

Empowering Individuals

Phase 0:

In North Korea, under the dictatorship of Kim's regime, only collectivism must be manifested whereas individualism is absolutely prohibited. North Koreans are extremely oppressed through limitations and denials of basic human rights. Fear of collective punishment is used to silence dissent. The Kim Il-Sung square, the most symbolic place in North Korea, is where the dictatorship, top-down control, oppression, and collectivism are concurrently manifested. The square is where significant parades and rallies have been held to commemorate many events and to propagandize the military capabilities of North Korea. There exist strong spatial rigidity, control, and hierarchy within the square.

The Thesis starts with questions of 'can architectural intervention bring a positive impact on **transforming the most symbolic place** in North Korea?' and 'can the transforming process be an opportunity to **empower the oppressed individuals**?'

With a prediction of the reunification of Korean Peninsula after the collapse of the North Korean regime, the thesis looks at an opportunity for a rebirth of the Kim Il Sung square by **regranting a new symbolic significance**; a transition from the power of the government (the privileged) to the power of the common (individuals) while encouraging changes from bottom-up level.

The design proposal responds to the rapidly increasing numbers of unorganized street vendors in the square followed by the influx of the market economy system.

As a proposal, the mobile market stall kit is designed which is made of highly compressed cardboard tubes that is light, economical, and durable ($\frac{3}{8}$ " thick and polyurethane coated). The kit is designed to be able to connect one kit to another which enables the vendors to **freely move, occupy, and form the structure of the market by themselves**.

Phase I:

As the market stall kits are distributed and actively used by the vendors, the incremental building process will gradually attack the formal property of the square, as similar to how fungi eat away at a bread. As the vendors freely occupy, build, and grow the market, this **self-building process** will become an educational opportunity for recovering their **liberty of expression, autonomy, and democracy** by going through decision making, cooperation and competition among the vendors.

Phase II:

As the market expands, the square will become chaotic but also maintain order due to the use of the provided market stall kits. Various unplanned arrangements of market stalls will appear based on the vendors' needs and efficiency. As a result, the rigidity and control, the inherent nature of the square, will be **subverted by the bottom-up development**; the square used to be fixed and controlled is now in a constant state of becoming.

The thesis is not about a creation of final products, but rather **a study of the process** about how minimal architectural intervention can act a role in transforming such a symbolic place, not by any top down planning but by bottom up changes, by the empowered individuals.