontaneous CoP, Jangheung Hakdang

Jangheung-gun is located in the southwestern end of Jeollanam-do, which belongs in the southwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. Vertically extended, it assumes the central district of the area with the Tamjin River flowing in the southern sea and it borders five administrative districts. The development process of the CoP, Jangheung Hakdang, in Jangheung area is assorted into four stages. The first stage was from the year 1991 when the small scale Ae Jang Society was established, to 1994 when Jangheung Hakdang was first founded. The second stage is the period from 1994 to 1995 when the basic infrastructure, such as leader selection and arrangement of managerial regulations, was established. The third stage is when the leading founder of the village school operated the school as the head. The fourth stage is the period when learning was established as part of the culture of the Jangheung people through consistent learning. Though the process is divided by periods, each stage overlaps with one another. According to the four stages of the CoP development process, the formative years are assorted into the germinating period (1991–1994), system establishment period (1994–1995), participatory growth period (1995–2005), and sustainable maturity period (2006–2011) and the following section will describe these in detail.

Germination Period (1991–1994)

The efforts of a high-ranking government official served as the momentum for the birth of Jangheung Hakdang. The person behind this is Son, a former Minister of Transport. After retiring, he returned to the Jangheung area. With the resurrection of the local assembly in 1991, the voluntary participation of residents in 1995 instigated the four-position local elections and local self-government was reintroduced. The future of the local area in accordance with the changing times was beginning to become the main concern of people.

After coming back to his hometown in 1990, Son managed a rice processing complex left by his deceased father. In January of 1991, with a restaurant owner and 20 young and middle-aged people who were concerned with the future of the local area, he established a small village school called Ae Jang Society.

We had a gathering named Ae Jang Society. The meeting was held with people from various age groups, and from a public official to farmers and doctors, it involved a wide array of people from all walks of life. (Kim)

‘Ae Jang Society’ means a gathering for people who love Jangheung. In the evening of 2nd and 16th of every month, people gathered in a local restaurant and opened the small village school. After one member made a presentation about a certain topic, the members would exchange their own opinions and life stories while having a meal together. Son often debated frankly while drinking with the young members.

The small village school was the gathering of people who were present when Mr. Son initially started it. There were many discussions and debates including life stories. (Yoon)

As Son built the Ae Jang Society, he completely settled in Jangheung. In January 1993, the third year since the establishment of Ae Jang Society, the members of Ae Jang Society gathered and discussed the things they could do for the local residents of Jangheung.

From 1993, we started discussing what it would be like to do such a thing. In 1994, we founded Jangheung Hakdang it has been operating ever since. (Kim)

After long discussion, the members agreed to provide the residents a place for study meetings and studies which would renew the awareness of the changing times and make Jangheung a place filled with vitality. This became the root of Jangheung Hakdang.

We felt that the residents needed learning. The residents needed to grasp the situations they are in and the surrounding conditions to carry out one’s role properly. The residents themselves wanted to learn through hands-on activities... (Wi)

The research participants mentioned that the establishment of Jangheung Hakdang was founded solely out of the attachment and affection for one’s hometown and unwavering convictions for local development.

Institution Building Period (1994–1995)

Seeking a Paradigm for Local Development

In January 1993, the small village school, Ae Jang Society, made a decision to establish Jangheung Hakdang which would target every resident of the area. The following year, on November 30, 1994, Son and 30 other initiators officially founded Jangheung Hakdang with ‘Ae Jang Society’ at the center. The object of this establishment was to change residents’ perceptions and frames of thinking and seek a new paradigm for the development of the area. Yet, some had pessimistic views about the establishment itself. This is the reason why community learning seemed strange and unfamiliar to the residents.

So we decided to do this nationwide, build village schools, and compose establishment promotion committee, widening the scope of members. However, there were people opposing it and doubting its success. (Kim)

Soon, on December 1, 1994, Jangheung Hakdang completed its registration as a non-profit corporate body at Gwangju District Court with its main office located in 153–157 Giyang-ri, Jangheung-eup, Jangheung-gun, Jeollanam-do. Accordingly, the board of directors became not only responsible for the vitalization of the village school but also its bankruptcy as well.

The Purpose and Program Planning of Jangheung Hakdang

The purpose of promoting Jangheung Hakdang is to contribute to fostering healthy and wholesome democratic citizens and making a vibrant Jangheung through providing a place for study meetings and workshops. This would change the perspectives of the people regarding the changing world and the environment, and foster responding abilities that allow the people to find tasks and carry out those tasks. To achieve such purpose, there was the need to document learning contents from regular study meetings, field-centered workshops, and presentation debates on pending issues and publish those to share with the members and residents. It was decided that the regular study meetings would take place on the 2nd and 16th (twice a month) of every month and its location would be the readily accessible lounge room of the Jangheung District Office.

The time of the study meetings carried on from 7 a.m. to 8:30 (90 min). It was a rule to have the program in the order of breakfast (20 min), appreciation of poetry and music (10 min), introductions of lecturers and greeting from the head of the school (5 min), lecture (50 min), and a question and answer time (5 min). The selections of lecturers were made within the Jangheung jurisdiction by the heads of institutions and guest speakers or figures that left their hometowns but guest speakers would be selected as politics, community, economics, and culture education specialists by the recommendations of the members.

We have to get out to the fields early in the morning. So, when they said we would start learning from 7 a.m., I thought it didn't make any sense. Of course, everything was hectic and it was hard. Sometimes, I would just fall asleep at the study meetings. I would roughly understand the words of the speakers but I could not concentrate and my mind was elsewhere. (Kim)

It was decided that the workshops of visiting fields inside and outside Jangheung or areas that were of members' interests would be held four times a year (March, June, September, December). For workshops, visits to educational spots, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, cultural sites, and construction sites were made. Presentation debates were hosted twice a year (May, October). The materials gathered from the study meetings, workshops, and Presentation debates were organized and published yearly.

Articles of the Association and Organization of Operating System

The operating system of Jangheung Hakdang at the time of establishment showed the organizational system operating separately under each department. The operating system of Jangheung Hakdang consists of the head of the school and an honorary head which assumes the role of a consultative body. According to the regulations and articles of the association, the head had a wide range of power and authority, representing the village school and handling everything from projects to activities while the authority of the board of directors was relatively weak. In this context, opinions were brought forward to allow the head of the school to only be the representative, the chairman of the general meeting, have the right to refer bills, and the authority to become the chairman of the board of directors. The first head of Jangheung Hakdang was the former secretary Son, who assumed the leading role in establishing Jangheung Hakdang. The honorary head, a consultant regarding overall affairs of the school, was elected among the former heads of the school through deliberations by the board of directors. Three vice heads of the school, consisting of vice heads of financial affairs, study meetings, workshops, aided the head and in cases of accidents, they became an acting head. A vice head of financial affairs takes charge of general affairs department while a study meeting vice head is in charge of the department of women and young men, and a workshop vice head controls the workshop department and publication department. In the department of general affairs, with a full-time general director and general affairs manager as the center, accounting and conventional administrative tasks are carried out. The study meeting department conducts and carries forward study meetings and presentation debates while striving to spur the participations of women and young people. Yet, the activities of the department of women and young people were insufficient and their participation rate was poor. Through reorganizations of the operating system, a vice head of the department of women was established and it was decided that the department of women, which was formerly under the control of the study meeting vice head, would be under the vice head of the department of women.

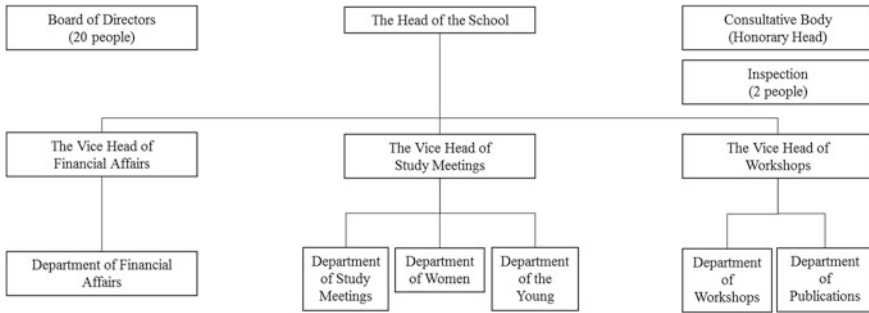


Fig. 1 Jangheung Hakdang organizational chart

I was once a chairman of the department of women before becoming a vice head for the department of women. I never missed a study meeting and was active in mainly promoting the participation of others. The department of financial affairs should be headed by a person capable of handling financial matters and cooperation is always present regarding workshops. I think that everything is same here as in the society. The purpose is to promote vitalization. (Park)

The workshop department holds and promotes the field workshops. In addition, it assumes the role of publishing the yearly ‘Jangheung’ Journal from the materials gathered from the study meetings, workshops, and presentation debates. The legislative organ consists of an operating board, executive board, and regular general meeting. Issues and matters gathered and organized from the monthly meetings are decided by the operating board which oversees the overall operation. The executive board enforces the contents that are determined by the operating board and carries forward projects. Additional activities are supplemented through the regular general meeting held every January and the direction for the year is set then. With this, the structure, operating regulations and system of Jangheung Hakdang, was arranged to organize the general and basis system, and organs that were established for efficiency can be seen through Fig. 1.

Determining Future Goals of Jangheung Hakdang

After the general structure of association articles and the operating system had been established, specific guidelines and the knowledge domains that would become the goals of Jangheung Hakdang were enacted and became the four doctrines of Jangheung Hakdang. The domain, acting as the center and the range of common interests, issues, and topics of the community members, allows its members to make judgments regarding the importance and properness of knowledge based on common understanding and imbues significance to the CoP’s reason for being and the actions of members (Wenger et al. 2002). When taking a look at the earlier mentioned four doctrines, the first doctrine is academic pursuit. It is the act of intensifying and improving one’s knowledge through a vast array of information, various

experiences, and field experiences. The second is new creation. After thoroughly grasping the old knowledge and making it completely one's own, based on that, a new creation of knowledge occurs (Cho 2008). This is based on constructive criticism, rational introspection, breaking away from stereotypes, and creative thinking. The third doctrine is golden mean. The concept of 'fittingness' is of the inclines standing straight up, not the meaning of center. The rightness is about filling the voids and insufficiency to become sound and whole. It is the practical awareness and methodology where excessiveness is drawn off and inadequateness is supplemented to make its subject stand tall and fitting (Son et al. 2010). Golden mean is represented through neutrality of political religion, eliminations of requests for favors, and realizations of democratic citizens. The last doctrine is self-reliance. The foundation of Jangheung Hakdang depends greatly on the participation and trust of residents, and the methods of gaining independence from local government or local institutions that may wield influence over the organization. To achieve this, Jangheung Hakdang repudiated the offers of financial assistance by Jangheung-gun and is running its operations solely on voluntary dues of residents and donations. This demonstrates the will of Jangheung Hakdang to maintain its morality and autonomy while remaining free from the local government and institutions, and adhere to independent and autonomous activities. This includes the values of participation with social responsibility, voluntary support, and rational operation.

Participation and Growth Period

Topic Selection and Development of CoP Learning

With the four doctrines (academic pursuit, new creation, golden mean, and self-reliance) as the foundation, the board of directors chose the subjects of study meetings, workshops, and presentation debates.

The topic selection is carried out by the board of directors. I have attended several topic selection meetings. Exchanges of opinions occur and the item that seems most suitable to the development of individuals or the community is chosen. (An)

In the first stages, there was little information, knowledge, or awareness of lifelong learning so the focus was on the fact that local self-government was beginning. Accordingly, pending local issues were chosen as topics and the head of a local institutions within the Jangheung area was invited to be the lecturer. Gradually, the learning domains would be expanded further and further.

Study Meetings

As of late 2011, 390 study meetings have been held. Lecturers have been the heads of the school 17 times, the heads of institutions 96 times, and guest speakers 277

times. Topics of study meetings were chosen from topics of Jangheung's pending issues, appropriate in regard to the times, and these lectures were followed by discussions among lecturers and members. This was to enhance the intellectual abilities of individuals and contribute to creating healthy democratic citizens, ultimately leading to a vibrant, developing Jangheung.

At Jangheung Hakdang, before the commencement of a study meeting, a poetry reading by a member takes place. Then time for music and art appreciation follows. This has symbolic meaning to maintain the tradition of literary circles that Jangheung has. Through such study meetings, members as participation subjects of the CoP gain practical knowledge that can be applied to present or future situations in real life and learn and share the knowledge that will allow them to responsibly carry out a practical role. In other words, members are able to better grasp the effects of domestic and overseas conditions, which change rapidly in the information-oriented, internationalized, and globalized society, on individuals and the community. Members are to learn and put into action by positioning a variety of information, related to real life, into subject matters that will support rational decision-making. This is based on the actual lives of the people rather than theories or principles. Learning does not end in itself but connects to the practice process that solves the problems of daily lives. Furthermore, on the basis of information, knowledge, and professionalism gathered from learning, the interests towards the lives of the local residents are deepened and becomes linked and expanded to the activities that will solve the tasks of the community. The learning information of previous study meetings can be separated as follows by fields: social science (202 times, 51.8 %), techno science (101 times, 25.9 %), liberal arts such as new year prospects (33 times, 8.5 %), arts and culture (25 times, 6.4 %), humanities (19 times, 4.9 %), natural science (6 times, 1.5 %), history (3 times 0.8 %), and mythology (1 time, 0.2 %). Among these, the field of social science took up the majority. This reflects the emphasis on lifelong education, the social system, and political rights of the residents, along with the engagement of local self-government.

Field Centered Workshops

Field centered workshops are operated four times a year (March, June, September, December). After selecting topics that arose as problems during the study meetings or are in the interests of the members, the related fields are visited. A workshop is assorted into four categories: education, agriculture and fisheries, culture, and construction. Through the workshops, members explore historical and cultural heritage sites within and out of the jurisdiction. This encourages members to reflect and reorganize their thoughts on society and life. Yet, since the attendance rates for the workshops are poor, being around 10 %, efforts are expended to increase the attendance rate.

Besides the study meetings, there are things called the workshops. Four times a year, we visit the industrial fields, successful cases in the agricultural and fisheries field, construction fields, education fields, etc.... (Yoon)

The workshops have been held 66 times in 121 different locations. The number of workshops held according to the fields are 16 times in education and industrial, construction, 14 times in agricultural and fisheries, 17 times in cultural heritage sites, two times in companies within the jurisdiction, and once in a local assembly.

Presentation Debates

In order to suggest visions for local administration and for the sake of community development, presentation debates are held twice a year in May and October. Along with education and environment issues and election of local representative, problems of the community and pending issues are unraveled in the form of a seminar or a symposium. Knowledge related to the presentation debate is gleaned and systematized through the study meeting and workshop that are held before the presentation debate. In a presentation debate, both specialists and residents participate to identify problems related to the issues and propose appropriate solutions. The presentation debates are meaningful in that by representing the public opinion and deploying active discussions, the direction for local administration is set forth and the ability to provide constructive criticism and create alternatives is cultivated.

The purpose of gathering through discussions and debates is to accept yesterday as yesterday and by setting that as the base, we are able to analyze today objectively. Then, we figure out how tomorrow will approach us and how we will receive tomorrow. It is very valuable in that we are preparing ourselves for the future. (Wi)

However, in regard to the debates of candidates for the local election, there were times when only some of the candidates were present due to the differences of opinions. Presentation debates have been held 31 times in total. The fields of the presentation debates are divided into the following: ecological environment two times, local festivals four times, local education two times, local development nine times, public office election seven times, suggestions for military administration four times, and Jangheung Hakdang, gukak (Korean classical music), and health once.

Publication and Application of “Village School” Journal

From the year 1995 to 2011, Jangheung Hakdang has been documenting and objectifying the activities and shared knowledge of its core projects, which are study meetings, workshops, and presentation debates. Moreover, these are published yearly, distributed to the members and residents, and shared.

By publishing the records of study meetings, workshops, and presentation debates, though it was not done by the members, we are able to inform the figures nationwide who left the Jangheung area or the people who used to work in Jangheung but left. For this reason, we have been publishing the journal every year. (Kim)

In this journal, every detail of the study meetings, workshops, and presentation debates are organized and printed without any adjustments. As of late 2011, the activity records indicate that 390 study meetings, 66 workshops, 31 presentation debates, and the activities of the school have been printed in 17 issues.

Management of Members and Financial Affairs

Though the financial situation of Jangheung Hakdang indicated its total assets at 10 million won at the time of establishment, the amount increased to 50 million won 3 years later. The investments came from donations, contributions, dues, and other revenues. Anyone who had the same objects and purposes like those Jangheung had the qualification to be a member. The members were divided into the general members who are the individual members, group members such as corporate bodies and organizations, and honorary members such as figures who left the hometown or residents of other areas. The finance of Jangheung Hakdang was covered with the dues of members and contributions of the residents. The fee, in the case of an individual member, was 50,000 won for membership and 30,000 won for annual fee. Corporate bodies were to pay 200,000 won for membership and 100,000 won for annual dues. The number of members of Jangheung Hakdang, which started out small with 30 members, increased to 302 members by 2007. As of late 2011, there were about 356 members, making Jangheung Hakdang an influential and vital CoP. Among the members, there are 310 individual members, seven corporate bodies, and 39 honorary members. About 50 members are actively participating and due to the large number of long-term residents of Jangheung, the sense of closeness between members is strong. The researcher of this research signed up for membership in 2010. Initially, the head of the school, Son and full-time members Ko and Choi operated the overall operation of the organization but soon, the horizontal communications between members made possible for the consistent establishment of the operation direction to be continued. However, as the members aged, flexibility of the organization decreased and the problem of young members being unable to easily associate with older members became apparent. Also, in terms of vitalization of the school, securing active participations of figures related to education, prosecution, and court came to the fore.

Maturation and Sustained Growth Period (2006–2011)

Disjunction Between Daily Lives and Academic Atmosphere

The daily lives of Jangheung residents were repetitions of quiet days without any radical changes. However, in any situation, until things are set in a regular track, difficulties are bound to arise. As such, there were many complications in the process of Jangheung Hakdang taking root. First, it was not an easy task to operate such a ‘village school’ for people of a farming village who may even be insensitive to the changes of times and the environment. Most of the local residents were engaged in agriculture and fisheries, and the image of them running busily from daybreak to make ends meet seemed distant from learning. Until then, ‘lifelong education’ was an unacquainted domain, with residents feeling it as being far from them and the issue of forming consensus as to the need for learning were difficulties faced in the process of urging residents to participate in lifelong education.

The countryside is a relaxed place where you can get away with walking around backwards. In the countryside, most gatherings occur in the night and it might work if it were carried out at night after daily tasks are finished but would the meetings taking place in the mornings work? There were many opinions such as this. People said it would be hard... Yet, waking up at daybreak has its meaning. It is not the number of people who attends that matters but the fact that such a meeting is held at daybreak. So, it was pushed forward. It is true that the participation rate of the young is still low. (Kim)

Due to situations such as these, there were many limitations including the low participation rate of residents and the gap between daily lives and learning. Additionally, the task of collecting membership fees and dues from the participants was complicated and upon seeing this, some were astonished and claimed that Jangheung Hakdang would not last long.

As the school started, there many who said ‘What would that matter to old people like us...’ They would possibly ‘consider’ going even if it was free, but paying with their own money... (Yoon)

Yet, regarding concerns such as these, Son remained unshaken in his convictions. Whether it is an individual or an organization, if the period of conflicts and confusion is successfully conquered, that becomes nourishment, bringing forth a more mature form. The influences of convictions and competence of a leader on the development of individuals and community were confirmed.

Misunderstandings of Residents and Entry Barriers

There were rumors among the residents on Jangheung Hakdang assuming the role of a political patronage of a certain figure. However, such suspicions were completely wiped out as time elapsed.

Well, not much was expected or wanted from it... The members of Jangheung Hakdang must have a certain purpose for doing this. You know, like a suspicion that someone among the members wants to run for the National Assembly. (Kim)

At first, there were people looking on at Jangheung Hakdang from a biased viewpoint, claiming that someone is running for the local election or the National Assembly but with the organization depoliticizing in every aspect, misunderstanding of the residents was resolved. (Yoon)

Additionally, there was a tendency among the residents to think of Jangheung Hakdang as the gathering of privileged classes such as former government officials.

Assessment of Jangheung Hakdang's Performance Results

In December 2004, after looking back to the last decade, the catch phrase 'Beyond a Decade, towards a Century' was established and posted. For this, 'How can Jangheung Hakdang be more successful and prosperous?' was selected as the presentation debate topic on April 7, 2005. 17 people including the head of the school, vice heads, members of the board of directors, members, and residents participated in the presentation debate. First, regarding the organizational (executive) domain, strategies instigating wide participations of people from all social standings and participations of young people who will substitute the aging population of members and reform of the head-centered operation methods were discussed. With these discussions as the base in terms of strategies to spur participation, at the regular general meeting held in February 2006, an address book of figures in a wide variety of domains was obtained and the figures were notified of the establishment purpose of Jangheung Hakdang. Furthermore, consistent efforts would be made for the participations of young people, which would substitute the aging population of the members. Son, who had substantially planned and operated Jangheung Hakdang for 11 years since 1994, judged the school to have reached a stabilized period and declared to leave the head position. After much argument, Yoon, the former director of Jangheung-gun Cultural Center, became the successor and operated Jangheung Hakdang for 2 years (2006–2007). During this period, due to the fact that Yoon was not originally from Jangheung, the participation rate of residents was relatively low. This indicates that even though Jangheung is known for its absence of exclusiveness, the local feelings, in regard to the head originally coming from another town, seem to have influenced to some degree. In 2008, the full-time governor Kim undertook the role of the head of the school and is currently assuming the role. In regard to member management area, appropriateness of fees, qualifications of members and clearance matter arose as key issues. The needs to clear away the members who have only registered without participating and to secure female members were discussed. Moreover, in financial affairs area, ordinary earnings such as fees and donations account for 55 % of all earnings and incomes other than the ordinary earnings such as business profits and contributions take up 45 %. Of the ordinary earnings, the pure earnings from the fees account for 18 %

and of incomes other than the ordinary earnings, contributions account for 40 %. Problems arising from such financial state were brought forward. To secure finances, talks were focused on measures such as the increase of fees, hunt for outstanding members and receiving financial assistance from the district office.

There are many financial difficulties. At the end of the year when we settle accounts, there are the basic costs that are spent by the method of a deficit operation. You know, things like maintenance cost for managing the office, the minimum personnel expenses, food expenses paid to the restaurant for study meetings. We try to minimize these basic expenses, in addition to the publication expense but it is really hard. (Kim)

Nevertheless, participation with the mindset that dues are necessary for academic pursuit is required. Receiving financial assistance from the district office, since it comes from the collected taxes of the residents, goes against the fundamental founding purpose of operating the school with the strength of the school alone and for this reason, the school has been operating on its own funds to this day.

Jangheung Hakdang is carrying out the local government's duty of educating the residents which provides sufficient grounds for justifying financial assistance from the district office. However, Jangheung Hakdang has always refused. It is really something to be thankful for. (An)

Nonetheless, in order to operate Jangheung Hakdang, it costs 40 million won to 50 million won a year, making members' dues insufficient to maintain the operation. The organization is in a state of depending on part of the contributions to make up for the shortage.

Ties and Sponsorships of Other CoP

Jangheung Hakdang is seeking opportunities for a new value creation through the ties and sponsorships of other CoP. Main organizations in mutual relationships with Jangheung Hakdang are Save the Gullies of Korea Gwangju, Jeollanam-do Headquarters, Korea Water Resources Corporation (KOWACO), 21 Century Namdo-Forum, Gwangju, Jeollanam-do Development Institute, etc. First, Save the Gullies of Korea Gwangju, Jeollanam-do Headquarters joined with Human Resources Fosterage Academy held the 'Solution Search to Save the Gullies of Korea (November 11, 2009)' discussion debate discussing the development of the participatory restoration of gullies model. Moreover, a forum on water was held jointly by Korea Water Resources Corporation (KOWACO) and Jangheung Hakdang with the sponsorship of Jangheung-gun.

The forum on water was planned by Korea Water Resources Corporation (KOWACO) Jeollanam-do Southwest Conservancy, which supplies the water of Jangheung Dam to cities and districts including the city of Mokpo, to inform the people of the importance of water which surrounds us. Since this forum took interest in linking water resources to the community economy and was prepared well, I would like to assess that this debate had a great academic significance in regard to the Jeongnamjin Water Festival. (Wi)

This forum continues to be held (07/30/2008, 09/05/2009, 07/28/2010, and 07/29/2011). Furthermore, from March 2003, through mutual exchange visits with 21 Century Namdo-Forum, interchanges of information are occurring and connection with Gwangju, Jeollanam-do Development Institute has been made since July 1997.

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this research was to expose forming process of the CoP to provide implications that can be applied to the successful operation of the spontaneous CoP in local areas and promote community well-being. For this, the forming process of the CoP through the interactions between the members of Jangheung Hakdang and the environment became the focus and the factors that maintain and develop the CoP, which manifest in the developmental process, were explored.

The results of the research demonstrate the meaning of the establishment of Jangheung Hakdang in that the vision was realized under the leadership of a homebound high-ranking government official and this CoP promotes the community well-being as well as community development. The forming process of Jangheung Hakdang, based on the characteristics and the background of the area, was identified as having four phases: germination period, system establishment period, participatory growth period, and sustainable maturity period. In the germination period, according to the changes of the local self-government circumstances, the main agent of Jangheung Hakdang who is the retired government official, made contacts and connections with potential members and the primary intentions of the CoP were discussed in this stage. In the system establishment period, a paradigm for the community development was sought out, the head of the school was selected, articles of association and regulations, which are the frame of an organization, were arranged, and the four doctrines of academic pursuit—new creation, golden mean, and self-reliance that are the future coordinates and specific guidelines of behavior of Jangheung Hakdang—were enacted. In the participatory growth period when action learning activities were actively carried out, participations of members and residents became diverse and inclinations started to change. Through discussions and debates such as study meetings, field workshops, and presentation debates, experience and knowledge were shared and ‘Jangheung Hakdang Journal’, that contains the activities and shared knowledge, was published every year to be of practical use to the residents and members. In the sustainable maturity period, problems that arose amid the operation of Jangheung Hakdang, such as the gap between daily life and academic atmosphere, misunderstandings of residents and barriers to entry, were checked, applied to the organization and visualized. In addition, creations of relationships with external organizations were executed by holding forums of topics, such as saving the gullies and water festival, through connections and sponsorships regarding other CoP. Likewise, Jangheung

Hakdang emerged as the large reception room of Jangheung area where the discussions of the subjects necessary in the latter part of the information age today occur.

Such results of the research exposed the resonance effect of the government official's retire to the country and his leadership on the residents, based on the local characteristic of the unique Confucian hereditary customs that Jangheung Hakdang has. Additionally, the research revealed that the active support and dedication, system reorganization for the school operation, participation of residents, and networks with related institutions exerted crucial influences over the 18 years of Jangheung Hakdang's continuation.

Based on the results of the research analysis, in order for a CoP to successfully take root and develop, the following implications can be suggested. First of all, to elicit dynamics and the participation from the majority of the residents, the role of a devoted leader of the CoP is important. For instance, common learning is realized through the overall lives of the residents by interlocking with the diverse domains of the region. For this reason, the leader must be aware and understanding of the current states of residents and the community, not to mention that the leader must lead a moral and ethical life and receive respect and trust of the residents. Secondly, voluntary support and service minds of members for financial stability of the CoP is necessary. In order to carry out the purpose of the desirable organization and make it shine brightly, the active attitudes and devotions of participants with concerns and love for the community are required. What is more, the role of a financial supporter is needed to make sure that the administrative organ is well-operated. Thirdly, the gap between generations needs to be eased and the participation rate of women should be enhanced. Unlike the urban area, in the case of the rural areas, the participation rates of women and the young are poor. To solve this, learning programs and time slots need to be composed flexibly to suit the young and women participants, and there is the need to improve learning accessibility through locally assigned study tour, not fixed study locations.

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