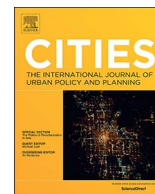




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City profile

Dual policy to fight urban shrinkage: Daegu, South Korea

Yu-Min Joo^{a,*}, Bokyong Seo^b

^a Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, 469C Bukit Timah Rd, 259772, Singapore

^b Department of Urban Planning and Design, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

Daegu is a South Korean inland metropolis, which grew rapidly with a booming textile industry during the country's industrialization under the developmental state. Over the past twenty years however, it has been badly hurt by South Korea's overall slowing down of the economy and population growth. Its key challenges are deindustrialization, population decline, and rising socio-spatial inequality with suburbanization promoting declining inner-city centers – all strikingly similar symptoms shared by many former industrial cities struggling to find a new niche in the global economy. This city profile identifies multi-level policy responses that have sought to revive Daegu and confront its urban shrinkage, under South Korea's relatively recent policies of democratization and decentralization. In particular, it highlights the coexistence of two seemingly opposite policy trends: one of pro-growth strategies and another, more inclusive, regenerative approach.

1. Introduction

Daegu is the third city of South Korea, following Seoul and Busan. It is an inland metropolitan city of 2.5 million, located in North Gyeongsang Province, along South Korea's major Gyeongbu expressway that connects Seoul to Busan. Once known as the country's textile hub, Daegu developed with the country's rapid rise in the global economy led by the developmental state,¹ beginning in the 1960s. The city initially benefited from the global economy, and its textile industry fueled South Korea's export-oriented industrialization, but Daegu is now hurt by globalization as it has struggled to find a new niche amid rising global competition. While Seoul has become one of the key Asian global cities (Hill & Kim, 2000; Kim & Han, 2012), and Busan has emerged as an important international port and, although not without challenges (Joo & Park, 2016), continues to work towards being a global hub (Seo, Cho, & Skelton, 2015); Daegu resembles 'the rest' – those cities, both within and outside South Korea, that are suffering from deindustrialization, slow growth, declining population, and decaying city centers, and are increasingly unplugged from the global economy.

Recently, the literature has begun to frame those cities facing structural urban decline as 'shrinking cities' (Martinez-Fernandez, Audirac, Fol, & Cunningham-Sabot, 2012). Urban shrinkage is not an isolated phenomenon taking place in a few former industrial cores, but is a widespread spatial manifestation of the other side of contemporary

globalization. A number of studies have underscored the diverse causes and manifestations of shrinking cities, both within (Alves, Barreira, Guimarães, & Panagopoulos, 2016) and across countries (Großmann, Bontje, Haase, & Mykhnenko, 2013; Mallach, Haase, & Hattori, 2017; Wiechmann & Pallagst, 2012). The policy responses to shrinking cities have also differed, according to varying institutional and political contexts (Couch et al., 2012; Mallach et al., 2017). It is important to develop cross-national knowledge on urban shrinkage by bringing together the studies on Western Europe, the United States, and Asia (Großmann et al., 2013). Yet the literature on shrinking cities in Asia, as compared to Western Europe and the United States, has been rather limited. The few exceptions are studies of Japanese shrinking cities and Chinese mining cities (see Hattori, Kaido, & Matsuyuki, 2017; He, Lee, Zhou, & Wu, 2017). Notably, there has been little research into the experiences of late industrializers in Asia, in countries that were known for their rapid growth under the developmental state, but are now facing equally fast-paced deindustrialization and aging populations.

South Korean urban development in the latter half of the twentieth century has prioritized growth – an ideology not unlike that of neoliberalism – guided by national-level planning (Park, Hill, & Saito, 2012). The shrinking city literature has been trying to confront the unquestioned pursuit of growth by seeking to shape the discourse to bring about a non-growth planning paradigm for urban shrinkage (Hospers, 2014; Sousa & Pinho, 2015). The main argument is that traditional

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: sppjym@nus.edu.sg (Y.-M. Joo), sobia59@hku.hk (B. Seo).

¹ South Korea's astonishing economic development achieved under the strong state intervention during the latter part of the 20th century, together with Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, has been studied under the developmental state theory. (See Amsden, 1989; Deyo, 1987). The starting point of South Korea's developmental state was when the military government led by Park Chung-hee took power in 1961, and began the state-led export-oriented industrialization as the state's foremost goal.

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Table 1

A brief overview of Daegu (as of 2015).

Area (sq. km)	883.56
Population (persons)	2,513,970
Household	982,360
Administrative districts	7 districts, 1 county
GRDP	46,592 billion Won (3.1% of South Korea)
Distance from Seoul	300 km (1 h 50mins by express train)
Average temperature	26°C (August), 1.4°C(January)

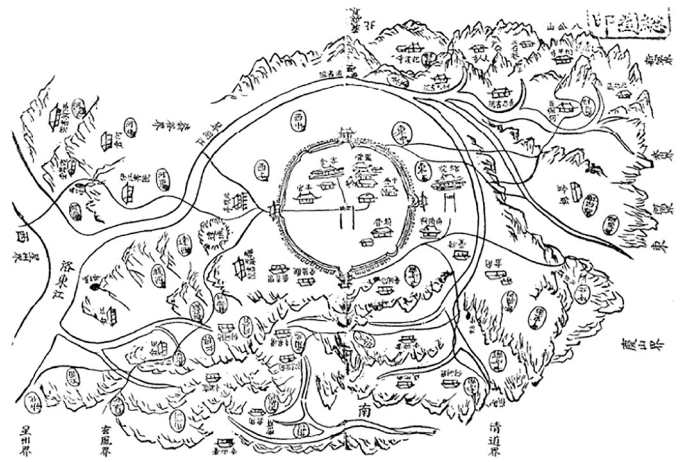
Source: DMG (2016b).

**Fig. 1.** Location of Daegu.

Source: Authors.

growth-oriented strategies cannot bring sustainable and successful development to shrinking cities given their changed economic and population structures. Outside the academy, however, shrinkage remains a stigmatized concept, especially in U.S. cities with a history of strong urban growth agendas (Audirac, 2017; Mallach, 2017; Wiechmann & Pallagst, 2012). As a latecomer to decentralization and democratization, it is unclear how South Korean cities will approach their newly emerging problem of urban shrinkage.

This city profile draws attention to the economic, demographic, and socio-spatial challenges that Daegu has been facing, and the various policy responses that have sought to revive the city. Daegu has been one of the first metropolitan cities to face shrinkage problems amid South Korea's slowing down of economic and population growth. Its labor-intensive manufacturing has significantly waned since the 1990s, and in 2000, the city's ranking within the country fell to fourth in terms of

**Fig. 2.** A map of Daegu in the 1700s.

Source: RRIKS (1982); Quoted in CHCCD (1993b, p.608).

population, as Incheon – a city located in the capital region² – emerged as South Korea's major air and sea port.

In the process of using multi-level analysis to study Daegu's ongoing challenges and policies, the paper identifies two groups of strategies with somewhat opposing goals – a top-down approach, dictated by typical growth agendas and seeking new growth engines, and another more inclusive approach that seeks to work within local conditions. What we observe is a dual policy trend as Daegu tries to fight its way back to being a competitive metropolitan city once more (Table 1) (Fig. 1).

2. Historical development of Daegu

Since the 1600s, Daegu has functioned as the provincial capital based on its significance in the military, administrative, and commercial activities. Literally meaning 'large hills' in Korean, Daegu is surrounded by mountains (Fig. 2), but is well-connected to other regions due to its advantageous geographical location. Since 1601, it has housed the Provincial Office of Gyeongsang,³ and has carried out key administrative functions for Korea's southeast region (CHCCD, 1993b). In 1896, Gyeongsang province divided into North Gyeongsang (Gyeongbuk) and South Gyeongsang (Gyeongnam), and since then, Daegu has been the principal city of Gyeongbuk. It is still the key metropolitan city of the province, but in 2016, the Provincial Office relocated to the city of Andong.

Daegu's first wave of industrialization, focused on cloth, iron, timber production, and food processing industries, took place under the Japanese Occupation (1910 – 1945). After the Sino-Japanese War broke out in 1937, a large number of factories and logistics facilities were built in Daegu and other major Korean cities in order to supply munitions to the Japanese army. Daegu had 254 factories in 1937; by 1941, the number had increased to 927 (CHCCD, 1993a).

The second industrial boom in Daegu took place in the wake of the Korean War (1950 – 1953). Due to the perimeter defense along the Nakdong River that runs north to south along the western border of the city, Daegu's factories and infrastructure remained relatively unscathed amid the destruction, and the city received a large influx of refugees. During South Korea's post-war reconstruction and economic development, labor-intensive industries for export, such as textile and

² The capital region includes Seoul, its surrounding Gyeonggi Province, and Incheon.

³ During the Chosun dynasty, there were 8 provinces, one of which was Gyeongsang. For nearly 300 years, before Gyeongsang divided into Gyeongbuk and Gyeongnam, Daegu was the sole provincial capital of Korea's southeast region.

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