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POSSIBLE LINES OF FUTURE RESEARCH ON RURAL-TO-URBAN
MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION OF NEW URBANITES IN KOREA

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POSSIBLE LINES OF FUTURE RESEARCH ON RURAL-TO-URBAN MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION OF NEW URBANITES IN KOREA

The research topics sketched below have been selected with an eye to their relevance for national and municipal policy and planning. They focus on aspects of the following broad questions:

1. What are the prospects for continued heavy out-migration from rural areas?
2. How do migrants decide where to go? Specifically, what makes some migrants choose smaller cities, others choose Seoul or Pusan? Are the smaller cities merely stepping stones to the larger ones?
3. It is sometimes felt that Seoul is "too big," and it would be better to encourage smaller cities to grow more rapidly. What are the real advantages (and disadvantages) of smaller cities, in terms of integration of migrants? In terms of other aspects of national development?
4. Even if Seoul were to grow much more slowly, the problem of squatter settlements would remain. But what precisely is "the problem"? What are the specific problems posed by various types of squatter settlements? What are the constructive functions of each type?

Each topic is discussed below in turn.

1. Prospects for rural out-migration.

Several studies done over the past few years have surveyed migrants into Seoul (and other cities) in an attempt to sort out "push" and "pull" factors behind their movement. These studies have provided a valuable over-all picture. Rather than additional studies of all migrants, it might be useful at this stage to go into greater depth regarding the motives of key groups, and the impact of certain major trends. Because young people make up such a large fraction of cityward migrants, and their motives and behavior are more likely than those of older migrants to suggest future trends, more detailed studies of migrants moving between

the ages of 15 and 25 seems to me a timely topic for research. In terms of future trends and policy relevance, research on the impact of farm mechanization also deserves high priority.

A. What motivates young rural out-migrants?

To the best of my knowledge, Korean survey research on motives for migration thus far has used cross-sections of migrants (that is, random or semi-random stratified samples of migrants at their place of destination). The studies show that in Korea, as in other nations, economic motivations are the most important determinants of most migrants' decisions to move. But the general category of "economic motivations" obscures some important distinctions. The work of Vincent Brandt suggests that young people in particular are likely to think about moving to the cities because they seek a fundamental change in their life style and life prospects, rather than because they are desparately hard up in the countryside or simple because they believe they will make more money in the city. Experience in other countries indicates that programs to improve seeds, diversify crops, and other measures to increase rural incomes do not have much impact on out-migration even when they are successful in raising rural incomes. Measures like increasing education and building roads, which are necessary to improve the quality of rural life, also stimulate migration. Therefore it might be helpful to understand in greater detail why young people in particular decide to move to the cities.

Such research clearly would be based on survey data. The samples should be purposive, drawn to represent young people with varying levels of education, and from very poor, poor, and middle-income rural families, in various sections of the nation. The questionnaire could be intensive, with a high proportion of open-ended items. It might explore, among other topics, (i) images or ideas of urban and of rural life; (ii) the degree to which rural youth have realistic or unrealistic ideas of their prospects in the city (controlling for the different levels of education of different respondents, which obviously affect their real prospects); (iii) the conditions under which they would be willing to remain in the countryside. The analysis of survey results should go beyond the simple marginal statistics to analyze the responses of different categories of rural youth.

B. How will farm mechanization affect rural out-migration?

During late 1971 and early 1972 the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry sponsored a team of consultants to examine prospects for farm mechanization. Experience in Japan and other countries suggests that during the next two or three decades the use of small tractors may spread extremely rapidly in Korea. Introduction of tractors and other farm machinery often displaces large numbers of agricultural workers. But in some places mechanization has actually increased the demand for

agricultural labor. For example, use of machines speeded up harvesting and planting and permitted two or three crops to be grown where only one was grown before. The impact of farm mechanization on rural employment, incomes, and out-migration is a topic which should rank high on any list of policy-oriented research.

The simplest and most direct method of studying the effects of farm mechanization is through intensive case studies of areas where small tractors have in fact been introduced. Such studies would develop data on trends in local wages, employment levels, and out-migration over the past decade or so. Where statistics are not available (as is almost certainly the case regarding out-migration) one can systematically interview local residents regarding members of their families who have left the area over the past few years, or substitute other approximate measures for the missing data. The impressions of local residents and officials regarding the impact of the tractors are also well worth gathering systematically. If several such studies were conducted in areas characterized by somewhat different contextual conditions--population density, crop patterns, land tenure arrangements, proximity to sizeable cities, and the like--the interaction of the various factors at work should begin to be clarified.

Since the contextual factors such as population density and land tenure arrangements also affect the variables we want to explain--wage levels, employment level and structure, and out-migration--it would be desirable in theory to control for differences in contextual variables in order to determine the independent effect of farm mechanization. If tractors have already been introduced in a large number of areas, it might be possible to use matched case studies. In other words, localities could be selected where the population density, land tenure patterns, and other contextual factors were approximately equivalent or matched, but the level of farm mechanization varied. Such studies are ambitious and difficult. They require scanning many localities in order to find matches; even then the matches are likely to be quite approximate. The simpler case study approach is probably the better strategy, even though it cannot give precise information on the effect of farm mechanization as an isolated variable.

In principle, regression and multiple correlation analysis offers a third possible approach. However, this would require statistical indicators for each of the important dependent and independent variables, available on a comparable basis either for quite a large number of localities, or for a smaller number of localities over a period of five or ten years. Such data are rarely available disaggregated to the level of localities. When data aggregated to the level of the province are used to evaluate a question of this type, they are likely to mask as much as they reveal.

2. Migrants' Choice of Destinations

Many countries share with Korea the concern that their largest cities are growing too large. The first response to rapid urbanization in many countries was a desire to keep people in the rural areas by stimulating rural development. (A few nations--Cuba since 1960, Mainland China, Italy before World War II--have used more direct and stringent methods.) With growing recognition that even successful rural development will not greatly slow the rural exodus, attention has turned to the possibility of diverting migrants from the largest centers to medium-sized or smaller cities.

Assuming for the moment that such a strategy is desirable, its feasibility depends in part on how migrants choose their destinations. Expansion of opportunities for jobs and education in medium cities will not automatically divert migration from Seoul. First, potential migrants must know about the alternatives. If their information comes from relatives and friends already in Seoul, they may not be aware of other possibilities. Moreover, even if they know about a range of possibilities, they may have reasons for moving which dictate one of the alternatives. For example, if a migrant is moving primarily to join relatives, his destination is pre-determined. If he seeks not only a good job and higher income, but a basic change in life style, he may believe (rightly or wrongly) that he will find what he wants only in Seoul.

Migrants are not a homogeneous category. The information sources and the criteria for choosing destinations will differ for a married agricultural worker with children, a single male high-school graduate living in a small town, and the single daughter of a middle-class rural family. But research cannot attempt to take into account all the various combinations of age, sex, education, place of residence, class background, and life-cycle position which strongly influence potential migrants' decisions. Therefore it makes sense to select several different categories which together account for a high proportion of migration flows, and to concentrate research on information and decision criteria within these categories.

The first step in this research strategy is to determine the characteristics of the migration flows into Seoul, Pusan, and several smaller cities. Cross-section surveys of migrants into Seoul are already available and give a reasonably good idea of the composition of this flow. I am not sure whether comparable data is available for other cities. If not, cross-section surveys designed to collect data comparable to that already available for Seoul would seem to be a high-priority task. Together the surveys would provide comparative "profiles" of the composition of migration into Seoul and other cities with respect to places of origin, distance traveled, age, sex, education, skills or occupational experience, socio-economic origins, and life-cycle position.

These profiles may have changed over time. If funds permit fairly large samples, the composition of different migration "generations" could be determined, that is, migrants arriving in the past five years, those arriving five to ten years ago, ten to fifteen years, etc. If funds cover only smaller samples, the survey might focus on a random stratified sample of migrants arriving in the past five years.

These profiles would provide a basis for selecting a few major categories of migrants for more intensive examination regarding their sources of information and criteria for choosing their destinations. How did the migrants find out about the place where they finally decided to go? How much did they know when they left? Did they have information about any other places? Did they make an effort to get such information? What were the main reasons for selecting the city they in fact chose?

The samples for this study would be purposive, and could be fairly small. The questionnaire should be quite detailed. It might be interesting to compare matched samples of young migrants (matched for age, sex, education levels, etc.) in Seoul and in several smaller cities. In particular, it would be useful to know under what conditions migrants with secondary school educations choose to go to smaller urban centers. It would also be interesting to compare matched samples of young migrants from small cities into Seoul and small-city stay-at-homes. The stay-at-home sub-sample could be asked whether they had ever considered leaving home, why they decided against it, and whether they were now committed to staying home or might still leave some day. In other words, under what conditions can the small cities retain particular categories of their population? Since smaller cities vary widely--some are dynamic, others stodgy and stagnant --it is probably a good idea to keep sub-samples from various smaller cities separate in the analysis.

3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Smaller Cities versus Seoul and Pusan

As mentioned earlier, the idea of encouraging a less concentrated pattern of urban growth seems attractive to officials and scholars in many nations now undergoing rapid urbanization. A variety of reasons are given for stimulating smaller cities and discouraging the further growth of the largest metropolitan centers:

- (i) The unit costs of additional services and facilities are assumed to be higher in the largest cities.
- (ii) Pollution is assumed to be more acute.
- (iii) Integration of migrants may be more difficult.
- (iv) Political tensions may be more explosive.
- (v) The stimulating effects of urban growth on rural hinterlands are less broadly distributed and therefore less effective if urban growth is concentrated in one or a few very large centers.

It is striking that, although these assumptions are widely believed, there is remarkably little evidence to support them. There have been a few attempts to analyze the effects of city size on the cost curves for specific types of urban infrastructure and services. The results have generally been inconclusive. While pollution probably is more severe in general in larger centers, small cities may also have severe pollution problems, depending on local conditions. The other assumptions remain virtually unexamined in any systematic way. Nor are the assumptions self-evident truths. A little thought will suggest counter-arguments on almost every point except, perhaps, pollution. Equally important, the nature, costs, and probable effectiveness of measures designed to divert migration from the largest cities to alternative destinations have not been analyzed. In short, we do not know whether measures to alter the pattern of rural-to-urban migration and reduce primacy are desirable in principle, feasible at any cost in practice, or advisable in terms of costs and benefits.

I doubt that the ILCORK Conference this coming August could or should try to explore this whole range of issues. To do so would leave little time for a great many other topics concerning population and migration. However, the question of the relation (if any) between city size and the integration of new migrants seems particularly appropriate for the coming conference.

Do migrants find it harder or easier to adjust in smaller than in larger cities, and in what ways? An analysis of this question might cover a number of topics, including:

- i. initial settlement, locating shelter and work.
- ii. longer term employment history, prospects, and satisfaction
- iii. the economic status of migrants' households, as distinct from individual wage-earners. How many wage-earners are there? Are there additional sources of livelihood (keeping chickens? growing vegetables? taking odd jobs? receiving food from home?) Do household costs differ systematically in smaller cities and in Seoul, not only with respect to prices of basic goods and housing but also with respect to money remitted to places of origin, the probability of housing relatives, etc.?
- iv. housing status, plans, satisfaction.
- v. education achieved or planned, for self and children.
- vi. access to and use of other services, such as medical care.
- vii. social integration, including both retention of ties with the place of origin, and expansion of social contacts in the city.
- viii. migrants' views on over-all gains and losses from their move; intentions to stay, return, move on.
- ix. political integration, that is, the nature and extent of migrants contacts with the authorities? In connection with what issues or problems? Attitudes toward municipal and national political authorities?

To compare these aspects of integration in smaller and larger cities one would again want matched samples of migrants, representing several different socio-economic categories. The smaller cities from which samples were drawn might themselves be selected as examples of several different types of economic and social structure. Research along these lines would be both theoretically interesting and relevant to policy. It would also represent a pioneer effort to explore a topic of interest in rapidly urbanizing nations everywhere.

4. Squatter settlements: Functions, Problems, Policies.

In Korea as in other nations, squatter settlements are often regarded as a blight, a cancer, an obstacle to orderly urban growth, a breeding ground for social disorder and perhaps for political instability, and an embarrassment in the presence of foreign visitors. Recently, however, some of these assumptions have begun to be reexamined. There is growing recognition that squatter settlements vary immensely with respect to their physical characteristics, the social and economic characteristics of their residents, the functions the settlements serve for their residents, and the extent and nature of the problems they pose for orderly urban growth. Indeed, both for research and for policy formation, the category labelled "squatter settlements" is too heterogeneous to be useful. The only feature all squatter settlements have in common is the fact that those who build the houses (and therefore any later purchasers of the houses) lack legal title to the land on which the houses stand.

Moreover, it is increasingly recognized that many settlements serve useful social and economic functions. Under some conditions they may be upgraded by the residents (with or without government assistance) to the point where they are integrated into the surrounding urban areas. Appropriate government policies can encourage this process of improving established settlements. The government can also guide the location and lay-out of new settlements in ways which protect the larger interests of the city without interfering with the constructive functions of the settlements.

During the next decade, governments are likely to rely increasingly on such approaches, rather than on efforts to eradicate the settlements and relocate their residents in low-cost apartments or in satellite developments on or beyond the periphery of the city. Experience with relocation has not been good. Until workers' incomes reach the levels of, say, Singapore, it is extremely difficult to construct conventional housing cheaply enough so that the poorest forty percent of the urban population can afford to pay an unsubsidized rent. Few governments can afford high subsidies on large numbers of housing units. Therefore most low-cost housing projects have been too small-scale to dent the problem, or have set rents appropriate to upper levels of the working class or even

to lower-middle class households rather than to the incomes of many squatter households. Often ex-squatters who are relocated in low-cost projects sell or rent their rights to occupancy to middle-income households better able to afford the rent; the original occupants then return to other squatter settlements. Where low-income families actually occupy the housing projects, physical deterioration, non-payment of rent, and overcrowding have often been severe. Where squatters have been re-settled far from employment sources (usually in outlying districts where land is comparatively cheap) low-income families have found them even less satisfactory. Peripheral locations mean high commuting costs. They also limit possibilities for the part-time and odd jobs essential to supplement the principal wage-earner's low and often intermittent wages. Moreover, in many cases relocation disrupts kinship and social ties on which families depend for security and assistance as well as sociability, and separates vendors and small artisans from their established markets and sources of supply. From the point of view of the governments, such projects turn out to be costly to construct and troublesome to manage. They are also often a political liability. To the best of my rather limited knowledge, Korean experience with eradication of settlements and relocation of the squatters parallels the experience of other nations.

In this context, research designed to distinguish the different types of squatter settlements in Seoul and in other Korean cities, the functions of each type, and the extent and nature of the problems posed by each for broader urban growth, would be rewarding both for theory and for policy. Some studies along these lines are already under way in Seoul. Preliminary findings from one extensive project suggest that the long narrow settlements stretched along the banks of the Chun-gye-chun Canal and other streams differ markedly from the settlements built on the steep hillsides, with respect to the characteristics of the residents, their attitudes, the functions served by the settlements for the residents, their intent to stay in the neighborhood, and their interest in improving their houses and communities. Further analysis in the same and later studies undoubtedly will refine this rough categorization.

The most obvious function of squatting is reduction of the costs of housing. Whatever the quality of squatters' houses--and the quality varies tremendously--they could not have obtained the same size and quality of shelter at the same cost by renting or purchasing a conventional apartment or house. Moreover, they can pay for improvements to the house as and when they have a little extra money, instead of paying a large lump sum as chonsei or down-payment, and/or meeting regular monthly rent or mortgage payments. This can be a crucial advantage for workers whose jobs are insecure, and whose wages leave no margin for illness or other emergencies.

But analysis of the functions served by squatter settlements should not be confined to the problem of housing. Many families might be able to

afford to rent a room or two in legal buildings. But if they did so they would not have money left over to send their children through middle school. Or perhaps they wish to invest the money they save in a small enterprise, thus avoiding paying the extremely high interest rates which prevail on small loans. Studies of the household budgets of a sample of squatters drawn from different settlements and from different income and occupation groups, matched with comparable samples from non-squatter households, might give us a better understanding of the role of squatting in terms of squatters' economic situation as a whole, not merely their housing situation.

In other countries it has been found that squatter settlements not only help poor people stretch their budgets, but also generate certain opportunities for employment which would otherwise not exist. In particular, where residents are actively improving their houses (which occurs in some but not all types of settlements), there is a strong demand for part-time services of people with construction skills--carpentry, electrical wiring, masonry, and the like. Since the squatters could not afford to pay for houses constructed under conventional arrangements, the employment generated in the settlements is additional jobs in the conventional construction industry, and does not substitute for the latter. It might be both useful and most interesting to explore the extent and nature of this and other types of employment created within the settlements.

It is often assumed that a major function of squatter settlements is to provide housing for new migrants and facilitate their integration into the city. But surveys of migrants into Seoul make clear that many of the migrants are young and single. And a recent and intensive survey of squatter areas in Seoul finds that less than 1% of squatters are unattached to households. Clearly single migrants do not settle in squatter settlements, at least not in Seoul. Further studies of the categories of people who do move into the settlements, and their reasons for doing so, could contribute to understanding the functions of the settlements, and the linkages between migration and squatter settlements.

Squatters also move out of the settlements, and those who go probably include many of the most successful economically. In fact, one major function of some types of settlements may be to serve as an economic bridgehead or stepping stone. But studies which consider only those households within a settlement at a particular time may fail to recognize this function of the settlement. Moreover, where those who do well leave, the population at any given time includes some households on their way up and some households which have failed to improve their situation and have stayed in the settlement for a long time. The current population therefore does not accurately reflect the total population which has lived in that settlement during, say, the past five years; it is weighted toward the less skilled, less educated, less energetic, or perhaps less fortunate elements in the total population.

It would be fascinating and informative to trace movement out of various types of settlements, into either conventional housing or other (better?) settlements. Such research could take the form of panel studies of the same settlements over time. Alternatively, one could attempt to locate former residents of squatter settlements, and question them about the conditions which made it possible for them to leave. However, some ex-squatters may be reluctant to disclose their former status.

From the standpoint of city plans and policies, it is important to understand not only the functions served by different types of settlements, but also their capacity for self-improvement. All squatter settlements begin as makeshift shacks on dusty or muddy lots. But some evolve in a few years into neighborhoods of small but well-built houses with courtyards, paved lanes, and other amenities, while others stagnate or deteriorate. What determines the different patterns of development? In other nations several factors have been found to be important. The most important is security of tenure. Where squatters believe that they will eventually get title to their lots, or at least will be permitted to remain indefinitely, they are willing to invest in improvements. Where they are insecure, quite understandably they will not risk whatever small sums they may be able to save from daily needs. A second important factor is density. Where houses are crowded together so closely that there is no room to expand and improve, investment obviously is discouraged. The location of the settlement near or far from sources of employment and its inherent physical features such as drainage or steepness also affect residents' desire and capacity to improve their houses and neighborhood. But these conditions are more flexible than security and density: self-improving settlements in other nations have often been located fairly far from employment and on very steep or otherwise difficult terrain.

The conditions under which Korean squatter settlements upgrade their quality could be tested by locating a number of settlements which have in fact been steadily improved since their inception, and taking an inventory of the characteristics of the settlements themselves and of their residents' characteristics. The findings might be checked against a sampling of a number of settlements which were founded at roughly the same times, do not suffer obvious disadvantages (such as a blatantly unpleasant location or repeated threats of eradication), but have failed to improve.

In exploring any of the topics sketched above, one group which deserves special attention is those residents who rent from other squatters. In Seoul this is a high proportion, perhaps more than half of the entire squatter population. The characteristics of the renters and their reasons for being in the settlements may differ somewhat from those of other squatters. The proportion of renters in a settlement may also affect its capacity for self-improvement. The question is important not only for theory but also for policy. Eradication and relocation programs have ignored renters entirely in the past. Yet renters in eradicated settlements lose not only their shelter but often their chonsei deposit as well. It seems probable that

some of these displaced renters have been unable to scrape together money to rent new shelter, and have become homeless persons.

One additional topic concerning squatter settlements seems to me to be particularly timely and interesting. The Municipal Government of Seoul has recently established criteria and procedures for the selective legalization of certain squatter settlements. Such policies have been attempted in a few other nations in recent years, but the appropriate criteria and procedures under varying conditions remain a subject on which there is little experience or consensus. The effects of the current policies therefore offer a most timely and important topic for analysis. The findings might be helpful both in Korea and in other nations facing similar problems.