



Plural and fluid place attachment amid tourism-induced neighborhood change in a disadvantaged neighborhood in South Korea

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ABSTRACT

Many urban neighborhoods have emerged as new urban tourist destinations since increasing numbers of visitors seek to experience 'authentic' mundane experiences. Ihwa Mural Village (IMV), a disadvantaged urban neighborhood in Seoul, South Korea, is such a case whereby a public art project implemented by the government to regenerate disadvantaged areas has led to the touristification of the neighborhood. The socioeconomic reconfiguration of IMV has complicated people–place relationships and has engendered controversial outcomes. This research draws upon recent debates of 'fluid and relational' place attachment and employed qualitative methods to demonstrate how people continuously construct, adapt, and reshape their connections to place and attachments and respond to such dynamics during tourism-induced neighborhood change. Findings reveal that people's place attachment is plural as it may not necessarily only premised on rootedness. Also, place attachment is multidimensional and fluid that could either amplify or attenuate during the trajectory of neighborhood change contingent upon the proximity to tourism hotspot, diverse neighborhood events affecting their quality of lives, and conflicting benefits. Comprehending the plurality and fluidity of place attachment is imperative to understand neighborhoods experiencing tourism-induced change since it could minimize the potential neighborhood conflicts.

1. Introduction

Contested outcomes of urban tourism are by no means new. As shown by much of the previous research, despite some positive effects, urban tourism brings a series of negative impacts of the tourist economy on neighborhoods, such as the proliferation of short-term rental and overcrowding (Colomb and Novy, 2016; Goodwin, 2017; Lew et al., 2008). However, what intensifies this discontent with urban tourism is the emergence of new urban tourism as a prominent form (Füller and Michel, 2014). New urban tourism is characterized by increasing contacts between residents and tourists in the visited city's everyday spaces due to the diversification of tourists' quests to seek "typical" mundane experiences (Maitland, 2013; Maitland and Newman, 2014). To meet tourists' "authentic experience" expectations, many areas not initially planned or marketed for tourists—such as ordinary neighborhoods—have been converted into new urban tourism destinations (Dirksmeier and Helbrecht, 2015; Maitland and Newman, 2014). The emerging number of new urban tourism destinations produces contentious impacts on both residents and neighborhoods by altering residents' social and cultural associations and changing material landscapes of

neighborhoods (Cameron, 2003; Jones and Evans, 2012). Significant changes in places brought by the intrusion of tourism into everyday practices and their controversial effects on residents urge urban scholars to reconsider place-people relationships and delve into the complex meanings of place.

Recent theoretical consideration of place attachment as 'fluid and relational,' which is premised on the assemblage thinking of place that cuts across the binary between place as routes/roots or open/closed, provides a relevant lens to explore tourism and its impact on everyday urban space (Cresswell, 2004, 2011; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Di Masso et al., 2019; Edensor et al., 2020; Massey, 2012). Within the context of new urban tourism, the place-people relationships are associated with the increased global mobility that has intensified the circulation of people and goods that reconfigures what Tim Cresswell has labelled as "micro-geographies of everyday life" (Cresswell, 2011, p. 551). Neighborhoods undergoing rapid and intense change beneath banners of new urban tourism are continuously reconstructed through their relationships with multiple constituents, such as the socioeconomic reconfiguration of urban communities generated by diverse forms of mobility. Since individuals constantly adapt their strategies to (re)

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establish or retain a sense of self-continuity in a new settlement (Devine-Wright, 2020), it necessitates flexible and plural ways to grasp the subjective experiences of place and implications of tourism-induced changes for local communities.

A distinct tourism-induced neighborhood change in a disadvantaged neighborhood in Seoul, South Korea, serves as a proper case to deepen the fluid and relational understanding of place attachment. Ihwa Mural Village (IMV), a *daldongne* located on hillsides with substandard housing conditions, has become ‘touristified’ after implementing a government-funded public art project as a part of culture-led urban regeneration. Murals and sculptures were installed on walls, houses, and staircases in public spaces. The project has induced a tourism-driven socioeconomic reconfiguration of IMV with the rapid influx of tourists and newcomers, has engendered controversial outcomes in the neighborhood, and has complicated people–place relationships.

Thus, this research sheds light on how the neighborhood’s transformation into tourist destinations has affected the local communities and how their place attachment has continually unfolded over time. To answer this question, I use qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and field observation, to understand subjective and multidimensional perspectives on place attachment and examine residents’ perceptions and experiences of neighborhood change. I found that the different narratives and experiences of people–place relationships displayed in IMV reveal the dynamics of place attachment: both plural and fluctuating that demand for interpreting the concept with *plurality* and *fluidity*.

2. Revisiting place attachment: The nexus of fixity, flow, and fluidity

2.1. What is place attachment?

Place attachment is the most commonly used term to refer to the “deep-seated emotional connection people have with a place” (Smith and Cartledge, 2011, p. 540). It is known as a worthy of systematic analysis to interpret residents’ behavior in possessing strong senses of cooperative and communal identities based on networks of extended family relationships (Gu and Ryan, 2008; Low and Altman, 1992; Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2013b). However, as the different usage of various place-related terms reveals—place identity, sense of place, topophilia, rootedness, and insideness—place attachment is also a complex and multifaceted concept. To such a multilayered dimension, some scholars claim place attachment as an “overarching, superordinate concept labeled with sense of place” (Von Wirth, Grêt-Regamey, Moser, and Stauffacher, 2016, p. 68).

In general, place attachment is conceived as a positive sense of personal or social identity associated with place (Manzo, 2005), and it has been considered to be substantially affected by factors such as residency characteristics, including place of birth, length of residence, affect, cognition, and behavior (Lewicka, 2011; Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Smith, 2018; Song and Soopramanien, 2019). For instance, individuals with robust place attachments have greater life satisfaction, stronger ties with neighbors, a greater interest in family history, and greater trust in others (Lewicka, 2011). Also, people with a strong attachment to place tend to have an increased sense of belonging and self-esteem (Devine-Wright, 2020; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Accordingly, the impact of change has been seen negatively and conceived as a disruption to place attachment (Brown and Perkins, 1992), or even a threat to place identity (Devine-Wright and Howes, 2010).

Methodologically, while much of the place attachment research has been led by a quantitative approach to measure the different dimensional aspects (Devine-Wright, 2020), qualitative methods were also used in order to examine the relationship between the theoretical conceptualizations of place and people’s everyday experiences (Dwyer et al., 2019; Lewicka, 2011). For instance, qualitative researchers have

used in-depth interviews to understand how groups of people bond with a particular place and investigate mundane meanings associated with diverse places (Devine-Wright, 2020; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Geographers have been leading this domain. Humanistic geographers have examined how people develop an attachment to place through shared symbolic meanings among different members of the group, and cultural and historical geographers have focused on socially constructed spaces and seek to comprehend how they give meaning to the lives of people who live there (Smith, 2018).

2.2. Place attachment: Navigating fixity, flow, and fluidity

With the emergence of “the mobilities turn” as a central topic in social science in the early 2000s, scholars have challenged a taken for granted ‘sedentarist approach’ that presumes place as “bounded, classifiable, and static” (Edensor et al., 2020, p. 2) and the neglectation on the varied and complex ways of people’s mobility (Cresswell, 2006; Di Masso et al., 2019; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2000). Instead, researchers have claimed to view place as progressive that constructs a place a unique, vibrant, conflicting, changing, multiple, and open to a globalized mobile world (Edensor et al., 2020; Massey, 2012).

Employing such a paradigm shift in social science into place attachment research, the concept has been reconsidered not only as “complex, multivalent bonds that may be positive, negative or ambivalent and evolve over time” but also as a component implicated in social and territorial conflicts (Devine-Wright, p. 507, 2020; Lewicka, 2011; Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2013b). More specifically, researchers have challenged how place attachment is perceived as a static phenomenon and understood as a one-dimensional set of attachment relations. Also, they have pointed out place attachment was uncritically conceived as a positively experienced bond developed over time despite the possibility of ‘ambivalence’ (Berghlund, 2018; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001; Low and Altman, 1992). Other factors, such as political exclusion and deterioration of place, can generate an ambiguous feeling of place attachment and engender the feeling that a community is less desirable (Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2013a). Thus, the aspects and consequences of place attachment are neither positive nor dichotomous (Devine-Wright, 2020).

Diverse forms of mobility and relational understandings of place in human geography have contributed to reconsider place attachment (Cresswell, 2004, 2011; Di Masso et al., 2019; Massey, 2012; Pierce et al., 2011; Verstraete and Cresswell, 2002). The rapid increase in various non-migratory mobility forms has intensified the circulation of people and goods across the world in the forms of—to name a few—urban redevelopment, residential changes, and lifestyles (Di Masso et al., 2019). The nexus of place attachment and mobility is complex since it could be shaped across time and space by a series of mobility conditions and the relational (re)configurations that underlie them (Devine-Wright, 2020; Di Masso et al., 2019).

With intensified mobility experiences, people can also have attachments to multiple places simultaneously (Gustafson, 2014) since one person’s attachment is not limited to one single home place. This perspective has become more critical recently as people have various possibilities for developing such dual or multiple bonds (Gustafson, 2006; McHugh and Mings, 1996). For instance, so-called ‘cosmopolitan elites’ deem to have a low preference for local involvement and local obligations. However, Gustafson (2009) found that their place attachment is not significantly weaker than occasional travelers or non-travelers. Instead, they were even active in local activities in some respects, revealing that mobility may not unavoidably undermine social cohesion. This shows that individual’s attachment is not limited to one single home place, and it has become more crucial recently as people have various possibilities for developing such dual or multiple bonds (Gustafson, 2006; McHugh and Mings, 1996).

Accordingly, the notion of home has become increasingly contingent and unsettled with varying modes of mobility and immobility (Bocagni,

2016). Place attachment is suggested to be conceived as a dynamic process that is continually unfolding over time with plural expressions (Devine-Wright, 2014). Reflecting such views, Di Masso et al. (2019, p. 132) proposed a "fixity-flow framework" to systematically reconceptualize "the different forms of interweaving between fixed/static and mobile/dynamic aspects of place attachment". The authors suggest viewing place identities as "'rhizomatic' configurations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) or 'assemblages' (Cresswell, 2015)," and also as "spread feelings of anchoring and rootedness across multiple, dynamic, and changing locales" (quoted from Di Masso et al., 2019, p. 131).

Nevertheless, to reflect real-world circumstances and inform policymaking (Devine-Wright, 2015), research on place attachment still requires more theorization with various empirical cases. I claim that a new urban tourism destination serves as a particularly relevant setting to address these gaps. First, the emergence of new urban tourism destinations not only presents mobilities and desires for 'authenticity' under the global processes but also is the outcome of an intertwined dimension of home (everydayness), tourism destination (for seeking new experiences), and/or migratory destination (for work and live). This creates a reconfiguration of complex networks and flows of people and objects at the neighborhood scale. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate varied meanings ascribed to place through an extended network of social relations, or "the existence of dual or multiple place attachments" (Gustafson, 2006, p. 19). Second, place attachment in a new urban tourism destination displays the multiplicity of place attachment or collectively recognized place identity and shows that place attachment is not only static but also fluid. For instance, people–place relations are presented in a dynamic nature over time that can be formed upon place change, diverse configurations of residential mobility, and continuity of settlement type (Bailey et al., 2016).

Such theoretical abstraction requires to be applied in different empirical settings to uncover place attachment dynamics by recognizing different types and intensities (Di Masso et al., 2019). Nonetheless, relatively little attention has been paid to examine tourism-induced neighborhood change in a disenfranchised neighborhood, even it provides relevance to understand how people navigate different situations and contexts with the trajectory of neighborhood change. Thus, to address such a gap, this study's central objective is to examine the flexible and fluid place attachment, focusing on a disadvantaged neighborhood that turned into a new urban tourism destination in Seoul, South Korea.

3. Research methods

Much of the work on place attachment has been dominated by a positivist approach to investigate patterns of attachment and factors that affect place attachment (Lewicka, 2011). Despite the usefulness of such an approach, it is not always best equipped to understand the "affect-rich nature of relations to place" (Sebastien, 2020, p. 5). As place is linked to life histories, social processes, and the individual's lived experiences that are not easily quantifiable (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2006; Seamon, 2013), the use of qualitative methods can provide potentially deeper and richer information for understanding subjective dimensions (Sebastien, 2020).

The purpose of this research is to examine the diversity and richness of people's emotional relationships with tourism-induced neighborhood change through their own words describing their subjective lived experiences. Thus, I use a series of qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and field observation during fieldwork undertaken from May 2017 to January 2018 in Ihwa Mural Village. This qualitative approach was considered appropriate to allow for "a layered, multidimensional perspective on place and to study residents' perceptions and experiences of neighborhood change" (Pinkster, 2016, p. 876).

The use of these methods has allowed me to collect data and build rapport with different social groups. I used semi-structured and focus

group interviews to understand the lived experience and the meanings that relate to neighborhood change. Field observation not only has granted me to establish rapport within the community and blend into them (Bernard, 2017) but also to learn about the activities of the people in a natural setting by observing neighborhood activities (Kawulich, 2005). A snowball sampling strategy was adopted to approach initial informants, and I asked them to nominate others in their social networks. At the initial stage, I was able to interview several 'key' long-standing residents who have been active in neighborhood activities and know most of the neighbors. They provided access to a number of additional interviewees with diverse backgrounds, such as inhabitants, resident business owners, newcomers, and artists who have participated in the public art project.

Interviews conducted with these different stakeholders ranged from one-time encounters to several follow-up interviews, and they ranged from 60 to 240 minutes. I audio recorded these interviews based on the approval of the interviewees and the Institutional Review Board. I conducted interviews in Korean, and all the transcripts were initially recorded in Korean and then later translated into English by the author. The interviews were focused on the participants' residential histories, their personal experiences of living in a touristifying neighborhood, perceived changes in the everyday usage of the neighborhood, and their interactions and relationships with the community.

The total number of interviewees was 39, including a group of longstanding residents (n=27) who tend to view themselves as the "T'obagi [native]¹ of IMV" and newcomers (n=12), which consist of business owners and artists. To this classification of interviewees' attributes, I need to clarify two points. First, I have followed how interviewees identified themselves and the others. Second, this distinction of different groups does not affect my analysis since it was engaged in textual analysis and coding to identify the key terms and themes in field notes, along with secondary data materials such as news articles and official documents. While my interviewees' perceptions cannot be used to generalize to the entire IMV population, their insights provide multidimensional perspectives and experiences of neighborhood change.

4. Case study

4.1. Daldongne: The place of various contested experiences and desires

Ihwa Mural Village (IMV) is one of the so-called *daldongnes* of Seoul, a negative term in common parlance that implies slums. *Daldongne* generally refers to an unplanned squatter settlement that consists of substandard housing that is frequently built with low-quality materials, inadequate sewage disposal, and small living spaces along small streets and alleyways. Many inhabitants of these neighborhoods are aware of social stigmatization associated with residents of *daldongne* as a working-class neighborhood. Also, in most cases, *daldongnes* are located on hillsides: *dal* means the moon, and *dongne* refers to village/neighborhood in Korean. In contrast to this seemingly romantic name, the term implies the sorrows of life of residents in the low-income group; as its location is on a hillside, residents can watch the moon more closely. *Daldongne* used to be the home of refugees from the Korean War (1950–1953). During South Korea's rapid urbanization process, *daldongnes* have been the objects of demolition to make way for skyscrapers or high-rise apartment buildings.

¹ The expression of T'obagi [native] were used by residents many times during the interview. Given that Ihwadong has been a *daldongne* that consists of the refugees from Korean War or rural–urban migrants to look for job opportunities in Seoul (and its metropolitan area), technically, they could not be native to Ihwadong. Nevertheless, many of these interviewees consider themselves as a native of IMV, which exemplifies the length of residence, in part, plays a critical role in shaping community's identity.



Fig. 1. Map of IMV. Source: Left by the author; right by Ihwa-dong Office (modified by author).

Despite the substandard living conditions, many residents have resided in the same place for decades and have grown strong place attachment to their neighborhoods and amongst themselves as community members. For instance, several scholars approach *daldongne* from place attachment with deep community sentiment (Cho, 2013; Shim, 2004). Many residents have a close relationship with each other and often spend time with one another gathering in public spaces to chat or play a Korean card game.

Nevertheless, due to the unsatisfactory living conditions, these neighborhoods also tend not to be desirable places for younger residents. Consequently, most residents of *daldongne* are seniors who have expressed strong place attachments and wish to keep up their homes, but simultaneously, they would love to move to an area with better living conditions if they could afford it. In other words, despite the residents' committed attachments to their local neighborhoods, most of them desire to live in a 'better and improved' living environment with more modernized conditions. Thus, *daldongne* postulates a unique urban neighborhood in which various contested experiences and desires coexist.

4.2. Ihwa Mural Village (IMV)

Ihwa Mural Village (IMV), a relatively small neighborhood with 186 households, is located in Ihwa-dong², Jongno-gu³, in central Seoul (Fig. 1). It is within 10 min of walking distance from Daehak-ro (Seoul's theater and performing arts district). Contrary to most of the *daldongnes*, which have been 'forgotten neighborhoods' not widely known to the public and rarely drawing attention from local officials, IMV has been the target of a series of urban projects. These examples include an abandoned redevelopment plan that would have constructed a new apartment complex, the *Naksan Public Art Project* (NPAP) as a part of the *Art in City initiative* (implemented), and a Residential Environment Improvement project (implemented).

It is important to point out why an alternative approach was implemented, instead of bulldozing, which was a common approach for

making room for the government's urban redevelopment projects during the 1970s and 1980s. There are several reasons. First, IMV is adjacent to two historical and cultural heritage sites: the Seoul City Wall (Hanyangdoseong)⁴ and Ihwajang House⁵. Due to proximity to these sites, Ihwa-dong is regulated by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG)'s Ordinance on Cultural Property Protection. Second, despite substandard living conditions, IMV is appreciated for its architectural and historical value. In the late 1950s, the former form of the Korea National Housing Corporation constructed *kuk-min-chu-t'aek-tan-chi*: a national housing complex (Fig. 2).

Kuk-min-chu-t'aek-tan-chi was built in deteriorated residential areas during the 1960s to improve housing conditions and provide stable housing supplies for low-income workers, and the one built in IMV is known as Seoul's first tenement house. There are two reasons that the one in IMV has received particular attention. First, it is the oldest remaining of such housing type and relatively in a well-preserved condition. Second, it provides cultural and aesthetic value for researchers and architects to investigate modern housing history (Ham and Ahn, 2016; Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2016). Therefore, such distinctive features of the neighborhood are deemed to provide a unique and nostalgic feeling to many Koreans who yearn for the past.

Implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) in 2006, NPAP is a part of the South Korean government's culture-led urban regeneration projects (Fig. 3). This project aims to revitalize underdeveloped urban neighborhoods economically, socially, and culturally to improve the conditions of the living environment, and approximately 70 murals and artworks were installed (Korea Arts Management Service, 2007). However, as IMV has since become the background for some TV shows and dramas, the neighborhood was converted into a new urban tourism destination in which visitors seek 'authenticity' in the landscape and their interactions with locals

⁴ It's also known as the Fortress Wall of Seoul, which was built in 1396, and is one of the most significant historical cultural heritage sites of Seoul. It stretches for 18.6km along the ranges of Bugaksan Mountain, Naksan Mountain, Namsan Mountain, and Inwangsan Mountain (VisitSeoul.Net).

⁵ Registered as the Historical Site No. 497, is the home of the first president of South Korea Syngman Rhee after Korea gained independence from Japan in 1945.

² "Dong" means a village or community.

³ "Gu" refers to the district.



Fig. 2. An Example of Kuk-min-chu-t'aek-tan-chi that renovated for commercial use. Source: By author.

alongside their appreciation of the public artworks. For instance, in 2016, IMV ranked fifth in most searched visitor destinations in Seoul by Chinese tourists (Han, 2016). The transformation of IMV has brought about massive neighborhood change and many contested outcomes to the community and their people–place relationships.

5. Evolving place attachment between fixities and fluidities

People–place relationships displayed in IMV reveal the dynamics of place attachment that is both multidimensional and fluctuating. Place attachment is discovered as *plural* with the neighborhood change brought by new urban tourism, and both the sedentarist assumptions (e.g., length of residency, movement as disruptive) and non-habitual way of understanding place attachment (e.g., appreciation of aesthetic value) shape people's place attachment. Also, place attachment is found to be fluid in the sense that it either amplifies or attenuates during the trajectory of neighborhood change that is intertwined with a range of neighborhood events.

5.1. Plural place attachment

IMV is one of a few remaining *daldongnes* in Seoul where many of the residents worked for the clustered garment and sewing home-factories located in the area during the 1960s and 1970s (Oh, 2020). Until today, the socioeconomic backgrounds of IMV remain homogeneous, with the majority of them as working-class. Also, IMV has a higher percentage of residents age 65 or over (18.8%) compared to the average of other neighborhoods in Seoul (12.79%) (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2016). Living in a so-called *daldongne* in Korean society often connotes hardship due to marginalized conditions, including a substandard living environment and the social stigmatization from the public assuming their socioeconomic class. Therefore, coping with everyday hardship and supporting each other emotionally—by communicating and helping out each other frequently—has been

deemed a virtue of living in IMV.

My ethnographic data suggest that rootedness, length of residency, and emotional solidarity formed from such distinctive conditions play an essential role in strengthening social relationships and group identity. As a consequence, despite the undesirable living environment, many of these residents perceive IMV as a “cozy,” “generous,” and “friendly and family-like” place where they call “my home,” as illustrated by an 88-year old woman and a 65-year old woman who has spent most of their lives in IMV, respectively.

I have lived in our neighborhood for more than fifty years, and my family moved from Haenam⁶ to here, after the Korean War...Our living condition was really poor...But most of our neighbors have a similar situation, so we helped each other...Our relationship is just like a family! (Interviewee A)

I have a lot of good memories with my neighbors chatting in the alleyway, making Kimchi⁷ together in the street [because few cars passed and no visitors except for the residents]...When one cooks a nice meal, they always drop by and inviting neighbors by simply knocking at the door. Whoever will be joining always bring whatever leftover dish they have in the fridge and bring it for an impromptu potluck party. (Interviewee B)

Such positive experiences have grown stronger over time and are determined by both past experiences along with the length of residency and older age; this resonates with place attachment literature that conventionally underscores affective bonding between an individual or a group and places at different spatial scales (Dwyer et al., 2019; Hammitt et al., 2006; Low and Altman, 1992; Pinkster, 2016; Strzelecka et al., 2017). These interviews also encompass nostalgia, a sense of belonging, and emotional solidarity in strengthening their bonds between people and place.

Contrary to such an account corresponding to conventional place attachment, it is essential to point out a discerning appreciation of attachment: the aesthetic satisfaction and the appreciation of the cultural and architectural value of IMV associated with its distinctive neighborhood feature. Before the NPAP, IMV was not widely known to the public. However, after the project, IMV started attracting many people, including newcomers (artists and business owners) and tourists. As revealed by the interviews, the remains of kuk-min-chu-t'aek-tan-chi and small alleys provide them with a sense of “authenticity” and “nostalgia from an old urban Korean neighborhood”.

When I participated in the art project in 2006, I was very impressed by the neighborhood's historical and cultural value...Kuk-min-chu-t'aek-tan-chi has great architectural value and stimulates nostalgia. These buildings must be preserved and let the public also appreciate the value of IMV. (Interviewee C)

Aesthetic satisfaction has brought this 60-year old man to the neighborhood and led him to become attached. To him, IMV is a *de facto* “live museum” that is rich in cultural and historical value since it comprises vernacular houses and the lifestyle of the 1970s. He has a background in metal curation, and he thought such a neighborhood architectural feature matches well with his plan to operate a museum to display his diverse collection of locks and bolts. Along with the museum, he also opened a café to make an income.

I would say the panoramic view of Seoul you can see from my café is one of the best views you can ever enjoy...I firmly believe that more people should come and visit here to feel this!! (Interviewee C)

Similarly, a 63-year old artist and a professor of art who has his

⁶ Located in Jeollanam-Do, located in the southmost part of South Korea.

⁷ A traditional side dish of salted and fermented vegetables.



Fig. 3. Installed artworks in IMV. Source: By author.

workspace in the neighborhood revealed a similar aesthetic appreciation.

I love my studio here because the unique atmosphere of IMV provides me inspiration for my artworks! I was the project director of NPAP, and I guess I was attached to here since then. (Interviewee D)

While technically he is not a ‘conventional resident’ of IMV, since where he and his family reside is not located within the neighborhood, he still actively participates in local activities and develop bonds with residents. He wanted to use his talent—art—to contribute to the revitalization of IMV: “I am trying to organize more free exhibitions so that both visitors and residents can enjoy the artwork”. Such accounts correspond to the findings that people can also have attachments to multiple places simultaneously with intensified mobility experiences, and their place attachment is not considerably lower than non-travelers (Gustafson, 2001, 2014).

In sum, what has attached both interviewees C and D to IMV is significantly different from other interviewees; different narratives and experiences show that place attachment is plural as it may not necessarily be premised only on rootedness (Bissell, 2020). Also, place attachment is not possessed exclusively by a particular group or individuals with intensified mobility experiences.

5.2. Fluid place attachment

Despite the committed attachments from the majority of the constituents of IMV, merely a fixed and plural understanding of place attachment is insufficient to capture place attachment dynamics. The interviewees’ narratives and experiences reveal that place attachment in IMV has been continuously evolving, disrupted, and adapted along with on-going neighborhood events and reconfigurations associated with tourism. In this sense, the recent theoretical discussion on reconsidering place attachment as ‘fluid’ and ‘relational’ (Devine-Wright, 2020; Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2013a) is relevant to examine the case of IMV.

5.2.1. Exclusion: The sentiments of powerlessness and resentment and estrangement from “cute artworks”

“Connect, Mix, and Get Together” is the motto of NPAP. According to an interview from the artistic director of the project (Interviewee D), “This Naksan area is too polarized... Daehak-ro is thriving, full of young people and vitality, while IMV is dilapidated even if they are adjacent to each other...that’s why we set such a slogan for the project, and we wanted to engage with the community and wished to bring more people to the neighborhood increase social mix”. Also, according to the executive director of the Public Art Program Committee (the sponsor of NPAP), “the target is neglected regions, the goal is *neighborhood improvement*, and the instrument is public art *through community engagement* (italics added)”. All these facts show that bolstering tourism

in IMV was not the purpose of NPAP. However, contrary to these goals, NPAP ultimately has led to the transformation of IMV into a tourist destination. For instance, in practice, MCST has listed IMV as an attractive tourist attraction for visiting on their website; SMG and Jongno-gu Office (local government) has created and distributed the mural village map.

Also, contrary to one of the objectives, community participation was neglected during the project implementation process. For example, among the total number of 70 installed public artworks, including murals and sculptures, only 5 of them (7%) have engaged community participation (Jongno-gu District Office, 2016; Korea Arts Management Service, 2007). The project merely served a beautification by installing murals and sculptures instead of addressing residents’ actual and urgent needs, such as improving the degraded infrastructure (Korea Arts Management Service, 2007). The way the project unfolded has raised the residents’ dissatisfaction and resentment due to its rushed implementation nature: neither a clear explanation of the expected outcomes nor enough efforts on effective communication were provided during the process. This can be proved by a quote from the artistic director of the project:

We were only given less than a half year for completing the project, which means we neither had enough time to engage many residents nor had a chance to communicate with residents well. (Interviewee D)

Also, both “colorful” and “cute” murals and artworks made residents feel uncomfortable since it has little to do with the memories, history, and everyday lives full of hardship so common in the village. Such a sentiment is revealed by an excerpt from a 42-year old woman.

To be honest, I have no idea what these artworks mean to us because I don’t think these match our neighborhood...Frankly, what we wanted was substantial aid, like renovation of the old houses and infrastructure. (Interviewee E)

According to her, due to ineffective communication when the project was implemented, many of the residents did not have clear ideas about the impacts of the outcome on their daily lives. As a result, they thought it should be a project that could enhance their quality of life. She revealed that installed murals and artworks are “unnecessary things” that may be attractive to tourists; these do not reflect the reality of IMV and fail to contribute to improving their living conditions.

To sum up, exclusion from the project and the fact that installed murals have less to do with real life in IMV have intensified residents’ estrangement and diluted their committed attachment. Also, given that public art has frequently been used for community building by augmenting local identity and promoting the participation of marginalized groups as a means to encourage their integration (Hall and Robertson, 2001; Hall and Smith, 2005; Sharp et al., 2005), public arts did not achieve such functions in IMV. Instead, NPAP simply served as

neighborhood beautification, which has ultimately turned the neighborhood into a tourist attraction for gaze upon. It shows that when the project does not address real need and not commit to enhancing local identity, it can detach people’s place attachment.

5.2.2. Negative impacts of overtourism and the complexity of the proximity to tourism hotspot

Overtourism is defined as “the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and quality of visitors experiences in a negative way” (World Tourism Organization, 2018, p. 4). IMV is exceptionally vulnerable to overtourism due to its unique topographic conditions and substandard living environment. Also, the fact that most of the houses consist of low-quality materials exacerbates vulnerability. Most of the residents are identified to have been suffering from a series of inconveniences with the growing tourist flows, including congestion, noise, littering, invasion of privacy (Park and Kovacs, 2020). However, as supported by my observation from the fieldwork and interviews, residents who live closer to tourism hotspots are affected more severely by disruptions.

Such negative impacts of tourism and these adverse impacts disrupt residents’ place attachment is not new. It resonates with the tourism literature that the location of an inhabitant’s residence influences their attitude toward tourism; residents who live close to attractions tend to be less tolerant of tourists and more concerned about perceived and actual adverse impacts (Gursoy et al., 2002; Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004). Also, residents who live in tourism hotspots may believe that “they are always about to be gazed upon, even if they are not. They may, therefore, feel ‘under the gaze,’ even if no tourist is actually about to capture them in his or her mind’s eye, let alone in the viewfinder” (Urry, 1992, pp. 177-178).

However, what complicates such understanding in IMV is the proximity to the tourism hotspot. Despite the identified disruptions to place

attachment from the negative impacts of tourism, it also shows how people adapt their attachment differently. For instance, ironically, such disruptions have intensified some residents’ solidarity to protect their rights, exemplified by the mural erasure incident intricately associated with the zoning plan that eventually raises the conflicting interest of “who benefits?”

In IMV, two staircases on which two murals (sunflowers and carps) were installed are among the most favorable tourist sites. Many of the photos posted online via Instagram, blogs, and other social media tools, are the ones that were taken in front of these murals (Oh, 2020; Park and Kovacs, 2020). In April 2016, the two murals installed on the stairways were painted over by several residents. While many media have reported that residents were upset by the inconvenience generated by tourism (e.g., Cho, 2016; Lee, 2016), many of my interviewees thought this is only partially true. More importantly, a research institution’s proposed zoning plan to minimize the negative impacts of tourism for residents who live adjacent to the two stairways has triggered a mural erasure incident and protests (Fig. 4). Park and Kovacs (2020), who have examined IMV and community responses, also have such a finding.

This proposed plan’s main point was to establish two tourist zones: one that allowed commercial use and a residential zone that did not permit commercial use to avoid overtourism disrupting residents’ daily life. This proposal would allow some residential community sections to be engaged in commercial ventures while others were to be excluded. Since IMV has turned into tourist destinations, some residents in these areas have transformed their residential homes for operating the tourism-related business, such as street food shops, souvenir shops, and cafés. Thus, these areas are deemed to have a high possibility to gain profit from tourism and tourists. Most of the residents who attended the protest are from this ‘residential zone,’ a tourism hotspot, who had no hope of gaining any such benefits under the proposed zoning plan. Such perceptions can be exemplified by a 59-year old man who has led several



Fig. 4. Zoning plan and mural erasure incident Note: Above two highlighted lines indicate the most popular routes for tourists. Source: OnGongGan Institute (2016, p. 42); translated into English by author. Pictures with murals are from Google Images.

residents in painting over the murals.

I am wondering whether they [government] regard us as ‘dogs’ and ‘pigs’⁸ because we are not wealthy people!!!

If the government wants to make our neighborhood a tourist attraction, they need to provide us some rewards because we are experiencing a lot of inconvenience from the tourists. If they think our neighborhood should be a residential area, then remove all the murals so that no more tourists will come here. (Interviewee F)

Also, an unofficial document written by this group, which I acquired during fieldwork, criticized how this zoning plan would violate their property rights. They also asked for a plan that would promote the coexistence of both tourists and residents. As this unofficial document’s contents reveal, and also supported by my ethnographic data, residents’ frustration arose from the unequal benefits that this zoning plan generates.

Nonetheless, interviewee F also revealed that while disruptions and perceived unequal benefits have alienated residents’ emotional bonds from IMV, paradoxically, conflicts have strengthened residents’ solidarity to protect their rights and neighborhood.

I am so glad that some of our comrades are on the same page to fight for this conflict. When I organized one-month protests that will hold every Saturday, many of our neighbors have joined, which shows our strong solidarity! (Interviewee F)

In summary, the proximity to the tourism hotspot presents a complex understanding of place attachment as it is intertwined with the “who benefits” issue that residents cannot overlook. This issue could serve as a source to extenuate attachment and intensify solidarity. While living adjacent to the tourism hotspot exposes residents to more direct inconveniences generated by tourism, it simultaneously provides an opportunity to benefit from tourism. Nonetheless, negative impacts have also degraded residents’ “cozy and family-like neighborhood” to a place where they “want to leave if I can afford”. Such complexity shows people’s committed attachment is fluid: it is contingent upon the proximity to tourism hotspots and diverse neighborhood events that affect their daily life and benefits.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study is to bring together geographers’ understanding of place and place attachment in tourism studies to examine how place attachment is not a uniform construct and how it is continuously evolving within the context of tourism-induced neighborhood change. Globalization has, to some degree, accompanied more spatial homogeneity in the contemporary world (Sebastien, 2020). Due to such a phenomenon, some researchers questioned if the notion of place still matters to individuals (Beatley, 2005; Casey, 1997). As this study shows, place has not lost its significance. Instead, it has regained its value, especially at the scale of neighborhoods, which are the site of accumulation of multidimensional lived experiences and memories (Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2013b; Sebastien, 2020; Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2013a). This indicates, amid intensified global and local changes, it becomes more significant to capture how various mobilities (and immobilities) affect and reshape place-based meanings and attachments associated with diverse developments and urban transformation (Di Masso et al., 2019).

While place attachment has been widely approached from the destination management and marketing perspective to manage tourism destinations more effectively, this research demonstrates that place

attachment also serves as an important lens to understand people-place relationships. As revealed by this study, a new urban tourist destination, where is also a site for ordinary lives of local residents, cannot be simply understood as a destination to increase its competitiveness to lure more tourists and intensify loyal consumer behaviors. It also intricates with continuously evolving and shifting place attachment that requires a fluid and relational approach.

This study also offers several insights for scholarship on place attachment and tourism studies in general. It contributes to expanding our understanding of the plurality and fluidity of place attachment with the examination of IMV. More specifically, it shows place attachment is contingent upon the proximity to the tourism hotspot and an array of neighborhood events induced by new urban tourism. Empirically, this research has filled gaps by engaging new urban tourism, a reconfiguration of complex networks and flows of people and objects under the intensified global mobility that reconstruct residents’ daily lives in an ordinary urban neighborhood. Contested consequences of tourism-induced neighborhood change indicate the relevance of revisiting place attachment as the nexus of fixity, plurality, and fluidity.

The findings of this research suggest that urban policymakers need to recognize the significance of the complexity of plural and fluid place attachment in touristifying neighborhoods. Urban policymakers need to be aware of the danger of the ‘fantasy’ of place attachment and assume it as fixed, positive, and only possessed by certain groups of long-established residents. They need to recognize place attachment could be either amplified or attenuated during the trajectory of neighborhood change. The appreciation of plural and fluid place attachment helps land-use planners and policymakers to set a sense of place within a broader socio-political context and minimize potential neighborhood conflicts. By doing so, it can help practitioners elaborate tourism policies at the destination level.

There are inevitable limitations to this study. First, although efforts were made to interview residents with different backgrounds, it was not feasible to interview all stakeholders. Thus, my interviews reflect fragments from various stakeholder perceptions and cannot be generalized to the IMV’s entire population. Nonetheless, considering interviewees’ familiarity and knowledge about the neighborhood, their insights provide valuable information to capture the dynamic and subtle people-place relationships. Second, this study was examined within a certain period; therefore, if a diachronic approach is adopted for future studies to understand how perceptions are changing over time, it will elucidate the evolutionary process of residents’ perceptions of neighborhood dynamics.

Third, if future research can feature collaborations with or a dialogue between scholars in other disciplines, such as environmental psychologists who conduct volumes of place attachment research, but whose approaches do not yet account for the myriad ways in which place matters, could help a deeper understanding of why people have perceived and responded in a certain way. Finally, I call for more qualitative research in other disadvantaged neighborhoods undergo tourism-induced neighborhood change to investigate additional perceptions to enrich the understanding of plurality and fluid place attachment in different contexts.

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⁸ “Dogs and pigs (a direct translation from Korean)” is a commonly used phrase to refer to someone treating another in a condescending attitude. This inflammable tone demonstrates his mixed feelings of anger and frustration.

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