

Abstract

A Study about the Promotion Strategies of the Decentralization Agendas of the Seoul Declaration

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On 8 December 2014, the Comprehensive Plan for the Decentralization System of South Korea was announced by the Presidential Committee of Local Autonomy Development. The Plan was the first official government document approved by the Cabinet Council. This government plan includes most issues concerning the local autonomy of South Korea such as the devolution of power, local autonomy of the neighbourhoods, sound local finance and accountability, local police services, and integration of administrative boundaries. These issues were classified into three categories, core agendas, general agendas, and future agendas.

Within this policy context, this study deals with local responses against the central government's version of the local autonomy development of South Korea. The main purposes of this study are to seek to develop promotion strategies for the greater local autonomy from both the views of the Seoul Metropolitan Government in particular, and the local governments in general. The major findings and contents of the study are summarized as follows.

First, promotion strategies for the decentralization system are described from the perspective of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Second, Seoul as the capital of South Korea needs to consider four major concerns in dealing with decentralization agendas: 1) better public services from the standpoint of citizens, 2) enhancing democratic values, 3) more balanced development at the

national level, and 4) as a major local partner of the central government in the policy making process. Third, bearing in mind those four major considerations, new perspectives are proposed about the relationship between the central government and local government. More specifically, various decentralization issues and agendas announced by the Presidential Committee of Local Autonomy Development are examined from the perspective of the Seoul Metropolitan Government.

As a leading role of Seoul, several projects of Seoul Metropolitan Government for the greater local autonomy development at the municipal level were also suggested: division of administrative roles between city and municipal level and devolution of power, bottom-up and participatory municipal autonomy, institutional structure to enhance local autonomy at the neighborhood level, networking for the greater autonomy at the metropolitan level, Seoul version of master plan for decentralization reform. Policy suggestions for the central government are proposed in the view of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Secondly, promotion strategies of decentralization system from local government's perspectives in general was explored. Specifically, ways of local government participations in the central government policy making process and various compositions of local government structure were discussed in detail. To vitalize the local autonomy, legislative improvements such as self legislative power, self regulatory power, authorities of organization reform and human resources were discussed and suggested.

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