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Forward:

This second Asia-Pacific Urban Forum held in Bangkok in March 11-15, 1996 aimed to examine Asian cities in poor urban middle class perspective, has a special meaning for Korean citizens who had been ruled under military governments without proper civil rights for 30 years.

South Korea is now standing in a turning point that both citizens and government should establish themselves in a new local autonomy era which has just begun in July, 1995. It has been 37 years for South Korea to revive local autonomy.

My comments are based on my experience in Seoul, the capital city of Korea where I live.

The Context:

Seoul is the last capital city established as a result of ideological confrontation in East-West Cold era. Even Berlin Wall was gone, citizens in Seoul still have not been liberated from the threat of war, and this situation has often been used by undemocratic government as a mean to control citizens which consequently withered urban societies. Seoul, the capital city of the country that had suffered most by conflict and contradictions in world history, also became an object of envy among Asian cities because Seoul showed a rapid achievement of economic growth over the remnants of war.

Seoul has twelve million people, a quarter of total Korean population, a quarter of Korean universities, and is responsible for 40% of national tax. Seoul is the heart and brain of Korea for its financial and market functions. It has 600 years of history as a capital city; however, this gigantic city has the characteristics of the ultra-rapid growths of national economy achieved in just 30 years, the vitality of a booming city and confused situation. In a generation, the population in Seoul has tripled, urban areas doubled, number of cars increased by 160-fold, and financial volume of city expanded by 1000-fold. Because most economic and cultural resources were concentrated in Seoul, government policy for decentralization of Seoul population was helpless. During this rapid growth, uncontrollable urban problems also has appeared. Under this situation, city management in Seoul was bent on taking care of city expansion. Great amount of resources and administration had been spent for construction of infrastructure including houses, schools, roads, waterworks, and sewage disposal. Due to poor financial situation, urban development had relied on real estate speculation, which consequently produced a crowded and condensed city environment and the poor urban classes were marginalized as in other Asian cities, especially in the families having under age, women, or elderly householders.

In front of 21st century, two huge waves from different directions are crossing in the cities in the world. One is the wave for globalization and informationization, and the other is for localization.

Now Seoul is confronted with a transition era of real local autonomy and self-government. Seoul has to heal the scars from the rapid growth, and on the other hand, should confront itself with the periods of highly industrialized societies and information in 21st century. It requires the transition of governmental paradigm. It should be the transition from an administration of external expansion of construction to a city administration of having serious consideration of human value. City administration for poor urban middle classes needs to be expanded, and it is a good thing to see the initiation of such trend.

From the experience of a bridge breakage in Han river, the collapse of Sampoong department store which took away 500 lives, gas explosion, etc., the changes in city administration should protect the lives and safety of urban citizens, resolve the severe traffic problems, recover contaminated environments, solve the neglected problems in urban poor classes, and promote citizen's welfare.

In order to achieve these, both administration officers, citizens, and all constituents of society should escape from old way of thinking and behavior.

Chapter 2: Raising the Curtain on the Urban Drama:
 the Need for a New Approach to Policy

Regardless of the types of any society, their profits can be achieved only by the act of unified constituents. Such is in the case of the weak like urban poor. The most important factor influencing the weak to make them an organization is NGO that promotes more public interest.

According to the discussion in this document, NGOs are a vital though still poorly developed means to change the present urban reality. They can work with both government and the low-income communities to channel the needed technical advice and credit to the communities. However, their wave is often ignored or resisted by government and has recently become more donor-driven rather than serving needs for the communities. Moreover, simplistic NGO attitudes that see governments as the opponent, or the informal sector as only evil, need to change. For these reasons, NGO involvement is still on a very small scale.

In the view of our situation, it is completely agreeable, and the importance of NGO's role will be explained by the cases of formation procedure of civil movement and vitality in Korea.

Under the current globalization trend in market economy, all cities in the world are being managed by 3 sectors different each other in their functions and characteristics. They are the public sector - governments having powers, the private sector having economic power, and the third sector, NGO that exposes public needs and shortage neglected or unconsidered by other two sectors.

In case of Asia where most countries having authoritative governmental systems, the private sector and the third sector are under strong influence of government. In Korea, NGO had been suppressed by military government for 30 years, and as a reaction, they became a small number and were more picked, however, they used to exert more strong power.

Civil society and the growth of NGO movement in Korea has unique paradigm which has grown through last 100 years of historical development, as though they proceeded the universal values of Western civil society in their ideology and situational roots.

Civil movement in Korean society represented by national self-determination under Japanese rule had maintained its ideological paradigm even after liberation and under the long authoritarian policies. On this base, civil class became to form in Korean society in 1960s and their civil consciousness became accumulated. Autonomous civil societies constituted by citizens exploded in 1970s and 1980s with rapid industrialization and urbanization of Korea and they are still growing.

Among these, so-called dissidents having revolutionary ideas sacrificed themselves against dictatorial military government, and consequently authoritarian

systems were collapsed in 1987 and the new era of civil society has opened. Since the governmental restriction to civil society has decreased, citizens' interest changed gradually from resistance against governmental systems to a variety of problems such as environment, welfare, human health and rights which can improve the quality of life. And the number of these civil societies are increasing in Korea.

However, the management of Korean civil movement societies only with membership fee is unstable due to the lack of citizens' participation and financial support. As other NGO in Asia, when they were supported by public or private sectors, they could not concentrated on the service to local society as indicated by Arif Hassan.

Chapter 3: The Present Urban Dilemma:
 Macro Imperative versus Micro Needs

Current Korean GNP reaches \$10,000. This is a big growth; however, Korean citizens do not feel the benefits of such growth. This growth has not been trickled-down for NGO and they still need to rely on foreign aids.

Why is that so? As predicted by the situation of former Korean presidents' secret money which had been announced extensively domestically and abroad, the wealth obtained from economic growth has not been distributed properly and has been used for corrupt politics. The phenomenon of the rich gets richer and the poor gets poorer became more distinctive.

This phenomenon appeared in various situation. In the level of government, a large number of people lost their residential areas due to dam construction, and the plutocrats constructed golf courses, leasure towns, international sports complex, which intensified the distinction between the rich and poor.

Free market system where the development plans are moved by governmental policies intensifying economic gap and the enterprises seeking their own profits, isolated urban poor and middle class. Moreover, a large scale of development toward the newest and the best is not suitable for their life pattern and consequently make them give up their opportunities voluntarily or unvoluntarily.

In 1990s, most usable land in Seoul were exploited and the growth of Seoul is getting slow. Population in Seoul is also decreasing due to that the number of incoming surpasses the number of outgoing population. In population structure, the portion of old aged citizens has increased; however, welfare systems for these population has not established or worked properly, they are emerging as a marginal group in addition to urban poor.

Chapter 4: The New Urban Contract: Institutional Change and Civic Activation

The ideal type of current society, participatory democracy, has to be preceded by various types of political revolutions and also requires many systemic revolution in administration and society. Participation of democratic citizens and the systemic improvement to guarantee the security of citizens need to be established. Without systemic revolution, the request for citizens' participation and help is useless.

For this revolution, first, improvement of law system obstructing the freedom of civic movements, second, raising public organizations and fortification of their support system, third, systemic improvement to help and establish financial independence, fourth, systemic improvement in participation, etc. can be suggested. The fourth category includes the participation in governmental policy establishment and administration procedure, opening for the information, opportunity expansion for national and public research facilities. The responsibilities of intellectuals and the role of civic societies and NGOs are huge in this new period. NGOs in 21st century of Korea should revolutionize political systems and monitor abuse or misuse of power, and moreover, should contribute for the construction of new democratic civic community from the collapsed Korean society due to urbanization.

Since July 1995, new changes in administration are being made by the Mayor elected by popular vote in Seoul Metropolitan City. Under the slogan of Make Seoul a Human City, it was announced that citizens can be involved in city administration as a partner. Citizens' involvement in the procedures of policy making, execution, and evaluation is promoting administration efficiency. The most important factor making Seoul citizens a community not a crowd, is promotion of more participation of citizens in city administration. City needs to supply everything for its citizens, but citizens also need to escape from old habit expecting everything from the government.

For an example, Seoul city constituted an organization called Green Seoul Citizen's Committee with 100 representatives from various walks of life, and made them serve as partners in environmental administration. This opportunity not only made the members of 100 public organizations to participate in city administration but also expanded environmental administration to a wide civic movement. This is the first attempt in Korea that administrative officers and citizens work together in the same level. Success or fail of this attempt relies on changed awareness of both officers and citizens and their strong will of practice. Now we have a bright view. This case in Seoul has a special meaning because its success will influence the whole Korean societies. It corresponds to the spirit of "Agenda 21" consented in Earth Summit in Brazil in June 1992.

There is also an example of failure in Paldang water protection policy for 18

million people living in capital areas. Opposed to government' expectation, now the residents in this area want the water source corrupted soon not to serve for. The reason for this originated from that central government had isolated the residents of this area and its local government in policy making for water protection. Consequently, their oppinions were neglected, and the policies concentrated on restriction produced an extreme inconvenience in their life, damaged their property and living rights, and took away their own initiative for water protection.

Although local governmental systems have begun, there is a conflict for construction of independent local systems withdrawing citizen's participation which comes from the fact that local government does not have proper power and financial distribution. Same as the fact that urban poor class needs to be empowered to solve their own problems, local residents and governments need to be empowered to make them serve as public communities and to participate in national policies.