

Space & Environment is a quarterly magazine published by KRIHS. Its purpose is to introduce current issues on territorial planning in Korea and disseminate research achievements and international activities of KRIHS and other Korean institutes.

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KRIHS Gazette

KRIHS (Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements) was established in 1978 with a mission of creating a beautiful and pleasant living environment. To achieve the mission, KRIHS has been committed to enhancing the quality of life and well-being of the people in the nation with its spatial planning studies and policy suggestions.

Since its foundation, KRIHS has carried out a variety of studies on the efficient use, development, and conservation of territorial resources. Its research areas range from sustainable and balanced territorial development and conservation of the territory to the provision of housing and infrastructure.

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SPACE & ENVIRONMENT

ISSUES & TRENDS 01

Promoting Urban Regeneration in the Era of Population Decline

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1. Background

Urban policies that have focused on development are reaching their limits, due to low growth, low birth rate, and an aging society. In the development era, urban policies have focused on supplying facilities and sites needed for economic activities. Based on these policies, large-scale cities and industrial complexes were established in suburban areas. However, as the economy has entered the era of an advanced country with low growth, quantitative expansion-centered urban development is causing various problems, such as environmental degradation, an increase in urban management costs, and a decrease in urban vitality.

With the advent of this aged and low-growth era, a new strategy for urban policy is required. A creative urban regeneration strategy that responds to the demands of the new economy and preserves the community, while the historicity and vitality of urban areas are boosted, is necessary for this era. It is required in today's urban economy to find new value in the urban area, rather than large-scale industrial complexes and newly built-up areas in the suburbs. The industries play pivotal roles for the urban economy at present, such as creative industry, cutting-edge manufacturing industry, and knowledge-based services, which are all operated in urban areas. Now is the time to turn from the conventional urban policy centered on physical development into a new urban regeneration plan that preserves the historicity of urban area and boosts creativity.

2. Urban Decline and Policy Issues

Our cities are no longer in the era of growth. On a national scale, cities are on the decline due to population outflow and industrial decline. According to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (2014), 65% of all 3,470 units of *Eup*, *Myeon*, and *Dong*, 2,239 units (Figure1), are on the decline nationwide. The definition of declining areas is an area that is under the standard in equal to or more than two

indexes, such as population decrease, business decrease, and building dilapidation.

Urban decline causes the degradation of the quality of urban life, decrease of investment, and a decrease of employment. The declined urban areas, where many vacant deserted houses are located, can easily become crime-prone areas and are vulnerable to disasters, as the infrastructure is poor.

Since the 1970s, urban decline has been considered to be a national issue, and active urban regeneration policies have been implemented abroad. In the United Kingdom, the Policy for Inner Cities was established in 1977, and the direction of urban policy was changed from the conventional new city development to the creation of the inner city. Since the 1970s, in the United States, the direction of policies has been turned into the community development of existing urban areas, in order to address the issues of excessive urban sprawling. Meanwhile, Japan revised its policies to restore the vitality of urban areas after the collapse of the bubble economy, and it enacted the Special Act for Urban Regeneration (2002) and the City Center Vitalization Act (1998).

In Korea, the Special Act on the Promotion and Support of Urban Regeneration was legislated in 2013 to respond to the issues of urban decline and the decrease of the urban population. The authorities in Korea are designating pilot areas for urban regeneration and are providing necessary budget, as part of the national urban regeneration policy. However, most urban policies are still following the practices of the development era. Many local autonomies are still establishing and executing urban policies that focus on developing the outskirts of a city by assuming population growth. Urban maintenance projects, such as redevelopment and realignment, are being implemented, focusing on profitability, rather than the preservation of local identity. Considering this situation, we will now take a look at desirable policy directions for the vitalization of urban regeneration.

1) As the result of comparing the size of the population, the number of businesses, and the percentage of deteriorated buildings, 2,239 (65 percent) out of 3,470 *Eup, Myeon, and Dong* are declining (corresponding to two or more indicators).

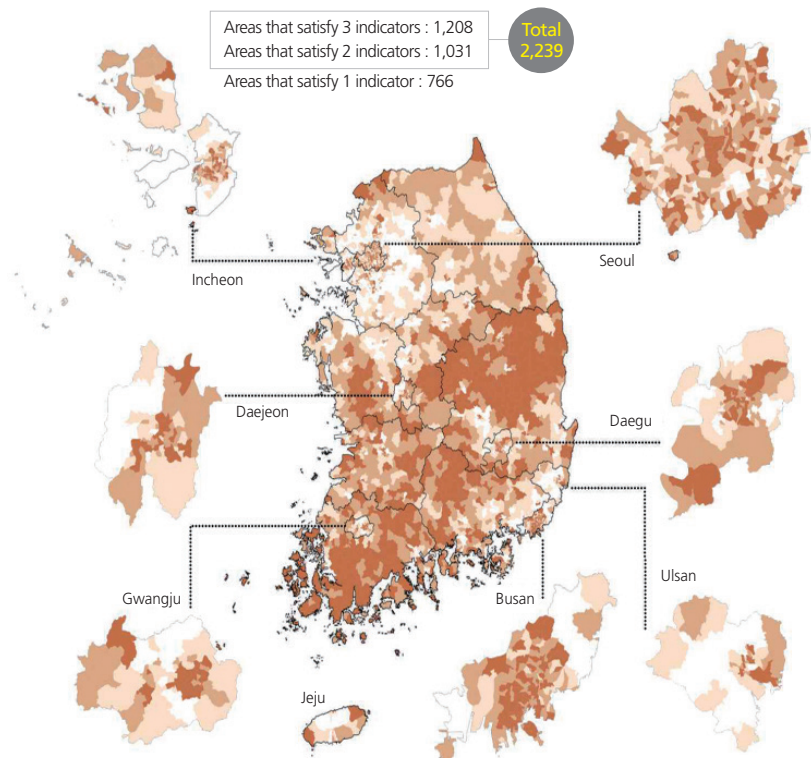
Three indicators in accordance with Article 20 of Urban egeneration Special Act

- ① **Population:** 20% or more of the current population has decreased compared to the highest point of the population over the recent 30 years. Or, the size of the population has shrunk for 3 consecutive years out of the recent 5 years.
- ② **Industry:** 5% or more of the current number of businesses has decreased compared to the highest number of businesses over the last decade. Or, the number of businesses has decreased for 3 consecutive years out of the recent 5 years.
- ③ **Deteriorated buildings:** 50% or more of all buildings were built at least 20 years ago.

Source

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport.
2014. *Studies for Establishing Basic Guidelines for National Urban Regeneration Projects*

Figure 1. Urban decline status in Korea¹⁾



3. Policy Directions for Urban Regeneration

Boosting new economy in declining cities

First, it is necessary to control new developments on the outskirts and to induce the comprehensive use and development of the inner city. The usage demand for central business districts in the city is high. Therefore, the area needs to be utilized in a more sophisticated way with functions of central business, residence, arcades, and cutting-edge industrial facilities. In particular, the areas where the floating population is concentrated, such as station adjacent areas, should be developed into a public transportation-oriented zone which would increase the development density. At the same time, the important infrastructure of cities, such as public offices, big arcades, and hospitals, need to be located in the existing downtown area first.

The dilapidated industrial complex, which has been the driving force of the urban economy, needs to be fostered as the hub for a new industry by improving the working environment and the living environment. It is also needed to replace and convert outdated industrial functions, enhance infrastructure, restructure space, and induce the simultaneous occurrence of an inflow of workforce and networking. An innovative urban space can be creative not only by physical improvement for the environment but also by the comprehensive complexation of supporting facilities, residential facilities, and commercial and business facilities.

Lastly, it is necessary to build attractive culture cities by utilizing the unique assets of the area, such as modern industrial heritage and the Hanok, the traditional Korean house. There are non-operating industrial spaces and public spaces in declining cities. In new urban policies, these non-operating resources need to be creatively utilized. These assets should be the foundation for establishing a unique urban landscape and need to be transformed as residential infrastructure and a place for culture and leisure that can be enjoyed by citizens in their everyday lives.

Community-initiated neighborhood revitalization

To cope with the trends of low growth and population decrease, urban policies should be transformed from their conventional framework of maintenance that focuses on physical repair into the vitalization of communities. Physical restoring the environment is important too, however, a social and economic project should be implemented together with it to execute a comprehensive and gradual approach. To this end, it is necessary to increase cooperation between groups inside and outside the region, such as the local autonomy, the central government, supportive organizations, experts, and civic groups. In particular, the competence of citizens should be enhanced to realize urban regeneration led by residents. This is the reason that education programs for residents provided by urban regeneration colleges need to be expanded, and practical education programs from merchant colleges and educational programs on how to set up a business need to be utilized to strengthen the competence of small-scale merchants in declining business areas with regard to their abilities to plan and set up a business. In addition, urban regeneration experts in various fields who can induce residents' participation should be fostered, and a group of experts who support on-site urban regeneration should be created and operated.

On the other hand, social economy organizations can play a pivotal role in vitalizing



local communities in which residents participate. The social economy organizations can contribute to the urban regeneration by supporting economic independence, expanding social services, and boosting the activities of communities. Support systems, including social corporations, village corporations, independent companies, and cooperative associations that are being implemented by different governmental agency, need to be utilized, however, an effort to connect these systems with actual local societies need to be exerted.

Building an area-based integrated support system

It is critical to have an area-based integrated support system to vitalize urban regeneration. Generally, the support projects of the governmental agencies are classified by sector. Focusing on local areas, however, it is necessary to integrate and connect economic, social, cultural, and welfare policies. Currently, the government is trying to seek measures to comprehensively support the urban regeneration pilot areas in accordance with the Special Act on the Promotion and Support of Urban Regeneration. The examples are the local community job creation project by the Ministry of the Interior, the cultural facility expansion and operation project by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, the kids' facility support project by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the project to establish distribution infrastructure for small and medium-sized enterprises and conventional markets by the Small and Medium Business Administration. Through these integrated supports, inefficiency caused by the dispersed investments of the governmental agencies should be addressed, and the regeneration effect of cities in decline should be maximized.

For an integrated support system, the local autonomies and the central government should be actively taken into account. At present, unfortunately, there are many cases of policy implementation without coordination between the involved departments of urban engineering, culture, and welfare, at local autonomies. To play a role to integrate the policies of the central government, each department of the local authorities should integrate their efforts in advance.

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