

Making a Townscape of Life World

-The Meaning and Issues in Korean Cases-

Kim, Han-Bai

Department of Landscape Architecture, Taegu University

ABSTRACT

A townscape has both aspects of seeing and living. However, the main streams of townscape making have been mostly focused on the former perspective so far. Such trends are apt to lack the realities of urban living. In this view, a prerequisite to complement the existing formalistic view with this realistic one is needed in order to accomplish the holistic characteristics of a townscape.

Many city governments of Korea are currently trying to improve the quality of living quarters by providing diverse kinds of open spaces such as vest-pocket parks, pedestrian-friendly streets, and supporting the residents participatory village making. In this context, this paper will review the possibilities of the realistic approaches in townscape making by examining some current cases being tried in Korean cities.

In conclusion, some main issues to be solved in future can be listed as the conflict between general citizen's view and the residents' view", the conflict between social aspects and aesthetical aspects" and the conflict between the tradition and the vernacular reality in design".

Key Words : Town scape of living, Realistic townscape, Maeul Madang, Walkable street, Participatory village making

I. INTRODUCTION: From the Viewing Scenes to the Living Scenes

A townscape has not only the visual aspect, but also the living aspect. Nariumi(1988) once differentiated these as "the scenes for viewing" and "the scenes for living". However, the main streams of townscape making have been mostly focused on the former perspective so far. Generally, the 'townscapes for viewing' consist of the strongly visible scenes such as the skylines, the main streets,

the boulevards, the plazas, a central river, etc. On the other hand, the 'townscapes for living' can be generally found in vernacular places like the old neighborhoods, the urban squatters, the old streets, the back alleys, the market places, etc. I will call the scenes of these places 'the realistic townscapes' because they show us the scenes of ordinary people's real lives rather than the visual spectaculars of urban axis. We can find some eccentric landscape characteristics in these living places such as the dynamism of ever-changing and becoming spaces, the complexity of chaotic and

unpredictable changes in scenography, the interweaving wholeness of space, activity and meaning and so on.

In this view, a prerequisite to complement the existing formalistic view with this realistic one is needed in order to accomplish a holistic townscape. Many city governments of Korea are currently trying to improve the quality of living quarters by providing diverse kinds of open spaces such as vest-pocket parks, pedestrian-friendly streets, and supporting the residents participatory village making. Therefore, we expect the Korean townscapes to be much improved in a holistic sense by these efforts in near future.

In this context, this paper will review the possibilities of the realistic approaches in townscape making by examining some current cases being tried in Korean cities. And it is expected for us to share the precious experiences of neighborhood countries regarding to this account.

II. BACKGROUNDS

The realistic inquiries on urban environments were firstly introduced by some socialistic urbanists like Jane Jacobs (1961) who observed the real life on the back streets of New York and insisted the recovery of humane urban environment in opposition to the modern urbanism. Such an ideology was successively developed by two contrasting academic sects; such as the cultural behaviorism and the phenomenism.

Some urbanists and landscape architects (Seymour Jr. *et. al*, 1969), both of whom had tried to build many vest-pocket parks in New York and nationwide cities in America, originally promoted the practical movements in this area.

Traditionally the townscapes of the East Asian regions generally have appeared more complex than

the other regions of the world. The multi-layered villagescapes composed of the curvilinear alleys, surrounded by courts and walls, and various tiny communal lots, where people enjoy their ordinary life together, still constitute the basic local identity of this region. In these aspects, it should be also noted that the realistic approach in townscape could be more appreciated in this region.

III. AESTHETICS FOR THE TOWNSCAPE OF LIFE WORLD

The realistic approach in townscape making is aesthetically an antithesis against the existing formalistic view. The formalistic townscapes are mostly designed landscapes usually distinguished by the strong visual order and unity. Such an approach is mostly adapted to the major spatial skeletons of a city such as the main boulevards and central plazas. They usually use the static classical straight axis, vista and geometric shapes. Such a manner also accommodated so called cubist aesthetics in modern times, which gives more attention to the solid object to be seen rather than the volumetric space to be lived in. They are close to the administrator or traveler's taste, e.g. outsider's view.

On the other hand, the realistic townscapes are distinguished with their organic spatial structure, complexity and mysterious sequence of view. They were given forms gradually and spontaneously by the residents' adaptation to their given environment during their everyday life. They mostly show themselves with the narrow and curvilinear alleys and tiny yards attached to them in the old residential areas or urban squatters. The attractions of realistic townscapes generally lie in their physical congruence with residents' livelihood pattern and the existing sloping topography. We can find some eccentric landscape characteristics in

Table 1. A Comparison between the Townscape for Seeing and the Townscape for Living

	Townscape for Seeing (Public Landscape)	Townscape for Living (Residential Landscape)
1. Subject	Administrator, Outsider	Residents, Insider
2. Approach	-Officer, Expert Initiative -Master Plan Approach -Law, Regulations	-Resident Initiative or Participation -Piecemeal Approach -Residents Agreement
3. Style, Design Motives	-Rationalism -Straight Axis, Landmark, Grid	-Organic Style -Curvilinear Spine, Labyrinth
4. Basic Mode of Aesthetics	-Classic(High Art Tradition) -Pure Formalism(Autonomous) -Formal Aesthetics(Analytical)	-Vernacular(Folk Tradition) -Realism(Reflection of the Life World) -Contents Aesthetics(Narrative)
5. Landscape Attributes	-Outsideness -Static Order -Whole-Oriented(Absolutism) -Visual Amenity -Geometric -Cubistic(Objectivity) -Visibility -Simplicity	-Insiderness -Dynamic Variety -Part-Oriented(Relativism) -Congruence with Livelihood -Congruence with Topography -Volumetric(Sense of Place) -Invisibility -Multi-Layered Complexity

these places such as the dynamism of ever-changing and evolving spaces; the complexity of chaotic and unpredictable changes of sight; the interweaving wholeness of space, activity and meaning, and so on.

IV. Current Cases in Korea

There have been various cases related to the improvement of the urban living environment in Korea, which was begun roughly from early 1990s. They are ranging from providing vest-pocket parks in low-income neighborhoods, remodeling the existing roads into pedestrian friendly streets, to improving the overall neighborhood environments by the resident's initiative.

1. The Cases of Small Village Park Creation: 'Samji-Madang and Maeul-Madang'

The Samji-Madang project was originally intended to provide the low-income

neighborhoods the spaces for cultural activity adjacent to their daily living environment, promoted by the Ministry of Culture and implemented by the City of Seoul. This idea was more generalized as a typical, tiny residential park (Maeul-Madang) designed to be suitable for the ordinary Korean urban dwellers' life style. A lot of Maeul-Madangs have been created throughout the whole City of Seoul and other big cities of Korea. The residents living near them are mostly loving and enjoying them as social spaces encouraging the communal spirit as well as simple resting-places.

The participatory approach is the core concept in these projects and is being emphasized more and more currently. The methods, such as the public hearings and residents workshops, have been increasingly and successfully tried for the whole process of design and implementation. We can see an extreme case in "Yangji Maeul Madang" where whole procedure of design and construction was carried out by the resident's active participation along with a design expert's systematic operation

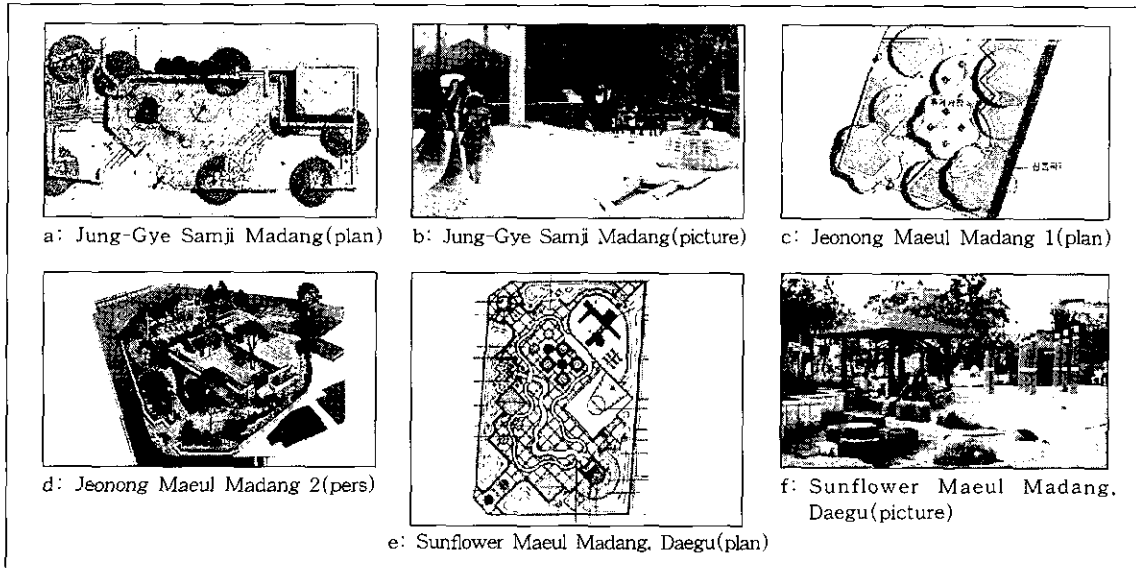


Figure 1. Samji Madang and Maeul Madang

(Kim, 2001).

The landscape form of these parks can be generally characterized by the harmonious repetition of existing spatial patterns of neighborhood and correspondence with the varied topography of the hillside where those neighborhoods used to be sited. Therefore, it could accomplish continuity with the social and physical context of the locale. *But there remain some problems such as the uniformity of shapes, which were mostly caused by creating the large number of parks in a relatively short period of time.*

2. The Cases of Streetscape Restoration: 'Walkable Streets' Project and the 'Insa-dong Street'

The 'Walkable Street' project is a citywide project of reforming the streets for the pedestrians by transforming the existing conventional vehicle roads into the pedestrian friendly streets along with visualizing the site-specific cultural themes. This project was originally initiated by a citizen

organization's campaign for recovering the pedestrian environment. Currently more than 30 streets are under improvement for the pedestrian's convenience and physical / cultural amenities.

However, this project showed some problems in both of the process and the design products. Firstly, the selection of the project streets was not executed with the citizens' participation satisfactorily. And even though most of the designs were chosen by the means of prize competitions, some of the designs are criticized for too much formality and the narratives beyond the residents' actual life style.

'Insa-Dong Street' is one of the main streets in the 'Buk-Chon' area, which is a representative traditional residential district located between two major palaces of Seoul. This project is designed for a restoration of an old fashioned cultural street named 'Insa-Dong Gil'. The image of Insa-dong consists of diverse elements such as vernacular shops and restaurants, facilities of art and culture related uses as well as the traditional Korean style houses antique shopping street and the alleys well known for foreign tourists.

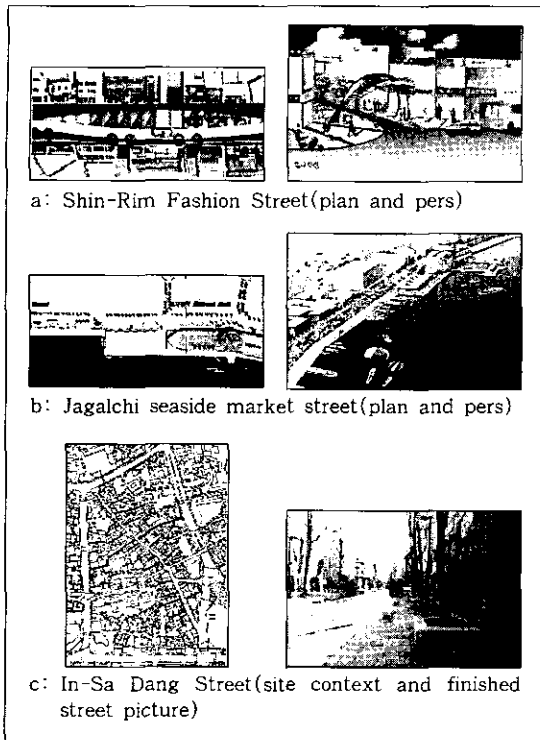


Figure 2. Walkable Streets and In-Sa Dong Street

This project has a dual purpose of preserving the old district and improving Insa-Dong Street to be pedestrian friendly and culturally affluent, with some Korean atmosphere. However, the finished streetscape can be criticized for the excessively classic design (unity oriented) and neglect of the back alleys which are indispensable part of the whole complex townscape of Insa-Dong.

3. The Participatory Neighborhood Improvement Movements: Some Precedents and the Case of 'Samdeok-Dong'

Even though in their initial stage, there have been many cases of community enhancement movements in Korea mostly promoted by their own residents or with the help of some citizen groups. Those movements usually care about the

community consolidation as well as the physical environment improvement. The scope of improving the neighborhood environment covers a whole system of communal living, including the types of the projects mentioned above. Many of the city governments are now trying to institutionalize these movements by providing the relevant legal and financial supports and so on.

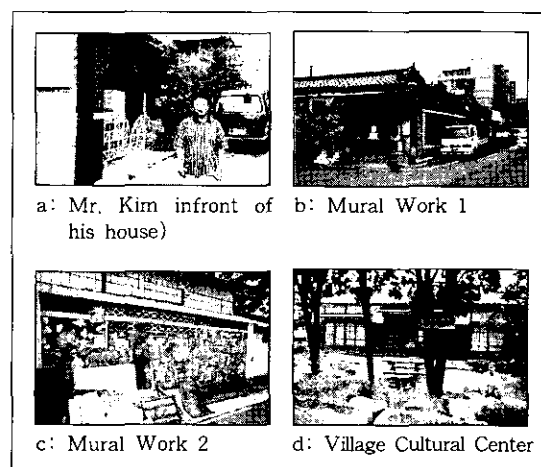


Figure 3. Sam-Deok Dong(Daegu) Neighborhood making by Mr. Kim and his house

The case of Samdeok-Dong is a very special one in these movements, in the aspect of leadership and the unique process of implementation. Samdeok-Dong' is a typical Korean neighborhood located in the City of Taegu (a provincial metropolitan city). This place is now under an extensive improvement movement by the residents' organization. This case is special because an individual called Kyung-Min Kim (an inhabitant), who had had some experience in the local citizen movement, originally initiated this project.

Kim began this project by removing the surrounding walls of his house and transforming his garden into a community garden. This idea was adapted later by the city of Taegu as a effective policy for improving public townscapes. He

promoted some other improvements with his neighbor groups such as making mural paintings, alley parks and small cultural centers all around his neighborhood. And he has been very successful in community consolidation as well as the formation of humane villagescapes.

Although it is too early in Korea to make a realistic approach in townscape control, such a trial is expected to make much progress in humanizing urban environment and to contribute a lot to heightening the equality of civic right in the future. However, there remain some issues to be solved as follows:

- 1) The conflict between general citizen's view and the residents' view:

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE ISSUES

Table 2. Current Cases in Korea

	Project Title	Initiative/Period	Project Type/Approach	Landscape
Pocket Park Making	Samji Madang	-Ministry of Culture, 1900-94 (18 case)	-Utilization of Unused Small Open Spaces in Low-Income Community	Character/Problems -Adapting to Existing Topography and Spatial Pattern -Adapting to Life Style of Residents
	Maeul Madang	-City of Seoul, 1996-98 (app. 100 case)	-Generalization of Samji to Typical Tiny Residential Park -Trials for Resident Participation	-Almost Same as Above but has Some Problem of Standardization
Street Making	Walkable Street Movement	-NGO campaign: 1993- -Regulation for Pedestrian Environment: City of Seoul 1997- -Walkable Street Making: City of Seoul 1999-(over 30 case)	-Pedestrian Friendly Street Making Projects -First Succeeded NGO Initiated Project -Implemented by Many Design Competition -Mostly shows Strong Visuality and Diverse Theme	-Mostly Focusing on Existing Highways(not on Neighborhood Streets Yet) -Too Much Concern for Formal Aspects and Narrative
	Insa-Dong Kil	-Insa-Dong Kil Improvement Project: Ministry of Culture 1990-2000	-Improvement of a Historic Cultural Strip -Historic Preservation + Walkable Street Making	-Improvement of a Historic Cultural Strip -Historic Preservation + Walkable Street Making
Neighborhood Making	Participatory Neighborhood Movement	-Resident Organization, NGO, City Officials and/or Experts: 1991-	-Began by Resident Org. -Kind of Anarchism -Institutionalization Tendency	-Various Kind of Project are being Tried. -Residents Agreement is More Needed than Legislation -Physical Work + Social Event
	Samdeok-Dong, Taegu	-an individual(a Resident and NGO staff): 1998-	-Physical Environment Improvement + Community Consolidation -Began with Removing Wall -Made Alley Park	-The Wall had Meaning in Both Aspects Above. -The Wall Removing Idea was Adopted by City of Taegu

In regard to the historic neighborhood, the ordinary citizen's view generally prefers preservation of the old residential districts to development of them. On the other hand, the resident's view is usually opposite to it. Then, how can the resident's participation be executed without injuring the core values of a realistic townscape? The administrator's role will be more vital for solving this problem.

2) The conflict between social aspects and aesthetical aspects:

While it is desirable to pursue the social aspect and the esthetical aspect altogether in the participatory projects, in many cases the esthetical aspect is neglected on account of the social value's priority. On the other hand, the formal aspect is frequently too exaggerated despite lacking the relevance with the actual life of the residents.

Therefore, it is necessary to contrive some competent alternative aesthetics; the principles and the design vocabularies fit for the realistic townscape making. The scholar and expert's role will be needed for this request.

3) The conflict between the tradition and the vernacular reality:

Generally speaking, most of the residents are more familiar with the conventional formal aesthetics; e.g. classic or popular style, both of which are not fit for the atmosphere of a realistic townscape. For this reason, in order to realize a true realistic townscape, a kind of identical modern vernacular, it seems unwise to leave the whole project to the decisions of such a resident group.

In this case, we need some experts with an eye for the realistic aesthetics to guide the whole process of decision making and implementation of the projects. Therefore, the residents will be expected to understand fully the essential characteristics of such projects and make wise judgements to allow the

appropriate experts over to the projects.

REFERENCES

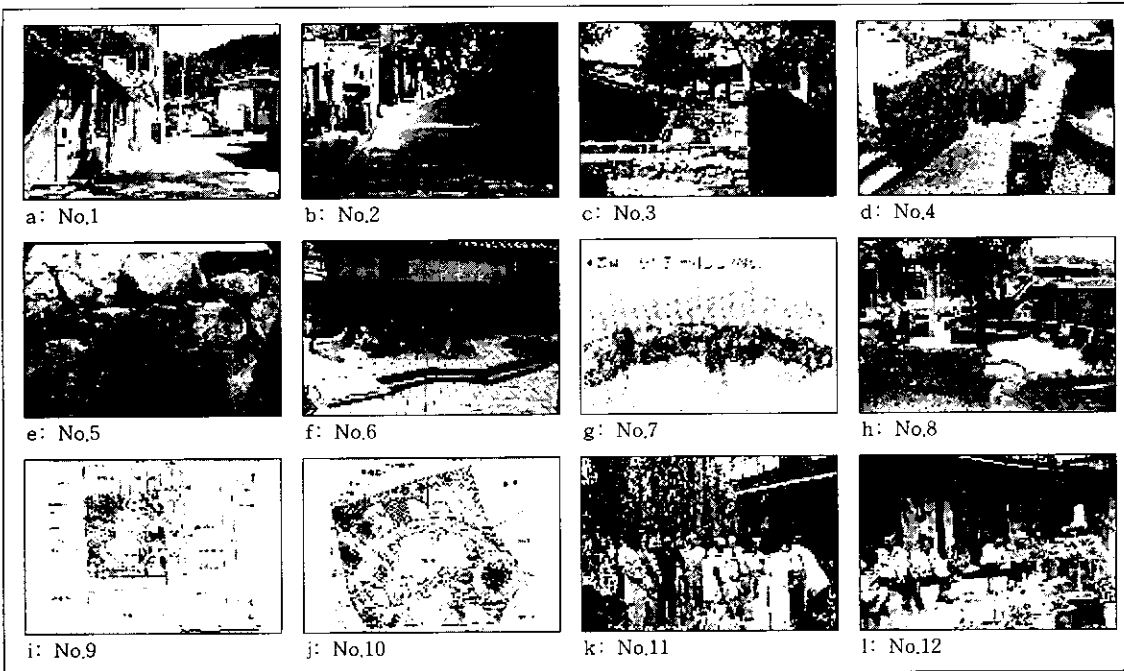
1. City of Seoul(1997) Master Plan of Maeul Madang.
2. City of Seoul(1998a) Master Plan of Maeul Madang.
3. City of Seoul(1998b) Master Plan of Maeul Madang.
4. City of Seoul(1998c) Master Plan of Maeul Madang.
5. Han-Bai Kim(1993) Either Urban Park or Odd Urban Space-Samji Madang. Korean Landscape Architecture, May 1993: pp.78-83.
6. Ja-Hoon Ku *et al.*(1996) Proposed Programs for Participatory Neighborhood Improvement in Seoul. Seoul: Seoul Development Institute.
7. Ki-Ho Kim(1997) Urban Conservation-- Korean Experience. A case study of Kahoe-dong Hanok conservation district (Paper presented at the preparatory meeting on conservation and development of historic cities in Northeast Asia. August 10-11. 1998) Seoul Development Institute. Seoul: Korea.
8. Kyeong-Jin Joh(2000) Paranoia: The Obsession of the Meaning of the Contemporary Korean Landscape Design, Locus 2, Seoul: Landscape Culture Press.
9. Kyu-Mok Lee(1987) Koreaness of Korean Architecture: Complementary Dual Structure. Space Magazine. Dec. 1987., Seoul: Space Press.
10. Kyung-Min Kim(1999) My Little Experiment: improving ally environment. Cultural City-Cultural Welfare(vol.66) Seoul: Ministry of Culture.
11. Seoul Metropolitan City-Making Walkable City: <http://urban.seoul.go.kr/main/walk/work.htm>.
12. Seung-Bin Im(1998) A City Built with Landscape Architecture. Seoul: Seoul National University Press13.
14. Shin-Won Kim and Jun Heo(2000) Design Characteristics of Village Parks Through an Analysis of Structuring Themes. Journal of Korean Institute of Landscape Architecture (28/2). Seoul: KILA, pp. 71-84.
15. Suk Jeong(2000) Ma-ul-man-dul-gi, an Experiment for a Community Based City Planning: Cases and Implications. Seoul Development Review. Sep. 2000.
16. Sung-Kyun Kim(2001) Community Participatory Neighborhood Park Design. Journal of Korean Institute of Landscape Architecture (29/3). Seoul: KILA, pp. 61-69.
17. Tae-Kyung Kim and Kye-Dong Ahn(2000) Street Space, and Their Supporting Role for the Whole Streetscape. Collection of Korean Landscape Design Competitions. Korean Society of Landscape Architects
18. Yang-Kyo Jin *et. al.*(2000) Meaning of the Conventional Market Place Derived from the Merchant's Point of View. Journal of Korean Institute of Landscape Architecture (28/1). Seoul: KILA, pp.118-128.
19. Yun-Jai Yang(1991) A Study on Low-Income Neighborhood Pattern. Seoul: Yul-Hwa Dang.

20. Maki *et. al.*.(眞文彦 1980) *Invisible City*. Tokyo: Rokudoushubansha.
21. Nariumi edit.(鳴海邦碩 1988) *Machizukuri from the view of Landscape*. Kyoto: Kakugeishubansha.
22. Takeuchi(竹内敏雄 1974; trans. by Ahn) *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics and Art*. Seoul: Mijinsa.
23. Appleyard, D.(1983) *Planning a pluralist city : conflicting realities in Ciudad Guayana*Batty and Longley(1994) *Fractal Cities*. London: Academic Press.
24. Clay,G.(1973) *Close-Up;How to Read the American City*. Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press.
25. Condon, P. M.(1988) "Cubist Space, Volumetric Space and Landscape Architecture". *Landscape Journal* (Spring 1988): pp.1-14.
26. Im, Seung-Bin(1995) *Pocket Park as an Oasis in the Depressed Residential Area-The Case of Samji Park in Seoul*. Research for the Landscape of Urban Parks. The 4th International Symposium of Japan and Korea. JILA and KILA.
27. Jacobs,J.(1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. N.Y.: Random House.
28. Rapoport, A.(1969) *House Form and Culture*(translated by Kyu-Mok Lee, 1985, Seoul: Yul-Hwa Dang).
29. Relph, E.(1976) *Place and Placenessness*. London: Pion Ltd.
30. Seymour Jr,W.N.(1969) *An Introduction to Small Urban spaces*. *Small Urban Spaces*. N.Y.: New York Univ. Press.
31. Shiffman, R.(1969) *The Vest-Pocket Park as an Instrument of Social Change*. *Small Urban Spaces*. N.Y.: New York Univ. Press.
32. Whyte, W.H.(1980) *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation.
33. <http://www.archforum.com/>
34. <http://www.dosi.or.kr/>
35. <http://www.sdi.re.kr/~jerome/>

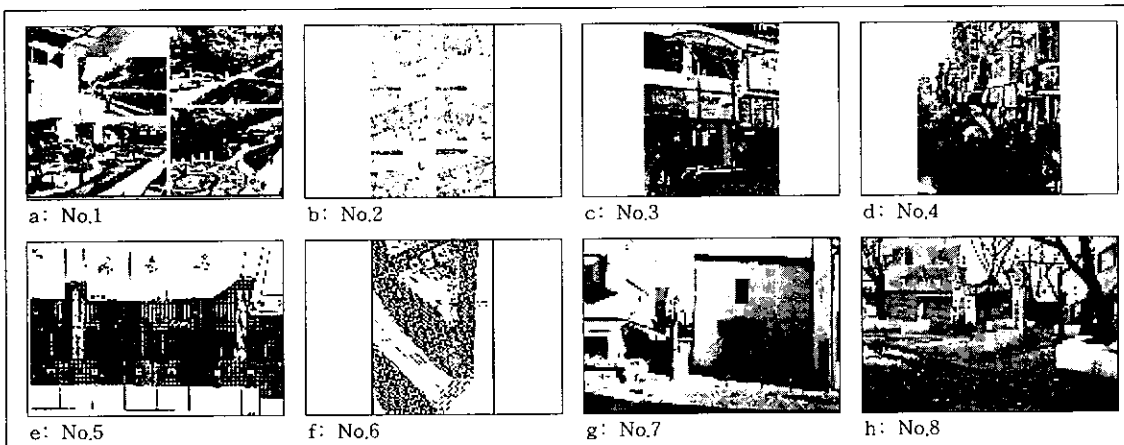
Accepted August 31, 2001

Refereed anonymously

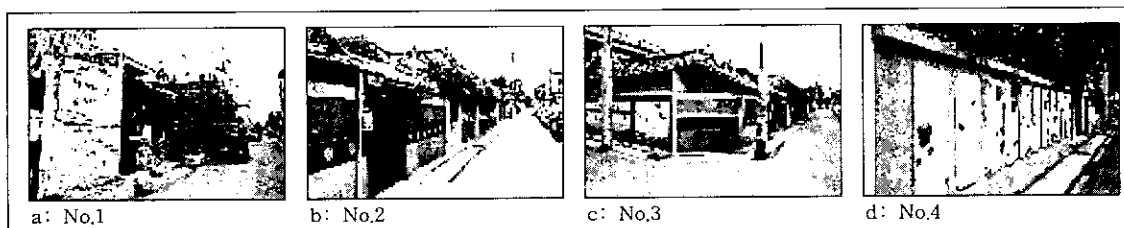
Appendix 1. Types of 'Townscape Making for the Life Eorld'



A: Samji and Maeul Madang
 a~c: Villagescapes of Jung-Gye Dong; d~f: Jung-Gye Dong Samji Madang; g~h: Changshin Dong Samji Madang; i~j: Maeul Madangs; k~l: Public Headings



B: Walkable Streets
 a: Bangadari Street; b~d: PIFF Street(Pusan); e~h: In-Sa Dong Street (plan and pictures)



C: Sam-Deok Dong Neighborhood Makings