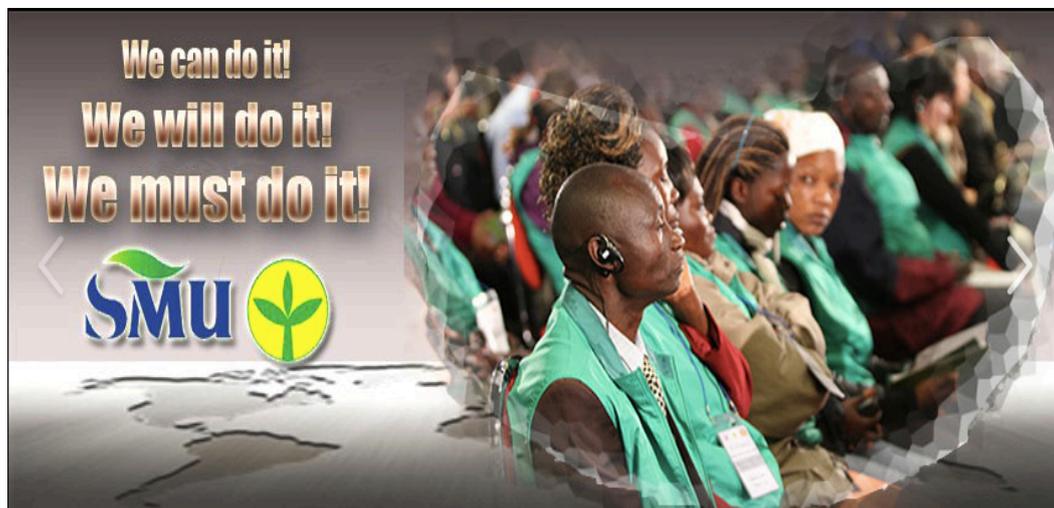


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# **THE GLOBAL SAEMAUL UNDONG PROJECT - A WOLF IN A SHEEP'S CLOTHING**



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## Abstract

This thesis presents a critical view on the global Saemaul Undong (SMU) project which has been exported by the Korean government and supported by UNDP. South Korea achieved rapid economic development in a short period of time and the SMU is an emblematic rural development model of Korea which was carried out in 1970s by a former dictator Park Chung-hee. As the SMU was implemented under an authoritarian regime, it is still a contentious history, yet, most literature about the SMU project focus on better branding or strategy of expanding rather than fundamental questioning for propriety. Despite of several decades of development aids and projects, the lives of the poor in the world have not changed that much and recently UNDP started supporting the global SMU projects, advertising that it is experience from the ‘South’ as if it can be a new solution for international development. The global SMU project sounds like it has elements to be an ‘alternative development’ with the words ‘inclusiveness’, ‘sustainability’ and ‘empowerment’. To examine why the Korean government has been exporting and why UNDP has been supporting this particular project in spite of its contentious history, I use two cases of Rwanda and Myanmar with various development discourses. What happened in reality both in Rwanda and Myanmar was ‘exclusion’ of the poorest people and unilateral approach and thus all the warm sounding words from the general planning from Korean government and UNDP’s ISNC model degenerate into ‘buzzwords’. So why was the SMU exported and supported so heavily? I argue that for the Korean former president Park Geun-hye and her confidant Choi Soon-sil it was a matter of private economic gains. For UNDP, it was to make a ‘plausible’ solution for development before they lose their credibility and legitimacy, which refers to ‘institutional corruption’. The name of ‘development’ has been manipulated by wealthy donor countries and huge multilateral institutions like UN. It has been a tool for them to address their contemporary agenda rather than development of developing countries. Since the ‘Western modernization’ has been contested sorely, using the face of the ‘South’ is an easier and safer way to pass down the ‘Northern’ agenda. I argue that that this is why UNDP calls the global SMU project a ‘South-South’ cooperation, although, Korea hardly belongs to the ‘Global South’ anymore. Therefore, through this thesis I show how this ‘mainstream development’ has adroitly hid itself behind the mask of ‘alternative development’ to achieve their own national, institutional interests while the human condition has been stagnating.

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# Tables, Boxes and Figures

## Tables

1 Total SMU ODA budget from government and Gyeongsangbuk-do province

## Abbreviations

CIDC	Committee for International Development Cooperation
CIDE	Center for International Development Evaluation
CPS	Country Partnership Strategy
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EDCF	Economic Development Cooperation Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ISNC	Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities
KDI	Korea Development Institute
KNU-iiRD	Kangwon National University Institute of International Rural Development
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
KOPIA	Korea Program on International Agriculture
KOTRA	Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency
KRCC	Korea Rural Community Corporation
KSP	Korea Knowledge Sharing Program
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MAFRA	Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Rural Affairs
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOSF	Ministry of Strategy and Finance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PIDA	People's Initiative for Development Alternatives
PMNR	People's Movement for National Reconstruction
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGF	Saemaul Globalization Foundation
SLT	Saemaul Leaders Training

SMU	Saemaul Undong
SSC	South-South Cooperation
TrC	Triangular Cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

# 1. Introduction

*“... now, the Republic of Korea wants to give back to the international community even more than what it has ever received. The Republic of Korea stands ready to extend a helping hand to those who are in need, providing them with appropriate support and care.”*

- Korean former president Lee Myung-bak (Roehrig, 2013 from Belfer Center)

*“During the difficult times, it was ‘can-do’ spirit of Saemaul Undong which rebuilt our nation again. (...) The global Saemaul Undong has made many successful cases in a short period of time. We will reinforce consultation for bespoke project plan to implement global Saemaul Undong which is suitable to each country's context (어려웠던 시절, 한국을 다시 일으켜 세운 것은 새마을 운동의 ‘할 수 있다’ 정신이었습니다...(새마을 운동은) 짧은 기간에 많은 성공 사례를 만들고 있습니다. 각국의 상황에 맞는 새마을운동이 추진될 수 있도록 맞춤형 컨설팅 기능을 강화할 것입니다)”*

- Korean former president Park Geun-hye (Jo, 2016 from MBC News)

South Korea<sup>1</sup>'s rapid economic development often been referred to as ‘the miracle on the Han river’. In less than half a century, Korea accomplished extraordinary economic growth, leaving its title of ‘developing country’ behind for a new position in the global arena as the 12th largest economy in the world (IMF, 2017). Already in 1996, Korea was accepted into the OECD and by the year of 2010, it joined the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (Roehrig, 2013). As a result of thirty-five years of Japanese occupation and three years of civil war (Korean war from 1950-53), Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world when it began its economic transformation (H. Kim, 2004; H. Lee, Lee, & Park, 2014). The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of Korea in the beginning of 1960s (\$91 in 1961) was in fact lower than many other countries which are still suffering from extreme poverty, including Cote d’Ivoire, Cambodia and Sudan (World Bank, 2017). Many people believe that the rural development project, the so called, Saemaul Undong<sup>2</sup> (SMU) (which means ‘new village movement’ in English) was a

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter ‘Korea’

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter ‘SMU’

cornerstone of Korean unprecedented growth. The SMU was a government-led Korean rural development model which was conceived and carried out in the 1970s by Park Chung-Hee, former dictator of Korea for eighteen years (1961 - 1979) to improve rural living condition and the overall economic situation (H. Kim, 2004). The model is well known for its bottom-up participatory approach, competition between villages by incentive and - worth noticing - the spirit and attitude behind the movement; diligence, hardworking and self-help. SMU is, however, still a widely contentious part of Korean history and the fact that it was carried out under highly authoritarian circumstances should perhaps set just a few alarm bells ringing. Nonetheless, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is officially supporting this rural development model, emphasizing its legitimacy as a project from the 'South' as well as its bottom-up process and 'can-do' spirit (UNDP, 2015). For this reason, they set up the so called "SMU Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities (ISNC)" model in 2015, introducing the Korean SMU project like this: "it significantly reduced rural poverty by increasing household incomes, improving basic infrastructure and services, revitalizing local communities and empowering women (*ibid*, p.9)". To give just one obvious reason why we should remain critical of this presentation of the SMU is the fact that in spite of this "empowering of women", Korea still ranked 111th out of 136 countries in 2013 in terms of gender equality (J. Kim, Lee, & Shin, 2016, p.2). Nevertheless, UNDP endorses the global SMU based on the arguments that it "embeds a series of lessons that are relevant to challenges that numerous communities across countries and regions experience as the new development agenda begins in 2016 (UNDP, 2015, p.9)".

Therefore, many developing countries are eager to learn about SMU and since 2011, the Korean government has been exporting this rural development model as their main Official Development Assistance (ODA) project to developing countries as a 'one-size-fits-all' solution for development. As SMU has already built up a global reputation as a mainstay of rapid development and now even receives support from the biggest multilateral organization in the world - UNDP - the global SMU project has spread to more than 70 countries including Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka and Nepal (UNDP, 2015).

Recent research conducted on the exporting of SMU from Korea is predominantly focusing on how to spread it more widely and how to enhance the international branding of the project. It therefore seems as if a couple of important questions related to the SMU have been neglected and kept unanswered - what was the real nature of the original SMU project in Korea during

the 1970s, why is the UNDP so keen to promote it, and is it even applicable in a contemporary context?

Therefore, this thesis provides a critical assessment of the global SMU project supported by the Korean government and UNDP. By doing so, it aims at discussing how this project has been carried out in reality and whether it has rudiments as a new solution for international development as it is insisted by the Korean government and UNDP.

International development and migration are the issues which are heavily interrelated. Furthermore, refugee issues and humanitarian crisis are also closely associated with development since the abuse on human dignity and human rights are also a matter of development. Therefore, when talking about refugee issues, it is impossible not to mention international development. Thus, as a master student at global refugee studies, I strongly argue that it has a meaning to discuss about international development in dealing with refugee studies.

## 1.1 Research Question

In this thesis, I find it relevant to scrutinize the global SMU project which is implemented by the Korean government and supported by UNDP with the apprehension in mind mentioned above. I therefore pose the following research question:

### **Can global SMU project be a new solution for international development?**

In order to answer the research question, I set up three working questions as following:

1. What was the main goal of SMU project in 1970s in Korea and how were the people from rural area involved in the procedure of SMU?
2. What is the purpose and aim of the global SMU project according to official documents from the Korean government and UNDP?
3. How 'South-South' cooperation of the global SMU project between Korea and Rwanda and Myanmar has been carried out in practice in relation to the official documents from the Korean government and UNDP?

## 2. Structure of the thesis

In this section, the structure of the thesis is briefly explained. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the thesis. A case study is applied in order to answer the research question and the chapter describes the cases used in this thesis and which and how data was collected. In addition, validity and the limitation of the thesis is explained in this chapter.

In chapter 4, the theoretical framework for the thesis is presented. The development discourses - alternative development and anti-development - and corruption in relation to development is delineated. In the beginning of this chapter, I explain why I chose development and corruption as the main concepts of the thesis.

In chapter 5, I analyze the original Korean SMU project from the 1970s. Following, the initial purpose and aim of the global SMU project are examined through two documents from the Korean government and UNDP. Lastly, the real cases of the global SMU project in Rwanda and Myanmar are examined.

Finally, I wrap up my findings and present a conclusion in Chapter 6, where the research question is answered based on the analysis.

## 3. Methodology

The section below explains what a case study is and why I chose it as methodology in order to answer my research question. In addition, there is a brief explanation about the two cases - Rwanda and Myanmar - for this thesis as well as clarification on data collection for the cases. Afterwards, the validity and limitation of the thesis is presented. Lastly, I introduce the main secondary empirical data used in this thesis.

### 3.1 The Case

According to Yin (2003, p.1), the case study method can be applied when the focal point of the research is a “contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” and thus, the purpose of this method is to examine the “real-life events” (*ibid*, p.2). For a case study, the particular ‘sites’ or ‘individuals’ should be precisely marked (*ibid*, p.77).

The Korean government has been insisting that SMU is a rural development model which can be applied and bring development in other developing countries and UNDP has been endorsing this scheme by emphasizing that it has a unique value because it is the South-South cooperation.

The Korean government has been exporting global SMU projects to more than 70 countries in the world. Since they are upholding SMU as a ‘one-size-fits-all’ or universalistic model, I choose countries with different ethnic, historical, economic and cultural background to discuss whether this perception seems reasonable or not. Among those 70 countries, the selected cases of this thesis are found in the countries of Rwanda and Myanmar.

The Korean government launched the global SMU initiative in May 2011 and they selected two pilot countries, one in Asia and one in Africa - Cambodia and Rwanda - for the project. In these two countries we therefore find the longest running projects so far, which should give the best possibilities of finding relevant data for the analysis.

The Korean government selected seven countries in Africa for Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) and Rwanda was one of those (PIDA, 2016). Moreover, the budget for grant-aid to Rwanda is the second biggest among those seven countries (*ibid*). The global SMU has been carried out in Rwanda since 2011 as a pilot project. Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda, has had great interest in the SMU project as well, and thus, the global SMU project has been implemented very actively in Rwanda so far (*ibid*). It has a meaning as a case since it was one of the first pilot nation model and the very first country in Africa where the global SMU was implemented. Furthermore, both Rwanda and Myanmar are two of six countries - Bolivia, Lao PDR, Uganda and Vietnam - where UNDP has been implementing its ISNC model. Moreover, they are also selected as countries where UNDP implements Type B which “provides policy advice and contribute to knowledge gathering and South-South exchanges (UNDP, 2015, p.40)”.

According to a report from the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), Myanmar is the second biggest Korean ODA recipient country ((Kotra Yangon Korea business Center, 2016, p.35). SMU project in Myanmar started in 2013 by Korean Rural Community Cooperation and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) started implementing the global SMU project in Myanmar in the late 2014 (UNDP, 2015). It was recently revealed that it was Choi Soon-sil, an influential confidant of the Korean former president Park Geun-hye,

who made the final decision for nomination of the ambassador of Korean Embassy in Myanmar and also the chairman for KOICA (K. Lee, 2017). This happened despite her lack of holding public office. For Choi, Myanmar was a main target to facilitate her private benefit (*ibid*). To shed light on the Myanmar case can thus explain how development initiatives can be controlled and driven by both public and private stakeholders and institutional interests.

## 3.2 Data Collection

Yin (2003, p.8) argues in the case study a different variety of data can be used and it is a unique strength of the case study. Yin (2003, p.85) brings up six types of sources of information that can be used for a case study method - “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artifacts”. In this thesis, various type of data is used. The main data used comes from documents, archival records, and interview and observations from a documentary. As a native Korean speaker, I have the advantage of including data written in both English and Korean in my thesis. This gives me a more comprehensive understanding of the topic, as a lot of relevant material is not available in English.

In the very beginning of the data collection I have searched data from many different countries, especially in Asia and Africa, for example, Rwanda, Cambodia, Uganda, Nepal, Laos, Senegal and Myanmar. As Yin (2003) demonstrates, qualified cases should be selected through screening data process among the originally collected cases. In a case study, it is critical to find the right cases for the theoretical perspective I use for the analysis. Thus, the criteria for screening procedure was decided with profound consideration of the theoretical framework of this thesis and through this process, Rwanda and Myanmar were singled-out among the original candidates.

What Yin (2003) emphasizes is that *while* the data is collected it is essential for investigators to grasp numerous data without bias. Therefore, during data collection the biased words which can affect the reliability of the data was not used for searching. The keywords used for searching for documentation were mainly ‘Saemaul ODA project’, ‘SMU initiative’ and ‘exporting SMU’. After having more data and more concrete theoretical framework has been built, I could access to official documents from Korean government - initial planning for the

project and evaluation - and also documentation and articles from UNDP which support exportation of Korean SMU project.

### 3.3 Reliability and Validity

As already mentioned above, the strength of the case study is that many different sources of data can be used (Yin, 2003). Using multiple sources of information can enhance the reliability and validity of the case study since the case is seen from different angles (*ibid*). Therefore, the findings and conclusion of the case study with multiple sources of information are more persuasive and precise than the one with just a single source of information (Yin, 2014, p.120). To increase the data dependability, the data which is utilized in this thesis comes from different sources such as governmental bodies, UN, civic organizations, documentaries, academic writings and newspaper articles which contains both qualitative and quantitative research. When I collect data originating from especially governmental bodies and the UNDP, I am fully aware that the data might reflect specific interest and agendas. This however, should be said about the treatment of data from other sources as well. Moreover, as the aim of reliability is “to minimize biases in a study (*ibid*, p.49)”, as mentioned previously in data collection, the biased words which can back up my pre-understanding were not used during data collecting.

As explained previously, I used documents and articles written in Korean and I translate the contents from the data written in Korean to English. Thus, there might be some words or specific meanings lost in translation. To minimize the risk of this and to make the thesis as transparent as possible, I include the original Korean text in brackets when I use exact quotations translated into English from Korean. Furthermore, I put forth a strategy in which I attempt to carry out the translations as precise and objective as possible by excluding my own preconceptions of the topic.

### 3.4 Limitations

Yin (2003) argues that interviews and direct/participant observations are some of the most important sources for case study data. All the analysis of this thesis is based on secondary empirical data which has been collected by other actors such as government officials, scholars, NGO workers and journalists. It means that I was not in the real context of the observation and interviews used in analysis which can be considered as limitation of this thesis. Therefore, even

though I was very careful when I choose secondary empirical data, I do not know how the respondents were selected, what questions were asked nor in what condition the interview, filming or observation was conducted. However, in order to ameliorate some of this limitation, the secondary empirical data applied in this thesis is explained in the next section.

### 3.5 Secondary empirical data

I have not done any actual fieldwork myself, therefore, secondary empirical data is applied for the thesis. The following is a concise introduction of the secondary empirical data applied.

In order to inquire the initial aim and purpose of global SMU project I include two documents. The first one is an official document from the Korean government called ‘Saemaul movement ODA general planning’, published by the Prime Minister’s Office in May 2011. This official document provides a comprehensive understanding about the Korean government’s general planning for global ODA project including the aim and purpose. The other one is a guidance from UNDP named ‘Saemaul Initiative towards inclusive and sustainable new communities: implementation guidance’ which was published in September 2015. This document, as indicated in the title, gives us a better idea of how UNDP want to add the value of ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘sustainability’ to the global SMU project. It also states UNDP’s understanding of the Korean SMU project back in 1970s which reveals the reason why UNDP supports this project.

In order to examine how the initial purpose and aim of the global SMU project from the Korean government and UNDP are implementing in reality I applied a case of Rwanda from a NGO, People’s Initiative for Development Alternatives (PIDA, former ‘ODA Watch’) and a case of Myanmar from documentary made by current affairs TV program called ‘Tracking 60 minutes’ of KBS.

PIDA is a participatory civil society organization where international development experts (steering committee), field workers, researchers and young people with interests in the field collaborate together to realize political, economical, social and cultural development by pursuing justice and equality (PIDA, 2016). PIDA organized a team to investigate the global SMU ODA project in Rwanda in the beginning of 2016 consisting of seven people - a director of credit union, a highschool teacher, two graduate students, a NGO activist and two activists from PIDA - to monitor whether the Korean ODA project which is carried out by taxpayers’

money spawns any improvement of developing countries, in this case of Rwanda (PIDA, 2016). The TV program called ‘Tracking 60 minutes’ is a current affairs program which conducts investigative reporting about current issues. KBS, the broadcasting company of the program, is a Korean public broadcaster. The episode from the documentary applied in the thesis is about the reality of ODA projects in Myanmar with corruption scandal of Korean former president Park Geun-hye and her confidant Choi Soon-sil.

Moreover, several newspaper articles were used to explore this corruption scandal in relation to global SMU ODA project in Myanmar. Most of the sources of the articles are from well-known media houses with reputation for trustworthiness including JTBC, Kyunghyang newspaper and Hankyoreh.

## 4. Theoretical framework

The concepts of alternative development, anti-development and corruption forms the basis for the theoretical framework of this thesis. I have chosen alternative development to analyze the cases on account of UNDP’s description on the global SMU project. UNDP keeps emphasizing that the origin of the project (“East” or “South”) to argue that it is a new solution of development, opposing the normative western modernization project of development. However, when knowing about the exact experience of the Korean SMU, it seems rather peculiar that UNDP would go as far to classify and identify SMU as something new - an alternative to the traditional paradigm of development. As a researcher from Korea and based on my prior understanding of the Korean SMU project, I assert that we need to be more skeptical about how the Korean government and UNDP frames and articulates the global SMU projects. Korea, a country which achieved rapid economic growth and went from being a ODA recipient to ODA donor itself in less than half a century, is from a Western perspective often regarded as the perfect development example. The larger model of Korea’s national development has previously been heavily imitated by other countries in Asia such as Malaysia and Indonesia with very mixed results. Both in the case of the global SMU projects and prior cases of imitating Korea’s development strategies, it has been and is still simulated as ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions. Nevertheless, the main assumption of this thesis is that one particular development experience cannot be universally applicable. Based on these observations, I therefore intend to elucidate whether the global SMU projects have been carried out as the Korean government and UNDP frame it through alternative development theories.

Corruption is an important concept when talking about development since its impact on development is considerable. Most economists argue that corruption is a main impediment of development and a cause of poverty traps. Moreover, it also has an inimical influence to sustainable development (Ackerman, 2014; Aidt, 2009). There are strong suggestions pointing to the fact that countries with a large degree of corruption have lower grades of human development. This is mainly because countries with high levels of corruption invest less in human development areas such as education and environment and more in public infrastructure than countries showing signs of low levels of corruption (Ackerman, 2014). Aidt (2009) argues that even though corruption brings little impact on the growth of GDP per capita, it cannot bring sustainability on development in the long run.

#### 4.1 Mainstream and Alternative development - moving from the 20th to the 21st century

The theoretical conceptualization of development emerged during the 1940s and has been evolving ever since (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004). From the 1940s to the 1960s, the idea of development was intrinsically connected to the quest of industrialization and the focus was mainly on economic growth (*ibid*). In this period, it is generally accepted that economic growth and equality are incompatible (Berry, 2014). The additional major point in this period is the active role of state in development and thus, the majority of development projects were carried out with top-down procedure by and for nation-states (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004). Besides from economic development, in this period development was also associated with ‘post-Second World War reconstruction’ and the ‘application of historical-development experiences’ of wealthy countries was the main aim of development (Potter, 2014, p.50). Accordingly, during this period, Western modernity should be followed by developing countries because the ‘Global North’ - North America and Europe - is considered ‘developed’ and Global South - is seen ‘underdeveloped’ (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004; Ziai, 2013). However, a counterview to this dominating paradigm started insisting that developing countries should not be confined as homogeneous units since ‘development’ represents different meanings to each country. Therefore, contesting theories opposing the mainstream development paradigm slowly began to emerge in the 1960s. One of the first alternative development theories is the dependency theory which was brought along by scholars from developing countries as a criticism of

modernization theory (Harriss, 2014). Their argument was that developing countries should navigate the way to stand on their own feet and stop being relying on developed countries, since the idea of development is postcolonial and Eurocentric (Hettne, 2009).

During the 1970s, more new approaches against mainstream development appeared as an alternative manner. According to the scholars who asserted the limitations of orthodoxy of 1950s' and 1960s' development - "successful economic growth had done very little to reduce poverty (Harriss, 2014, p.41)". The main interest of the alternative approach was therefore to enhance the 'the voices of excluded', so to speak, based on the premises that "development would only address the problems of the poor when it involved the poor themselves, particularly local community organizations" (Hettne, 2009, p.83; Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004, p.44).

In the same vein, the age of post-development began in 1980s claims 'inclusiveness' and 'sustainability'. In this era, it is argued that "economic growth does not contribute to development if it does not translate to the social change and increased capability to function of the poor (Höckert, 2011, p.10)". Moreover, happiness studies found out that a simple economic growth does not guarantee human satisfaction and happiness. In China, for example, during the period of enormous economic growth, the economic inequality within the nation increased and became one of the biggest social challenges (Berry, 2014). Therefore, sustainable development is not only about economic yardsticks like the GDP or GNP; sustainable betterment in human welfare should be a main essential feature of development (Aidt, 2009).

Another noticeable characteristic of this period is that while alternative development thinking ran into a so-called 'impasse' or deadlock over the realization that problems with exclusion, poverty and Western hegemony still remained, mainstream development took a new turn in the 1980s with the emerging paradigm of globalism. The communist system came down, 'interventionism' had failed horribly except for in a few places in East Asia, and Francis Fukuyama famously declared the 'end of history' based on the triumph of Western liberalism (Hettne, 2009). Driving this new global development paradigm - globalization - was the rise of neoliberalism and the Washington Consensus which was pushing ahead the agenda of market liberalization, structural adjustment programmes and conditional aid (*ibid*). Whereas mainstream development in the first decades after the Second World War, in the 'golden age', had put the nation-state as the main unit of development, globalization is reducing the focus

and power of the nation, simply making it into a medium “for signals from the world market: structural adaptation and cutbacks on welfare (*ibid*, p.88)”. Beck (2016) sees this epochal shift as the transition to a ‘second modernity’, where new ‘world risks’ such a financial crisis, inequality and climate change are shared across borders and regions. This ‘collapse of world order’ or move into ‘global chaos’ has created the notion of ‘failed states’ where internal, ethnic and regional conflicts are escalating over claims of territory, resources and political power (Beck, 2016, p.258; Hettne, 2009). In this context, the role of development has changed drastically, as it no longer concerns itself with national development or securitization, but rather human development and security based on a strong notion of transnational responsibility for human welfare (Hettne 2009, p.99). Hettne (2009) further argues that in this new era, international institutions such as UN has lost credibility and legitimacy. In this ‘post-westphalian’ era, alternative development of “failed states” and other developing countries must therefore be seen a ‘global development’ project, radically different from development during the Cold War era.

*“Post-conflict reconstruction is a new development experience of massive social engineering, completely different from the physical rebuilding of war-torn societies in which the inner societal coherence is still intact (ibid, p.101)”.*

In this new global era, from the 1990s and onward, postmodernism has come out as an alternative to mainstream development, criticizing the grand narratives embedded in modernisation theories and strategies (Potter, 2014). As mentioned, the concept of ‘human development’ appeared as one of the strongest criticism of ‘economic growth’, offering a new understanding of international development as the “creation of conditions that make it possible for people to realize their potential as human beings, or to live full human lives that they value” (Harriss, 2014, p.36). It does not mean that development can totally be separated from economic growth, but for any reason person’s freedom or chance to develop themselves in accordance with their own capacity should not be diminished (*ibid*, 2014).

Accordingly, alternative development started focusing on solutions which are “more equitable, participatory and sustainable, more human in scale and form, and socially inclusive (Parpart & Veltmeyer 2004, p.48)”. Therefore, top-down and directive procedures of development were sublated. Hence, ‘participation’ of the poor, marginalized ones appeared as one of the most

compelling concepts of development. The supporters of this approach argue that the poor should vigorously participate in decision-making and they also should take vital role in the process of development since it would bring changes in their lives (*ibid*). In the same vein, Höckert claims that “People should be actively involved and given the opportunity to shape their own destiny, instead of simply having the role of passive recipients of the fruits of development programs (Höckert, 2011, p.12).”

‘Psychological inclusion’ means “the state of feeling part of a social group in ways that are conducive to personal well-being” and ‘Psychological exclusion’ means suffering from “aggressive exclusion or simply the absence of active inclusion (Berry, 2014, p.174)”. ‘Inclusion’ not only contributes to psychological satisfaction but also creates benefits for ‘social capital’, such as improvement of group productivity (*ibid*, p.175).

However, ‘inclusion’ or ‘participation’ does not always guarantee satisfaction and feeling of inclusiveness since there are different level of ‘participation’ in the procedure of development projects. According to Mikkelsen (2005), there are three different level of participation: cosmetic label, co-opting practice and empowering process. Cosmetic label of participation is used to make project look plausible but in real it is classical top-down approach. In co-opting practice, local people participate in development projects but the projects are regarded as ‘ours’ and ‘they’ participate to make the procedure easier (Mikkelsen, 2005). Empowering process is a true sense of participation since it considers empowering marginalized ones and also contemplate of women participation. In this approach of participation, the development projects are ‘theirs’ not ‘ours’ (*ibid*).

## 4.2 Anti-development

*“Any money remaining after project costs had been repaid went to the BNP<sup>3</sup>’s Village Development Committees - leading one villager to note caustically, “It seems that politics is nowadays nicknamed ‘development’” (Ferguson & Lohmann, 1994, p.178)”*

Pieterse (2010, p.84-90) sees a development in alternative development-thinking itself, moving away from offering alternative strategies to achieve economic growth to now questioning the

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<sup>3</sup> Basotho National Party is a political party in Lesotho

whole notion of economic growth as the main goal. Alternative development theory has therefore evolved simultaneously with mainstream development (*ibid*, p.84). It has moved from a structuralist to a normative focal point - from dependency theory and focus on the nation state to transnational human development. Moreover, today's alternative development thinking is founded on the observation that first did nation-driven development seem to fail, and now has market-driven development also proven utterly insufficient, calling for a third development system based on civil societies, emerging from bottom-up and community-based (*ibid*, p.85). The biggest problem with alternative development in this new global era is, as Pieterse (2010) identifies, the impression that alternative development has succeeded. Therefore, "the problem is that there is no clear line of demarcation between mainstream and alternative: alternatives are co-opted and yesterday's alternatives are today's institutions (*ibid*, p.89)". The alternative ideas have simply been absorbed by mainstream theory nowadays.

Ferguson and Lohmann (1994, p.176) presents an 'anti-development' perspective with the example of Lesotho, describing it as one of "almost unremitting failure to achieve their objectives". The World Bank issued a report about Lesotho as a country in need of certain type of 'development' which was far from the reality, just to make it suit to development agencies' 'standardized development package' (*ibid*, p.176).

*"The World Bank mission to Lesotho is in no position to formulate programmes for changing or controlling the South African mining industry, and it has no disposition to involve itself in political challenges to the South African system of labour control. It was an excellent position, however, to devise agricultural improvement projects, extension, credit and technical inputs, for the agriculture of Lesotho lies neatly within its jurisdiction, waiting to be "developed". For this reason, agricultural concerns tend to move centre stage and Lesotho is portrayed as a nation of "farmers", not wage labourers. At the same time, issues such as structural unemployment, influx control, low wages, political subjugation by South Africa, parasitic bureaucratic elites, and so on, simply disappear. (Ferguson & Lohmann, p.177)"*

As it is well described in the quote above, the World Bank and 'development' agencies neglected Lesotho's economic and political structures and labor drain to South Africa in the attempt to create an advantageous situation which would justify their intervention. Thus, it was

not a big surprise that the ‘development’ projects in Lesotho failed horribly. In Lesotho’s example, ‘development’ apparatus is a “machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which incidentally takes “poverty” as its point of entry and justification (Ferguson & Lohmann, 1994, p.180)” rather than for poverty eradication. What Ferguson and Lohmann (1994, p.181) argue is that the most substantial thing ‘Westerners’ can do is not ‘development’ but ‘political participation’ in their own society to withstand policies which is not appropriate to any citizens.

In the similar vein, Cornwall and Brock (2005) criticize the concept of ‘participation’ as well as ‘poverty-reduction’ and ‘empowerment’ for being nothing but hot air and buzzwords used in today’s development discourse. They argued that the biggest change we have seen in development is found in the language - actual strategies and tactics are not that different from what we have seen previously. The word ‘participation’ for example, is described in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the process of global partnership for sustainable development based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity to strive insuperable issues such as poverty reduction with the participation of all countries and also participation of the poor (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). However, ‘participation’ has been used in development policies “to enable ordinary people to gain political agency and as a means of maintaining relations or rule, for neutralizing political opposition (*ibid*, p.1046)”.

The language applied on development policies is clouded in vague ‘warm sounding buzzwords’ which is difficult to find grievance with, but in reality, these words often have complex meanings where the balance of power and relationships between the actors is hidden from the view (*ibid*).

Besides criticism of the buzzwords in development, Ziai (2013) even argues that the concept of ‘development’ should be abandoned since it is too Eurocentric and it makes social problems into development problem and further, several decades have passed under the name of development but human condition has not improved. The mainstream concept of development regards Europe and North America as ‘developed’, therefore, developing countries are expected to follow them as ideal models, neglecting both history and context of developing countries (*ibid*). Shortly, since ‘we (global north)’ are developed, technologies, experts and finance from ‘us’ can improve the lives of ‘them (global south)’. Cornwall and Brock (2005) back up Ziai’s argument up by criticizing the idea that ‘aid givers’ are the ones with the correct

knowledge and way of doing things while the receivers are ill-equipped to handle the responsibilities. This de-politicized and a-historicized process does not consider how and why these countries require aid in the first place (*ibid*). Words like ‘participation’ and ‘sustainability’ have been introduced in ‘mainstream development’ for a long time now, yet it seems like the proper notions behind have not been adopted in reality (Pieterse, 2010, p.89). Therefore, Pieterse (2010, p.89) argues that “‘alternative’ has no more meaning than ‘new’ in advertising”.

Based on the discussion above, to bring positive changes in the lives of people from developing countries, development projects should aim to improve their lives in long-term by inclusion of the poorest, marginalized ones. Development need to focus on human satisfaction than simple economic growth and this can be achieved by encouraging human development - self-esteem, social justice and freedom of choice - through development projects (Höckert, 2011). Development projects are required to be planned with a thorough consideration of historical, cultural background and context of the society, not just following the standard of so-called Global North where widely considered as developed societies.

### 4.3 Corruption and development

If alternative development - in this case, ‘human development’ - has really become a part of mainstream development, then why have the lives of the poor and the conditions of developing countries not improved from the numerous development projects and enormous amount of foreign aid? (Ziai, 2013). When we think about the result of all the aid programmes and projects under the name of development, ‘development’ appears to be nothing but a rhetorical tool in a geopolitical agenda. Yet, some still argue that a main reason why all the ‘development’ projects have not worked is because of the corruption in developing countries which reduces the efficiency of foreign aid (Schudel, 2008). However, among these corruption-focused arguments, most of them fail to take the corruption of donor countries into consideration (*ibid*).

Smillie (2017) argues that foreign aid has not only been given for the sake of poverty eradication itself, on the contrary, it has been driven by donor countries’ own interests, which is referred to as a sign of ‘institutional corruption’. It is not about “criminals and illicit transactions” but it is related to “practices and influences that distort the purpose and mission of an institution (*ibid*, p.47)”. Foreign aid has thus been used as a tool for realizing the

contemporary interests of donor states rather than achieving genuine development of the recipient countries. Or put differently, ‘development’ is equal to what the donor countries find suitable for the time being, not what the recipient countries themselves perhaps regards as necessary.

*“For decades during the Cold War, aid was a blunt instrument in the fight against communism. Donor governments turned a blind eye to corruption, electoral malfeasance, bad government and human rights abuse in the effort to win and sustain strategic friendships. Aid money used this way may have been wasted, but it was wasted by donors long before anyone else got their hands on it (ibid, p.52)”*

Smillie (2017, p.52) claims that commercial and strategic interest were and still are manipulating foreign aid massively and that the aid has been dissipated even before it reached anyone. The international organizations are not the exceptions. They are also part of this ‘fig leaf’, conducting various works and campaigning in accordance with MDGs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), “but getting into the habit of mistaking the nobility of their intentions for the feasibility of their goals (*ibid*, p.52)”.

There have been some changes in definition of corruption. The definitions of corruption earlier were limited to ‘public sector corruption’, however, corruption is not only found in public sectors anymore and it can also happen between privates and public (Labelle, 2014, p.240). The notion of ‘grand corruption’ which means communal crime between private sector (business) and public sector (government) has appeared (*ibid*, p.240). The globalist paradigm has also brought along changes of stakeholders in development. A lot of new actors have entered the development arena such as businesses, celebrities and philanthropic organizations, and some of their roles in development exceed traditional development actors - government, international organizations and NGOs (Richey & Ponte, 2014). It also means that corruption can happen in many different ways and scales between diverse stakeholders in development projects.

It is demonstrated through a number of researches that corruption is one of the biggest barriers for development because “corruption weakens institutions and reduces the capacity of all governments and international organizations to tackle challenges like poverty, conflict,

economic crisis, and climate change (Labelle, 2014, p.239)”. Corruption is found everywhere in the world regardless of the scale and economical level of the country. However, there is a tendency that corruption is more rampant in developing countries than in developed ones and the influence of corruption is way more pernicious in developing countries (*ibid*). The poor in developing countries are the worst victims of corruption since they are at the very end of the corruption chain. It can menace even lives of people in severe case, for example, if officials ask for money in return for something which was supposed to be provided by law originally, such as basic infrastructure, food or medication, the lives of the poor would be severely at risk (*ibid*, p.241).

But is corruption within developing countries the only cause of the stagnation in development processes? Some argue that the reason “why decades of development efforts are not working for many of the world’s most poor and vulnerable people” is because most of foreign aid falls into the hands of corrupt leaders and participants (*ibid*, p.246). However, as mentioned earlier, this may be due to the fact that donor countries’ main interest is not equivalent to genuine development in the first place (Smillie, 2017). Schudel (2008) argues that this phenomenon is more prevalent in donor countries with high level of corruption. Schudel (2008) claims that the level of corruption in donor countries have influence on the allotment of the aid to developing countries. The donor countries with low level of corruption have tendency to give more aid to recipient countries with less corruption, whereas, the donor countries with high level of corruption do not make those separations between recipient countries (*ibid*, 2008). The reason why highly corrupted donor countries do not distinguish recipient countries as less corrupted or more corrupted is because their interests in rent-seeking is stronger than their interest in development of recipient countries (*ibid*, 2008). Schudel (2008, p.510) analyzes ‘the effects of corruption on aid’ with four probable conditions. The first condition is when both donor and the recipient nation’s corruption is low which makes efficient use of aid possible and thus recipient can get more interests from donor population/countries. In the second condition, the donor country has a low level of corruption but recipient nation is highly corrupted. This causes less aid distribution from the donor country since its electorate are less interested in aiding recipient with high corruption. The third condition is when the donor nation is relatively corrupted but not the recipient. In this case, even though the recipient government has capability to facilitate aid efficiently, the donor is not interested in development of recipient nation. In the last condition, both donor nation and recipient are relatively corrupted. Here, the

donor nation's interest is not disturbed by the corruption level of recipient country since donor nation's interest is more in private gain than development (*ibid*, p.511).

Accordingly, it can be understood that 'institutional corruption' is also one of the biggest obstacles for international development and it is more rife in donor countries with high level of corruption. Moreover, besides governments, development organizations are not exceptions. It shows why the western world is not 'walking the talk' which is has assured time after time.

By scrutinizing the SMU cases in Rwanda and Myanmar through a combined perspective of alternative development and anti-development, we can come closer to an understanding of how the SMU projects are carried out in those countries and for whom those projects are conducted. The corruption case in Myanmar let us explore what is the impact of aid corruption from donor countries or organizations on recipient country and its people, especially the poor. Based on this, we can figure out what is the real aim or hidden purpose of the global SMU project.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1 UNDP's Supporting on global SMU project - a South-South cooperation?

The fact that the UN has been supporting Korea's global SMU development projects is paramount for this thesis. UN has 193 member states and the UNDP have been helping 170 of these countries and territories to implement the Goals (UNDP, 2017b)<sup>4</sup> - eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities and exclusion - from UN as a leading UN development agency<sup>5</sup> (UNDP, 2017a). UNDP states in their website that they "help countries to development policies, leadership skills, partnering abilities, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to sustain development results<sup>6</sup>". As the biggest multilateral institution, they have substantial impacts on international development since they have a whip hand to decide the path or aim for the whole global development scheme. MDGs (Millennium Development

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/about\\_us.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/about_us.html)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/about\\_us.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/about_us.html)

Goals) and the newly coined SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) are good examples of this. The seventeen SDGs were implemented in January 2016 and since then, most of UN member states' focal point on development policies have been focused on SDGs until 2030 - clearly showing how big the impact of them is on international development. Thus, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, UN and UNDP's endorsement of the global SMU projects is not a triviality. But why exactly has UN become so fond of Korea's SMU model? UNDP explains their enthusiasm for the projects as follows:

*“The significant experience that the Republic of Korea and its people have gained in promoting Saemaul Undong constitutes valuable knowledge that UNDP can tailor to various contexts and make available through South-South Cooperation (UNDP, 2015, p.9)”*

The strength in Korea's global SMU projects, as UNDP sees it, thus lies in the prospect of a vigorous South-South cooperation (SSC), which - as indicated by the name - promotes collaboration between two or more developing countries from the 'global south'. The overall aim with SSC is amongst others to “foster the self-reliance of developing countries by enhancing their creative capacity to find solutions to their development problems in keeping with their own aspirations, values and special needs (United Nations Development Programme Information Disclosure Policy, 2017)”. In a brief introductory video from UNDP's website, the lead advisor for South-South cooperation, Xiaojun Grace Wang explains about the opportunities and challenges connected to SSC. Although the notion of south-south collaboration has been around for decades, she argues, this new scheme should not be seen as “old wine in new bottles”<sup>7</sup> (UNDP, 2016a). According to her, the main difference today is that a lot of emerging economies have started investing in not just developed but also other developing markets in a global and neoliberal era where “innovation, ideas, technology and people flow freely in the world”. According to UNDP's guiding principles, the SSC is “a manifestation of solidarity among peoples and countries of the South that contributes to their national well-being, their national and collective self-reliance”, and the initiatives, goals and collaborations must be determined by the countries of the South themselves (United Nations

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/development-impact/south-south-cooperation.html>

Development Programme Information Disclosure Policy, 2017)<sup>8</sup>. All in all, the rhetoric around SSC resembles the ideas coined already back in the 1970s by the dependency theorists, whom were calling for self-reliance, independent collaboration between third world countries and detachment from the capitalist world system (Hettne, 2009, p82). Yet, it seems ill-considered to jump to the conclusion that this newly endorsed South-South cooperation has any real connection to what the dependency theorists was seeking to achieve half a century ago. For example, UNDP stresses the fact that “South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation (UNDP, 2014, p.2)”. Furthermore, there are several “barriers” or challenges related to South-South cooperation which requires the “help” and interference from UNDP or other transnational institutions. Based on this logic, South-South cooperation is promoted under yet another development strategy by the name of ‘triangular cooperation’ (TrC). This triangular model implies “Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries, *supported* by a developed country(ies) or multilateral organization(s), to implement development cooperation programmes and projects (*ibid*, p.3)”. According to the lead advisor of the SSC, the biggest challenge to South-South cooperation is the lack of knowledge and experience with “solutions proven and scalable”; the developing countries do not know “what works and what does not work” and therefore, UNDP can act as a so called “knowledge broker” (UNDP, 2016a). Thus, by establishing ‘triangular cooperation’ UNDP can tap into the opportunities of the SSC, accelerate the development progress and stir it in the right direction (*ibid*). UNDP asserts that SSC and TrC are important to current global development because the partnerships between Southern (developing) countries and support from developed countries / multilateral organizations are decisive to surmount contemporary development challenges and also to achieve international development goals such as MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda (UNDP, 2014).

UNDP’s endorsement of SMU is based on two main premises which are highly conflicting. On the one hand, it seems as if UNDP and the western world in general wish to present Korea as a highly successful example of how a war-torn country managed to raise itself to the highest level of development in less than half a century. Korea’s miraculous transformation thus forms the main legitimacy of promoting the SMU project as favorable development scheme for other countries. On the other hand, UNDP upholds that Korea’s global SMU project is grounded in

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<sup>8</sup> [http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc/about/what\\_is\\_ssc.html](http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc/about/what_is_ssc.html)

a strong South-South cooperation, which implies the collaboration between two developing countries from the global South. Hence, Korea is in fact presented as both a ‘developed’ *and* ‘developing’ country at one and the same time. However, to say that Korea - an industrial powerhouse and the 12th largest economy in the world today - and countries such as Myanmar or Rwanda in which the global SMU project is implemented are “equal” countries of the global south is nothing but dressing up a wolf in sheep's clothing. This conundrum clearly illustrates how ideas from alternative development theories have been adopted by the mainstream development industry as a tool to maintain control over developing countries by new schemes such as South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation.

### 5.1.1 Summary

UN is the biggest multilateral organization in the world and their impact on ‘development’ is significant. The SDGs established in the beginning of 2016 from UN and now spread out to most parts of the world is the centerpiece for ‘development’. UNDP has been supporting the global SMU project since 2015, promoting it is a ‘South-South and triangular’ cooperation as the project is implemented by collaboration of countries from ‘Global South’ and supported by multilateral organizations. However, it raises a question of whether Korea should be considered belonging to the global ‘North’ or ‘South’? Korea ‘was’ a developing country but has been a member of the OECD since 1996 (OECD, 2017). Yet, UNDP still puts Korea into the frame of the ‘South’. I cannot help being skeptical about their claims and it gives me an impression that they support the global SMU project from Korea to make the project be seen as a new solution for international development. With this impression in mind, in the following analysis I present how the Korean SMU project in the 1970s was implemented and how both the Korean government and UNDP describe the original SMU project. Afterwards, I scrutinize their purpose and aim for the global SMU project and how it has been carried out in reality with the two cases of Rwanda and Myanmar.

## 5.2 Korean SMU project in 1970s

*“Saemaul Undong is a movement of sustainable development in the Republic of Korea that transformed that nation from a developing to a developed country in a single generation. (UNDP, 2016b)”*

*“The paradox of a top down, centrally directed mobilization campaign such as the Saemaul Movement is that it cannot escape its essentially bureaucratic characteristics even when the policy goal is to create self-sufficient, independent, self-reliant villages...It (nevertheless) is probably unique in the developing world in terms of results, as measured by rapid improvement in the quality of rural life - Brandt 1981 (H. Kim, 2004, p.133)”*

The Korean government and UNDP seems to insist that the Korean SMU project in 1970s was carried out with a bottom-up approach through participatory process, emphasizing that voluntary participation and ‘can-do’ spirit were the main success factors of the project. Further, the frame the project as the paramount reason for Korea’s miraculous transformation. In this section, I discuss how the Korean SMU project engendered in the early 1970s, in which context it happened, and how it was carried out in reality.

### 5.2.1 Korea in 1960s

After thirty-five years of Japanese colonial ruling, liberation, division into ‘north’ and ‘south’ and the following Korean War (1950-1953), the South Korea was vastly devastated and until the 1960s it was one of the poorest countries in the world (H. Kim, 2004; H. Lee et al., 2014). Korea’s first president, Rhee Syng-man was widely recognized as an American front-man and after several years with economic poverty, rigged elections and oppressive and crony leadership, the student led April 19 Revolution forced Rhee to step down and find exile in Hawaii in May 1960 (Han, 2013, p.35-40). This left Korea in a political vacuum in which general Park Chung-hee seized power by a military coup d’état in 1961. After a brief period of military junta control (1961-1963) and a “tug of war” with the American Kennedy Administration, General Park resigned from military position and won the president election in 1963 as a civilian (H. Kim, 2004; T. Kim & Baik, 2013).

His main pledge was autonomy of Korea since Korea’s dependency on US was huge at that time and Park wanted to introduce “a new uniquely Korean way” (H. Kim, 2004, p.89).

*“More than half of budget depended upon the United States ( · · · ) Though nominally independent, the real worth of the Republic of Korea, from a statistical point of view, was*

*only 48% ( . . . ) It showed, dramatically, that our government would have to instantly close down if U.S. aid were withheld or withdrawn - Park Chung-hee (ibid, p89)”*

He implemented the first ‘5 year’s planning of economic development (1962-66)’ to reconstruct the nation, however, the resources and money Korea had back then was inadequate to achieve the goals of the plan and it turned out to fail (Y. J. Lee, 2013). At that time, there was also a high pressure from US to Korea on reaching a settlement between Korea and Japan and at the same time Korea was in need of aid to realize national development (H. Kim, 2004). Therefore, Park signed the treaty to normalize diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan in 1965 despite of severe opposition from the people and in return US released US aid and 400,000 tons of grain was donated from Japan (*ibid*).

*“More than anything else, [we] need money. Even though the US helps us, I can’t expect that the US would double its aid and I can’t trust the US. But we can justifiably demand money from Japan. It’s a huge loss for the nation if anyone destroys that [[financial source] in the name of anti-Japanese sentiment or humiliation - Park Chung-hee (ibid, p.94)”*

Nonetheless, it does not mean that Park totally changed his aspiration to create “a new uniquely Korean way”, the aid Korea got was a cornerstone for national development to create Korea’s own path for him. Park had a strong belief that Korea should reach development based on two priorities: “Korea-first” and “economy-first” (*ibid*, p.89). In mid 1960s, Park decided to send troops to Vietnam War and from 1965 until 1971, more than 300,000 Korean soldiers were deployed to Vietnam (*ibid*). The overall amount Korea gained from US for dispatch of Korean armed forces to Vietnam, between 1965 and 1970, was \$927 million (*ibid*). Park’s focus on development was similar to the mainstream development idea in 1960s when the ‘economic development’ was the focal point of development (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004). His emphasis on ‘economy-first’ illustrates perfectly that what he cared for more than anything else was economic growth.

In the beginning of 1960s, the economic situation in the whole country was quite bad but the conditions in the rural areas were even worse. At this time, expenses of most of the peasant households exceeded their earnings and therefore, ninety-two percent of rural households

became debtors by September 1960 (Y. J. Lee, 2013). One of Park's beliefs on national development was that the improvement of standard of living in rural area is essential for economic development because if the people from the rural area have more purchasing power it can boost industrialization (*ibid*). During his junta period, he established the People's Movement for National Reconstruction (PMNR) to implement the spirit of "hard work, frugality, perseverance, and self-help" - this became the fundamental spirits of SMU later (*ibid*). In the late 1960s, migration from rural to urban areas increased due to the poor economic situation of rural household and growth of the rural-urban economic gap. Between 1968 and 1970, around 1.5 million people - which constituted 10 percent of the entire farming population - left the rural area for a life in the city. Consequently, Korea had to increase the amount of grain imports in the late 1960s and beginning of the 1970s (*ibid*). As the situation got worse, Park saw the necessity of modification of the agricultural policies. Furthermore, the rural area was decisively important for him to keep his regime since it was relatively easy to handle rural area for political mobilization (*ibid*).

### 5.2.2 Janus face of Korean SMU project in 1970s

As described above, the rural situation between the late 1960s and the 1970s was very poor. To boost rural economy and implant "a new set of national values and mental discipline as a prerequisite for state-led rapid development and modernization", SMU, a Korean rural development model, was launched in April 1970, by Park Chung-hee (H. Kim, 2004, p.133).

*"Our industry can develop only when our farmers become well-to-do and the rural communities develop rapidly. Well-to-do farmers generate a great deal of purchasing power, providing one of the basic conditions for industrial development. When industries develop rapidly, the resources thus generated are made available ... for reinvestment in the agricultural sector. Viewed in this way, agriculture and industry are inseparable - Park Chung-hee (Y. J. Lee, 2013, p.365)"*

Park got the idea for the SMU project when he visited one village in the Gyeongsang province region which was located in the south-eastern part of Korea, to estimate the damage of the village after a severe flooding. Unlike what Park had expected, the village was not only tidy but also had better living condition by reestablishment of infrastructures (H. Kim, 2004). The

village had been restored totally by voluntary work of the people from the neighborhood and Park got an inspiration from this village and initiated ‘New Village Movement’, so-called Saemaul Undong (SMU), aiming to improve the condition of the rural lives (*ibid*).

In the very beginning of the project, between October 1970 and June 1971, the government allocated 300 bags of cement to 33,267 villages for free to use it for community (*ibid*). The village could decide what to do with the cement they got from the government by themselves and the government divided villages into three levels based on the result: basic villages, self-helping villages and self-sufficient villages (*ibid*). After then, the Korean government started supporting mainly self-helping and self-sufficient villages on the basis of what Park said:

*“government funds for rural investment should firstly be given to those people who demonstrate the spirit of self-help, participation, cooperation, unity and the determination to work for themselves (ibid, p134).”*

UNDP is backing up this incentive system from created by the Korean government by saying “this encouraged further self-assertion by members of the local community in formulating and implementing development initiatives, thus facilitating a cooperative relationship between the government and the local community (UNDP, 2015, p.12)”. Furthermore, they argue that “effective community investment was a key factor in promoting active participation in the SMU movement (*ibid*, p.12)”. This approach calls, however, ‘inclusion’ into question, since what the incentive system caused was fierce competition as well as exclusion by supporting villages with good result exclusively. UNDP also introduces SMU as a bottom-up approach of development which conveniently fits perfectly under UN’s new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (*ibid*). However, what the people from rural areas experienced under the SMU was far from a pleasant bottom-up initiative; as popularly argued by the Korean government and UNDP.

According to Kim’s (2004, p.135) findings, this “participatory” approach of the SMU coerced people to conform to ‘community will’ and ‘community decision’ under intense state control for the sake of the national economy. Park Chung-hee emphasized the Saemaul spirit and the concept of ‘mutual aid’ to let people think and believe that all of their effort was for a greater good; the well being of the nation. Moreover, the strict focus on economic development caused

a “growth first - distribution later” mentality where “even the government can do nothing about lazy people” (H. Kim, 2004, p.137; H. Lee et al., 2014, p.244). This saying and the collective mind-set characterized by “my cooperation = my family = my fatherland”, made people who did not participate or cooperate in the project to be seen as ‘lazy people’ and gave them a lot of pressure (H. Kim, 2004, p.142). Some families who refused to participate in the communal activities were even “evicted from the village - their belongings were taken from their homes and they were told to move elsewhere if they would not abide by community decisions (*ibid*, p.135)”. Some of the testimonies from the Saemaul veterans - “We would have been considered rebellious if we had not done our job properly” and “those who did not show up for meetings were treated worse than commies (Doucette & Müller, 2016, p.31)” - also show just how much pressure and social control state exercised over people’s participation.

In 1972, Park’s government selected leading participants of the project and made them into Saemaul leaders through ‘Saemaul Leaders Training’ (SLT) which was a rigidly uniformed two-week course for Saemaul leaders and one week education for public officials, social elite and intelligentsia (H. Kim, 2004). Kim (2004, p.144) claims that “SLT provided the populace with formal training in Park’s political thought, just as in North Korea mass training focused on Kim II Sung’s political thought”. The initiative of Saemaul Leaders Training is seen as an “indoctrination program” and adds to the understanding of exactly how top-down led and militaristic the SMU project was, resembling the very same methods used to mass-mobilize the Korean people under the Japanese colonization (*ibid*, p. 146).

In development it is important to make people participate, especially the ones who are poor and marginalized so they can decide or be part of their own destiny as Höckert (2011, p.12) argues: “People should be actively involved and given the opportunity to shape their own destiny, instead of simply having the role of passive recipients of the fruits of development programs”. However, the simple fact that people are involved in the project does not mean that they have discretion to create their own future. As we can see from the examples and testimonies illustrated above, people did participate in the SMU projects and when seen from the outside it might have looked like people participated voluntarily. In real, though, it was a great deal of pressure from the state and from the village leaders which made everyone cooperate. Among the three different levels of participation which Mikkelsen (2005) accounts for - 1) cosmetic label, 2) co-opting practice and 3) empowering process - the level of

participation in during the Korean SMU can be interpreted as a cosmetic label. This mean that using a ‘participation approach’ was not to actually meant empower or include people but rather to make the project look specious. In the Korean SMU, participation of people looked plausible but when going into detail with the deployment, there was still a classical top-down approach. The state made precise plans the villages and gave birth to Saemaul leaders who were supposed to oversee that the villages would produce good results and transform successfully into ‘self-helping’ or ‘self-sufficient’ villages. In the same vein, Doucette & Müller (2016, p.35) also argue that “Saemaul is best represented as an ‘organizational technology’ for producing developmentalist subjects, in which Saemaul leaders played an active disciplinary role, rather than a voluntary, bottom-up movement”. The peer pressure from the neighbors and the pressure from the Saemaul leaders was predominantly harsh and severe, therefore, it was almost impossible to reject to conform as individuals. Furthermore, the competitive initiative of the SMU caused exclusion. The citizens from the ‘self-helping’ or ‘self-sufficient’ villages might have felt some notion of inclusiveness, but people from the ‘basic village’ would feel exclusiveness since they could not get attention from the government nor support. According to happiness studies in relation to inclusion, ‘exclusion’ would occur a huge human dissatisfaction by putting some of the group - basic villages - in inferior status compared to the other groups - the self-helping and self-sufficient villages (Berry, 2014).

Another indication that the Korean SMU was characterized by a typical top-down approach is ‘Tongil rice’ varietal. Doucette and Müller (2016, p.35) recounts how the Korean government mobilized their ‘agrobureaucracy’ to adopt the new rice variety ‘Tongil’ rice. The observation following shows how the dense Korean agrobureaucracy was mobilized for planting *Tongil* rice.

*“In Sinan-gun, Jeonnam-do guidance workers persuaded farmers to plant Tongil under the slogan of ‘Visit Farmers Ten Times’. Many farmers accepted the recommendation to save the guidance workers’ face. ( . . . ) Government-supplied inputs such as fertilizer were often used to coax compliance. And, in interviews with farmers, confirmation was found of the allegation that, as a last resort, traditional variety seedbeds were physically destroyed by rural guidance workers and other responsible local officials (ibid, p.35)”*

According to western observers of the SMU project “the degree of official cajoling and monitoring was so intense that farmers started to refer to specific rice seedbeds and areas designated for the new variety production as the country magistrate’s plot, the chief of police’s plot (*ibid*, p.35)”.

This instance strongly demonstrates the high-degree of top-down procedure of the SMU project. The Korean government decided to adopt a new rice variety and demanded farmers to start planting *Tongil* rice instead of the traditional one. As illustrated in the observation, the rice paddy of farmers who planted traditional seedbeds was destroyed by officials or guidance workers. In this process of the SMU, individual farmers had no discretion. It was the government which decided what to do and how to do it. This refers to co-opting level of participation from Mikkelsen which means that local people are involved in projects, but the principle agents who make plan or decision is ‘us’ and ‘they’ cooperate just to make the procedure easier (Mikkelsen, 2005). In this top-down procedure of development, people would feel psychological exclusion, ‘the absence of active inclusion’ which produces discontent and unhappiness and this cause a decrease of social capital (Berry, 2014, p.174). In addition, through the top-down procedure, government often uses community participation as ‘a means of legitimizing the political system and a form of social control’, not as a solution to make the lives of the poor better or give them a chance to decide their own future (Botes & Rensburg, 2000, p.45).

Unlike what is described in Saemaul ISNC model - that a predominant feature of the Korean SMU was a bottom-up approach with “everyone” involved - it did not empower the poor and it was not common citizens from the rural area who participated in the SMU. Neither did they benefit the most from the SMU project. According to Kim (2004), the actors who participated the most in the project were the Saemaul leaders and affluent farmers. The poor residents and non-agricultural families participated less actively (*ibid*). According to statistics, the income of the poorest farmers increased 69%, the medium-size farmers increased 76%, rich farmers’ income was raised 99% and industrial farmers’ income increased 190% (*ibid*, p.136). Moreover, the rural income decreased by 8% in the period between 1970 and 1975 compared to between 1963 and 1969 (*ibid*, p.138). Consequently, the Korean SMU might have helped growth of production output to a certain extent, and the income of some households did increase, yet, it was the rich who got richer and the inequality within rural area rose. One of the ideas on development in the very beginning was that economic growth and equality is incompatible

(Berry, 2014). However, Berry (2014) asserts that inequality is not a prerequisite for fast growth and economic growth itself does not guarantee human satisfaction and happiness. Growth might bring some positive beneficial effects but only if when it appears together with elements which can bring good changes in social structure (*ibid*). Park implemented the Korean SMU accentuating ‘economy-first’ over social and economic equality. To achieve fast economic growth Park’s government connived growth of social, economic inequality which is very relevant to human dissatisfaction. Moreover, selective participation in SMU project was one of the obstacles of development that hindered a truly participatory process (Botes & Rensburg, 2000). As it is portrayed above, people who were deeply involved in SMU were Saemaul leaders and rich farmers. The opinions of those disguised as the voice of the whole village and thus, the wants and affairs of the village could determine by those few people who had power and bigger voice. People who were poor and marginalized in the village did not have the ability to raise their concerns and voice in the procedure of the SMU project. Therefore, they could not decide their own destiny and future.

Another aspect to consider in relation to the Korean SMU project is the historical and geographical context of Korea during the SMU. Park Chung-hee dispersed the national Assembly and announced ‘Yushin’ constitution in October 1972 which was a constitutional reform for his dictatorship which “aimed at exercising complete and absolute control over socio economic and political processes” (Doucette & Müller, 2016; S. Han & Shim, 2010, p.473). With this new Yushin constitution, Park implemented the SMU in earnest since he needed support from the rural area to solidify his long-term seizure of power. As a result, “Park mobilized all available resources to accomplish the single task of economic growth quicker than planned” (Doucette & Müller, 2016; H. Kim, 2004; Han & Shim, 2010, p.473). The fact that the Korean SMU project had been carried out under dictatorship and top-down militaristic mobilization imitating the Japanese fascist regime “not only caused a major strain on the democratic process but also destroyed the social fabric of the civil society (Han & Shim, 2010, p.474)”.

At the same time, Korea’s rapid development was hugely influenced from the international situation in 1960s, 70s and 80s, as “the cold war political situation in US was actively supporting capitalist economies” and therefore, Korea could pursue the “export-led industrialization” (Cho, 2000, p.50). Both the Korean government and UNDP put great emphasis on Saemaul Spirit - diligence, self-help and cooperation as one of the main success

factors of the Korean SMU. However, Doucette and Müller (2016, p.31) claims that this emphasis on ‘can-do’ spirit “promotes a narrative of the rural peasantry as lacking in motivation and of the state as providing a people-centered, voluntary and democratic pathway for development” to make “problems and solutions visible and intelligible”. This makes “elements that would complicate the problems identified in the policy narratives and that are not easily governed by experts and bureaucrats” unseen which render all the social problems into a matter of ‘development’ problem (*ibid*, p.31). Therefore, Korean government and UNDP’s emphasis on ‘can-do’ spirit and collective mind is a-historical and a-political view on the Korean SMU project.

### 5.2.3 Summary

Park Chung-hee, the former dictator of Korea wanted to make Korea’s own way of development by ‘economy-first’ and ‘Korea-first’ priorities. Since 1960s the core focus of his development idea was economic growth. Korea was extremely destitute in 1960s, therefore, Korea got aid mainly from US and Japan. Moreover, Park sent troops to support the American’s war in Vietnam to gain money used for national development. He started development in rural area because he believed that the advancement of living standard in rural area was crucial for industrialization. Moreover, the rural area was critical to Park as it was easy for political mobilization. However, due to growing economic gap between urban and rural and impoverished situation caused mass migration from rural to urban and therefore, Park started implementing a Korean rural development model, SMU, to boost rural economy, rapid development and modernization, moreover, for his stable regime.

The Korean SMU is commonly recognized as a scheme that promoted rapid Korean economic development and UNDP has been supporting global SMU projects, stressing that it is a South-South and triangular cooperation with bottom-up process. It is true that many people from rural area participated in SMU project, however, it does not mean that it was the empowering process of participation. Unlike what UNDP describes, there are many data which demonstrate that the participatory procedure of the movement was actually occurred by huge pressure from the state which can be referred to cosmetic label of participation. The Korean government used participatory process to make the projects look plausible - not to empower people and achieve human satisfaction by inclusion. The selective participation during the SMU period also was a huge hindrance of participatory development process, resulting economic inequality. Some of

the projects, like the *Tongil* rice instance, were completely decided by the government and people from rural areas, especially the poor, were forced to carry out the plan from the government which indicates co-opting level of participation. As a consequence, the SMU project in 1970s in Korea can be understood as a top-down procedure of development which neglected to realize true meaning of participation and bring human satisfaction. Moreover, the Korean government and UNDP's endorsement on 'mental revolution' makes national/international context of Korea in 1970s invisible.

### 5.3. The global SMU project

In this section, two documents regarding the planning of the global SMU project - one from the Korean government and one from UNDP - are mainly presented to examine the Korean government and UNDP's initial plans for the global SMU project.

#### 5.3.1 General planning of the SMU ODA from the Korean government and ISNC model from UNDP

The concept of SMU project has been exported to several developing countries since 2005 by Gyeongsangbuk-do, the Korean province where the original SMU project took off in the 1970s (Kang, 2016; H. Kim, 2004). However, it was not until 2011 the Korean government set up a national plan for the converting the SMU into an ODA project and got involved in the large-scale exporting of the development model. In the beginning of 2011, a SMU ODA Task Force was launched to establish the SMU development cooperation model. A document, 'Saemaul Undong ODA project general planning (새마을 운동 ODA 사업 기본계획)', was published in May 2011 by a broad coalition including the Prime minister's office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Strategy and Finance (MOSF), Ministry of Interior (MOI), Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA), Korea Program on International Agriculture (KOPIA), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), Province of Gyeongsangbuk-do and Korea Saemaul Undong Center (Prime Minister's Office et al., 2011). The general planning explains the background of the global SMU project, details about how they will carry out the project and the ultimate goal of the project.

In addition, UNDP published a document called ‘Saemaul Initiative Towards Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities: Implementation Guidance’ in September 2015. The purpose of this guidance is to support the global SMU project from the Korean government by backing up South-South cooperation so it can bring advantages to people in developing countries - or ‘Least Developed Countries (LDC)’ according to the term from UNDP (UNDP, 2015). This document mainly described the ‘Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities (ISNC) Model’ and the purpose and strategy of the model (*ibid*). By firstly analyzing the initial purposes and aims of the global contemporary project we can later juxtapose it to the findings of how the project have been implemented in reality

The general planning from the Korean government states that the idea of the global SMU project commenced based on a doubt on traditional foreign aid - a doubt whether the enormous aid towards developing countries actually contributed to proper development. Moreover, they argue that it is time to cut the vicious circle of the so called ‘aid trap’ which generates aid fatigue since foreign aid hitherto has sustained the dependency rather than leading to self-sustained growth of developing countries (Prime minister’s office et al., 2011, p.1). Since a large part of the population and especially poor people lives in rural areas, development of these areas is essential to poverty ‘eradication’. To achieve this, development projects should be carried out to help them to escape from poverty by themselves instead of unilateral aid (*ibid*, p.1). Hence, this document underlines the importance of poverty eradication as well as self-sustained growth based on Korea’s own development experience (*ibid*, p.1).

A such view on development resembles the ideas linked to alternative development. In the beginning of the development paradigm, the ‘Western modernity’ was regarded as the right path to development, therefore, there was a general acceptance that developing countries should follow the ‘historical-development experience’ of wealthy western countries - North America and Europe - to be developed (Potter, 2014, p.50). However, since the 1960s the objection of western modernity such as the ideas coined in dependency theory started claiming that the previous mainstream development is postcolonial and Eurocentric and thus, it cannot indeed improve lives in developing countries.

Nevertheless, in the previous section, the thesis argues why the classification of the global SMU projects as ‘South-South’ cooperation should be rejected. Firstly, because the UNDP is

involved in the project - making it into a triangular cooperation rather than a pure independent project, and secondly because it seems inappropriate to treat contemporary Korea as a 'South' country - when it for a long time has been part "developed countries' club".

Moreover, the general planning of the SMU ODA project from the Korean government states that the Korean SMU project was carried out with "collaboration of active state support and voluntary participation from rural people (정부의 적극적 지원과 주민의 자발적 참여가 조화를 이루어 추진) (Prime Minister's office et al., 2011, p.2)". UNDP also introduces the SMU project as a bottom-up, empowering process of development scheme, as saying "Village leaders played a crucial role in inducing the villagers' participation in the movement, which helped in reducing and even eliminating poverty in numerous communities (UNDP, 2015, p.14)". However, as we have learned from the previous analysis of the original SMU, it was rather carried out by a severe pressure from the government and villagers which made people participate in an involuntary manner in the project in reality.

Now, to be fair, this does not necessarily mean that the new global SMU project will turn out the same way. That is why it is important to first scrutiny the current aims and purposes of the project and subsequently scrutiny the two selected cases of SMU projects in Rwanda and Myanmar.

The document from the Korean government articulates that the global SMU project should be implemented in a way to cultivate willingness for self-subsisting so they can make their own decision on the main issues and implement it by themselves, instead of letting people from outside decide and carry out the project unilaterally (Prime Minister's office et al., 2011). According to the first step of the plan, the Korean government offers invitational SMU education training courses for people who would play a pivotal role of the global SMU project such as leaders of villages, central/rural governmental officials et cetera (*ibid*, p.7). Afterwards, in the second stage, the Korean government supports the formation of voluntary association centrally with people who take training courses on the global SMU project in Korea and let the association make their own plan and implement and manage it by themselves through discussion with villagers (*ibid*, p.8). In addition, in the document from UNDP, it is written that

*"the new elements that will be added to update the current SMU through the ISNC model are sustainability and inclusiveness. These include efforts to engage the participation of*

*the local population into community activities, ensuring the inclusion of women, youth the poorest strata and vulnerable groups as participants and beneficiaries of community projects (UNDP, 2015, p.23)*”.

What is written in both general planning from the Korean government and the document about ISNC model from UNDP are related to ‘human development’ which is one of the alternative concepts of development, criticizing ‘economic growth’ centered development. Since the 1970s, inclusion of the voices of the poor and marginalized people became a paramount factor of development as ‘people-centered perspective’ has been heightened (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004, p.43). Harriss (2014, p.36) claims that development should be conducted to “make it possible for people to realize their potential as human beings, or to live full human lives that they value”. Happiness studies also determined that economic growth cannot be prerequisite of human satisfaction and happiness, therefore, development should focus more on human aspects than on simple economic growth. To pursue human development - self-esteem, social justice and freedom of choice, the poor should be actively included in the process of development instead of being passive receivers. Scholars who support this approach argue that “development would only address the problems of the poor when it involved the poor themselves, particularly local community organizations (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004, p.44; Höckert, 2011)”. According to Berry (2014, p.174), ‘inclusion’ can strengthen social capital since it gives psychological satisfaction which is a feeling of being “part of a social group in ways that are conducive to personal well-being”.

However, with regard to participation, Mikkelsen (2005) argues that there are different levels of ‘participation’ in development projects. The word ‘participation’ stated in two documents from the Korean government and UNDP is related to ‘empowering process’ of participation which “enables local people to do their own analysis, to take command, to gain in confidence, and to make their own decisions (*ibid*, p.54)”. In this process, empowering the poor, marginalized ones to create their own future is essential. According to the planning, neither the Korean government nor UNDP are main agents in making decisions on development projects. Rather it is the people from the villages who will decide what and how to implement new solutions in the development process. It is somehow similar to the initial plan of the Korean SMU project in 1970s, despite the fact that it was the state and Saemaul leaders who made the

decisions in reality and therefore did not succeed to empower rural people. As discussed earlier, this reality refers to the concepts of ‘cosmetic label’ and ‘co-opting practice’ of participation.

Another word which is also mentioned many times in both documents is ‘sustainability’. The global SMU general planning of the Korean government specifies that the project focuses on guaranteeing the sustainability by connecting different projects such as in the field of agriculture, health, education and so on (Prime Minister’s office et al., 2011, p.5). Moreover, it is stated that the Korean government will prepare an ‘exit-plan’ to secure a smooth transition towards full responsibility of the project by the time the direct support from Korea comes to an end. This is to make sure that even after the Korean government stops the direct involvement, the development project can continue and keep benefitting the villages and people (*ibid*, 2011). It also underlines the necessity of the construction of a model which lives up to an international standard and goals of development such as MDGs - gender equality, environmental issues and so on (*ibid*, p.1)

Undoubtedly, in the document from UNDP, the notion of ‘sustainability’ is highlighted the most. In the UNDP document, it is stated that the main focus of the ISNC model is ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘sustainability’ as indicated by the name of the model - Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities (UNDP, 2015, p.24). In addition, it is stated that the ISNC model will concentrate on localizing the ‘post-2015 agenda’ and ‘SDGs’, moreover, ‘sustainability’ is one of the main key points of them (*ibid*, p.30).

*“Amid sustainable development, ISNC model will also reflect the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development - economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. The ISNC model aims to promote sustainable productions that involve the community in economic activities that are environmental friendly and deliver social benefits (ibid, p.23)”*

‘Sustainability’ is one of the main concepts in post-development era and similar to human development it has gained ground together with ‘inclusiveness’ as a criticism of simple economic growth. As Höckert (2011, p.10) argues “economic growth does not contribute to development if it does not translate to the social change and increased capability to function of the poor”. Therefore, to bring sustainable change and betterment in the society and also the lives of the poor, the poor, excluded and marginalized people should be included in the process

of development projects. In the general planning of the global SMU project and ISNC model, it is well described that the project will include and empower the least fortunate in society in order to realize sustainable development.

To achieve active involvement of rural people and make the project successful both the Korean government and UNDP stress the importance of the transformation of people's mindset. During the period of the Korean SMU project in the 1970s, it was the SMU spirit - a combination of diligence, self-help and cooperation - which got the most attention, and it is understood that this consciousness reform played a major role to lead the project to success.

The general planning from the Korean government states that the Korean SMU was a driving force of Korean modernization with economic growth and the reform of consciousness. It also tells that the Korean SMU brought the positive change in people's mindset by inculcating self-confidence and this way contributed to national modernization through eradication of rural poverty (Prime Minister's office et al., 2011, p.2). The UNDP document also claims the positive effects of the SMU spirit on the project in 1970s.

*“The self-reliant aspect of the Saemaul spirit could be said to have encouraged community members to develop their potential to overcome challenges and creatively explore new economic resources and means of increasing productivity (UNDP, 2015, p.12)”*

Moreover, UNDP (2015, p.23) states that three essential elements of the SMU spirit - diligence, self-help and cooperation - will be the core point of ISNC model. This obsession with a change of mindset raises the question about the emphasis on the SMU spirit for development project. Can this 'mental revolution' of the people make their lives better (Doucette & Müller, 2016)? It sounds as if people and countries are simply poor and 'underdeveloped' because they have not been diligent and cooperated with each other and did not have a proper attitude of self-help. Doucette and Müller (2016, p.31) argue that this narrative “diagnoses the problem of development not simply as lack of proper technical inputs or the individual will to improve but as the lack of a collective spirit of development”. They criticize that the global SMU project organized by the Korean government makes it look like a 'can-do' collective spirit of the poor people in rural areas will allow them to escape from poverty (*ibid*). Moreover, as discussed above, internal and external factors restraining and promoting Korea's development such as

the Yushin constitution and the Cold War was neglected in the initiative of the global SMU project by Korea Knowledge Sharing Program (*ibid*). The context in which the original SMU project was carried out compared to today's situation in which the Global SMU project is now tried implemented are vastly different. When Korea first implemented the SMU project, the 'nation-state' was the main agent of development with aim of economic growth and national security. However, after the 1990s, the 'nation-state' has become a medium for transnational interests and 'development' has become a 'global' concern with focus on 'human development' (Hettne, 2009). With the understanding of the national and international context back then, the governments and institutions who claim that we can apply the SMU project to other states and expect it to simply reproduce the rapid development Korea experienced clearly shows the lack of understanding of the "time-bound nature of the Korean state-led development project (Pirie, 2008, p.75)".

### 5.3.2 Summary

The general planning of the global SMU project from the Korean government and the ISNC model of UNDP argues that the global SMU project can contribute to international development by focusing on 'inclusiveness' and 'sustainability'.

In the general planning, the Korean government claims that now the development projects should be carried out in a way to teach developing countries how to fish instead of simply giving them fish to make them escape from the poverty and to fulfill sustainable development. Furthermore, what is written in two documents from the Korean government and UNDP refers to 'human development' and therefore, the notions which are the most highlighted from both documents are 'inclusiveness' and 'sustainability'. Both documents refer to the perceived experience of a participatory process of the Korean SMU project back in the 1970s, describing how it was a bottom-up and empowering process even though it is better explained as merely a 'cosmetic label' and 'co-opting practice' level of participation rather than 'empowering process' of participation. The plannings claim the importance of inclusion of the poor, marginalized ones and empowering them by letting people from rural area design and carry the project by themselves and create their own future. They argue that through this inclusion approach they can bring positive changes in the people's lives and thus realize sustainable development.

The Korean government and UNDP insist that the prerequisite of realizing successful and sustainable development is ‘mental revolution’, namely by obtaining the SMU spirit - diligence, self-help and cooperation - which makes it sounds like poverty and stagnation in developing countries are the consequence of a lack of ‘can-do’ and collective spirit. Furthermore, to think the SMU model is universal and fully applicable in a contemporary context is to neglect the particular patchwork of Korea’s condensed post-war development and position in the world system. In the next section, I examine how the participatory process, sustainability and mental revolution described in the two documents work in reality through case analysis.

## 5.4 Cases of the global SMU project

In this section, two cases of global SMU projects from Rwanda and Myanmar are examined. The two cases are scrutinized based on the previous analysis of initial plannings from the Korean government and UNDP in order to understand how the global SMU project have been carried out in reality.

### 5.4.1 Rwanda

To examine the global SMU project case in Rwanda, a report from a Korean NGO called ‘People’s Initiative for Development Alternatives (PIDA)’ is used. This NGO organized a citizens oversight team in March 2016, consisting of seven people - a high school teacher, graduate students, activists from the organization etc. - to investigate ODA projects in Rwanda (PIDA, 2016). The team went to Rwanda for research for around two weeks in late July after five months of preparation for the research. The team visited several development sites in Rwanda where the global SMU projects have been carried out.

As it is presented previously, Rwanda is one of the African countries under the Korean government’s CPS and the Korean government selected Rwanda as a pilot country for the global SMU project in 2011. In Rwanda, around 88% of the population are engaged in the agricultural sector and a great number of people are living in poverty due to low productivity (PIDA, 2016). One interesting feature of Rwanda is that they have a collective action named, ‘*Umuganda*’, an old traditional custom of Rwanda which means ‘action of gathering to achieve common goals (공동의 목적을 이루기 위해 함께 모이는 행위)’ (PIDA, 2016, p.12). This can be seen as a very similar notion of the ‘collective mind’ of the Korean SMU project.

The global SMU project has been implemented in Rwanda since 2011 and the civil oversight team from PIDA visited five villages - Nyaruguru, Kigarama, Mushimba, Gihogwe and Nyamagabe - to explore how the global SMU project has been welcomed and is performing. The institutions which are in charge of the projects are different from village to village which means each project might differ slightly from one another.

In Nyaruguru, KOICA has been implementing an ‘integrated rural development’ project. The purpose of the project in this village is to improve the quality of life, increase the average income and enhance the capacity of the rural population. The aim is to achieve poverty eradication and rural development through passing down the Korean rural development experience (*ibid*). The three villages, Kigarama, Mushimba and Gihogwe were selected as the SMU model villages and Saemaul Globalization Foundation (SGF) has been carrying out a model village project, aiming to promote sustainable development through delivering Korean experience of the SMU and to maximize a ripple effect of it. The main focus of the projects is reformation of consciousness, improvement of living environment and income increase (*ibid*). MAFRA, Korea Rural Community Corporation (KRCC) and Kangwon National University Institute of International Rural Development (KNU-iiRD) have been implemented agriculture and animal resources development project in Nyamagabe from 2011 to 2013. The purpose of this project was to increase agricultural productivity and food security by mechanized farming, enhancement of farmers’ ability and agricultural development (*ibid*).

All projects in the five villages in Rwanda share the aim of generating better life conditions and increasing the average income. However, what the team from PIDA has observed in the development field in Rwanda turns out to differ significantly from the initial aims and what the Korean government’s general planning of the global SMU and UNDP’s ISNC model have stated.

One of the main goals of the model village initiative which has been carried out by SGF in Kigarama, Mushimba and Gihogwe is to establish and operate cooperative unions. However, it was found that the local residents should pay union dues to join the cooperative union (*ibid*). It is not allowed to join the SMU project without being a member of union. In practice, this means that only people who have enough money to pay their union dues can be member of a

union and thus take part in the SMU projects. Meanwhile, the people who do not have enough money to pay union dues are excluded, not being able to get advantages from the projects. Moreover, In Nyamagabe where the MAFRA was in charge of the project, the absence of communication between facilitators and villagers was detected. The report from PIDA shows that the facilities for poultry, fish and cocoonery farming were not functioning as they were supposed to due to the lack of understanding and investigation about the local situation such as climate and capacity. The electric installation which is necessary for operating farms could not be installed because of the shortage of budget. Afterwards, the Korean government tried to set up a photovoltaic lighting system but it could not be used since it does not fit to their technical conditions. In addition, the generator which was given to village later became useless because villagers could not afford the gasoline price to use it (*ibid*).

*“Chickens became sick because the temperature in the hennery was too high. There was no expert so we could not give them any treatment. Therefore, people started selling the chicken hurriedly or eating them. A lot of them were killed (양계장은 실내가 너무 더워서 닭이 아프기 시작했어요. 전문가가 없어서 치료할 수가 없어서 서둘러 닭을 팔거나 잡아먹기 시작했어요. 많이 죽기도 했어요) - A villager (ibid, p.21)”*

*“Korean experts did not come regularly. Since they did not come that often to the village, we could not get the proper administration and education on the project (한국인 전문가가 규칙적으로 오지 않았어요. 마을에 자주 오지 않아 정기적인 관리와 교육이 되지 못했구요) - A villager (ibid, p.21)”*

According to the report, it is even revealed that the Korean experts did not come to the village for education on the project whereas reports from the Korea government says that experts were sent to the village for the training (*ibid*).

Both the Korean government and UNDP frame the original Korean SMU as if it was a bottom-up process where the ‘voluntary participation’ of the people was one of the critical success factors of the scheme. Human development - self-esteem, social justice and freedom of choice - is what have come into the picture in recent development discourses and those elements of

human development are something mentioned many times in the general planning of the global SMU project and ISNC model. As we have seen, they strongly emphasize the importance of ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘empowerment’ in the process of the project. Therefore, the focus of the new global project should be focusing on allowing villagers to design and implement their own project since the main aim of the global SMU project is to enhance capacity of self-reliance to cut the ‘vicious circle of aid trap’ and stop ‘aid fatigue’.

*“UNDP, playing the convening role to empower the voices of developing countries and emerging economies, could advocate for enhancing global partnership for sustainable development complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of sustainable development goals (UNDP, 2015, p.31)”*

However, what happened in reality is ‘selective participation’ which impedes the participatory process of development projects (Botes & Rensburg, 2000). In the projects, the people who are in need the most were not even able to participate in the projects due to the mandatory union fee. The ones who decide what project they want to do for the village and how to implement it were the people who have more money and were less marginalized in the society. Furthermore, the lack of communication between the Korean facilitators and the villagers was a conspicuous example of exclusion of voices of the poor. There were not enough meetings between the facilitators and the villagers which means that people from the village did not have a proper chance to express their opinion on the project. The constant support of installation which cannot be used in the village also clearly exhibits that the opinions of the villagers were not considered in the first place unlike what was promised.

Parpart & Veltmeyer (2004) and Höckert (2011) argue that development projects should devote effort to agonize the problems of the poor, marginalized ones and to do it they should certainly be included in development projects. Berry (2014, p.174) argues that ‘equality and inclusiveness’ are the distinct sources for human happiness and ‘psychological inclusion’ offers people the sense of belonging which is favorable for ‘social capital’, whereas ‘psychological exclusion’ causes human dissatisfaction. It is also claimed that “societal welfare is greater when economic growth is pro-poor and, more generally when it is egalitarian (Berry, 2014, p.173)”.

The instances described above reveal that the global SMU project is actually carried out through a top-down procedure which is opposite from the intentions declared in the written documents from the Korean government and UNDP. Perhaps not totally surprisingly, the participatory procedure in the global SMU project in Rwanda is best characterized by the concept of 'cosmetic label' of participation. The participation is used "to make whatever is proposed appear good. Donor agencies and governments require participatory approaches and consultants and managers say that they will be used, and then later that they have been used, while the reality has often been top-down in a traditional style (Mikkelsen, 2005, p.54)". In this case, the concept of 'participation' which has been the most important approaches in contemporary development paradigm is degraded to one of the 'buzzwords' in development. Cornwall and Brock (2005) argue that the notion of 'participation' is one of the main buzzwords in development and it has been used not to make betterment for the poor but as a manoeuvre to make the projects sound 'nice'. Even though the Korean government and UNDP clearly stated that the voices of the poor would be included and they would have free will to create their own future, in Rwanda, people - 'they' - are still participating in 'our' project with the idea that 'we' are the ones who poses the right ideas and solutions to development.

According to the report from PIDA (2016), the households in Gihogwe and Mushimba who cultivated rice experienced income increase which enabled them to pay for their insurances and children's tuition fees. However, as Berry (2014) demonstrates, economic growth does not guarantee human satisfaction. Especially when the poorest people in the village were not involved in the project, it cannot represent human-oriented development. It does not mean that economic growth is not important in development but neither should it be considered as the guiding principle of development. As PIDA (2016) also expressed in their report, in all global SMU projects in Rwanda, the concern was mainly income increase and not human development per se. It can be understood as a reason why the global SMU project could not realize human development but rather generated human dissatisfaction by exclusion.

The exclusion of people brings not only the failure of realization of human development but also become a huge obstacle of sustainable development. The report from PIDA (2016) indicates that although establishing and facilitating cooperative unions to promote development projects is the main objective of the global SMU project, the organization process is still at an early stage at the end of 2016. The problem is that the project with KOICA in Nyaruguru is planned to be finished in 2017 and it is therefore highly doubtful whether this

project can be continued without support from KOICA after 2017. A similar situation is identified in the model villages as well. The projects for model villages are built up around a 5-year-plan but the volunteers from Korea who are mainly in contact with and work with the local residents have been changed every single year. Consequently, some of the projects have already been abolished (PIDA, 2016). For example, in Kigarama, one project which helped a sewing-cooperative union in the village to sell their products to Korean people operated until 2015. However, after the plan was over, the sewing-cooperative could not get enough information about trendy design and demand for the goods which made them unable to manufacture the right products for the market and the shortage of money for delivery fee became an obstacle as well. Thus, the project could not be persisted and villagers expressed their anguish about the cessation of the project in the interview with PIDA (*ibid*). Another problem in these villages is that since the focal point of the project is on ‘economic benefit’, there is a tendency that only some plans which showed tangible results are continued (*ibid*). In Nyamagabe, the cooperative union which was established for the projects for poultry, fish and cocoonery farming was dissolved because the profit from the projects was dissatisfying. It is exposed that this circumstance was caused by inadequate facilities for the projects due to the lack of pre-investigation on the situation of the villages (*ibid*).

The realities are vastly different from the promises of the Korean government and UNDP. One of the words which was repeated and emphasized the most from them is ‘sustainability’. As it is discussed above, the general planning of the global SMU project from the Korean government articulated that it is paramount to pledge the sustainability of the project and therefore they will formulate thorough exit strategies for the projects (Prime minister’s office et al., 2011). In the same vein, UNDP enunciated that “the new elements that will be added to update the current SMU through the ISNC model are sustainability and inclusiveness (UNDP, 2015, p.23)” and also stated that “monitoring and evaluation systems should be developed to enable practitioners to track development progress and results that could be valuable for scaling up the model (*ibid*, p.50)”. Rwanda is one of the countries which were selected for the implementation of the ISNC model; yet monitoring from the Korean government and UNDP has not been conducted adequately. In addition, as discussed previously, the Korean government implements the global SMU project with the strong emphasis on ‘mental revolution’, having SMU spirits and collective mind-set for development. UNDP supports this emphasis. Nevertheless, just having a ‘collective mind-set’ cannot be the main key to

‘development’, just like having a ‘can-do’ spirit and a collective mind-set was not the main factor for Korea’s “miraculous”. It is nothing but an act of “false advertisement”, hiding complicated social problems and making it into a question of a mental rather than a structural problem.

The planning from the Korean government and UNDP was full of ‘warm sounding words’ such as ‘participation’, ‘inclusiveness’, ‘sustainability’ and ‘empowerment’, but none of them were found in the process of the projects in Rwanda. Cornwall and Brock (2005, p.1044) argue that those nice sounding buzzwords create “the legitimacy that development actors need to justify their interventions”. The Korean government criticized the traditional way of development, yet, what they have done in Rwanda does not seem that different from what have been done heretofore in the development field. Ironically, the actions of the contemporary Korean government resemble the way Korea itself was coerced to take on the Western modernization project in the aftermath of liberation from Japan and the Korean War. The Western countries - which are generally perceived as ‘developed’ - have been compelling that ‘underdeveloped’ countries should follow the historical experience of the Western world to achieve development. In the procedure of the global SMU project, the Korean government did not execute enough examination of feasibility before the implementation of the projects. Instead, they carried out the projects in a way which they thought was right, without exhaustive consideration on the local situation and opinions from the villagers. As a result, it did not accomplish a betterment of lives and turned out as a waste of time, effort and money. Based on their critique of ‘western modernity’, the Korean government was promoting the Korean path of development to developing countries dressed up as common members of the ‘South’.

#### 5.4.2 Myanmar and corruption

A report ‘Myanmar ODA project comprehensive evaluation (미얀마 ODA 사업 종합평가)’ from the Center for International Development Evaluation (CIDE) of Seoul National University stated that agricultural project in Myanmar achieved the ‘expected result’ in a short period of time (Center for International Development Evaluation, 2015, p.109). The report also evaluated that the recipient country (Myanmar) would be able to manage and control the project post-aid period due to the comprehensive exit plan as it was written in general planning of the SMU ODA project (*ibid*, p.110).

What we can monitor from the Myanmar global SMU development field is, however, a similar picture to that of Rwanda. According to a current affair program from KBS, quite a few problems were observed in the global SMU project in Myanmar. The world's first global SMU center was established in a village called East Phaunge located in the Hlegu township. A broadcasting team from KBS found out that a harvester which costs more than \$40,000 became a so-called 'white elephant', simply hidden away in a warehouse instead of being used actively (J. Kim, 2017). In an interview with KBS, the head of the village mentioned that:

*“It is a good machine but the variety of the rice we mainly cultivate is long, so it lies on the ground when it is windy. This machine cannot gather the rice from the bottom of the ground, rather it tramples the rice. Therefore, it caused damage and decrease of productivity, so we stopped using it (이 기계는 좋은데 저희가 주로 심는 벼 품종은 길어요. 바람이 불면 쓰러지죠. 이 기계는 밑바닥까지 수확을 못해요. 기계가 오히려 벼를 밟아버리니 생산량이 줄고 손해가 많아져서 사용을 안하게 됐어요) (ibid)”*

The expensive but inoperative machine is just one of the many examples. It was not villagers who asked for the machines. The head of the village also said in the interview that it was the Korean government who decided to bring it to the village (*ibid*). The warehouse is full of nice and expensive but useless agricultural machines because the Korean government brought all the machines along without enough pre-investigation on the local situation (*ibid*). In the village, another project on poultry farming was also implemented. Here, the facility for chicken farm was almost destroyed and became unusable because it was built with bamboo which cannot be used for a long time in the rainy area like the village (*ibid*). One of the villagers mentioned in the interview that she will not raise chicken again even if she was given a second chance. Nor would she recommend other people for poultry farming since she does not want them to fail like her (*ibid*). Additionally, in Sakanji village which is also located in the small city Hlegu, it is, again, revealed that some establishments which were set up for villagers such as a dispensary and weekday childcare center were abandoned (*ibid*).

The examples of Myanmar which are not different at all from the ones from Rwanda also indicate the lack of participation of villagers in the development project and the huge obstacles of sustainability of the project itself. Mikkelsen (2005) claims that the concept 'participation'

has been regarded as one of the core notions of development for longer than a decade so far, nonetheless, it is still highly controversial that whether it is accomplished in real practices. To realize sustainable change in society and lives of the poor, development should focus on ‘humans’ and the way to achieve it is to let the ones who need betterment in their lives be actively involved in the process of the project instead of letting it simply be given to them (Höckert, 2011; Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004). The empowerment of the poor enable them to “define their own development problems, goals, and solutions (Parpart & Veltmeyer, 2004, p.52)”. Therefore, the concepts of ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ are regarded as the indispensable constituent for ‘grassroots, people-oriented, transformative form’ of development (*ibid*, p.52). However, as we have already seen from the previous discussion, participatory processes were not truly conducted in neither the original Korean SMU project in 1970s nor in contemporary Rwanda and Myanmar. Ziai (2005) argues that diverse main development actors such as UN and transnational NGOs use plausible buzzwords to give their intervention *raison d’être*. The general planning from the Korean government and the ISNC model are good examples of this. Although the words ‘participation’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘sustainability’ are described as instruments to complete the ultimate goals of the global SMU project, what we have witnessed in reality is an asymmetric and traditional ‘North-South’ power relation lying on the back side of this jargon (*ibid*). In this case, the notion of ‘participation’ used as a ‘new and more subtle forms of manipulation’ (Mikkelsen, 2005, p.76). This can explain why the human conditions have not bettered despite of several decades with numerous development projects carried out in the name of ‘development’.

In Myanmar, there is another issue related to the global SMU project. The former president Park Geun-hye, daughter of the late dictator Park Chung-hee who initiated the SMU project in 1970s, was ousted in March 2017 due to a corruption scandal which has been unfolding since October 2016.

According to the report from the Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC), the budget for the SMU ODA in 2015 was 60.1 billion won (approximately \$53million) - 54.7 billion at government expense and 5.4 billion from Gyeongsangbuk-do province - which was 2.5% of the total ODA budget (Committee for International Development Cooperation, 2016). The budget for SMU ODA had been more than doubled in 2015 compared to 2011 when the budget was 25.3 billion won (approximately \$22.3million) (*ibid*).

Table 1. Total SMU ODA budget from government and Gyeongsangbuk-do province

(unit: billion won)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total budget	28.1	34.4	43.4	44.6	60.1

(reference: CIDC, 2016, p.6)

Park's presidential term started in February 2013 and the increase in SMU ODA budget accelerated since her presidency, particularly between 2014 and 2015 (*ibid*). There is a strong suspicion that the reason of this rapid increase in SMU ODA budget is because Park wanted to extend the project which is considered the biggest achievement of her father. At the same time, the ODA budget is the money which is spent overseas, meaning that it is not easy to keep track of the usage (Doucette & Müller, 2016; J. Kim, 2017; S. Kim, 2016).

Park allowed her suspected partner in crime, a civilian by the name of Choi Soon-sil, to become deeply involved in state affairs and Choi is currently accused of manipulating the government for her private interests. Among some of the many corruption allegations, it is believed that Choi was trying to derive unfair benefits through the ODA budget, especially with the projects in Myanmar (J. Kim, 2017; Park, 2017). In May 2016, Yoo Jae-kyung, a former senior executive at Samsung Electronics who did not have any diplomatic experience, was appointed ambassador of Myanmar, an act which is entirely nonsense in the light of Korean general practice (Park, 2017). As the scandal unfolded, it came into the open that it was Choi who de facto appointed Yoo as an ambassador. Furthermore, according to the statement from the prosecutor, Choi also intervened in the appointment of the chief director of KOICA which is in charge of many global SMU projects worldwide (Chung, 2017). It was also discovered that president Park endorsed the involvement of the Mir Foundation - an organization which was established in 2015 to spread the value of Korean culture in the world<sup>9</sup> - in the SMU task force as the only private participant (Ju et al., 2017). As it is revealed that Choi is an actual owner of Mir foundation, it became at the very center of the corruption scandal and Samsung paid supporting payment which was around 22 billion won (around \$19.6) with hidden intention for

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.mir-foundation.com/#data=en/contents/intro/about>

private gain to three foundation and Mir was one of them (Shin, Kim, Ju, & Kim, 2017). Samsung also paid supporting donation - 7.8 billion one (around \$7 million) to Choi's daughter Jung, Yu-ra who is now detained in Denmark waiting for extradition to Korea (*ibid*). The private gain Choi tried to get through the ODA project in Myanmar is estimated to run up to around 2-3 billion won (around \$1.76 -\$2.65 million) (Ku & Kim, 2017).

As more diverse stakeholders are involved in development projects nowadays, more various ways and stakeholders of corruption can likewise be found compared to the old times when the corruption was generally confined to the 'public sector' (Labelle, 2014). In the Myanmar case, both the public and private sector were involved in corruption. However, no matter what kind of stakeholder is engaged in corruption in relation to the development field, one thing for sure is that corruption is a huge obstacle for development. As Labelle (2014, p.239) argues "corruption weakens institutions and reduces the capacity of all governments and international organizations to tackle challenges like poverty, conflict, economic crisis, and climate change". Labelle (2014) also claims that the impact of corruption is more destructive in developing countries, particularly the poor in developing countries are the biggest sufferer. Although it is generally known that corruption is more prevalent in developing countries, corruption is still found in developed countries as well (*ibid*). Schudel (2008) demonstrates that the level of corruption in donor countries affects the allocation of the aid, for example, less corrupted donor countries have tendency to allocate less aid to corrupted recipient countries since they are more interested in fostering the development of poor countries. On the other hand, donor countries with higher level of corruption do not make this distinction in recipient countries since they are more interested in personal gain rather than the improvement of developing countries (*ibid*).

According to the corruption perceptions index of 2016, Myanmar is one of the most corrupted countries in the world, ranked as the 136th least corrupt nation among 175 countries, while Korea is ranked as the 52th least corrupt nation (Transparency International, 2016). The level of corruption is rather high in Korea compared to other donor countries from DAC and Schudel (2008) indicates that when both donor and recipient countries are in high level of corruption, the private interests of donor countries is not influenced by the corruption level of the recipient countries. In this case, the foreign aid is used in Myanmar inefficiently due to highly corrupted government of the recipient and also the foreign aid from Korea does not foster betterment in Myanmar since it is not their main intention as a donor (*ibid*). The relatively highly corrupted

donor countries like Korea do not use aid to foster development in poor countries but “to serve more strategic (e.g., political and/or economic) goals (*ibid*, p.508)” and this is clearly demonstrated in the case of Myanmar.

Moreover, when knowing what is happening behind the scenes, it is not surprising that the SMU ODA project in Myanmar has not worked out exactly as planned. The former president Park and her confidant Choi obviously had more interests in rent-seeking than in genuine development of Myanmar. The Korean government conducted a feasibility investigation only for half of the ODA projects in 2015 (Office for Government Coordination, 2017) and this adds to the explanation of how easily the ODA projects can fall into a hand of a person like Park and Choi. Foreign aid from Korea have not bettered the situation of Myanmar. Similar to Smillie’s (2017) argument, aid from Korea has been used to enhance the donors’ own interests, rather than improving the conditions in Myanmar. While the Korean government filled their planning with warm sounding buzzwords to make their plan look very much plausible and succeeded to get international attention and even support from UNDP, the lives of the poor of Myanmar who are at the very end of the corruption chain did not change at all (Ziai, 2005). In addition, it brings a doubt about the monitoring process mentioned in the ISNC model document whether it was conducted as it said. If the monitoring system had been operated in proper way as it was promised it would have been harder to exploit the global SMU project for private gains.

According to Smillie (2017), the organizations which are involved in ‘development’ can hardly be free from ‘institutional corruption’ since they also manipulate development projects and aid with their own institutional interests. The global SMU project is seen as a cooperation and knowledge, experience sharing from the ‘South’ and therefore, it seems like ‘alternative’ path overcoming the normative ‘Western’ project of development. However, as it is discussed earlier, UNDP determined Korea as a part of ‘Global South’ even though it today is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. This was presumably done to make the project look and sound more plausible and less ‘northern’. Still, the world order mainly revolves around the Western hegemony - although considerably challenged by the rise of China today - and therefore the Western World have greater force at multilateral institution like UN. Although mainstream development has been steadily influenced by constant critique from the alternative development thinkers, the overall power of defining and carrying out transnational development projects still remains within the realm of the West. The reason why we have not

seen considerable improvement in developing countries is because the Western World has manipulated aid projects in under the pretext of ‘development’ to address their own interests.

### 5.4.3 Summary

The global SMU project has been tried implemented in Rwanda as a pilot country of the project since 2011. In Rwanda, they have a traditional collective action called ‘Umuganda’ which has a similar character to the collective mind-set of the Korean SMU. In Rwanda, what the Korean government and UNDP stated in their documents, such as inclusiveness, sustainability and empowerment, has not been conducted in practice. In three model villages - Kigarama, Mushimba and Gihogwe - it was found that the most marginalized people could not participate in the project since they were unable to afford the union due. This appears to be against the notion of ‘inclusiveness’. In addition, lack of pre-investigation on the local situation and also communication between Korean facilitator and villagers resulted machines and facilities useless. In Nyaruguru, the project is at risk of cessation since the organization process of cooperative union which act as a central axis of the project are still at an early stage and the village will only get the support from KOICA until 2017. A sewing cooperative union project in Kigarama also stopped after the support from Korea closed. The case of Myanmar was hardly different from the case of Rwanda. In villages in Hlegu, it was revealed that expensive farming machines from Korea were left in storage, because the Korean government brought the machines in the village without thorough investigation and communication with the villagers. For the same reason, facilities for poultry was destroyed. Moreover, establishments constructed for villagers like dispensaries and childcare centers went out of use. Through both cases we can see that terms like ‘inclusiveness’, ‘sustainability’ and ‘empowerment’ promised from the Korean government and UNDP were just ‘buzzwords’ to make the project sound ‘good’.

Another important issue in Myanmar concerns the corruption scandal which resulted in the impeachment of the former Korean president Park Geun-hye, who was partly related to ODA project in Myanmar. Park’s confidante Choi Soon-sil was the one who de facto appointed the new ambassador of Myanmar and also the chief director of KOICA to use them for her private gain. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that the global SMU project has been a very little help to the poor and rural population in Myanmar. This failure also means that UNDP’s monitoring system which was specified in the ISNC model has been far from sufficient or adequate. The

‘institutional corruption’ hinders betterment of human condition in the first place since the interest of donor countries and institutions is not ‘development’ but rent-seeking, further accumulation of wealth and cronyism. For Park and Choi it was their private economic gains and for UNDP it was their legitimacy, maintained by co-branding their agenda with a constructed face of the ‘South’.

## 6. Conclusion

When a new development strategy is based on a previous project, the original project ought to be thoroughly examined before the new one is carried out. Especially when this specific project happens to have been implemented by an authoritarian dictator. No matter how good results it may have spawned, no matter how ‘human-oriented’ it might sound - the alarm bells should be ringing. Loud and clear. However, the history of Korea’s development has long been told from a predominantly western perspective and too little attention has been paid to the severe violations of human rights and political freedom during the era in which the Korean SMU was implemented. Both the Korean government and UNDP have been clinging to the convenient illusion that the Korean SMU project in 1970s was a bottom-up driven and empowering process. Based on a thorough analysis of the original SMU project in Korea, this is however far from what characterizes the reality of the project. In fact, it was mainly applied through a rigid and militarized top-down structure, imposing social control and exclusion of those who did not agree with the means or the aims. Furthermore, the actors behind the global SMU project claims that the ‘can-do’ spirit and collective mind-set were the main success factors behind the Korean SMU, and that the SMU in turn was the main driver of Korea’s unprecedented pace of modernization. However, I argue that this is a-historical and a-political perspective since Korea’s rapid development cannot be explained by a single factor such as the SMU project. It was a complex combination of national and international factors such as the authoritarian Yushin constitution and the geopolitical landscape during the Cold War which paved the way for Korea’s miraculous growth. You simply cannot take the SMU out of this overall equation and expect it to succeed on its own. This is especially the case since the ‘nation-state’ no longer is the main agent for development. Globalism and transnational humanitarian intervention has become prevalent and it is therefore hard to say that the SMU project would work in these current settings. As learned from the cases from Rwanda and Myanmar, the reality is far from what it is stated in the general planning from the Korean government and ISNC model from

UNDP. What happened under the global SMU project was ‘exclusion’ of the most marginalized people and unilateral decisions from the Korean government which only resulted ‘human dissatisfaction’. Commanding the rural population to ‘participate’ can per definition not be understood as a proper ‘bottom-up’ process. Therefore, all the good sounding words in both the general planning from Korea and ISNC model from UNDP turn out to be nothing but fancy buzzwords. In the case of Myanmar, we even observed the impact caused by corruption from the donor country. Korea is still rather corrupted compared to other donor countries in DAC and as a corrupted donor country it has more interests in private gains than betterment of the lives of the poor. The huge international institutions like UN cannot be free from this ‘institutional corruption’. This is one of the major reasons why developing countries are still ‘developing’ and struggling with abject poverty. Korea’s involvement in Myanmar is just one example of how donors’ and big institutions’ main interests have not been on ‘development’ of developing countries but national, institutional interests in the first place.

The question then is why UNDP keeps supporting the global SMU project in spite of the ugly truth of the original SMU project and Korea’s high level of corruption? Either this global institution has been incredibly naive and ‘fooled’ by Korea, or it has intentionally neglected the dark sides of the project to make it fit into a contemporary agenda to avoid suffering from yet another legitimacy crisis. It also needs greater scrutiny that why UNDP emphasizes that global SMU project is ‘South-South’ cooperation, even though it is hard to say that Korea still belongs to ‘Global South’. I argue that they want the global SMU project to be seen as an alternative manner of development even though it still keeps the mainstream idea of development - Western modernization. It has been a useful scheme to sell the ideas of the great institutions through the face of country from the ‘South’ - although this country - Korea - is more likely a wolf in a sheep’s clothing which itself has been subject of Western modernization and coercion from the West.

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