

Korean New Town Development as a Strategy of Smart Growth

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Background of Smart Growth and its Role in Korea

- Smart growth is an alternative paradigm of urban planning to urban sprawl which was established in 1980s.
- This is an advanced concept from previous urban growth management program.
- It aims at
 - High-density city development and development with planning.
 - Mixed-use development
 - Pedestrian way and public transit
 - Public space
 - Communication and adjustment between government and interest groups
- In Korea, some theories of smart growth are now under discussion to improve previous development paradigm applied during the period of fast economic growth.

Effects of New Town Development on Urban Growth Management and Urban Sprawl in Korea

- Urban growth control policy in Korea had been largely adopted since the early 70s, the time of rapid urbanization
- The greenbelt was the main policy among others.
- The greenbelt policy was strictly enforced until the early 90s, and the spirit of the policy is still retained.
- Since late 1990s many regulations have been relaxed and public housing development for the poor is allowed on some peripheral areas.
- This GB policy forced many new towns to be located outside the greenbelt.
- Despite the contribution to controlling urban growth and limiting development boundary, the GB policy has been criticized for its unexpected results of increased traffic distance and distorted land market inducing leap-frog type developments.
- Inside of the urbanized area surrounded by the greenbelt had been packed with sporadic high density developments.

- After consuming almost of the developable land inside, the government started new town development outside the greenbelt in order to prevent urban sprawl.
- Now, it is clear that new town developments had prevented urban sprawl around metropolitan area such as Seoul.
- The relatively large-sized new town developments had diminished extra demand of housing development.
- Those new towns with good environmental condition together with sufficient infrastructure were more competitive than small individual developments in urban sprawl.
- Many problems related with public services seen in urban sprawl could have been resolved by new town development.

Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices

- The housing types and unit sizes in new towns completely depend on the residents' characteristics and their housing market.
- Unlike most new towns in developed countries, early Korean new town developments were focused on middle income group of metropolis, especially Seoul.
- This is because the goal of new town development in Korea was to stabilize housing market for middle and high income groups rather than to control urban growth.
- So, most houses were built as high-rise flat, large and medium-sized multi-family apartments for middle income group.
- This is the reason why the type of housing looks alike and the scenery of residential area is monotonous.

- Even though there is much criticism on lack of consideration for low income group, the economic strength of their residents and the increase of tax revenues due to land price rising enable the city government to maintain better environment than other existing cities.
- And this is the main reason that the Korean new town development is largely regarded as successful one.

Job-Housing Balance

- The balance between job and housing in quantity and their relative locations are essential to reduce long distance commute.
- However, early new towns built in 1990s are mainly regarded as bed town because their main purpose was solving housing shortage problem in Seoul Metropolitan Area (SMA).
- Korean new towns in SMA, which are located about only 10km away from Seoul, with the greenbelt between them, were to be dependent on Seoul.
- Therefore, the job creation was not the most important criteria.
- Some of those new towns, by urban planners, were able to secure a little self-sufficiency with a deliberate plan for the spillover of commercial and business functions from their mother towns.

<Table> Population and Employment of Korean New Towns; 1995~2010

Year new town	1995		2000		2005		2010	
	Population	Employment	Population	Employment	Population	Employment	Population	Employment
Ilsan	264,673	24,800 (9.4%)	337,793	59,626 (17.7%)	344,444	78,517 (22.8%)	338,341	100,907 (29.8%)
Pyungchon	150,068	13,859 (9.2%)	154,732	31,058 (20.1%)	150,187	43,909 (29.2%)	147,177	50,749 (34.5%)
Sanbon	125,467	11,705 (9.3%)	137,460	16,698 (12.1%)	130,632	20,737 (15.9%)	125,339	24,330 (19.4%)
Jungdong	96,562	5,031 (5.2%)	115,359	13,255 (11.5%)	115,166	26,480 (23.0%)	120,744	35,616 (29.5%)

• () means the ratio of employee to population

Source: KOSIS

- The enabling act for new town development, 'Land Development Promotion Act', was the other reason for the lack of commercial and business functions for the early new towns.
- Because the main purpose of this act is primarily to supply land for housing as much as possible, there are some restrictions on securing industrial land.
- On the contrary, in 2000s job creation became one of the main tasks of the new towns, because their location being further out, sometimes more than 20km from their mother towns, made commuting travel almost impossible.
- Therefore, the job creation was crucial inside of new towns. There most housing demand came from not metropolis but neighboring small and medium sized cities.
- Therefore, Korean government has tried to promote job creation by relaxing regulations to secure industrial land for the employment.
- In case of SMA where a huge market exists for it, house demand could be generated by adding more employment such as industry, R&D, and distribution.

Promoting public transport and creating walkable neighborhoods

- Most Korean new towns are connected to their mother towns by train.
- This is because the severe traffic congestion exists on the road connecting to the mother town, even if the distance between them is not far away.
- However, locating too many stations on the way to its mother town made commute time much longer, and many commuters prefer to drive personal vehicle.
- To solve this problem, Korean government made more bus-only lanes and introduced intra-regional express bus.
- Besides adding and expanding those railways, construction of GTX (Express Train) to Seoul is under consideration, which would enable commute with public transit to be much easier. Inside the new town, separated networks of pedestrian way and bicycle path have been popular idea these days.
- But wide roads for improving traffic flow allow vehicles to speed up, thus sacrificing pedestrian safety.

Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas

- Usually, new towns are developed in more compact fashion than urban sprawl.
- Therefore, natural environmental disruption could be reduced.
- In Korea, the new town development plan is authorized by the government and there should be an environmental impact study on every sizable development.
- So, a certain region which contains sensitive environmental issues can be excluded in the planning process.
- But reduction of open space and disruption of nature are inevitable in new town development, because most of those developments have been done on either cropland or hilly area, or both.

Others

- Though Korean new towns aim at planned and high-density development, mixed-use system is not always applied to their land use plans.
- There is a building type of residential and commercial mixed-use, but still this form of building is only allowed in commercial area, not in residential area.
- With regard to the process of planning, although there are few opportunities such as public hearing for interest groups to state their opinions, their opinions are rarely reflected on the final plan because the process does not mandate it

Conclusion

- Whether the concept of smart growth should be applied identically to all countries and whether the concept would be effective wherever applied are debatable.
- Every country has its own urbanization process, speed of urbanization and unique urban culture, the results of smart growth policy might be different.
- In the case of Korea, high density development has become common practice, because the nation's land area is relatively small considering the population size.
- Whether the development is well planned or not, the relatively high land price made urban development to be more compact with high density, much higher than the smart growth theory ever conceived.

- Usability of public transit also differs from country to country.
- In Korea, bus had been accustomed as the most popular public transportation mode for a long time, while bicycle and motorcycle had not been much used.
- So, since car ownership has risen fast recently, public transit system has to compete with private vehicle in cost, time, and convenience.
- Unlike Korea, in Southeast Asian countries where bicycle and motorcycle are popular transportation tools, public transit system should compete with bicycle and motorcycle for convenience as well as expenses.

- Regarding the urban development, the experience of Korean new town development could be a good lesson for Latin American countries and Caribbean countries, but still it cannot be directly applied everywhere.
- After understanding each country's differences and sharing development experiences with each other, then it should be modified carefully in harmony with local circumstances.

Thank You