

A City of the 'Bang' (Room)

¹Moo-Kyung Kim, ²Young Lee

¹35 Baekbeom-ro, Mapo-gu, Seoul
121-742, Korea. Sogang University, mookyung@sogang.ac.kr

² 1342 SeongnamDaero, Sujeong-Gu
Seongnam-Si, Gyeonggi-Do, S. Korea, 461-701
Gachon University, ylee@gachon.ac.kr

Abstract. Not long ago, New York Times introduced 'Jimjil-Bang (Korean Bathhouse)' as the most impressed scene of modern culture in Korea (Kantor, 2014). In the field of Urban Architecture emphasized importance of 'Bang(Room)' culture start from Jimjil-'Bang, Norae-'Bang(Karaoke Room)', PC-'Bang', Game-'Bang', Video-'Bang' and even to Ballae-'Bang(Laundry Room)' And, the main theme of Korean exhibition in 2004 Venice Biennale was 'A city of the Bang'. Through this exhibition of examining Urban Architectural and Sociocultural meaning of Bang culture in Korea Acity of the Bang became a part of Korean Urban landscape. If we can find connectivity between the public, semi-public, semi- private and private space in our daily & public life with analyzing location of Bangs. We can find a solution to problems occurred in the city through proper arrangement and harmony.

Keywords: Bang culture, public space, private space, daily & public life

1 Introduction

An Architect Kim Kwang Su, a participant of 2004 Venice Biennale, expressed in quite provocative way of this phenomenon as 'runaway of Bang(Room)'. Namely, "It might seem rational in the chain value of Apartment – Office – School but, for the truth, 'Bang(Rooms)' are ran away from extremely irrational identification bully"(Kim Kwang Su,2004). So to speak, in the huge Seoul city, long distance of house to work place and work place to school increase "temporary space and exchange medium space which are replacing house role" and this result is caused by absurdly lack of public space in Seoul(Kim Kwang Su, 2004; Kim Sung Hong, 2004). Like this, 'Bang(Room)' is a secret room which is very private, and also public as Sarang Bang(reception room for male guests) and therefore, this can be defined "private and public space in the city provided by civilian"(Kim Kwang Su, 2004). This article is focused more on the 'Norae-Bang', 'Jimjil-Bang' and 'PC-Bang' among the examples of 'Bang culture' and its aim is to examine the change of these spaces and related space experience. Through this, we will figure ordinary city life have any significant or questions to share for world architecture and to see whether there is proposal of new 'way of life' in the urban architecture of Korean city society urban space has been severed. (Jeong Gi Yong, 2004).

2 Noraebang (Karaoke Room)

An appearance and success of Noraebang have influenced expansion of more new 'Bang(Rooms)' and in regarding to this, Noraebang is "the original of 'Bang culture'"(Park So Jin, 2012: 9).¹ Noraebang's social and cultural meaning may be different for Office workers, teenagers, University students and house wives, but above all, Noraebang has its own characteristic that everyone can directly participate and experience. This is definitely an extension of traditional drinking alcohol culture of Korea -while they drank alcohol, they sang together or sang in rotation. "gloomy basement space" image of Noraebang gave 'closed' space, 'sealed small cozy' space, 'basement', 'cave', 'corner' or 'resort pension' feelings(Article above:27-33). These



Fig. 1. Noraebang (Karaoke)

feelings are defined by French sociologist Maffesoli and it related to 'covering' or 'envelopment' which are the replacement of 'development', the dominant value of modernity (Maffesoli, 2011). Noraebang has naturally turned into 'self-expression' space arousing potential talent is very natural. In other words, open up potential possibilities of own and bring it to gether to 'express oneself' (Kim Moo Kyung, 212:210-211)..

3 Jimjil-Bang (Korean Bathhouse)

.Jimjilbang is the 'multi gift set' of Bang culture and let's look on the aspect of whole space form and composition of it. May be details are different but most of Jimjil-Bang are composed as follows. First, on one side, there are 'Bang(Rooms)' for health and fatigue recovery such as 'Oxygen Bang(Room)', 'Salt Bang(Room)', 'Foot massage Bath', 'Ice Bang(Room)', 'Massage Room' and etc. and on the other side, there are 'PC Bang', 'Noraebang', 'Cinema', 'Comic Book Bang', 'Sleeping Bang', 'Meeting Bang' which are 'Bang(Rooms)' culture composed outside.

JimjilBang is an open space for 'everyone'. Maybe this phenomenon is an extension of traditional heritage of public bath in Korea or Japan which were opened to every

¹ Noraebang started in BuSan in the early 90's and rapidly spread throughout the country. After 2 years of spreading through, about 15,000 noraebang were appeared and increased to 35,000 in 2010 (Korea Creative Content Agency, 2011:17; Park So Jin, 2012: quote from 8p), About 1,900,000 people are visiting Noraebang per day.(Park Jin Young, 2011: Park So jin, 2012: quote from 8p)

‘class’ of people. On the other hand, this enables to link between the ordinary people-public and Bath-Hot spring- fomentation.



Fig. 2. Jimjil-Bang (Fomentation Room)

4 PC-Bang (Internet Cafe)

BNC internet café opened in 1994 was the first PC Bang in Korea. And that time, ‘Internet Café’ called as ‘Modem Café’, ‘Network Café’ and ‘Cyber Café’. In the early stage of PC Bang is located near University Campus for PC network and games. And PC Bang rapidly expanded since 1997 when opening business fever and computer industry boom occurred caused by encountered foreign exchange crisis.

PC Bang did not extinct, it regenerate continuously to the network space and to social. ‘Moving PC Bang’ is infinitely expands and links society through Wi-Fi the Wireless internet, at this point, PC bang should be discussed Yoon Myung Hee’s proposal; “Bang(Rooms) are connected through computer and internet”.(Article above:86) So to speak, through internet and mobile phone, endless networking can be made while moving. So now Korean society is like a huge PC Bang.



Fig. 3 PC Bang (Internet Café)

5 Conclusion

Classic sociologist Simmel said “genuine change of history” is “the change of the form”, the purpose of this paper is to questioning mainly of ‘Bang(Room)’ form ‘A city of the bang’ and ‘Bang culture’. An analysis of ‘Norae Bang’, we intended to show ‘self-expression’ is more strengthened by opening up ‘all the potential possibility’ through singing. This space strengthens sense of kinship and sense of belonging. Whereas in Jimjil Bang, we intended to emphasize metaphorically that Jimjilbang is ‘polytheism’ in regard to user composition and activities inside the room.



Fig. 4. Original Part of SeongNam_TaePyongDong distribution of public space

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