



Human Rights City Gwangju: Its Development, Achievement and Limitation

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Human Rights City Gwangju: Its Development, Achievement and Limitations

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This research outlines why and how the City of Gwangju has developed itself as a human rights city. The city has equipped itself with an almost complete set of software and hardware of a human rights city including the biggest human rights department in Korea. This research uses both interviews and statistics to describe the achievements and limitations of the human rights city Gwangju, such as providing human rights education to all government officials, which thereby makes human rights a main-stream function of the city administration, and is as such one of the city's most important achievements. The human rights indicators of the city prove that there has been steady improvement in the human rights level of the city, but some interviewees were not ready to accept the achievement due to the poor indicators in some critical areas such as public safety and the low level of participation and empowerment in addition to the high expectations of the general public. One of the reasons for the low public acceptance of the human rights city Gwangju is likely to have been caused by the lack of holistic approach. In the human rights city Gwangju, there was no integrated collaboration among different departments to improve the human rights indicators, nor positive implementation of the agendas of the SDGs, especially those of gender and the environment. In spite of the limitations, the prospect of the human rights city Gwangju is considered positive with the human rights regime well-established and the continuous support of the general public and civil society.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Democracy Movement and Human Rights: The tradition of civil society activism in Korea used to be focused on the democratization of the political system and protection of freedom of citizens from state violence, legal or illegal. It is more democracy movement than human rights movement. Accordingly, the issue of human rights was

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considered of subsidiary importance to democracy, which was promoted by civil society organizations or progressive religious groups. They were considered anti-government groupings by authoritarian governments, which relentlessly suppressed the rights of the anti-government activists by law enforcement devices such as police, the prosecution, and even courts. The common understanding of *human rights* by the general public is extremely limited. The following rights are not considered human rights to them: housing, transportation, air quality, jobs, and education among others. For example, housing is an issue of different levels of wealth of individuals, and accordingly, there are few civil society organizations focusing on housing or poverty in Gwangju.

Central Government and human rights: It is only a recent phenomenon for the central government to actively take over the issues of human rights directly, with human rights protection devices such as National Human Rights Commission being established in 2001, and the Ministry of Justice Human Rights Bureau in 2006. The change was possible in 1998 because of the progressive party gaining power, which was supported by activist organizations and people who had been fighting against military dictatorship and authoritarian governments after World War II. It must also have been influenced by the UN General Assembly which in 1993 adopted the Paris Principles² that require a National Human Rights Institution.

Gwangju as a Human Rights City: The reports by the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee in 2015 briefly show the need for a legal body for human rights protection at the local level by stating: "To ensure effective local governance and adequate implementation of human rights at the local level, it is important to have a proper legal framework for local government. The organization, powers and functions should be clearly prescribed by law. Further, national legislation should delineate clearly the responsibilities and powers of central and local government authorities in relation to one another."(A_HRC_30_49_ENG). The initiative of making Gwangju a human rights city seems to have started naturally because all the people felt comfortable on human rights issues at local level from their experiences in the struggle for justice and democracy while suffering repression at the hands of past governments. The shared historical legacy of the city has comfortably led the residents of the city to share the progressive political identity (Kim 2016, p 131).³ It is consequently natural that the

² <https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/ParisPrinciples.aspx>

³ This shared political identity of the residents resulted in a staunch support to the progressive parties in this region and in the city. Refer to S. Chirumbu & M. Barbu (2012) for more details on the shared political imaginary related with the political identity.



active promotion of human rights at the local level was initiated in Gwangju in 2007 and 2009 by the Gwangju City Council, which established human rights ordinances⁴, and by the Gwangju City Government, which established a human rights department in 2010 and World Human Rights Cities Forum in 2011 among other measures. Such initiatives were influenced by international human rights movement such as the Right to the City movements and Human Rights Cities movement in localizing the human rights norms with a revolutionary definition of 'Human Rights City' as a city that provides relevant services not as a gift but as a realization of human rights.⁵ In addition to the limitation on the scope of human rights, there is also the issue of human rights actors and stake-holders: Common citizens think the issue of human rights is to be handled by specialized activists or activist groups⁶ and by those who are negatively influenced by issues such as housing, transportation, or education among others. Those who are not directly influenced are reluctant to get involved in social issues.

Regardless of this limitation of understanding in the side of the ordinary citizens, however, both elected and non-elected officials of the local government of Gwangju have been involved in institutionalization and implementation of different rights in various sectors of life thanks to the shared political imaginary by the local residents based on its rich historical legacy favorable to human rights and democracy.

1.2. Justification of the research

The tradition of modern democracy is not long in the Asian countries, which lacked experiences like French Revolution in 1789, let alone human rights. The movement is more focused on independence from outside colonial rulers or external invasion as in China and Korea in the early 20th Century. The democracy is mostly given, as in the case of Japan after WW II, instead of being developed by the struggle of people as in the case of South Korea. In this context, the level of human rights movements cannot be expected to be mature as in many European countries. However, the City of Gwangju

4 The Ordinance on the Promotion of the City of Democracy, Human Rights and Peace in 2007 and its revision of the Ordinance on the Promotion of Human Rights and the City of Democracy, Human Rights and Peace in 2009. Kim (2010) criticizes that the establishment of the ordinance and other measures were not discussed enough among the civil society.

5 People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE) - <https://www.pdhre.org/>

6 The City of Gwangju asked the Gwangju International Center (GIC) to organize the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) in 2014, and all GIC staff opposed to accept the proposal saying that the GIC is not a human rights organization. The opposition came from other organizations and the city council representatives.



has been a unique model of a human rights movement and the development of a human rights city in this Asian context with its unique tradition of independence and democracy movement. Furthermore, the study of the Gwangju example will reveal that shared historical experience by the residents is an important factor for the success of human rights promotion and consequently the development of a human rights city. It is also interesting to see how the City of Gwangju was influenced by external and internal factors and the influences of other cities inside and outside Korea.⁷ Moreover, it will be of value to see how the life of the citizens is influenced by the human rights policies of the city. It is, therefore, worth delving into the relevance of human rights policies in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the city.

1.3. Highlight of basic concepts

George Orwell's 1984 convincingly emphasized the importance of the language in controlling the subject as the rulers want to control. The introduction of the Right to the City seems to have expanded the scope of human rights from the individual realm to the collective one as defined by David Harvey (2008).⁸

Far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.

In this regard, the Right to the City emphasizes the right of the people not only to diverse services of the city but also to participate in shaping the quality of services or in making the city itself (D. Harvey 2008).

The concept of the Human Rights City is similar to the Right to the City as defined by People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (HDHRE):⁹

⁷ Use the UN OHCHR documents and write mails to Mr. Mugiyanto of INFID.

⁸ The concept of 'The Right to the City' was first introduced by Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville* (The Right to the City).

⁹ <https://www.pdhre.org/>



A city or a community that provides human security, access to food, clean water, housing, education, healthcare and work at livable wages, sharing these resources with all citizens - not as a gift, but as a realization of human rights.

The Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City (2014) emphasizes the active leadership of local governments for human rights promotion and protection of citizens while expanding the concept beyond *the Right to the City* to include nine additional items: non-discrimination, social inclusion and cultural diversity, participatory democracy, social justice, solidarity and sustainability, political leadership and institutionalization, human rights mainstreaming, policy coordination, human rights education, and training right to remedy.

This statement does not necessarily mean that the concept of the Human Rights City is a super set of the concept of the Right to the City since the concept of the Right to the City may also include all the above areas.

The advent of the SDGs even expanded the roles of local governments to handle the issues of human rights not only at local level as a protector of human rights in their daily life but also as a protector of comprehensive well-being of individuals and the all human beings now and in the future at global level.¹⁰ Surprisingly, the City of Gwangju did not actively connect the human rights policies to the SDGs until 2019, though the officials of the Gwangju City Human Rights Department attended the UN Habitat Conference in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016. Due to the lack of understanding of the connectedness of the two concepts of human rights and SDGs, the opening ceremony of the 8th WHRCF took place almost at the same time as the Gwangju SDG Council holding a ceremony to declare the new Gwangju SDGs 2030 on October 18, 2018. The collaboration began only at the beginning of 2019, when the OHCHR requested local governments to submit a report on "Local Governments and Human Rights in the context of SDGs" at the beginning of 2019.¹¹

2. Research Objective and Methodology

2.1. Research Objective

¹⁰ Such a definition was given by Dr. KIM Gigon (Gwangju-Jeonnam Institute).

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/LocalGovernment/Pages/Index.aspx>. The analysis of the reports were submitted to the UN Human Rights Council as A/HRC/42/22 in September 2019.



With this background at hand, this research aims to analyze the City of Gwangju with regard to how it has developed itself into a human rights city and to describing what kind of human rights regime it has established in terms of administrative system, gender, environment, education, and culture among others. It will handle both its achievement and its limitations. It also tries to find the impact of the policies of the human rights cities to the achievement of SDGs directly or indirectly with focus on *gender* and *environment*.

2.2. Research Questions

This research handles the general overview of the development of the human rights city Gwangju based on the interviews with the local government officials and the materials available including the human rights indicators of the city hall. More specifically, the following areas will be the focus of this research.

- 1) Why and how did Gwangju begin to develop itself as a human rights city?
- 2) What are the institutions of the Human Rights City Gwangju?
- 3) What are the achievements of the Human Rights City Gwangju?
- 4) How has the human rights city Gwangju contributed to the achievement of the SDGs with focus on gender equality and the environment?
- 5) What are the limitations of the human rights city Gwangju?
- 6) What the recommendations for the future Human Rights City?

2.3. Research Methodology

To derive the intended results, we will use relevant documents and statistics as well as intensive interviews with both government officials and civil society activists. In addition, we want to see the extent of their understanding of SDGs and the relationship between the human rights city and SDGs. We also want to know their advices for the future development of Gwangju as a human rights city. While analyzing the human rights city Gwangju, we will pay more attention to the achievement in the areas of gender equality and the environment. The interviews were carried out in Korean, and the results were translated into English to be shared with prospective readers as an attachment to the paper.

The interview participants include both non-governmental activists and government



officials.¹² The interview with 00G is mostly focused on what direction the research should take. He also strongly advocated conducting qualitative research, which could be accompanied by data such as annual human rights city indicators, which the City of Gwangju initiated in 2012 for the first time in Korea.

Code	Gender	Affiliation	Focus of questions
00G	M	Research Institute	Human Rights City
01G	F	Government	Gender
02G	F	Government	Human Rights City
03M	M	Government	Human Rights City
03F	F	Government	Human Rights City
04L	M	Government	Human Rights City
05C	F	Government	Gender
06C	F	NGO	Environment
07G	M	NGO	Youth
08O	F	NGO	Gender
09W	M	NGO	Human Rights City
10Y	M	NGO	SDG

Table 1: Interviews (*All names are codified.)

3. Research Findings

3.1. Achievements of the Human Rights City Gwangju

One of the interviewees said, "Personally, I think we have to treat human rights as a concept closely connected to the political, social and economic rights of an individual". In addition, all interviewees agreed that the human rights city needs to protect and promote of the rights of the citizens both as an objective and as a process of empowerment as defined in the Gwangju Declaration on the Human Rights City:

"A human rights city was understood as 'human rights governance in an local context' where local government, local parliament, civil society, private sectors and other stake-holders work together to improve quality of lives of all local inhabitants in a spirit of partnership based on human rights standards and norms."

Some of the interviewees were eager to recognize the City of Gwangju as a human rights city both in its system and in the attitude of the people. There are several aspects

¹² There were six government officials, five NGO activists and one researcher.



of a human rights city in Gwangju: The government officials are more human rights friendly, and civil society organization activists feel comfortable talking with representatives of the government. One interviewee (01G) proudly talked about the comments by an NGO activist:

"We often say that the current Gwangju City officials act like activists, unlike past government officials. This is a result of many years of human rights education and training. We are always conscious of human rights and act accordingly. When we have to make some opposing remarks against the common norms of human rights, we are really careful, and we are also ready to accept criticisms."

Almost all interviewees recognized Gwangju as a human rights city. In Gwangju the term of *human rights administration* has become a common expression among government officials while it is a kind of taboo in many other local governments because of the long history of authoritarian rule. Moreover, the interviewees who work in the Gwangju city government advocate the achievements of Gwangju as a human rights city. 01G asserts:

"Gwangju citizens often underestimate our achievement. There are many human rights classes and lectures. For example, there has been a weekly human rights lecture series for several years in the city hall. It is now so popular that the lecture hall is full with audience every Wednesday. The lectures and classes help us to have awareness that the socially marginalized people experience more suffering with less protection. So we developed public measures or manuals to protect them in the case of natural calamities".

However, there are interviewees who are reluctant to whole-heartedly accept Gwangju as a human rights city, saying:

"I still don't have a feeling that Gwangju is a human rights city. Gwangju is regarded as a human rights city because it is a symbolic city of democracy, not because the citizens have more respect for the other people's diversity in terms of politics, society and economy. Crime and domestic violence rates are still on the higher side, and the city had issues with the gender equality indicators in the past."



3.2. Milestones of the human rights city adoption

The City of Gwangju and the province surrounding it has a long history of movement against oppression and external occupation. In 1894, the people in this province rose up against exploitation by corrupt government officials, which expanded into the biggest uprising against an oppressive government in Korean history. The uprising would have changed the course of the history by unseating the dynasty but for the involvement of China and Japan.

In the 20th Century alone, there were two major uprisings in Gwangju out of eight in Korea. The Gwangju Student Movement in 1929 was expanded to the whole Korean peninsula against the colonial occupation. The 1980 May Democratization Movement in Gwangju initiated the nation-wide grass-roots movement toward democratization, which resulted in the change of the constitution in 1987, gradually developing Korea from military rule into a civilian democracy. South Korea ranks 20th while the US ranks 21st in the 2018 Economist democracy index.¹³

Consequently, one of the most unique characters of Gwangju is its movement for human rights and democracy. Still, the concept of human rights in Korea in general and in Gwangju in particular is more focused on the protection of human rights of anti-government activists from state violence through establishing a democratic government. Accordingly, the human rights promotion is typically given a stereotypical image of an anti-government movement. Most of the activists themselves in the 1980s and up until the early 2000s did not pay attention to the rights of citizens in terms of rights to the city.

However, some civil society groups held international conferences to promote the spirit of May 18 Movement inside and outside Korea in diverse ways. The Gwangju Citizen's Solidarity (KCS)¹⁴ began an annual international conference on May 18 Movement for five years, inviting international human rights activists such as the May Mothers of Argentina, and the international TV or newspaper reporters, who covered the May Movement in 1980, among others. In collaboration with the Asian Human Rights Commission, they prepared and declared the Asian Human Rights Charter in 1998. The charter includes a comprehensive rights of citizens, which went beyond the traditional

¹³ <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/01/08/the-retreat-of-global-democracy-stopped-in-2018>

¹⁴ The Kwangju Citizen's Solidarity (KCS) gradually disappeared after 1999 since it failed to have an appropriate leadership. However, it was inherited by the Gwangju International Center, which began in the KCS office.



political rights as follows:

Economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR)

- the right to cultural identity
- the right to development and social justice
- the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children, differently abled persons, workers, students,

Civil and political rights (CPR)

- the right to life
- the right to peace,
- the right to democracy,
- the freedom of conscience
- the right of prisoners and political detainees

On the other hand, the survivors and victims' family members actively engaged in the movements for the prosecution of the military perpetrators, May 18 special laws, establishment of the May 18 National Cemetery, compensation of the victims in the May 18 Movement, among others, mostly through the May 18 Foundation established in 1994. The May 18 Foundation also started to award the Gwangju Peace Prize from 2000, held the Gwangju International Peace Camp in 2004, and Asian Human Rights School in 2005.¹⁵ Such active movements by the civil society motivated the Gwangju City Council to pass the Ordinance on the Promotion of the City of Democracy, Human Rights and Peace in 2007, followed by a series of measures by both the City Council and the City Government.¹⁶

3.2.1 Institutionalization of South Korea

The people of Korea have managed to change the politics of Korea since May 18 1980. The 1987 June Movement, with the participation of one million people, forced the military regime to change the national constitution to elect the national president by

¹⁵ <http://eng.518.org/sub.php?PID=0302>. The Gwangju International Peace Camp is now changed into Gwangju Asia Forum.

¹⁶ This local government initiative was also possible thanks to the local autonomy, which was re-introduced in 1995 by the strong demand of the then party in opposition. It seems that the level of human rights cities movement in Malaysia is comparatively lower than that of Indonesia because of the lack of local autonomy in Malaysia even though the level of Malaysia democracy is almost the same as the Indonesian (<https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>)



direct election. Koreans elected the first civilian president in 1993, though from the party which inherited the military rule. The civilian president executed many important reforms: in 1993 disbanding the military faction, which staged coup d'etat in 1979 and had been ruling the armed forces from behind since the 1970s, beginning of the real-name financial system in 1993, establishment of the Special Law on the May 18 Democratization Movement, making it possible to prosecute the former dictators and compensate the victims of the May 18 Movement at the strong request of civil society with the support of the majority of the people. The National Government also decided to establish the May 18 National Cemetery.

Both civil society and the Gwangju City Hall began to promote the legacy of the May 18 Movement in various ways, which has naturally evolved into a human rights city movement along with numerous human rights related institutions and systems including the 2007 'Ordinance for the democracy, human rights and peace city development' by the City Council.

The institutions of Gwangju as a human rights city include three areas: human rights norms characterized by Gwangju Human Rights Protection and Promotion Ordinance (2009) and Gwangju Human Rights Charter (2012); human rights systems such as the Human Rights Department (2010) and Human Rights Ombudsmen (2013); and human rights policies and projects such as Human Rights Indicators (2012), the Human Rights Impact Assessment (2017) and Human Rights Education for all local government officials, which is considered one of the most important achievements of the system in Gwangju by the interviewees.

3.2.2 Institutionalization of Gwangju as a Human Rights City

The following is the list of human rights city institutions established in Gwangju in chronological order.¹⁷

2007 Gwangju ordinance for the democracy, human rights and peace city development:

This ordinance, which was later revised in 2009, was originally proposed and enacted by the city council.

2009 Gwangju Human Rights Protection and Promotion Ordinance: This ordinance is the extension of the 2007 ordinance, and it is the first of its kind. All other 17

¹⁷ More information in detail is available at the local government and human rights report to the OHCHR in 2019: Major Policies and Systems of Gwangju as a Human Rights City.



higher level local governments of Korea followed the suit of Gwangju including the Seoul Metropolitan City and cities located in politically conservative areas.

2009 *Human Rights Promotion Citizen Committee*: This is one example of good governance among the city hall and civil society organizations and academics. It was prescribed in the Human Rights Protection and Promotion Ordinance of 2009 and has been in operation since then. It has 20 members on two-year terms.¹⁸

2010 *Human Rights Department*: The substantial difference of Gwangju from other local governments is the size of the human rights department in the city hall, which has 15 full-time staff while others have none or only a few except Seoul, the population of which is more than six times that of Gwangju. The National Human Rights Commission of Korea disclosed the size of the human rights department in metropolitan cities of Korea in 2016.¹⁹ The lack of officers to work for human rights in most local governments clearly shows the limitation of the movement to establish human rights ordinances in different cities.²⁰

18 This committee is chaired by Professor AHN Jeon, one of the co-researchers of the current research project.

19 The number of officers at the Gwangju Human Rights Office is 20 as of November 2019.

20 AHN Jeon (2011). The achievements and limitations of the movement to establish human rights ordinances (인권

조례 제정운동의 성과와 한계) *In Korean



Provinces	Ordinance	Human rights officials
Seoul	2012	15
Busan	2012	1
Daegu	2014	0
Gwangju	2009	15 ²¹
Daejeon	2012	3
Ulsan	2012	1

Table 2: Human Rights Ordinance and the number of officers

2011 *Human Rights Roundtable* invites human rights activists, experts and scholars to share current trends of the world with focus on human rights once a month. SDGs and NUA (New Urban Agenda) are some of the topics discussed here. The sessions are organized in collaboration of five organizations: the City Hall, the Gwangju Board of Education, the Gwangju Local Office of the National Human Rights Commission, the Gwangju Human Rights Council, and the Public Interest Law Center of Chonnam National University. There have been 66 meetings held in the past eight years.

2011 *World Human Rights Cities Forum* (WHRCF): The City of Gwangju started the annual World Human Rights Cities Forum in 2011. The Forum has become an important stage of cooperation to strengthen ties among local NGOs in addition to human rights cities. In 2018, it was organized with the involvement of 30 organizations, international, national, and local including UN OHCHR, UCLG CISDP, Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI), Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, National Human Rights Commission among others. It attracted the participation of 1,800 people both Korean and international from 57 cities and 44 countries. Gwangju citizens are also benefitting from this event by expanding the scope of their understanding on human rights and related issues. It is a training venue for the local people regarding the localization of world issues such as SDGs and NUA. The Forum has been an effective device for the promotion of human rights cities globally with the Korean government in the middle to influence the UN Human Rights Council to adopt resolutions on local governments and human rights.²²

²¹ Gwangju has 20 officers and Seoul has 21 in each human rights department as of 2019.

²² The resolution specifically mentioned the forum in A-HRC-27-59_en2014_09 as "The concept was launched in 1997 by the People's Movement for Human Rights Education, a non-profit international service organization. It was further developed, particularly as a normative concept, by the World Human Rights Cities Forum that takes place annually in the city of Gwangju (Republic of Korea)."



- 2012 *Ordinance on Protection and Promotion of Student Rights*: This ordinance specifies the rights of students: right to study, right to privacy, right to non-discrimination, right of minority groups, among others. Corporal punishment is prohibited. It also requires schools to establish a committee for the protection and promotion of student rights. The ordinance was proposed in 2005 for the first time in Korea, but it was passed in 2011, after another local government.
- 2012 *Gwangju Human Rights Charter*: The Charter was established through a lengthy process of consultation incorporating the demands of civil society organizations, academics, human rights experts, public officials, refugees, women, laborers, among others. The Charter is the first city-level human rights charter in Asia and the third in the world. Other Korean local governments again followed the suit of Gwangju in establishing the human rights charter as they did with human rights ordinances.
- 2012 *Human Rights Indicators*: The Human Rights Indicators came into use from 2013, and the result of the assessment in 100 areas was disclosed since then. The number of areas was merged or reduced into 50. The 2018 report on the human rights based on the indicators shows that there were improvements in 41 out of 50 areas: Non-regular jobs were reduced from 36% to 33%; social jobs increased from 34% to 36.15%; the suicide rate, which was higher than the national average in the past, fell to below the national average, among others.
- 2012 The *Human Rights Basic Plan and Action Plan* aim to establish a concrete plan every five years starting from 2012 with the first plan (2012 - 2016), followed by the second basic plan for a human rights city (2018 - 2022). Each of the five-year basic plans includes annual action plans consisting of 123 policy tasks in the following six areas, the progress of which is to be monitored by relevant organizations:
- i) promotion of human rights for social minorities,
 - ii) human rights system and human rights administration,
 - iii) formation of a human rights community culture,
 - iv) establishment of a human rights cooperation system,
 - v) strengthening the status of Gwangju as a human rights city, and
 - vi) implementation of the Gwangju Human Rights Charter.
- 2012 *Human Rights Policy Joint Meeting* began in collaboration with the private and public sectors. These gatherings are attended by human rights activists, academics, and officials from the Human Rights Department. The proceedings pay attention to monitoring human rights conditions of the city as well as



identifying ideas and policies to address immediate human rights issues at the administrative level. There were 69 meetings until 2019.

2013 The *Human Rights Ombudsman* was introduced in the Human Rights Department to handle the issues and complaints raised in the local government and subsidiary organizations.

2013 *Human Rights Education* for both citizens and government officials is one of the most important factors in fostering Gwangju as a human rights city since it changes the attitude of people by making them conscious of the necessity of taking human rights promotion as the norm from policy establishment to implementation. It also helps the people to behave themselves appropriately in society.

2017 *Human Rights Impact Assessment*: The Human Rights Impact Assessment System is based on the *Human Rights Protection and Promotion Ordinance* (2009). It provides the tools to screen all ordinances and regulations in the city council before establishment or revision.

2018 Gwangju established the *Public Corporate Human Rights Management Task Force*, which is comprised of managers and laborers from City Hall and other public enterprises under the jurisdiction of the City. The Task Force conducted three training sessions on 'corporate and human rights management' in order to promote the corporate culture of human rights management for public enterprises. In 2019, the City is planning to further expand human rights management to its 15 municipal enterprises by adding the item of human rights management into its management evaluation procedures.

2018 The position of *Women's Rights Protector* was added to the Human Rights Department. The department independently investigates, and gives counseling and advice regarding cases of discrimination, harassments, and violence in local government offices.

The level of human rights protection and promotion system of Gwangju is much more developed and complex than that of any other local governments. It may well be summarized as follows:

The uniqueness of the Gwangju City's human rights protection system is the fact that it tries to integrate the whole city government operation under the umbrella of human rights. In short, Gwangju has developed sustainable systems with ordinances and charters. And hardware and software systems have been created based on the ordinances and the 2012 human rights charter. In this regard, the 2009 ordinance is the most



important legal base for the development of Gwangju as a human rights city. The human rights city operation elaborated up to now is summarized in a simple list as follows.

Legal Bases:²³

2009 *Human Rights Protection and Promotion Ordinance* (the 2007 ordinance was merged into this)

2012 *Ordinance on Protection and Promotion of Students Rights*

2012 *Gwangju Human Rights Charter*

Hardware implementation

2010 *Human Rights Department*

2009 *Human Rights Promotion Citizen Committee*

2013 *The Human Rights Ombudsman*

2018 *Women's Rights Protector*

Implementations

2011 *World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF)*

2011 *Human Rights Roundtable*

2012 *Human Rights Indicators*

2012 *Human Rights Policy Joint Meeting*

2012 *Basic plans* for a human rights city (2012-2016) and (2018-2022)

2013 *Human Rights Education* for both citizens and government officials

2017 *Human Rights Impact Assessment*

2018 *Public Corporate Human Rights Management Task Force*

The list is reorganized in Diagram 1 below for the easier understanding on how the human rights protection is managed by the human rights governance among the local government, civil society and the citizen committee mediating the governance. The comparison of another major local government shows the stark contrast between that city and Gwangju.

²³ There was another ordinance to help the ethnic Koreans in the Central Asian countries, who were descendants of those who were forced to move from Sakhalin under the Soviet Union rule during World War II.

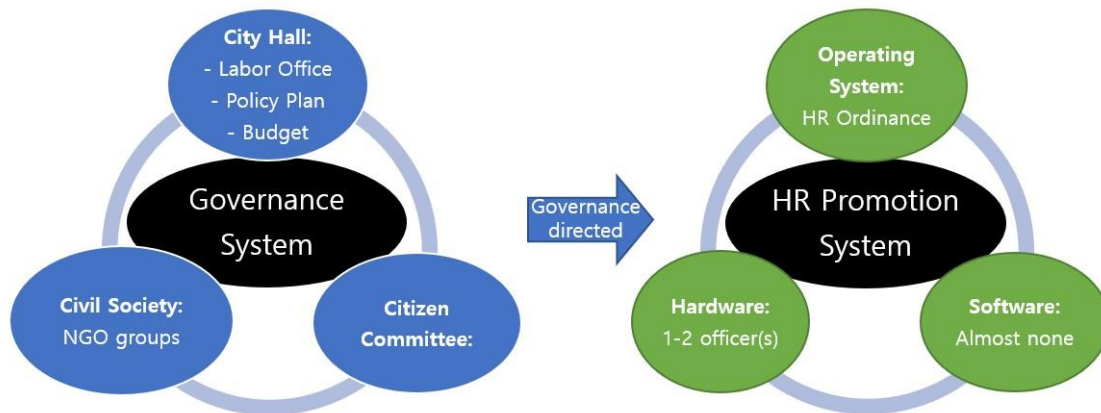


Diagram 1: Governance of the human rights system of a major city of Korea

Among all the diverse human rights institutions, the existence of the Human Rights Department seems to be the key into the development of Gwangju as a human rights city. Another key to the success is the human rights education among civil servants and citizens. An interviewee (01G) said, "I met many NGO activists or city hall officials in charge of human rights in other cities who are envious of Gwangju. However, we Gwangju citizens often underestimate our achievement (in human rights). For example, we have many programs for the elderly and teenagers to study and play together. In addition, we have so many lecturers and classes to promote human rights."²⁴

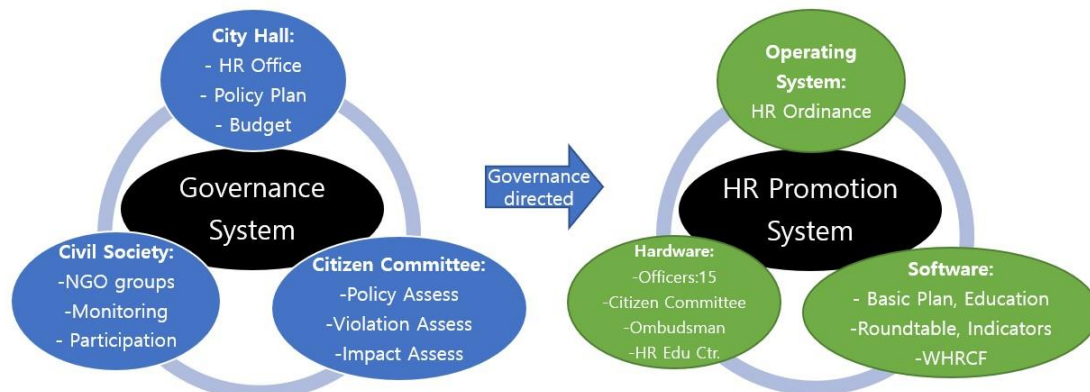


Diagram 2: Governance of the human rights system of Gwangju

There is an additional important aspect of the HR promotion in the side of education: the existence of the Democracy and Human Rights Education Center and the Democracy and Human Rights Education Center in the Gwangju Board of Education. This fact is unique since there are no such offices or centers in any other provinces, with

²⁴ This interviewee used to work in both the human rights department and the Women Foundation.



the only exception of the City of Seoul with its Democratic Citizen Education Center. Note that the Seoul office does not carry the words of human rights. It is also worth pointing out that the HR office and the HR center of the Gwangju Board of Education began the ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) program in collaboration with Gwangju and the Sustainable Development Council.

The level of the human rights city policies and implementation of Gwangju has become highly developed in the past ten or more years. Nevertheless, there are some limitations in terms of development of skills, knowledge and expertise in one specific area, for example, in human rights due to frequent new job assignments in a different office every couple of years as mentioned in one of the interviews. One government official worried that the programs she developed in her previous job did not seem to be effectively implemented. However, the regular new job assignment gives rise to an interesting by-product: Human rights norms are easily shared in different offices with more officials and employees are directly exposed while working in the Human Rights Office. They are not becoming professional but more comfortable with human rights norms and issues through office transfer. The Human Rights Office is by no means alienated from other offices.²⁵

3.3. Human Rights Education

Most of the interviewees agree that human rights education is the most important achievement of the human rights city Gwangju. 05C believes that the human rights education raises the sensitivity of government officials and citizens to human rights. Thanks to the education people began to know that human rights should be promoted in diverse areas of city projects as 01G says:

“Not only civil servants but anybody become different when they receive human rights education. For example, we study a nuclear power accident with the human rights sensitivity regarding the Japanese nuclear power plant accident. And we began to have awareness that the socially marginalized people experience more suffering with less protection. So we developed public measures or manuals for this kind of accident. We know that there are people who cannot go to the hospital, and we are learning that these safeguards should be ready.”

The most recent statistics of the education participation is given in the report of the Gwangju City to the OHCHR in February 2019 as below.

²⁵ The city government promotes citizen participation with *neighborhood projects* with about US\$200,000 for 20 neighborhoods this year. The results are displayed at the World Human Rights Cities Forum.



	Types of Education (Targets)	Participants
Public Officials	Wednesday Human Rights Classes, Classes in the Metropolitan Officials Training Institute, Classes for executives/fire fighters/local district officials, Cyber Classes and Human Rights events, etc.	9,518
Children and Youth	Visiting Human Rights Classes for Children & Youth, Labor Human Rights Classes for Out-of-School Youth, Model UN Human Rights Council, etc.	203,323
Ordinary Citizens	Classes for city bus workers, apartment residents' associations, HR culture communities & sports workers, etc.	20,880
Vulnerable Groups	Multicultural families, temporary workers, social service agents, etc.	696
Human Rights Instructors	Youth Human Rights education instructor courses, strengthening Human Rights education activist capabilities	44
Social Welfare Workers	Classes for nursery school teachers, the elderly, the handicapped, social welfare facility workers, local children center workers, etc.	40,618

Table 3: Human Rights Education of Gwangju

3.4. SDGs in the context of a Human Rights City

3.4.1. Gender

South Korea is notoriously patriarchal, which is proved by statistics. The Inter-Parliamentary Union ranks Korea at the 120th with women representation with only 17.1%.²⁶ The wage gap is biggest in South Korea with women getting 36.7% less than men as the following OECD data shows.²⁷ However, recent world trends have influenced the central government and local governments. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984 may have influenced South Korea toward gender equality, but the direct result was made after the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and after the request of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) by the Women's Development Act enacted in 1995. Substantial changes began to be made by the First Basic Plan for Women's Policies in the period between 1998 and 2002 and the Second Basic Plan in the period of 2003~2007 with the objectives of applying gender-equal perspectives in all

²⁶ <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

²⁷ <https://www.statista.com/chart/13182/where-the-gender-pay-gap-is-widest/>



government policies, and fostering a gender-equal basis toward the realization of a gender-equal society. Another major legal change took place in 2015 with the revision of the Women's Development Act of 1995.²⁸ It is interesting to know that most of the substantial implementations of gender equality were made under liberal governments from 1998 to 2007 including the establishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2001. Both acts in 1995 and 2015 were proposed by both liberal and conservative parties with more participation of the liberal congress members.

Gwangju was one of the liberal local governments following the suit of the central government for the promotion of gender equality in the middle of 2000s.

2007 *Woman Development Basic Ordinance* was established by the City Council. However, it was rather declarative with no substantial measures for implementation.

2013 The above ordinance was drastically modified with the objectives clarified to include gender impact assessment, gender-sensitive budgeting, gender-sensitive education, gender statistics, gender main-streaming strategies.

2017 The *Gwangju Ordinance on Gender Impact Assessment* requires the local government to establish the Gender Sensitive Budget Committee, which assesses the impact of the financial management of the city and promotes gender equality.

The City of Gwangju currently has four government offices to promote gender equality. The Office of Women and Family handles women, child rearing, family welfare, low birth rate, and children support. The Women and Family Policy Officer is in charge of gender sensitive training of the local government officials. There is an independent office promoting work and family balance. The Gwangju Women Foundation helps to facilitate the collaboration and communication between the government offices and the local citizens.

The women representation of the city council is higher in Gwangju than other cities and the gender equality ranking is also very good in Gwangju. However, one of the interviewees (O8O) does not accept this as an achievement of a human rights city. It is merely a result of women's active participation, which began in the 1980's democratization movement. It is also worth pointing out that no female mayor was

28 Basic law of women development: <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150623001178> and <http://www.archives.go.kr/next/search/listSubjectDescription.do?id=002618&pageFlag=>



elected in the city of Gwangju nor at the district level.

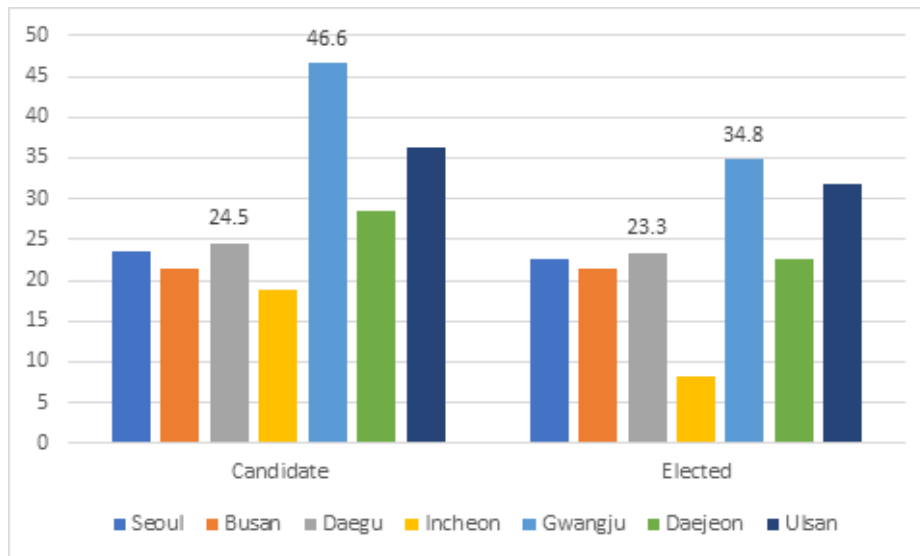


Figure 3: The women representation of the city council

Gwangju was favorably reviewed for gender equality (2018)²⁹ by the Korean government. It ranked at the top consecutively in 2016 and 2017. However, the reports pointed out that special measures and education were needed to raise the level of public sensitivity on social safety and crime prevention.

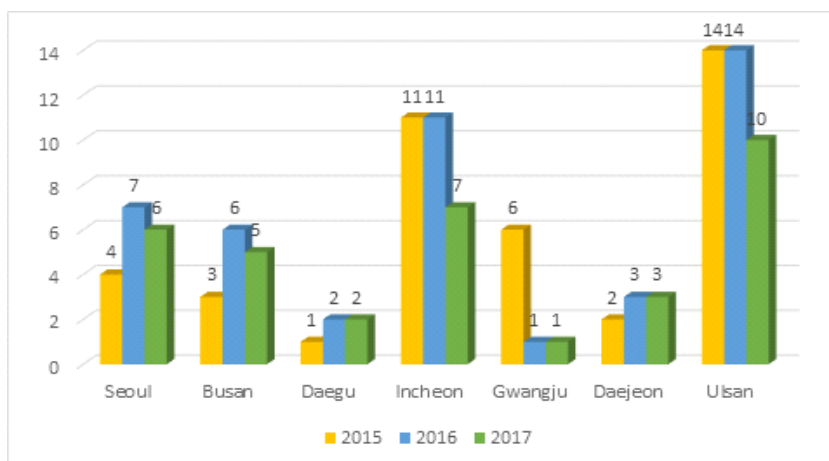


Figure 4: The gender equality ranking of major cities

Miran, women's rights activist, is worried that women are not safe. She also points out

29 JU Jaeseon, et als. (2018). Gender Equality Report on Local Governments. Korea Gender Policy Institute of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. p.36



that the most important aspect of women's rights is safety. The women are in danger of domestic violence and sexual violence. In addition, they are dominated by patriarchal characteristics of the society within families and in jobs. She also adds that the top priority should go to the safety of women with both safety system and massive civilian education program not only for human rights but also against violence.

3.4.2. Environment

SDG history in Gwangju: The environment initiative was influenced by the international movement as it was in the case of the human rights city. Agenda 21 proclaimed in the Earth Summit or the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 obliged the local government and people to establish the Green Gwangju 21 Council in 1995. It was re-organized as the Gwangju Sustainable Development Goal Council (Gwangju SDG C), again with the influence of the UN SDG established in January 2015.

SDG and the human rights city in Gwangju: Environment-related departments of the city hall, environment-related civil society organizations and local businesses began to get involved in the Gwangju SDG Council.³⁰ But there was no formal connection or collaboration between the SDG Council and human rights organizations. The Human Rights Department of the Gwangju City paid little attention to the SDG issues. The WHRCF has rarely handled the SDGs directly in its major sessions. Only the 2018 Forum began to handle SDGs with the plan of creating Gwangju 2030 till the 2020 Forum. The general secretary of the Gwangju SDG Council was invited to join the 2019 WHRCF planning committee.³¹ The following is the brief history of the Gwangju SDG related development including the beginning of the Council.

- 1995 *Green Gwangju 21* was established as a civil society organization at the recommendation of the City Hall following an open discussion meeting of citizens.
- 1998 *Gwangju Basic Ordinance on Environment* was enacted as the legal basis for the official establishment of *Green Gwangju 21*
- 2012 International Climate and Environment Center was established
- 2015 *Green Gwangju 21* was reorganized into the Gwangju SDG Council.

³⁰ We may ask government officials and NGO activists to which issue they are exposed more: a human rights city or SDG by a survey.

³¹ One of the researchers of this research would like to join the Gwangju SDG Council.



- 2016 The *Gwangju Weather Climate Ordinance* was established to develop policies and take actions against the climate change.
- 2017 *The fifth Gwangju Agenda* (2017-2021) was established.
- 2018 The 2018 WHRCF began to discuss Gwangju 2030 to disclose at 2020 WHRCF with the support of KOICA.

The existence of an organization is crucial for any policy to be implemented, and the creation of the Gwangju SDG Council made possible the implementation of SDG goals in Gwangju, though separately from the human rights city scheme.

Table 4 shows how the SDG agendas have been implemented and assesses the five year intervals since its establishment in 1997. The agendas were created through discussions with local communities for the sake of successful results across development fields such environment, citizen life, city forest, water recycling, and community building, among numerous others.³²

Phase	Systems	Major Areas
Agenda 1 (1997~2001)	-Basic Directions -Action Principles -Implementation Guidelines (for citizens/businesses/administration)	1. Environment-saving Citizen's Life (14) 2. People live in harmony with nature (6) 3. Gwangju with Clean Environment (5) 4. Sustainable Economic & Social Systems (6) 5. Promoting Foreign/Domestic Environmental Cooperation (2)
Agenda 2 (2002~2006)	-Basic Directions -Action Principles -Indicators -Implementation Tasks	1. Ecology & Green Areas (4) 2. Water & River (4) 3. Atmosphere & Energy (3) 4. Wastes & Consumer Life (3) 5. Traffic & Urban Planning (4) 6. Culture & Welfare (4) 7. Education & Public Relations (4) 8. Solidarity & Cooperation (3)
Agenda 3 (2007~2011)	-Action Goals -Implementation Tasks	1. Governance-style implementation projects (12) 1. Goals and Indicators (12) 1. Presented yearly goals (12)
Agenda 4 (2012~2016)	-Implementation -Goals and Indicators -Yearly goals Presented	1. Environment & Ecology (4) 2. Green Economy & Society (7) 3. Green Education (1)

³² This table is quoted from the 2019 OHCHR report on "Local Government and Human Rights".



Table : Agenda 21 in five year plans

There have been numerous measures created, but the results are not satisfying, especially in the areas where business interests are at stake or large scale budget is necessary as in protection of climate, adequate transportation and housing.

Cities	2016	2017	2018	2015 (bikes)
Seoul	0.32	0.32	0.31	1.65
Busan	0.40	0.38	0.37	1.38
Daegu	0.48	0.47	0.46	1.39
Incheon	0.53	0.51	0.49	1.65
Gwangju	0.46	0.44	0.43	1.36
Daejeon	0.45	0.44	0.43	1.57
Ulsan	0.48	0.47	0.46	1.4

Table : Number of cars (bikes) per family

It is expensive and needs more budget and political will to produce significant results in building streets which are pedestrian-friendly and bike-friendly. However, car traffic is given the priority over pedestrians. The main street of Gwangju has no pedestrian crossing for more than 1,200 meters. It prohibits the access of bikes. Bikes are not allowed into the subway except on holidays. Bikes are not allowed into buses, either. The bike paths are not well-connected. The per capita number of cars shows that Gwangju is not more environment-friendly than other Korean cities.

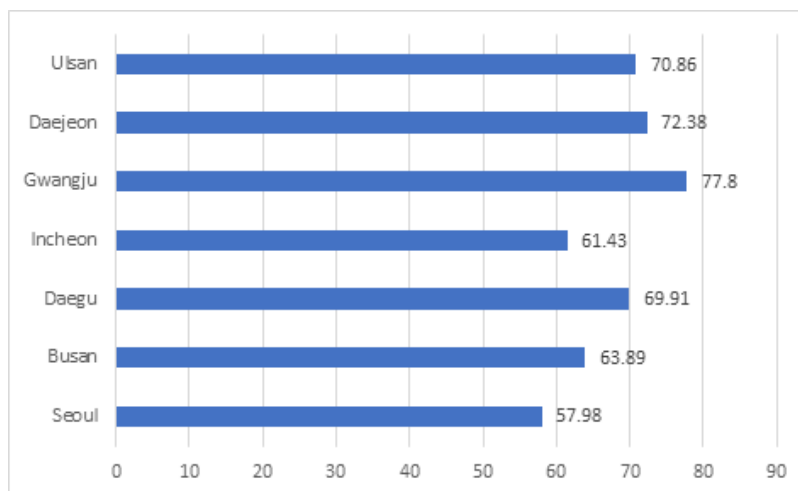


Figure 5: Apartment ratio of mayor cities (%)



Gwangju has the highest rate of apartment housing. The conversion of traditional housing into apartment housing has been promoted by construction companies, which make the most of the laws, which allow the construction of apartments with only the 70% of residents. In the process, the traditional neighborhood relationship is destroyed, and the memories of the people related with the houses and alleys disappear.

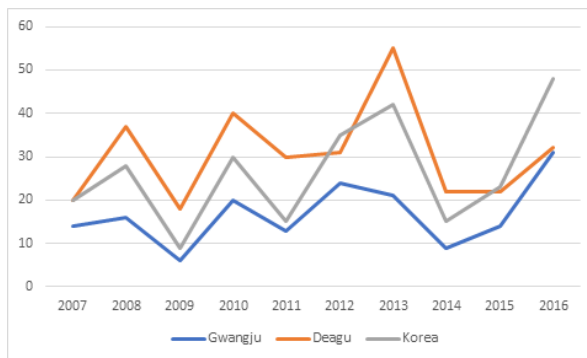


Figure 6: Number of tropical nights

Figure 6 shows the consequence of this drastic increase of apartment construction, which has made the city less green and more warm. The number of warm nights has increased more than twice from 2006 to 2016. Daegu used to be the warmest city in Korea, but now Gwangju is as warm as Daegu is.

The air quality is better in Gwangju than other cities. One of the reasons is the Gwangju city and its surrounding province is less industrialized than other parts of Korea.

City	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Seoul	54	49	47	41	45	46	45	48	44
Busan	49	49	47	43	49	48	46	44	44
Daegu	48	51	47	42	45	45	46	43	42
Incheon	60	55	55	47	49	49	53	49	46
Gwangju	46	45	43	38	42	41	43	40	40
Daejeon	43	44	44	39	42	41	46	44	45
Ulsan	49	48	49	46	47	46	46	43	43

Table 6: Air quality of major cities

SDGs and the human rights city are not closely collaborated, but this is not simply a problem between the two. The lack of collaboration and coordination is found among almost all departments and offices in the city hall. It is also a universal problem in other cities as well.



3.5. Achievements and limitations

There are diverse opinions among the interviews on the achievements of the human rights city Gwangju project. But the HR indicators show a steady improvement annually in the HR situation in various areas. The following is the general trend of the improvement. Negative opinions must have been made with the lower points in critical areas such as safety for women, employment, housing as the following table shows. Each year more than two thirds of the indicators show positive changes.

*5 Areas of 50 indicators & 72 sub-indicators	2014	2016	2017	2018	
% of increasing measures	74%	82%	78%	81%	79%
No of increasing measures	73	41	39	58	285
No of decreasing measures	25	9	11	14	75
Total number of measures	98	50	50	72	360

Table 7: Human Rights City Indicators showing improvement

Human rights measures in the five indicators have been modified, and Table 8 includes the 27 measures which continued to be used for the last five years. It shows that two thirds of measures show improvement. However, some critical indicators like natural disaster and traffic accidents have become worse. In addition, the supply of public housing has been also limited since it requires a huge investment while Korean local governments do not have much financial autonomy in addition to the lack of political will.

27 measures in the five major indicators	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1 Volunteers per 10,000 people	7.7	9.4	8.68	8.84	8.17
1 City officials human rights education	72.65	88.04	100	100	100
1 Citizen human rights education	17.65	17.77	18.12	18.52	18.93
1 High school human rights education	97.12	94.27	97.15	99.37	99.37
1 Public information release rate	97.4	97.98	97.5	94.1	79.98
2 Employment rate: ages of 15-64	57.4	58.4		63.8	65
2 Social business employment	2686	2998	3200	3400	3600
2 Non-regular/regular jobs payment percent	57	54	53.5	50.3	50
2 Non-regular/regular employment in city hall	19	18	14.93	10.3	8
2 Non-regular/regular employment	39.7	36	33.7	36.9	33
2 Suicide rate in 100,000	23.8	22.5	21.4	23.2	22.6
2 School violence out of 1,000*	1.8	3.8	4.7	4.7	10.3



2 Public housing*	10.1	10.1	10.07	8.36	10.4
3 Female unemployment rate	2.5	3	2.96	2.4	3.7
3 Female employment rate		48.3	48.12	50.4	50.7
3 Elected positions for female	29.4	29.5	29.4	29.7	30.4
3 Female principals high schools	42.19	50.21	57.74	62	60.34
3 Female Maternity leave	12.7	13.1	13.76	18.05	20.8
3 Males on maternity leave				22.9	35
3 People under the national pension system	69.61	71.81	75.19	76.14	77.33
3 Poverty rate*	4.08	4.33	4.66	4.28	4.98
3 City handicap employment	4.2	4.6	4.4	4.1	3.5
4 Low bottom bus	13.5	17.8	22.8	25.7	27.8
4 Number of conviction/10,000 citizens*	75.6	79.3	82.06	84.7	83.1
4 Air pollution			33	32.22	30.99
4 Number of students	23.3	22.8	20.07	21.53	21.8
5 Culture voucher for marginalized groups	67.5	68.3	57.31	56.84	63.3

Table 8: Two thirds of Human Rights City indicators showing improvement (* designates the areas showing lack of improvement.)

City	Traffic accident	Fire	Crime	Natural disaster	Safety	Suicide	Disease	Sum
Seoul	1	2	5	1	2	2	2	15
Ulsan	3	2	2	3	3	3	1	17
Busan	2	4	4	2	1	5	4	22
Daegu	3	3	2	3	2	4	5	22
Incheon	2	1	3	5	4	4	3	22
Gwangju	5	3	3	4	3	2	4	24
Daejeon	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	26

Table 9: Safety of major cities (2017)

The low ranking of the safety in Gwangju as shown in table 9³³ seems to one of the reasons why some interviewees and members of the general public are not convinced that the City of Gwangju is a human rights city in spite of the significant achievements in building a human rights city system as shown in the human rights indicators.

There is a clear positive by-product of the human right city project beyond the achievement and limitations: branding the city as a human rights city. The Human Rights City Basic Plan of Gwangju (2011) allocates one of the eight chapters to

33 Ministry of Interior and Safety. National Local Safety Indicator 2018 Report



branding the city.³⁴ In this regard, the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) has played an important role in branding Gwangju as a human rights city while the Asia Culture Forum (ACF) failed to do so as a culture city though it started earlier than WHRCF in Gwangju in 2006. The WHRCF managed to mobilize the local and international organizations as shown in Table 10 to take part in the forum and to propagate the concept of human rights cities around the world while promoting Gwangju as a human rights city. The successful management of the forum attracts the attention and the support of the local politicians regardless of the change of the local government. It contributes to providing an annual platform for human rights cities and activists to discuss and share their expertise and experiences while widening their network.

	ACF 2019	WHRCF 2019
Year of beginning	2006	2011
Partners: domestic	7	30
Partners: international	0	10
Participants: domestic	300	2,000
Participants: international	10	250

Table 10: ACF and WHRCF comparison

Words/phrases ³⁵	Korean (%)	English (%)
<i>culture city</i> (CC)	2,370,000	685,000
<i>human rights city</i> (HRC)	174,000	50,700
Culture City Gwangju (% out of CC)	30,000 (1.27)	379 (0.06)
Human Rights City Gwangju (% out of HRC)	19,300 (11.09)	169 (0.33)
<i>culture forum</i> (CF)	524,000	547,000
<i>human rights forum</i> (HRF)	179,000	320,000
<i>Asia Culture Forum</i> (% out of CF)	22,500 (4.29)	3,480 (0.64)
World Human Rights Cities Forum (% out of HRF)	91,300 (51.01)	78,300 (2.45)

Table 11: Frequency of key words/phrases

Table 11 compares the level of exposure of the City of Gwangju in the Google search between the Human Rights City Gwangju (HRC-Gwangju) and Culture City Gwangju (CC-Gwangju) and between World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) and Asia Culture Forum (ACF). The comparison is:

³⁴ The City of Gwangju has promoted itself as a culture city to soften its image of a radical rebel city. The central government also supported the city with a huge Asia Culture Complex project, the budget of which was planned to be 4 billion US dollars.

³⁵ The frequency varies from time to time. This Google frequency check was done on 3 December 2019.



CC-Gwangju has a higher frequency than HRC-Gwangju both in Korean and English, but it is far less significant when the frequencies of CC-Gwangju is compared with other culture cities:

- 1) CC-Gwangju has 1.27% of CC, and HRC-Gwangju has 11% in Korean.
CC-Gwangju has 0.06% of CC, and HRC-Gwangju has 0.33% in English.
- 2) HRC-Gwangju has 8.8 times higher exposure than CC-Gwangju in Korean.
HRC-Gwangju has 6 times higher exposure than CC-Gwangju in English.
- 3) ACF has 4.29% of CF, and WHRCF has 56.98% of HRF in Korean, and ACF has 0.64% of CF, and WHRCF has 31.88% of HRF in English.
- 4) WHRCF has 13.3 times higher exposure than ACF in Korean, and WHRCF has 50.1 times higher exposure than ACF in English.

The following table of frequency additionally shows the significant position of Human Rights City Gwangju among human rights cities of the world. The exposure of Gwangju ranks third in its frequency in English, but it ranks the highest with the native language exposure in consideration.

City	Human Rights City in native language	English	Native	Total
Bandung, Indonesia	Kota Hak Asasi Manusia Bandung	2	6	8
Barcelona, Spain	Ciudad de los derechos humanos Barcelona	4	0	4
Eugene, US	Human Rights City Eugene	4		4
Graz, Austria	Menschenrechtsstadt Graz	194	3,300	3,494
Gwangju, Korea	인권도시 광주	169	16,300	16,469
Kaohsiung, Taiwan	人權城市高雄	5	233	238
Lund, Sweden	Mänskliga rättigheter stad Lund	1		1
Nuremberg, Germany	Menschenrechtsstadt Nürnberg	2	119	121
Porto Alegre, Brazil	Porto Alegre Cidade dos direitos humanos	6	5	11
Rosario, Argentina	Ciudad de los derechos humanos Rosario	66	0	66
Seoul, Korea	인권도시 서울	5	2,250	2,255
Utrecht, Netherlands	Mensenrechtenstad Utrecht	9	68	77
Vienna, Austria	Menschenrechtsstadt Wien	166	1,430	1,596
Wonosobo, Indonesia	Kota Hak Asasi Manusia Wonosobo	5	3	8
York, UK	Human Rights City York	317		317

Table 12: Frequency of Human Rights City + City Name

The significance of the higher WHRCF exposure is even more considerable since the annual expenditure of human rights of the Gwangju City is only one twentieth of that of culture. The success of the WHRCF owes not only to the dedication of the Gwangju City's Human Rights Department and the WHRCF secretariat but also to the character of the city for democracy and human rights in its history. The attention of the



international organizations such as OHCHR, UNESCO and UCLG to the WHRCF is in turn an encouraging factor to the City of Gwangju and its people to be more interested in promoting itself as a human rights city continuously. One of the WHRCF 2019 participants commented that the forum can be a part of the Korean Culture Wave in the human rights cities movement.³⁶

4. Conclusion, recommendations and prospects

This research reviewed how the City of Gwangju has developed an integrated human rights protection and promotion system including its human rights ordinance, human rights charter, and other devices including the human rights department with substantial number of officers. The most important motivation came from its historical legacy of resistance to injustice and spirit independence. In addition, the presence of a strong public support continued to support the city government in strengthening the system of the human rights city regardless of the government change. One of the most significant achievements was to make human rights into the norm of the administration of the local government through human rights education for all government officials, public service personnels, schools and even citizens. The human rights indicators prove that there has been steady improvement in the human rights of the citizens even though there are poor records in critical areas such as public safety, school violence, environment and housing. The interviewees all agree that a strong political will accompanied by citizen consensus is crucial to build a stronger human rights city in the future.

Before and at the beginning stage of the human rights city, the civil society had the initiatives in establishing the human rights city including human rights ordinance, human rights indicators and other numerous measures. Now the city government leads the implementation of human rights policies, while the civil society plays limited roles of advising through different committees such as the Human Rights Promotion Citizen Committee. This is why many of the interviewees think that the role of the political leadership is becoming more important. The political leadership must emphasize that the human rights city is the core value throughout the city administration, not for the sake of a slogan. Citizens need to be mobilized to create human rights-oriented political leadership and female leadership who can plan to change our lives to make a city of equality in the human rights community.

³⁶ Professor KIM Jungseop is a researcher who introduced the concept of the human rights city for the first time in Korea. He also got involved in the WHRCF from 2011.



The general opinion of the interviewees is that the civil society of Gwangju is still strong though it is getting weaker. However, only a few influential people of the civil society can make their voices heard. Younger activists cannot even take part in that process. The table is for the older men, not for a women in their 20s or 30s. The civil society needs to be open to the general public and to the younger generation to promote a better and sustainable governance between the civil society and the local government.³⁷ It is also important for civil society not to be violent and antagonistic to the local government. Civil society organizations used to fight violently against authoritarian governments, and they are often stubborn without the skills of negotiation, which often makes the city government not to be open with their management. Both the civil society and the local government need to make the most of the soft power to make Gwangju a better human rights city. In this regard, the human rights education needs to be expanded to training citizens and government officials not only human rights but also on skills of participation with the practical issues that citizens can implement in their daily life. Both civil society and the local government need to find human rights issues in collaboration and participation with citizens so that they can think about what they should do to make a better human rights city.³⁸

In this project of the human rights city development of Gwangju, the City of Gwangju and the civil society feel proud that they have been a model of a human rights city. However, they also feel obligated to continue to promote a human rights city in a holistic approach, and the World Human Rights Cities Forum will continuously play a significant role as a global platform of sharing the human rights city experiences and expertises of UN, UCLG and local governments, human rights organizations, while mobilizing the Gwangju citizens and the political leadership even to the extent to take care of such difficult agenda as public safety, violence, environment and housing.

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³⁷ From the interview with 07L.

³⁸ From the interview with 08O. She also emphasizes the importance of soft skills.



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