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Alternatives for Local Development for the Kyrgyz Republic

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	VI
List of Tables	VII
Abbreviations	VIII
Glossary	VIII
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Country context and local development challenges	1
1.2 The motivation for the research	6
1.3 Aim and Research Questions	8
1.4 Structure of the Doctoral Dissertation.....	9
2. Literature Review	11
2.1 Local Development Theories	11
3. Local Development Alternative I: European Union’s LEADER Model	19
3.1 Introduction	19
3.2 Socio-economic background of the LEADER	21
3.3 The basic principles and characteristics of the LEADER	23
3.3.1 Policy delivery mechanism of the LEADER	24
3.3.2 Good Governance and Decentralization and LEADER.....	26
3.3.3 A brief overview of the LEADER programme implementation in Hungary.....	29
3.4 General Summary of the EU LEADER Programme.....	33
4. Local Development Alternative II: Korean Saemaul Undong Model	35
4.1 Introduction	35
4.2 Socio-economic background of Saemaul Undong	38
4.3 The basic principles and characteristics of Saemaul Undong	39
4.3.1 Saemaul Undong’s Local Community Development Strategies	40
4.3.2 The institutional framework of the Saemaul Undong.....	42
4.3.3 Developmental State and Saemaul Undong (1970-1979).....	46
4.3.3.1 Government input and Saemaul Undong output.....	48
4.3.3.2 Criticism of the Saemaul Undong Movement.....	50

4.4	General Summary of the Korean Saemaul Undong	51
5.	Comparative analysis of the European LEADER and the Korean Saemaul Undong	53
5.1	Possibilities of applying role models in Kyrgyzstan	57
5.2	Research Methodology	58
5.2.1	Data Collection Techniques	59
5.2.2	Facilitating data management, coding, and analysis	60
5.3	Research areas in Kyrgyzstan for the pilot study	61
6.	Case study I: Korean Saemaul Undong application in Kyrgyzstan	64
6.1	Saemaul Undong's Application Process to Kyrgyzstan	65
6.1.1	Korea International Cooperation Agency-funded My Village Initiative context ...	67
6.1.1.1	My Village Initiative's Leading Local Actors	69
6.1.1.2	Cooperation in the My Village Initiative in Kyrgyzstan	72
6.1.1.3	The local development scheme of the My Village Initiative	75
6.1.1.4	Preliminary Outcome of the My Village Initiative	76
6.1.1.5	Contribution and comparison of the Korean and Kyrgyz versions of the Saemaul Undong model	77
6.2	Case Study II: EBRD's Modernization of Drinking Water Project	81
6.2.1	European Union's Mission in Kyrgyzstan	81
6.2.1.1	EBRD's Modernization of Drinking Water Project Context	81
6.2.1.2	EBRD's drinking water project's local critical actors and their cooperation	83
6.2.1.3	EBRD drinking water project's local development scheme	84
6.2.1.4	EBRD drinking water project's contribution to Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality	84
6.3	Case Study III: Kyrgyz Businessman-initiated Local Development Initiative	86
6.3.1	Ülgülöö Ayil Ökmötü, or Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative Context .	86
6.3.1.1	Exemplary Local Self-Government's critical local actors and their collaboration	87
6.3.1.2	Exemplary Local Self-Government scheme for local development	88
6.3.1.3	Targeted Project under the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative	89
6.3.1.4	Preliminary Contribution of the Exemplary Local Self-Government	92
6.4	Empirical Finding and Discussion	93
7.	Research Theses and Conclusion	100

7.1	Research Theses	100
7.2	Conclusion.....	103
	References	108
	Appendixes.....	117
	Acknowledgment.....	137

List of Figures

Figure 1 – Kyrgyz Republic, Personal remittances received (% of GDP).....	3
Figure 2 – Research stages of the doctoral dissertation.....	10
Figure 3 – The seven fundamental principles of the LEADER.....	24
Figure 4 – Institutional scheme of Saemaul Undong for local and rural development.....	43
Figure 5 – Organizational Arrangements for the Saemaul Undong.....	45
Figure 6 – Proposed research areas in Kyrgyzstan.....	63
Figure 7 – Local business sector inclusion in the KOICA My Village in Kyrgyzstan.....	71
Figure 8 – Main Stakeholders and Collaboration in the KOICA My Village in Kyrgyzstan.....	71
Figure 9 – The selection of the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality for EBRD funding.....	83
Figure 10 – Critical Stakeholders and Collaboration in the EBRD Water Project.....	84
Figure 11 – Local Stakeholders and Cooperation in the Exemplary Local Self-Government.....	88
Figure 12 – The complexity of local development perspectives.....	99

List of Tables

Table 1 – Territorial disparity in Kyrgyzstan	6
Table 2 – Summary of local development concepts	17
Table 3 – The scale of the LEADER programme (1991-2013).....	21
Table 4 – Local characteristics of the LEADER	25
Table 5 – The Scale of Saemaul Undong (1971-1978).....	37
Table 6 – Saemaul Undong local development scheme	41
Table 7 – The outcome of the Saemaul Undong projects (1971-1980).....	48
Table 8 – Comparison of the EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong	55
Table 9 – Codes	61
Table 10 – Basic statistics of the selected case studies in Kyrgyzstan	62
Table 11 – Activities related to Saemaul Undong in Kyrgyzstan.....	67
Table 12 – The acceptance of Ashar as the primary mechanism for implementing My Village's local development initiatives	72
Table 13 – Outcome of the KOICA My Village Initiative (2019-2020)	76
Table 14 – Comparison of the Korean and Kyrgyz versions of Saemaul Undong in the KOICA My Village Initiative.....	79
Table 15 – EBRD’s drinking water project’s outcome.....	85
Table 16 – Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative.....	92
Table 17 – A synopsis of Kyrgyzstan’s international and local development approaches.....	97

Abbreviations

EU: European Union

EBRD: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

GAMSUMO: Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations under the Kyrgyz Government

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

KOICA: Korea International Cooperation Agency

LAGs: Local Action Groups

LEADER: Liaison Entre Actions pour le Developement de l'Economie Rurale.

LED: Local Economic Development

LSG: Local Self-Government

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NSC: National Statistic Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic

WB: World Bank

Glossary

Aksakal – The term “aksakal” refers to an elder with significant respect and authority within a community. The younger generation typically displays utmost respect and appreciation for aksakals. Understanding this cultural framework is crucial for interpreting the social dynamics within the research.

Ashar – The concept of “ashar” revolves around voluntary collective action to address specific tasks. This practice is primarily observed in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan and is believed to have

originated from nomadic traditions, although the exact historical emergence of “ashar” remains uncertain. Participants do not receive payment for their involvement in “ashar” activities.

Ayil¹ (village) is a small administrative and regional subdivision of the Kyrgyz Republic. “Ayil” is defined as a settlement that has reached a certain level of improvement, with a population of at least 50 people. At least half of the population, including family members, must be employed in agricultural production.

Ayil Bashchy – village head.

Ayil Ökmötü² – the executive and administrative body that operates under the village's jurisdiction and serves as the local self-government at the village level. It focuses on addressing local issues and is conducted by local communities through representative and executive bodies and direct citizen participation. The Kyrgyz Government established the “ayil ökmötü” in 1996 as part of the local self-government unit to decentralize power and decision-making and to bring governance closer to local communities. The size of an “ayil ökmötü” may vary depending on the size of the village and may encompass one or several villages.

Kenesh² – a term often used in Kyrgyzstan, refers to an assembly, council, or parliament. It holds significant weight in local governance, with its decisions and policy implementations profoundly impacting local development. This term is commonly applied to legislative bodies, such as the national parliament (Zhogorku Kenesh) or local councils at various administrative levels, including Rayon Kenesh (district council) or Oblast Kenesh (regional council).

Rayon¹ (district) – an administrative-territorial unit that unites villages, settlements, and towns of regional significance located within the established boundaries of a given region. Public administration is carried out considering local communities' interests and the competence of local self-government bodies.

¹ Ministry of Justice of Kyrgyz Republic (2019, July 8). The legal framework of the Kyrgyz Republic is founded on the principles of the Kyrgyz Constitution. Administrative and territorial structure of the Kyrgyz Republic, Law No.83. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from <https://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/202276/edition/956344/ru>.

² Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyz Republic (2021, October 20). The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic. Local state administration and local self-government bodies, Law No.123. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from https://www.gov.kg/ru/p/local_state_administration.

Oblast¹ (region) – the most significant administrative and territorial unit in the Kyrgyz Republic in terms of regional territorial divisions. An “oblast” is an administrative-territorial unit that unites the territories of cities of “oblast” (region) significance and districts located on the territory of this region. The state administration is carried out in these oblasts in a manner that considers the interests of local communities and the competence of local self-government bodies.

"Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale" (LEADER) is a French acronym that stands for "links between actions for developing a rural economy."

Saemaul Undong (새마을운동) – the New Village Movement/Development, is a Korean term that translates to "new village movement" in English. The term "Sae" represents "new," "maul" denotes "village," and "Undong" encompasses both "development" and "movement."

"Ülgülüü Ayil Ökmötü" – in this context, "Ülgülüü" refers to Exemplary or Model, and Ayil Ökmötü denotes the local self-government system.

1. Introduction

1.1 Country context and local development challenges

Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan), a landlocked country in Central Asia, emerged as a sovereign nation after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. It shares borders with Kazakhstan to the north, China to the east and southeast, Tajikistan to the southwest, and Uzbekistan to the west. The country is administratively divided into seven regions: Batken, Osh, Jalal-Abad, Talas, Chuy, Issyk-Kul, and Naryn. These regions are further subdivided into 40 districts (rayons), 32 cities, and 452 local self-governments (ayil ökmötüs') (NSC, 2019). The capital of the Republic is Bishkek, and Osh is its second-largest city. Kyrgyzstan, with a population of seven million and a territory of 199,949 km², is primarily characterized by its mountainous terrain, with nearly 90 percent of its landmass situated at elevations exceeding 1,500 meters. The Pamir Alai Mountains surround the country to the southwest, and the Tien Shan Mountains to the northeast. The country's distinctive geographical features present considerable hurdles to its development. The challenges encompass limited economic prospects and slow progression, requiring prompt attention and innovative problem-solving approaches.

World Bank (2021a) categorizes Kyrgyzstan as a lower-middle-income country with a gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$ 8,5 billion and a per capita GDP of US\$ 1,276 in 2021. The economy's vulnerability to external shocks is a significant concern, given its dependence on one gold mine, Kumtor, which accounts for about 9,7% of GDP, and on worker remittances (mainly in Russia), equivalent to approximately 31,1% of the country's GDP (World Bank, 2021b). Over the last twenty years, remittances have been instrumental and a cornerstone of Kyrgyzstan's economic development (see Figure 1). The long-run positive impact of remittances on economic growth is not just significant but crucial for Kyrgyzstan, and it supports its economic growth (Aitymbetov, 2006; Kumar et al., 2017). On the other hand, Murzakulova (2020, p. 12) argues that remittance flow does nothing to generate sustainable economic development. They are usually used for daily consumption and cover low payments. Dependence on remittances reduces domestic investment and labor shortages in rural areas, especially in the agricultural sector, and makes exports less competitive in the long run. Although it positively impacts reducing poverty, consumption, and imports. Most studies (Ergeshbayev, 2006; Schmidt & Sagynbekova, 2008;

Thieme, 2014) indicate that external migration is primarily an economic issue of the meager labor market, limited opportunities, and slow development of the national economy that have an impact on the development of the labor market outside of Kyrgyzstan. According to the Department of External Migration under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, 740,500 citizens registered as migrants in 2018. The destinations are as follows: Russian Federation—640,000 people; Kazakhstan—35,000; Turkey—30,000; USA—around 15,000; Italy—5,500; Republic of Korea—5,000; Germany—5,000; Great Britain—2,000; and United Arab Emirates—30,000.

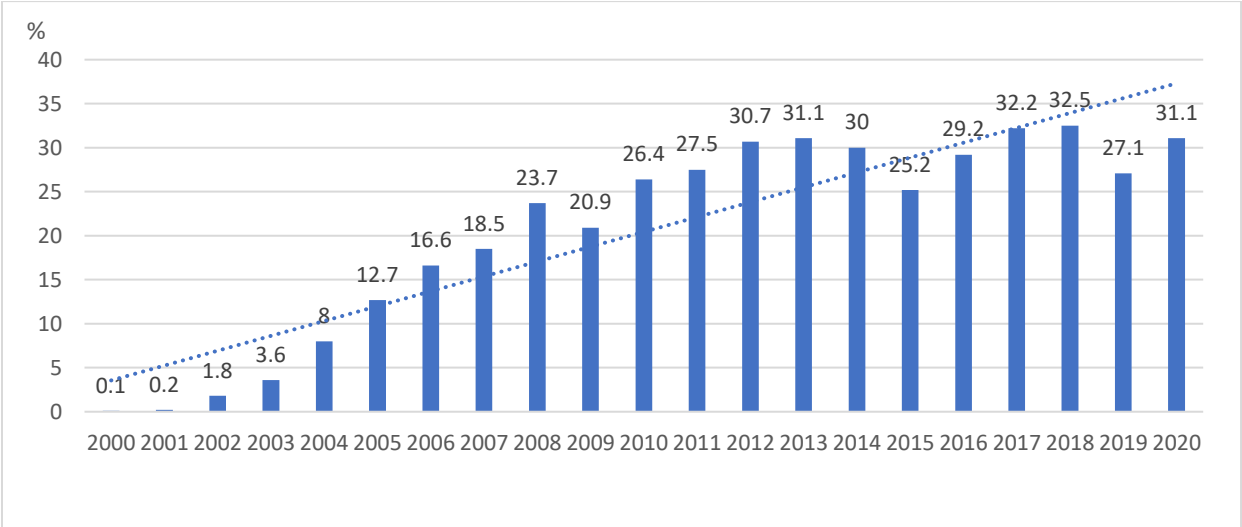
The leader of these countries is the Russian Federation. Unofficially, the number of migrants from Kyrgyzstan reaches around a million. Migrants mainly work in the construction and service areas. Kyrgyzstan's citizens do not need a visa to enter the Russian Federation, which is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU³). In 2015, the EAEU was established for regional economic integration, providing unrestricted movement of goods, services, capital, and labor. The EAEU pursues a coordinated, harmonized, and unified policy in specified sectors of the treaty and international agreements. The Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Russian Federation are Eurasian Economic Union members. The Union was created to upgrade comprehensively, raise the competitiveness of cooperation between the national economies, and promote stable development to increase the national living standards of the member-states.

Kudaibergenova (2016) claims that Kyrgyzstan's integration position into the EAEU is primarily driven by its economy and dependence on its significant immigration flows to Russia. Since there are one million Kyrgyzstan citizens in Russia, membership in the EAEU is seen as a potential pathway to achieve freedom of movement within all member countries. Moreover, the Kyrgyz-Russian Development Fund was established in 2014. The fund is created to support Kyrgyzstan's economic and industrial development and decrease the negative impact of the transition process to EAEU (Tiulegenov, 2015). Mostafa and Mahmood (2018) argue that Kyrgyzstan has become one of the most unstable countries in Central Asia. Its economic and political instability (revolutions, ethnic tensions between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in 1990 and 2010) and tensions between regional elites (clan conflicts) affect its neighboring countries, especially Russia. On top of that, concerns over the rise of radicalism and Islamic fundamentalism in

³ Detailed information about the Eurasian Economic Union can be found on the official website: <http://www.eaeunion.org/?lang=en#about>.

Afghanistan, also located in Central Asia, present another challenge for joining the EAEU. Kyrgyzstan needs Russian development assistance, military cooperation, and support for its internal and external security and political stability (Mostafa & Mahmood, 2018). Contrary to this perspective, Kudaibergenova (2016) contends that the Eurasian Economic Union has not made notable strides. Hence, it becomes essential to delve into its economic challenges. The current economic realities in Russia, including the ruble crisis and the conflict with Ukraine, undoubtedly pose challenges. The objectives of the EAEU may seem declarative or influenced by political agendas; however, they remain significant and deserving of attention. The Eurasian discourse is a legitimate strategy for political elites to ensure stability, security, and economic development and establish migration and mobility routes for member-states, particularly Kyrgyzstan (Mostafa & Mahmood, 2018). A notable proportion of migrants originating from Kyrgyzstan reside in the Russian Federation. Kyrgyzstan relies on remittances, with private transfers accounting for a substantial 30% share of its GDP. Consequently, Kyrgyzstan stands among the most remittance-dependent economies on a global scale.

Figure 1 – Kyrgyz Republic, Personal remittances received (% of GDP)



Source: World Development Indicators (2023). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?end=2022&locations=KG&start=1993&view=chart>

Local Development Challenges

Kyrgyzstan, a land of contradictions (Anderson, 1999), has weathered significant political storms. Once hailed as the 'island of democracy,' it experienced three revolutions in 2005, 2010, and 2020 that toppled its Presidents. The root causes of the political unrest during the so-called 'colorful' revolutions in 2005 and 2010 were unfair parliamentary elections, corruption, nepotism, and the failure of national development programs. The most recent event in 2020 was triggered by a rigged parliamentary election, leading to the resignation of the late President Zheenbekov. Despite these challenges, a beacon of hope emerged amidst the turmoil: the rise of a vibrant civil society, the proliferation of opposition parties, and the establishment of independent media, elements that neighboring countries in Central Asia lack (Marat, 2012).

In Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is the only state characterized by its open political process, but weaknesses in governance are pervasive (WB, 2021b). In 2022, Kyrgyzstan ranked 140th out of 180 economies in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, scoring 27 out of 100 (on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being very corrupt and 100 being very clean). According to the World Bank (2020b), improving state governance is a top priority for achieving better development outcomes, and corruption is the biggest obstacle to economic development. The regime change led to the frequent replacement of high-ranking officials, including the prime ministers. The newly appointed prime minister comes with a new national development program. Adapting to the new policies takes time, and the previous national development programs are neglected. This is because of the length of service; where some were served for three months, and the longest was nine months. Around thirty prime ministers have served since the country's independence. As a result, the parliamentary system of governance has not been effective; instead, Kyrgyzstan's third revolution (2020) has resulted in the change from a parliamentary⁴ to a presidential government. Given Kyrgyzstan's recent turbulent history, I argue that many ordinary citizens are likely tired of protests and colorful revolutions. Hence, peace and economic development naturally align with national interests. The need to focus on local and regional

⁴ With the passage of the new constitution in 2010, most formal powers were delegated to Parliament (*Zhogorku Kenesh*). However, the President continued to play a crucial role in formulating foreign and domestic policy decisions. On 10 January 2021, Kyrgyzstan voted to change the system of government from parliamentary to presidential in parallel with the presidential elections, reversing the transition to a parliamentary system following the 2010 popular revolution, in which most executive power rests with the prime minister. On January 10, 2021, Kyrgyz voters supported the presidential governance model.

development has grown. The importance of regional development was particularly emphasized during former President Zheenbekov's tenure (2018~2020), when he designated 2018, 2019, and 2020 as the “Years of Regional Development” by decree.

Regional development policy has been assigned priority status in national strategic documents, such as the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Kyrgyz Republic through 2018-2040, mainly in the section on the Economic Development of regions. These policies focus on constructing roads, building essential infrastructure, providing clean drinking water, ensuring efficient energy, reducing poverty, and local development through the specialization of local areas in sectors like tourism, agriculture, and mining. Kyrgyzstan inherited a well-developed, albeit basic, infrastructure and social service system from the Soviet era. However, the current condition of these infrastructures and facilities has deteriorated since independence. The dissolution of the Soviet Union left significant gaps in the maintenance of infrastructure, drinking water provision, sanitation, health care, childcare, and social facilities. The responsibility for providing essential services now falls to *ayil ökmötüs* (local self-governments), many of which struggle with inadequate funding, technical resources, and institutional capacity. According to data from the Kyrgyz Ministry of Finance (2021), 72% (329) of the 452 local self-governments are state-subsidized, and most lack financial autonomy. Local self-governments are vital in meeting Kyrgyzstan's local development needs. However, they frequently face challenges due to insufficient revenue, making it difficult to carry out the tasks mandated by the central government. Consequently, local self-governments heavily rely on financial assistance from higher levels of administration. To resolve this, it is suggested that the grants allocated to lower levels be augmented (Grävingholt et al., 2006).

The uneven distribution of population across regions, districts, and villages poses a significant challenge to local development in Kyrgyzstan. For instance, the population of the Kara-Suu district, at around 457,000, exceeds the combined population of regions like Talas (approximately 267,000 inhabitants) and Naryn (approximately 289,000 inhabitants). Similarly, there are notable disparities at the village level, with over 20,000 residents in Shark village compared to just 722 in Ak-Kuduk village. These imbalances are widespread and numerous. In addition, persistent border disputes with neighboring countries like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan remain ongoing challenges for national and local development. These conflicts frequently arise from competition over natural resources, particularly water for irrigation and grazing land for

livestock (Kurmanalieva, 2018). Table 1 contains data on territorial inequality, poverty, unemployment rates, and Kyrgyzstan's gross regional product (GRP) per capita (NSC, 2019).

Table 1 – Territorial disparity in Kyrgyzstan

	Population	Poor population (people)	Area (km ²)	Poverty rate (%)	Unemployment rate (%)	Gross regional product (GRP) per capita (thousand soms)
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Kyrgyz Republic	6,523,5	1,678,265	199,949	25,3	5,8	95,1 (US \$ 1,126)
Batken oblast	537,3	190,043	17,0	34,7	7,4	42,3 (US\$ 500)
Osh oblast	1,368,1	261,842	29,0	18,8	2,6	37 (US\$ 438)
Jalal-Abad oblast	1,238,8	469,423	33,7	37,2	11,0	54,2 (US\$ 641)
Talas oblast	267,4	33,753	11,4	12,5	2,6	66,4 (US\$ 786)
Chuy oblast	959,8	247,531	20,2	25,4	6,1	88 (US\$ 1042)
Naryn oblast	289,6	107,560	45,2	36,8	7,3	61 (US\$ 722)
Issyk-Kul oblast	496,1	139,909	43,1	27,9	7,4	176,5 (US\$ 2090)

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (2023). Retrieved from <http://stat.kg/kg/statistics/>

1.2 The motivation for the research

The country's current socio-economic and political context presents pressing challenges that require immediate attention and action. Like many other nations, Kyrgyzstan faces several unresolved issues, with regional, rural, and local development emerging as the most urgent priorities. This study focuses on local development in rural Kyrgyzstan, where over 4.4 million people reside, accounting for 63% of the total population. Rural areas experience significant

disadvantages, with poverty rates surpassing the national average and high levels of unemployment. Currently, remittances and agriculture serve as the primary sources of income in the country's rural areas. Therefore, this research explores alternative pathways for local development to broaden opportunities and improve living standards in rural Kyrgyzstan. The aim is to explore a new paradigm that is local, inclusive, and sustainable.

Two role models are selected for this: the European Union's (EU) "LEADER" and the Republic of Korea's (Korea⁵) "Saemaul Undong." In the context of local development research, it is critical to identify best practices that can guide and inspire future initiatives. A role model in local development research is a successful example that serves as inspiration and direction for others to emulate or follow. By displaying best practices and achieving positive outcomes, these local development role models can substantially impact the creation of effective policies and strategies. When selecting EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong role models, several factors were considered. First, the chosen models have garnered considerable attention in research circles. For example, Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale (LEADER), emphasizing links between the rural economy and development actions, is extensively studied within the European Union. Likewise, Korea's Saemaul Undong, also called the New Village Movement or Development, is gaining prominence in regions like Africa, Latin America, the ASEAN region, and Central Asia, where its influence has recently expanded. The initiatives have a global footprint. Second, both regions motivate academics, the public sector, policymakers, and ordinary citizens with their development paths: the EU core value of democracy in a diverse and heterogeneous environment and the rapid development of East Asia resulting from an authoritarian regime and developmental state and modern technologies. Third, these models represent inclusive, sustainable, and local development characteristics most appropriate for this research motivation. Finally, Kyrgyzstan has expressed its interest in the Korean Saemaul Undong, introducing it as a model of action in rural areas and being the first Central Asian country to do so.

While the EU and East Asia have different contexts, socio-economic conditions, and political systems, this study examines the role models' historical context and theoretical underpinnings to understand their local development strategies. The primary objective is to identify the basic principles and characteristics of the two models by comparing them in terms of their local development schemes. This comprehensive approach ensures that the similarities and

⁵ South Korea is officially named the Republic of Korea.

differences are thoroughly understood, and appropriate local development strategies can be adopted in Kyrgyzstan to promote local development based on its context.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

In this dissertation, I aim to explore the potential for implementing local development models in rural Kyrgyzstan. The study involves a comprehensive review of existing literature to identify the essential components of local development concepts. Additionally, I will examine and analyze the fundamental principles, characteristics, and implementation strategies of two prominent role models: the EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong initiatives.

The empirical part of this dissertation comprises three distinct case studies. The first case study is "Menin Ayilym" (My Village Initiative), which is a local development project funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) based on the Korean Saemaul Undong model. The second case study is the EBRD drinking water project in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality, Kyrgyzstan, as an international local development initiative. While attempting to find a LEADER-type initiative in Kyrgyzstan, I encountered challenges due to Kyrgyzstan not being an EU member and difficulties accessing EU representatives for research. Consequently, through personal connections, I could only gain insight into the EBRD project in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality. Due to the cultural norms of Kyrgyzstan, conducting interviews took much work. Due to my prior education and connections in Korea, I could only obtain information about Korean Saemaul Undong activities in Kyrgyzstan⁶. Finally, the domestic field research is "Ülgülüü Ayil Ökmötü" (Exemplary Local Self-Government) initiative in Kyrgyzstan's Bel territory, which is initiated by a Kyrgyz businessman from the private sector, showcasing local development efforts within the country. Three independent case studies are conducted in Kyrgyzstan from 2019 to 2021. In order to access the data, semi-structured questionnaires are developed for international field studies, while in-depth interviews are conducted for domestic field research. Theoretical research in the first part addresses two questions, while the empirical part tackles the third question. The research postulates are as follows:

⁶ The author studied International Community Development and Saemaul Undong (Master Studies) at Yeungnam University, Republic of Korea.

Research Question 1: What are the main similarities and differences between the European Union LEADER and the Republic of Korea's Saemaul Undong local development schemes?

Research Question 2: How can the European Union's LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong be applied as an alternative model for local development in Kyrgyzstan?

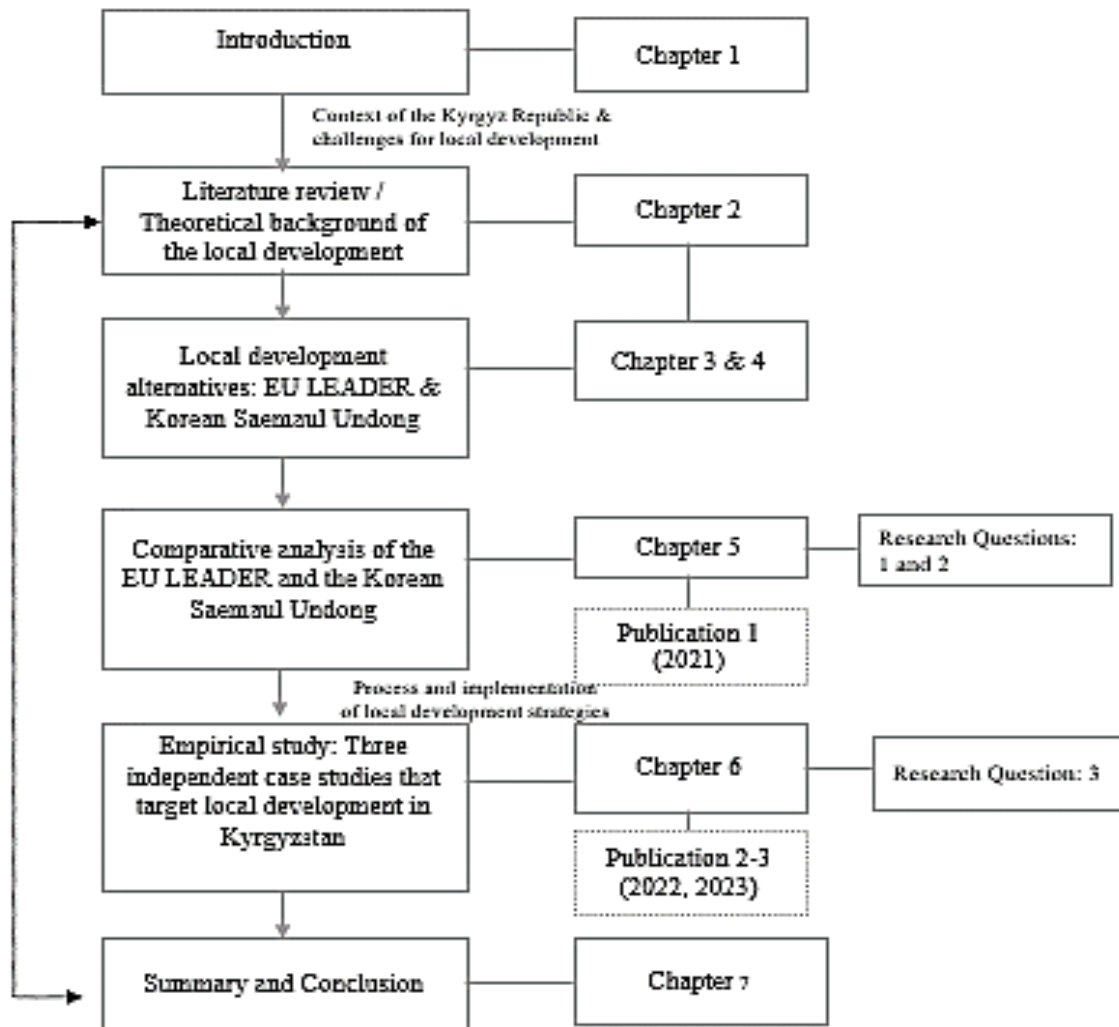
Research Question 3: Who are the primary local stakeholders, and how do they collaborate in the international and domestically-driven local development case studies in Kyrgyzstan?

1.4 Structure of the Doctoral Dissertation

The dissertation is structured as follows. The first chapter introduces the context of Kyrgyzstan, its local development challenges, and the aim of this dissertation. The following chapter 2 discusses the theories of local development. Chapters 3 and 4 are dedicated to local development alternatives: the European Union's LEADER and the Republic of Korea's Saemaul Undong models. The Chapters introduce role models and outline socio-economic backgrounds, basic principles, characteristics, and local development schemes. Chapter 5 provides a comparative analysis of the European LEADER and the Korean Saemaul Undong. A comparative analysis serves to identify similarities and differences between the selected two role models based on their local development schemes. Chapter 6 is the empirical part of this dissertation, and three different case studies are selected. The first case study, Korean Saemaul Undong's application, vital local actors, and their cooperation in Kyrgyzstan is presented. The chapter examines the processes and implementation of local development schemes by Korean donors. The chapter closes with a comparative analysis of the original Korean Saemaul Undong and the Kyrgyz version or globalized Saemaul Undong. The second case study is the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) "drinking water provision" project in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality. The context of the EBRD project, vital local actors, and their collaboration are presented. This section closes with the contribution of the EBRD drinking water project in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality, Kyrgyzstan. The third case study, "Exemplary Local Self-Government," was initiated by a Kyrgyz businessman in southern Kyrgyzstan's Bel territory. The section follows the project's context, critical local actors and their collaboration process, and primary contributions to the pilot area. This case study holds significant practical implications, providing a practical example of

successful local self-government in Kyrgyzstan. Empirical Chapter 6 closes by discussing the findings of the selected case studies and their similarities and differences in local development schemes. Chapter 7 summarizes the research answers, results, and conclusions based on the research questions formulated in the first chapter. This study attempts to provide a balanced overview and analysis of the field studies conducted in rural Kyrgyzstan in response to our main research questions.

Figure 2 – Research stages of the doctoral dissertation



Source: own elaboration

2. Literature Review

The primary goal of this chapter is to present a thorough overview of the essential theories and pertinent literature on local development, aiming to cultivate a deeper comprehension of the subject matter. Within this section, the dissertation establishes a theoretical framework by deliberating and delineating these crucial theories and concepts of local development. This framework places the findings within the context of existing knowledge and offers a perspective through which to comprehend their implications for the dissertation topic. I have extensively focused on literature that closely aligns with my objective of comparing two distinct cases and models. The literature chosen for this chapter concentrates on local development and was selected based on its relevance, scholarly credibility, and contribution to the theoretical framework. The sources were meticulously curated from peer-reviewed journals, reputable publications, books, and recent research within the past two decades. This selection ensures the inclusion of both fundamental and contemporary perspectives.

2.1 Local Development Theories

Local and regional development has established multi and inter-disciplinary contexts of social, cultural, economics, geography, planning, urban studies, and environmental and political studies (Pike et al., 2011, pp. 3-4). In addition, local and regional development conception has extended and integrated with the "Development Studies" concept to address ongoing and future challenges. Therefore, "what kind of local and regional development" and for "whom" framework of understanding, instruments, and policies should be considered as the fundamental questions of the concept of local and regional development (Pike et al., 2007, p. 1254). Moreover, consideration should also be given to the historical context and the "where" of local and regional development in space, territory, place, and scale. Definitions are an essential and deceptively tricky starting point for comprehending what local and regional development entails. It has been suggested that localities and regions' success, failure, and development are shaped and determined by the processes and politics of government and governance. There is a need for renewed local and regional development politics based on questions of who governs and how power is exercised. It is because it determines the varieties, institutions, and resources available to frame, address, and

answer the question, "What kind of local and regional development is appropriate and for whom?" It is rejected that thoughtful and parochial approaches are developed at the expense of other people, classes, and places. Instead, multilevel institutional structures operating at various levels and intergovernmental coordination will likely provide the most significant potential. Pursuing local and regional development comes with potential challenges. The lack of a local and regional development vision would make this task even more challenging (Pike et al., 2007, p. 1266). In local and regional development, principles and values are socially and politically determined by actors within localities and regions. A principle refers to an ingrained or fundamental truth that underlies individual and social behavior, belief systems, and frameworks of logic and reasoning. A value is a belief or ideal considered necessary, valuable, and meaningful. Principles and values provide information on how specific interests and social groups in particular places define, interpret, comprehend, and articulate what is described and meant by local and regional development.

Regional development theories consider local development as a policy based on the local aspects of a particular territory. For example, Cochrane (2011, p. 97) emphasizes that historically, until the 1980s, a regional policy was defined as "distressed" or otherwise economically deprived areas. Similarly, local development has been framed within the economic decline or decay discourse. Local and regional development policies have concentrated on attracting new industries and stimulating relocation from thriving in less affluent areas. However, since the mid-1990s, self-help processes have been emphasized to identify how regions can generate growth and prosperity through the initiative of locally based actors such as businesses and public agencies.

From another perspective, Tödting (2011) stresses the importance of indigenous and endogenous development for local and regional development. Indigenous is characterized by "homegrown" assets and resources embedded more locally, committed, and capable of enduringly contributing to local development. Such resources comprise land, natural resources, the inhabitants' local labor force, historically rooted traditional skills, and local entrepreneurship. The idea of endogenous development is widely described. Endogenous development includes social and political factors, such as the engagement of social agents and civil society, that trigger self-help processes, local initiatives, and social movements to improve a region's living conditions. Due to the influential role of local forces and factors of the development strategy, it is often referred to as a "bottom-up" approach. The central idea is that indigenous and endogenous forces and

factors should drive local and regional development from the bottom up. Local and regional actors and agents should initiate local-regional development rather than central government or external agencies. It should be oriented to the needs and objectives of the local-regional population.

Endogenous approaches to local and regional development have evolved as a counter-thesis to previous regional development approaches for less developed areas, which strongly emphasize external factors. Such as interregional trade (exports, imports) or the mobility of capital (firms), labor, and technology between regions and countries (Tödtling, 2011, p. 334). Local development takes into consideration the endogenous potential of local areas. Economic and non-economic factors must be considered for a successful local development process. The development of local economies can be influenced by non-economic factors such as social, cultural, historical, institutional, and geographical aspects.

As outlined in a recent study by Pálné Kovács (2015), local governments play an essential role in local development. However, they must improve their capabilities and enhance local knowledge to succeed. As well as impacting local living conditions and economic development, local governments significantly affect the environment. The term "local knowledge" refers to "mixed knowledge." The concept of a place representing a mix of distinct types of knowledge is implied; it is also intended to convey the meaning of a place in which the environment shapes knowledge. The author discusses the application of local knowledge (the slightest moveable knowledge) to support local governance and economic development. A significant focus will be placed on the degree of competence and maneuvering space granted to local governments and the degree of centralization and decentralization of their powers. Based on the author's example of Hungary, it is evident that the government's strong centralization could be more conducive to effective leadership at the local level. Centralization resulted in the loss of many public service competencies and funding sources for local governments in Hungary (Pálné Kovács, 2021; Kákai & Kovács, 2023). As a result, local governments need more instruments and resources to possess and channel local knowledge into development.

The overall governance environment determines the functioning of local governance. Decentralized systems allow local governments to shape the frames of locally optimal decision-making. Exploiting the change is challenging. The challenge of local governance is whether it can manage problems at the right time and place. Local governance is good if it can give correct local answers. The feature of local governments is providing direct participation since they are closer to

the citizens. It is not closed within branch logic; therefore, it can make complex decisions based on local knowledge. Although there is a contradiction in the more complex decision-making processes, the more significant is the danger of the selection of actors to be involved. Government openness is broader at easier decisions; however, in the case of complex decisions, the only chance of "consensus" is in bargaining mechanisms. The learning process of local government requires the time of one generation and the continuous demand for governance renewal. Based on excellent tolerance and sensitivity, it is recognized that a lot of energy and knowledge of different individuals and groups are needed to develop a city or region. The world of local governments is colorful. The role of local knowledge and adaptability in successful local governance cannot be overstated. While the government's empowerment and investments serve as a foundation, the unique local knowledge, the deep understanding of local circumstances, and the invaluable ability to collaborate with partners truly drive progress.

Blakely and Bradshaw (2002, p. xvi) define local economic development (hereinafter LED) as a process through which partnerships are formed between local governments, community groups, and the private sector to manage existing resources to create jobs and stimulate the economy in a specific community. It emphasizes local control, using the potential of human, institutional, physical, and area natural resources. Local economic development initiatives are believed to mobilize actors, organizations, and resources and develop new institutions and local systems through "dialogue" and "strategic actions." Blakely and Bradshaw (2002) consider LED an emerging field of study that is currently more of a movement than a strict economic model that specifies a standardized approach. The authors acknowledge that LED (2002, p. xvi) is a process in which local governments and community-based organizations engage to stimulate business activity and employment. The principal goal of LED is to promote local employment opportunities in sectors. In recent decades, more attention has been given to the local place and people-oriented approaches to dealing with market opportunities, failures, and unevenness in the national and global economies. The rise of a robust national economy and the potential for increased immigration have given weight to the notion that the capacity to solve the problems of low-income areas lies within these communities (Blakely & Bradshaw, 2002, pp. 53–55). Further, the authors point out that LED can be explained through the underlying rationale.

$$\text{Local and regional development} = c \times r,$$

In the context of local and regional development, '*c*' represents an area's capacity, including its economic, social, technological, and political capacity. On the other hand, '*r*' represents the resources of the area, which encompass the availability of natural resources, location, labor, capital investment, entrepreneurial climate, transport, communication, industrial composition, technology, size, export market, international economic situation, and national and state government spending. Understanding these factors is crucial for comprehending the potential and limitations of a community's development.

A '*c*' value equaling 1 represents a neutral capacity that neither adds to nor detracts from the resources of a community. A '*c*' value greater than 1 indicates a strong capacity that increases when applied to (multiplied by) resources. On the other hand, a '*c*' value less than 1 indicates a weak community capacity (low-functioning social, political, and organizational leadership), which can be attributed to cronyism, corruption, self-interest, disorganization, or ineptitude, and when applied to resources, reduces them, and impedes development.

Communities are the architects of their own economic destiny. They can strategically market their resources and leverage their human, social, institutional, and physical assets to create new enterprises and sustain their existing economic base. Schools, colleges, hospitals, recycling centers, churches, daycare centers, youth programs, housing projects, county fairs, and ethnic organizations contribute to the local economy. The exciting revelation in local economic development is that these organizations can identify their unique assets and harness them to foster a more robust local economy through collaborative partnerships. Partnerships are agreements and shared commitments to pursue joint economic objectives determined by public, private, and community sectors and implemented as collective actions (Blakely & Bradshaw, 2002, p. 351). The authors argue that traditional economic development theories have primarily focused on the '*r*' part of the equation (resources), overlooking the '*c*' part (capacity). Therefore, LED theory should encompass the '*r*' and '*c*' parts.

Helmsing (2003), on the other hand, discusses the significant changes in the local economic development landscape, particularly in low-income countries, focusing on Africa. In the 1980s model, central government agencies and parastatals heavily influenced local economic activity. Peasant farmers depended on parastatal agencies for essential inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, and these agencies also controlled crop prices and purchasing, limiting the influence of market forces and individual farmers' decisions. This system often hindered individual initiative and

market-based solutions. The rise of structural adjustment programs and market liberalization brought new opportunities and challenges. While reduced government spending restrained local development efforts, the emphasis on the market and decentralization allowed new actors, such as NGOs and private businesses, to play a more significant role. Helmsing's research emphasizes the importance of local economic development in reducing poverty and achieving broader development goals. The study clearly distinguishes between community economic development and enterprise or business development. The former aims to facilitate household economic diversification as a crucial strategy for rural and urban livelihoods, while the latter seeks to specialize the local economic base. These two approaches are complemented by a third category, 'locality development,' aimed at creating local public goods and positive externalities. Effective local governance, strategic investment in infrastructure and human capital, and supportive policies fostering entrepreneurship and innovation are crucial needs. The author recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to local economic development and highlights the importance of customized strategies considering each locality's unique challenges and opportunities. Additionally, the study emphasizes the vital role of ongoing learning, flexibility in the face of change, and a commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable development for the primary stakeholders involved in local economic development.

Swinburn et al. (2004) posit that local economic development arose in the early 1970s as a reaction to the increasing mobility of businesses and capital in search of competitive advantages. Initially, communities concentrated on comprehending their economic foundation, recognizing opportunities and barriers to growth, and executing strategies to attract investment. Presently, local economies encounter a broader range of challenges, indicating that LED strategies must persist in adapting to a more intricate and dynamic economic environment. The study emphasizes that LED is a dynamic process that necessitates communities to consistently assess their economic environment and adjust their approaches to stay competitive in attracting and retaining investments. Specifically, local economic development endeavors to boost the economic potential of a specific area, thereby improving its economic prospects and overall quality of life. It is not a solo act; it involves the collaborative efforts of public, private, and non-governmental stakeholders to foster an environment conducive to economic growth and job creation. Local economic development, by its nature, is a partnership between the business sector, community interests, and municipal or local government. Local governments are leading, especially in establishing

strategies and action plans. Moreover, private enterprises are critical in creating jobs and driving economic activity. The community is a significant beneficiary of the local economic development programs. Every community has strengths and weaknesses that are essential in shaping its economic development potential. Nurturing a robust local economy involves comprehending the distinctive features of a community and employing a collaborative, analytical approach to formulate a strategy. Conducting a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is instrumental in uncovering the aspects that can be capitalized on or improved to bolster economic development. The collaborative analysis should guide the design and implementation of a tailored local development strategy. It is essential to emphasize that successful local economies do not just happen by chance; they result from intentional strategies, impactful policies, and robust partnerships. Through adopting a collaborative mindset, grasping the nuances of the local environment, and undertaking thorough planning, communities can leverage the potential of LED to foster sustainable economic development and enhance the quality of life for their residents. Table 2 of this literature review chapter outlines several fundamental theories and elements related to local development conceptions.

Table 2 – Summary of local development concepts

Theory/Concept	Key Proponents	Main Ideas	Relevance to local development
Local and regional development	Pike, A., Rodríguez-Pose, A., and Tomaney, J.	The fundamental questions of the concept of local and regional development revolve around the framework of understanding, instruments, and policies, as well as the "for whom" and "where" aspects. When examining local and regional development, it is essential to consider the historical context and spatial elements such as space, territory, place, and scale.	Highlights essential factors: the specific location of the local development, the target beneficiaries, and the type of development being pursued.
	Cochrane, Allan	Local development, up until the 1980s, referred to efforts aimed at encouraging economically disadvantaged areas to entice new businesses to move from city centers to outlying areas. However, by the mid-1990s, local development	Encouraging self-help initiatives among local government, businesses, and the community is prioritized.

		shifted its focus to promoting self-help activities led by local stakeholders such as government agencies, businesses, and communities, all working together to foster growth and prosperity within a specific region.	
	Tödting, Franz	Emphasizing the importance of indigenous and endogenous development: Indigenous development is homegrown and embedded locally, while endogenous development takes a 'bottom-up' approach.	Emphasis on a bottom-up approach
	Pálné Kovács	Local knowledge is essential in local development, where local government is indispensable.	Emphasis on local knowledge
Local economic development	Blakely and Bradshaw	Fostering partnerships between local governments, community groups, and the private sector is crucial for driving local development. To drive effective and impactful economic development initiatives, it is essential to identify a community's capacity (<i>c</i>) and resources (<i>r</i>).	Emphasize the importance of collaboration among local stakeholders and the capacity and resources of the targeted area for local development.
	Helmsing, A. H. J.	The main emphasis is shifting from dependence on central government towards a more inclusive approach involving diverse local development stakeholders.	Effective local development initiatives depend on collaboration and coordination among public, private, and non-profit entities.
	Swinburn, G., Goga, S., & Murphy, F.	Local economic development is not a solo act but a collaborative process in which the public, private, and non-governmental sectors collaborate to improve economic growth and job creation.	Each community should collaborate with critical local development stakeholders to understand the nature and structure of the local economy and analyze the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Source: own compilation

3. Local Development Alternative I: European Union's LEADER Model

3.1 Introduction

LEADER, a transformative program, was introduced in 1991 for three years and was extended in 1995 by an expanded, five-year version: LEADER II (Ray, 2000, p. 164). A pilot intervention of "Community Initiatives" was introduced by the European Commission. LEADER is the version of this programme designed specifically for rural development (Maurel, 2008). It was announced as a pilot programme to stimulate innovative approaches to rural development at the local level. The Cork Declaration (1996) underlines the importance of a new paradigm in which rural development is integrated, sustainable, community-oriented, and local within a coherent European framework. The European LEADER programme was aimed to enhance the quality of life in rural areas and encourage rural economic diversification by providing support initiatives for rural-agricultural tourism, local entrepreneurship, and community facilities.

Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) in the EU are developed and implemented based on the unique challenges and opportunities of each Member State. The rural development paradigm has emerged since the 1990s as a relevant European policy field. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Cohesion Policy are the backbones of the LEADER programme (EC, 2006). In each Member State's rural development context, the LEADER programme was implemented under the national and regional RDPs, co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The approval process involved negotiations between the European Commission, the local organization, and the designated intermediary representative of the national government (Ray, 2000, p. 165).

The origin of LEADER is the French abbreviation for "*Liaison Entre Actions pour le Development de l'Economie Rurale*," meaning links between the rural economy and development actions (EC, 2006). LEADER is a local development method used for 30 years to attract stakeholders to develop and implement local strategies, make decisions, and allocate resources for developing EU rural areas. A new model of local development began to appear, based on a bottom-up approach to evaluating local resources and attracting new participants to create and implement strategies (EC, 2006; Ray, 2000; Chevalier et al., 2012). LEADER programme aims to establish a partnership by forming Local Action Groups (LAGs) to mitigate disparities in the diverse and

heterogeneous context of the European Union (EC, 2006; Van de Poele, 2015). The LAG is the tool to implement the LEADER principles (Staic & Vladu, 2020). The main feature of LEADER is the local action group representing the public-private partnership. The role of the LAG is to manage financial resources and implement local development strategies. The private partners must represent the majority (at least 51% of the partnership structure). LAGs are chosen through an open procedure based on the criteria set out in the programs.

The operation of the LEADER programme takes place in a geographical area where the population of LEADER territory should be at least 5000, 10,000, and at most 100,000. Each EU Member State can decide how to implement LEADER on its territory (planning, selection, and funding of LEADER areas) (Staic & Vladu, 2020). This policy initiative is based on a territorial rather than a sectoral approach. It offers a new way of thinking about territorial development, which was initially based on a centralized, exogenous model (top-down), which allows for an endogenous perspective (bottom-up), including new forms of governance (Chevalier et al., 2012). LEADER programme encourages partnerships between local authorities, local associations and residents, and entrepreneurial spheres. It strongly emphasizes partnership building and networking to exchange good practices and experiences (Van De Poele, 2015). LEADER is widely regarded as a resounding success for the EU's rural development initiative, instilling confidence in its potential for future rural development. This success serves as a beacon of hope, inspiring optimism for the future of rural development within the EU.

The LEADER programme, spanning four generations, has played a pivotal role in rural development. LEADER I (1991-1993) introduced an innovative approach, focusing on territorially oriented, integrative, and participatory mechanisms. LEADER II (1994-1999) emphasized the creative aspects of projects. LEADER + (2000-2006) and LEADER Axis (2007-2013) marked the programme's transition into the EU mainstream rural development policy. However, the LEADER program's true significance lies in its laboratory role. It continually unites and assesses novel approaches to integrated and sustainable development, thereby influencing, complementing, and strengthening the EU policy on rural development. The comprehensive scope of the LEADER programme is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3 – The scale of the LEADER programme (1991-2013)

LEADER programme	No. of LAGs	Area covered (1000 km ²)	EU funding (Billion euros)
LEADER I – 1991-1993	217	367	0,442
LEADER II – 1994-1999	906	1,375	1,775
LEADER + 2000-2006	893	1,577 ^a	2,105 ^b
LEADER Axis (2007-2013)	1,400	3,500 ^c	5,800 ^d

Source: Van de Poele, 2015, p. 199.

^a Equal to 15% of the total territory of EU-15 and covering some 50 million people.

^b Plus 1,5 billion euros by private contribution and some 1,5 billion euros by the Member States of EU-15.

^c Covering 88 million people in EU-27.

^d Plus 3.4 billion euros by the EU-27 Member States and private contribution

In the 2014-2020 programming period, the LEADER programme was extended under the broader term Community-led Local Development (CLLD). This expansion was a testament to the collaborative nature of the LEADER programme, which has been funded by three other EU funds: the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, and the European Social Fund. The LEADER method, developed 30 years ago in 217 pioneering LAGs, is a testament to the power of collective action. It is currently implemented by an impressive network of 2800 LAGs, each of which can count on hundreds of active citizens, covering 61% of the rural population in the European Union (EU Rural Review, 2020).

3.2 Socio-economic background of the LEADER

European local development has evolved through several stages (Lukesch, 2018). In the last century of the 1980s, local development experts and activists, usually confined to their national or regional context, found opportunities to share experiences at European gatherings organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, and the European Community, which became the European Union in 1993. In the 1980s, the economic crisis in lagging regions and old industrial areas brought new responses, such as Local Employment Initiatives (LEIs). The phenomenon was identified and analyzed by the OECD's local

economy and employment program, an ongoing priority focus of the OECD since 1982. It has been funded for several years by the European Commission's Local Employment Development Action Programme (LEDA) and was implemented in 45 local areas between 1986 and 1996. LEDA has distilled the essential characteristics of bottom-up local development approaches, encompassing the "local partnership," "local area," and "local development strategy," to provide a general model for area-based development that pursues a wide range of social and economic development objectives. These evolved against accelerated industrialization and structural change in rural areas, specifically in France, Italy, and the newly entered southern EU Member States: Greece (1981), Spain, and Portugal (1986) (*ibid.*, 2). The perceived depletion of rural areas prompted a new policy approach that focused on the role of rural regions. This shift in policy was marked by the 1988 European Commission Communication "The Future of Rural Society." Since 1989, the Presidency of Jaques Delors and the Agricultural Commissioner Ray McSharry have provided targeted pastoral development assistance from the Structural Fund. A committed official at the European Commission named Michel Laine drafted the first edition of LEADER, launched in 1991 (*ibid.*).

On the other hand, Granberg, Andersson, and Kovach's (2015) research emphasizes that agriculture was an economic sector in the EU after World War II due to the lack of food. The solid political position of farmers and increasing prosperity made it possible to increase agricultural subsidies. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) played a role in this priority. Nevertheless, overproduction, increasing subsidies, rural exodus, and the pressure of changing global contexts made changes in spatial planning inevitable. The negative development of rural areas in Europe and the inability of agricultural policy to solve the cumulative development problems prompted the creation of the LEADER programme. LEADER approach aims to shift EU rural development policy from government to governance to improve local efficiency and inclusive policy implementation (*ibid.*). The shift towards decentralization and participation is viewed positively by many researchers in the EU LEADER programme for local development. Kovach (2000) emphasizes that a rural development option is now available under the EU LEADER programme. The possibilities involve developing niche markets such as rural tourism and local organic products. In addition, it consists of seeking funding through creative, innovative ideas based on the revival of local traditions, the reconstruction of local monuments, and the recreation of rural/local images.

3.3 The basic principles and characteristics of the LEADER

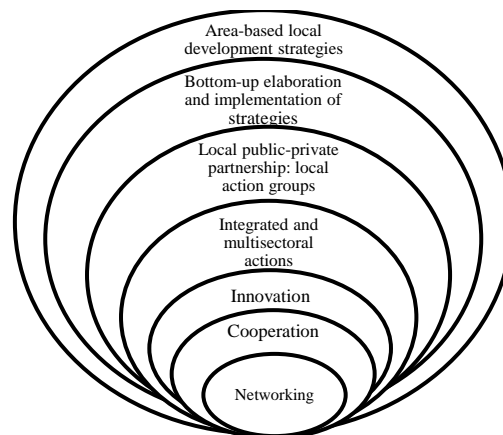
The LEADER local development strategy is based on seven principles, each crucial in policy implementation. These principles are not just vital; they are a robust toolkit. As each feature complements and interacts with the others, it significantly impacts rural dynamics and their problem-solving ability. The European Commission (2006) broadly interpreted these seven leading principles, providing a comprehensive understanding of the LEADER program's structure and operation.

- 1) An area-based approach is characterized by local identity and shared traditions that reflect a small, homogeneous, and socially cohesive area. As a target area for policy implementation, an area-based local development strategy emphasizes belonging to a specific location. Focusing on a particular area makes the policy effective in identifying local potentials and bottlenecks for local development.
- 2) The bottom-up approach, a cornerstone of the LEADER programme, is a testament to its democratic principles. It invites stakeholders to participate in the initiatives and make decisions about the priorities of their local areas. This means that local actors, including the inhabitants of these specific areas, a group of economic and social interests, and representative public and private institutions, are empowered to shape their local development. This participatory model is a vital strength of the LEADER programme, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among its stakeholders.
- 3) Public-private partnerships or Local Action Groups (LAGs). Establishing LAGs (local partnerships) is a crucial feature of the LEADER model. A local action group is expected to bring together public and private partners, including representatives from non-profit organizations and local associations in the specific area. Private partners and associations must represent at least 50% of the local partners at the decision-making level. The LAGs define and implement a local development strategy and make financial resource allocation and management decisions.
- 4) Integrated and multisectoral actions indicate that the local development strategy needs to be sectoral development. Instead, it should be connected and coordinated as a single entity encompassing diverse economic, social, cultural, and environmental actors.
- 5) Promoting innovation means freedom of action by introducing new products and processes, modernizing traditional know-how, or searching for innovative solutions to current

challenges in rural areas. LEADER has the potential to stimulate creative and innovative approaches to local development. However, innovation should be defined broadly as a new product, process, organization, market, etc.

- 6) Cooperation encompasses more than just networking. Local Action Groups collaborate on projects with another LAG or similar group from another Member State region or even a third country.
- 7) Networking creates connections between people, projects, and rural areas. It includes exchanging experiences and know-how within and between LAGs, rural regions, administrations, and organizations implementing local development policies at all levels. Institutional networks include the European Commission at the supranational, national, regional, and local levels.

Figure 3 – The seven fundamental principles of the LEADER



Source: Musaeva, 2020, p.16

3.3.1 Policy delivery mechanism of the LEADER

The importance of partnerships in LEADER is emphasized a lot. The Local Action Group is conceived as a constituent of participatory democracy (Dax & Oedl-Weiser, 2016; Esparcia et al., 2016, p. 33). They are seen as a local expression of the transition from government to governance in European rural development policy. Accordingly, the core of the LEADER method is the establishment of LAGs, which consist of representatives from the public, private, and non-profit

sectors. LAGs are multisectoral, area-based partnerships operating throughout the European Union to support participatory local development in rural areas (Furmankiewics et al., 2016a). The establishment of the LAG is one of the operational elements of LEADER to apply for EU funding by producing a “business plan” of proposed development actions based on the valorization of indigenous resources (tangible and intangible) and the active participation of the public, community, and business sectors within the specific territory designated (Ray, 2000, p. 164; Maurel, 2008; Bumbalova et al., 2016). LEADER programme is called the “Pan-European example of participatory democracy” due to local characteristics.

1) Pan-European example of participatory democracy

In the LEADER programme, the local actors and partnership mechanisms actively support territorial diversity and community values. Consequently, rural development policy (in this case, the LEADER) must follow the principle of subsidiarity. It must be decentralized and based on partnership and cooperation between local, regional, national, and supranational (EU) levels. The emphasis must be on endogenous (bottom-up, participative, and community) development that harnesses rural communities' creativity and solidarity (Ray, 2000). Rural development must be local and community-driven within a coherent European framework.

2) Local characteristics of the LEADER

Localizing the LEADER programme through a territorial approach, a bottom-up approach, a partnership, innovation, and multisectoral integration creates a platform for tackling local challenges. Table 4 displays the local characteristics of LEADER.

Table 4 – Local characteristics of the LEADER

Local	Area-based Bottom-up Partnership Innovation Multisectoral	Represented by the local groups and the local development strategy
Trans-local	Networking	

	Trans-national cooperation	Emerge from the interaction between local groups and their respective strategies
Vertical	Decentralized management and financing	The programming authority represents and implements the governance structure in which local groups conduct their activities. Local partnerships are a crucial element of this feature, which can be considered management's 'terminal' at the local level.

Source: CEC, 2003, p. 66; Van de Poele, 2015, p. 200

3.3.2 Good Governance and Decentralization and LEADER

In 1994, the European Commission adopted a decentralized approach to implementing initiatives that operate at the national or regional level but do not change their local character (Van de Poele, 2015). The decentralization of institutions is crucial for solving local problems. Decentralization can change the model of democracy (Pálné Kovács, 2015). There is general agreement that decentralization is one of the prerequisites for good governance. Furthermore, citizens' participation in decentralized countries is supported by more than a centralized one. It rearranges the position of local and regional interests in the central decision-making arenas, changing the parties' territorial organization and clientele. Public policy success is defined by the organizational framework in which the implementation occurs (“governance matters”). The institutional system affects the goals and instruments of local development policy. The organization and value system of the actors involved, the effectiveness of coordination, and the level of decentralization determine the performance of local development priorities.

Good governance entails granting an appropriate voice and opt-out opportunities and successfully addressing the territory's social and economic development challenges (Rodríguez-Pose & Tijmstra, 2007). With the increasing localization of businesses and a consequent emphasis on locality as a development point, good governance at all levels of government has become increasingly important. However, traditional development strategies relied heavily on national systems and the capabilities of central government officials. LED strategies' success primarily depends on a suitable local-regional institutional system and the availability of the necessary framework and skill levels at all levels of government. This trust in good governance encourages local actors to participate. It can empower local civic groups and populations in general and

facilitate cross-pollination. High-quality and inclusive local government institutions are critical to the success of the LED approach, as it relies heavily on the involvement of various stakeholders to identify local opportunities and threats and develop strategies to address them. Participation can take many forms, from voting in regional or local elections to attending strategy meetings and knowledge-sharing exercises. Decentralization has resulted in the formation of new levels of government in many countries and increased local participation through elections and new local debates. Reduced distance between politicians and their constituents can increase political accountability, transparency, and participation. As local and regional governments are closer to their constituents and deal with less complex central government agendas, citizens can better understand political issues, monitor politicians' behavior, and hold them accountable. The close links between politicians and their electorates can make regional and local arenas more vulnerable to corruption and pressure groups. The ability of local governments to stimulate genuine horizontal collaboration and multi-stakeholder participation depends on the characteristics of local officials and the existence of capable formal and informal interest organizations with which local governments can work (Rodríguez-Pose & Tijnstra, 2007).

Returning to LEADER is based on a set of goals proposed and negotiated by the Member States – a top-down approach. However, at the local level, the local action groups can decide on the objectives and principles of the program they consider relevant and achievable in their local areas (Convey et al., 2010). Introducing a new territorial development model based on a bottom-up approach appears to be an entirely new process and experiment in the formerly communist countries of Central Europe (Maurel, 2008). Maurel highlights territorial development policies, which focus on promoting new territories based on local community activities, are understood as development support policies. Territorializing the Structural Funds became a trend. The shift from a centralized (exogenous) mode of development to a decentralization (endogenous) based on local initiatives and resources has taken various forms in the European Union's LEADER programme. Rather than defining general guidelines for using funds, the novel approach left more room for maneuvering in implementing the LEADER programme in each EU Member State (ibid., 513).

However, after the EU expansion toward Central European countries, creating conditions for local development took work (Kovach, 2000; Chevalier et al., 2012; Maurel, 2013). In these post-socialist countries, adopting the European local development model is considered unprecedented. Countries with a communist past, with new modes of governing systems and tools

for implementing local development projects, demanded strict transfer of legal norms and regulations from European Union institutions to the new Member States under the hierarchical structure and constrictive type of governing (Maurel, 2013). The legal and institutional adaptation required a significant amount of institutional learning and modes of governance, which should comply with various European Directives: decentralization, regionalization, re-implementation of local autonomy, and others. This type of transfer is created based on the ability of local actors to demonstrate the kind of initiative to enhance dynamics. Chevalier et al. (2012) highlight the main obstacles of a communist background, which led to passive local people's participation, the gap between national politics and policy, and the principles of local elective democracy. The absence of social capital (trust), social connections (networking), insufficient education of rural residents, and relatively weak civil society hindered local participation. Maurel (2008; 2013) stressed that LEADER's principles are poorly disseminated among local communities and stakeholders in Central Europe. The applicability and effectiveness of the LEADER method were a concern in the implementation process in Central Europe due to path dependency heritage.

In the second half of the 1990s, post-socialist countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Poland changed their path toward Europeanization. During this period, the party-state was dismantled, the economy was liberalized, and parliamentary democracy was established (Kovach, 2000). The implementation of LEADER is carried out through the national and regional rural development programs of each EU Member State, focusing on rural and local development. In subsection 3.3.3, on page 29, the implementation of the LEADER programme in Central Europe, specifically Hungary, is briefly discussed. As the author of this PhD dissertation is based in Hungary, the aim is to gain insights into the application of the LEADER programme by reviewing relevant literature and conducting a personal interview with a key stakeholder involved in the program. When considering adopting the LEADER approach as a new model for local development in a different country, it is crucial to emphasize the need for a thorough examination of its implementation mechanism and the lessons learned from Hungary's experience. In this regard, Kyrgyzstan can benefit from studying how Hungary implemented the LEADER programme. This is particularly valuable for development practitioners and stakeholders who have experienced a similar historical path, such as those impacted by the heavily centralized administrative system inherited from the Soviet Union. Hungary provides evidence that the

LEADER approach may not work even in European countries where the governance context does not fit the original LEADER logic.

3.3.3 A brief overview of the LEADER programme implementation in Hungary

Like many other EU Member States, Hungary participates in the LEADER initiative. The LEADER programme is implemented through each EU Member State's national and regional rural development programs (RDPs). RDP is managed at Hungary's national level (Ministry of Agriculture) and funded through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and national contributions (Hungarian government). Each Member State is part of a broader framework of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) that includes Regional Development, Social, Cohesion, and Fisheries Funds managed nationally by each EU Member State. Hungary's strategic plans outline the country's goals and investment priorities based on Partnership Agreements (ENRD, 2023).

The main ideas of the LEADER programme are gradually introduced in Hungary in the 1990s within the SAPARD and PHARE programs (Balogh & Eróss, 2015). In 2001, Hungary launched an experimental program based on the LEADER model, establishing fourteen local action groups with a total budget of 1,7 million euros (Maurel, 2008, p. 518; Chevalier et al., 2012). Although Hungary joined the EU in 2004, the LEADER model was introduced in 2001 and laid the groundwork for developing documents, procedures, and pilot programs (Kovách, 2000; Patkós, 2018). The local action groups intended to adopt local rural development strategies to address three types of action: (1) aid for large families, (2) the integration of Roma into local society, and (3) youth training. Later, most LEADER projects in Hungary centered on "rural tourism," "preservation of cultural heritage," and "non-agricultural SMEs" (Maurel, 2008; Chevalier, 2012).

A study by Maurel (2008) highlights that LEADER+ came into force immediately after EU enlargement within the Operational Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (2004-2006) with a budget of around 19 million euros, of which 14,3 million came from the EU. The 67 LAGs were established, and implementation of the local strategies began in 2006. However, LEADER+ is operated in a highly centralized manner, with project selection based on hard bargaining. The same opinion is emphasized in the study of Csurgo and Kovach (2015), where the LEADER programme continues to give national authorities a crucial role in management, control,

and institutional mediation. The authors emphasize that local action groups are controlled by the Agriculture and Rural Development Agency (further Agency). The Agency comprises a central organization for cross-cutting issues, directorates with administrative powers, and county offices with 19 representatives. The Agency is an institution that was founded to manage funding applications and to award and implement market regulation measures. The Agency is hierarchical and bureaucratic. The local action group has informal relations with various institutions at the local level, and its position in the local development system is horizontal. The case study by Csurgó and Kovách (2015) found that LEADER implementation is bureaucratic (top-down), which goes against the bottom-up principle. According to the LEADER principles, the selection of the local action group should not be determined and conducted by the central government or ministries. They claim that the bottom-up approach is suffered in this matter. LEADER stakeholders often complained about the dirty tricks of the Agency (Patkós, 2018, p. 179). This organization seemed interested in withholding EU funding from beneficiaries and wanted to block local action groups (ibid.). Another disadvantage of the LEADER programme in Hungary is the excessive bureaucracy, which discourages civilians from further cooperation and involvement (Ruszkai & Kovács, 2013).

1) Local Action Groups selection in Hungary

In 2007, the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture introduced a new administrative structure for the local development programme, the “Local Development Offices.” Established in all statistical micro-regions (administrative level), these Offices have no counterparts in other Central European countries. Funded by the Ministry of Agriculture (from a budget allocated by the New Hungary Rural Development Programme), competitions are organized in the micro-regions to decide who will manage them. Municipal associations, enterprises, and local associations with multiple objectives can bid. One of the tasks of these Offices is to organize applications for the third and fourth axes of the national rural development program with the technical help of managers. The establishment of local communities whose parameters correspond to the administrative region (or several administrative regions) and aim to become local action groups after the Ministry of Agriculture recognizes them. Local action groups must be registered as legal entities by the Ministry of Agriculture. Upon recognition, they acquired a Coordination and Planning Group, elected from among local action group members, representing the civil, public, and private sectors.

These Groups consist of no fewer than five members, including at least one academic with solid management experience. They are responsible for planning and drafting the local development strategy selected by the Ministry of Agriculture. Once validated by the Ministry of Agriculture, they legally become Local Action Groups (Chevalier et al., 2012, pp. 17-18).

2) The main local actors in the LEADER programme in Hungary

To support community development in Hungary, the LEADER initiative involves teamwork among local actors, such as local action groups, representing the public, businesses, civic groups, and locals. Local action groups are the key players in the LEADER programme in Hungary at the local level. They are legal entities formed locally. They are responsible for defining local development needs, priorities, and strategies and implementing local development initiatives (Interview, 2021).

Today, there are approximately 103 LAGs actively operating in Hungary (ENRD, 2023). They have a budget of 42 billion HUF allocated under the Rural Development Programme scheme to implement economic and service development initiatives that address local needs (Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture, 2018) Local action groups include municipalities, business owners, entrepreneurs, civic societies, local associations, and non-governmental organizations.

- a) *Local municipalities.* They are critical partners in the LEADER programme due to their strong influence and presence in local communities. Support can be provided for LAGs, and local development activities can be facilitated.
- b) *Business owners and entrepreneurs.* Local businesses and entrepreneurs can play a significant role in the LEADER programme by offering employment opportunities. They can also contribute to the local economy and participate in development programs.
- c) *Residents and community organizations of the local area.* Residents are essential stakeholders and beneficiaries of the LEADER programme since local development initiatives directly impact their livelihoods. Local community members are encouraged to provide input and feedback on local development priorities and participate in local development activities. In developing and implementing local development strategies, civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations and community organizations, provide valuable input and expertise.

Veselicz and Patkós (2019) view LAGs as a "collaborative organization." These groups have many local partnerships involved in planning and implementing projects. They serve as workshops for multi-level governance and play a significant role in local decision-making. This, in turn, helps utilize available financial resources for a more coordinated and efficient rural development process. The study by Veselicz and Patkós (2019) delves into the effectiveness of the LEADER programme in Hungary, specifically focusing on three LAGs in Békés County. The authors explore the organizational and institutional factors that impact LAG performance, particularly emphasizing the influence of staff expertise and territorial connections. The findings underline the significance of well-qualified and fairly compensated staff for facilitating local initiatives. However, the study raises concerns about potential bias in fund allocation, suggesting the possibility of undue influence from certain municipalities or LAG members. Additionally, it highlights the impact of territorial connections of LAG staff on resource allocation, potentially favoring specific areas. This emphasizes the need for geographical representation within LAGs to ensure equitable regional development. To address these challenges, the research proposes several recommendations. Firstly, it suggests "standardizing LAG office staff" by establishing EU-level guidelines for the size and qualifications of the LAG office team to ensure a consistent standard of expertise and capacity across all LAGs. Secondly, it advocates for "uniform wages" by implementing a standardized wage structure for LAG staff across the EU to attract and retain qualified personnel, thereby reducing financial disparities between LAGs. Finally, the study proposes the creation of a "centralized database" managed by the EU to enhance transparency and accountability in fund distribution, minimizing the risk of bias and favoritism. Implementing these recommendations is believed to make the LEADER programme more effective in promoting balanced and sustainable rural development in Hungary.

3) Cooperation and participation in the Hungarian LEADER programme

Theoretically, collaboration occurs through partnerships with essential local actors or LAGs. Collaboration is a fundamental requirement and one of the pillars of the LEADER programme and relevant EU directives. Below is an excerpt from an interview discussing the collaboration between local stakeholders in the LEADER programme in Hungary.

“... Traditionally, local government, entrepreneurs, and civil society have not worked together as a unified front. The LEADER programme was established to bridge this gap. Participation in the

LEADER programme requires involvement from these actors above, with the local government holding no more than a 49% stake. This ensures that the state does not overpower other sectors. LEADER stands out from other development models in this regard. Its added value lies in its ability to recognize local nuances, needs, and opportunities...”

The LEADER programme in Hungary is facing a substantial challenge due to the low level of active involvement from local actors. The research of Finta (2011) highlights that a rushed and bureaucratic approach can undermine the fundamental principles of participatory rural development, ultimately impeding authentic community ownership and engagement. The research highlights the need for more participation from local actors, particularly during the planning phase. Despite attempts to involve local action group members in reviewing and refining plans, attendance, especially from the civil and private sectors, has remained low, indicating passive membership. Moreover, the rural population was largely excluded from the planning process, attributed to the inadequate promotion of the program and its opportunities. In addition, an excessive focus on meeting procedural requirements and generating deliverables overshadowed the crucial aspect of community mobilization. Consequently, the program did not foster the intended social concentration, cooperation, and shared vision among local communities.

The research study by Balogh and Eröss (2015) also expresses a similar perspective, highlighting that the Hungarian LEADER program is exceptional due to its concurrent and comprehensive encounter with various challenges. These challenges encompass an over-centralized system, significant political influence, cumbersome bureaucracy, delayed payments, short call and reporting periods, insufficient funds for Local Action Groups, unpredictable legislative and personal environments, and a lack of competitive spirit among LAGs.

3.4 General Summary of the EU LEADER Programme

The LEADER initiative, widely implemented across Europe, is recognized as one of the most established and renowned European-wide programs. The success of the LEADER approach is rooted in its seven principles, which aim to empower local communities to transform their living environments and achieve tangible outcomes in LEADER territories. By shifting control over rural development from state institutions to Local Action Groups (LAGs), LEADER has effectively empowered local people, democratized rural development, and fostered active participation. This

has resulted in a significant transformation in local governance and the establishment of valuable partnerships. EU LEADER funding has played a crucial role in driving impactful local development projects in rural areas, reducing inequality, and creating employment opportunities across EU Member States.

It is crucial to recognize that implementing LEADER principles has resulted in diverse outcomes in each Member State, primarily due to differences in stakeholder capacities, administrative decentralization, historical context, and other social factors. For instance, the execution of the LEADER programme in Hungary has faced significant obstacles. The shortcomings can be ascribed to multiple factors. Firstly, there have been administrative inefficiencies in Hungary, leading to bureaucratic obstacles and delays in project approvals, thus impeding the timely execution of LEADER projects. Additionally, political interference has hindered some LEADER projects in Hungary, as decisions related to project funding and support have occasionally been influenced by political considerations rather than objective assessments of community needs, leading to favoritism and undue influence. In the current global context, it is imperative to actively involve local communities and empower them to effect positive changes in their living environments. The success of the LEADER approach depends on the effective integration of its seven principles to achieve tangible results for residents. Several recommendations can be offered for countries contemplating the adoption of the EU's LEADER initiative. Firstly, there should be a focus on decentralizing control to local actors to allow communities to shape their own development processes directly. Secondly, it is crucial to establish funding mechanisms to support sustainable local projects. Thirdly, there is a need to encourage collaborations between the public and private sectors and local associations or NGOs to create a cohesive support system. Fourthly, investing in building local capacity through training and support is essential for effective project management. Fifthly, transparent administrative processes should be established to minimize bureaucratic delays. Finally, a robust monitoring and evaluation system should be implemented to track progress and make necessary adjustments. By embracing these strategies and learning from successes and challenges, as exemplified in Hungary, other nations can replicate the achievements of the LEADER initiative and drive meaningful local development.

4. Local Development Alternative II: Korean Saemaul Undong Model

4.1 Introduction

The Republic of Korea's economy has experienced rapid changes in the last decades. The nation has transformed from a traditional agrarian economy to a newly industrialized and export-oriented economy. Industrialization allowed Koreans to increase their per capita income significantly. In 1953, the country's GDP per capita was US\$ 73; in 2007, it rose to US\$ 21,695 (Park Sooyoung, 2009). Today, Korea is the 13th largest economy globally, with a GDP of about US\$ 1,63 trillion and a per capita GDP of around US\$ 35,000 in 2020 (WB, 2020b). In addition, Korea is one of the youngest members of the first former aid beneficiary to join the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which it joined in 2010 (Lim, 2011; Doucette & Müller, 2016). As Korea's status rises, so does the pressure to fulfill its obligation to provide international development assistance. The Korean government has established Saemaul Official Development Assistance (ODA) for third-world countries to honor its commitment.

"The term "Saemaul" is derived from the combination of "Sae," which means New, and "maul," which refers to the Village, the fundamental unit of the community. "Undong" encompasses both Movement and Development. Essentially, Saemaul Undong can be understood as a New Village or Community Movement (Park Jin-Hwan, 1998; National Council of Saemaul Undong, 2000, p. 4). The concept of rural development in Korea is closely associated with Saemaul Undong as a paradigm for rural and community development. Initially, it emerged as a response to the growing disparity between urban and rural areas resulting from the first (1962-1966) and second (1967-1971) Five-Year Economic Development Plans (Park Sooyoung, 2009; Chung, 2009). These plans prioritized heavy and chemical industrial development and trade policies geared towards exports. As a result, this economic development strategy began to show positive results. However, the rural areas experienced deterioration due to significant internal migration from rural to urban areas, leading to widening urban-rural disparities. Saemaul Undong was formally initiated in response to these challenges on April 22, 1970. According to Park Jin-Hwan (1998, p. 47), it was not until 1973 that an official definition of the Saemaul Movement was established. President Park Chung-Hee delivered an impromptu speech at the village's national convention in 1973 to uplift the villagers' morale. During the speech, President Park Chung-Hee

characterized the movement as "a Movement for a better life." This resonated well with the farmers, who shared a common goal of breaking the cycle of poverty. Park Jin-Hwan⁷ (1998) defined Saemaul as the "development of the work ethic of farmers through participation in village projects to expedite rural modernization." Goh (2010, p. 30) asserts that Saemaul Undong is a self-help endeavor to eliminate rural poverty in Korea. The Movement initially focused on providing rural communities with construction materials through a program called "Saemaul Refurbishment," which later developed into the Saemaul Undong. Under this program, the government supplied each of the 34,665 villages with 335 bags of cement (one bag of cement weighs 40 kilograms) and iron rods (Chung, 2009, p. 44). The villagers were granted the freedom to decide on cement usage. The focus was on fostering collaborative efforts for collective projects, leading to positive transformations in rural communities that had long been affected by stagnation. The fundamental principles of the Saemaul Undong are "diligence," "self-help," and "cooperation." The late President Park Chung-Hee, the founder of the Korean Saemaul Undong, articulated its philosophy, purpose, and concept in the following manner:

"... To put it more easily, Saemaul Undong is a campaign to live a better life. A better life is one where people escape poverty and income increases so that rural communities can become affluent and enjoy an elegant and cultural life. Neighbors share friendships and help one another, creating a good and beautiful village to live in. Although having a good life today is important, it is a bigger ambition to create a better life for tomorrow and our offspring. Everyone knows the method; the problem is how to practice it. One should be diligent in living a better life and acquiring a strong spirit of self-help. All villagers must cultivate a strong cooperative spirit to improve their lives. Diligence alone is insufficient for an individual. Therefore, each family must also be diligent. However, diligence alone is inadequate for a family seeking a better life. Thus, all villagers must strive to be diligent. By collectively embodying diligence, villagers can enhance their cooperative efforts..." For in-depth insights, refer to Choi Oe-Chool's research study (2014, p. 80).

The Saemaul Undong is a comprehensive rural development model that combines top-down and bottom-up approaches (Goh, 2010, p. 32; Chung, 2009). Notably, it received support and guidance from the late President Park Chung-Hee. Additionally, the Korean government's Five-Year Economic Development plans played a crucial role by providing funds for investing in

⁷ Park Jin-Hwan served as a special assistant to the late President Park Chung-Hee on economic affairs and Saemaul Undong.

rural areas through the Saemaul Undong program. For the economic advancement of rural communities, the government supplied materials for building village roads, bridges, electrification infrastructure, and storage sheds. On average, the government allocated 2.5% of the GDP annually to the Saemaul Undong projects (Kwon, 2010; Eom, 2011b). Under the bottom-up approach, Saemaul projects were executed with the voluntary participation of the community.

The Saemaul Undong initiative spanned a decade, from 1970 to 1979, and was recognized as a nationwide social movement (Chung, 2009; Reed, 2010; Yang, 2017). In the 1980s, it transitioned to a collaboration stage between the government and non-government organizations, significantly promoting national values and contributing to the 1988 Seoul Olympics. At that time, the Saemaul National Olympic Committee was established to promote three core social values: order, kindness, and cleanliness, to elevate public awareness. Since the 1990s, Saemaul Undong has continued its operations as a non-governmental movement, offering volunteer services in Korea. In 2010, the initiative expanded globally and officially became the development assistance program for the Korean government. Table 5 details the scale of Saemaul Undong from 1971 to 1978.

Table 5 – The Scale of Saemaul Undong (1971-1978)

Saemaul Undong by Stage	Year	No. of participated villages	No. of participants	No. of projects	Total investments (millions won)
Stage 1 Initiation by the government Priority: Living condition improvement	1971	33,267	7,200	385	12,200
	1972	34,665	32,000	320	31,594
	1973	34,665	69,280	1,093	96,111
Stage 2 Spatial and functional expansion Priority: Income improvement and consciousness reforms	1974	34,665	106,852	1,099	132,790
	1975	35,031	116,880	1,598	295,895
	1976	35,031	117,528	887	322,652
Stage 3 Promotion of urban-rural links Priority: Improving productivity	1977	35,031	137,193	2,463	466,532
	1978	34,815	270,928	2,667	634,191

Source: Eom, 2011a

4.2 Socio-economic background of Saemaul Undong

Korea was under Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to 1945, and following World War II, it gained independence. The Korean peninsula was divided into northern and southern parts along the 38th parallel as per the agreement reached at the Yalta summit conference among the USA, Britain, and Russia after the end of the Pacific War in 1945 (Park Jin-Hwan, 1998). It was decided that the US military would occupy the southern part of the 38th parallel while the Soviet army would occupy the northern region. North Korea adopted a communist political system, while South Korea established a democratic one. The impact of the Japanese occupation, the Korean Civil War of 1950-1953, which led to the territorial division between North and South, and heavy reliance on US aid programs were defining factors for the country during that period (Park Jin-Hwan, 1998, p. 10). Living conditions were dismal, leading to a loss of confidence and motivation among Koreans (Park Seung Woo & Choi, 2016). As living conditions worsened, idleness and laziness became prevalent, with many men in the village abstaining from work and engaging in alcohol and gambling. These challenges were pervasive in Korea in the 1960s before the initiation of Saemaul Undong.

In the 1960s, various government programs aimed at combating poverty proved ineffective. For instance, the People's National Reconstruction Movement (PNRM) failed to achieve its objectives, as highlighted by Goh (2010) and Rho (2014). The PNRM focused on training and educational initiatives, neglecting ideological reform. Rho (2014) emphasized the establishment of regional training institutions, but the trained instructors could not effectively reduce poverty. The primary obstacle was promoting order within the bureaucratic and top-down military government. Goh (2010) suggested that the government should provide more economic incentives to invigorate the PNRM. Participation in these programs was coerced due to the top-down implementation approach and lack of leadership. Furthermore, the oversight of economic and spiritual components in other programs, such as the Special Projects for Rural People's Income Increase in the 1960s, also contributed to the overall failure of government development initiatives (ibid.). These shortcomings served as a foundation for integrating spiritual and economic aspects into the Saemaul Undong, a government-launched initiative.

4.3 The basic principles and characteristics of Saemaul Undong

The core tenets of Saemaul Undong encompass the values of "diligence," "self-help," and "cooperation," along with the "can-do" and "must-do" spirits. According to Rho (2014), these principles embody social capital (trust) and are instrumental in addressing societal challenges. Additionally, Brandt (1981) underscores the ideological significance of these principles, portraying them as enduring values. Notably, Koreans are often regarded as diligent individuals, akin to the Germans, Japanese, Chinese, and Swiss. This perception stems from their exceptional diligence and work ethic. "Self-reliance" embodies the notion of depending on oneself, as elucidated by Chung (2009), who describes it as assisting those who strive to help themselves. Goh (2010) contends that government support galvanizes farmers to engage actively in local and rural development without external dependency. President Park Chung-Hee firmly believed in the strength and confidence fostered by "cooperation." However, Choi (2014) proposes a globalized interpretation of Saemaul Undong, encompassing "sharing," "service," and "creativity." "Sharing" underscores the experience of growth, while "service" embodies a tangible form of sharing. "Creativity" is identified as a driving force for enhancing quality of life through community development and change. Chung (2009) maintains that local rural development is contingent on the residents taking ownership of improving their lives and localities, echoing the collaborative culture embedded in Korean rural communities, such as "dure" and "hyangyak," which have inspired the spirits of Saemaul Undong. The cooperative culture prevalent in Korean rural communities epitomizes self-governance and collective action. As posited by Chung, this culture has fostered a sense of camaraderie, emphasizing harmony and mutual assistance.

Park Soyoung (2009) presents an alternative perspective on the tradition of collaboration, suggesting that homogeneous communities are typically bound by kinship and Confucian values. Historical ethnic homogeneity has significantly fostered close cooperation, reducing the likelihood of disputes and conflicts. Each village had its own autonomous regulations and customs of collaboration, known as "dure," "gyae," and "hyangyak." The term "dure" denotes a tradition that spans over 500 years, emphasizing the collective effort needed to accomplish demanding tasks that no single family can undertake alone. "Gyae" is a small savings scheme that is particularly popular among stay-at-home spouses. The longstanding tradition of "hyangyak" represents an accepted norm that promotes collaboration and positive relations among rural residents rooted in the Confucian tradition. This rich social capital in rural villages nurtured a sense of receptiveness

toward Saemaul Undong, as working together for a common objective was already familiar. Saemaul Undong elevated traditional collaboration to a more refined and considerate level (Park Sooyoung, 2009).

4.3.1 Saemaul Undong's Local Community Development Strategies

The Saemaul Undong distinguishes itself from other local community development models through its unique implementation strategies. It focuses on small villages or "mauls," ranging from less than 20 households to 200 or more households. Additionally, rural villages are categorized by the government into three groups based on their level of development: "basic," "self-help," and "self-reliant." Prosperous villages receive increasing support from the government. The implementation scheme encompasses specific characteristics of development units, entities, development areas, methods, and strategies. Approximately 32,485 villages have participated in the Saemaul Undong Movement (Park Jin-Hwan, 1998, p. 72). This section offers an overview of the local development schemes of the Korean Saemaul Undong, as explained in scholarly works by prominent Saemaul researchers such as Park Jin-Hwan (1998), Chung (2009), Goh (2010), and Choi (2014).

Critical elements of Saemaul Undong include:

- a) The village as the strategic unit of community action
- b) Integration of two extremes of development approaches (top-down and bottom-up)
- c) Voluntary participation and democratic decision-making (including how to utilize government-supplied resources like cement and iron rods)
- d) Selection of Saemaul leaders (both male and female) with a sense of duty, patience, and perseverance who can lead the community
- e) Nationwide Saemaul education and training
- f) Classification of villages (basic, self-help, and self-reliant) to promote competition between villages
- g) Public relations (PR) promotion in local community development, Saemaul Undong.

Here is the summary of the local development scheme for the Saemaul Undong, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 – Saemaul Undong local development scheme

<p>Village as the strategic unit of community action</p>	<p>The Saemaul project begins its development process at the village level, the fundamental administrative unit in Korea. Korean villages are categorized by the number of households: small villages consist of fewer than 20 households, while large villages have 200 or more. Additionally, rural Korean villages had established organizations for farmer cooperation, known as dure (farmers’ fraternity for mutual aid) and hyangyak (autonomous regulatory charter). Villagers were united by shared regional identity, common interests, and collaborative work.</p>
<p>Integrated two extremes of development approaches (top-down and bottom-up)</p>	<p>The Saemaul Undong initiative combines elements of both top-down and bottom-up development approaches. Government leadership was crucial in creating the initial conditions for development. However, over time, the government shifted its focus to supporting voluntary implementation activities by the villagers rather than exerting direct control. As a result, Saemaul activities were organized based on collaborative interactions between government organizations and village residents.</p>
<p>Voluntary participation and democratic decision-making</p>	<p>In Korean culture, a strong tradition of cooperative labor exists among villagers, particularly in traditional rural communities. The Saemaul Undong projects were developed to leverage this cooperative culture, encouraging active and willing participation from villagers for the betterment of their own communities. The government aimed to guide the villagers, providing technical information aligned with the villagers' preferences. By enhancing farmers' participation and granting them decision-making authority over government-supplied resources such as cement and iron rods, the initiative facilitated the development of grassroots democracy and voluntary engagement in Korea.</p>
<p>Selection of Saemaul leaders (male and female) with a sense of duty, patience, and perseverance who were able to lead the community</p>	<p>In every village, male and female leaders played integral roles in driving the Saemaul Undong initiatives forward. The community elected these leaders and served in their roles without remuneration.</p>
	<p>The government established Saemaul Training to cultivate strong leadership within the Saemaul Undong Movement. It set up the Saemaul Training Institute at central and ten provincial-level training institutes for Saemaul leaders. The</p>

<p>Nationwide Saemaul education and training</p>	<p>training program, which lasted one or two weeks, aimed to inspire trainees to contribute to rural development, underscore the significance of leadership roles, enhance leadership capability, and hone the skills to persuade villagers. Sharing success stories from accomplished Saemaul leaders (case studies) served as a compelling and enlightening method of instructing other Saemaul and social leaders. The training prioritized practical action and real-life cases over theoretical concepts. It emphasized teaching and self-learning through reasoned discussions of successful cases, group dynamics, field tours, and more.</p>
<p>Classification of villages to promote competition between villages</p>	<p>In order to encourage healthy competition among rural villages, the government has implemented a categorization system based on the level of development. Villages were divided into three categories: "basic," "self-help," and "cooperation."</p>
<p>Public Relations (PR) promotion</p>	<p>Public Relations helped create a positive social environment for Saemaul Undong and shared success stories with other villages. Public Relations activities emphasized Saemaul songs, flags, uniforms, and street cleaning to enhance the social atmosphere of the Saemaul Undong Movement. Involvement in public media proved to be one of the most effective methods of informing the public about Saemaul Undong's objectives.</p>

Source: The author’s compilation is based on research studies by leading Korean Saemaul Development scholars Park Jin-Hwan (1998), Goh (2010), Chung (2009), and Choi (2014)

4.3.2 The institutional framework of the Saemaul Undong

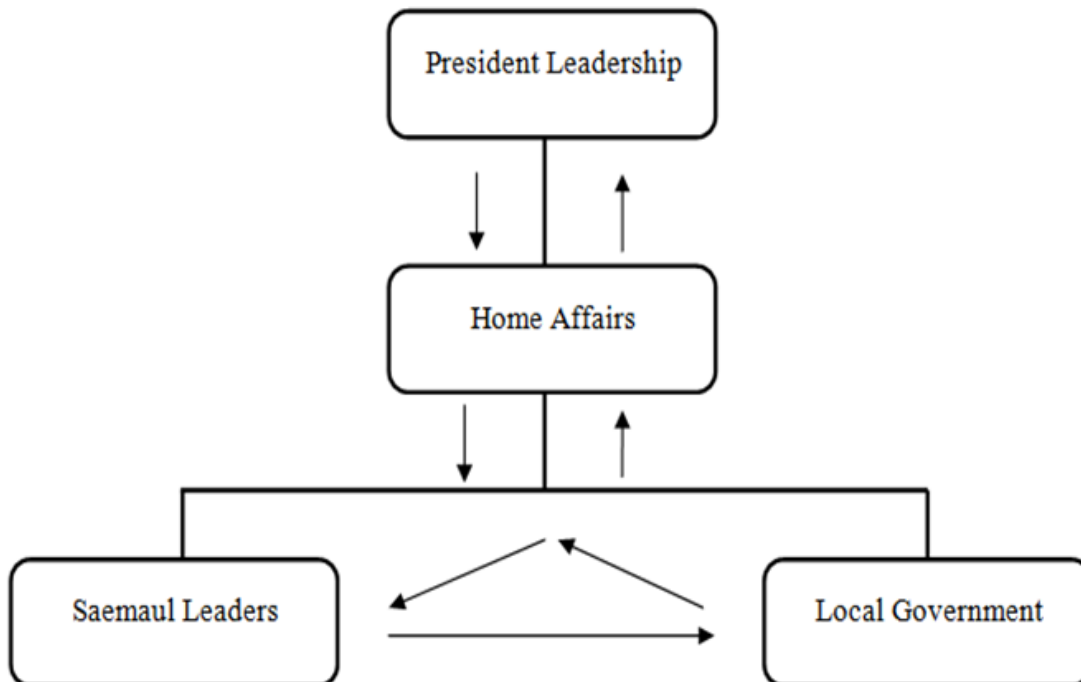
The works of Chung (2009), Choi (2014; 2018), and Goh (2010) have underscored the hierarchical structure and centralized decision-making process that characterized local development in Korea during the Saemaul Undong era (1970-1979). Chung (2009) details the administrative system's highly authoritarian (centralized) nature during this time, explaining that local autonomy was virtually unattainable. This central administrative system, inherited from Park Chung-Hee’s military regime, encompassed budgeting, state control, and appraisal.

In 1972, the Park Chung Hee administration designated the Saemaul Undong policy as the foremost priority of all government policies. Saemaul-related units were established in every

government organization, be it local or central. The publication of the comprehensive Saemaul survey featuring detailed statistics on all villages, including the Saemaul Medal in the government award system, and the inaugural national convention for Saemaul leaders in November 1973 highlighted the government's commitment to the cause. Moreover, Saemaul-themed songs were composed and disseminated.

Chung (2009, p. 57) emphasizes the idealistic nature of Saemaul Undong, portraying it as a platform for villages to engage in local community development activities independently. Nonetheless, the 1970s necessitated a greater emphasis on self-sufficiency, financial resources, farming technologies, and capable village leaders. Thus, the government's initial involvement through guidance, support, and leadership was pivotal in initiating development activities. Given Saemaul Undong's focus on the holistic development of agricultural communities, coordination among every government and non-governmental organization was imperative. Figure 4 provides an analytical overview of the institutional framework of Saemaul Undong for local development.

Figure 4 – Institutional scheme of Saemaul Undong for local and rural development

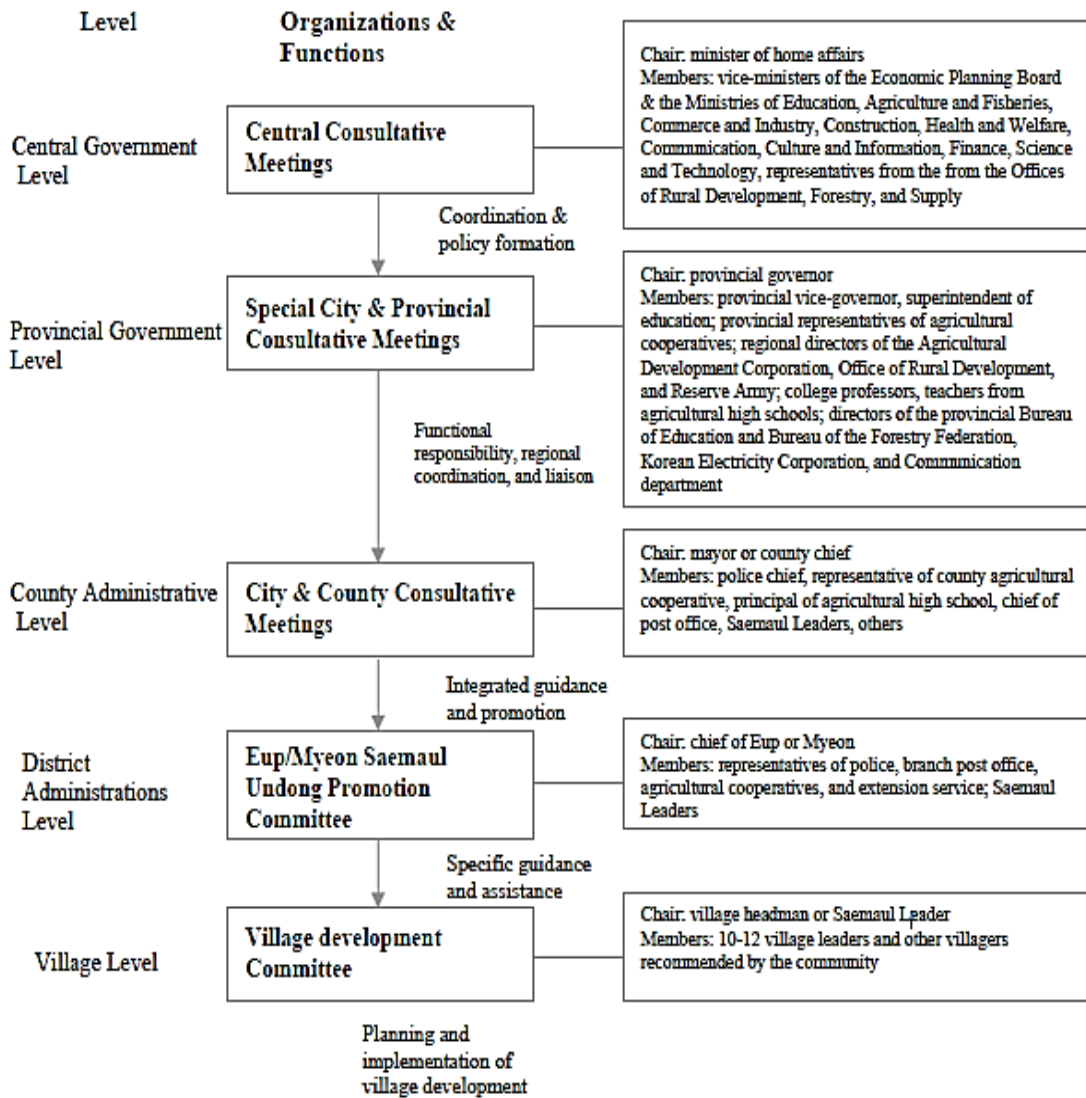


Source: Musaeva, 2021, p. 7

The Saemaul Undong was established under the Home Affairs⁸ during the Saemaul campaign. The Promotion Council (Home Affairs) was mandated by the President's order on March 7th, 1972, to oversee the execution of Saemaul projects. It was responsible for coordinating these projects across different levels of the government hierarchy, from national institutions to local villages (Chung, 2009, p. 59). Under Park Chung-Hee's government, Saemaul projects received administrative guidance, material and technical support, project evaluation, and the assignment of civil servants. Figure 4 illustrates this approach, reflecting the insights of an institutionalist perspective on the dynamics of the Saemaul Undong. According to many scientists, international observers, and researchers, the Saemaul Undong was conceived as an integrated rural development model founded on institutional principles. However, Goh (2010) argues that the Korean Saemaul Undong blended top-down and bottom-up approaches. The administration system of Saemaul Undong was described as systematic and centralized (top-down), with the Ministry of Home Affairs serving as the focal point for addressing the progress and challenges of Saemaul projects. The Saemaul comprehensive briefing rooms were established within government organizations to facilitate the smooth execution of the movement. The involvement of local communities and the workforce represented a new bottom-up approach to the success of Saemaul Undong. It was emphasized that successful completion depended solely on the people, with government agencies encouraged to pay tribute to actual performance rather than endlessly discussing changes in farmers' mindset (Brandt, 1981, p. 502). Achieving an integrated rural development program over nine years was deemed more critical, effectively mobilizing and coordinating psychological, technological, bureaucratic, and material resources to address recalcitrant agricultural issues. The Saemaul Movement increasingly served as a practice-oriented institution, embodying the Korean model of integrated rural development regarding input, output, and process (Goh, 2010, p. 32). Each community was administratively integrated into larger units to ensure structured and scalable projects. Unlike previous development approaches, it fostered strong relationships between the highest levels of government and the grassroots community units, guaranteeing meticulous project planning and collaboration throughout (Choi, 2018, p. 79). Figure 5 illustrates the organizational arrangement for Saemaul Undong.

⁸ "Home Affairs" was the "Ministry of Home Affairs in the 1970s —currently, the "Ministry of the Interior and Safety" of the Republic of Korea.

Figure 5 – Organizational Arrangements for the Saemaul Undong



Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981 (adapted from Eom, 2011a, Figure 1, p.37)
Eup and *Myeon* are the district levels in Korea's local administrative system

In Figure 5, there is an illustration of the promotion systems, both vertical and horizontal, for each project as described by Eom (2011a, p. 38). The outcomes of the Saemaul Undong projects in various regions were conveyed to the central administrators, who then allocated rewards and penalties to ensure the highest level of effectiveness. This comprehensive promotion system served as an essential institutional framework for providing timely and accountable support and for

evaluating, coordinating, and adjusting the Saemaul Undong, as highlighted in the works of Park Sooyoung (2009) and Eom (2011a).

4.3.3 Developmental State and Saemaul Undong (1970-1979)

The East Asian economic miracles observed in Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan are often referred to as developmentalism. According to Meredith Woo-Cumings (1999, p. 1), East Asian industrialization can be defined as the state of developmental theory. This "developmental state" represents a closely integrated network of political, bureaucratic, and financial influences that shape economic activities in capitalist Northeast Asia. This state model has emerged as a distinctive response to a world primarily dominated by the West. Despite persistent challenges like corruption and inefficiency, state policies today continue to be justified by the imperatives of enhancing economic competitiveness and fostering nationalism, even in the era of globalization. As Bolesta (2007, p. 105) describes, the developmental state often stands between a liberal open economy model and a centrally planned model. This theory is neither purely capitalist nor socialist but instead integrates the advantages of the private sector with the positive role of the state.

One compelling argument, as outlined in the developmental state theory, emphasizes the influential role of the state in regulating the market (Wade, 2018). This perspective shifted in the 1980s to encompass a framework supporting a role in a largely deregulated and fully open economy. The pivotal role played by the developmental state is evident in the rapid industrialization of South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, which has transformed developmental states into quasi-neoliberal states (Wade, 2018). The state insulated itself from the vested interests of the private sector and large corporations while purposefully engaging in cooperation with them. On the other hand, Wong (2004) argues that East Asian economies, such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, did not start from scratch in their economic development but rather acquired knowledge, technology, and economic expertise from abroad. Land reform was jointly planned and administered by both domestic authorities and U.S. advisers. Pirie (2007, p. 7) asserts that South Korea was fundamentally a creation of the U.S. and played an integral role in the modernization of Korea. The U.S. provided protection from external threats and substantial aid for over four decades, with the Korean state receiving US\$ 12.6 billion in military and economic assistance from the United States between 1947 and 1976. Furthermore, Wong (2004, p. 350)

emphasizes that technology was initially imported from the advanced industrial West and, subsequently, from within the East Asian region. Management practices were similarly internalized through foreign investment ventures. Macroeconomic policy management was transferred from abroad and adapted domestically to align with local priorities. The case of Korea has been recognized as a developmental-state model characterized by the active role of state institutions in economic growth and state control of finance in the Korean industrial transformation process (Evans, 1995; Hyun-Chin & Jin-Ho, 2006). According to state institutionalists, the developmental state compelled private capital to align with its interests. In Evans's (1995) view, a developmental state is characterized by a strong bureaucracy and embedded autonomy. The state needs a specific bureaucratic capacity and coherence to drive development. It must also maintain a close working relationship with capitalists while possessing the ability to regulate their activities. This requires the state to be integrated with and independent from private interests. In the case of the Korean government, it leveraged *chaebol* (family-owned businesses) to realize national objectives such as rapid growth, the development of heavy industry, and the promotion of exports. A pivotal component of the state's economic strategy involved nurturing and bolstering large, nationally-owned firms.

In the early 1970s, when the Saemaul Undong began, Korean rural communities were overlooked mainly amidst the government's focus on export-driven economic growth (Goh, 2010). Furthermore, the Korean developmental state was characterized by strong leadership from the upper echelons of the government (Han, 2012, p. 20). Han acknowledges that Saemaul Undong was a modernization movement that coincided with urban industrial development and contributed to the growth of the agricultural and industrial sectors. According to Han (2012, p. 21), Saemaul executives were responsible for overseeing medium-sized businesses within villages, and these businesses received varying levels of government support based on their competitiveness and performance. In contrast to an urban business, the village was a company operated through the villagers' cooperation, whose sub-units were individual families. The village as a “business” was a kind of cooperative enterprise. During the Saemaul Undong period, the villages had contracts with the government for projects as if they were in the private sector, and such a phenomenon was widespread. The “business contract” was popular with Saemaul Undong (Han, 2012, p. 23). This is impossible if the village officials or the Saemaul leader lacked management and planning skills. Therefore, a thorough knowledge of farming and other skills is required. As a result, those who

did military service in the village had to be Saemaul leaders. In the initial stages of Korean modernization, the military sector was a school of modernity in which most Korean men experienced modern and organized lives (Han, 2012, p. 21). The Korean War (1950-1953) multiplied the military sector in Korea. It has become more modern than other areas. The author emphasizes that some Saemaul leaders were forced to step down as village chiefs because they failed to complete their military service (Han, 2012, p. 22). The author argues that previous research on Saemaul Undong fails to recognize its significance. The focus on profitability resulted in the enhancement of villagers' livelihoods. The introduction of developmentalism and its emphasis on self-reliance represented a new phase with the advent of Saemaul Undong (Han, 2012, p. 24).

4.3.3.1 Government input and Saemaul Undong output

The community residents, predominantly villagers, initially initiated basic projects to enhance their living environment as a foundation for their progress. The 1970s marked a significant phase in the swift modernization of rural villages. The dedication of the rural community to Saemaul Undong established a framework of trust and collaboration. The leadership of Saemaul Undong shifted primarily to the private sector and was characterized in the second and third stages by voluntary efforts to support local and rural development (Choi, 2018). Table 7 presents the project outcomes that surpassed their targets.

Table 7 – The outcome of the Saemaul Undong projects (1971-1980)

Project	Unit	Goal (A)	Result (B)	B/A (%)
Expansion of Village Roads	km	26,266	43,558	166
Establishment of Farm Roads	km	49,167	61,797	126
Building Small Bridges	one	76,749	79,516	104
Building Village Halls	one	35,608	37,012	104
Building Store Houses	one	34,665	22,143	64
Housing Improvement	one	544,000	225,000	42
Community Resettlement	one	–	2,747	–

Installing Sewage Systems	km	8,654	15,559	179
Installing Telephone lines in Farming and Fishing Villages	household	2,834,000	2,777,500	98
Saemaul Factories	one	950	717	75

Source: Eom, 2011b, p. 612

Goh (2010) highlights that in the early 1970s, as the Saemaul Undong initiative was launched, Korean rural communities faced challenges despite the government's focus on export-driven economic progress. These communities were caught in a cycle of poverty, with approximately 80% of Korean farmhouses still having thatched roofs, only 20% having access to electricity, half lacking village entry roads for cars, and power tillers being unable to access most village roads. The role of the late President Park Chung-Hee was pivotal. Goh (2010) asserts that President Park, who was born into a poor rural family, understood the struggles of poverty firsthand. Driven to address this issue, he proposed the Saemaul Undong as a self-help community development initiative. The movement began by providing 335 bags of cement (equivalent to 40 kilograms per bag) and 1,000 kilograms of steel wires to each of the 33,000 villages for community development projects.

Local governments and villagers collaborated to determine the allocation of government support, focusing on the valuable resources of cement and iron rods at the time. These resources were earmarked for constructing small bridges, roads, and other essential projects (Goh, 2010, p. 30). The villagers were empowered to make decisions on utilizing the government-provided resources. The spirit of cooperation was ignited through Saemaul Undong's projects. Villagers actively contributed by providing their labor without compensation, offering land for widening village roads and other valuable resources. The government's material support created a ripple effect, as noted by Goh (2010). By 1971, just one year after the movement began, the government's support for the 33,000 villages led to positive outcomes, amounting to three times the initial government support. In the subsequent year of 1972, the Saemaul Refurbishment program evolved into the comprehensive Saemaul Undong initiative, with the government extending material support to only about half of the 33,000 villages. Only 16,600 villages were recognized as high-performing entities. This reflected the stringent application of the principle of self-help development: "the better village, the first support," aimed at motivating underperforming villages. This approach attracted over 6,000 villages to the movement. Goh underscores that during the early stages,

Saemaul Undong faced resistance from the general public, social elites, politicians, intellectuals, and journalists. However, their perspectives shifted when they observed around 6,000 villages that did not receive government support. Witnessing this, they became actively involved in the movement, offering resources and volunteering to participate in the Saemaul Undong Movement. County and township levels of municipal authorities channeled the government support for Saemaul projects. After the start of the Saemaul Undong, the local government's function, which was the maintenance of law and order, became reoriented toward rural development. An effective government support system at the local government level was essential for successfully implementing the Saemaul Undong. In delivering their services, the coordination and integration of various development projects concerning required development inputs at the village level were promoted primarily by county-level local officials. The local governments established the Saemaul divisions at the district (*eup*) and county (*myeon*) levels. The timely and accurate delivery of materials and services to villages according to the planned schedule was an indicator of the outstanding performance and commitment of the local administrator. The merit evaluation for local government officials was based on the performance of the Saemaul projects they took under their charge.

Saemaul Undong is a local development program that has garnered strong support from top political leaders. The president has demonstrated his commitment to rural development by personally visiting rural villages and expressing his concern during various vital events such as the New Year press conference, the monthly meeting for the national economic report, and the Cabinet meeting. The steadfast commitment of political leaders has resulted in a fair distribution of resources to the rural sector, greatly aiding rural development. This support has been instrumental in garnering understanding and backing from society for the principles and strategies of Saemaul Undong, leading to the mobilization of resources and policy support from the government and other societal sectors (Goh, 2010).

4.3.3.2 Criticism of the Saemaul Undong Movement

The Saemaul Undong is an authoritarian policy of rural modernization that has been in effect since the 1970s, championed by the late President Park Chung-Hee. According to Doucette and Müller (2016), the movement gained momentum with the administration of Park Geun-hye, the daughter

of President Park Chung-Hee. Initially criticized as a tool to perpetuate the regime's power and bolster its legitimacy, Saemaul Undong was seen as a political instrument of the Park Chung-Hee era. Lee (2011, pp. 364-365) highlights the early stages of Saemaul Undong when farmers were viewed as a convenient pretext for state intervention in village affairs, allowing the government to exert administrative control in return for superficial improvements in their quality of life. Lee also points out the modest funding scheme at the time, wherein 335 bags of surplus, unsellable cement were allocated to the countryside for "village projects that meet the common demands of villagers." At that time, cement was a valuable resource, necessitating maximum utilization in road expansion, bridge construction, and other essential activities.

4.4 General Summary of the Korean Saemaul Undong

The Saemaul Undong has led to many positive outcomes, each contributing to a significant transformation in rural life. These outcomes, which include improved living standards, enhanced rural living environment, infrastructure development, and the expansion of roads, underscore the success of the policy and its impact on rural communities (Douglass, 2014, p. 136). First, the Saemaul Undong projects have significantly improved people's living standards in the countryside (Eom, 2011b; Park Sooyoung, 2009). These projects, in combination with village upgrading and heavily subsidized rice production, have enabled rural households to achieve the same living standards and incomes as urban households. Second, the Saemaul Development projects had a snowball effect. One success encouraged another, leading to substantial village improvements in a relatively brief time. The first phase of the 1970s was considered a landmark decade for the modernization of rural villages. Third, the principal direction running through all decades has been to limit the role of government in the Saemaul Undong and to increasingly emphasize the spirit of voluntary cooperation as a central characteristic. 'Voluntary cooperation' in the Saemaul Undong program refers to the active participation of local communities in the planning and implementation of development projects, which fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Between 1971 and 1979, the Saemaul Movement participants made a transformative impact by building an impressive 85,000 kilometers of roads across the country. On average, this equated to 2.6 kilometers of road for each village, revolutionizing transportation infrastructure and connectivity. The government provided research-based guidance and oversaw village activities

(Goh, 2010). The expansion of telephone lines and access to electricity enabled villagers to receive timely market information. Upgrades to the sewage system improved sanitation, creating a healthier environment that enhanced the quality of life for villagers. The collaboration with the government provided valuable practical learning experiences in project management. It fostered trust, ultimately leading to the empowerment of people in the villages and the transformation of local governance (Park Sooyoung, 2009). Goh (2010) acknowledges that the tangible outcomes of village projects, such as enhancing physical infrastructure, including farm roads and village entrance roads, have significantly contributed to Korea's economic development. Additionally, Saemaul projects underwent evaluation at preliminary, intermediate, and post-project stages. The initial assessment was used to determine suitable project priorities, making project prioritization essential. The interim review assessed progress identified errors, and redirected projects by analyzing input and output data. Successful results were then presented at weekly, monthly, and annual meetings attended by high-ranking officials, including President Park Chung-Hee. The President recognized and honored any thriving villages, Saemaul leaders, and local governments. Their achievements were publicized in the news to encourage competition and share the success of the Saemaul projects with other villages. The active involvement of mass media in the Saemaul Undong was pivotal in disseminating information about village success, establishing a network with other Saemaul Undong communities, and promoting participation and competition.

5. Comparative analysis of the European LEADER and the Korean Saemaul Undong

This section delves into the uncommon features of the European LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong models, highlighting their distinct approaches to local development. The primary objective of this dissertation is to contrast these models and evaluate their potential applicability in Kyrgyzstan. To accomplish this, this study explores the following research question:

Research Question 1: What are the main similarities and differences between the European Union LEADER and the Republic of Korea's Saemaul Undong local development schemes?

The LEADER programme, an initiative of the European Union, is pivotal in supporting and advancing projects prioritizing local development in rural areas across EU Member States. This program, funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, aims to decentralize public policies and adopt a more localized approach to addressing public issues and devising solutions (Chevalier et al., 2012).

At the heart of LEADER is its bottom-up approach, which facilitates the collaborative development of collective projects in LEADER pilot areas by offering a supportive framework. According to the European Commission (2006), the fundamental concept underpinning the LEADER approach is recognizing the diverse nature of European rural areas. This leads to the assertion that local development strategies are more effective and efficient when adopted and implemented by stakeholders under the leadership of public-private agencies. The creation of local action groups is deemed crucial for the successful transfer of local development practices. Embracing the seven LEADER principles, which prioritize being area-based, bottom-up, fostering public-private partnerships, integrating multi-sectoral actions, and promoting innovation, cooperation, and networking, is crucial for realizing this objective.

Regarding the Korean Saemaul Undong, rural communities in Korea possess several characteristics that set them apart from other rural communities. These include a long history of settlement by people typically related by kinship, reliance on rice cultivation as their primary source of income, and adherence to traditional customs and autonomous norms based on Confucian principles. The homogeneity of ethnic groups has also played a significant role in fostering cohesive cooperation and reducing the likelihood of disputes and conflicts. The defining

characteristics of Saemaul Undong are the "can-do" and "must-do" attitudes. However, the guiding principles of the Saemaul Undong Movement are diligence, self-help, and cooperation. To ensure the success of Saemaul Undong and improve lives, it is essential to embody the spirit of Saemaul Undong. Park Chung-Hee described the values of Saemaul Undong as "a mental development campaign." The campaign must be led by action and practice, not just words. When selecting a project, five considerations should be taken into account: (1) Base decision-making on the opinions of the entire village; (2) Contribute to the interest of the entire village; (3) Consider the village's unique characteristics without imitating others; each village needs to identify its own set of capabilities and resources; (4) Identify the capabilities of villagers; (5) Establish direct or indirect links between projects and the increase in villagers' incomes (Park Chung Hee's own writings about the Saemaul Undong plan draft, 1972, p. 13).

The EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong programs share significant similarities in their policy formulation and design. Both programs are characterized by a top-down initiation of local development initiatives, with the EU LEADER originating from the European Commission and being implemented in its Member States and Saemaul Undong being launched by the late President Park Chung-Hee and his administration. Both models emphasize flexibility in project implementation at the grassroots level and focus on community building, participation, and cooperation, employing a bottom-up approach to local development within a centrally defined set of strategies. Additionally, both prioritize a territorial rather than sectoral approach and aim to empower local communities. However, the most striking difference between the two programs lies in their governing systems. The EU LEADER operates within liberal democracies, emphasizing decentralization, while Saemaul Undong was implemented under an authoritarian regime, emphasizing centralization. This contrast in operational contexts significantly influences the implementation and outcomes of the two programs. It is important to note that while decentralization is a fundamental principle in the European Union, Central and Eastern European countries continue to face challenges in implementing the EU LEADER approach due to historical influences of Soviet bureaucratic control and political centralism. Countries like Hungary struggle with increasing centralization, hindering the bottom-up development principles promoted by the EU. Similar issues have been encountered in the Romanian LEADER program due to weak administrative networks, political interference, and enduring socialist-era legacies. Furthermore, the programs differ in their targeted goals. Saemaul Undong aims to reduce poverty, modernize

villages through infrastructure development, and instill confidence in social change in Korea, while the LEADER program focuses on improving the quality of life, promoting local economic prosperity in EU rural areas, conserving the environment, fostering social inclusion, and supporting innovative projects. The cultural approach to collaboration also sets these programs apart. Cooperation in Korea is deeply rooted in Confucian values, while the EU LEADER program facilitates collaboration and participation by establishing local action groups. Table 8 offers an in-depth comparison of the EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong schemes for local development.

Table 8 – Comparison of the EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong

Indicator	EU LEADER	Korean Saemaul Undong
Policy initiation	The supranational level programme, initiated by the European Union (EU Commission)	Government-led policy, initiated by the late President Park Chung-Hee and his administration
Objective	Mitigate disparities in rural areas in the EU Member States, create jobs, help develop innovative projects, promote tourism, conserve cultural heritage, promote non-agricultural activities, and grow enterprises.	Saemaul Undong aims to alleviate poverty, upgrade villages, increase income, develop rural areas, and change farmer attitudes by incorporating a can-do and must-do spirit.
Local development scheme	Top-down and bottom-up approaches (EU funding instrument and obligation to set up a Local Action Group (LAG)). LAGs are vital local actors in implementing the LEADER programme. They ensure local development strategies and projects that respond to each local area's needs and potential.	Top-down and bottom-up approaches (government resources and guidance, villagers' participation).
Basic principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Area-based (2) Bottom-up (3) Local action groups (4) Integrated and multisectoral actions (5) Innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Diligence (2) Self-help (3) Cooperation

	(6) Cooperation (7) Networking	
Government and governance	Democratic regime (decentralized)	Authoritarian regime (Highly centralized)
Main actors (stakeholders)	Municipalities, the private sector, and local associations (residents of that area).	Central government includes all layers of government institutions, officials, and villagers (community residents).
Local participation	Participation in the EU Member States varies passively in Eastern Europe, with its communist heritage, and weakly due to Western Europe's sparsely populated rural areas.	Full voluntary participation
Precondition for success	<p>(1) Formation of Local Action Groups (LAGs) for a successful LEADER implementation in the pilot area; they are an essential agent in the LEADER programme.</p> <p>(2) Pan-European example of participatory democracy</p> <p>(3) Local characteristics: (area-based, bottom-up, partnership, innovation, multisectoral. Trans-local: (networking, transnational, and cooperation. Vertical: (decentralized management and financing)</p>	<p>(1) A village is the strategic unit of community action</p> <p>(2) Integration of two extremes of development approaches (top-down and bottom-up)</p> <p>(3) Voluntary participation and democratic decision-making</p> <p>(4) Selection of Saemaul leaders (male and female) with a sense of duty, patience, and perseverance who were able to lead the community</p> <p>(5) Nation-wide Saemaul leadership education and training</p> <p>(6) Classification of villages (basic, self-help, and self-reliant) to promote competition between villages</p> <p>(7) Public relations (PR) promotion in local community development</p>
Local-level scale	The LAG area comprises a minimum of two and several settlements The population target should be between 10,000 (exceptionally 5,000) and 100,000 inhabitants.	In Korea, Saemaul Undong targets a <i>village</i> as a unit for development. The number of households determines the size of a village. For example, one village has less than 20 households, while another has 200 or more.

Geographical domain	Expanded in the Member States, but only within the European Union.	Saemaul Undong has become a global development paradigm and is now implemented in Africa, Latin America, and ASEAN countries. Recently, Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan) joined.
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Source: Musaeva, 2020, pp. 21-22

5.1 Possibilities of applying role models in Kyrgyzstan

This dissertation aims to investigate the potential application of role models in Kyrgyzstan by addressing the following research question:

Research Question 2: How can the European Union’s LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong be applied as an alternative model for local development in Kyrgyzstan?

The dissertation provides an in-depth analysis of the methods employed in the EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong initiatives, assessing their feasibility and potential impact if implemented in Kyrgyzstan's unique social, economic, and cultural landscape. The research is organized around three distinct case studies, offering diverse perspectives on the potential adaptation of these models in Kyrgyzstan.

The first case study focuses on the "My Village Initiative," a local development project in Kyrgyzstan inspired by the Korean Saemaul Undong and supported by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). The KOICA-funded My Village project presents a valuable opportunity to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the Korean Saemaul Undong model in a local context. This case study examines various aspects of Korea’s Saemaul Undong model application in local development strategies, including local actors, cooperation, and engagement. This study explores how Korea’s emphasis on public-private partnership and local development can be tailored to address specific needs in Kyrgyzstan by assessing the outcomes of the KOICA-funded My Village project. The findings from this case study will highlight the potential advantages and challenges associated with adopting the Korean Saemaul Undong while offering a framework for its successful implementation in Kyrgyzstan.

The second project concerns the "drinking water project" in Kyrgyzstan, which the European Bank is funding for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). It should be noted that there are currently no established European local development programs in Kyrgyzstan and, indeed, no LEADER-type projects. Consequently, only one European case study is included to illustrate how Europe contributes to Kyrgyzstan's overall development. The drinking water case study examines how the EU fosters local development by supplying a vital resource: clean water, thus bolstering local capacity. By delving into these mechanisms, I aim to understand how similar strategies could be adapted for Kyrgyzstan, considering its specific socioeconomic hurdles and opportunities.

The third case study examines Kyrgyzstan's "Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative," which a private businessperson funds. The study seeks to determine Kyrgyzstan's capacity to undertake local development projects without depending on international donors. It analyzes Kyrgyzstan's strategies and practices to promote local development, assessing their efficacy and longevity.

The research delves into three case studies to uncover local development programs' shared and distinctive features in Korea, Europe, and Kyrgyzstan. It aims to investigate the involvement of key stakeholders like local governments, entrepreneurs, and residents in propelling development efforts. Furthermore, it intends to examine collaboration and local engagement. The research investigates how local development strategies from the EU and Korea could be adapted and implemented as viable options in Kyrgyzstan. By examining the strengths and challenges of these foreign models within a case study framework, the research seeks to identify adaptable elements that align with Kyrgyzstan's specific requirements. The research findings will contribute to a better understanding of enhancing local development in Kyrgyzstan in the long term, thus offering a roadmap for the region's future.

5.2 Research Methodology

In the empirical part of this dissertation, I employed a multiple-case study approach (Yin, 2003). To gather quantitative and qualitative data, I developed a semi-structured questionnaire for the international-led KOICA My Village Initiative and EBRD drinking water project. I conducted in-depth interviews regarding the locally-led Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative. I selected critical informants with the most comprehensive knowledge about the KOICA My Village and EBRD drinking water projects. For the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiatives, I conducted

in-depth interviews and focus group discussions involving up to five participants in various focus groups from the field study. The study initially did not limit the number of semi-structured questionnaires and interviews. The sample size in each field research study was determined by reaching a natural "breakpoint," beyond which new evidence did not contribute additional information. The sample size was determined by theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and confirmed when no new data relevant to the study was obtained.

I sought approval from the local authorities in the respective territories to conduct these studies. Consequently, individuals, such as the head of Ayil Ökmötüs', responded in a somewhat formal manner and refrained from freely expressing their views. Conversely, local leaders and activists were more open, feeling less constrained as they shared their insights. Our key sources of information included local self-government officials, members of local councils (ayil kenesh), a village chief, Kyrgyz and Uzbek Saemaul leaders, schoolteachers, medical personnel, businesspersons (including the initiator of the Exemplary local self-government), academics, village elders (aksakals), as well as ordinary participants and non-participants from the pilot areas in Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, secondary data such as public policy documents, official decrees, reports, publications, and relevant seminar and workshop materials were also incorporated into our field study.

The field study took place in 25 KOICA My Village pilot areas across Batken (10), Osh (14), and Chuy (1) oblasts (regions). The EBRD project area encompassed one municipality in Batken Oblast, specifically a small town in Kyzyl-Kiya. Finally, the Exemplary local self-government project area included the pilot villages of Bel and Borbash in the Osh region. The survey comprised forty-eight respondents ($n=48$) from the KOICA My Village project, fifty-two respondents ($n=52$) from the EBRD drinking water project, and twelve key informants ($n=12$) from the Exemplary local self-government in the Bel area. The field study was conducted during the autumn of 2020, spring of 2021, and summer of 2021.

5.2.1 Data Collection Techniques

In order to protect the anonymity of critical informants, numerical IDs were used, and permission was obtained to include respondents' names in the empirical section of the work. The study encompassed a semi-structured questionnaire survey, which can be found in Appendix A and B,

and interview questions in Appendix C. These survey and interview tools were thoughtfully developed through author discussions and a review of previous literature on EU LEADER and Saemaul Undong's studies. Additionally, sociodemographic information about the participants, available in Appendix D, was collected to provide better characterization. The fieldwork involved observing and noting specific aspects during the interviews. The interviews and focus group discussions, lasting between 30 to 80 minutes, were recorded as mp3 files and transcribed. Moreover, the interviews were translated from Kyrgyz to English.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using SPSS for descriptive analysis. Furthermore, the research employed NVivo 12 Pro to conduct in-depth interviews and analyze open-ended semi-structured questionnaires. NVivo 12 Pro is a computer software program designed to assist researchers in systematically managing, analyzing, and visualizing qualitative data and documents.

5.2.2 Facilitating data management, coding, and analysis

Qualitative data can yield valuable insights (Dhakal, 2022). NVivo 12 Pro, developed in 2018 by QSR International, analyzes field notes, semi-structured questionnaires, and in-depth interviews for qualitative data. The initial step involves coding textual data files to organize the data for analysis, display, and reporting.

The coding process entails labeling and categorizing data segments in the dataset according to the research questions. Moreover, the software offers mapping tools, such as templates and visual representations, to enable users to interact with and populate data and establish relationships between data blocks.

These coding, classification, and mapping tools facilitate additional organization of the data to enable researchers to query and analyze it, draw conclusions, and validate findings across all units of analysis. It is worth mentioning that interview transcripts are classified as files prior to coding initiation.

Table 9 – Codes

No.	Name	Description
1	Donor demand	What requirements were for selecting your <i>Ayil Ökmötü</i> / Local Self-Government from donors? (Identification prerequisites of the donors: KOICA My Village, EBRD, and Exemplary local self-government)
2	Financial incentives	How much investment did your <i>Ayil Ökmötü</i> / local self-government receive under ___KOICA My Village, EBRD, and Exemplary LSG? (Identifying financial incentives of the KOICA, EBRD, and Businessman launched initiatives)
3	Scale	How many villages (administrative area) participate in your <i>Ayil Ökmötü</i> / local self-government? (identifying the scale of the KOICA My Village, EBRD Water project, and Exemplary local self-government)
4	Leader selection	How do local leaders were chosen in the pilot areas? (How did you get selected as the KOICA My Village leader?)
5	<i>Ashar</i>	Is <i>Ashar</i> (traditional voluntary participation method) suitable for the Korean-led My Village project?
		Are you using the traditional method of voluntary participation (<i>Ashar</i>) in the EBRD and Exemplary local self-government projects?
6	Participation	How many local inhabitants have participated in your KOICA My Village, EBRD, and Exemplary LSG projects? Is participation through <i>Ashar</i> (voluntary basis)?
7	Sustainability	What do you think about the project (KOICA My Village, EBRD, and Exemplary local self-government)? How successful and sustainable are they?
8	Other opinions	Share other additional opinions, experiences, and plans

Source: author’s research

5.3 Research areas in Kyrgyzstan for the pilot study

The My Village initiative, funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency and based on the Korean Saemaul Undong model, encompasses thirty pilot villages. However, this dissertation

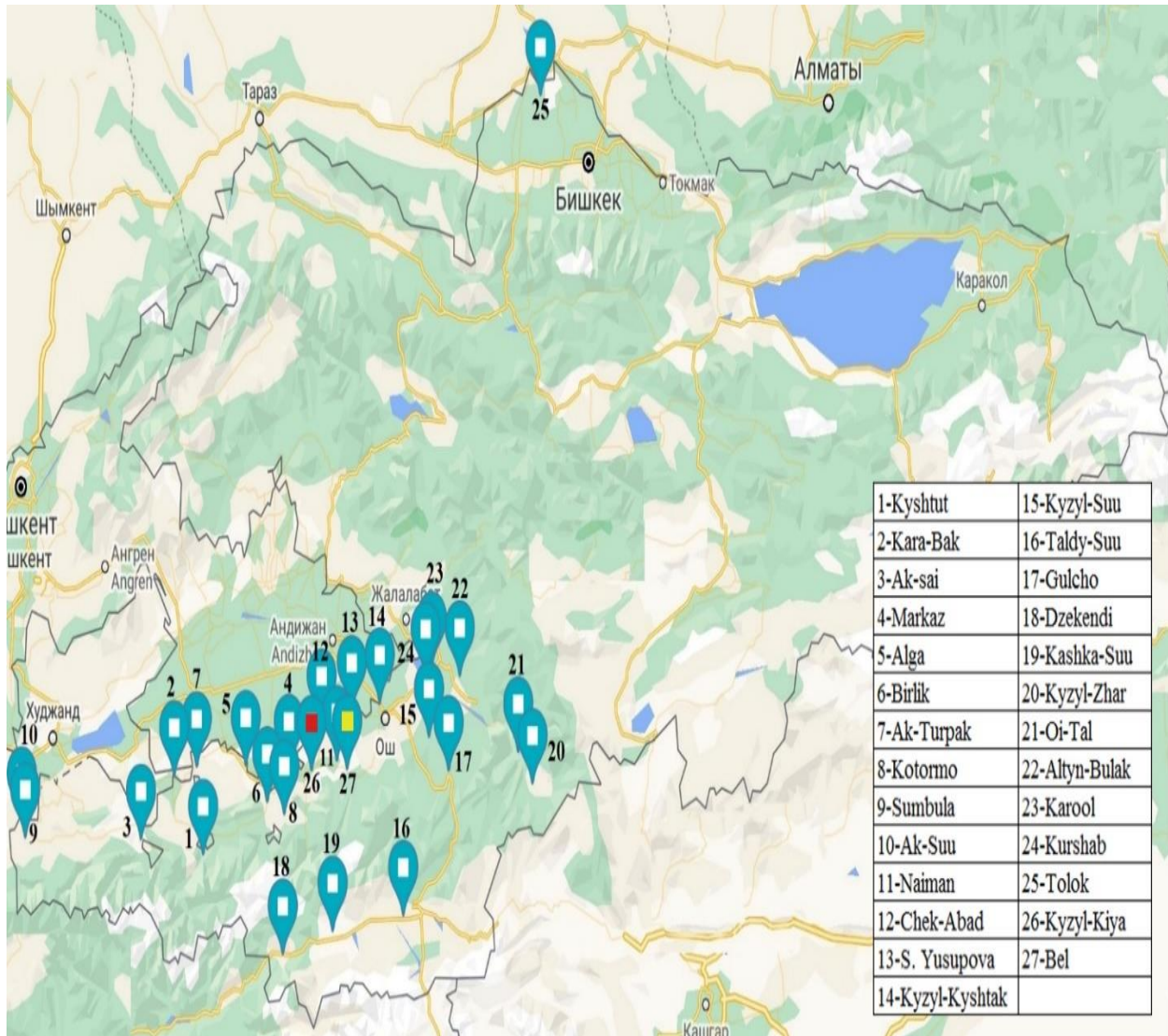
focuses on twenty-five pilot areas, as the remaining five have yet to participate in the research study. These twenty-five pilot villages' locations are illustrated in Figure 6 below. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is undertaking a drinking water project focused on Kyzyl-Kiya town in the Batken region. The Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative marks a significant milestone in Kyrgyzstan's local development, the first project initiated by a private sector entity. A pilot project is underway in the villages of Bel and Borbash in the Osh region.

Table 10 – Basic statistics of the selected case studies in Kyrgyzstan

KOICA My Village's target location			
Participated region	No. participated local self-government	Area covered	Funding & period
Batken	12	17,048 km ²	US\$ 3,500,000 (grant) Period: 2018-2022
Osh	15	28,937 km ²	
Chuy	3	19,895 km ²	
EBRD drinking water supply project location			
Batken	1	Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality 7831km ²	US\$ 1,700,000 (credit) US\$ 3,500,000 (grant) Period: 2017-2019
Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative's pilot area			
Osh	1	Bel local self-government 187,000 km ²	There is no data on funding Period: 2018-2023

Source: author's research

Figure 6 – Proposed research areas in Kyrgyzstan



Source: own illustration

6. Case study I: Korean Saemaul Undong application in Kyrgyzstan

After independence, Kyrgyzstan established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea in January 1992. However, Korea recently began investing in Kyrgyzstan's rural areas through its Saemaul Undong model. Korea is one of the youngest members and the first former development aid recipient to join the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which it joined in 2010 (Doucette & Müller, 2016). Today, the Republic of Korea is the 13th largest economy globally, with a gross domestic product of about 1,63 trillion US dollars in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). Choi (2014) remarks that Saemaul Undong is for living a better life together and can be adopted as a significant project for global development cooperation by Korea, whose global status has changed from that of a "receiving country" to that of a "giving country." As Korea's status rises, so does the pressure to meet international obligations. The Korean government launched Saemaul Official Development Assistance (ODA) to fulfill its duty to third-world countries. For this mission, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and several government agencies, organizations, and foundations have expanded the rural development model based on the Saemaul Undong concept under Global Saemaul as a model for developing the world community. In addition, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized Saemaul Undong as a stepping stone to transforming Korea from one of the world's poorest countries in the world to an economic giant between 1970 and 1979 and added it to the Memory of the World Register in 2013⁹. It has also sought United Nations (UN) recognition that Saemaul Undong is an effective model for rural development. In addition, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has recommended that UN-affiliated organizations in Africa consider the Korean Saemaul Undong as a role model (Choi, 2014). Choi highlights the former President of the United States of America (USA) Obama, who stressed Korea's Saemaul Undong as a paradigm for combating poverty during the G8 press conference on July 11, 2009, parliamentary speech in Ghana. Then, former World Bank President Kim Yong pledged to work together on Saemaul Undong's globalization and international development projects to encourage developing countries to fight poverty. In other words, pursuing greater international recognition prompted the Korean

⁹ In 2013, UNESCO added Saemaul Undong to the Memory of the World Register. Available at: [<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-1/archives-of-saemaul-undong-new-community-movement/>] (accessed June 26, 2021).

government to export its Saemaul Undong as an official development aid model for emerging economies. In addition, Saemaul Undong will expand the Korean products market and economic area (Choi, 2013).

According to the Korea Saemaul Undong Center¹⁰ database, there are 42 villages in nine Asian (9) counties: Kyrgyzstan, Laos People's Democratic Republic, Timor-Leste, and Myanmar from Africa, Burundi, and Uganda. Oceania: Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and from Latin America, Honduras is actively implementing Saemaul projects with Korean support and the voluntary participation of villagers from their respective countries. To successfully disseminate and pursue various Saemaul projects and Global Saemaul Undong, the Korea Saemaul Center has selected model pilot villages from neighboring areas in some developing countries. For the first time in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has started to show an interest in Korean Saemaul Undong and present its application and implementation in this research study.

6.1 Saemaul Undong's Application Process to Kyrgyzstan

In rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, which is home to 65% of the total population, various Saemaul Undong-related initiatives are being implemented by KOICA, the Public Fund "Center of SMU in Kyrgyzstan," and the Saemaul Globalization Foundation. The former President Sooronbay Zheenbekov issued a decree declaring 2018¹¹-2019¹²-2020¹³ as the years for regional development in Kyrgyzstan. Regional development is a priority for economic development and is a crucial aspect of the Kyrgyz Republic's National Development Strategy for 2018-2040. The section on regional economic development emphasizes rural development policies, mainly focusing on building roads and transportation infrastructure, providing clean drinking water nationwide, ensuring efficient energy supply, combating poverty, and promoting local economic development through local specialization.

¹⁰ Korea Saemaul Undong Center. Saemaul Projects Overseas - Saemaul Undong Model Village Development Status. Available at: [<https://www.saemaul.or.kr/eng/sub/globalSMU/overseas.php>] (accessed June 28, 2021).

¹¹ Decree of the Kyrgyz Republic President of January 10, 2018, No. 2 "On declaring 2018 the Year of Regional Development."

¹² Decree of the President of Kyrgyzstan of January 11, 2019, No. 1 "On declaring 2019 as the Year of Regional Development and Digitalization of the Country."

¹³ Decree of the Kyrgyz Republic President of January 8, 2020, No. 1 "On declaring 2020 the Year of Regional Development, Digitalization of the Country and Support for Children."

The KOICA-funded “Menin Ayilym – My Village” project and other initiatives related to Saemaul Undong have received significant support from the Kyrgyz government. Currently, the state budget subsidizes 82% of the Ayil Ökmötüs’. Foreign investments in the countryside are a godsend for them. Kyrgyzstan has been interested in Korea’s experience in effective village development since 2010. In that same year, 2010, a short-term civil servant training program was organized by the Saemaul Undong Center in Seongnam City, Korea. An initiative group from Kyrgyzstan visited Korea to get to know the Saemaul Undong on-site. Based on the trainee’s database of the Korea Saemaul Undong Center, 309 participants from Kyrgyzstan completed a Saemaul invitation training in the period 2009-2020¹⁴Korea bears all the training program costs, including other expenses (travel and accommodation). Saemaul Veterans organized unique educational programs, lectures, and field trips for the initiative group from Kyrgyzstan on Saemaul Undong. After the delegations’ visit, the Saemaul Undong Public Foundation was established in Kyrgyzstan to continuously learn the philosophy and principles of Saemaul Undong.

The practical application of the Saemaul Undong principles began in 2010 in four Kyrgyz villages: Manas, Ak Jol, Lesnoe, and Tortkul of the At-Bashy local self-government, Sokuluk district, Chuy region¹⁵. In the designated villages, the partners have implemented the following projects through the joint efforts of the residents and with the support of the Korean Saemaul Undong: the reconstruction of local roads through technical assistance with the appropriate equipment. Rebuilding and construction of social facilities (cultural center, gyms in schools, playgrounds). Repair of the water supply network (installation of a water tank). To support the younger generation and introduce them to a healthy lifestyle, the Kyrgyz Korean Friendship Park was opened. The implementation of these projects benefited 8,636 rural residents from selected villages. Table 11 shows Saemaul Undong's activities in Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁴ Data provided by the International Bureau of Korea Saemaul Undong Center trainee’s database (personal communication, May 6, 2021).

¹⁵ In March 2016, KOICA Kyrgyzstan invited me to serve as a local expert on Saemaul Undong’s studies in the country's pilot areas.

Table 11 – Activities related to Saemaul Undong in Kyrgyzstan

	Public Fund “Center of the Saemaul Undong Movement in Kyrgyzstan”	Saemaul Globalization Foundation	KOICA Korea International Cooperation Agency
Start of cooperation (year)	2010	2015	2019
Direction	Training (2010~2017) Project financing (since 2017)	Seminars and training courses on Global <i>Saemaul Undong</i> in Kyrgyzstan and Korea	My Village project financing and training for the pilot villages
Partner (local & foreign)	<i>Ayil Ökmötü</i> (local) Korea <i>Saemaul Undong</i> Center (foreign, Korean)	<i>Ayil Ökmötü</i> (local) Korea <i>Saemaul Undong</i> Center (foreign, Korean)	<i>Ayil Ökmötü</i> (local) GAMSUMO (local) Good Neighbors International (foreign Korean) Center for Overseas Agriculture and International Development (COAID) (foreign, Korean)

Source: Musaeva, 2021, p.113

6.1.1 Korea International Cooperation Agency-funded My Village Initiative context

The preliminary feasibility studies have been conducted regarding the KOICA My Village project in Kyrgyzstan (outgoing official letter №K16-163 dated September 1, 2016¹⁶). The Korean government approved Saemaul Undong's application to Kyrgyzstan as an annual ODA plan for 2017. However, the official commencement occurred in July 2019¹⁷ in Ala-Archa residency, Kyrgyzstan. The former Prime Minister of Korea, Lee Nak-yon, visited Kyrgyzstan and officially

¹⁶ The outgoing official letter №K16-163 of September 1, 2016 (accessed on September 2, 2016) of the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic.

¹⁷ Invited as an alum of the Park Chung Hee School of Policy and Saemaul (PSPS), Yeungnam University, Korea (2014 ~ 2016). Presented the “Application of Saemaul Undong in the context of Kyrgyzstan” at the “Menin Ayilym - My Village project” opening ceremony in the residence of Ala-Archa, Kyrgyzstan.

launched the My Village Initiative on July 20, 2019. Both countries, Korea and Kyrgyzstan, former Prime Ministers, took part in the opening ceremony.

The prominent donor is the Korea International Cooperation Agency; the total grant is around US\$ 3,500,000. Beneficiaries of My Village Initiative are thirty (30) villages in three regions: Batken, Osh, and Chuy. The target of My Village Project beneficiaries should reach up to 35,000 residents. The duration is four (4) years, starting in 2018 and finalizing in 2022. The main objective of the KOICA-funded My Village Initiative is “to improve the Kyrgyz rural peoples’ (villagers’) lifestyle through Korean Saemaul Undong principles of diligence, self-help, and cooperation.”

The research study describes the preconditions of Korean donors and the process of selecting pilot villages for the My Village Initiative, which the Korea International Cooperation Agency funds.

1) Korean donor preconditions

Before introducing the Korean Saemaul Undong model in Kyrgyzstan’s pilot areas, a Korean expert team conducted a survey. They visited each selected pilot territory and met with the local self-government authorities, the village head, leaders, and ordinary residents.

Here are the preconditions from the donor (Korea) for initiating Saemaul Undong in rural Kyrgyzstan:

- a) Voluntary participation of pilot village residents. A prerequisite of Korean donors is voluntary participation in the Saemaul Development projects in Kyrgyzstan's pilot territories. The Korean Saemaul Undong model is built on the idea of residents participating voluntarily. The same principle is applied to a beneficiary country, Kyrgyzstan.
- b) Contribution of Ayil Ökmötü (local self-government)
- c) Leader selection
- d) Local self-government and village residents are expected to contribute to the KOICA My Village Project. Village residents are expected to contribute labor without compensation and in-kind contributions if necessary, following the principles of the Korean Saemaul Undong.

In addition, pilot village leaders and local authorities were queried about their willingness to collaborate and engage in the Korean-led initiative. If their response is affirmative, the local self-government should extend financial and technical support, human resources, and necessary

documentation (such as decrees, business plans, reports, etc.). The subsequent section outlines the procedure for selecting villages for the Korean Saemaul Undong model.

2) The process of selecting pilot villages for the My Village Initiative funded by KOICA

The Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations representative under the Kyrgyz Government, also known as GAMSUMO, has introduced pilot villages for the donor, KOICA. Nurlan Asanbekov ¹⁸, a GAMSUMO representative, detailed the selection process during a speech and presentation at the Saemaul Undong Leadership Seminar in the Issyk-Kul region of northeast Kyrgyzstan. "... Out of 452 local self-governments, only 45 expressed their willingness and interest in participating in the KOICA My Village Initiative." However, only one village from each of the last thirty local self-governments is eligible to participate, making a total of thirty pilot villages from the Batken, Osh, and Chuy regions (oblasts).

These pilot villages were chosen because of their active collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and eagerness to embrace new experiences from a donor country. The desire to learn something new about village development from the Korean experience was great among these thirty pilots of local self-governments. The interest in studying Korean Saemaul Undong has been consistently growing, with approximately 20-30 active leaders, including heads of local self-government and mayors, visiting Korea annually to learn about Saemaul Undong, the Korean model of village development, at its birthplace...."

The representative of GAMSUMO noted that he personally visited Korea for ten days to gain insights into Korean village development experiences. In 2018, a memorandum was signed between KOICA and GAMSUMO to implement the My Village Initiative in Kyrgyzstan.

6.1.1.1 My Village Initiative's Leading Local Actors

The primary institution responsible for coordinating activities from Kyrgyzstan's end is the Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations under the Kyrgyz Government, GAMSUMO. This entity serves as the highest administrative body for overseeing

¹⁸ Personal meeting with GAMSUMO representative in Issyk-Kul oblast on December 18, 2020. I asked permission to use his name and surname in the research work.

the project within the Kyrgyz government. GAMSUMO's primary role is to monitor the project's progress in each village. On a local level, coordination is delegated to the local self-government, which represents the lowest administrative unit. Furthermore, the local authority is entrusted with implementing and managing the My Village project. Furthermore, alongside the grant, the local self-government covers the shortfalls of the My Village project. It is crucial to include the facilities constructed in the pilot villages in the Ayil Ökmötü balance to guarantee long-term sustainability in the latter stages of the KOICA My Village project. The project's ongoing upkeep falls under the local self-government's jurisdiction.

The selected pilot villages should appoint local Saemaul leaders from Kyrgyzstan who are willing to work voluntarily (unpaid). This aligns with the approach of Saemaul Undong leaders in Korea, who served in villages without remuneration (Park Jin-Hwan, 1998; Park Sooyoung, 2009, p. 123). This same principle should be applied to the Kyrgyz version of the Saemaul Undong model. The local Saemaul leaders play a crucial role in driving the project forward, as residents' successful implementation and mobilization depend on them. It is also essential for these active leaders to establish a village development committee and community fund for the KOICA financial operations in their pilot areas. The community fund serves as a physical meeting place for the Saemaul leaders to gather and discuss their activities related to the My Village Initiative. However, during the field study, I did not see any of them. In practice, Saemaul leaders typically convene with their teams in their homes to discuss project activities.

In reference to this matter, I sought clarification regarding the process through which the local Saemaul leader in the pilot areas of Kyrgyzstan, chosen by the donor KOICA, was selected. The question I posed was: "How did the donor, KOICA, choose the local Saemaul leader in Kyrgyzstan's pilot areas?"

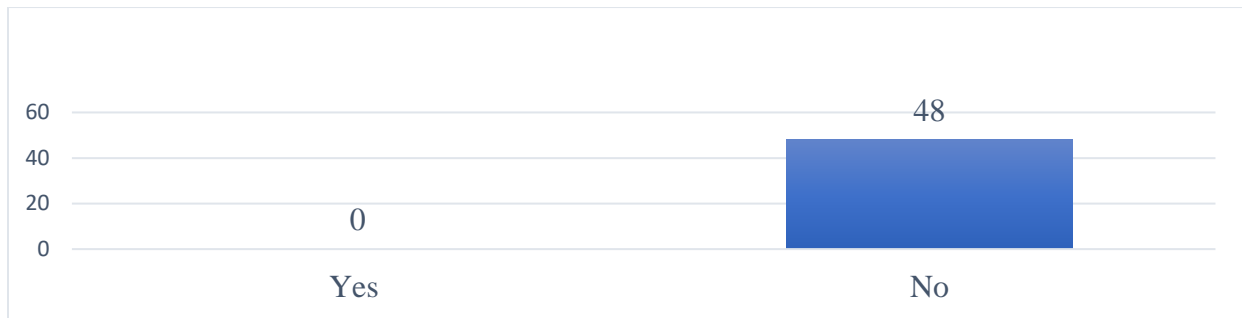
Most of the responses I received emphasized a selection process based on the resident's preferences, which the local government subsequently approved. Typical answers to this question included:

- a) The village chief personally appointed me as the project leader.
- b) It was a decision reached collectively by the villagers.
- c) The residents (village inhabitants) made the selection at a local government meeting, with support from the local authority.

d) The local self-government convened a general meeting to introduce the Korean model, and the leader was chosen afterward.

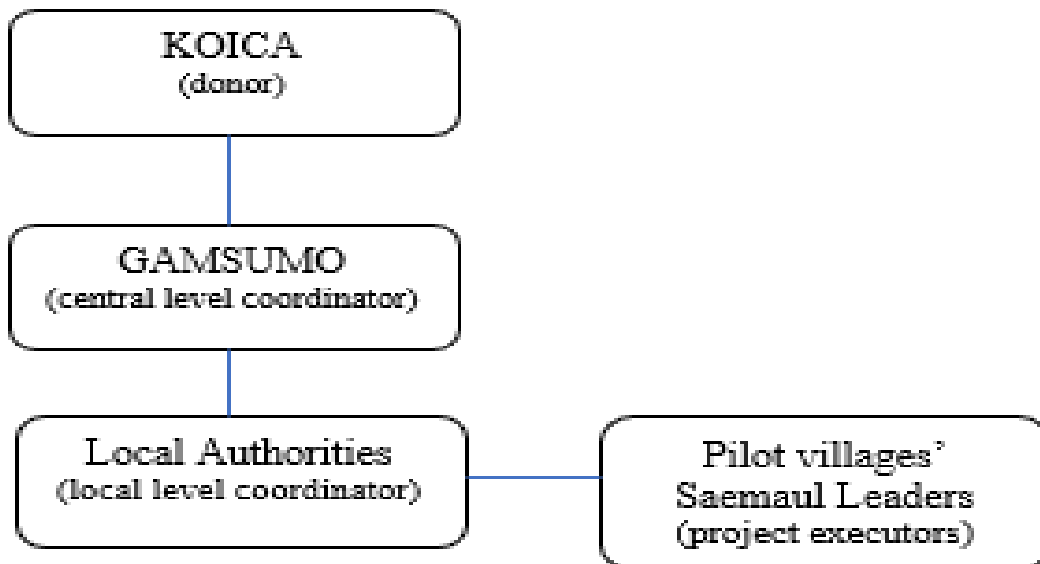
In the KOICA My Village Initiative in Kyrgyzstan, it is surprising that local businesses appear less involved. It is interesting to highlight that out of 48 respondents (see Figure 7), none reported observing substantial participation from local businesses in the pilot areas.

Figure 7 – Local business sector inclusion in the KOICA My Village in Kyrgyzstan



Source: Semi-structured survey, 2020

Figure 8 – Main Stakeholders and Collaboration in the KOICA My Village in Kyrgyzstan



Source: author's illustration

6.1.1.2 Cooperation in the My Village Initiative in Kyrgyzstan

The primary development strategy of the Korean Saemaul Undong involves mobilizing residents and promoting principles and spirits that aim to achieve tangible results in the modernization of rural Korea. In line with this, Kyrgyzstan has proposed its traditional Ashar method. Ashar is a conventional approach that involves collective action and voluntary citizen participation in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan. It is an efficient method that is still widely used, particularly in rural areas, and it traces its origins back to the nomadic lifestyle of the Kyrgyz people. The primary goal of Ashar is to swiftly accomplish tasks through collective action without compensation (Musaeva, 2020, p. 24). Activities such as building internal roads and bridges, environmental cleaning, tree planting, and other community projects are carried out using the Ashar approach in Kyrgyzstan. However, there is limited literature on the Ashar tradition. Earle et al. (2004) emphasize that the Ashar tradition serves as a tool to encourage participation among villagers. However, it is primarily a top-down process initiated by local authorities to mobilize villagers for community projects. Following careful consideration of the factors, I have explored the potential of Ashar as a complement to the Korean soft principles using a semi-structured questionnaire. The question was: "Is the Ashar tradition of voluntary participation suitable for the KOICA My Village project?" All respondents unanimously agreed that the traditional practice of voluntary participation is a fundamental requirement for Saemaul Undong activities in the pilot areas of Kyrgyzstan. This unanimous agreement is a strong indicator of the acceptance of the Ashar tradition. The respondents expressed an overwhelmingly positive response of 97.6% (see Table 12) in favor of voluntary participation.

Table 12 – The acceptance of Ashar as the primary mechanism for implementing My Village's local development initiatives

Ashar_suitable_Korean_Saemaul_Undong in Kyrgyzstan					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	do not know	1	2.4	2.4	2.4
	yes	47	97.6	97.6	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Source: results obtained from the SPSS program

This study also investigates the role of the cooperative tradition Ashar method in the pilot areas of the beneficiary country, Kyrgyzstan, through an in-depth analysis of an open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire.

1) Key findings on the traditional cooperation method: Ashar

The Saemaul leaders in the Batken region have emphasized the significance of the Ashar method in Kyrgyzstan, particularly the KOICA My Village Initiative. The excerpt of the interview is presented as follows:

"... The Ashar method, a well-established and widely embraced approach in rural areas, is particularly well-suited for the My Village project led by the Koreans, as Saemaul leaders in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan affirmed. Although prevalent in Kyrgyzstan's rural regions, this method is rare in urban areas, highlighting its enduring significance in the countryside. The spirit of cooperation inherent in the Ashar tradition aligns closely with the core principles of Saemaul Undong. Given its historical significance as integral to our nomadic heritage, the Ashar tradition can effectively bolster village-based initiatives. The My Village initiative by KOICA presents a valuable opportunity to promote unity and volunteerism through the Ashar method across our pilot areas in Kyrgyzstan..."

A Saemaul leader in the Osh region noted that the Ashar community's rallying call to action closely mirrors the core values of Korea's Saemaul Undong. This philosophy has been embraced through the KOICA-funded My Village Initiative in selected regions. The sense of teamwork and self-assurance cultivated through KOICA My Village can provide valuable support for local endeavors within Ashar, reflecting the fundamental principles of Saemaul Undong. The genesis of the Korean Saemaul Undong Movement drew inspiration from our traditional Ashar beliefs in the power of collective endeavor. Both Saemaul Undong and Ashar share the guiding principle of fostering collaboration among villagers to drive community development...."

Lastly, the Saemaul leader of the Chuy region emphasized that Ashar's impact was profound: it stirred the villagers' emotions and encouraged solidarity. It also cultivated a sense of responsibility for the local development project and promoted community cohesion. Ashar's influence paved the way for unity among the people and sparked widespread public interest. Rather than seeking donations, it advocated for the tradition of unity and self-help.

2) The limitations of the Ashar method in the KOICA My Village Initiative

The KOICA My Village program has been recognized for adapting the Korean Saemaul Undong principles of "self-help" and "cooperation" to the Ashar tradition of cooperation. However, this study highlights the constraints within Kyrgyzstan's Ashar tradition, particularly the challenges in engaging rural residents voluntarily in local development efforts. The following is an excerpt from an interview that addresses the limitations of the Ashar tradition within the My Village Initiative. "... In a market-driven economy, individuals are generally disinclined to engage in unpaid labor. Initially, there was reluctance among the local population to participate in the KOICA My Village project in our pilot village. Consequently, as a Saemaul leader, I mobilized my relatives and peers within the community. Subsequently, my wife's acquaintances and relatives also rallied to our cause. We successfully constructed a bridge and implemented street lighting in our pilot area. ..."

Another Saemaul leader expressed a different perspective regarding Ashar's limitations. "Voluntary participation or involvement through the Ashar was a challenge when our project, funded by KOICA's My Village Initiative, experienced an interruption. The KOICA funding was allocated to prioritize and establish a kindergarten in my village. The selected pilot village is in a mountainous region with harsh winter seasons and shares borders with China to the east and Tajikistan to the southwest. The local economy mainly relies on cattle breeding and migrant remittances, as the area has limited job opportunities. Migration to Russia for employment is common among the younger population. However, the Ashar technique still holds promise for local development. The leader of the pilot initiative emphasized the constraints of voluntary work in an area with minimal job prospects and high unemployment rates in rural Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz Saemaul leader emphasized the importance of fair compensation for labor, particularly in a market-driven economy. The COVID-19 pandemic hindered community gatherings, leading to the necessity of hiring a local company to complete the initial project. Subsequently, the Kyrgyz Saemaul leader, who was responsible for project implementation, resigned from the position due to a new regulation prohibiting government employees, such as village heads (ayil bashchy), from serving as Saemaul leaders in the later stages of the KOICA My Village Initiative in Kyrgyzstan. Despite these challenges, a former Kyrgyz Saemaul leader proudly highlighted the opening of a

kindergarten, made possible with the support of a Korean donor, as a significant achievement for the mountain village.”

A former leader of the Saemaul movement in Kyrgyzstan emphasized their first significant achievement: opening a completed kindergarten that was available for use. This marked a historic moment, as it was the first instance of a kindergarten being established in a mountain village with the help of a Korean donor. It is a testament to the initiative's success and the community's resilience, instilling optimism for the future.

6.1.1.3 The local development scheme of the My Village Initiative

My Village Initiative is a comprehensive three-phase initiative in Kyrgyzstan sponsored by the Korea International Cooperation Agency. In the initial phase, the pilot villages emphasized infrastructure improvement projects, including roads and bridges. Subsequent phases prioritize income-generating projects such as mini-factories, processing plants, greenhouses, and other initiatives to foster residents' economic prosperity.

The KOICA My Village Initiative scheme provides grant support to selected pilot areas to implement the Korean Saemaul Undong. The total fund allocated for the program is US\$ 3,500,000, beginning in December 2018 and concluding in December 2022. Each pilot village receives a grant of US\$ 25,000 for the first phase (2018-2019). If the village succeeds in the first phase, it progresses to the second stage. The primary objective of the first phase is to develop essential infrastructure in all thirty pilot areas. Upon completing the initial project, the pilot villages advance to the second phase (2020-2021), which focuses on income-increasing projects and includes an additional US\$ 4,000 grant, making the total grant amount US\$ 29,000. In the third stage, the total grant amount is increased to US\$ 35,000. This strategy increases participants' motivation to complete projects on time and receive additional bonuses in subsequent rounds.

Each of the thirty chosen villages was granted US\$25,000 in the initial phase. However, out of the 30 finalists, only 15 progressed to the second round, signifying a significant moment for all 30 pilot areas. In the second phase, 15 fortunate villages were designated "self-help" villages, while the remaining 15 were classified as "basic." This classification was done fairly and transparently. Meanwhile, the remaining fifteen villages received the same amount as in the first phase

(US\$25,000) and continued with the income enhancement projects for the second phase. The selection of pilot villages for the upcoming phase is contingent upon the projects' performance and timely completion. Pilot villages were classified to promote healthy competition among participating villages and project leaders. The third phase of the My Village grant is scheduled to take place from October 18th, 2021, until October 18th, 2022, encompassing an allocation of US\$ 35,000 to be awarded to select "self-sufficient" villages in support of income-generating endeavors. Following a rigorous selection process, only nine (9) villages out of the original thirty (30) pilot locations have qualified for the final round (2021-2022). The remaining twenty-one (21) locations are to receive an additional US\$ 2,000 each to ensure the successful completion of their respective projects. This phase signifies the culmination of the overall project, reflecting the progress and impact of the KOICA-funded My Village Initiative.

6.1.1.4 Preliminary Outcome of the My Village Initiative

KOICA-funded My Village Project is currently in progress. Our recent field study has led us to discover the successful initial phase projects. One notable achievement is the implementation of the Korean Saemaul Undong in Kyrgyzstan, which is part of the KOICA My Village project's efforts to contribute to local and rural development. You can find more details about this in Table 13.

Table 13 – Outcome of the KOICA My Village Initiative (2019-2020)

Projects	Result	Unit
Irrigation and Water	28,4	km
Water Source	1	one
Water Reservoir	1	one
Public Health Center	2	two
Hospital	1	one
Road	7	km
Sidewalk	980	m
Bridge	2	two
Streetlight	2,265	household
School	3	three
Kindergarten	5	five

School Fence	530	m
Community Center	2	two
Public Bath	1	one
Football Field	1	one

Sources: Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations under the Kyrgyz Government; Field Survey, 2019~2020

6.1.1.5 Contribution and comparison of the Korean and Kyrgyz versions of the Saemaul Undong model

The research on implementing the Saemaul Undong model in Kyrgyzstan and its role in fostering local development in rural areas has brought about positive changes in the lives of the people residing in the pilot areas. With support from KOICA funding, significant progress has been made in the first phase of the My Village Initiative. This progress included completing crucial infrastructure development with minimal expenditure and a substantial contribution of voluntary labor from the villagers in the pilot areas. All the planned facilities were completed within the scheduled timeframe. Since the state budget finances 72% of local self-governments, foreign investments in the countryside are “manna from heaven.”

Ashar tradition is considered the closest modern counterpart to the original Saemaul Undong principles of self-help and cooperation. However, it has also demonstrated some limitations. While some pilot villages have successfully revitalized the Ashar tradition, others have not. Factors such as COVID-19, high rates of external and internal migration, limited employment opportunities, and a market-focused economy have adversely affected the traditional Ashar approach, constraining its impact on local development in rural Kyrgyzstan, as evidenced by the findings of the KOICA-funded My Village Initiative.

My Village Initiative’s local development projects begin with constructing essential infrastructure such as pavement, bridges, school fences, and irrigation channels in each pilot village. These projects benefit the entire community and can be carried out by ordinary villagers without requiring exceptional talent or professional expertise. As a result, the villagers willingly participate in these efforts. However, when it comes to more complex projects such as building a school, clinic, hospital, or kindergarten, the involvement of professionals is necessary. Our research has shown that the participation of ordinary villagers is not as helpful in these more

complex projects. Professionals in rural areas must receive fair compensation for their work. The role of the Ashar tradition in local development in Kyrgyzstan is a topic of debate. While traditional cooperation methods can be effective, an excessive reliance on Ashar may diminish its impact. Suppose the donor organization (KOICA) insists solely on using the Ashar or voluntary participation principle. In that case, it may not achieve satisfactory results in the subsequent phases of the KOICA My Village Initiative. This research suggests that different approaches should be used in the second and third phases of the My Village Initiative to engage local communities and generate income effectively.

The most significant outcome of the KOICA My Village Initiative is cultivating "local leaders" rather than solely the resurgence of Ashar or the community's development through voluntary participation. The Saemaul leaders in Kyrgyzstan have shown remarkable dedication to the My Village Initiative. Despite not receiving any payment, they took on their responsibilities with a strong sense of accountability. In addition, the collaboration between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in spearheading progress in their village has enhanced the appeal of rural life. These two communities, working together, have managed to uplift their village's living standards and prospects. However, developing paper-based business plans has proved quite taxing for the Saemaul leaders of Kyrgyz and Uzbek ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan. As the primary responsibility for conducting the Saemaul Undong activities rests on the shoulders of the local Kyrgyz and Uzbek Saemaul executives, they have expressed their need to receive monthly compensation for their work. This compensation is essential in ensuring the continued success and sustainability of future Saemaul Undong activities in Kyrgyzstan.

1) Comparison of the original Korean and Kyrgyz versions of Saemaul Undong

When comparing the original Korean Saemaul Undong with the globalized version in third-world countries, such as the KOICA My Village Initiative in Kyrgyzstan, it becomes clear that the initial approach involved the participation of both central and local governments. In Kyrgyzstan, Saemaul pilot villages were selected in three regions: Batken, Osh, and Chuy. The Saemaul Undong Development in Kyrgyzstan also focused on indigenous participatory traditions like Ashar to engage residents voluntarily. While this approach worked well initially, the tradition of cooperation eventually displayed its limitations. However, during the infrastructure-building phase, Ashar proved helpful in involving local communities. Table 14 presents a comprehensive

overview of the main similarities and differences, providing a detailed comparative analysis for easy reference.

Table 14 – Comparison of the Korean and Kyrgyz versions of Saemaul Undong in the KOICA My Village Initiative

Indicator	Republic of Korea’s Saemaul Undong	Kyrgyz version of Saemaul Undong within the framework of the KOICA My Village Initiative
Policy initiation and objective	Government-led policy Poverty reduction, modernization of villages, income increase, rural development, nation-building, and attitudinal change	NGO-led rural development policy To improve the Kyrgyz rural lifestyle
Local development scheme	Integrated (top-down and bottom-up) approaches	The vertical and horizontal collaborative scheme, where Aiyl Ökmötü, LSG, a local Saemaul leader, and ordinary participants work together
	Village as a strategic unit	Village as a strategic unit
	Every Korean Saemaul village has Male and Female Saemaul leaders.	Every pilot area has a Kyrgyz or Uzbek Saemaul leader.
	Villages are classified into primary, self-help, and self-reliant	Pilot villages are classified into the same principles (basic, self-help, and self-reliant) to boost competition
	Nationwide Saemaul education and training	Saemaul Education is organized at home, in Kyrgyzstan, and in Korea.
	Public relations (PR) promotion, Saemaul song, flag, centers, and others	Social media (Facebook and WhatsApp to exchange messages and news about Saemaul Undong activities in pilot areas of Kyrgyzstan) Mass media (newspaper articles are rarely recorded about Saemaul Undong in Kyrgyzstan, but there are some articles in Kyrgyz language and

		a TV interview with a representative of the Saemaul Public Fund in Kyrgyzstan)
Basic principles	Diligence Self-help Cooperation	Ashar (conventional voluntary participation)
Government and governance	Authoritarian regime (highly centralized)	Democratic regime (decentralized)
Critical actor	The central government, including all layers of government institutions, officials, and villagers	GAMSUMO Aiyl Ökmötü (LSG) Local Saemaul leaders
Local participation	Full voluntary participation	Voluntary participation exists
Investment	Korean State invested billions of won (subsidized by the state)	KOICA contribution (grant) Aiyl Ökmötü (LSG) contribution Ordinary citizens' and migrants' contributions
Cultural background (Saemaul Undong era: 1970~1979)	A homogeneous society with Confucian values	The heterogeneous Islam religion dominated society.

Source: Musaeva, 2021, p. 120

6.2 Case Study II: EBRD's Modernization of Drinking Water Project

6.2.1 European Union's Mission in Kyrgyzstan

The European Union's initiative in Kyrgyzstan aligns with its strategic priorities for external action outlined in the EU Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP). It reflects the EU's dedication to fostering a robust political partnership with Kyrgyzstan, explicitly focusing on facilitating digital transformation to ensure the existence of transparent, accountable, and rule-based institutions. The initiative also aims to advance the promotion and protection of human rights, promote human development and gender equality, and improve the quality and inclusivity of education. Additionally, it seeks to contribute to developing a green and sustainable economy by promoting green skills, green growth, and strengthening trade and investment.

To bolster cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, the EU has identified three priority areas:

- a) governance and digital transformation;
- b) human development;
- c) the promotion of a green and climate-resilient economy.

The EBRD drinking water project in Kyrgyzstan's Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality represents an initiative to fulfill the third objective of creating a resilient climate economy. The municipality has secured approval for a \$6.7 million project to renovate its water supply and sewerage systems. This funding will support the modernization of the water supply system, the installation of advanced water meters, and the upgrade of essential equipment. An agreement with the EBRD was ratified in July 2017 to revitalize the water supply system in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality. This three-year project, which began in 2017 and concluded in 2019, has significantly contributed to the region's infrastructure.

6.2.1.1 EBRD's Modernization of Drinking Water Project Context

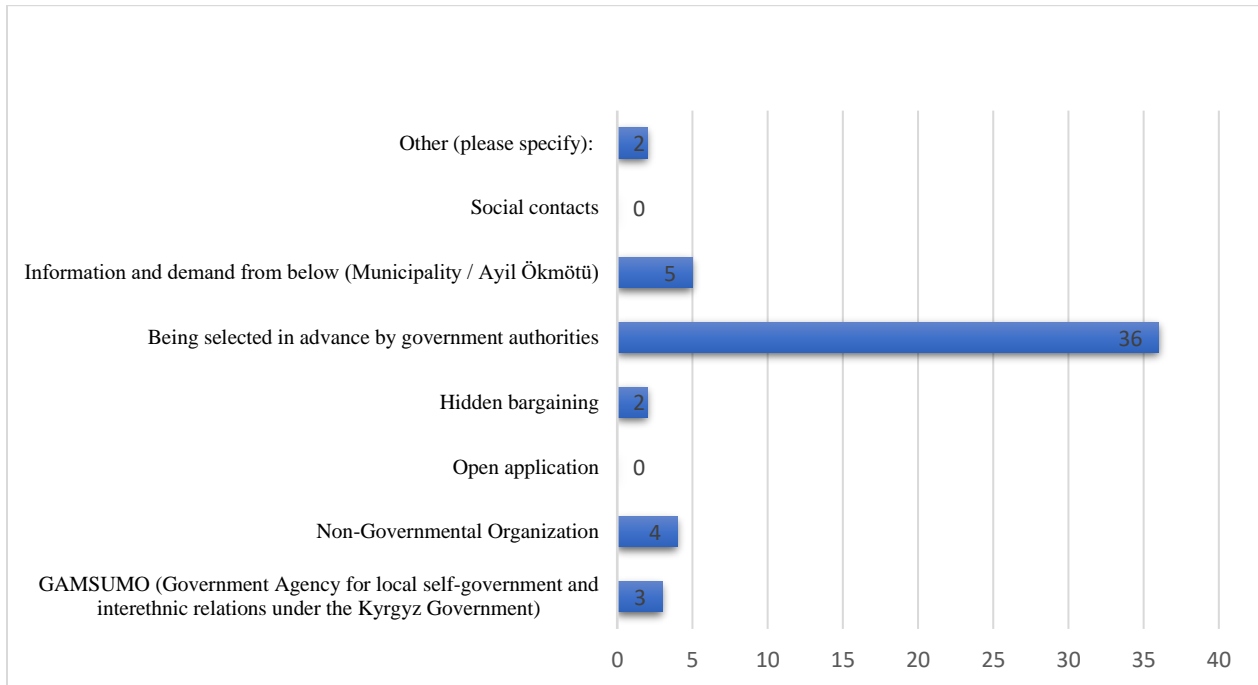
The Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality, home to 56,000 residents, often faces water shortages due to the outdated water supply network built during the Soviet era, resulting in approximately 80% water loss in the area. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has been

considering a project for many years. Abdilazis Satybaldiev, the head of the Kyzyl-Kiya Water Company, emphasized the urgent need to reconstruct the water supply system, noting that the pipes installed between 1956 and 1980 are outdated. The water intake is located in the neighboring district of Kadamzhay, 15 kilometers or half an hour away from the pilot area, Kyzyl-Kiya town. Former mayor Ermekbay Topchubaev highlighted that providing drinking water was a top priority during his tenure. He mentioned that while the local budget allocates funds to renovate water pipes annually, more is needed for comprehensive repairs. Despite the municipality's self-sufficient budget of around 140 million Kyrgyz soms (approximately US\$ 1.65 million in 2021), undertaking large projects in this area still needs to be funded.

Efforts by the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality to find donors for the rehabilitation of the water supply system eventually garnered the attention of the EBRD, which intervened with a local development scheme consisting of grants and loan aid. This scheme aims to replace the internal water supply and sewerage lines, addressing the long-standing local concern of providing residents with clean drinking water since the country's independence. The vice mayor¹⁹ explained the selection process for EBRD funding, stating that it was agreed upon with the central government at the municipality's request after a waiting period of over seven years. The selection criteria for EBRD funding for the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality are shown in Figure 9. It indicates that “being selected in advance by government authorities” is the most frequently chosen response, with 36 participants selecting it.

¹⁹ The interview was conducted with the 1st Vice Mayor, A. Gaparov, in the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality in the spring of 2021.

Figure 9 – The selection of the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality for EBRD funding



Source: Semi-structured survey, 2021

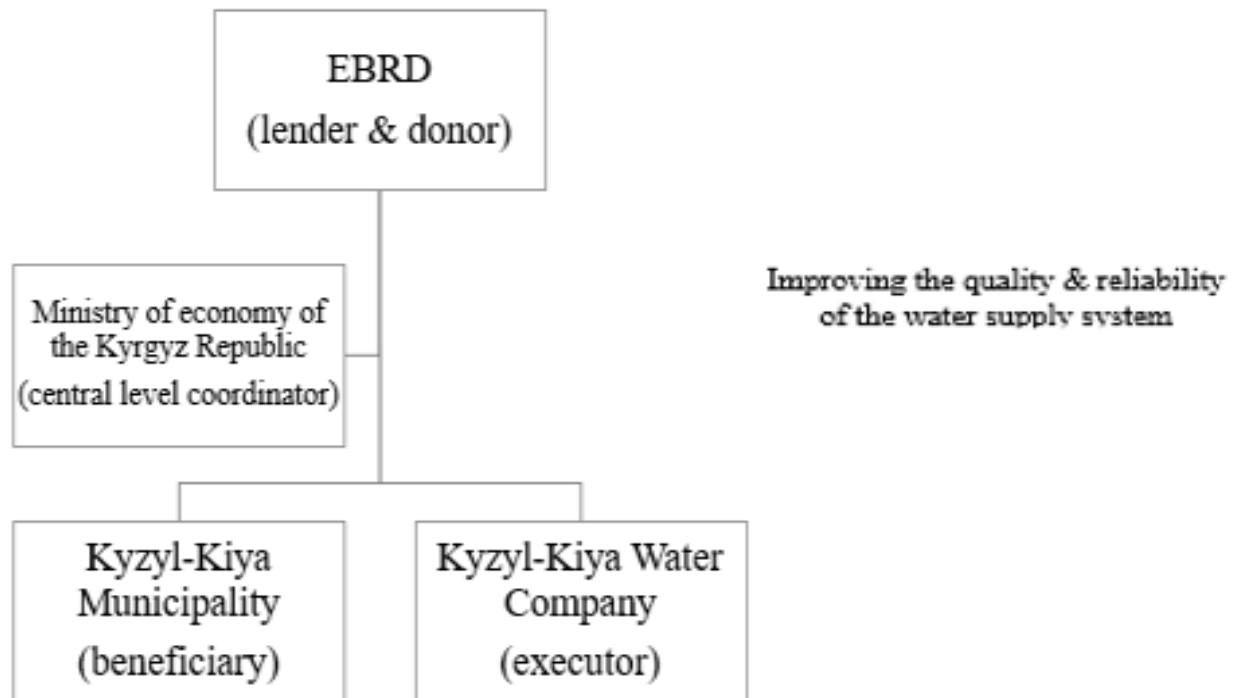
6.2.1.2 EBRD’s drinking water project’s local critical actors and their cooperation

The Mayor’s Office and the municipal enterprise, Kyzyl-Kiya Water Company, have been tasked with implementing the EBRD Water project. The Municipal Property Department is also responsible for ensuring the project runs smoothly.

The EBRD is a key contributor as both a donor and lender. The Ministry of Economy is the central government's primary coordinator. Locally, the Kyzyl-Kiya Water Company carries out the water project under the oversight and coordination of the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality.

The collaboration in this project is primarily institutional and top-down. There is no provision for voluntary participation from localities. Loan repayments are made through the residents' utility tax, effectively making residents the payers through their utility payments for water consumption. Although residents benefit from the project, they are not involved in its implementation. Furthermore, the private (business) sector is not involved in the EBRD drinking water supply project.

Figure 10 – Critical Stakeholders and Collaboration in the EBRD Water Project



Source: author's research

6.2.1.3 EBRD drinking water project's local development scheme

The EBRD drinking water project has allocated US\$6.7 million to rehabilitate the water system, with US\$1.7 million approved as loans. The Mayor's Office of Kyzyl-Kiya will have a 15-year repayment period, including a 3-year grace period and an interest rate of 1% per year. Additionally, the project includes US\$4 million in grants, with US\$1 million designated for technical support, US\$0.4 million for equipment, and US\$0.6 million for technical consultants.

6.2.1.4 EBRD drinking water project's contribution to Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality

The EBRD project was initiated to upgrade the inland water and sewage infrastructure in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality to enhance the quality and efficiency of the municipality's water supply and sanitation services. The project involved the installation of new pipelines, replacement of outdated

equipment, and the construction of a modern wastewater treatment plant. These enhancements have provided the city's residents with secure and dependable access to clean water and improved the city's environment. The project has been completed, and as part of it, the Kyzyl-Kiya Water Company acquired four units of specialized heavy vehicles. The details of the project outcome can be found in Table 15.

Table 15 – EBRD’s drinking water project’s outcome

Project	Unit	Outcome
Replacement of internal water supply and sewerage lines	km	32,5
Special equipment (heavy vehicles)	four	4

Field Survey in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality, October 1~December 12, 2020

6.3 Case Study III: Kyrgyz Businessman-initiated Local Development Initiative

6.3.1 Ülgülöö Ayil Ökmötü, or Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative Context

The word Ülgülöö translates to "Exemplary" or "Model" in English, and "Ayil Ökmötü" refers to exemplary local self-government in the Bel territory. A prominent businessperson spearheaded the initiative²⁰ from the private sector, who hails from Bel, a southern region of Kyrgyzstan. This individual is renowned for their leadership in both the Bel territory and the country, particularly within the thriving hospitality industry. The businessperson owns multiple resort areas in Kyrgyzstan. Based on social media sources, the initiator of this endeavor is listed among the top 100 wealthiest citizens²¹ of Kyrgyzstan, with an estimated fortune of approximately US\$200-220 million.

At the First Year Report Conference²², the businessperson elucidated the rationale behind launching the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative as follows:

"... In Kyrgyzstan, most local self-government units rely on state subsidies, which hinder local development. The Bel local self-government, for instance, consistently seeks to attract investors due to its state subsidies. As a businessman, local authorities have frequently urged me to create job opportunities and invest in my home village. Instead of focusing solely on hard infrastructure projects like building roads and bridges, I opted for a different approach. The primary goal was identifying a capable leader for the Bel local self-government...."

The entrepreneur underscored the significance of engaging young professionals in local self-government to promote economic growth at the local level. He highlighted the need to select highly competent and skilled administrators and professionals in the local self-government sphere to spearhead the progress in his hometown of Bel. The businessman began identifying Kyrgyzstan's most influential and high-performing local self-government body.

The Government of Kyrgyzstan annually hosts the "Outstanding Results of Local Self-Government Activities" competition. This competition involves 452 local self-governments and

²⁰ The businessman is one of the country's wealthiest citizens, owning several five-star hotels and recreational centers in Kyrgyzstan.

²¹ "A list of the hundred (100) wealthiest persons in Kyrgyzstan" obtained <https://ruh.kg/2020/01/25/kyrgyzstandagyi-e-bay-100-chinovnikti-bilip-alyi-yiz-2013-zhyilkyi-k-rs-tk-ch/>.

²² I have been invited to participate as a guest at the "First Year Report Conference" regarding Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiatives activities and challenges in Kyrgyzstan's Bel area. The conference was held in the Osh region, in one of the resort areas, owned by a businessperson/initiator of the domestic field research.

offers attractive incentives ranging from 500,000 to 3 million Kyrgyz soms (equivalent to approximately US\$6000 to US\$35,000). The competition fund is allocated from the state budget. The competition drew the attention of a businessperson who reached out to the recent winner. The victorious candidate was a young, skilled professional heading the local self-government in northern Kyrgyzstan. The businessperson invited the winner to join a one-year pilot program called the Exemplary Local Self-Government in his hometown of Bel. To motivate the young specialist, the businessperson provides additional incentives on top of the regular wages. An agreement has been reached.

I had the opportunity to meet with the businessman candidate for a pilot project in his hometown. We discussed relocating to an unfamiliar location and starting from scratch. The newly appointed head of Bel local self-government expressed the following sentiments:

"... Working in south Kyrgyzstan marked the first instance in the history of local self-government in the country. This endeavor was unprecedented nationwide. Seeking to enrich my professional experience, I accepted the invitation to work in south Kyrgyzstan for a maximum of one year. However, I served as the head of Bel's local self-government for one year and four months. The supportive staff and residents of Bel and Borbash villages warmly welcomed me...."

6.3.1.1 Exemplary Local Self-Government's critical local actors and their collaboration

In the Exemplary Local Self-Government, vital local figures are Businessman, Ayil Ökmötü, and Villagers, who play a pivotal role. To enhance collaboration, the initiative has formed different focus groups, including "Youth," "Women," "Local Businessmen," and "Farmers." These focus groups are instrumental in identifying and addressing the most pressing issues within the community. Social media is also crucial for maintaining frequent communication with a businessperson abroad. Social media platforms are vital for exchanging ideas and gathering feedback on Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiatives. The project's chat group boasts a membership of over five thousand residents from the pilot area. The businessman emphasized that physical presence in today's digital era is unnecessary in resolving issues. He noted that social media has become a crucial aspect of daily life for business people and individuals outside Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, the technological progress in social media in Western developed

countries has positive spill-over effects on developing nations such as Kyrgyzstan. Figure 11 displays the local entities participating in the project initiated by the businessman.

Figure 11 – Local Stakeholders and Cooperation in the Exemplary Local Self-Government



Source: author's research

6.3.1.2 Exemplary Local Self-Government scheme for local development

The Exemplary Local Self-Government's development scheme operates without relying on grant or loan assistance. Over time, the businessman has generously contributed to various initiatives within the Bel territory. Through the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative, the businessman aimed to empower the villagers by entrusting them with responsibility and ownership, emphasizing that their future progress depends entirely on their own efforts. The aspiration is for our villages to serve as models for others. The businessman believes that exemplary development starts at the village level, so specific development strategies have been designed. A detailed overview of the project's implementation under the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative and its impact on the pilot area provides readers with a clear understanding of the local development scheme spearheaded by the businessman in his native village, Bel territory, located in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan.

6.3.1.3 Targeted Project under the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative

The primary document outlining the development strategy of the Exemplary Local Self-Government for 2018-2023 was created with the input of a dedicated working group. This strategy comprises several projects aimed at achieving specific goals. The Exemplary Local Self-Government Projects are focused on various socioeconomic issues such as increasing income, promoting youth and adult education, language learning (including English), addressing environmental concerns, and infrastructure development, along with enhancing the activities of the Bel local self-government.

The initial "Socioeconomic" initiative entails a businessperson offering a monthly sum of 5,000 soms (roughly US\$60) to assist three semi-orphan families in the Bel and Borbash villages. Since 2017, these three households have received a monthly contribution from the businessperson, and this support is ongoing. Beneficiaries: three households.

The second project is called "Income Increase." This project aims to boost income by providing poor households with ten sheep, funded by a local businessman in collaboration with the Bel local self-government. The process involves distributing ten sheep to each needy household, which will raise the sheep to produce lambs. The household keeps the lambs, while the original ten sheep are passed on to another household. This year-long project is designed solely to generate profits and will benefit ten poverty-stricken households.

The third project pertains to "Education." A businessman is sponsoring 50% of the total tuition fees for ten students enrolled in the region's prestigious private lyceum, which costs approximately US\$1,500~3,000 annually. This private middle high school is only accessible to affluent families. Twelve schools are scattered across Kyrgyzstan, with a curriculum emphasizing math and science, taught in English and Turkish. This assistance benefits three middle school students. Additional education-related projects focus on pursuing higher education abroad and at esteemed universities in Kyrgyzstan. For instance, a bachelor's student is being supported by a businessman to study at the American University of Central Asia (AUCA), where the tuition fee is approximately US\$5,000 for one semester. Furthermore, the same individual is sponsoring two bachelor's students, one studying in South Africa and the other attending a prestigious university in the capital city of Bishkek. This support benefits three university students.).

The fourth project is "Educating Adults." The women focus group leader explained the educating adult project: "... There is a renowned teacher and author of the "Mothers' School" novel

concept in Kyrgyzstan. In the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan, this teacher founded a school for mothers. The main idea behind his vision is that young people's upbringing begins with their mothers' education. The teacher was invited to the Bel area by the initiator of the Exemplary Local Self-Government. During his visit to Bel, the teacher lectured high school teachers. Teachers in Bel and Borbash villages supported the establishment of a center for educating mothers. The process began in Bel territory with the assistance of a businessman. Bel's local self-government teachers traveled to the neighboring region, Batken, for a knowledge exchange seminar. A businessman covered expenses for the trip..."

I had an opportunity to meet this teacher in person at a First Year Report Conference hosted by a local entrepreneur. The author of the Mothers' School gave a special lecture during the conference. During our conversation, I asked how the Exemplary Local Self-Government Project benefits from the Mothers' School. Here is the response I received:

"...Currently, I (Gapyr Madaminov) conduct online lectures for high school teachers in the Bel and Borbash villages. Before establishing a new mother's school, qualified teachers in the target area must be required to execute the project. Therefore, my current focus is on educating teachers. These teachers will later share their knowledge and expertise with the mothers in the community, who are the direct beneficiaries...."

The fifth project is called "Foreign Language Learning." This project focuses on learning a foreign language, specifically English. Four European volunteers visited the Bel area for the first time in 2019 as part of the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative. Volunteers from Switzerland, Germany, and France came to the pilot area in Bel to provide English language courses to local middle school pupils. The volunteer activities lasted one to three months, during which the volunteers were provided accommodation and meals. A local businessman recruited talented youth from the Bel territory living abroad to contribute to their home villages through the Exemplary local self-government framework. An anthropologist from a Swiss university born in the Bel area coordinated these voluntary activities. The project was deemed successful. In line with this initiative, a new educational facility has been established in the Bel territory as part of the Exemplary local self-government program. The center provides foreign language classes and short-term courses in floristry, sewing, wedding party service organization, and other subjects. These courses primarily cater to middle school students and young people.

The primary focus of the sixth initiative was "Sanitation." The businessperson sponsored the construction of seventy bathhouses in areas where impoverished households lacked access to private bathing facilities. These bathhouses were purpose-built to cater to the needs of those living without adequate sanitation facilities. As a result of this initiative, seventy households in need were successfully provided with improved access to sanitation and hygiene facilities.

The seventh initiative, the "Environmental and Economic Project," is an ongoing battle for essential human need-clean drinking water. The drinking water program is a continuous effort, as addressing the water issue is crucial in Bel's territory. Inhabitants of the village rely on irrigation water for their daily needs due to the lack of access to clean drinking water. The villagers sought assistance from a businessperson regarding the drinking water problem. Aizada, a resident and activist from the pilot Borbash village, mentioned that the drinking water project is still in progress, even though it was initiated in 2018. In an interview, she stated: "... A businessperson invited female and youth activists from Bel village to the capital city of Bishkek, where he owns a resort area. During our visit, we were allowed to sample water from a local artesian well, which provided fresh mountain water. The purpose of this event was to encourage the residents to support the drinking water projects in the Bel territory. The businessperson expressed his intent to cover the project's shortfalls but emphasized that the residents should bear most of the costs. Upon their return from the businessman's resort area, the activists began advocating for fundraising efforts to ensure clean water in Bel territory. Each household was requested to contribute and donate 2,000 soms (US\$ 20) to facilitate the provision of safe drinking water to every household in the Bel area. However, the fundraising efforts faced challenges. While some households donated, others refrained from doing so due to doubts about the project's success. Despite the activists' efforts to visit each household and explain the drinking water provision, raising funds proved difficult and did not yield successful results..."

Aizada, an advocate and a member of the Women's focus group, highlights the vital role of local self-government in ensuring community access to clean water. She emphasizes that this project is pivotal because local self-government is responsible for providing this essential service. This insight is crucial in helping the audience understand the community's context and challenges, underscoring the significance of their role in the community's development.

The standout final project centers around "identifying a skilled manager" to lead the development of the initiator's hometown. This led to a search for a competent candidate for Bel,

as stipulated by Kyrgyzstan’s local self-government law, which requires the local council to elect the head of the local self-government. When a businessman was approached to invest in and create job opportunities in the Bel region, he began seeking a suitable candidate for the head of the local self-government. The businessman's efforts garnered unanimous support for the new candidate. The area has a history of frequent turnover in the head of the local self-government position. As a result, the local council deputies agreed to endorse the businessman's candidate. Everyone agreed to back the businessman's chosen candidate for a brief pilot phase of the project. Consequently, the businessman's candidate emerged victorious and assumed the position of head of Bel's local self-government. The candidate served for a year and four months in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan.

6.3.1.4 Preliminary Contribution of the Exemplary Local Self-Government

The businessperson initiated meaningful work through the Exemplary Local Self-Government program in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan, particularly in the Bel area. Numerous residents and community leaders acknowledge the entrepreneur's significant contributions to the community over the years. Table 16 provides a comprehensive overview of the local development projects implemented under this initiative.

Table 16 – Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative

Project	Unit	Outcome
Income increase: animal husbandry (sheep)	household	10
Social protection assistance (cash: every month five thousand soms - US\$ 60)	household	3
Education 1: Scholarship for talented school students	ten	10
Education 2: Scholarship for talented University students	three	3
Education 3: European volunteers visit to conduct English language courses	four	4

Infrastructure: Established the educational center “Inspiration.”	one	1
Infrastructure: Bathhouse	household	70
Environment: Drinking water	ongoing	
Education 4: Mothers’ School	ongoing	

Source: field study in Bel and Borbash villages, August 2021

6.4 Empirical Finding and Discussion

The practical section of this dissertation examines three independent case studies in the pilot regions of Kyrgyzstan: Batken, Osh, and Chuy. The research question in focus is as follows:

Research Question 3: Who are the primary local stakeholders, and how do they collaborate in the international and domestically driven local development case studies in Kyrgyzstan?

1) Case Study I: Application of Korean Saemaul Undong in Kyrgyzstan under the KOICA-funded My Village Initiative

The My Village Initiative is highly dependent on the active involvement of various local stakeholders, including the local self-government, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek Saemaul leaders. At the local level, this initiative is primarily led and coordinated by the local self-governments (Ayil Ökmötüs’), which have full ownership of all KOICA-funded My Village projects within their administrative jurisdictions.

Operating at the central level, the Government Agency for Local Government and Interethnic Relations under the Kyrgyz Government, known as GAMSUMO, assumes the crucial role of primary coordinator. GAMSUMO has been instrumental in collecting comprehensive data on the implementation of projects in the pilot areas of Kyrgyzstan, highlighting the significant contributions made by both central and local government agencies to support the successful integration of the Saemaul Undong model by Korean donors in Kyrgyzstan.

It is worth noting that the private sector, or businesses, are not directly involved in this initiative. This is mainly because remote, mountainous rural areas, where the My Village projects are focused, typically do not host many businesses. In cases where small businesses do exist in these areas, they are often driven by necessity, especially within the rural context of Kyrgyzstan.

The collaboration at the local level, particularly at the village level, was facilitated through the Ashar with project implementers. The Ashar method, which reflects the resilience and determination of the Kyrgyz people, is recommended for inclusion in the KOICA My Village Initiative as it mirrors the collaborative culture of Koreans. It is worth noting that Ashar, a tradition of cooperation and voluntary participation in Kyrgyzstan, has played a pivotal role in adapting the original Korean Saemaul Undong principles of "diligence," "self-help," and "cooperation" to the local context. The Ashar method has been integrated into the KOICA My Village project to foster cooperation among villagers at the local (village) level, overseen by local self-government and endorsed by elected Kyrgyz and Uzbek Saemaul leaders. On the other hand, social media, particularly WhatsApp, plays a crucial role in Kyrgyzstan's KOICA My Village project. The pilot villages in remote areas benefit significantly from social networks. They are an ideal platform for sharing and receiving information about the project and organizing seminars, training, and other related activities online. The collaboration among key stakeholders, such as the central government or GAMSUMO, local self-government (vertical), and leaders from the Kyrgyz and Uzbek Saemaul movements (horizontal), involves vertical and horizontal coordination.

In this research, it has been observed that the Ashar method, which involves voluntary participation and cooperation, serves as a practical tool rather than a guiding principle for localizing the values of diligence, self-help, and cooperation of the Korean Saemaul Undong in Kyrgyzstan under the KOICA My Village Initiative. During the initial phase of infrastructure development in the Kyrgyzstan My Village project, the Ashar tradition of cooperation has played a crucial role. Given that the project aimed to benefit the entire community, every villager contributed their resources, primarily through unpaid labor. However, in some pilot areas of the project, the traditional methods of cooperation were not effectively utilized. In these cases, leaders hired external firms to complete the project, highlighting the socioeconomic challenges of unemployment and significant migration. Many villagers sought fair compensation for their labor in the project.

It is important to emphasize that the practical application of Ashar occurs when a genuine community collaboration is needed or when relatives seek assistance without expecting anything in return. However, the Korean donor's requirement for initiating the Saemaul Undong model in Kyrgyzstan was clear: "Villagers should contribute voluntarily." The historical experience of village development in Kyrgyzstan using the Ashar method does not support the large-scale implementation of programs to introduce Korean Saemaul Undong in Kyrgyzstan due to the spiritual and ideological differences between the two countries. The President and his administration supported the Korean Saemaul Undong, and its success depended on the extensive coordination and involvement of high-ranking officials, ministries, agencies, and local authorities. The key factors behind the success of Saemaul Undong in Korea were economic growth through industrialization, political stability, and the strong and committed leadership of President Park Chung Hee, as well as the elected leaders of Korea's Saemaul Undong Movement. Regarding Kyrgyzstan, the absence of strong presidential leadership, ongoing political instability stemming from several colorful revolutions, frequent turnover among high-ranking officials, and the lack of a clear ideological foundation represent significant gaps that will take generations to bridge. The development of Kyrgyzstan at the local level is a lengthy endeavor that demands political will and steadfast commitment from its leaders.

2) Case Study II: The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's Modernization of Drinking Water Project

The EBRD implements a top-down institutional approach, with the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality as the primary entity responsible for project coordination. At the same time, the Kyzyl-Kiya Water Company carries out implementation. The Ministry of Economy also plays a central role at the government level, overseeing coordination and data collection for the EBRD project within the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality. Civil society has not been involved in the EBRD drinking water project, and the private business sector is not engaged.

The EBRD drinking water provision project in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality is notable for its lack of a collaborative tradition or the Ashar method. Instead, it relies solely on an institutional top-down approach. This approach needs to incorporate local community involvement and traditional collaborative methods, which are essential for ensuring the sustainability and

effectiveness of the water provision. The project's narrow focus on institutional solutions overlooks the broader implications for the community's quality of life, public health, sanitation, and local development.

3) Case Study III: Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative

The Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative, spearheaded by a prominent businessperson, aims to foster collaboration and active engagement among diverse stakeholders. These stakeholders include representatives from the public and private sectors, as well as members of civil society. This collaborative endeavor unfolds through the establishment of focused working groups. Notably, the project in the Bel territory has not historically embraced cooperation or adhered to the Ashar method endorsed by the businessman. The entrepreneur has emphasized that the Ashar method is considered obsolete and outside the vision of the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative. Social networking platforms such as Telegram facilitate communication with entrepreneurs who primarily reside overseas. The entrepreneur emphasizes that physical travel to rural areas is unnecessary, stating that 21st-century technology is readily available and underpins the activities of the Initiative. Social media plays a crucial role in addressing issues related to the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative as perceived by the entrepreneur.

Various local actors play a crucial role in this case study with a local focus. These include the local government, private sector (businesses), and the community (residents of a specific area). The literature review section cites studies by Blakely and Bradshaw (2002), Swinburn et al. (2006), Cochrane (2011), and Tödting (2011), which highlight the importance of local actors, participation, cooperation, and a bottom-up approach as essential elements of local development. Furthermore, the Exemplary Local Self-Government case study underscores the significant role of the local government and a professional candidate brought in through a business deal. According to local development authors such as Pálné Kovács (2015), the local government is crucial to local development as it is the closest administrative unit to the people. Even the LAGs of the EU LEADER involve private-public and community actors in local development. The third case study, centered on a local businessperson in his hometown of Bel, effectively showcases various facets of local development efforts and challenges in Kyrgyzstan, independent of support from international donors such as KOICA or EBRD.

Table 17 provides a comprehensive overview of international organizations contributing to local development in Kyrgyzstan, including the Korea International Cooperation Agency and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Additionally, it highlights domestically driven local development initiatives such as the Exemplary Local Self-Government in Kyrgyzstan. Meanwhile, Figure 12 presents distinct perspectives of local development in Kyrgyzstan based on our field research.

Table 17 – A synopsis of Kyrgyzstan’s international and local development approaches

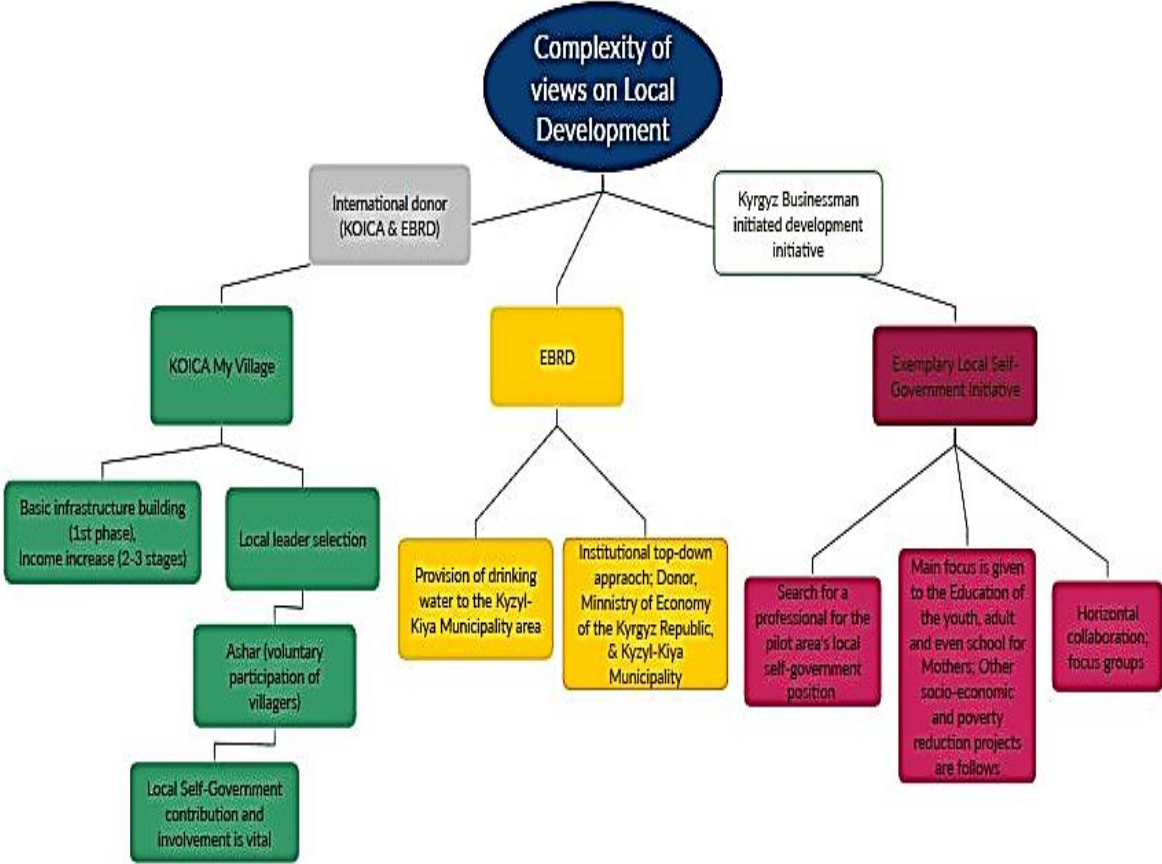
Indicator	KOICA My Village Initiative	EBRD Drinking Water Project	Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative
Objectives	Improving the lifestyles of rural residents of Kyrgyzstan	Improving the life and health of the population through the modernization of water supply and sanitation services	Improving villagers' quality of life and the activities of Bel local self-government
Project initiation	A bilateral agreement between the Republic of Korea and the Kyrgyz Republic	A bilateral agreement between the European Union and the Kyrgyz Republic	At the request of the local authorities of Bel territory of the southern part of Kyrgyzstan
Critical stakeholders	Donor (foreign NGO or KOICA), Government institutions (GAMSUMO from central and Ayil Ökmötü / LSG from local), Local Kyrgyz and Uzbek Saemaul Leaders, including residents of pilot areas	Donor (foreign NGO or EBRD), Ministry of Economy and Finance from central, Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality from a local level and its departments	Donor (Kyrgyz businessperson), Ayil Ökmötü, LSG, Focus group members and Villagers
Roles of local development stakeholders'	Government institution (coordinator), International NGO (investor),	Government institution (implementor), International NGO (investor & lender),	Local self-government (local level coordinator), Private sector/ businessman (initiator & investor),

	LSG & Community/villagers (executors & beneficiaries)	Community/ municipality residents (beneficiaries and debt payors for the utility)	Community/villagers (executors and beneficiaries)
Cooperation mechanism	A combination of vertical and horizontal collaboration exists. <i>Ashar</i> , the traditional voluntary participation method, played a crucial role in the first infrastructure-building phase, the only phase of the KOICA My Village project in Kyrgyzstan. The inhabitants of the pilot areas have indeed participated and cooperated through the <i>Ashar</i> method.	Hierarchical (top-down)	Collaboration with project executors happens through the established different focus groups. However, communication with a businessman occurs through social media (Telegram) Telegram is an online platform for all Exemplary local self-government project participants to exchange feedback and receive information from each other and the initiator (businessman).
Local development scheme	The combination of vertical and horizontal collaborative scheme, where <i>Aiyl Ökmötü</i> , LSG, a local Kyrgyz and Uzbek Saemaul leader, and ordinary participants work together	Institutional top-down	Horizontal
Communication with investors	Through selected leaders and WhatsApp social media	Through the Mayor's Office and responsible Municipal departments	Focus group leaders, face-to-face and online communication through Telegram
Investment scheme	A grant from a donor, an in-kind contribution from pilot area residents, and a local self-government contribution.	Grant and loan	A grant from a businessperson, local self-government contribution and in-kind contribution of residents

	Besides, migrants also contributed to the KOICA My Village project.		
Scope and scale	Thirty pilot villages of the three regions: Batken, Osh, and Chuy, Kyrgyzstan	Only one Municipality of the Batken region, Kyrgyzstan	Only one, Bel local self-government from Osh region, Kyrgyzstan
Beneficiary	From 35,000 rural residents ~ up to 100,000	56,000 ~ 100,000 residents	13,527 Bel LSG residents

Source: author’s research

Figure 12 – The complexity of local development perspectives



Source: obtained through NVivo 12 Pro mapping tool

7. Research Theses and Conclusion

7.1 Research Theses

In the concluding chapter of this research study, I outline three main research questions that I aim to address to complete this dissertation.

The main objective of this dissertation was to identify effective local development models for the rural areas of Kyrgyzstan. In Kyrgyzstan, rural areas are defined as locations outside towns and cities with low population density, where a significant portion of the economy is often based on agriculture, farming, and remittances. These areas suffer from limited infrastructure, much of which dates back to the Soviet era and is currently outdated and in poor condition. Despite these challenges, residents of rural Kyrgyzstan maintain strong community connections and continue to observe local traditions and customs to this day.

The research has identified two role models from disparate regions—the European Union and the Republic of Korea—despite their geographical, economic, social, and political differences. The introduction of the dissertation elucidates the rationale behind these specific role models. This research delves into the contextual, historical, and local development aspects of EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong, aiming to explore their potential implementation. The main task involved conducting a comparative analysis to discern the similarities and differences between these role models. Chapter 5 provides an in-depth study comparing the EU LEADER initiative with the Korean Saemaul Undong. For a thorough analysis of these two role models, refer to Table 8. After reviewing the main similarities and differences, this research discovered that the EU LEADER's local development scheme primarily emphasizes the bottom-up approach. In this approach, local representatives of public-private groups and local associations (Local Action Groups) decide on local development initiatives. Their goal is to address each local area's specific needs and potential. The Korean Saemaul Undong demonstrates a straightforward top-down approach, with government resources, guidance, and involvement present at all levels of government institutions. Additionally, there is a contrast between the governance systems of the EU, which lean towards decentralization, and the authoritarian or highly centralized system in Korea during the Park Chung Hee era (1962-1979). This reflects the differing values of the two regions; Korea is rooted in Confucian values, while the EU is more rooted in democratic values.

Learning about the differences between the EU LEADER and Saemaul Undong, the research aimed to apply them as an alternative for local development in the beneficiary country, Kyrgyzstan. The following research questions postulate: Research Question 2: How can the European Union's LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong be applied as an alternative model for local development in Kyrgyzstan? Research Question 3: Who are the primary local stakeholders, and how do they collaborate in the international and domestically-driven local development case studies in Kyrgyzstan? In order to examine the fundamental aspects of the EU LEADER and Korean Saemaul Undong, this study has conducted three distinct case studies in Kyrgyzstan.

It is worth noting that the LEADER-type project in Kyrgyzstan is currently unavailable, and gaining access to field research on EU-led projects in the country is highly challenging. The only viable option was establishing connections with the EBRD water project through personal networks. We focused on exploring the EBRD clean water project to shed light on implementing EU development projects in Kyrgyzstan. The field study on the clean water project, which the EBRD bolsters, emphasizes the necessity for more local involvement. This project represents a top-down institutional solution for water provision, crucial for local development in the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality in Kyrgyzstan. An important insight gained from the EBRD water project is the effectiveness of the "grants-and-loan scheme." This approach serves as an appropriate method for ensuring accountability in international donor projects, and it empowers the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality to be answerable for the completion of these projects.

The field study on the Kyrgyz version of Saemaul Undong revealed that Kyrgyzstan, a third-world beneficiary country, gained significant benefits from the Korean Saemaul Undong. Within three years, the threefold investment in a single pilot village proved worthwhile for Kyrgyzstan's selected pilot regions and local development. The local self-governments, receiving state subsidies for over twenty years, particularly benefited from the assistance of the Korean Saemaul Undong grant. The residents of these pilot villages also experienced substantial benefits. Upon examining the implemented projects (refer to Table 13), all infrastructure-building projects were found to contribute significantly to the well-being of those areas. The initial stage laid the groundwork for economic development by creating conditions for income-increase projects in the second and third stages of the KOICA-funded My Village Project. The experience of implementing the Korean Saemaul Undong in Kyrgyzstan highlights the importance of cultivating

local leadership. Local leaders improved their areas and created better living environments through infrastructure development and other projects as part of the Korean Saemaul Undong initiative in Kyrgyzstan. The model emphasizes the connection between local actions and village leaders. While voluntary participation, known as the Ashar method, is a valuable mechanism, it is not the sole determinant of success in the KOICA My Village Initiative. Additionally, involving local self-government as a crucial stakeholder has been pivotal in enhancing their human capacity, enabling them to further develop business plan projects and educational initiatives through training and seminars in Korea and Kyrgyzstan.

The third case study is a locally-driven initiative that focuses on local development. This research is significant for two main reasons. Firstly, it is the first of its kind in Kyrgyzstan. Secondly, Kyrgyzstan relies on external interventions and needs more internal solutions for endogenous development. Therefore, this third case study is essential for understanding Kyrgyzstan's position in local development and what local development means, especially when contrasted with international intervention-led local development in Kyrgyzstan. The third case study, Exemplary Local Self-Government field research, shows that local self-government is one of the key players in local development. Therefore, the businessman started searching for a “professional candidate” for the pilot Bel territory, south Kyrgyzstan. The lesson learned from the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative in the Bel territory is a “search for a competent leader for the position of Bel LSG.” Second, educational facilities should be established, and that area's human capital (youth) should be invested. Another critical element that we want to emphasize is networking. As an initiator, within the framework of the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative, the businessman has reached out to talented youth born in the Bel and Borbash pilot villages of Kyrgyzstan and abroad. Due to the well-coordinated networking, European volunteers have visited the Bel territory for the first time to teach the English language there. The project has received positive feedback from the people in these pilot areas. Many were willing to accept volunteers into the Bel territory. The villagers provided housing and food free of charge. The locally-led case study offers hope for future local development projects in Kyrgyzstan, setting an example for other local self-government bodies in the country. Despite the slow progress and funding challenges of local development initiatives in Kyrgyzstan, the recent field study has uncovered new approaches to drive development at the grassroots level. As previously observed, a lack of professional personnel in the local self-government sector highlights the need for a new

understanding of the required competencies for local development. Additionally, the initiative's success is not solely dependent on grants or loans, as the instigator has significantly contributed to his hometown. Despite a relatively short stay (one year and four months) in the Bel region, the "invited" candidate accomplished several projects. According to one of the local deputies in the Bel local self-government body, the rotation of skilled professionals within the local self-government sector is another crucial factor for local development in Kyrgyzstan.

7.2 Conclusion

This dissertation explored local development alternative models and their application in Kyrgyzstan. The local development models come from the European Union and the Republic of Korea. They are LEADER and Saemaul Undong.

This study's comparative analysis underscores the need for a refined and adaptable approach to implementing the EU LEADER local development model in Kyrgyzstan. The importance of customizing the LEADER framework to suit the unique characteristics of each region, as demonstrated by the European LEADER experience, is highlighted. The case of Hungary serves as a potent reminder that the context is a critical factor, given the significant variations in program implementation and results. Stakeholder capabilities, administrative frameworks, historical backgrounds, and cultural norms all play a part in influencing the course of LEADER's impact. This complexity underscores the need for an approach that embraces local insights and respects existing structures. It allows communities to tailor solutions to their specific requirements and aspirations.

In contrast, the Korean Saemaul Undong model integrates numerous characteristics that contribute to its intervention efficacy. It necessitates that third-world countries that stand to benefit from it carefully examine and tailor it to suit their specific national contexts. Nevertheless, the recipient country needs to recognize that the success of Saemaul Undong was greatly facilitated by extensive support from the Korean government, including the personal influence of the late President Park Chung-Hee. At the core of the initiative is the village, which serves as the focal point for community action driven by the political will for rural and community development at the local level. Korea's industrialization and export-oriented economies provided the framework for Saemaul Undong to modernize rural areas and villages. Throughout its decade-long

implementation (1970-1979), stable investment and a conducive political environment resulted in positive changes in rural areas and people's lives. The favorable government intervention in Saemaul Undong paved the way for a grassroots-driven development approach, with villagers voluntarily taking the lead in the latter years. Another vital characteristic of Korean culture is its cooperative spirit, closely tied to Confucian values. Principles such as diligence in serving others, unselfishness, and social conscience, derived from Confucian philosophy, were integrated into the ethos of Saemaul Undong.

This research focused on critical actors and their collaboration through three case studies. The field research is interesting in understanding and exploring international and domestic donors' approaches to developing locally in third-world countries like Kyrgyzstan. In every case study, the critical actors are present and active but differ. For example, in KOICA My Village Initiative, the private (business) sector is missing. The EBRD case is purely institutional. The business sector and civil society are excluded. Although our domestic Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative has all the critical local stakeholders mentioned by the prominent local development authors in the literature review chapter, such as local government, private sector, and community, the absence of "local" entrepreneurs is evident. Developing the business sector is vital for the local development foundation in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the rotation of the best professionals into the local government implies "trust" and "human capital" issues. "An invited candidate" for the head of the Bel local self-government position from the northern part of Kyrgyzstan by the deal of businessperson proves that professional managers with novel local development ideas are needed in the first place. Then, the conditions for local development, such as infrastructure building, will be created, and increasing income will follow. An initiator of the domestic field study stresses that "if the man or woman can lead the community and improve the economy of his home village Bel, he can even attract professionals from Africa." His statement about Africa is rhetoric, implying that professionals should be attracted to the local self-government in Kyrgyzstan.

Future research directions: The local development phenomenon is still emerging in Kyrgyzstan and requires investment in human capital, particularly in nurturing local entrepreneurs deeply embedded in the local community. This endeavor is essential to establishing partnerships with key local development stakeholders. These partnerships should be based on mutual interest, and there should be an emphasis on fostering partnerships instead of the traditional approach of

cooperation, such as the Ashar method. However, Ashar can still be handy in remote areas with a scarce population due to the high migration situation in Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, this study advocates for a shift towards collaboration through partnerships with key local stakeholders, which is vital for Kyrgyzstan's current needs in local development.

Footnotes

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- [2] Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyz Republic (2021, October 20). The Law of the Kyrgyz Republic. Local state administration and local self-government bodies, Law No.123. Retrieved June 20, 2024, from https://www.gov.kg/ru/p/local_state_administration.
- [3] Detailed information about the Eurasian Economic Union can be found on the official website: <http://www.eaeunion.org/?lang=en#about>.
- [4] With the passage of the new constitution in 2010, most formal powers were delegated to Parliament (*Zhogorku Kenesh*). However, the President continued to play a crucial role in formulating foreign and domestic policy decisions. On 10 January 2021, Kyrgyzstan voted to change the system of government from parliamentary to presidential in parallel with the presidential elections, reversing the transition to a parliamentary system following the 2010 popular revolution, in which most executive power rests with the prime minister. On January 10, 2021, Kyrgyz voters supported the presidential governance model.
- [5] South Korea is officially named the Republic of Korea.
- [6] The author studied International Community Development and Saemaul Undong (Master Studies) at Yeungnam University in the Republic of Korea.
- [7] Interview, October 28, 2021. Finta Istvan, President of the Association of LEADER Organizations in Hungary, was interviewed about the role of the LEADER programme and the implementation of LEADER projects in Hungary.
- [8] Park Jin-Hwan served as the late President Park Chung-Hee's special assistant on economic affairs and Saemaul Undong.
- [9] “Home Affairs” was the “Ministry of Home Affairs in the 1970s —currently, the “Ministry of the Interior and Safety” of the Republic of Korea.
- [10] 2013 UNESCO added Saemaul Undong to the Memory of the World Register. Available at: [\http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-

- world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-1/archives-of-saemaul-undong-new-community-movement/] (accessed June 26, 2021).
- [11] Korea Saemaul Undong Center. Saemaul Projects Overseas - Saemaul Undong Model Village Development Status. Available at: [https://www.saemaul.or.kr/eng/sub/globalSMU/overseas.php] (accessed June 28, 2021).
- [12] Decree of the Kyrgyz Republic President of January 10, 2018, No. 2 "On declaring 2018 the Year of Regional Development."
- [13] Decree of the President of Kyrgyzstan of January 11, 2019, No. 1 "On declaring 2019 as the Year of Regional Development and Digitalization of the Country."
- [14] Decree of the Kyrgyz Republic President of January 8, 2020, No. 1 "On declaring 2020 the Year of Regional Development, Digitalization of the Country and Support for Children."
- [15] Data provided by the International Bureau of Korea Saemaul Undong Center trainee's database (personal communication, May 6, 2021).
- [16] In March 2016, KOICA Kyrgyzstan invited me to serve as a local expert on Saemaul Undong's studies in the country's pilot areas.
- [17] The outgoing official letter №K16-163 of September 1, 2016 (accessed on September 2, 2016) of the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic.
- [18] Invited as an alum of the Park Chung Hee School of Policy and Saemaul (PSPS), Yeungnam University, Korea (2014 ~ 2016). Presented the "Application of Saemaul Undong in the context of Kyrgyzstan" at the "Menin Ayilym - My Village project" opening ceremony in the residence of Ala-Archa, Kyrgyzstan.
- [19] Personal meeting with GAMSUMO representative in Issyk-Kul oblast on December 18, 2020. I asked permission to use his name and surname in the research work.
- [20] The interview was conducted with the 1st Vice Mayor, A. Gaparov, in the Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality in the spring of 2021.
- [21] The businessman is one of the country's wealthiest citizens, owning several five-star hotels and recreational centers in Kyrgyzstan.
- [22] "A list of the hundred (100) wealthiest persons in Kyrgyzstan" obtained <https://ruh.kg/2020/01/25/kyrgyzstandagyi-e-bay-100-chinovnikti-bilip-alyi-yiz-2013-zhyilkyi-k-rs-tk-ch/>.

[23] I have been invited to participate as a guest at the "First Year Report Conference" regarding Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiatives activities and challenges in Kyrgyzstan's Bel area. The conference was held in the Osh region, in one of the resort areas, owned by a businessperson/initiator of the domestic field research.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Title: Alternatives for Local Economic Development for the Kyrgyz Republic

Dear Respondent, I am Aida Musaeva, a 3rd-year Regional Policy and Economics doctoral student at the Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Pécs, Hungary. This semi-structured questionnaire is part of my Doctoral dissertation. The main goal of our study is to offer alternatives for Local Economic Development (LED) for the Kyrgyz Republic. The Republic of Korea's Saemaul Undong (New Village Development) model in the Kyrgyz Republic has been selected for this study. Therefore, we would like your opinion on the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) funded "Menin Ayilym – My Village" project in your Ayil Ökmötü. Your views are essential in our field of study. We appreciate your in-kind contribution.

1. How was your Municipality / Ayil Ökmötü selected for the KOICA My Village project?

- Kyrgyz Republic / Korea Republic Saemaul leader Seminar
- GAMSUMO (Government Agency for local self-government and interethnic relations under the Kyrgyz Government)
- Open application
- Hidden bargaining
- Being selected in advance by government authorities
- Information and demand from below (Ayil Ökmötü)
- Social contacts
- Other (please specify): _____

2. What did you primarily look for when applying to the My Village?

- Investment opportunities
- Employment opportunities
- Poverty reduction
- Business opportunities
- Study and short training in the Republic of Korea

- Infrastructure improvement
- Provision of drinking water to the villages
- ICT or the application of modern technologies to the agricultural sector
- Other (please specify): _____

3. What requirements were for selecting your Ayil Ökmötü for the My Village project?

(identification prerequisites of the donors (example: KOICA – Korea International Cooperation Agency and others))

4. How much investment did your Ayil Ökmötü receive under the My Village project?

(Identifying financial incentives)

5. How many villages participate in the My Village project in your Ayil Ökmötü?

(Identifying scale of My Village)

6. What has been done under the My Village project?

- Expansion of Village Roads (km)
- Establishment of Farm Roads (km)
- Building Small Bridges
- Building Village Halls
- Building Store Houses
- Housing Improvement
- Community Resettlement
- Installing Sewage Systems (km)
- Mini-Factories
- Other (please specify): _____

7. Which of the following best describes the My Village emphasis in your local area?

- My Village has placed an increased emphasis on the positive mindset change of villagers.
- My Village has improved the village infrastructure
- My Village has enhanced the village agricultural sector
- Nothing has happened
- Other (please specify): _____

8. Is *Ashar* (traditional voluntary participation method) suitable for the Korean-led My Village project?

- Yes (for example):

- No (reasons):

9. Who would participate in the discussion and decision-making process of the My Village project in your Ayil Ökmötü?

- Myself
- My spouse
- I, together with my spouse
- My parents
- My parents-in-law
- All male household members
- All-female household members
- Do not know
- Nobody

10. Is the My Village project's private (local business) sector included?

Yes (for example):

No (reasons):

11. Overall, how many local inhabitants have participated so far in the My Village project in your village? Is participation through ‘Ashar’?

12. Please identify which of the following you consider the most critical Local Economic Development priorities in your community (Choose only THREE)

- Climate change and the environment
- Extractive Industries
- Fragility, Conflict, and Violence
- Trade
- Communication Technologies and Information
- Education
- Social Protection
- Drinking water
- Irrigation
- Transport
- Food and Agriculture
- Governance and Anti-Corruption
- Rural development
- Energy
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Health

Other (please specify): _____

13. Which institution is the vital stakeholder for your Ayil Ökmötü for Local Economic Development?

	Important	Not important	Neutral
Foreign non-governmental organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Central Government (Kyrgyz Ökmötü)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kin and family ties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Private sector (business)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Court	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Police	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kyrgyz non-governmental organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Most people who live in this village can be trusted

- Strongly disagree
- Strongly agree
- Do not know

15. Local self-government can be trusted

- No trust at all
- A lot of trusts
- Do not know

16. Do you trust local entrepreneurs?

- No trust at all
- A lot of trusts

- Do not know
- In our village, there are no local entrepreneurs
- Other (please specify): _____

17. How likely would you cooperate with the private sector (business) in your local area?

- Very unlikely
- Rather likely
- Other (please specify): _____

18. How likely would you cooperate with the residents of your local area?

- Very unlikely
- Rather likely
- Other (please specify): _____

19. Overall, what do you think about the My Village project? How successful and sustainable is it?

These last questions are for classification purposes only. Your responses enable us to segment our findings better.

20. In what Ayil Ökmötü do you currently reside?

Name of Ayil Ökmötü: _____

21. How does the KOICA choose local Saemaul leaders in the pilot area? (How did you get elected as the Saemaul leader of my village?)

22. Which of the following best describes your professional position?

- Local self-government
- Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution)
- Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)
- Government institution (local, national)
- Academia, University, Research Institute
- Media
- Student
- Not Applicable / Decline to answer
- Independent / Freelance worker
- Other (please specify): _____

23. What is your highest certificate /diploma/ degree?

- Secondary general high school education (11 years)
- Primary technical / Vocational schools
- University (bachelor's degree, certified diploma, master's degree)
- Kandidate nauk or Doctorate (equivalent to the Ph.D.)

24. What is your gender?

- Woman
- Man

25. What is your age?

- 25 and under
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56 and above
- Decline to answer

26. How long have you lived in this village?

- More than five (5) years
- More than ten (10) years
- All my life
- Other (please specify): _____

You can add other opinions, firsthand experiences, and plans for the “My Village” project in your village here.

Thank you for taking part in our study – We appreciate your input.

Appendix B

Title: Alternatives for Local Economic Development for the Kyrgyz Republic

Dear Respondent, I am Aida Musaeva, a 3rd-year Regional Policy and Economics doctoral student at the Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Pécs, Hungary. This semi-structured questionnaire is part of my Doctoral dissertation. The main goal of our study is to offer alternatives for Local Economic Development (LED) for the Kyrgyz Republic. The European Union's Rural Development model in the Kyrgyz Republic has been selected for this study. Therefore, we would like to know your opinion on the European Union's *Rural Development* projects in your municipality/ayil okmotu, which are being implemented by the European Union's (EU) International Organizations such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the German Development Agency (GIZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), and the French Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED). Your views are essential in our field of study.

We thank everyone for their contributions to the research study.

Questions:

1. How was Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality selected for the European Union's rural development project?

- GAMSUMO (Government Agency for local self-government and interethnic relations under the Kyrgyz Government)
- Non-Governmental Organization
- Open application
- Hidden bargaining
- Being selected in advance by government authorities
- Information and demand from below
- Social contacts
- Other (please specify): _____

2. What did you primarily look for when applying to the EU rural development project?

- Having an exact project plan
- Aim to learn
- Following the suggestion above
- Having a general development plan
- Having no idea about the scheme
- Other (please specify): _____

3. Is the EU-initiated Rural Development Project on a grant basis?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify): _____

4. What investment did your town/village receive under the EU rural development project?

- Received € 25,000 ~ € 50,000
- € 100,000 ~ € 250,000
- € 1,000,000 ~ € 5,000,000
- Other (please specify): _____

5. How many residents participated in your Municipality's EU-led project?

- 10~100
- 100~500
- Other (please specify): _____

6. Are you using the traditional method of voluntary participation (Ashar) in the EU rural development project in your community?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify): _____

7. What has been done as part of the EU-led project?

- Expansion of Village Roads (km)
- Establishment of Farm Roads (km)
- Building Small Bridges
- Drinking water
- Installing Sewage Systems (km)
- Mini-Factories

Other (please specify): _____

8. Are your village/town entrepreneurs involved in the EBRD project?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

9. How do you classify entrepreneurs?

- Owner of a small shop
- A person who employs at least five people
- Other (please specify): _____

10. how important is the EU rural development project in your area?

- Extremely important
- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Somewhat not important
- Extremely not important

11. Please identify which of the following you consider the most critical local economic development priorities in your community (Choose only THREE)

- Climate change and the environment
- Extractive Industries
- Fragility, Conflict, and Violence
- Trade
- Communication Technologies and Information
- Education
- Social Protection
- Drinking water
- Irrigation
- Transport
- Food and Agriculture
- Governance and Anti-Corruption
- Rural development
- Energy
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Health
- Poverty reduction

- Job opportunities
- Migration
- Other (please specify): _____

12. Which institution is the vital stakeholder for your Municipality for local economic development (LED)?

	Important	Not important	Neutral
Foreign non-governmental organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Central Government (Kyrgyz Okmotu)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kin and family ties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Businessmen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Court	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Police	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kyrgyz non-governmental organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Most people who live in this community can be trusted.

- Yes
- No
- May be
- Other (please specify): _____

14. Are the Kyrgyz Government development programs necessary for your Municipality?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Other (please specify): _____

15. How would you assess the impact of the Kyrgyz Government development programs on your municipality?

	1	2	3	4	5	
very bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	very good

16. Our local business leaders are trusted

- Yes
- No
- Local business leaders are absent in my area.
- Other (please specify): _____

17. How likely would you cooperate with the residents in your local area?

- Cooperation is possible through _____
- Cooperation is impossible due to the _____
- Other (please specify): _____

18. What do you think about the EU project in your region? Is it successful and sustainable?

- Yes, for example, _____

No, because _____

These last questions are for classification purposes only. Your responses enable us to segment our findings better.

19. In what Municipality's administrative territory do you currently reside?

Name of Municipality/ Administrative district:

20. Which of the following best describes your professional position?

- Local self-government
- Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution)
- Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)
- Government institution (local, national)
- Academia, University, Research Institute
- Media
- Student
- Not Applicable / Decline to answer
- Other (please specify): _____

21. What is your highest certificate /diploma/ degree?

- Secondary general high school education (11 years)
- Primary technical / Vocational schools
- University (bachelor's degree, certified diploma, master's degree)
- Kandidate nauk or equivalent to the PhD

22. What is your gender?

- Woman
- Man

23. What is your age?

- 25 and under
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56 and above
- Decline to answer

24. How long have you lived in this community?

- More than five years
- More than ten years
- All my life
- Other (please specify): _____

If you have additional information about the project, you can add it here.

Thank you for taking part in our study – We appreciate your input.

Appendix C

Title: Alternatives for Local Economic Development for the Kyrgyz Republic

Dear Informant, I am Aida Musaeva, a 3rd-year Regional Policy and Economics doctoral student at the Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Pécs, Hungary. This field research is part of my Doctoral dissertation. The main goal of my research is to offer alternatives for Local Development in the Kyrgyz Republic. Therefore, we want to learn more about your area's Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative. Your views and honest opinions are essential for this field of research. We thank everyone for their contributions to our research study.

Open-ended interview questions:

1. What was the inspiration behind the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative?
2. What was the purpose of inviting the head of Bel local self-government from northern Kyrgyzstan?
3. How did the local people and deputy leaders respond to and accept the newly appointed head of the Bel local self-government?
4. What projects are implemented under the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative?
5. What funds are available to Bel's local self-government and its local development projects?
6. How does the businessperson communicate with the Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative participants?
7. Age, gender, educational background, profession, and village residence (5~10 years/lifetime).

The Exemplary Local Self-Government is followed by additional information

Appendix D

The demographic background of the respondents and interviewees

KOICA-funded My Village Initiative						
Res_ID	Pilot_region	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	Living in village
1	Batken	Man	36-45	University	Unemployed	All my life
2	Batken	Woman	36-45	University	High school	All my life
3	Batken	Man	36-45	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
4	Batken	Man	26-35	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
5	Batken	Woman	46-55	Vocational school	Independent worker	All my life
6	Batken	Man	26-35	Secondary high school	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
7	Batken	Man	26-35	Secondary high school	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
8	Batken	Woman	26-35	University	High School	All my life
9	Batken	Man	46-55	Vocational school	Farmer	All my life
10	Batken	Man	36-45	Vocational school	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
11	Batken	Man	36-45	University	Government institution (local, national)	All my life
12	Batken	Man	36-45	Vocational school	Farmer	All my life
13	Batken	Man	36-45	University	Physician (Doctor)	All my life
14	Batken	Man	36-45	Secondary high school	Farmer	All my life
15	Batken	Man	36-45	Secondary high school	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
16	Batken	Woman	26-45	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	More than ten (10) years
17	Batken	Man	36-45	Vocational school	Farmer	All my life
18	Batken	Man	36-45	Secondary high school	Farmer	All my life
19	Batken	Man	36-45	University	LSG	All my life
20	Batken	Man	46-55	Secondary high school	Farmer	All my life
21	Batken	Woman	36-45	Secondary	Independent worker	All my life

22	Batken	Man	46-55	high school Secondary high school	Independent worker	All my life
23	Batken	Man	36-45	Vocational school	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
24	Batken	Man	26-35	University	LSG	All my life
25	Batken	Man	26-35	University	LSG	All my life
26	Batken	Woman	25 & under	Secondary high school	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	More than five (5) years
27	Batken	Man	26-35	University	LSG	All my life
28	Batken	Woman	25 & under	University	High school	All my life
29	Batken	Man	56 & above	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
30	Batken	Man	46-55	University	LSG	All my life
31	Batken	Man	26-35	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
32	Batken	Man	36-45	University	Farmer	All my life
33	Batken	Man	36-45	Secondary high school	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
34	Osh	Woman	46-55	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
35	Osh	Man	36-45	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
36	Osh	Man	56 & above	Vocational school	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
37	Osh	Man	36-45	Secondary high school	LSG	All my life
38	Osh	Man	36-45	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
39	Osh	Woman	36-45	Secondary high school	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
40	Osh	Man	56 & above	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	More than ten (10) years
41	Osh	Man	26-35	University	LSG	All my life
42	Osh	Man	46-55	University	LSG	All my life
43	Osh	Woman	36-45	University	Civil society (NGOs, Community Organizations, Private Foundations, Faith-Based Groups, Youth Groups)	All my life
44	Osh	Man	46-55	Vocational school	Farmer	All my life
45	Osh	Woman	36-45	University	LSG	All my life
46	Osh	Man	56 & above	Vocational school	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
47	Osh	Man	36-45	Secondary high school	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
48	Chuy	Woman	36-45	University	Government institution (local, national)	More than ten (10) years
EBRD drinking water project in Kyzyl-Kiya Municipality						
1	Batken	Woman	46-55	University	LSG	All my life
2	Batken	Man	25 & under	University	Lawyer	All my life

3	Batken	Man	26-35	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
4	Batken	Man	56 & above	University	LSG	All my life
5	Batken	Man	25	University	Student	All my life
6	Batken	Man	26-35	Vocational school	Housekeeper	All my life
7	Batken	Woman	26-35	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
8	Batken	Man	56 & above	University	Pensioner	All my life
9	Batken	Woman	56 & above	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	More than ten (10) years
10	Batken	Woman	25	University	LSG	More than five (5) years
11	Batken	Woman	25	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	More than five (5) years
12	Batken	Woman	26-35	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
13	Batken	Man	46-55	University	LSG	More than five (5) years
14	Batken	Woman	56 & above	University	Housekeeper	All my life
15	Batken	Woman	56 & above	University	LSG	Decline to answer
16	Batken	Woman	46-55	Vocational school	LSG	More than ten (10) years
17	Batken	Woman	56	University	LSG	All my life
18	Batken	Man	26-35	University	LSG	All my life
19	Batken	Woman	26-35	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	Decline to answer
20	Batken	Woman	26-35	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
21	Batken	Woman	56 & above	University	Housekeeper	All my life
22	Batken	Woman	36-45	University	Pensioner	All my life
23	Batken	Woman	46-55	High school	Vocational school	All my life
24	Batken	Woman	46-55	University	Pensioner	All my life
25	Batken	Woman	26-35	Vocational school	Vocational school	All my life
26	Batken	Woman	46-55	Vocational school	Government institution (local, national)	More than ten (10) years
27	Batken	Man	26-35	University	Government institution (local, national)	All my life
28	Batken	Woman	36-45	University	Government institution (local, national)	More than five (5) years
29	Batken	Woman	36-45	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	More than ten (10) years
30	Batken	Woman	25 & under	High school	Unemployed	More than five (5) years
31	Batken	Man	26-35	University	Academia, University, Research Institute	All my life
32	Batken	Woman	26-35	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
33	Batken	Man	25 & under	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
34	Batken	Woman	25 & under	High school	Nurse	More than five (5) years
35	Batken	Woman	26-35	University	Student	All my life
36	Batken	Woman	46-55	Vocational schools	Pensioner	All my life
37	Batken	Man	46-55	Vocational schools	Government institution (local, national)	All my life
38	Batken	Man	46-55	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
39	Batken	Man	36-45	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	More than five (5) years
40	Batken	Man	26-35	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	More than ten (10) years
41	Batken	Man	36-45	University	High School Teacher	All my life
42	Batken	Man	36-45	University	Decline to answer	All my life
43	Batken	Man	36-45	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
44	Batken	Man	26-35	Vocational school	Decline to answer	All my life
45	Batken	Woman	25 & under	University	Decline to answer	More than five (5) years
46	Batken	Woman	46-55	University	Government institution (local, national)	All my life
47	Batken	Woman	56 & above	University	Farmer	All my life
48	Batken	Woman	36-45	University	Private sector (Company, SME, Financial Institution-bank)	All my life
49	Batken	Woman	25 & above	University	Decline to answer	All my life
50	Batken	Man	26-35	University	LSG	All my life

51	Batken	Woman	25 & under	High school	Student	All my life
52	Batken	Woman	36-45	Vocational school	Government institution (local, national)	More than five (5) years
Exemplary Local Self-Government Initiative						
1	Osh	Woman	36-45	Secondary high school	Unemployed	All my life
2	Osh	Woman	56 & above	Secondary high school	Branch of the village first aid health center	All my life
3	Osh	Woman	56 & above	Secondary high school	Pensioner	All my life
4	Osh	Man	36-45	University	Head of <i>Ayil Okmotu</i> (LSG)	One year and four months
5	Osh	Man	46-55	University	Businessperson	More than ten (10) years
6	Osh	Man	46-55	University	<i>ayil kenesh</i> (local council deputy)	All my life
7	Osh	Woman	25 & under	University	Head of youth center “Shyktan -Inspiration.”	All my life
8	Osh	Woman	25 & under	University	Member of the youth center “Shyktan -Inspiration.”	All my life
9	Osh	Woman	56 & above	Secondary high school	Pensioner	All my life
10	Osh	Woman	56 & above	University	Member of the branch of the village first aid health center, pensioner	All my life
11	Osh	Man	56 & above	University	Pensioner	All my life
12	Osh	Woman	36-45	PhD	Associate Professor Anthropologist, Switzerland	More than ten (17) years

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