Exporting Urban Korea?

Reconsidering the Korean Urban Development Experience

Edited by
Se Hoon Park, Hyun Bang Shin and Hyun Soo Kang

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2 Transformations in the governance of urban and regional planning in Korea

From (neo-)developmentalism to civic democracy, 1965–2020

Mike Douglass

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Introduction

Within two decades of being listed among the lowest income countries in the world, South Korea in the late 1960s was being heralded as a "miracle economy". The accelerated urban transition from 20 percent of the population in 1955 to more than 80 percent urban in 2000 was of fundamental importance to the country's rapid economic and social improvements. Although an uneven process that has encountered junctures of deep political and economic crises, the shift from an agrarian to an urban-industrial society has provided the foundations for substantial improvements in income and general welfare (OECD, 2019).

These advances were not gained by adherence to a static model of governance. Over several decades Korea[1] experienced fundamental transformations in modes of governance. The deeply contextual dynamics of these shifts underscore the understanding that they were neither preordained passages through stages of development nor a linear road toward democracy. Rather, they were outcomes of changing relations of power among the state, civil society and corporate economic interests within and beyond the country. Figure 2.1 summarizes these transformative dynamics that underlie urban and regional policies from 1965 to the present. They can be characterized by, first, the emergence of the developmental state. Second was the transition into neo-developmental mode of state-corporate partnerships beginning from the 1980s that coincided with political reform toward democratic governance. Third, along with democratization came the devolution of state authority to local levels of governance, which gave rise in the early 21st century to city regions as potential loci of participatory civic democracy.

The developmental state in spatial planning, 1960s–1980s

The inauguration of the Park Chung-hee Government (1963–1979) initiated Korea's rapid urban-industrial transformation. In leading this drive, the national

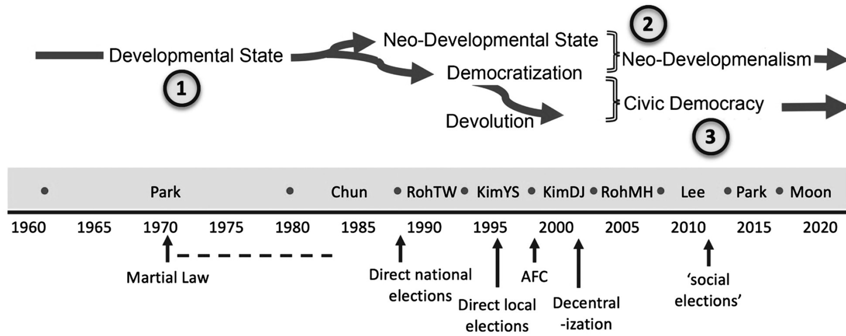

Figure 2.1 The political dynamics of urban and regional policy in Korea, 1960–2020.

government took on extraordinary powers that have been summarized as the "developmental state", loosely defined as a strong, highly autonomous state acting as the "big push" in industrialization (Douglass, 1994; Evans, 1995). Among the most important sources of state autonomy under Park's government were:

- Inherited political culture accepting a strong state (Im, 1987).
- Radical agrarian land reform that occurred following the Korean War (1950–1953), effectively eliminating rural elites who could have substantially weakened state autonomy from elite and class interests.
- Nationalization of the banking system, allowing government to autonomously invest in spatial planning and industrial capacity while also building a highly trained techno-bureaucracy to inform and implement policies (Ha and Kang, 2011). This further provided the means for government to channel people's savings into creating the *chaebol* from small family-owned enterprises to become among the largest corporations in the world.
- Continuing state of war conditions with North Korea and anti-communism that were used to justify martial law and state suppression of civil society and labor movements.
- US military aid adding financial resources to the Korean government (Kim, 2017).

State autonomy is not absolute; it is necessarily imbedded in social networks (Evans, 1995). In addition to a bureaucracy of skilled, merit-based recruits, the Park regime drew together a "leader-dependent" tier of personnel selected from his home region and school ties in the southeast who received special treatment in promotions from Park. This favoritism would echo through Korean politics and spatial policies for decades to come (Ha and Kang, 2011).

With the invocation of martial law in 1972, which effectively lasted until 1987, competitive elections were abolished, labor union actions were severely restricted and basic human rights were not guaranteed. With the foundation for economic

growth based on maintaining a low-wage labor force and a compliant civil society, while improvements in standard of living were widespread, they also favored elites in government and the rising *chaebol*. Technical rationality and social stability in the face of the communist north were used to depoliticize social issues and justify harsh responses to social protests, which became chronic in urbanizing Korea. As underscored by Im (1987), Korea's bureaucratic authoritarianism did not create the country's strong state; rather, it helped change a society with a long-held political philosophy supporting a strong state into a developmental state. It also generated militant labor unions that would figure prominently in political reform over the coming decades (Minns, 2001).

For Korea and other "newly industrializing economies" (NIEs) of East Asia (Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore), the turn toward export-oriented manufacturing was historically opportune. It occurred at a critical global juncture marked by the appearance of a "new international division of labor" (NIDL) that entailed the massive deindustrialization of high-income economies of the West accompanied by the redeployment of labor-intensive sectors of manufacturing to selected lower-income countries (Froebel, Jürgen and Otto, 1980). With most potential candidate countries still deeply entrenched in import-substitution strategies, nationalization of foreign invested companies and non-alignment rejection of re-integration with former colonial masters, competition was exceptionally limited for the new wave of global investment in export-oriented manufacturing searching for sites outside of the high-income countries of the world (Elkins, Guzman and Beth, 2006).[2]

The Asian NIEs were nonetheless competing against each other, and Korea's developmental state was able to keep wages lower than those in the other Asian NIE competitors (Minns, 2001). They also had to compete by having a developmental state with the political will to reliably develop, plan and institute policies, including those related to the built environment for industrialization. The commitment to bureaucratic meritocracy, including the establishment of independent and highly capable policy think tanks, also required political will that is not ubiquitous. While no country is free from corruption, in Korea roads and bridges were nonetheless built, and policies were implemented. These are the hallmarks of the developmental state that have been contrasted with the "soft state" dominated by rent-seeking elites (Myrdal, 1970; Evans, 1989).

In this light, a common feature shared by the Asian NIEs was that the state, and not the market, stood at the helm of the space-economy of planning and development. However, variations among the four Asian NIEs were substantial. Whereas Singapore and Hong Kong used public housing as their tool to discipline society, Korea (and Taiwan) used police powers. Hong Kong had a free press; Korea tightly controlled the press. In creating the *chaebol* through state support, Korea stood alone among the NIEs in not relying on FDI for its endogenous export industrialization. The main point to be made is that no single model of a developmental state existed; each was a particular mode reflecting specific contexts and opportunities appearing during its time (Douglass, 1994).

Spatial planning was a crucial component of Korea's developmental state. In addition to providing critically needed infrastructure for industrialization, it was used to try to stop the growth of Seoul; its effectiveness was, however, quite limited. From 1953 to 1965 Seoul doubled in population from approximately 1 million to 2 million residents. When export-oriented manufacturing took off in the late 1960s, migration to Seoul greatly accelerated. By 1990 the city had reached 9 million in population, and thereafter expanded into neighboring Gyeonggi-do and Incheon to form the extended Capital Region (CR). By the year 2000 this mega-urban region had a population in excess of 25 million, or nearly one-half of the total population of the country.

The attraction of Seoul was multifaceted, including higher social status, employment, quality of education and altogether higher life chances than anywhere else in the country.[3] However, the unstoppable speed of Korea's spatial polarization also generated a number of social problems. In particular, the housing situation worsened as the ratio of housing stock to number of households reached 54 percent in 1980. Slums were prevalent. Air pollution in Seoul also became a serious health threat.

In response to the undesired outcomes of the rapid growth of Seoul, the First Comprehensive National Physical Development Plan (1972–1981) adopted four types of policies to inhibit and organize the growth of the capital city:

- Direct controls on population mobility
  - Forced elimination of squatter settlements in Seoul (from 1960s);
  - Special citizens tax on Seoul residents (1973);
  - Severe restriction on the expansion of universities (from 1970s).
- Direct controls on industrial expansion
  - Penalty tax for factory construction (1973);
  - Restricting new construction of industrial plants in Seoul (1975);
  - Compulsory relocation of industries away from Seoul.
- Containment of urban expansion
  - Adoption of green belt zones around Seoul and all major cities (1972);
  - New towns to spatially organize the capital city (1967–1986).
- Plans to remove of government functions from Seoul (1972).

To attract development away from Seoul, the government called upon the widely adopted "growth pole" strategy of concentrated decentralization to disperse industrial growth to selected provincial locations. Industrial parks, free trade zones and massive investment in new heavy industry sites such as Ulsan and Pohang were all constructed. Busan, the second largest city and southeast gateway port to the Pacific, took on the role of light manufacturing. Daegu became a textiles and apparel center.

Outside of Seoul particular attention was given to southeast Korea, the home provinces of President Park's and other political leaders. An expressway was constructed between Seoul and Busan. A number of new towns were also built in this region. This led to a bipolar development pattern anchored on each end

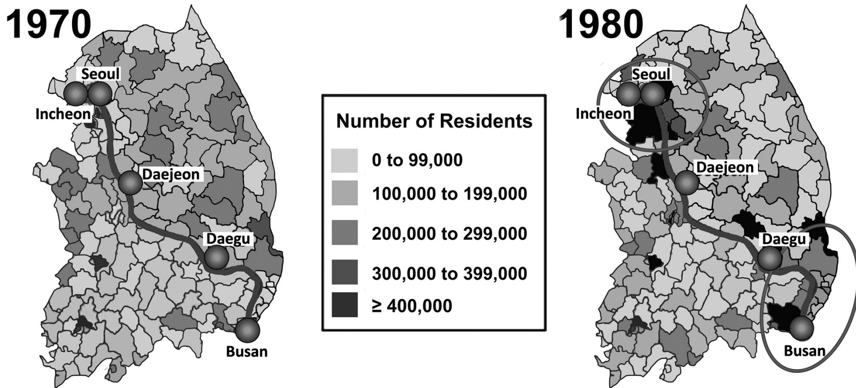

Figure 2.2 National development corridor, 2011.

by Seoul and Busan (Figure 2.2). Korea's gateway to the world economy was more naturally through the southeast, and Seoul's precarious location near the border of an aggressive communist state contributed to the felt need to move development away from the capital city. Yet despite these conditions favoring the southeast and all of the spatial planning efforts aimed at attenuating national spatial polarization in the CR, its share of the national population rose from 29 to 47 percent between 1970 and 2000.

The government also launched a national village modernization program, the *Saemaul Undong* (New Village Movement), along with a green revolution program in the 1970s. Village modernization was a centrally orchestrated self-help program focusing on tile roofs, local roads and other village infrastructure such as water wells and electricity. The green revolution served to momentarily move the country toward self-sufficiency in grain production for national food security, cheap food for rapidly increasing urban populations and to lessen foreign exchange losses.

The *Saemaul Undong* was successful in raising rural incomes to near urban levels—a rare accomplishment that set Korea apart from other Asian countries. However, the program declined rapidly by the end of the 1970s. Village self-help reached its limits, crop infestations resulting from reliance on a single variety of high-yielding rice, the high level of subsidies needed for farmers and urban consumers and the assassination of its creator, President Park, all contributed to its demise (Douglass, 2014).

The strategy and fate of the *Saemaul Undong* point toward a major missing element in Korea's spatial planning: rural-urban linkages. The idea that rural and urban development could mutually benefit or that towns can make positive contributions to rural development was overlooked due, in part, to the separation of urban from rural (agriculture) planning bureaucracies and the growth pole strategy view of rural areas merely as sources of cheap surplus labor. Whether a

rural-urban linkage strategy would have advanced rural regional development in Korea is a matter of conjecture, although achievements were made in other countries (Tacoli, 2006). The longer-term outcomes of this neglect were missed opportunities to stem rural depopulation as well as shrinkage of rural towns that would become increasingly pronounced in the coming decades.

All of the particular circumstances of Korea's miracle economy under its developmental state disallow putting it forward as a model for other countries to mimic. The deeply contextual conditions for such elements of state autonomy as radical agrarian land reform and nationalization of financial institutions are not viable policy options in most settings today. Even in Korea by the mid-1980s changing internal and global conditions brought to a close this first round of Korea's rise to a high-income society under a developmental state—just two decades after it appeared. Success of political reforms toward democratic governance, the rise of the *chaebol* to transnational corporate levels and the permeating spread of global neoliberalism combined to transition Korea into a neo-developmental era.

Neo-developmentalism and democratization 1990s–present

Neo-developmentalism

In the wake of the demise of the authoritarian developmental state, two strands of spatial planning emerged in Korea in the late 1980s: neo-developmental projects designed and implemented from above by government through private corporate sector partnerships with overtures to democratic reforms, and devolved participatory forms of local governance.

The turn toward neo-developmentalism began in the 1980s from within Korea and from changing global dynamics. The source from within was the growing power of Korea's *chaebol*, which by 2011 saw just ten of these family-owned conglomerates accounting for nearly 80 percent of Korea's GDP. The second source was the ascent of global neoliberalism that worked through external pressures on the Korean government to liberalize Korea's financial institutions, privatize government institutions and services and open the economy to foreign investment. Yet instead of the government taking a passive role that was common elsewhere in Asia through neoliberal policy shifts, the Korean government continued to play a strong role in promulgating development policies with corporate partnerships.

The result of these changing power relations is an amalgamated "neo-developmental" mode of policymaking in which government and corporate interests co-lead project design and implementation (Park, Richard and Asato, 2012). Top-down command planning with no or only token citizen participation; mega-scale projects; supply rather than demand-driven spatial policies; wholesale changes in land use and the natural environment; orientations toward physical techno-fix planning solutions for social problems; and standardized replication of projects are all characteristics of neo-developmentalism (Ha and Lee, 2007). New towns with mass-produced housing, industrial estates, free economic

zones, global city projects such as the "second miracle on the Han" (Kim, 2008), smart cities *cum* eco-cities and u-towns (ubiquitous-towns, meaning they are suitable for all cities across the globe) and consolidated mega-regions are among the many types of neo-developmental projects. City marketing, place-branding, high security, gated and fortified buildings and "Central Park" simulacra can be added to their characteristics.

The construction of housing and new towns is emblematic of neo-developmentalism. A major impetus to the housing and new town construction surge in the late 1980s was the 1989–1993 "2 Million Housing Project", which substantially filled the long-standing void in housing in the CR. The escalation in housing construction was quickly routinized by government and *chaebol* land developers to spread across the nation. As a result, less than 10 percent of housing in most of the CR was built before 1979 (Park et al., 2016). Single-family detached houses fell from nearly 90 percent in 1980 to about one-quarter over the next three decades, thus earning Seoul the title of "apartment city", erasing Korea's vernacular architectural history and socially functioning neighborhoods.

New towns also began to be deployed to regions outside of Seoul CR in response to the decline of local economies resulting from the pervasive relocation of Korea's labor-intensive manufacturing to lower-wage economies in Asia. In evidence of the fundamental freeing of the *chaebol* from its previous national territorial constraints, government-assisted FDI from Korea's *chaebol* exploded from a level of US$57 million in 1981 to over US$20 billion by 2007. This trend was further accelerated by the Asia Finance Crisis in 1997, which also relieved the *chaebol* from such previous obligations as full-time employment of Korean labor (Lee, Lee and Park, 2012).

At the level of strategic spatial planning, solutions to rising spatial disparities resulting from deindustrialization were sought through the pursuit of the goal of regional balance with a focus on linking local revitalization with large-scale new town construction. The target of regional balance strategies in Korea has not been about uneven spatial development in general, but rather centrally about curtailing the expansion of the CR. As with policies under the developmental state, this concern has had three main components: (1) stopping the growth of the CR, (2) spatially organizing the settlement of the outer areas of the CR, mostly through new town construction and (3) stimulating the growth of cities and regions outside of the CR through, for example, industrial growth poles, free trade zones, new towns and housing and, more recently, regional revitalization strategies aimed at enhancing local government capabilities to plan and finance project.

Among the most prominent of recent regional balance attempts is Sejong City, a newly built national administrative capital for the relocation of government functions away from Seoul. First proposed by President Roh Moo-hyun in 2003, it was launched in 2012 as Sejong Special Autonomous City. Slated for completion by 2030 at a projected cost of over US$20 billion, it is a quintessential neo-development master-planned project that leveled an existing hilly landscape for a completely new 465 km^2 automobile-oriented smart/eco-city. Its target

population of 500,000 will be the equivalent of about 2 percent of the population of the CR.

In recent decades new towns have been given new clothing aimed at catching the global promotion of smart techno-cities. One mode is "u(biquitous)-towns", which is a term used to signify fully digitally wired cities (Lee et al., 2008). Because of their infrastructure requirements, they "will be realized mainly in newly built cities (because) it's easier to start from a white blank canvas" (Hwang, 2005: 1). The great majority of u-town and other new town projects are located in the CR, including Songdo, a flagging $40 billion new city in Incheon.

By the early 2000s the unrelenting production of housing encountered the well-known problem of supply-driven production, namely, the inability to anticipate actual demand. As a result, uninhabited apartments in 2015 in Korea totaled 570,000, which was an increase of 200,000 from 2010 exacerbated by decreasing depopulation outside of the CR (Kim, 2016) (Figure 2.3). In the CR, however, housing supply has continued to fall short of effective demand due to both supply and housing cost issues, which is also related to speculative investment by more affluent property owners.

Attempts were also made to use industrial estates to improve regional balances. While those constructed after 1990 show a greater dispersion away from the CR (Figure 2.4), they have remained largely unintegrated into local

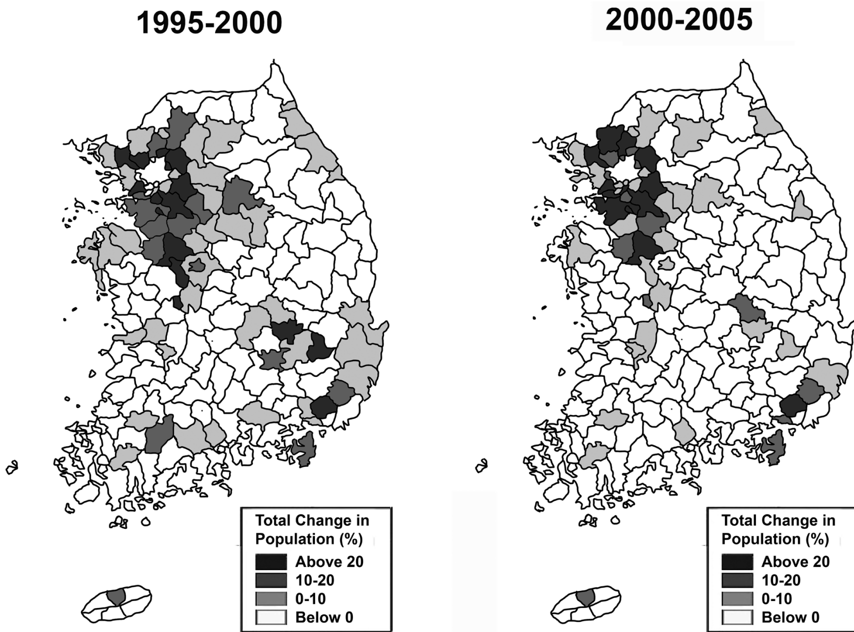

Figure 2.3 Population growth by county, Korea 1995–2000 and 2000–2005.

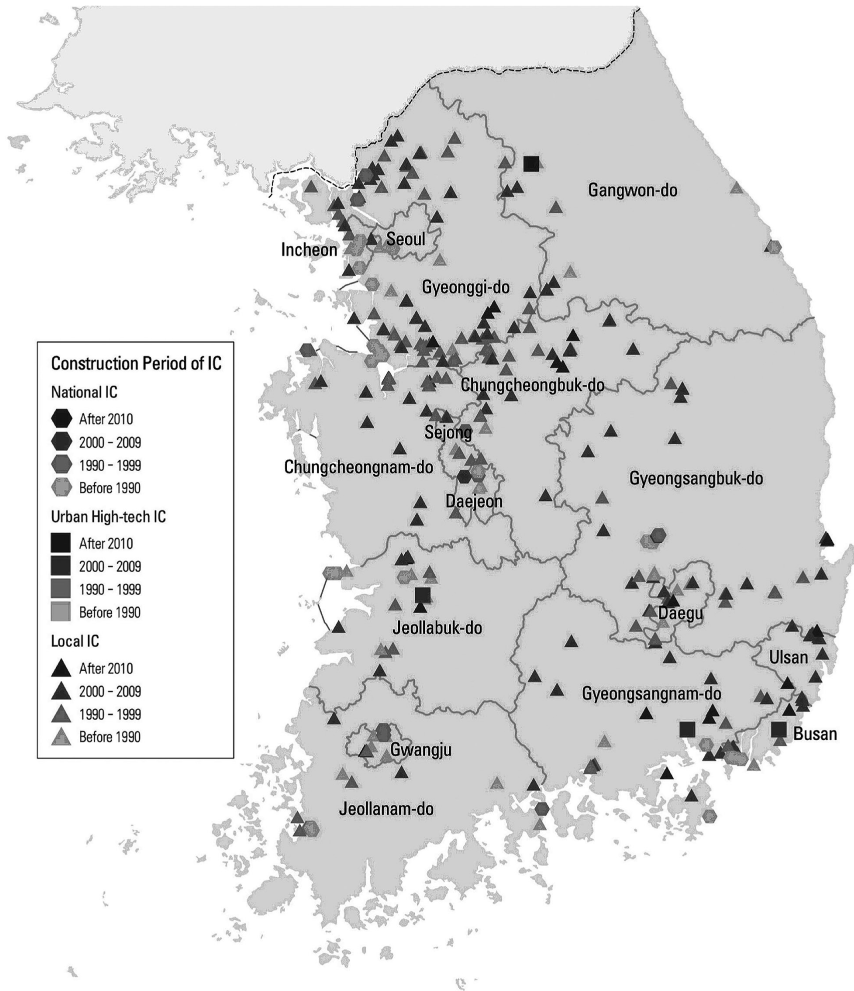

Figure 2.4 Spatial distribution of industrial complexes before 1990 to after 2010.

economies, and have not yet made a significant contribution to them. Similarly, the FEZs in the CR have been much more successful than those elsewhere (KDI, 2015). At the same time, in Korea's post-industrial economy the CR has not only become increasingly important in higher-technology industries, it has also expanded in employment serving *chaebol* global headquarter functions. From 1966–1995, more than four-fifths (84 percent) of the total increases in manufacturing employment accrued to the CR and the southeast (Kim, 2000). Industrial estates elsewhere have experienced high vacancy rates accompanied by low levels of inter-firm linkages and an absence of R&D capabilities.

Particularly hard hit by steep population losses, rural regions have been included in programs aimed at overcoming spatial imbalances. In 1995, the government slated 33 cities and 32 counties for amalgamation to become "Shi-Kun" (urban-rural) Consolidated Cities (KRIHS, 1994). The purpose was to incorporate economically depressed areas with neighboring cities to allow for greater efficiencies in extending basic infrastructure while strengthening local economic potential. Similarly, from 2000 rural revitalization programs were launched for 163 basic living areas based on volunteerism and cooperation. These programs reportedly did not make headway due to local government not having yet become "a sound and energetic system" (LHI, 2014). More to the point, Korea's rural depopulation and lack of well-developed town-based rural support functions have passed a tipping point at which possibilities for revitalization are chronically slipping away. This is evidenced by stark data showing that between 1982–2010 the government closed more than 5,000 rural schools due to insufficient student numbers (Chandler, 2010).

Democratization and neo-developmentalism

As democracy ascended from 1987 onward, neo-developmental spatial strategies began making overtures to participatory governance that incorporated social as well as economic objectives. For example, heavily subsidized free economic zones and industrial clusters were pursued at the same time that localities were encouraged to undertake their own urban revitalization programs. Some of these ideas were continued across presidential elections. Others were discarded. Park Gyeun-hye's presidency exemplified a conservative with a populist front as she promoted the "Happy Living Zone" initiative focused on quality of life and neighborhood regeneration programs aimed at revitalizing old city centers with a promise to cut back new town construction. Her "demand-driven customized assistance" acknowledged the criticism of supply-driven neo-developmental projects. At the same time, she supported such neo-developmental plans as the Pangyo Creative Economy Valley (Kim and Lim, 2016). Similarly, while the Moon Presidency brought democratization to a new level as he put forth his agenda to accelerate political and financial decentralization and reinforce balanced development, he also stressed local competitiveness, innovative cities and industrial parks that represent a straight line continuation of neo-developmental approaches to regional development.

In sum, despite the many policy initiatives to link central planning with local initiatives, neo-developmentalism in practice has remained substantially unconverted at national levels of planning. This observation can be seen when viewing the kinds of policies that have consistently been carried on by each president, and those that have not. Those that have continued through time regardless of the change of presidency include new towns, housing production eliminating middle- and lower-class neighborhoods, free trade and export zones and corporate megaprojects such as super-tall buildings, vast shopping malls and global gambling resorts. For example, in 1998 in the wake of the Asia Finance Crisis, the

government announced its intentions to establish a number of free trade zones to attract global investment (Cha, 1998; *Korea Times*, 2010). By 2019, eight such zones were in place around the country (KFEZ, 2019). Yet an initiative to enhance regional cooperation and collaboration was abandoned when the presidency was passed to Park Gyeun-hye.

Some observers have suggested that neo-developmental and participatory planning each have a role to play in spatial planning. This position is problematic for three reasons. First, the opportunity costs and actual public expenditures on neo-developmental projects are immense and have taken resources away from locally engaged participatory forms of planning. Second, neo-developmentalism spatially collides with and has destroyed or undermined existing settlements, livelihoods and the environment.[4] Third, as noted, centrally driven efforts to revitalize regions outside of the CR have not shown measurable success.

While neo-developmentalism continues, democratization in the form of devolution of state power was moving toward realizing participatory planning through local governance and civic democracy.

The rise of cities in governance: toward civic democracy (from the 2000s)

The achievement of electoral democracy at the national level in 1987 is one of the most important accomplishments of the Korean miracle. Under President Kim Dae Jung, support of liberal democracy, namely, the rule of law and the freedoms of assembly and expression, also advanced. In 1995 the groundwork was laid for a third mode of democracy, civic democracy—active citizen participation in policymaking, planning and implementation—with the direct election of local governments, which also validated the rise of cities as loci of democratic governance. Possibilities for civic democracy were furthered in the early 2000s when legislation was enacted to devolve substantial decision-making authority to local levels of government, including fiscal autonomy.

Heo and Hahm (2014) identify this third component of civic democracy as the one that consolidates democratic reform and promotes a profound shift in political culture, that is, a societal change in attitudes toward a civic orientation of collaboration with government. It does so by establishing cities and other local jurisdictions as levels of governance that most closely "responds to the will and needs of the people" and "becomes a high-quality civic democracy" (Cho 2014: 710).[5] In Dahlgren's (2009) terms, civic and political culture intertwine through daily practices of participating in political life in tandem with engagements in social life (Reese and Rosenfeld, 2008). This understanding underscores the city as the level at which "civicism" can provide a counterpoint to the "statism" of Korea's mode of neo-developmentalism. Research finds that where it takes root, civic culture is durable through time (Rice and Arnett, 2001).

Civic democracy did not just appear with the devolution of state power to local governments. Korea has a substantial history of grassroots organizations and movements dating from at least the late Joseon Dynasty and throughout

its period of colonization by Japan (Kim, 2017). More recently, however, devolution of governance has legitimated and substantially enhanced the capacities of city governments to respond to citizen concerns. This transformative institutional change in governance has created openings to what Castells (1997) calls a turn from mainly "resistance identities" to "project identities". In the same vein, Kim Pil Ho (2017: 3816) states that "grassroots community movements have acted as a critical social catalyst, exerting major influence on the country's shift from a modernist planning structure to a decentralized, participatory system". Analysis following renewed decentralization advances after 2002 also concludes that grassroots democracy allows communities everywhere to "create democracy models suitable for themselves" (Ha, 2007). Such conclusions underscore the likelihood of Korea to experience an increasing diversity of urban experiences.

From the 2011 elections onward, the election of a number of progressive city mayors have led to far-reaching departures from neo-developmentalism (Cho, 2019). A key factor in this change was what Chang and Bae (2012) call the "birth of social elections" in Korea. Instead of citizens voting on the basis of individual sourcing of information as in the past, the spread of social media provided the means to share information and enthusiasm that arose from and formed networks around issues of concern and the candidates who represented them. This new form of political mobilization inverted previous voting patterns dominated by older voters, a majority of whom allied with conservative parties. A majority of voters were now young and generally more progressive than their elders.

Policies enacted during the tenure of liberal presidents also played into the growing capacity of cities to govern. The Urban Planning Act of 2000 opened channels for popular participation in planning. The presidency of Roh Moo-hyun in 2002 pushed decentralization further by the adoption of regional balance through participatory governance. Civil society rose to the occasion through the formation of such alliances as the Civic Movement for Decentralization. The Livable City Building program launched in 2005 identified local participation in planning as a way to account for the unique characteristics of each city.

Following the array of legislation aimed at increasing capacities for local governance, a number of city governments were quick to adopt innovative urban policies for participatory governance. A short-list of the types of policies and programs that have been adopted by city governments, including Seoul (Cho, 2019; Douglass, 2019), cover four areas:

- Inclusion in public decision-making
  - Participatory budgeting
  - Direct citizen participation in government decision-making
- Distributive justice
  - Social economy and community enterprises
  - Sharing city
  - Community currency
  - Curtailing housing construction by housing destruction
  - Social housing

- Social and cultural conviviality
  - (Re-)making the commons
  - Transforming abandoned spaces into community centers
  - (Re-)establishing open markets
  - Participatory art and cultural festivals
  - Promoting human scale architecture
  - Revitalizing vernacular neighborhoods, including slums
- Environmental Wellbeing
  - Reducing energy by "one less nuclear power plant" (Seoul)
  - Urban farms and food gardens
  - Alternative energy
  - No car streets and "complete streets".

Seoul has led the way in creating alternatives to neo-developmentalism. Upon taking office in 2011, Mayor Park Won-soon cancelled the Han River global city megaprojects, adopted policies to stop massive clearance-based high-rise housing construction, moved to stop evictions that did not include relocation in new housing, initiated participatory budgeting, adopted a sharing car system, brought ordinary citizens into the government decision-making process, and supported community currency, among others. The city of Suwon has promoted a similar policy agenda, including a successful no-car streets campaign.

Many of the issues now being addressed by these local policy responses arose from impacts of neoliberal policies that Korea was compelled to adopt by the IMF after the 1997 AFC. These issues include high and rising income inequality (Kim, 2016), youth unemployment (Jung, 2017), senior poverty with high suicide rates (OECD, 2019), lack of low-income housing and rising costs of public transportation, schooling and food. More generally, they represent efforts to recover from the consequences of neo-developmentalism such as loss of neighborhoods and resident's place-making possibilities, public space, spontaneous cultural events and art festivals and environmental deterioration.

A major caveat to the discussion of diversity among cities is the continuing concentration of economic and social power in the CR (Lee and Shin, 2015). This pattern is manifest in the seriously declining capacities for local autonomy in government financing. From 2000 to 2013, the number of localities capable of generating at least one-third of their financial needs substantially declined to a point that the only local ones capable of generating more that 65 percent of their budgets were in the CR.

The implications of continuing growth of the CR and faltering economies with declining fiscal capacities elsewhere in the nation are that, in spite of all the policies for regional balance, Korea appears to be moving toward an extended city-state radiating from Seoul. If so, Korea would not be alone. While theoretical debates on spatial polarization remain unresolved, comparative research on actual experiences in Asia and around the world show that spatial polarization of the population and economy has increased over the past several decades (Jones and Douglass, 2008; Khanna, 2016).[6] About one-third of the population

of Japan lives in the Kanto region surrounding Tokyo, and its population share is increasing. The Pearl River Delta, the Greater Shanghai region and Jing-Jin-Ji region expanding from Beijing each have urban populations approaching 100 million (Khanna, 2016). In 2019, more than one-quarter of the population of the Philippines archipelago lived in Greater Metro Manila, and the extended metropolitan region of Jakarta has a population of 31 million, making it the largest metropolitan region in the world after Tokyo. In sum, no country has managed to diminish the share of national populations in its principal metropolitan region.

If at all possible, ameliorating such an outcome in Korea would require as yet untried bold initiatives to enormously increase transfers to local levels, loosen the taut strings that continue to tie local policymaking to central bureaucracies and drastically reduce public financing of neo-developmental projects. The role of national government in a decentralized system of governance would then be one of redistribution of financial, material resources and professional assistance to local levels of governance to level the playing field and ensure basic levels of life chances across the national territory. The principle would echo the idea of subsidiarity, namely, that all political powers would be devolved to local jurisdictions unless convincing reasons can be given for assigning them to higher level ones (Barber and Ekins, 2016).

Whether such major departures from prevailing political structures would either be adopted or would work is an open question, but the alternative of continuing top-down public-corporate partnerships in master planning as the principal form of spatial planning has already lost any social and economic purpose that it might once have been presumed to have had. Korea's population is projected to decline from its 52 million peak in 2028 to 39 million in 2065 (*Korea Times*, 2019). By 2050 it will have become a super-aged society, with 40 percent of its population over age 65; outside the CR this share is projected to be as high as 80 percent. Rather than continuing to construct vast new towns with surplus housing and industrial complexes to stimulate regional revitalization, the moment has arrived to work with people to upgrade existing housing and reinvigorate their neighborhoods, for aging in place through participatory modes of spatial planning, and for an economy that uses the talents of an aging society in rewarding ways rather than pushing the elderly into poverty. Civic democracy might not be able to carry the weight of such hopes, particularly outside the CR, but promising outcomes have already been accomplished in several cities (Joo, 2019; Cho, 2019; Valmero, 2015).

Conclusions

Korea has achieved unparalleled successes over a historically short period of time from the 1960s. By 2018, it had a global reputation for technological innovation, its GDP per capita was slightly above the EU average and it ranked among the highest in the world in health standards and educational attainment (Seth, 2019). Along with these successes it has confronted issues

of accountability of governance over, inter alia, human rights and basic freedoms, inequality, irregular employment, dispossessions of land, environmental destruction and heavy-handed use of state power in spatial planning. Achieving its successes and addressing discontent have rested on the capacity of Korean society to dynamically reform its political system to pursue fundamental transformations in relations among government, civil society and the corporate economy. The major shifts have been from authoritarian developmental state planning of the 1960s and 1970s to neo-developmental state and corporate economy collaborations from the 1980s, coupled with democratization, and, most recently, a trajectory toward civic democracy following devolution of governance to local levels.

From 1987 successive presidents have put forth their own mix of state-corporate and socially engaged concepts for spatial planning. Sonn and Lee (2015: 364) identify this feature of the Korean polity as the key to its resilience, namely, a heterogeneity that "combines political liberalism, economic conservatism, resistant regionalism, and localism" in ways that have allowed the state to maintain a strong position as regulator and policy leader while responding to neo-developmental and democratic voices. In other words, rather than having a static model of governance, Korea has proven to be adaptive. From this perspective, Korea does not fit into the pattern of contemporary neoliberalism in which government moves into the background of the corporate economy (Park, Richard and Asato, 2012; Chung, 2019). It has chartered its own way forward in the dynamics of changing relations of power that continue to be characterized by a strong state even with the rise of the *chaebol* dominating the economy and civil society successfully winning democratic freedom and the right to participate in governance.

However, the path dependency of attempts to change political structures have also limited the direction and scope of adaptation, which is manifested by the persistence of neo-developmentalism despite democratization and devolution of political power (Choi, Lee and Kim, 2019). From this perspective, when taking into account all of the turning points in the economy, the wide range of political orientations of political leaders and the tenacity of political and economic institutions, transformations in the political economy of spatial planning in Korea do not support either the simplistic notions of a linear development path determined by economic growth, or, therefore, the position that societies can or should choose to economically grow first and then move on to consider a social and environmental agenda later (Yap, 2011). The entire period of transformation in Korea's political economy from the 1960s to the present has been rife with political and economic crises, major confrontations between state and civil society and unexpected impacts of changing global forces. Worthy of note in this regard is Amsden's (1992) famous statement that Korea's success was achieved by getting "prices wrong" through strong state protection against manufactured imports—not by being determined by unfettered markets.[7] All of these understandings lead to the conclusion that the miracles Korea has achieved and the unresolved problems attending them are outcomes of contestations and

realignments among and within the state, civil society and corporate economy that have had no predetermined outcomes.

Critical assessments of neo-developmentalism have generated a chorus of calls for a paradigm shift in spatial planning toward inclusive, people-centered, socially just and environmentally sound processes of governance (Park, 2018; Choi and Kim, 2018; Kim and Lim, 2016). This brings to the fore the need to separate decentralization from the pursuit of regional balance. Advocating decentralization of planning with local autonomy sets in motion open-ended spatial processes of governance and the distribution of economic, social and environmental benefits. Some city regions will find their way forward through active citizen participation, while many others will continue to rely on neo-developmental types of top-down investments with token citizen participation. Further, under current trends, while major city regions might thrive, other settlements are likely to shrink to levels below which they can no longer be sustained or even inhabited. Consolidating smaller settlements into larger ones would only be short-term solutions unless much greater support is provided for them to find a new economic base through their own collaborations.

The miracles of Korea are not only to be found in stellar economic growth rates over several decades. They most profoundly derived from the capacity of the Korean people to secure transformations in processes of governance from authoritarian rule to participatory democracy within an exceptionally compressed period of their history. While economic growth contributed to the rise of civil society, democratic outcomes were not preordained. As the Korea experience shows, inclusive governance was achieved through indefatigable social insurgencies for political reforms in a setting in which government was ultimately capable of instituting them. A look around Asia and the rest of the world readily shows that democratic governance is not secure at any level of per capita income. Devolved forms of local democratic governance are even less apparent. In this, the world's first urban century, cities in most countries in Asia still do not have elected governments, nor do they have the personnel, expertise or financial resources to independently promulgate and implement policies.

Recent statements by the United Nations declaring that democracy is in retreat around the world makes the issue of democratic governance one of the most salient at the current juncture in history (Freedom House, 2019). Korea is now identified as one of only five full democracies in Asia. This is arguably the most impressive of all the gains of the country over the past six decades of national development.

Notes

1 Korea is used interchangeably with South Korea.

2 Until the 1980s, the number of countries signing bilateral investment treaties indicating openness to global investment averaged less than ten per year. The number skyrocketed in the 1980s to reach nearly 200 per year by the 1997 Asia Finance Crisis (Elkins, Guzman and Beth, 2006).

3 According to the Third National Land Development Plan 1992–2001, in 1988 the Capital Region had an economic and social opportunity index of 141 compared to 67 for the rest of the nation (100 = weighted average).

4 The 1988 Olympics—a huge neo-developmental project—infamously displaced more than 700,000 people. The Hadid Dongdaemun Design Plaza, which contributed to Seoul's rising public debt under the neoliberal government in the first decade of this century, cost more than US$ half billion to construct.

5 Worthy of note in this regard is a study of 158 countries that finds corruption to be lower in decentralized government systems, the reason being the greater ability of citizens to have voice and accountability over public matters (Ivanyna and Shah, 2011).

6 Neoclassical economists theorize that spatial polarization will eventually equilibrate over time (Hirschman, 1975). Other theorists argue that it will not automatically reverse itself; nor, due to heavy biases in public spending on primate cities and lack of knowledge about opportunities elsewhere, is it economic efficient (Myrdal, 1957; Friedmann, 1973; Smith, 1990; Jones and Douglass, 2008).

7 In addition, "authoritarian capitalism" persists in countries with very high levels of per capita GDP (Carney, 2018).

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