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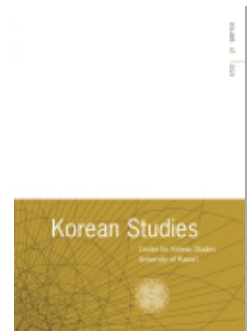
*Stitching the 24-Hour City: Life, Labor, and the Problem of
Speed in Seoul* by Seo Young Park (review)

Jinwon Kim

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autonomy, also takes its toll by distancing them from institutional politics and the civil society's engagement therein.

The alternative journey to establish progressive parties in the legislature is elaborated on in the third chapter, highlighting the lessons learned from their rise and fall. The chapter gives a detailed explanation of the institutional changes that enabled former pro-democracy activists' induction as progressive legislators from the perspective of institutionalism. Even so, the author's originality lies in her heavier emphasis on the activists' agency, that is, their incessant struggles to reform election laws, which also accounts for their failure. Her critique that the progressive parties' negligence in responding to external neoliberal challenges and internal cleavages eventually led to the demise of progressive politics is poignant yet illuminating for politics in general.

Throughout the chapters, the book is not only clearly written but also sophisticatedly organized. It guides the readers in the right order to review the historical background of Korean politics, compare the three roads taken with rich context and lively interview excerpts, and finally head toward the future of progressive politics. By doing so, this volume exposes its readers to various thought-provoking discussion topics, such as the interplay of social movements and institutional politics as well as intra-organizational democracy not only in political parties but also in civic groups. In the context of today's shifting political and economic environments that require a new role of politics, the main takeaway for supporters of democracy and progressive politics may be to avoid the pitfall of neglecting the deep-rootedness of politics in *the Street*, that is, the most vulnerable people whose access to politics is easily threatened, while trying to aim for higher political power in *the Assembly*.

Minyoung Kim
Department of Sociology,
University of California, Irvine

Stitching the 24-Hour City: Life, Labor, and the Problem of Speed in Seoul, by Seo Young Park. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2021. 186 pages.

Once a symbol of the labor movement in the 1970s and '80s, where Chun Tail-il—a sewing worker and labor activist—immolated himself to death by calling for standard labor law compliance in 1970, the Dongdaemun

Market now seems to have lost its past memories of the nation's once industrial backbone—the manufacturing industry and its industrial warriors. The Dongdaemun Market is now well-known as a late-night shopping mecca at the heart of Seoul, attracting both locals and domestic and international tourists looking for “fast fashion” items, including uniquely-designed and/or imitation clothing, shoes, and handbags. Hosted and organized by the Seoul Metropolitan Government at Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP) twice a year, Seoul Fashion Week also brings vivid and trendy fashion vibes to the “creative” class, from designers to fashion models to entertainers. However, often overshadowed by the flamboyant lights of the night shopping district and fashion shows, the industrial “past” of the city still resonates in the Dongdaemun Market, from manufacturing factories to garment workers and wholesalers. In fact, the Dongdaemun Market is a unique space, reinforcing contradictory and paradoxical urban images, for example, the postindustrial present and industrial past, and imitation and creativity, intersect and coexist in the fast pace and rhythms.

In *Stitching the 24-Hour City*, Park introduces and reminds readers of those who are often forgotten in the postindustrial urban discourses, but, who, in fact, create and recreate the space behind the scenes in the context of time and space—garment workers to wholesalers and retailers to market designers to labor activists in the rise and peak of the fast fashion industry. Research on the garment industry and the “fast fashion” industry is nothing new; scholars across the globe have paid attention to and analyzed various social issues around these industries, such as the gendered dynamics of the work, hazardous working conditions, labor exploitation, flexible production, ethical consumption, and environmental justice from boycotts against Forever 21 (a fast fashion brand) in L.A. to the Rana Plaza factory building collapse in Bangladesh. However, based on detailed fieldwork between 2008 and 2010 and periodically afterwards, Park uniquely and provocatively examines aspects of “sped-up” work, production, and circulation cycles in the industry with the rise of postindustrial spatial orders in South Korea through the knowledge economy and creative industry. More importantly, based on detailed participant observations and in-depth interviews, the author brings the local context from local histories and a sense of the time period to the front of her analysis. She shows how such unique traits of the work and industry are intertwined with workers’ everyday lives in the context of intimacy, affection, and passion; how these workers actively construct and reconstruct the meaning of work.

Part 1 focuses on how the fast-paced cycle of production and circulation are infused in personal lives of various actors in the Dongdaemun Market, including garment workers, wholesalers, retailers, and designers. Chapter 1 depicts the nightscape of Dongdaemun Market as a space for fast-paced ceaseless production and circulation and as a symbol of tense energy. In Chapter 2, the author shows how such everyday relationships in marriage, extended family networks, and collegueship (often sisterhood) are interwoven in the sped-up production of the industry, particularly at home-factories and long-term development of networks. Chapter 3 challenges traditional understandings of the hierarchy between creativity and imitation and between designing and manufacturing; and raise questions about the ambiguity of such divisions in their work. Though Dongdaemun brands are often known as imitations or knockoffs of global or luxury brands with fast production, designers and seamstresses speak of their passions and emotional attachments to the products that they make, and they interpret the production process as creative evolution.

Part 2 focuses on the dissident and alternative spaces that labor activists and the local government create in order to slow down the pace of the market and disassociate with the legacies of state-led economic development from the 1960s to the '90s. Chapter 4 details how labor activists at MANI, a nonprofit organization in the Dongdaemun Market, organize and provide classes for less-skilled workers to develop their skills with "slower" pace in order to become more "marketable and sustainable" artisans, funded by the local government; and create a social enterprise for ethically produced clothes by experienced domestic workers. However, the government-funded project creates ruptures between ideals and reality, as well as between activists' agendas and workers' expectations. Chapter 5 starts with three women's stories in the Dongdaemun Market, as workers and activists in the 1970s and '80s; and raises questions about the Seoul Metropolitan Government's urban branding strategy in the Dongdaemun Market. Though the collective memories of the past are still alive in three women, their livelihoods are not cultivated and contained in this process.

Stitching the 24-Hour City impressively raises provocative questions about space and time, intimacy, affection, and passion in the workplace. I was particularly intrigued by how quasi-family like labor relations and sisterhood, often psychological and emotional aspects of work, have been infused in and actively reinforced among owners and workers. Such gendered and paternalistic practices are well-documented in many scholarly works, including Margaret Gray's provocative work on fantasies and limits of locavore and ethical consumption, *Labor and the Locavore*. Gray

points out that American farmers in Hudson Valley family farms north of New York City actively use paternalistic practices or personal “favors,” for example, providing free housing to immigrant workers, offering airfare to their home countries in the name of “family,” and helping acquire green cards. Yet, this ambiguity and quasi-familiness creates exploitative work environment by keeping these workers from the public eye and restricting workers from raising concerns. Likewise, In *Sewing Women*, Margaret M. Chin also documents that while Chinese garment factory owners in New York City tend to establish paternalistic relationships with their workers—Chinese immigrants, immigrant women workers reinforce traditional gender roles. Yet, as pointed out earlier, despite the fact that such analysis is not completely new, *Stitching the 24-Hour City* is unique because of the author’s approach to the discourses of time and space in the marketplace.

Despite its merits, a few questions arose while I was reading this book. First, the author seems to engage less with the literature and analysis on space compared to the emphasis on intensive anthropological analysis on time. Why did the author choose the Dongdaemun Market? Why does this space matter? Simply, what is the authenticity of the space? Because of this lack of engagement, Chapter 5 seems to be out of place. Second, though the author argues that the Dongdaemun Market is reflective of the broader postindustrial nightscape in Seoul, it was not clear to me how to connect this specific case study with the context of Seoul’s urban landscape. How do we locate the fast pace of production, circulation, and even consumption and everydayness of workers, wholesalers, retailers, buyers, and designers in the urban landscape or nightscape of Seoul and even in the global marketplace? Lastly, though this book focuses on domestic garment workers and activists (with a few analyses of foreign buyers from Japan and Russia), the book omits relatively new actors in the market—immigrants. The media has reported that immigrant workers, many of whom are undocumented, have replaced a decreasing number of domestic skilled workers in Changshin-dong, where home-factories are located. Simply, how do we locate the Dongdaemun Market in the global flows of people, including immigrants and workforces? A broader view both at global and local levels would enhance the analysis of everyday participation of actors in the Dongdaemun Market that the author has successfully provided.

Jinwon Kim
*New York City College of Technology,
City University of New York*