



KRIHS Policy Brief

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50 years in the city: Experience of a Korean born in 1968

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1. (Rapid urbanization) Industrialization policy that lasted for the past 50 years resulted in rapid migration of populations from rural to urban areas. In 2017, nine tenths of the total population live in spaces classified as urban areas.
2. (Concentration on major cities) Metropolitan areas have developed along the Gyeongbu axis in Seoul, Busan and Daegu. In particular, Seoul accounts for only 0.6% of the national land but houses 18% of the nation's population. Its population density of 16,000 people/ km² is higher than any other cities in OECD member countries.
3. (Major new town development) Major new town projects have been implemented as industrial cities to develop heavy and chemical industries (1960-70s), first generation new towns to disperse and accommodate populations concentrated in Seoul (1980-90s), second generation new towns to stabilize house prices and ensure self-sufficiency (2000s), and Sejong and other innovation cities for balanced national development (mid and late 2000s).
4. (Mass supply of apartments) Since the construction of the first post-war apartment building, Yurim Apartment, in 1958, many apartment complexes have been constructed primarily in the Gangnam area in Seoul and new towns. Currently there are 10 million apartment houses, accounting for 60.1% of the total houses in the country (17 million houses).



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Policy proposals

1. Cities in Korea experienced imbalanced growth represented by the inflow of populations from rural to urban areas in the course of the rapid post-war modernization and industrialization and the formation of major cities on the Gyeongbu axis.
2. New towns have been developed in response to social needs, for example industrial cities to develop heavy and chemical industries, new towns in the capital region to accommodate rapidly increasing urban populations, and innovation cities to ensure balanced national development.
3. In particular, inflow of populations to urban areas has been discriminatorily concentrated on major cities. As a result, apartments as a way of compressed, efficient housing supply have become the most common type of dwelling in Korea.
4. In the past 50 years, cities in Korea have grown in an uniform way to provide dwellings for populations moving to urban areas. Now new urban policies are needed to respond to population declines and growth slowdown.