

# The Consequence of Sense of Place on Residential Decisions of the Urban Community of South Korea

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**Abstract-** The sense of place, the feeling of security and comfortably at place and time is one of the crucial factors that affect to human decisions. As one of the main elements of any kind of place, sense of place is a cause as well as, a result of the place process because people are experiencing location and locale of the place and that sense of place leads to determine the human decisions. Hence, sense of place is related to the identity of the place and the dwellers of the place. The residential decision is one of the most important decisions of people because it directly related to the human investments not only money but also time, physical and mental power, etc. Therefore, urban planners should pay attention to identify the consequences of sense of place of the community to optimize the urban planning efforts.

**Index terms:** sense of place, place theory, urban planning, spatial stratification,

## I. INTRODUCTION

The sense of place, one of the interwoven major elements of any kind of places, is the sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time (Agnew 1987; Pathmasiri, 2015a). In other words, sense of place is the feeling of security (food security, income security, physical security, etc.) and comfortably (mental satisfaction, privacy, social dignity, etc) of life and property at a specific place and time. Therefore, everyone uses it as a decision-supporting tool in routine decision-making process.

The sense of place relates to identity. "Identity is how we make sense of ourselves" (Rose, 1995: 88p); and it is "connected to a particular place by a feeling that you belong to that place, it's a place in which you feel comfortable, or at home, because part of how you define yourself is symbolized by certain qualities of that place" (Rose, 1995: 89p). Thus, sense of place is related to the identity of the dwellers. Besides, "many intense feelings of belonging focus on domestic places: a room, a house, a garden. Such places can offer a feeling of safety and

refuge" (Rose, 1995:89p). In this sense, a sense of place is a natural human attribute; and sometimes it is suggested that this desire is a territorial instinct (Rose, 1995).

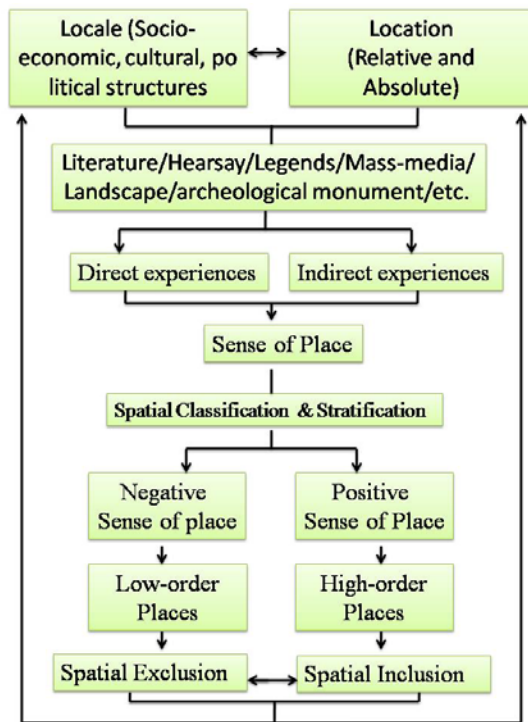
Rose (1995) identified three kinds of sense of places; identifying with the place, identifying against the place, and not identifying. People can identify different places based on their sense of places and the identities. Sometimes someone may feel that he/she belongs to a particular place (whatever it is a domestic place, apartment, village, region, country, etc.), because he/she feels comfortable and having mental and physical security in the place. In contrary, someone may feel that he/she is not belonging to the place and he/she may have had bad experiences at the place. However, for some other places, feelings 'for the place or against for the place' would not be developed in our mind due to the lack of information related to the structures of the place.

The feeling of security and comfortably is developed based on the life experience (Figure 1). People experience the macro scale areas based on the local/ micro scale places, because of 'everyone still continues to live a local life, and the constraints of the body ensure that all individuals, at every moment, are contextually situated in time and space' (Guddens, 2010).

The feeling, on the one hand, can be developed due to the nature phenomena and characteristics of the place at the time. In other words, location characteristics of the place would lead to developing the sense of place.

On the other hand, sense of place is the feelings of social structures (locale) at a particular place and time (Figure 2). By means of lifelong socialization, and though the limits set by the physical environment, people draw upon social structures (Agnew, 1987). Due to the social structuration process, social structures lead to societal stability and security. Hence, social experience of a person at a place and time is not solely personal experience but also an experience of the social structures that constituted to the place at the time.

**Figure 1: The sense of place development process and its consequences**



In a society, there are many kinds of social structures, such as socio-cultural structures, economic structures, political structures, etc. Each social structure has the power to control its members and to be reproduced in the society. However, in contrast, the power of each social structure very in compare to the other social structures constituted to the place. In another words, in all society, there are superstructures, infrastructures, and the deep structures. The power of social structures are not static, they are dynamic according to the time and space dimensions. Hence, structural experience and feelings are varying in time and space (Johnston, 1987, Peet, 2008; Pathmasiri, 2014). For example, as a superstructure, market economic structures may do a major role in 'sense of place development processes' in socio-economically developed societies/places; in under developed societies/places, cultural structures would be the superstructures of the society (Pathmasiri, 2015b).

However, in contrast, peoples are not cultural dopes; to a certain extent, people are capable and knowing agents (Agnew, 1987). Everyone live their lives; they are going their own path and doing their own projects. Therefore, sometimes one's personal experience may not be related to the social structures constituted to the place. Therefore, sense of place can be developed as individual's personal experiences or communal experiences. Another characteristic of the sense of place is that it may be

developed through on the image or action of a person or a group of people.

Place are dynamic because due to the biophysical processes, social structuration process and nature of human thinking process. Hence, as a cause and a result of the place process, sense of place is also changed in the time dimension. If people identify a place as a secure and comfortable place, they invest their time, power and money to reside in and to develop the place. Conversely, if people identify against the place, they would not invest in the place, try to migrate to secure and comfortable place.

The landscape is one of the main data sources to identify the sense of place (present-days as well as past days). Sometimes people change the landscape to destroy the evidence related to the historical evolution of the place. Apart from the archeological records, literature and oral history also can transmit the historical sense of place of a place.

Hence, getting direct and indirect experience at a place, one can develop a positive or negative sense of place. The lack of information, experience of the place leads to develop memory blank states regarding the place. If a person, family, or society lives/live a long period in the same place would lead to developing a strong sense of place (Negative or positive) about where living and interacting other places.

Every large area consists of a group of small areas/local places. Therefore, sense of place may also focus on other kinds of places, at a range of different scales, such as local, region, province, country, etc (Rose, 1995). In addition, when interacting with others, people get to experience the other places too. Therefore, they can develop a sense of place related to the dwelling place as well as to the other places. Besides, people use this sense of place as a way of defining the others those are not the members of the society/place. Hence, it is clear that people use the sense of place to classify/identify people as well as places.

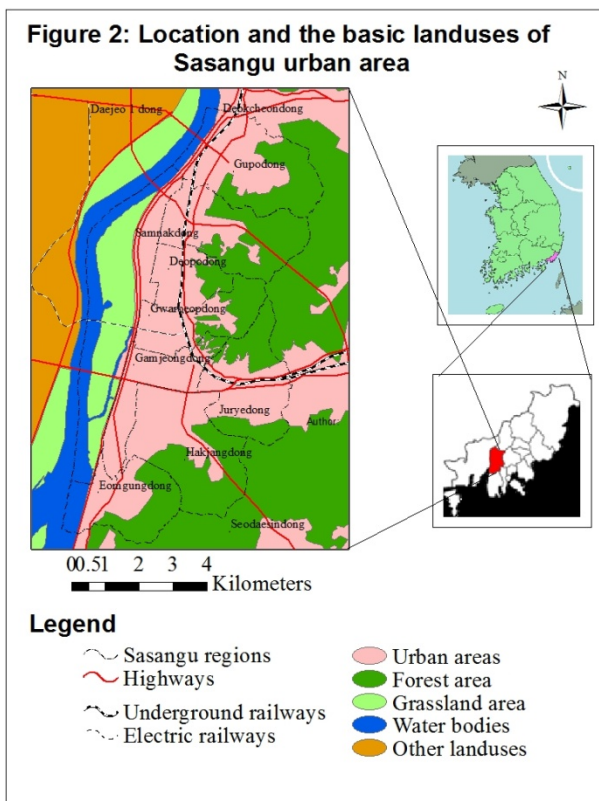
Not only that, based on the sense of relative security and the comfortably, classified places are stratified by people in their minds. Then, some places are stratified, as spatially excluded areas and the dwellers of the places may be socially excluded by the mass society. Positively identified places are stratified as spatially included areas and the dwellers may be socially included by the mass society. Spatial/social exclusion and inclusion lead to people's spatial decisions, especially residential decisions and the quality of life at the place.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is identifying the consequences of sense of place on residential decisions of the urban community of South Korea. The secondary objective of the study is identifying the socio-spatial hierarchy of traditional and modern South Korean urban area.

## II. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of the study a case study was conducted in Sasangu region of Bussan metropolitan city (Figure 2). In addition to the secondary data and information, primary data and information gathered based on random sampling method based questionnaire survey (100 of university students), key informant interview (22 real estate companies were interviewed to collect information related to 1178 apartment houses), and observation.



## IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sasangu urban area is located on Nanjong Valley and east bank of Nakdong River (Figure 2). It is a part of Bussan metropolitan area of South Korea since 1995. The total population of the area is approximately 472,000 in 2016. The land extent of the area is 32.09 Km<sup>2</sup> and population density is about 13,090 per square kilometer. Therefore,

majority of residents of the area are living in apartment houses.

According to the legends and evidence, the study area has more than 1000-years old history. Since *Silla* Dynasty (A.D. 676 - A.D 918), *Sasangu* was a peripheral part of Dongle-kun country and that time *Sasangu* had been governing by dividing three sub-regions; Jurey, Kupho, and Kegam (Wikimedia Foundation, 2016a).

During the *Joseon* Dynasty (A.D. 1392 – A.D. 1894), Korean society had been organized based on a caste system. The main castes of the society were *Yangban* (aristocracy), *Chungin*, (middle caste), *Sangmin* (common people), *Nobi* (the lowest caste), *Baekjeong* (untouchable, outcast group) (Kim, 2005). *Yangban* were the ruling class and they were mainly composed of civil servants and military officers. *Chungin* caste was the next caste that below the *Yangban* caste. Government-employed technical specialists (e.g. interpreters, physicians, jurists, astronomers, accountants, calligraphers, and musicians), military officers were included to this caste. Peasants, laborers, fishermen, some craftsmen, and merchants were the next caste called *Sangmin*. They were considered as clean workers because their economic activities were accordance to the rules of the social structures of the society. Further, they paid most of Korea's taxes and were subject to the military draft. However, they had little social states and the consequence of this exclusion was poverty. Further, at that time, 3/4 of Koreans were *Sangmin*. The lowest caste of the Korean caste system of *Joseon* Dynasty was *Nobi* that composed by slaves, serfs, and indentured servants. Traditionally, the people, occupied in some economic activities such as hunting, butchering, skinning, and leather tanning had not considered as members of the society; they were excluded from the society as untouchable, outcaste groups. They were excluded not only from the society but also from the developed areas/ urban areas. Socio-spatial exclusion leads to marginalizing these low castes and untouchable groups into ghetto type places on the outskirts of towns and villages. They were not recognized as citizens and had no civil rights, had excluded from the jobs which other castes were involved. Further, they had a monopoly over their social occupations principally actors, minstrels, entertainers, prostitutes, etc. Most of these economic activities were prohibited from the Buddhist religious structures, which was the most dominant religious structure at that time.

Therefore, it is clear that due to its socio-spatial peripheral location of *Sasangu* in relation to *Dongle-kun* country, *Sasangu* had been excluded/marginalized from socio-

economic, political and cultural activities of *Dongle-kun* country.

Then during the colonial period of Korea (1910-1945), Japanese had considered Koreans as ‘others’ from their society. Japanese, directly and indirectly, forced Koreans to occupy in some economic activities which prohibited by the traditional Korean social rules. Hence, it is clear that Japanese colonialism weakened and destabilized the Korean caste system; it led to collapse the socio-spatial hierarchy of all over the country. However, in 1945, Korea won the independence from Japan (Kim, 2003).

However, due to the Korean War (1950-1953), socio-spatial structures of the country drastically changed and imbalanced again. Bussan was one of the two cities that South Korean government could able to keep their authority. Due to these circumstances, approximately half-a-million refugees crowded in Bussan. At the end of the war, about 1/3 of Bussan population was refugees (Lankov, 2010). It led to creating ghettos with slums in the previous urban landscape.

On the other hand, United Nation Organization (UNO) with the United States of America (USA) have done a great roll to reconstruct and to developed the socio-economic environment of South Korea. Under the intervention of UNO and USA, some social structures, such as Christian religion, as well as capitalist economic structure, and social class structure rapidly reproduced and spread all over the country and led to being a New Industrial Country (NIC). Due to the socio-economic, cultural and political structural changes new middle class were emerged in between the capitalist upper class and the relatively poor working/labor class. This middle class is consisting of civil servants, salaried white-collar workers in large private companies, and professionals with specialized training, such as engineers, health care professionals, university professors, architects, and journalists. The number of factory workers also has grown impressively (Savada, et.al, 1990). According to Cho (2015), when it was 2013, about 67.1% of total families were in middle class and 14.3% and 18.6% families were in lower class and upper class family in respectively.

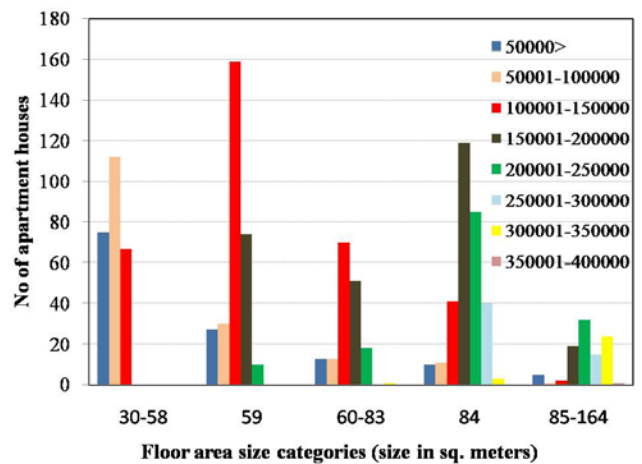
This social structuration process occurs in specific locations; each class is defining their own place, because a place is an area in which ‘settings for the constitution of social relations are located and with which people can identified’ (Agnew, 1987: 28p). In other words, each class is developing and organizing its own class-oriented places.

Because of contemporary South Korean society is organized based on the capitalist social class system, the economic power of each family is most important.

Purchasing ability an apartment house of a family mainly depends on the economic ability of the family. Real estate market motivates the community to constitute the each class in specific places/ apartments.

The average floor area per apartment house for the sample is 71.1 sq. meters. However, as indicates in Figure 3, about 27.4% of sample apartment houses are 84 m<sup>2</sup> of size, 26.6% are 54 m<sup>2</sup> and 22.5% of houses are in between of 30-58 sq. meters. Apart from that, floor area sizes of 14.7% houses are in-between 60-83sq. meters and 8.7% are more than 85 sq. meters. These houses can be categorized into three groups based on their prices; the **cheaper houses** (less than US\$ 50,000.00 in 30 m<sup>2</sup> – 58 m<sup>2</sup> floor size category and less than US\$ 100,000.00 in other categories), the **expensive/luxurious houses** (more than US\$ 100,000.00 in 30 m<sup>2</sup> – 58 m<sup>2</sup> category, more than US\$ 150,000.00 in 59 m<sup>2</sup> category, more than US\$ 200,000.00 in 60 m<sup>2</sup> – 83 m<sup>2</sup> category, and more than 250,001.00 in other two categories), and the **intermediate houses** (in between of above two types of categories).

**Figure 3: Classification apartment houses of Sasangu based on market price and floor area size categories (price in US\$) - 2016**



About 13.7% apartment houses are in cheaper house category and about 22.4% are in luxurious house category. The majority of houses (63.8%) are in intermediate house category. The average price per house for the sample is about US\$ 162,800.00. These figures are relatively similar to the family percentage figures in each class that identified by Cho (2015).

Further, the average no of stories of an apartment is 18-19 floors and on one floor there are 2-3 apartment houses. Addition to that, there are apartment clusters in *Sasangu* and these apartment clusters have same characteristics. As identified in key informant interview, residents of high



price apartments are opposing, if a low price apartment is built in high price apartment cluster.

By the real estate market, the buyers, those who have not purchasing power to purchase luxurious/comfortable house/expensive, are excluded from luxurious apartments. Some of those who excluded from luxurious apartment houses are included by the intermediate price houses. The rest of people, those who have not socio-economic power to purchase luxurious or intermediate price houses, are pushed into low price houses; the government for the poor people makes most of these houses. Therefore, it is clear that social status of each family can identify based on the place where they are living. In this sense, sense of place also affects the price of apartment houses.

People are experiencing each place based on local scale areas where they live their lives; basically their living apartments, railway station, educational institutes, working places, recreational places, etc (Table 1). Further, experiences would be or would not be good, happy, joyful, comfortable experiences. The experiences, a person can experience at a place would differ time to time as well as person to person. In this sense, sense of comfortably (mental or physical) at the micro scale place of *Sasangu* is a personal one. However, as indicate in Table 1, some experiences are common to both residents in *Sasangu* and outsiders. For example, both insiders and outsiders have the comfortable experience at the vicinity subway stations than the at the university vicinity.

**Table 1: The places where insiders and outsiders are experiencing *Sasangu* and the types of experience**

| Place                      | Residents experiences % |     | Outsiders' experiences % |     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
|                            | Good                    | Bad | Good                     | Bad |
| Vicinity of subway station | 64                      | 14  | 44                       | 0   |
| Town area                  | 26                      | 20  | 36                       | 28  |
| Parks                      | 5                       | 0   | 0                        | 0   |
| Vicinity of University     | 0                       | 56  | 20                       | 72  |
| Bars                       | 0                       | 10  | 0                        | 0   |
| Karaoke hall               | 5                       | 0   | 0                        | 0   |

Residents, as well as outsiders of *Sasangu*, have both positive and negative senses of place that developed through the local socio-environmental experiences.

*Sasangu* residents, as well as outsiders, have developed a positive sense of place regarding *Sasangu* based on

facilities, especially transportation (Table 2). In addition to that, 25% sample of *Sasangu* residents has a positive sense of place, due to their own hometown.

**Table 2: Reasons behind the inclusion of local area of *Sasangu***

| Reasons                             | Residents sample (%) | outsiders Sample (%) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Comfortable transportation facility | 44                   | 56                   |
| Good environment                    | 6                    | 12                   |
| Other facilities                    | 25                   | 8                    |
| Live in the area                    | 25                   | 0                    |
| No idea                             | 0                    | 24                   |

However, negative sense of place or identity is developed against to the place based on the experiences related to the social environment than natural or manmade physical environment (Table 3). Further, insiders of the place (*Sasangu*) have more detail memories related to their place in compare to outsiders. However, both of them have identified that the social structures of *Sasangu* are less comfortable and insecure relative to other places, which they are interacting or experiencing. Further, some outsiders (36%) have memory blank states.

**Table 3: Reasons for the exclusion of local places in *Sasangu***

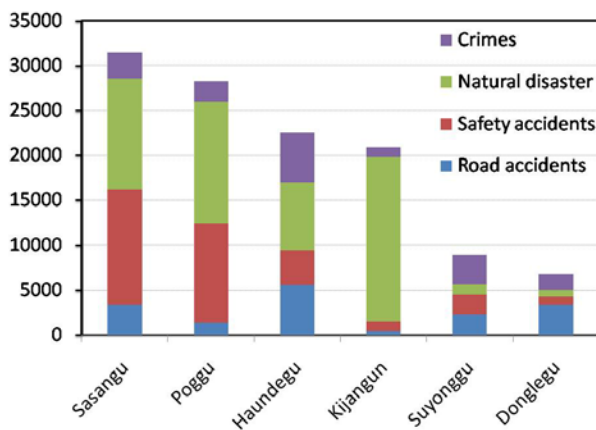
| Reasons                  | Residents sample (%) | Outsiders Sample (%) |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Social uncomfortably     | 32                   | 52                   |
| Crimes                   | 22                   | 4                    |
| undisciplined people     | 20                   | 4                    |
| Insecurity               | 18                   | 4                    |
| Lack of social relations | 8                    | 0                    |
| No idea                  | 0                    | 36                   |

In addition to that, people are well known about this insecure situation of *Sasangu* through the News. *Sasangu* was the most insecure area in the Bussan metropolitan in 2014 (Figure 4). The figure also indicates the socio-spatial peripheral location of *Sasangu* related to the Donglegu.

Then, the sense of place based spatial stratification motivates people to move to another secure and comfortable place. As identified in the sample survey,

about 50% of *Sasangu* residents sample are willing to move their residences to another place in Sasangu or another city. About 64% of them are willing to change the residence place due to the insecurity and uncomfortably of present residence place.

**Figure 4: No of incidents related to the insecurity and uncomfortably among sub-regions of Bussan metropolitan - 2014**



Source: <http://news20.busan.com/controller/newsControlle r.jsp?newsId=20140911000211>

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Same as traditional space and society, modern space and society also are being organized/re-organized under place process and sense of place is a result as well as a cause of this place process. For ensuring the societal stability and the security, each class motivates its members to reside in its own place (class-specified place). Hence, spatial separation (dividing places based on sense of place) and spatial sharing (sharing the same place with the members of the group) is common phenomena in traditional and modern society. Therefore, to optimize the urban planning objectives, planners should pay attention to understand the place process of the urban area through the sense of place-based approach.

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