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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.650913>

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Citation

BAE, Yooil, & KIM, Sunhyuk. (2012). Civil society and local activism in South Korea's local democratization. *Democratization*, 20(2), 260-286.

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Civil society and local activism in South Korea's local democratization

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(Received February 2011; final version received October 2011)

Recent studies on causes of intergovernmental transformation in old and new democracies have found that decentralization is often the outcome of negotiations between national and local political interests. South Korea is commonly believed to be an exception because local elections and institutions introduced in the early 1990s were, by and large, the product of negotiations among political elites at the centre, without significant inclusion of local actors. However, this article attempts to explicate a hitherto ignored aspect of decentralization reform in Korea: the role of civil society and local activism in the politics of decentralization. In the 2000s, several 'triggering events' such as economic instability, democratic consolidation, emergence of civilian leaders, and the growth of civil society provided a strong momentum for the decentralization movement. We demonstrate how civic organizations at both national and local levels have played significant roles in proposing and pushing for decentralization, and argue that the bottom-up movement for decentralization under the Roh Moo-hyun administration was surprisingly well mobilized and institutionalized, especially at the agenda-setting stage.

Keywords: civil society; decentralization; local democracy; South Korea; democratization

Introduction: democratic transition and decentralization

Over the past three decades, a large number of developing countries have undergone transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Introduction of democratic constitutions in these countries enhanced the practice of democratic politics, institution building, and activities of civil society. However, while it is commonly recognized that democratic politics is now in place, crafting of democratic political rights and institutions by 'package deals' at the elite level has not completely neutralized the dominance of central elites and upper classes.¹ Accordingly, scholars and ordinary citizens in new democracies have begun to question the role of democracy in resolving social issues such as economic (in)equality, (under)development,

and political (under)representation.² Diverse approaches have been adopted to address these particular problems in new democracies, but none has garnered greater attention than empowerment of local bodies and decentralization.

As demand for democratic devolution and decentralization increases, an extensive range of decentralization reforms to restructure the state is now in vogue across political spectra and political systems.³ Since the 1970s, many nascent democracies in Latin America, East Asia and Eastern Europe have designed and implemented various forms of decentralization. This has been possible because decentralization, commonly defined as 'transfer of function and authority' to provide certain types of public services from the central government to subnational bodies, is widely believed to have made local governments more efficient and to have increased government responsiveness and political participation.⁴

Although decentralization tends to diminish the central government's dominance, most 'initial' works and negotiations for building democratic institutions at the local level in most developing countries have primarily involved *national* political leaders. Ongoing studies on local democratization in old and new democracies, however, have found that the strengthening of democratic local government critically depends on activities of subnational actors and civil society.⁵ The process of decentralization is not a one-way process. It is often conditioned by a series of political negotiations among major political actors, such as national politicians, bureaucrats, local governments, and civil society.⁶ Since democratic transition and consolidation are more than mere democratic institution building, democratic politics at the national level is heavily dependent upon vibrancy of local governments and civil society, as Tocqueville argued.⁷ In fact, most of the contributions civil society is expected to make to democratic transition and consolidation, such as those underscored by Schmitter and Diamond, come into action at the local level.⁸ For example, the power of local political forces vis-à-vis the central/federal state determined in large measure the grassroots representation in national politics, policy reforms and legitimacy of the political system in France and Italy in the 1970s.⁹ In the Philippines and Mexico also, associations of mayors and governors played crucial roles in such negotiations.¹⁰ Subnational government associations and civic organizations want to create more space for direct political participation and play bigger roles in making decisions related to local political and economic affairs.

Against this backdrop, decentralization in East Asian countries, where concentration of power and resources at the centre was instrumental in uniting the nations and making economic growth possible in the period of nation building and industrialization, is particularly interesting. In these countries, with political democratization, civil society and local governments have started demanding better performance and higher responsiveness from central governments, which has led to various decentralization moves in the region. However, despite fragmented improvements, decentralization has been more discussed than acted upon for many years in most of East Asia, except countries like China, because of the dominance of central political interests over localities. Inputs from civil society,

businesses, and local governments have been systematically ignored, controlled, or only partially adopted.

For example, South Korea (hereafter Korea), which is the main subject of this article and one of the forerunners among late democratizers, reaffirms the limited nature of decentralization in East Asia. As the popular theory suggests, local elections and institutions introduced in the 1990s in Korea were primarily determined by negotiations among political elites *at the centre*.¹¹ Although decentralization was intended to end the more than 50 years of centralism and diminish the state's dominance over the market, society, and localities, extant literature argues that central agencies and politicians exploited the very process of decentralization to diffuse the united voices from below, delaying decisions on devolution, or delegating functions without financial authority.¹² Therefore, unlike the cases of bottom-up decentralization in countries that democratized their governments earlier, Korea's top-down approach to local democratization provided little opportunity for local bodies and civil society to transform the central government.

However, though the notion of decentralization being 'state-led' in Korea and other East Asian countries has some truth in it, dominance of central political actors in decentralization has been gradually diminishing since the late 1990s. In the aftermath of the financial crisis (1997–1998), in particular, the power of the central polity began to decline precipitously, while social organizations gained strength and became politically more influential. At the same time, rebirth of local elections in the mid-1990s provided a new momentum for local politics.¹³ With these 'triggering events' and favourable political changes, therefore, notable efforts were made from below to push forward the decentralization agenda throughout the 2000s. Particularly under the Kim Dae Jung (1998–2003) and Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008) administrations, comprehensive plans for decentralization, such as the Law for the Promotion of Central Authorities (LPCA, 1999) and the Special Law on the Promotion of Decentralization (SLPD, 2004), were enacted. These laws resulted in radical changes that could threaten the status of existing central agencies and political stakeholders.¹⁴ For example, transferring decision-making authority and more than 1500 functions from the centre to local bodies and abolishing special administrative agencies meant the shrinking of ministerial powers at the centre. Indeed, as a result of decentralization reforms implemented together with a broader administrative reform programme, some of the central governmental ministries underwent major reorganization in the late 1990s.¹⁵ Owing to the aforementioned decentralization laws, which were more than just marginal adjustments, the structure of the state was reorganized to delegate more authority and control over resources to local tiers of the government.

Then, how could Korea achieve such relatively radical decentralization reform? Because of the resistance from central stakeholders, such as central bureaucrats, decentralization required shaking up of the existing central political patronage system.¹⁶ This was clearly more than simple political negotiations at the centre. In this article, we argue that it is necessary to examine the relatively neglected side of the politics of decentralization in Korea in the 2000s: the role of the

civil society.¹⁷ We do recognize that the role of civil society in promoting local democracy in Korea has not been the typical ‘Tocquevillian grassroots politics’ as described in existing literature on emergence and development of civil society politics vis-à-vis a strong central state.¹⁸ Nevertheless, existing explanations appear to have underestimated the role of civil society in Korea’s decentralization reform. Indeed, by participating in several rounds of negotiations for decentralization, civil society often played a crucial role in drafting major bills, providing new ideas and alternatives, and promoting public discourse on decentralization by pressuring central political actors in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Though there was no overnight transfer of power to local bodies, institutionalized support for decentralization from civil society has been consistent and strong and has contributed to shaping of relevant policy debates and effecting significant change. Top-down policy decisions with no consideration of local and social preferences no longer went unchallenged.

We outline how civic organizations at both national and local levels such as Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice, People’s Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, and Civic Movement for Decentralization have played their respective roles in Korea’s decentralization reforms by examining their discourses and activities in enacting decentralization-related laws under the Roh government. We focus on why decentralization became an important agenda after democratic transition, how Korean civil society’s nature transformed from democratic movements to advocacy campaigns and what kind of strategies and activities civic organizations adopted in the 2000s. Evidence that civil society played a crucial role in drafting decentralization moves does not imply rejection of the top-down theories but it does suggest that greater attention should be paid to the civil society and activism. Our argument is underpinned by extensive field research, including interviews with members of the elite.

Civic activism and local democracy under strong central state

State-led decentralization from a top-down perspective

There are two main approaches to the driving forces of decentralization in the literature. First, state-centric theories argue that decentralization has not been driven so much by the local governments, citizens, and civil society asking for it, though it has often been a reaction to political or economic failures of centralized states over the past decades. In many countries, such as Italy and Belgium, national political leaders who recognized its potential economic and political benefits often adopted and implemented far-reaching decentralization reforms.¹⁹ At times national elites perceived a decentralized system as an optimal strategy for maintaining their political power as it helped mobilize regional resources and political support.²⁰

On the contrary, recent studies show the patterns of dynamic political interactions and negotiations between central and local political interests in decentralization processes. They argue that local politicians and social actors participate in debates and decisions that shape the form and degree of decentralization.²¹ For

example, Falleti developed ‘a sequential theory’ of decentralization to show that different and often conflicting sets of territorial interests and preferences of national and local politicians lead to varying forms and sequences of political, fiscal, and administrative decentralization.²² Other works argue that local-based or ideologically-motivated political parties tend to pressure central politicians and bureaucrats to carry out decentralization.²³ Thus, in recent literature on the politics of decentralization, local and social sectors have been recognized as important political actors in reshaping of state structures.

It is commonly believed that Korea’s trajectory of local democratization for over 50 years has belonged to the state-centric model because the role of subnational bodies and civil communities in promoting decentralization was not noticeable until the mid-1990s. Unlike its Japanese counterpart, which developed a relatively equal working relationship between civil and business societies, the Korean central government led and dominated the process of nation building and economic modernization until the late 1980s.²⁴ As indicated in Table 1, largely due to the long tradition of strong centralism, progress in local democratization has been relatively limited and slow, prompting some analysts to identify a ‘democratic lag’ between central and local democratization even after the democratization of 1987.²⁵ During the first and second phases (1948–1987) of authoritarianism, state-led development weakened the local civil society, depleted local organizations’ capacities, and made the democratic culture fragile. These have been cited as possible causes and consequences of delayed local democratization in conventional ‘state-led’ decentralization theories.²⁶ The rule of authoritarian leaders (1961–1987) resulted in the dark age of democracy under military regimes as they dissolved all local councils, disbanded basic local governments, and returned to the appointment system for local executive heads (1961 onwards). Despite the constitutional guarantee of local democracy, authoritarian leaders suspended implementation of local democracy for reasons of administrative efficiency, economic development, national security (that is, threats from North Korea) and local governments’ inadequate financial resources (1972). In doing so, central bureaucrats and politicians could micromanage local affairs and civil society. After the grand democratization in the early and mid-1990s, local mayoral and council elections were reinstated in the third phase (1987–1995), but even this reintroduction of local democracy was often cited as the outcome of strategic negotiations between ruling and opposition parties at the centre.²⁷

However, the decentralization process in Korea from the late 1990s onwards has shown a different pattern of local and civil society participation. While reintroduction of local elections in the 1990s contributed to the building of local democratic institutions and political channels from the ‘Weberian’ perspective (Phase 4), local citizens gradually started demanding more than periodic elections, asking for quality civic participation and effective means of holding their government and agencies accountable in ‘Tocquevillian’ terms.²⁸ In fact, an opinion poll on local democracy has showed that nearly one-third of local residents demanded more substantive participation in local affairs, while most of them rated the growth

Table 1. Phases of decentralization reform in Korea.

Phase	Year	Major reforms and events
First phase: constitutional foundation of local democracy	1948–1961	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of 1948: The legal status of local government and local autonomy. Establishment of basic units of local administrations (Local Autonomy Act). • Delayed popular election until December 1960: Korean War (1950–1953), Dictatorship of President Syngman Rhee. • Implementation of popular local elections under the Democratic Party government (1960–1961).
Second phase: the dark age under military regime	1961–1987	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military regime forcefully suspended the practice of local democracy: The Military Commission Decree No. 4 (1961). • Abolished local councils, appointed the executive heads of local governments, and displaced basic local governments as autonomous units. • Centralized national economic development.
Third phase: democratization and preparing for decentralization	1987–1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratization and amendment of new democratic constitution (1987). • Political leaders promised for restoration of local autonomy during presidential campaign. • Revision of Local Autonomy Act (1990, 1994): reorganization of local council and executive head of local government.
Fourth phase: gradual development of decentralization	1995–2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular election for local executive heads and councils (1995) including the first gubernatorial election. • Devolution Promotion Act (1999)

Source: Choi and Wright, 'Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) in Korea and Japan'.

of local institutions and their power during the past 10 years positively.²⁹ No doubt, there has been bargaining between the state and civil society, as well as between national and local units, but this changing pattern of interaction reflects the growth of civil society and its emphasis on issues of local democracy and empowerment of local political actors which could promote *substantive democracy* and reduce social inequality in this period. Therefore, the following agenda became the major concerns for civil and local society³⁰:

- Substantial delegation and devolution of central authority and functions to local governments and expansion of local affairs including public safety (police) and education.

- Abolition of local branch offices of central ministries (special administrative agencies) and guarantee of autonomy with less central control.
- Rationalization of local taxation system and transfer of financial resources.
- Empowerment of local councils, residents' right to recall representatives and participatory auditing of local governments.

As such, it was expected that decentralization reform would end the dominance of the political centre and excessive patronage of local affairs, which were necessary during the nation building and industrialization process in Korea. In economic terms, it was argued that local taxpayers' insistence on good-quality services would increase efficiency in allocating fiscal resources of local governments.³¹ At the same time, decentralization was also expected to result in more responsive and democratic forms of local policy-making by providing opportunities to local citizens and incentives to local politicians.³² Since Korean authoritarian leaders intentionally delayed and ignored the introduction of local democracy for aforementioned reasons, decentralization reform has been considered a very important form of democratization.

Above all, such substantive local democratization and demand for decentralization from below coincided with the transition of the activities of Korean civil society from 'pro-democracy' to 'pro-advocacy'. Second, the quantitative and qualitative growth of local and civil society under the persistence of state power was also an important propelling factor. In order to trace and analyse the role of national and local civil society in the politics of decentralization, it is necessary to first examine the development of civil society in the process of Korea's democratization.

Transformation of civil society

Democratization in Korea has been characterized by many scholars as a 'transition via social movement'.³³ Pro-democracy movements by civil society, organized and led by student groups, labour unions, and religious organizations, played crucial roles in initiating and promoting democratization over time. In the three 'democratic junctures' in the post-war period, civil society consistently contributed to the breakdown of authoritarian rule, transition to democracy, and democratic consolidation.³⁴

Since the transition to democracy in 1987, civil society in Korea has undergone crucial changes. Immediately after the transition to democracy, when the Roh Tae Woo government was in power, civil society was divided between the 'people's movement' camp and the 'citizens' movement' camp. The people's movement organizations preferred to continue their pro-democracy movement, arguing that the newly installed regime, led by another military general-turned-president, was not democratic enough. They continued their pro-democracy campaigns, often using violent methods. On the other hand, citizens' movement groups accepted the democratic legitimacy of the new regime and changed their goals and

tactics. Instead of democracy, they chose to focus on economic equality, state and political reforms to curb corruption, and social and environmental issues. Instead of illegal and violent tactics, they adhered to legal and peaceful methods.

During the Kim Young Sam government, the division and competition between the people's movement camp and the citizens' movement camp gradually came to an end, with the citizens' movement camp emerging as the winner. The Kim government maintained a relatively amicable relationship with civil society. Various reform campaigns of citizens' movement organizations were warmly received by the government, and a sizable number of civic activists participated in the policy-making process either as expert advisors or cabinet members.

During the Kim Dae Jung government, civil society groups in Korea expanded their activities to include corporate restructuring, in response to the financial crisis in 1997–1998. Civic organizations demanded corporate reform to make the governance structure of major industrial conglomerates more transparent and efficient. Also, they vigorously campaigned for political reform. During the 2000 general elections, civil society groups in Korea waged a movement to 'blacklist' candidates who they deemed 'unfit' for nomination and election.

Overall, the transformation of Korean civil society since 1987 is unmistakable. From the grand pro-democracy movement during the 1970s and 1980s, civil society in Korea has now evolved into essentially an advocacy group, identifying new issues, supporting new causes, and developing and proposing practical solutions. This transformed civil society in Korea is focusing its efforts on making Korea's democracy deeper and more substantive. Against this backdrop, it was during the Roh Moo-hyun government that civil society groups and local organizations became seriously interested in the issue of decentralization. As we discuss in greater detail in the following sections, decentralization emerged as a national issue in earnest during Roh's administration.

Political opportunity for decentralization in late 1990s–2000s

The period of transition to democracy and the subsequent consolidation (1987–1994) marked a major turning point for democratic politics as it brought about a new constitution, democratic presidential elections, and several institutions. Yet central political actors still maintained their dominant position and there was little room for debating local democratization. In fact, there was an opportunity for proponents of decentralization to push forward local democracy on the governmental agenda. For example, candidates running for the presidency in the 1987 election announced enforcement of full-fledged local democracy as one of their core campaign pledges, and the Local Autonomy Act (LAA, revised in 1988) did introduce direct elections of local council members.³⁵ Nevertheless, there was opposition from central ministries and the Conservative Party militated against effective implementation of decentralization plans. The three opposition parties enjoying the majority position (1988–1990) – the Party for Peace and Democracy, the Democratic Reunification Party, and the New Republican Party

– hammered out a compromise on the democratization of local bodies. However, President Roh Tae-Woo, who had been driven into a difficult position by the majority parties during his earlier term and was worried about the growth of local power in the home turfs of the opposition parties, exercised his veto power to scuttle the decentralization proposals (March 1989).³⁶ As such, while post-democratization politics was dominated by central politicians, civic mobilization for local democracy by local civil society stalled.³⁷

It was not until civilian leaders, such as Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung (1994–2002) who provided great impetus to the process of decentralization, that full-fledged local elections were mandated by LAA (revised in 1994) and held for the first time in Korea's history. This progress resulted in two important developments that were favourable to stronger and more advanced decentralization reforms in the 2000s. Despite lingering controls of the centre, local elections since 1995 have created a 'local political arena', which in effect has opened up the public sphere to civil society and local citizens. Local governments gradually strengthened their authority to control public policies dealing with local demands and problems, and financial discretion of local governments increased steadily.³⁸ In general, more than 80% of intellectuals and local residents agreed that local elections and local autonomy have accomplished enhancement of local democracy since the reintroduction of local elections in the mid-1990s.³⁹ Indeed, as a result of the 10-year-long experience of local autonomy, policy channels from local society to the centre have been diversified; several new institutions and procedures have taken root, resulting in phenomena such as demanding relevant information from local governments (information disclosure, 1996), seeking investigations of illegal administrative actions (1996), and requesting specific governmental action on policy issues (petitioning, 2000).⁴⁰ These new institutions and programmes did not automatically lead to actual citizen participation. Yet, citizens now at least had formal channels to vent their views on everyday issues at the local level. Regardless of the existing control by the central government, the influence of citizens and civic organizations on local politics increased substantially.⁴¹

Second, central political actors under the civilian leaders who were formerly opposition leaders and advocates of local democracy emphasized and pursued structural reform to overcome the financial crisis and the economic downturn, which made governmental reorganization justified and popular. For example, as part of downsizing and reorganizing efforts by the central government (February 1998),⁴² the LPCA was passed in 1999, and the Presidential Committee on Devolution Promotion (1999) was established in order to accelerate transfer of central functions to local bodies and to facilitate government innovation.⁴³ Moreover, the economic downturn led to questioning of centralized policy-making and geographical concentration as the general public lost confidence in the central government. This changed circumstance also provided a political opportunity for advancing decentralization. To relieve the country from the humiliating International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout, the Kim Dae Jung government endeavoured to remove barriers to liberalization of the economy. Although the IMF

did not directly pinpoint the decentralization issue, the bailout and the wave of 'reinventing government' movement prompted intellectuals and policy-makers to ponder the cost of a highly centralized system and to devise a strategic plan for decentralization. As such, the progress of decentralization during the 1990s laid a firm foundation for a more institutionalized process of decentralization in later periods.

Not surprisingly, organized resistance from central ministries often frustrated the voices and preferences of local and civil society in the process of drafting and implementing reform. Even under democratic governments, the logic of national politics altered the direction of reform bills in such a way that the central government maintained a considerable degree of leverage over local bodies and civil society.⁴⁴ The ostensible reason for opposition was the capacity and moral rectitude of local governments as indicated in a series of surveys, but undeniably, the reluctant attitude of central ministries – in particular, from the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MOFE) – was the main impediment to decentralization.⁴⁵ Overall, collective opinions of local governments and civil society were systematically ignored or marginalized, while central bureaucrats hampered the process of decentralization reform by procrastinating appropriate hearing procedures and lobbying politicians.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, despite this apparent thwarting of decentralization and persistent central political control under the two civilian presidents, the central government could not ignore the influence of civil society and local governments any more. The aforementioned triggering events and favourable external environment contributed to the shrinkage of central government and growth of local and civil society in the early 2000s. Election of a 'decentralization-minded' President Roh and the growth of local and civil society were more than just gathering brushwood to make the fire of reform.⁴⁷ The following analysis of decentralization politics, focused on the drafting and passage of the SLPD in 2003–2004, shows how local and civil society played a crucial role in realizing decentralization.

Civic groups and local governments in the politics of decentralization

Decentralization, viewed as an integral part of democracy, has undeniably been a frequently recurring topic in the process of consolidation and strengthening of democracy in post-democratization politics of Korea. Yet, as discussed above, the process of decentralization under authoritarian leaders was in the hands of central political elites. Despite valuable efforts made by former civilian President Kim Dae Jung, changes in central-local relations took place only in a piecemeal fashion. Therefore, it was not until the Roh administration that the government began to work on decentralization in earnest. President Roh and leaders of his government claimed that the crisis of Korean politics and economy resided in inefficient distribution of resources between the centre and the periphery⁴⁸ and placed decentralization as one of the top reform agendas, such as administrative reform, public personnel reform, expansion of e-government, and financial and tax reform.⁴⁹

In order to avoid any unnecessary processes and delays and to overcome bureaucratic resistance, the Decentralization Roadmap (2003) was designed to reconfigure the structure of central-local relations within a given time period. The roadmap was based on concrete principles, including 'delegate first, complement later', 'local affairs should be in residents' hands', and 'both functions and authority should be delegated'. Based on these principles and under the supervision of 'decentralist politicians', ministries and agencies at the centre were forced to make a list of functions 'transferable' to local bodies. The list of functions included some policy functions that were earlier with central ministries, improvement of local financial and administrative capacities, empowerment of local councils, and establishment of collaborative networks between the central and local governments.⁵⁰

Under the Roh government which was much more favourable to decentralization, local governments and civil society became important negotiating partners for the reform, and central political actors were not able to take unilateral actions anymore. Although the overall process of a making detailed plan for decentralization itself was still mainly directed by central politicians having lawmaking power, the top-down decision-making from the central political world was considerably constrained by participation of civic organizations and local governments. First of all, the roadmap itself was a product of political deliberation among various stakeholders and a reflection of voices from local governments and civil society (Table 2). From December 2002 onwards, the Presidential Transition Committee (PTC), which later developed into the Presidential Committee on Government Innovation and Decentralization (PCGID), organized several meetings, conferences, and hearings to disseminate its programmes for decentralization and receive feedback from non-political and non-bureaucratic actors.⁵¹ Incorporating opinions of non-governmental actors and local governments, results of public surveys, and experiences of the MOGAHA, the PCGID hammered out the roadmap for decentralization in 2003. In the process, while national politicians took a wait-and-see attitude, intense debates took place between civil society and local governments, because civic groups and local governments favoured much more radical moves toward local autonomy during this period.⁵² In the beginning, since central ministries such as MOFE and several other major ministries were obviously reluctant to accelerate decentralization and were intentionally procrastinating devolution of their functions and authority to local governments, the passage of SLPD was in doubt.⁵³ Yet President Roh, decentralist ministers, and the designers of the decentralization plan at the PCGID, effectively managed and coordinated internal complaints by using a carrot-and-stick strategy.⁵⁴ In the end, opinions of civil society and local government associations were considerably reflected in the final form of SLPD, which addressed outstanding issues of decentralization reform and legally forced central agencies and politicians to pursue decentralization (December 2003). Although President Roh and decentralists in the government added forces in the process, the passage of SLPD could not be possible without strenuous efforts and lobbies from the civic

Table 2. The decentralization roadmap in the Roh administration.

Decentralization roadmap	Detailed tasks
1. Functional redistribution between central and local governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the local infrastructure • Comprehensive delegation of central affairs • Implementation of local educational autonomy • Implementation of local police system • Abolition of central ministries' local branches
2. Comprehensive delegation of financial and taxation authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of regional financial imbalance • Revision of local taxation system • Strengthening local financial autonomy • Transparent local finance
3. Strengthening local administrative capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening autonomous local administration • Innovating local governance and empowering local bureaucrats
4. Activating local legislative body and reforming local election system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activating local councils • Reforming local election system
5. Building up responsive government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up democratic checking-control system • Reforming local government evaluation system
6. Activating civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce various resident participation systems • Strengthening infrastructure for civic activities
7. Making cooperative intergovernmental relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensification of collaboration between centre and local • Building trans-local collaboration system • Arbitrating disputes among local governments

Source: PCGID (2003).

organizations and local political worlds. As a result, many recurring decentralization issues that failed to be enacted in the past decades, such as the introduction of local police and education systems, local allocation tax (increase from 15% to 19.13% of national income), and the resident recall and referendum system, finally have been adopted.⁵⁵

As such, the favourable political opportunity coincided with the growth of civil society; decentralization under the Roh administration can be labelled as 'negotiated decentralization' characterized by the active role of civil society and close interactions between civil society and the central government. Since the late 1990s, civic organizations have played a crucial role in supporting decentralization legislation through various mechanisms such as electoral politics, partnership with

local governments, mobilization of public opinion, intellectual networks, and direct participation in government.

Professionalized civil society and policy competition over decentralization

In addition to changes in the central political-economic environment, the extent of the activities of civil society in the politics of decentralization depends on the extent of their professionalization and policy-making capacity. Since the late 1990s, a number of large civic organizations have started to enjoy considerable influence over national, regional, and even international affairs since. As noted earlier, the nature of civic organizations has been changed to advocacy-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that mobilized citizens to influence national politics and the policy-making process. Lee and Arrington identified two main causes of this 'centralizing pattern' of civic politics. First, it was politically and geographically easier for civic organizations to forge partnerships or cooperative relations with opposition parties that were relatively weak, compared with the strong presidency and bureaucracy. In a sense, social organizations benefitted from the asymmetry of power between the legislature and the executive, by collaborating with the relatively weak National Assembly. Second, civic organizations attracted greater attention from the general public and the mass media by emphasizing the 'public' nature of their movement and demonstrating their visibility in the central policy-making process.⁵⁶

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, several 'general purpose' civic organizations such as the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ, founded in 1989) and the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD, founded in 1994) played a crucial role in consolidating democracy and promoting political, economic, and social reform in Korea. In the issue of decentralization, these organizations set out an integrated approach to decentralization so that major decisions on political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization would be adopted as a single package. CCEJ was originally focused on issues of economic justice, economic inequality, business-labour relations, and poverty, but it has extended its interest to a broader range of policy and governance issues. It established a special committee, the Committee of Local Autonomy⁵⁷ and initiated various decentralization related activities, including the hosting of the Exhibition on Local Government Reform and cooperating with the National Association of Governors. Prominent scholarly groups specialized in decentralization issues in the public administration field were deeply involved in this committee.⁵⁸ In addition to proposing alternative decentralization bills, the leaders of CCEJ, in cooperation with local governments, frequently visited lawmakers at the National Assembly and central ministers to encourage the passage of the SLPD bill in 2003. Since CCEJ's major interest was in economic justice and inequality, it also expressed concern about unequal distribution of economic resources (Figure 1), governmental responsibilities, and decisional authorities between the central and local governments through various reports and official reviews.⁵⁹

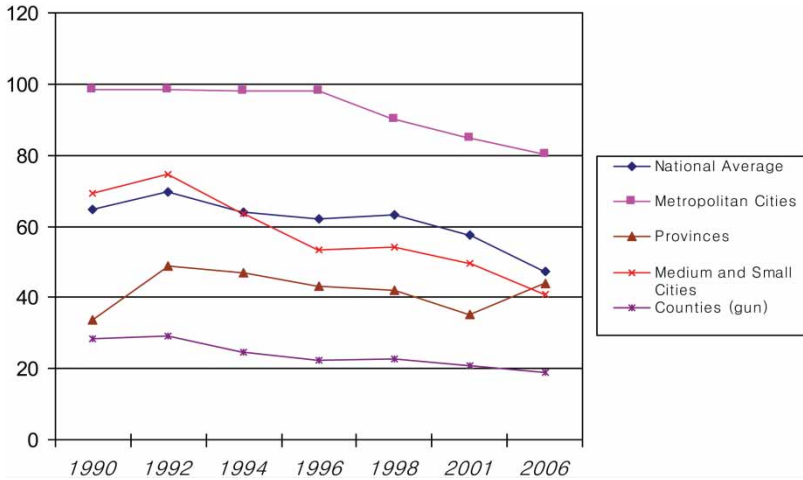


Figure 1. Regional disparities in Korea: fiscal independent ratio.

Source: Korea Statistics Information Services portal (1990–2006).

Note: Fiscal independent ratio (%) = (Local own revenue/Total local revenue)*100.

While CCEJ was more interested in improving the central-local governance system in part due to its moderate ideological stance, the other major civic organization PSPD tended to lean toward issues of substantive democracy and citizen participation. PSPD organized a coalition for local autonomy, namely Civil Society Network for Decentralization and Participation (*Punkwŏn'gwa Ch'amyŏrŭl wihan Siminsahoe Netŭwŏk*), in November 2003. This united 16 civic organizations, and the coalition actively expressed its views on decentralization. In addition, PSPD established a specialized internal division called Solidarity for Participation and Local Autonomy (*Ch'amyŏ Chach'iyŏndae*), and proposed various local policy alternatives (May 2000). The direction of PSPD's decentralization movement clearly reflected its progressive outlook; it was mainly focused on checking state power, democratization of local communities' power structures, and electoral movements.

In addition to CCEJ and PSPD, a few other civic groups, composed of intellectuals and experts in administrative reform, also campaigned for decentralization. For instance, the Citizens' Coalition for a Better Government (CCBG), led by professionals and scholarly groups, was deeply engaged in issues related to 'reinventing government'. Unlike social movement organizations, CCBG chose to express its opinions on decentralization through legal, non-confrontational, and non-violent methods. It organized monthly policy forums and published reports on governmental reform. Its professional perspective was taken seriously and was incorporated into the Roh administration's reform programmes and roadmaps.⁶⁰

One of the most noteworthy phenomena in the decentralization drive under the Roh government was the emergence of a *local-based* civic organization, the Civic

Movement for Decentralization (CMD), which has been the most active civic alliance for a single policy issue, decentralization, since November 2002 (established in October 2000). Previous studies on local democracy in Korea have argued that locally organized civic groups and local mobilization had been substantially weak.⁶¹ Unlike the aforementioned general-purpose national civic organizations, however, CMD was organized by purely local activists in major local cities and was more enthusiastic about advancing decentralization reform. By bringing the issues of seriousness of local democracy and regional disparity to the fore, it mobilized prominent local figures in major local cities, such as Pusan, Taejŏn, and Taegu. At the initial drafting stage of the SLPD legislation in particular, CMD's initiatives and activities played a crucial role.

CMD promoted decentralization in two ways. First, decentralization-minded local intellectuals, such as leaders of local civic organizations like Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and local branches of CCEJ, local university professors, journalists, local politicians, and businesspeople, joined forces under CMD's leadership and deeply engaged in the decentralization movements. These local elite groups were mainly concerned with declining local economies and the widening central-local disparities and united themselves to fight the central powers.⁶² In 2001, about 3000 intellectuals and CMD members held a mass meeting for the 'National Intellectuals' Declaration on Decentralization', in front of the National Assembly.⁶³ CMD announced the founding of 'local charters' asking transference of decisional authorities, taxation and economic resources, and recruitment of home-grown talent, on 22 March of the same year. In addition, to stimulate grassroots' interest on the issue of decentralization, CMD organized several academic meetings, workshops, and conferences in cooperation with local governments and their associations and other civic groups like CCEJ. Professors who were advisory members of CMD developed strategies and plans for decentralization. These tasks could be done only by this scholarly group because the tasks (Table 2) required professional experience and knowledge. They also drafted their own version of the 'Decentralization Promotion Bill' and the 'National Balanced Development Bill', which improved upon earlier versions of government bills passed in July 2003.

Second, CMD attempted to put pressure on politicians and central bureaucrats by directly participating in politics and engaging politicians. In particular, immediately before the 2002 presidential elections, in December 2002, it invited three major candidates – Yi Hoe Ch'ang (December 6), Roh Moo-hyun (December 8), and Kwŏn Yŏng-Kil (December 11) – to sign an agreement that they would actively pursue decentralization once elected.⁶⁴ This strategy was extremely successful in attracting politicians' attention to the issue of decentralization. Moreover, by using personal and educational ties, members of CMD personally lobbied National Assembly members to support decentralization.

Since civic organizations shared almost identical views and professional knowledge on the matter of decentralization and local development, their activities succeeded in gaining public attention and in turning the vague concept of

decentralization into a well articulated and firm demand on the central polity. The rise of civic power around the issue of decentralization has been critical in setting governmental agendas, and the strong pressure from below was, by and large, reflected in the final version of SLDP (Table 3).⁶⁵ Indeed, the opinion of civic organizations was seriously considered and adopted by PCGID and MOGAHA bureaucrats in the early stages of decentralization agenda setting. Of course, this became possible because the decentralists at the centre, who occupied important positions, including the president and the minister of MOGAHA, were willing to address local needs and wanted to avoid being blamed for employing a ‘closed decision-making process’.⁶⁶ Yet, civic organizations, such as CCEJ, PSPD, and CMD, went beyond being mere assistants or collaborators to emerge as active ‘policy competitors’ who, with professional knowledge, could produce better policy alternatives. In fact, SLDP was the product of dynamic negotiation and debates among central actors, local governments, and civil society through various types of conferences and meetings.⁶⁷ Contrary to the conventional understanding, as such, the vibrant civil society politics played a crucial role in furthering decentralization in the 2000s.

Table 3. Civic and local voices in drafting SLDP (2003).

	Collaborative proposition from below	Outcome
Political decentralization	Abolition of political parties’ nominations for local elections	Reflected in SLDP Article 7 (5)
	Abolition of local executives’ term limits (three consecutive terms)	SLDP Article 7 (6)
	Publicly managed local elections	SLDP Article 7 (5)
	Salaried local councils members (instead of honorary positions)	SLDP Article 7 (2)
Administrative decentralization	Autonomous authority over human resources and organizations, autonomous lawmaking power, local public safety (police), local education authority, abolition of special administrative agencies	SLDP Article 15 (5)
Fiscal decentralization	Introduction of new taxes (local income, consumer taxes)	SLDP Article 6 (1)
	Consultation with local executives regarding central grants and transfer	SLDP Article 6 (3-4)
	Transformation from grant-in-aid to block grant program	SLDP Article 6 (4)
	Devolution with fiscal resources	SLDP Article 6 (5)
Establishment of state agency for the promotion of decentralization	Presidential committee on government innovation and decentralization	SLDP Article 3 (8-12)

Source: National Assembly, ‘The Forum on Decentralization Related Bills’.

Alliance between civic groups and local government associations

The growth of local governments and the emergence of local political figures have begun affecting national politics since mid-1990s. It is true that before the 1990s all politics was national and centralized in Korea. Local governments had failed to focus on local agendas, and local residents devoted their attention to national issues rather than community issues. Local newspapers had a share of less than 20% in newspaper subscriptions, indicating that what happened locally was seen as trivial and marginal, as compared with what happened in national politics.⁶⁸ Yet, local political actors began playing a crucial role in constructing decent and competitive local communities by promoting decentralization, after local residents recognized that central offices were too far away to listen to their voices and the gap between the centre and the localities grew wider. The effect of democratic politics awakened local citizens as well. There was growing criticism of the central government's excessive control over local governments.⁶⁹ Local governments' demands for decentralization were mainly expressed through activities of four local government associations (LGAs) that were established in the late 1990s and early 2000s – the National Association of Governors, the National Association of Mayors, the Association of Metropolitan and Provincial Council Chairs, and the National Association of Council Chairs. Collaboration among these local government associations was a critical factor that pressured the central government since only the National Association of Governors had official authority to propose policies to the central government (*Taejōngbu Chōngch'aek Kōnūigwōn*), while other associations were systematically marginalized.⁷⁰

However, nothing could be done without an alliance between civic organizations and LGAs. Through lobbying activities, local government associations promoted a big bang approach to replace the central government's gradual approach to decentralization. Local governments and civil society demanded that the central government immediately devolve important functions and responsibilities to local governments, while the central government opposed any radical change. When the central ministries adopted a lukewarm attitude, alliance with civil society to break the deadlock was critical. To promote and achieve the goal of 'decentralize first and complement later', the four associations organized an executive committee for negotiation with the central government and prepared legislation for the promotion of decentralization by cooperating with civic activist groups such as CMD and CCEJ. For example, the four local government associations and CMD invited a few National Assembly members who were interested in decentralization to participate in a forum, held 3 September 2003, to discuss the future direction of decentralization legislation. Researchers in CMD signed a research service contract with the National Association of Mayors to develop a detailed decentralization bill.

In addition, CMD, CCEJ, and PSPD jointly organized expert meetings, workshops, and conferences whenever there were issues requiring action in collaboration

with local governments and their associations.⁷¹ In the process, civic organizations and local government associations developed alternative decentralization proposals containing plans that were more comprehensive and radical than the central government's bills. In summary, civic organizations and their cooperation with local governments through the four associations played an invaluable role in promoting alternative policy initiatives.

Direct participation in governmental positions

While resident voters and citizens in Western democracies and Japan had mobilized themselves to demand 'living environments' or 'home rule', grassroots citizens in Korea were less interested in decentralization issues.⁷² The reason was that decentralization issues required a deeper understanding of the nature of governmental affairs and the financial system than other social issues. In this context, professionalized civil society groups, such as scholarly associations, have been deeply engaged in the decentralization movement since the 1990s. These scholarly associations have contributed to facilitating decentralization by shaping public debates and advising political and administrative leaders through professional research, discussions, media appearances, and reports on problems and promises of decentralization. Many civic groups such as CCBG, a civic organization specializing in administrative reform, are led by scholars, activists, and intellectuals. CCBG was created in 1997, and about 60% of the standing operational committees are composed of professors in the public administration field.⁷³ Whenever there were public discussions, symposiums, or hearings about decentralization, experts and scholarly groups associated with civic organizations such as CCEJ, CCBG, and PSPD contributed to creating favourable circumstances for decentralization through various publications and policy reports on highly technical issues. Consequently, scholarly groups armed with specialized knowledge provided important theoretical background for civic activities and contributed to the formation of specific reform programmes.

During the Roh administration, participation by intellectuals in policy-making became more direct and the intellectuals became brokers of the decentralization idea. First, a number of scholarly associations that were endorsed by civil society became members of governmental advisory committees. The typical role of advisory committees, such as PCGID, was to advise the president and governmental ministries and to deliberate on policies at relatively early stages of the policy-making process. However, presidential committees under Roh did not play just an advisory role but a mediator role between the big bang approach (civil society) and the piecemeal approach (central ministries). PCGID, which was established in 2003, could exercise enormous power in leading decentralization and administrative innovation reforms. Former chairmen Song-Sig Yun and Byōng-Jun Kim confirmed that President Roh maximized the authority of the committee by showing strong will and leadership.⁷⁴ The source of power was the appointment of PCGID members, who were very familiar with

decentralization and close to President Roh, as his intellectual and ideological allies. Many of the chairmen and members of PCGID had previously worked in civic organizations and received strong support from the president.⁷⁵ In fact, about half of the committee members came from universities, and most of them were directly or indirectly associated with civic organizations. With the president's full support, PCGID developed a diverse set of decentralization strategies, tasks, and rules, and mandated central ministries to carry out its programmes and plans.

Second, as journalists have observed, the main source of elite recruitment during the Roh administration was scholarly groups who had strong connections with civil society. A number of professors became top political figures and executives and orchestrated the overall decentralization process.⁷⁶ For example, Byōng-Joon Kim, a university professor whose academic background and practical experience were in government innovation and decentralization, was a core member of the PTC (December 2002 to February 2003) and later served in numerous decentralization reform-related positions, such as Chairman of PCGID (2003–2004) and Head of the Policy Office of the Blue House (2004–2005). He was previously the chairman of the CCEJ decentralization committee and designed and controlled the whole process of decentralization reform as the top decision-maker of the Roh government.⁷⁷ With the support of the president, scholars-turned-officials and qualified outside specialists played important roles in directing tenured technocrats in central ministries to implement decentralization policies. In addition, these political appointees held explanatory seminars and meetings for the National Assembly members, particularly for members of the Subcommittee on Administrative Autonomy and Subcommittee on Legislation and Judiciary, who were in charge of passage of the decentralization law.⁷⁸

The efforts of political appointees from the scholarly community and civil society were noteworthy and effective in pushing through reform measures during the Roh administration. In fact, professors had occasionally been appointed as advisory staff, committee members, or ministers during previous administrations. While they had been mere rubber stamps in most cases, scholarly groups and civic groups played the role of think tanks during the Roh government, widening the intellectual spectrum of public debates and providing practical knowledge for the decentralization reform drive.⁷⁹ The Roh administration was often called a 'committee government' because it established many governmental committees to implement governmental agendas and reform policies through a deliberative process. Under these circumstances, participation of civil society in various committees was crucial in integrating and reflecting interests of various groups in the policy-making process. Well-educated and reform-minded specialists in these committees provided innovative ideas for the government's reform agenda and contributed to development of blueprints for decentralization and governmental innovation. Because decentralization, local autonomy, and innovation were relatively well-known subjects for academics and civic activists, their direct influence in the decentralization produced 'feasible alternatives'.

Conclusion: limits and prospects of civic politics for decentralization

The conventional analyses of decentralization politics have argued that strong resistance from powerful central ministries and reluctant national politicians effectively delayed decentralization reform for a long time. Even after local autonomy was introduced in the early 1990s, political debates and legislative politics of decentralization in Korea mainly revolved around the central government and vested interests at the centre dominated the reform process. Until the late 1990s, local voices from below were largely rejected or ignored because decentralization literally meant sharing power with local and civil society and thus shrinkage of the central government's power. Under the strong tradition of centralism and state dominance, decentralization reform efforts were initially not very successful.

However, as we have argued in this article, the upsurge in support for decentralization during the Roh government in Korea, contrary to the conventional wisdom, was not entirely central-government driven. The relative success of decentralization reform during the Roh government, as compared with past reform efforts, stems from several factors. First, local and civil society actors, as well as reformist politicians, benefitted from several internal and external developments, such as the financial crisis of 1997–1998, increasing regional inequalities, declining level of trust in the central government, and the growth of civil society after democratization. A nationwide consensus emerged that central bureaucrats and politicians posed barriers to reform efforts.

Second, for a decade, holding of local elections and the practice of local autonomy under a strong central government actually strengthened local and civil society actors and nurtured their shared values and perceptions about the need for decentralized governance. This culminated in a broad coalition of local elites, intellectuals, civil society actors, as well as local government associations, which broadly preferred comprehensive decentralization. As a result, the input and pressure from local and civil society were visibly reflected in the final version of decentralization legislation.

Finally, the diversification, professionalization, and institutionalization of civil society activities helped overcome sectoral interest conflicts and bureaucratic resistance. Although there were several limitations to local authority in the final version of the decentralization legislation – limited financial transfers, as well as delays in local education and local police autonomy, to name but a few – the emergence of local power in the 2000s reshaped the process of decentralization reform. Experts in civic organizations armed with decentralization ideas were strategically placed in critical positions in governmental organizations and provided political leaders with specific actionable proposals and programmes. In so doing, trained and specialized intellectuals and activists in civil society helped formulate practical and well-developed decentralization plans. This gave reformist politicians and bureaucrats the motivation to be more enthusiastic about the transformation of central-local relations as a part of the larger governmental reform process. Indeed, the opposition from bureaucrats in powerful ministries and central

government politicians was relatively muted during the Roh government. To understand this development, it is critical to explicate the hidden role of civil society and local bodies in the politics of decentralization in Korea.

While civic organizations' efforts could lead to successful legislation of decentralization in Korea, their activities also had to overcome several challenges like deep-seated central politicians.⁸⁰ First, once the grand decentralization bills were successfully enacted, the coalition of civic organizations slackened. In order to effectively monitor the transferring and implementation process, they needed to retain collaborative efforts. Second, the influence of civil society and local bodies was too dependent upon support from the top political leadership. At the same time, the civic mobilization for decentralization during the Roh administration was a local elite-based movement and participation of local politicians, professors of local universities, businesspeople, and journalists (who participated in civic organizations) was very important. In fact, for the pursuit of continuous decentralization reform, it is still crucial to generate mutually reinforcing, collaborative relationships among leaders of the civil society, stable interest of the top leadership, and innovative approaches from policy experts. Yet, for public pressure for decentralization to become stable and durable over time, a broader spectrum of grassroots actors, beyond intellectuals and local elites, need to be empowered.

The development of Korea's decentralization reform is not different from the dominant pattern of transformation of intergovernmental relations in East Asia. Japan has endeavoured to transform the highly centralized state since the early 1990s. The emergence of decentralist leaders such as Hosokawa Morihiro and Murayama Tomiichi provided a momentum for decentralization, and scholars such as Nishio Masaru provided innovative ideas through a specialized governmental committee, the Committee on Decentralization.⁸¹ Yet, the main difference between Japan and Korea lies in local capacity and grassroots politics; Japanese local bodies and civil society, which had increased their capacities through central grants and functions delegated during the post-war period, could effectively march toward decentralization. In addition, civic organizations and local residents who had experienced 'grassroots-led' progressivism since the 1970s already had a solid base for a bottom-up decentralization movement.⁸² Voices from the Japanese business world (*zaikai*) have also been effective in the process of decentralization.⁸³ Therefore, the Japanese case indicates that without appropriate local capacity and widespread social participation, including grassroots citizens and businesses, it may be hard to achieve successful decentralization.

This also holds implications for other developing countries in the Asian region. Many countries such as China, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia designing and implementing various forms of decentralization need to nurture the capacity of civil and local society first. The cases of Korea and Japan as well as Mexico⁸⁴ demonstrate how civil society, local governments, and expert groups and their strategic actions play a crucial role in pushing forward decentralization reform.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Jefferey Sellers, Apichai Shipper, Paul Chang, David Straub, Se-il Park, John Donaldson, Erik Mobrand, interviewees in South Korea, and anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions.

Notes

1. Törnquist, 'Assessing Democracy from Below'.
2. Heller, 'The Politics of Democratic Decentralization'.
3. Selee and Tulchin, 'Decentralization and Democratic Governance'.
4. Diamond and Tsalik, 'Size and Democracy', 130.
5. Heller, 'The Politics of Democratic Decentralization', 133.
6. For example, see Eaton, 'Political Obstacles'; Falleti, 'A Sequential Theory'; Garman, Haggard, and Willis, 'Fiscal Decentralization'; O'Neill, 'Decentralization as an Electoral Strategy'.
7. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.
8. Schmitter, 'Civil Society East and West', 247; Diamond, 'Toward Democratic Consolidation', 7–11.
9. Tarrow, *Between Centre and Periphery*; Gourevitch, *Paris and the Provinces*.
10. Selee and Tulchin, 'Decentralization and Democratic Governance', 302.
11. Lee, 'Decentralization in Korea', 64; Seong, 'Delayed Decentralization', 127–48.
12. Kim, *Chibang Pun'gwŏn*, 23.
13. Bae and Sellers, 'Politics of Urban Growth in Korea', 547.
14. Therefore, politicians in the National Assembly and central bureaucrats at powerful ministries were clearly reluctant to cooperate. Kim, Ku, and Yu, 'Ch'amyoŏchŏngbu', 27–53.
15. Kim, 'Administrative Reform', 169. Since the mid-1990s, a total of 115 divisions and agencies belonging to central ministries were abolished or merged into other ministries, and there were many lay-offs of central bureaucrats.
16. Heller, 'The Politics of Democratic Decentralization'.
17. There are various definitions of 'civil society' in the literature (see, for example, Diamond, 'Toward Democratic Consolidation'; and Schmitter, 'Civil Society East and West'). Combining these definitions, civil society in this article is defined as 'a distinct public sphere of organization, communication and reflective discourse, and governance among individuals and groups that take collective action deploying civil means to influence the state and its policies but not capture state power, and whose activities are not motivated by profit' (Alagappa, 'Introduction', 9). As such, civil society groups that are most relevant to this article's analysis of Korea's decentralization include, for example, Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ), People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), Citizens' Coalition for a Better Government (CCBG), and Civic Movement for Decentralization (CMD).
18. Choi, *Minjuhwa ihuŭi Minjujuŭi*, 231; Kim, 'Civil Society and Local Democracy'; Park, 'Local Governance and Community Power'.
19. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 20–3.
20. Devas and Delay, 'Local Democracy and the Challenges', 678–9.
21. Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge*; Turner, *Central-Local Relations*.
22. Falleti, 'A Sequential Theory', 330–44.
23. Garman, Haggard, and Willis, 'Fiscal Decentralization'; O'Neill, 'Decentralization as an Electoral Strategy'.
24. About the Japanese case, see Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge*, 304–14.
25. Kim, 'Civil Society and Local Democracy'.
26. Lee, 'Decentralization in Korea'; Seong, 'Delayed Decentralization'; Kim, *Chibang Pun'gwŏn*, 23.

27. Yu, 'Chibang chach'üi', 501.
28. Baiocchi, Heller, and Kunrath Silva, 'Making Space for Civil Society', 913–14.
29. MOGAHA et al., *Minsön Chibang Chach'i*.
30. MOGAHA, *The Current Status*.
31. Tiebout, 'A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures'.
32. Grindle, *Going Local*, 6–7.
33. Choi, *Minjuhwa ihuüi Minjujuüi*, 86–8.
34. Kim, *The Politics of Democratization*. This does not mean that civil society was the only determinant of Korea's democratization – other variables such as political leadership and international factors also played important roles.
35. Lee, 'Decentralization in Korea', 6.
36. Yu, 'Chibang chach'üi', 502.
37. Kim, 'Civil Society and Local Democracy'.
38. OECD, *Territorial Review*. Theoretically, it is true that local residents and civic organizations are not motivated to participate in local politics without an appropriate level of governmental accountability. Posner, 'Local Democracy and Popular Participation', 42.
39. MOGAHA et al., *Minsön Chibang Chach'i*.
40. Bae and Sellers, 'Politics of Urban Growth in Korea', 546–7.
41. Ki-u Yi (former CCBG and PCGID member), interviewed by author on 28 October 2005, Incheon, Korea. Even the sceptics admit this development. See Park, 'Local Governance and Community Power', 13.
42. The aim of this reorganization was improving governmental efficiency and democratic governance. The Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Government Administration were merged into MOGAHA, which took responsibility for improvement of local administration and the self-governance system.
43. The committee became the first permanent organization for the pursuit of devolution (January 1999). Members mainly came from scholarly groups, ministers, bureaucrats, local executives, civic activists, and businesses.
44. Seong, 'Delayed Decentralization', 145.
45. A KIPA survey (KIPA, *A 2002 Survey*, 27) showed that about 60% of central bureaucrats questioned the competence and morality of local political leaders in making local decisions. Yet, the reluctance of central agencies mainly originated from the consideration of their organizational survival in the period of central government restructuring. In fact, there were several organized resistances among street and managerial-level bureaucrats of central ministries who were supposed to be sent off to local governments and other agencies after decentralization (*The Korea Economic Daily*, 6 August 2003).
46. Yong-shik Park (former leader of the National Public Workers' Union), interviewed by the author on 18 October 2005, Seoul, Korea.
47. President Roh, since the early 1990s, had expressed his great interest in decentralization, deconcentration, and balanced development policies, and had even established a private research institute by himself, namely, the Centre for Local Autonomy (*Chibang Chach'i Silmu Yön'guso*) in 1993.
48. Roh's 'Taegu Declaration on Balanced National Development' (12 June 2003), available at <http://www.president.co.kr/cwd/president/speech.html>.
49. Byung-Joon Kim (former Vice-Minister of Education and Science), interviewed by the author on 23 July 2009, Seoul, Korea.
50. MOGAHA, *The Current Status*.
51. Söng-sig Yun (former Chairman of PCGID), interviewed by the author on 19 October 2005, Seoul, Korea.
52. PCGID, *The Promotion of Decentralization Sourcebook 2004*.

53. Inhwan Chŏng (an officer at MOGAHA), interviewed by the author on 12 October 2005, Seoul, Korea. Also see *Dong-A Ilbo*, 'Chibangbun'gwŏn Chŏngch'aegŭi Hyŏnchuso'.
54. For example, MOGAHA could maintain the size of the organization by gaining new functions, such as e-government, immigrant policy, and government innovation, in place of what they delegated in local government-related affairs. *The Korea Economic Daily* (6 August 2003).
55. PCGID, *The Promotion of Decentralization Sourcebook 2004*.
56. Lee and Arrington, 'The Politics of NGOs', 81–2.
57. The committee was established under CCEJ as a specialized policy community and has been very active in providing knowledge and policy alternatives on local autonomy and decentralization since the Kim Dae Jung administration.
58. Namgung, 'Haengjŏnghakchaüi', 45–66.
59. Ik-sik Kim (former Chairman of Local Autonomy at CCEJ), interviewed by the author on 26 October 2005, Seoul, Korea.
60. Ki-u Lee, interview.
61. For example, Park, 'Local Governance and Community Power'.
62. Hyŏngi Kim (Chairman of CMD), interviewed by the author on 22 July 2009, Taegu, Korea.
63. *Yonhap News*, 3 September 2001.
64. Hyŏngi Kim, interview.
65. Yun, interview.
66. Ibid.
67. Kim, Ku, and Yu, 'Ch'amyŏchŏngbu'.
68. Im, *Chibangjojingnon*, 200.
69. Korea Institute of Public Administration, *A 2002 Survey*.
70. Sungho Kim (A Specialist at National Governors' Association), interviewed by the author on 25 October 2005, Seoul, Korea.
71. Ik-sik Kim, interview.
72. For example, in Japan, demands for social services in areas such as the environment, education, elders' care, and welfare became important bases of support for decentralization. Lam, 'Local Governance'.
73. Namgung, 'Haengjŏnghakchaüi'.
74. Yun and Byung-Joon Kim, interviews. In PCGID, about 50% of members came from the scholarly world, while 29% were former and incumbent government officials.
75. Byung-Joon Kim, interview.
76. For example, see *Wŏlganjungang*, 'Ch'amyŏ Chŏngbu Ch'oedae Injaepul Chiptan'.
77. In addition, the former chairman of PCGID (Sŏng-sig Yun), the Chief Presidential Secretary (Usik Kim), and the former chairman of Presidential Committee on National Balanced Development (Kyŏng-Ryung Sŏng) came from the academic world.
78. Chŏng, interview.
79. *Wŏlganjungang*, 'Ch'amyŏ Chŏngbu Ch'oedae Injaepul Chiptan'.
80. In fact, the reverse trend of decentralization (re-centralization) is frequently observed in many developing countries. See Eaton, 'Political Obstacles'.
81. Furukawa, 'Decentralization in Japan'.
82. Indeed, Japanese civic organizations are locality-oriented and led by local residents rather than highly educated professionals. Pekkanen, *Japan's Dual Civil Society*.
83. In the context of economic recession, Japanese business society was very interested in state liberalization and restructuring. Nishio, *Mikan no Jihobunken*.
84. See Grindle, *Going Local*, 12.

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