

Socio-Economic Considerations for Planning of a New Capital City

Sang Chuel Choe, Ph.D.*

INTRODUCTION

Capital cities embody and exemplify the nature of their mother nations and are a reflection of the wealth, organization, and power of the political entity. Some nations have poured considerable resources into their wholly new capitals in order to create there an image of the nation as it hopes to be in the future, a goal for the people's aspirations, and a source of national pride. The creation of a new capital city, however, has not always been based on such a wide range of motives. The transfer of the capitals of some nations to new sites have invariably been political acts.

In the case of Korea, the decision to shift the capital to a new site is based on several diverse motivations. The first of these is national security. More than ten million people are under the risk of direct bomb attack from aggressive North Korea, living only 40 miles away from the Demilitarized Zone. One out of every five Koreans is now living in Seoul, and the pace of immigration into Seoul shows no prospect of slowing down. The locational disruption raised by the national territorial division has jeopardized the spatial efficiency of national development, as the over-concentration of people and industries in a skewed location of the capital city at the northeastern corner of the country has been generating much more movement than would occur with a central capital. External diseconomies of scale in Seoul already have become significant and are expected to become aggravated as time goes on. All of these facts have incrementally combined to bring about the decision to move the capital.

The announcement of the decision to build a new capital city was made early this year and seems to have been calmly digested by the people of both Seoul and the entire nation, although the implications of shifting the nation's capital City of Seoul, which has survived for six-hundred years, may be greater than the people imagine.

* Chairman and Assistant Professor, Dept. of Landscape Architecture, Graduate School of Environmental Studies, Seoul National University

LOCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The site where the city will stand is not known. However, the selection of the site for a new capital is one of the toughest and most subtle issues because, given spatial inertia and regionalism which are hard to change in the short period of a long historical continuum, a rough boundary for the optimal location of a new capital city can be delineated. The location of the capital near the centre of gravity of the country is highly defensible from economic and social points of view. The location should be neutral in terms of regionalism, although Korea is not a federal state, as are Australia (Canberra), Brazil (Brasilia) and Pakistan (Islamabad). Even though Korea has not been bothered by the geopolitical divisions, the historical heritage of regionalism dies hard. The location should be equally accessible from all parts of the country and, at least, should facilitate the remodelling of spatial organization around the new city by expanding and revising of the existing networks.

The momentum of shifting the capital city, toward which national resources and aspirations are to be focused, should be fully utilized to reduce regional disparities existing between Seoul and other regions. The creation of a new city, disregarding whether it is a capital city or not, will be instrumental for the reorganization of patterns of urban and regional distribution. In this sense, the location of a new capital city should be selected in the context of regional development.

The site for a new capital city should meet the generic requirements which are applied to other cities. However, a capital city, being different from a conventional city, may require an impressive vista and a certain monumentality in the site per se, not mentioning whether this means following European formality or achieving Oriental naturalistic geomancy. The concept of geomancy has been aptly defined as the art of adapting the residences of the living and the dead so as to cooperate and harmonize with the local currents of the cosmic breath.⁽¹⁾ It is physically interpreted to mean that the site of a city has to be bound on the north by a elegant mountain range and to be encompassed on the south by an ever-flowing river. In any circumstances, the selection of location will finally resort to geopolitical compromise and, hopefully, a practical scrutinization of the economic and technical feasibility of building city within a limited area of the centre of gravity in the country.

(1) Yi-Fu Tuan, "Discrepancies Between Environmental Attitude and Behavior", in P.W. English and R.C. Mayfield ed., *Man, Space and Environment*, Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 74.

POPULATION AND STAGES OF GROWTH

The anticipated population of the new capital city seems naturally define itself by stages. The government considers that the population will reach approximately one half million when the city is completed. This includes the number of necessary employees needed by civil service and their families, an unspecified number of construction workers, the existing population of the site and the population engaged in residentiary industries. How fast the population should reach one half million by the end of construction depends on many uncertain factors. Nevertheless, we may guess that population will increase by the stages of growth shown in Table 1. Learning from the experience of the newly created cities like Seongnam and Ulsan in Korea, the new capital city will grow much faster than other cities of the same size have grown in the past.

As far as the anticipated population is concerned, there would be two kinds of approaches for planning a new capital city: a prefixed population, adopted by Brazilia and most British new towns, and the open-ended population which has been the case of Islamabad. we can assume that the former approach is possibly adopted by in the Korean case of a new capital city.

Table-1: Stages of Growth and Major Development Indicators

	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
Population (persons)	75,000	250,000	500,000
Characteristics	Construction-Leading	Administrative-Specialization	Economic Maturation
Construction Period	Construction Period	Transfer Period	Period of Maturity
Planning Area (Square Kilometers)	300	300	300
Built-up Area (Square Kilometers)	20	46	64

A prefixed population for a new city raises a number of questions.

Although a capital city can be planned for a small population and a limited administrative role, it will have to play in the long run a role of commercial, cultural, and financial centre which will naturally increase in size to a larger city. The size of the city and its population should be kept flexible and the anticipated population should be used only as a yardstick for the provision of infrastructure facilities and for employment generation.

It is desired that, from the beginning, the plan will assume that the new capital city

will fulfill a diversified function including some manufacturing activities. This will create a balanced community which could survive, even after losing its governmental function, when Korea becomes one country and Seoul regains the capital function. Balanced community means more than economic significance. Special attention is also to be given to promoting a balanced community in both age and social structure. It may be wise to build specifically for elderly people and expanded families at the outset of city construction. It is fundamentally important that a new capital city should be developed as a self-contained community in which the newcomers will find work as well as settlement. A new city must appeal to the principal employees of government service as well as their dependents. Many of the newcomers, otherwise, may refuse to settle down on a permanent basis in a newly created city and are likely to drift back to a more livable city, if any chance is provided, or commute daily or weekly from Seoul or other adjacent large metropolis.

PLANNING A HUMAN COMMUNITY

The pleasing social pictures drawn by planners and designers are meant to display the excellent fruit borne by the underlying social and economic institutions which they advocate. The planner's most widely used concept of social institution is the hierarchial constellation of human society. Whether it be called 'neighborhood unit' or 'planning unit', the aim is to carry out large-scale urban development in a coherent fashion, paying due attention to often neglected fundamentals: individual and collective human needs. What is aimed at is a social unit to support a varied range of communal facilities, and to attain a satisfactory balance of income groups among the residents.⁽²⁾

The concept is that of a social unit comprising a certain number of people from a variety of classes, occupying a defined area of land, served with the amenities and facilities necessary for a healthy social life, sited at convenient distances, with a service centre where the social institutions of day-to-day life are grouped.

The neighborhood unit first suggested by C.A. Perry in 1929 and elaborated further by many others has been adopted in most master plans for the more recent new and expanded towns as shown in Table 2. But with it have come the more dogmatic ideas of those who have attempted, with an insufficient factual background, to formulate the-

(2) Norman Person, "Planning a Social Unit", *Plan Canada* Vol. 3, No. 2, September 1962, pp. 78-79.

ories of neighborhood units as a cure for the chaotic disorder of the modern city. Many sociological inquiries have shared the skeptical view of applying the concept of neighborhood units to the actual world. Neighborhood planning has been widely and uncritically adopted because it appeared to answer so many planning and social problems. Now, the neighborhood idea is being subjected to intense criticism. In the past, communities have almost invariably evolved by natural means over long periods of time. But time is no longer on our side. The scale and tempo of construction can quickly outstrip the present leisurely pace of community development.⁽³⁾ The increase in car ownership has resulted in people becoming more mobile and able to satisfy their interests over a wider area.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the master plan of a city itself is only a physical framework and will not necessarily produce a living community.

Table-2: Theories on Hierachy of Neighborhood Units

Hierachy	I	II	III	IV	V
	Patriarchal Unit	District Unit	Parish Unit	Neighborhood Unit	
C.A. Perry (Families)	5-10	50-150	500-1500	multiples of parish unit	
W. Christaller (Dwelling Units)	100-200	300	700	1,800	5,300
C.A. Doxiadis (Dwelling Units)	Small Neighborhood 75	Neighborhood 450	Small Town 2,800	Town 15,000	
Islamabad (persons)	Class I 50-100	Class II 400-800	Class III 3,000	Class IV 10,000	Class V 20,000-40,000
U.S.S.R. (families)	Group 100-200	Block 400-800	Rayons 800-1,600	City 3,200-6,400	
Royal Institute of British Architects (persons)	Residential Unit 1,000	Neighborhood Unit 5,000	Borough Unit 140,000	District Unit 240,000	
Brazilia (persons)	Quadra 750	Superquadra 3,000	Neighborhood Unit 12,000		

To quote Toynbee,⁽⁴⁾ "neighborliness is demanding, but it is rewarding too." Its reward is sociability and the zest for life that sociability brings with it. However, one of the thorny issues which a newly created capital city may have to face is the promotion of a balanced community in both economic and social structure. It is easy to envisage at the

(3) Lesley E. White, "The Social Factors Involved in the planning and Development of New Towns", in *Planning of Metropolitan Areas and New Towns*, U.N., 1967, p. 194.

(4) Arnold Toynbee, *Cities on the Move*, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 227.

planning stage a balanced social unit in terms of income and status. But in reality, this will be difficult. Harmonized coexistence between the uncontrolled settlement of construction workers and the residential districts of middle-class government employees should be attained. But it may not be so easy as the planners think it ought to be. The higher the income and the better housing, the lower the standard of neighborliness. The social drabness of a newly built city may be reinforced by the egocentric middle-class values of the status-oriented mandarines in their middle-class material setting of urban facilities.

Before one can apply the concept of the neighborhood unit in modern urban environments, one first clarify the various conceptions and assumptions contained within that ambiguous term. Deliberate measures are necessary to promote a balanced community health, escaping from the trap of physical determinism of neighborhood units

ECONOMIC BASE AND DEVELOPMENT STAGES

As J.H. Harody has said, it is surprising how little importance planners attributed to the economies of the new capitals created in this century and within their areas of influence.⁽⁵⁾ Of course in the new capitals, the civil service will account for a large proportion of the work force and for a long time the building industry also will be important. It is not clear whether the new capital city is to be developed as a full-fledged urban economy or as a specialized economy of the government sector. However, a desirable image of a new capital city under consideration seems to begin with a reaction against the congested and smoky industrial city, resulting, for the most part, in a selection of pre-industrial values of gardens and serenity. At least, there is a vague image of economic structure being shared by the planners and government officials that a new capital city should be immune from the inherent vice of a large metropolitan industrial complex, which is represented by the present capital city of Seoul.

It is uncertain in the case of the new capital city to what extent and in what kind manufacturing industries will be allowed to locate. Since any city can not be completely isolated from industry and be planned quite independently without consideration for land for industrial establishments, industrial development will have to conform to the development of the city and should not be left to the whim of private enterprise. At first, industrial establishments will be needed to provide construction-materials and what urban

(5) Jorge E. Harody, "The Planning of New Capital Cities," *Planning of Metropolitan Areas and New Towns*, U.N., 1967. p. 239.

economist call residentiary industries or consumer-goods industries.

Industrial development of a new city has always been very slow and has been arranged in a time sequence of distinct stages. We might identify, first, the stage of construction in which the urban economy is dominated by construction industries through the period of construction. This initial stage is to be followed by the stage of administrative specialization in which the local economy broadens to include government services, and deepens by extending forward or backward linkages of government-related establishments and by adding some residentiary industries for the government employees and their families. The third and final stage is the stage of economic maturation in which the proportion of government services in the urban economy diminishes as the other sectors of the local economy fill out the range of business and consumer services. In this stage, the urban economy may play the role of national eminence in some specialized skill or economic functions like finance and so-called systems industries. The urban dynamics of economic growth are so simple as the stage theorists have hypothesized. As W. Thompson pointed out,⁽⁶⁾ promotion up through the hierarchy of cities is partly a matter of good timing or a sufficiency of momentum in interurban competition.

We do not know yet where the new capital city will be, but it is very important to

Table-3: Employment Structure of A New Capital City

(Unit: thousand persons)

	Development Stages		
	First Stage	Second Stage	Third Stage
Total Population	75.0	250.0	500.0
Persons Employed	46.6(100%)	133.4(100%)	203.3(100%)
Persons Employed/ Total Population	62%	53%	41%
Agriculture	13.0(28.0%)	10.0(7.5%)	7.0(3.5%)
Manufacturing	—	5.5(4.1%)	23.0(11.3%)
Food	—	2.1(1.6%)	6.1(3.0%)
Printing	—	1.3(1.0%)	3.3(1.6%)
Others	—	2.1(1.5%)	13.6(6.7%)
Social Overhead Capital & Other Services	33.6(72.0%)	117.9(88.4%)	173.3(85.2%)
Government	21.7(46.6%)	52.4(39.3%)	63.0(31.0%)
Construction	10.0(21.4%)	16.0(12.0%)	20.0(9.8%)
Trade	0.4(0.9%)	13.7(10.3%)	25.0(12.3%)
Business	0.3(0.5%)	23.2(17.4%)	39.8(19.6%)
Others	1.2(2.6%)	12.6(9.4%)	25.5(12.5%)

(6) W.R. Thompson, *A Preface to Urban Economics*, Johns Hopkins Press, 1965, p. 18.

understand the economic dynamics of the new capital city relative to neighboring cities since a new city does not come about as an isolated island but does have to survive and to grow through competition with the existing urban hierarchy and regional economy as a whole. Although it goes beyond the present discussion to give some concrete figures about the composition of employment by industry and its trends over time, the following Table 3 is intended to give glimpses of what the city will look in terms of economic structure. The figures are derived from the standard composition of Korean cities, exogenously given the total population and the number of government employees.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS

Workers are necessary for the building of a completely new city. When time to build a new capital city is announced, tens of thousands of workers from rural areas and other cities will certainly trek to the designated site in order to earn wages by building the great and grand new city. While they are being employed at this, they will be housed in camps or in the neighboring cities and villages scattered around the site at commuting distance. We do not know whether the new capital city will need an independent settlement for the construction workers or will utilize the existing settlements near construction site. Under any circumstances, controlled settlements for construction workers should be deliberately taken in account in the very beginning of planning for a new city.

As far as the problems of construction workers are concerned, the accommodation of them during the construction period is not enough. Another issue is where will they go when the construction work is finished and paid off. Unlike the construction workers in the existing cities, the discharged labor force at a new city may have no prospects awaiting them in their previous places of work. The immigrant building workers will not easily find places to live in the exquisitely-designed townscape of a newly-built city. Also, their life may be happier in shanty-towns which are less formal and less oppressively inhibited by regulations than it would be in a well-planned new city.

The planner's ideal of fitting the man to the plan has to be less rigidly applied. The planner's dream of building a impeccable city in terms of function and structure only should be pursued as an ideal. In the early stages some improvisation may be required and a flexible program to deal with the influx of people in the short period of time will be necessary. Planners tend to put a misplaced faith in the idea that everything can be controlled by their plans. The newly created city should not be too clean for many immi-

grants of little means to live in an integrated socio-economic residency pattern and in a comparatively small and elastic human settlement.

Another bothering problem is to relocate the existing inhabitants of the site chosen for a new capital city. No matter where the site will be, we will find more than ten-thousand inhabitants within the proposed site boundary. Some of them will be employed in the construction industries. But most of them will need intense job training and relocation programs. We know that the forced dislocation from the site of a new capital city is a highly disruptive and disturbing experience. The loss of a sense of spatial identity is more than that of losing economic ways and means. They should be resettled in areas not greatly far from site, with continuous attention to their grievance of a lost home.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The nature of this paper is not to provide a machine or method, which will furnish a definite solution, but to attempt to highlight some socio-economic factors to be considered in the process of planning and building a new capital city. The present attempt by no means pretends to include all aspects of the broad question of socio-economic considerations in a paper of this type. In summary, the planner should not ignore the people for whom he plans. He has to give attention to the social structures, institutions, culture and sub-cultures, socio-economic classes and age groups which are very fabric of society. Although people reside, work and play in buildings, their behavior is not determined by the buildings.

Very few planners have been exposed to the exercise of planning and building a new capital city. To most planners, the exercise will be an adventurous but very risky excursion into a new branch of the field. As a social scientist planner with an intimate working relationship with physical planners and architect-planners, it is often felt that physical planners can be too optimistic about the social harmony which will result from their physical plans. The logical consequence of this optimism is to assume that the structure of the physical environment will lead to the attainment of the common social good in a determinate way. To paraphrase Webber,⁽⁷⁾ spatial and physical arrangements have no value which is intrinsic to their forms per se. Spatial arrangement and physical environment have only instrumental value to the accomplishment of a non-spatial socio-economic objective.

(7) M. Webber, "The New Urban planning in America", *Town Planning Institute Journal*, January 1968.