



SNUAC-TOYO GIC Co-Lecture Series 1
Seoul, Zoom Meeting, May 22, 2025

Let's meet the rooted cosmopolitan citizens against digital platform Economy

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Key Words: digital platform economy, algocracy, light community, grassroots democracy

- The digital revolution is strengthening the digital platform economy and leading to the rise of an invisible algocracy. Globally, civil society has become fragmented and isolated due to such a rapid transition to a phone-bound and home-bound society, which made citizens easily connected through digital platform economy but anti-social incompetent.
- Big Tech has not only violated privacy but also discouraged citizens' engagement into public issues and then make them suffer from the epidemic of loneliness. In order to overcome Big Tech's invisible algocracy and its side-effects, citizens at grassroots level should get over inside and outside challenges to restore the so-called 'talking politics strategy.'
- After the COVID-19 pandemic, younger generations are more likely to feel reluctant to engage in any physical contacts with others. The author argues that caring democracy can serve as a practical task to restore democratic citizenship from below.
- This lecture tries to focus on the mechanism of how care is democratically implemented with reference to Ezio Manzini's light community strategy. This mechanism is composed of three factors such as seeing others as equal partner, active participation from below, and collaborative seeking solutions.
- The author calls it as restoration of democratic citizenship process. The Korean civil society after COVID-19 pandemic, interestingly, has been struggling with building care democracy.
- This lecture takes several East Asian experiments and tries to apply Manzini's model to them to examine whether they recognize others and listen to their voices as an equal member, and making them responsible for their participation.



Introduction

- The Rise of Algocracy and the Challenge of Care Democracy in South Korea
- Exploring the Impact of Digital Revolution and Platform Economy on South Korea
- Digital revolution and the rise of "datafied society."
- Algorithms and big data are shaping public policies.
- South Korea faces challenges in balancing digital advancements with democratic values.

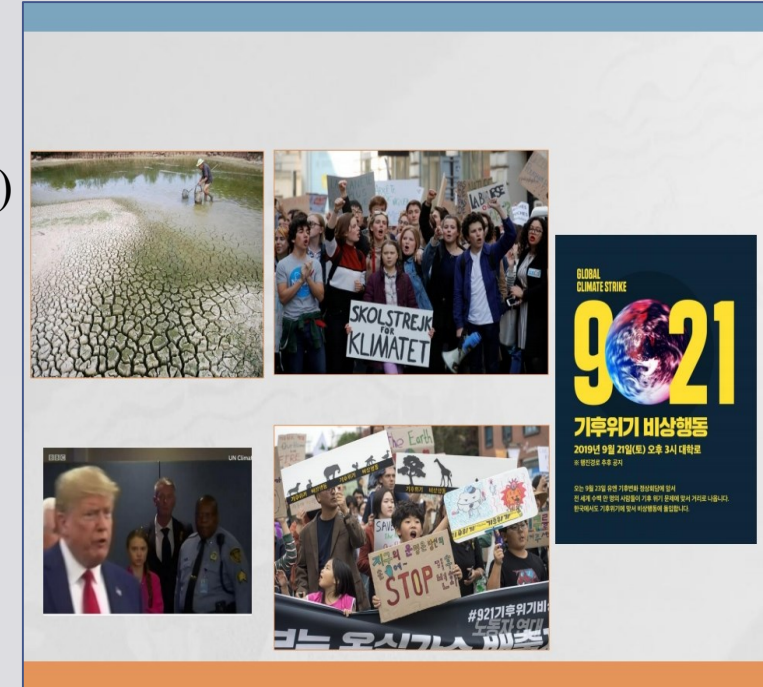


2. As of 2025, Provocative questions to Korean Civil society

- Bypassing NGOS and Extreme to Political parties?
- DINK(Double Income, No Kids), How to deal with your care issues?
- Who are your reference groups?
- Do you feel lonely? Loneliness vs. solitude
- What's your hapticality? We live in the Anti-Social Century.
- What do you think your live is Home-bound or Phone-bound.

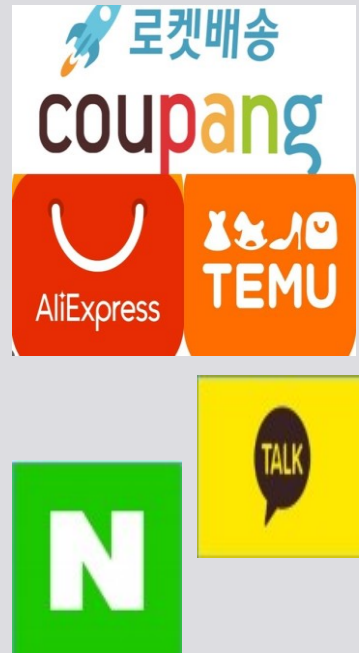
Glocal Crises in Korea

- Lowest fertility rate (total fertility rate of 0.75, world's lowest, 2024)
- Suicide rate (27.3 deaths per 100,000, 1st in OECD, 2019)
- Life Expectancy in South Korea is 84.3 years (male 81.4, female 87.1 2024 Korean Demography)
- Approaching Hyper Aging Society (20 % of population 65+, 2024 December)
- Individualism: 35.5%, (single-person household, 2023) 13.3% (four people household, 2023)
- Disintegration of local rural communities; central-local divide; municipal revitalization
- Digital platform economy: Irregular worker, Precariat (gig worker)
- Climate crisis/ disaster and Resilience
- Migration and Diversity & Inclusion
- COVID-19 Pandemic Socio-economic impact on Mental health & Loneliness
- Ukraine war (2020) & Israel-Hamas war (2023)



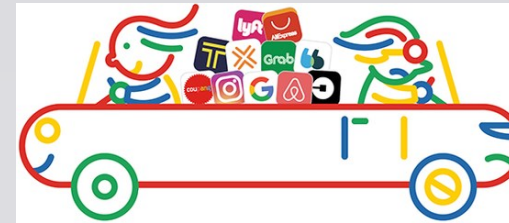
Digital Revolution and Information Regime: We are Easily Connected But Incompetent!

- Mojos (Mobile Journalists) vs. Fake News (ex)
Extreme YouTuber for Money
- Illusion of Sharing Economy and Mass production of gig workers
- Emerging Platform Workers: Strugglers, Strivers, and Successors, in *Hustle and Gig* (A. J. Ravenelle, 2019)
- Big Tech's Invisible Control of Digital Platform Economy
- Digital Literacy & Sousveillance



Digital Platform Economy's Invasion & Individualism/ Consumerism

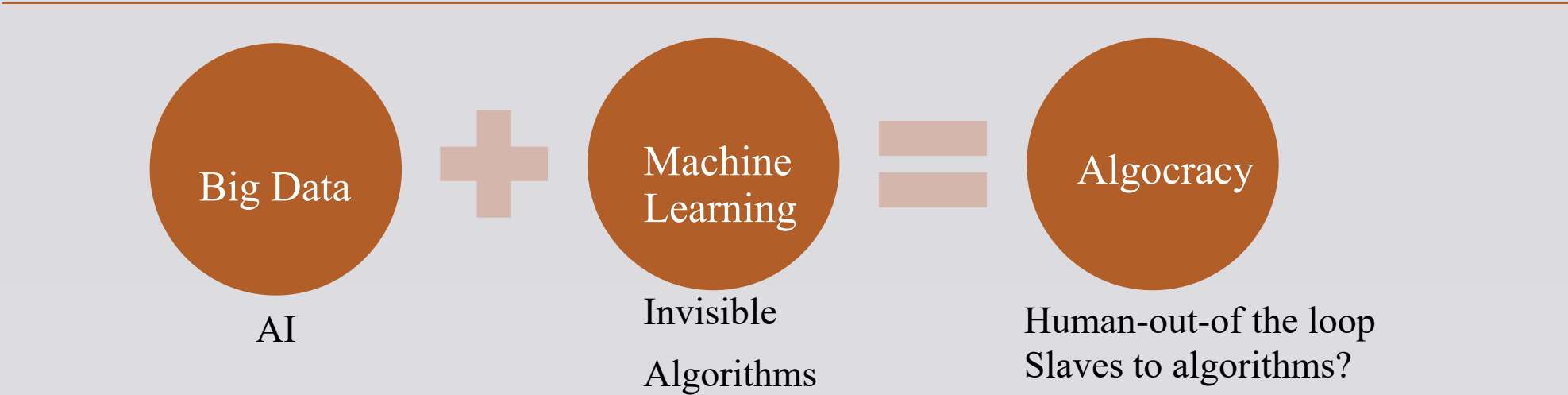
- Critical diagnosis of the 'catch-up' strategy in governance
- Tackling the Information Regime by desperately developing a strategy for the Algocracy challenge from below.
- The power of the global capitalist economic system (neoliberalism)
- Consumerism
- Big-Tech's Invisible Dominance



Source: www.joongang.co.kr/article/23419421#home



Source: Forrester Research, Inc. 2015



* Expanded into news, marketing, tourism, catering, law, medical, etc.



Algocracy: The Age of Algorithmic Control

- Key Concepts:
- Everything in life is datafied and controlled by algorithms.
- Digital platforms are spaces of both threat and opportunity.
- Platform workers are vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation.
- Concern about algorithms making policy decisions instead of citizens.

Active Engagement against Algocracy



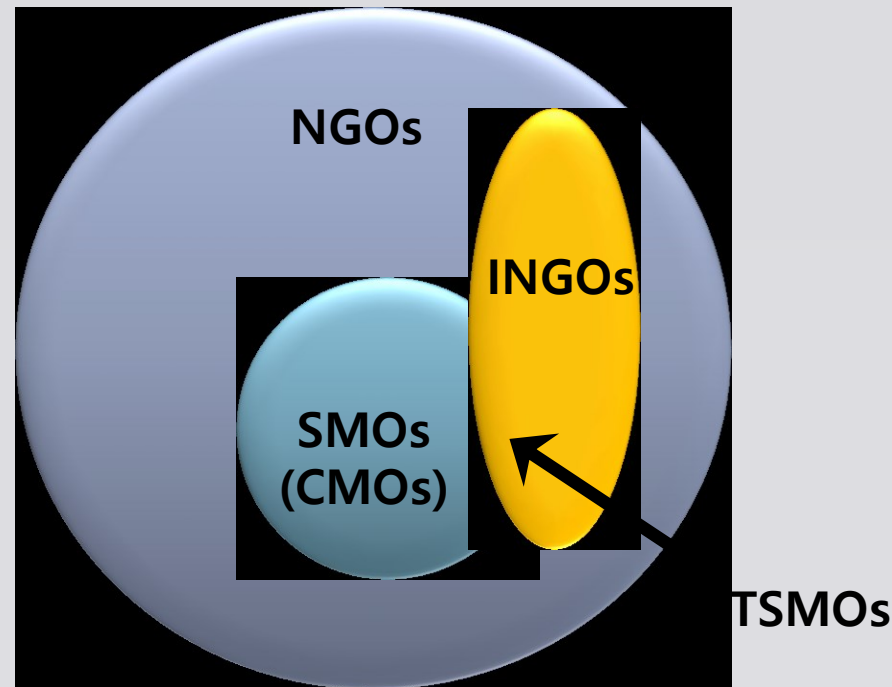
Radical Transparency Strategy from the Bottom Up

- Big Data Algorithms: Monitoring and Incentivizing Political and Socio-Economic Activities
- Strengthen surveillance of the political and economic elites
- Voluntary participation and solidarity activities of grassroots citizens
- New technology mobilization strategy (e.g.) Google glass, and similar wearable monitoring devices
- Balancing surveillance and privacy
- Distributed strategy rather than information and data concentration

Citizenship with Civility: NGO as a Wild Card

Citizenship 10 Accountability Requirements

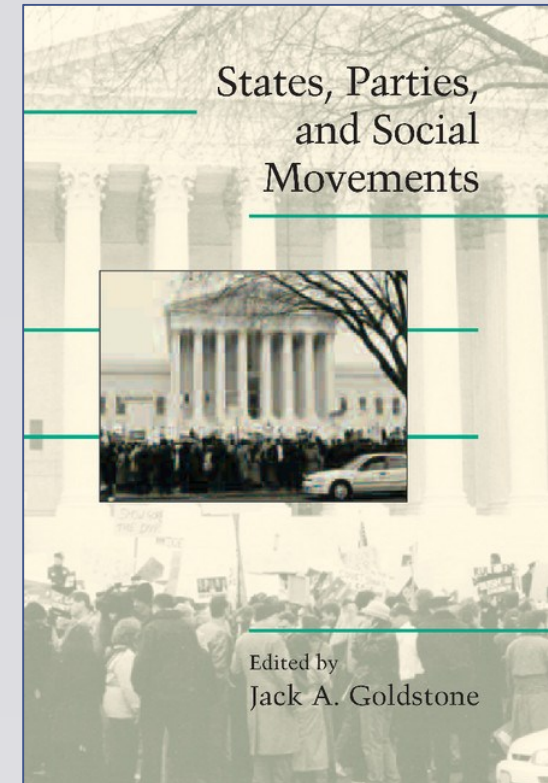
- Respect for Human Rights
- Independence
- Transparency
- Good Governance
- Responsible Advocacy
- Participation
- Diversity/ Inclusion
- Environmental Responsibility
- Ethical Fundraising
- Professional Management



Source: *INGO Accountability Charter 2014*

Source: J. Smith et al. 1997: 13 (revised)

Tripartite Relationship



J. Goldstone 2003

Reflecting Governance

- The virtuous cycle of persistence-communication engagement-participation-innovation
- Intermediate supporting organization, top-down versus bottom-up approach
- The relationship with government and business, critical conflicting and competitive partnership
- Solutions, impact, and policy competition rather than change and transformation
- The importance of value conflicts or value war (not battle)



EZ House, Nowon-gu, Seoul



Renewable Project, Gasi-ri, Jeju



Local Food & iCOOP, Goesan-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do

Challenges to Governance: ‘Catch-up’ and Top-down Strategy



Energy Zero House, Nnowon-Gu, Seoul



Saemangeum Solar Energy Projects, Gunsan, Cheollabuk-Do



Digital Platform Economy's Impact on Civic Engagement

- Key Issues:
- Digital platforms undermine traditional forms of civic engagement.
- Platform workers are alienated and marginalized.
- Disconnection from local community events and participation.
- Emergence of social polarization and exclusion of minorities.




Challenges to Deliberative Democracy

- Key Points:
- Weakened deliberative democracy due to algorithmic control.
- Platform economy creates competition among workers without offering protections.
- The disappearance of true political discourse and public engagement.
- The MZ generation is more isolated in digital spaces, lacking real-world engagement.



Urgent challenges to Korean civil social movements

- Revitalizing activism: change, challenge, conflict but not dynamism
- Resisting invisible domination of digital platform (Alogracy) as sousveillance.
- Balanced approach to 'MZ generation (Career & cause development)
- Virtuous or vicious cycle to resource mobilization (extension to interest group)
- Reclaiming rooted cosmopolitan citizenship

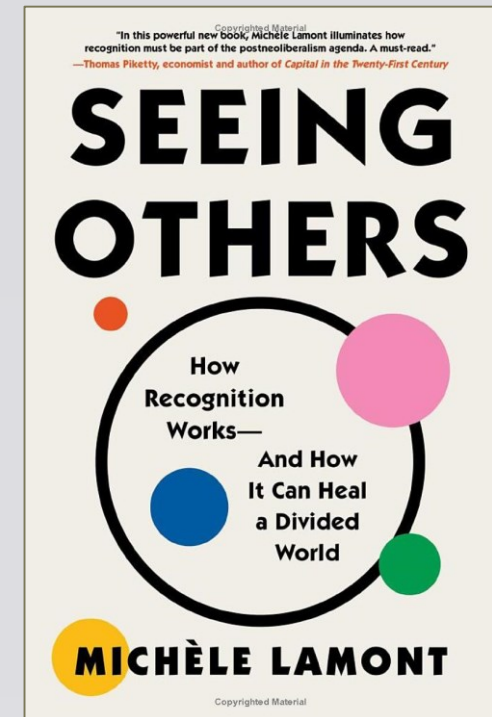


Challenges in Building Care Democracy

- Challenges:
- Self-Individualization (not individualism) and platform dependence undermine local community engagement.
- Building trust through direct interaction is crucial for care services.
- Over-reliance on digital platforms can lead to self-alienation.
- The privatization and commodification of care services deepen social inequality.

Rooted cosmopolitan citizenship: Lifeling approach to civility and democracy

- *Democratizing Global Economy: The Role of Civil Society*, J. A. Scholte (2003)
 - Public Education: civility and awareness
 - Public Debate: deliberation and persuasion
 - Public Participation: engagement and involvement
 - Public Transparency: openness and accessibility
 - Public Accountability: monitoring and responsibility
- *Seeing Others*, M. Lamont (2023)
 - Listening Democracy (B. Han, 2023)
 - Citizen with Civility: Gap between Neighborhood and Citizenship (Kong 2017)
 - Altruistic Individualism (S. Chung 2023)





ANTI-Social Century: phone-bound and home-bound life

- Convergence on Digital Platform Economy
- Hapticality: ability to contact
 - First, it is a series of processes of looking at, meeting, understanding, respecting, and cooperating with others.
 - Cooperation presupposes diversity, inclusiveness, and openness.
- Public servants are partners who serve, care for, and coexist with residents, not beings who use each other.
 - Abusive complaints, misunderstanding that public servants are targets for implementing profit politics, and service providers who fill services.
- How should we overcome this? Issues regarding gig workers; issues regarding migrant workers; approaches to immigrants

Talking Politics Matter for Governance!

- The perseverance and resilience of the local residents
- Innovation with a focus on social value
- Governance: Why the Prefix? Good, Transparent, Democratic Governance
- Civic participation from below: Civil Initiative, autonomy, accountability
- Horizontal decision-making and everyday communication; implementing talking politics



Seongmisan Village, Mapo-Gu Seoul



Deokam Energy Village,
Wanju Cheollabuk-Do

Transnational Capitalist class vs. rooted cosmopolitan citizenship

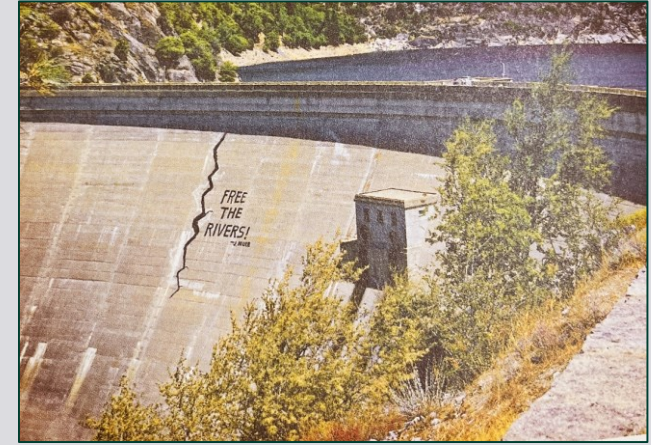


Transnational Capitalists (TCCs) Disappearance of local communities/ sense of belonging/ cooperation and coexistence/ solidarity.



Rooted Cosmopolitans Citizenship: enhancing regional resilience, horizontal leadership and a light community & open community creative cooperation processes.

MZ's Searching for Alternatives



Change-maker at Heyground, Seongsu Alley, Seoul



Rooted Cosmopolitan Citizenship Matters:

Environment, Social Economy, Local Food, Eco-Tourism, Zero Waste,
Home Care, Alternative School



Sinya Ominami (Kamiyama,
Tokushima)



Ikuko Saito
(Kamiyama)



Hidehiko Mita (Tateyabashi,
Gunma)



Tokoru Sensei (Kamiichi, Toyama)



Terumi Azuma (Kamikatsu,
Tokushima)



Joanne Cho (Coop-Hangang,
Seoul)



Dr. San-Ju Yu (Doulan, Taitung)



Kyoko Sengoku, Tanabe, Wakayama)

Rooted cosmopolitan and Light Community:

Kamiyama Margoto College, Tokushima prefecture



Photo: Shinya Ominami.
(Courtesy of NPO Green Valley)



SOCIAL ECONOMY AND LIGHT COMMUNITY: JUNGLE DELIVERY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN TATEYABASI, GUMA PREFECTURE, JAPAN



Hidehiko Mita: Jungle Delivery & Noriko Yasuraoka: Tsumugi-mugi Project
(Tatebayashi, Gunma Prefecture)

AGRICULTURE MEETS ENVIRONMENT:

LIGHT COMMUNITY PROJECT, KAMIICHI, TOYAMA PREFECTURE

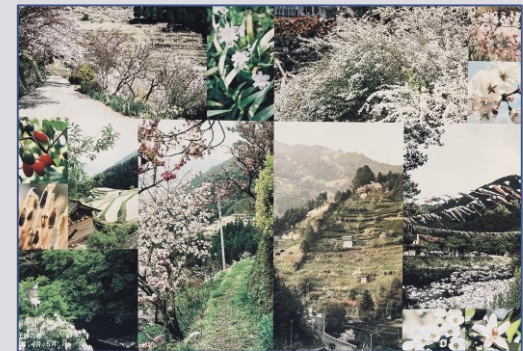


- Shinichi Tokoro: Returnee to Local community; local farming and eco-tourism
- Internship Co-program between Kamiichi Town and Toyo University

Tokushima, Kamikatsu, zero Waste Project



Azuma Terumi and her legacy and commitment



Social cooperative Hangang:

Environment, community, humanities and ecology



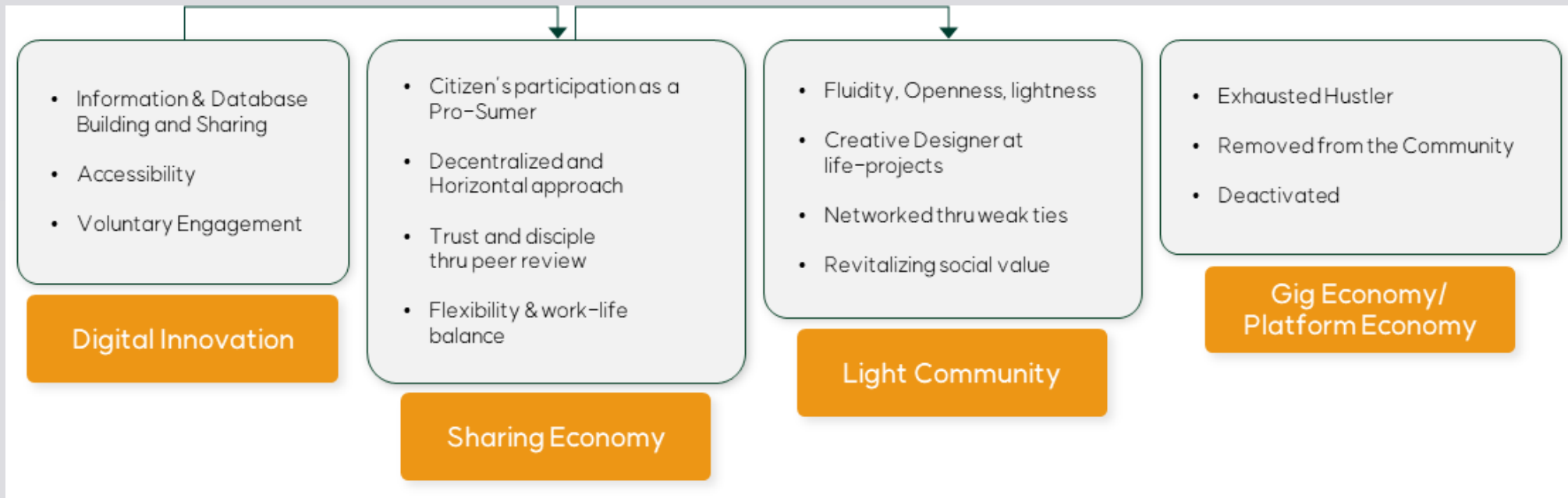
Care and Local community

Dr. San-Ju Yu & Doulan Home Care (Taitung, Taiwan)



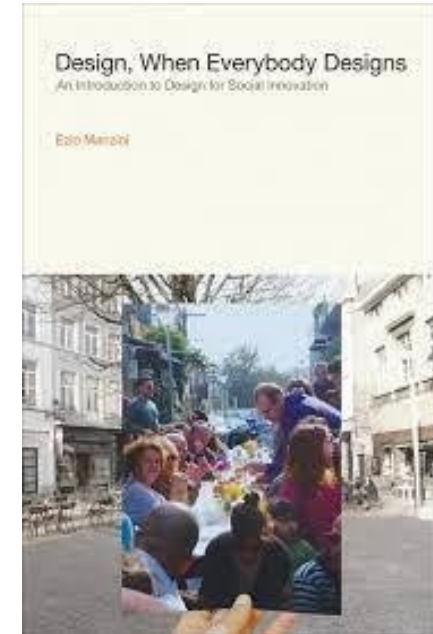
Dr. San-Ju Yu (돌란/Taitung)

Light Community Model Against Algocracy



Light Community Model (E. Manzini, 2019)

- Recover a sticky and heavy community?
 - A community with more freedom of entry and exit
 - An experiment in an open, flexible, and light community (Fluidity; Openness; Lightness)
- Politics of Everyday and Everybody Design (Life Projects)
 - Experiments in daily life at local community (Life Projects)
 - Residents themselves organize projects (Project-making)
 - Rediscovering the resources of cooperation and reciprocity at locales (Exploring)
 - Strengthen the sense of belonging through cooperative process (Collaborating)
- Designing and Transforming Everyday Life
 - Acting
 - Transgressing
 - Transforming



Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation (Ezio Manzini, 2015, MIT)

Source : Ezio Manzini. 2019. *Politics of the Everyday*, New York: Bloomsbury.



Implications for East Asia

- Key Points:
- South Korea faces challenges in balancing democratic values with digital transformation.
- The rise of digital platforms and AI risks eroding democratic participation and community life.
- The Light Community strategy offers a new way to combine digital and physical spaces for better care and democracy.
- There is a need to reconnect care services with local community involvement to fight social inequality and alienation.

KONG Suk-Ki (PhD from Harvard University) is a research professor of Asia Center at Seoul National University. His research interests include political sociology, social movements, civil society & NGO studies, and social economy with focusing on Korean NGOs' transnational activism, local community and citizenship, grassroots democracy, social innovation, and civic empowerment. His researches are published at several journals including *Human Rights Quarterly*, *Citizenship Studies*, *Korea Observer*, and *Korean Social Science Journal*. He has contributed to a couple of book projects such as *Asianization of Asia* (2024), *Future Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West: Care of the Self* (2023), *COVID-19 in East Asia and Aftermath* (2023), *Citizenship and Migration in Europe and Asia* (2012). He has also published various books about Korean civil society and NGOs (in Korean).

