

**MYTHOLOGIZING A ‘ZONE CITY’:  
URBAN FANTASIES *OF* AND *IN* SONGDO,  
SOUTH KOREA**

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## Abstract

Songdo is a city built within Korea's first Free Economic Zone (FEZ). The city has become imbued with three distinct yet interrelated fantasies – a grand state project envisioned to guide the country towards modernity; a blank slate onto which an organized and efficient utopian community can be built; and an urban node in a frictionless world. In this thesis, I present an anthropology *of* and *in* the city by exploring the relations between the urban imagination *of* Songdo and particular groups *in* the city. I argue that Songdo's fantasies shape the behaviors, perceptions, and material practices of people working and living in the city, who in turn interpret and act upon Songdo's physical and symbolic spaces. I attempt to demonstrate that while Songdo's mythologies and their concomitant practices link to global trends, the production and experiences of the city reflect a situated and locally embedded urban form.

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# List of Terms

## Acronyms

BIT Zone	Bio-Information Technology Zone
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEZ	Free Economic Zone
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute
IBD	International Business District
IFEZ	Incheon Free Economic Zone
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IoE	Internet of Everything
IPDA	Incheon Public Development Agency
KDI	Korea Development Institute
KEPZ	Kaohsiung Export Processing Zone
KPF	Kohn Pedersen Fox
KTX	Korean Train Express
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
MEPZ	Masan Export Processing Zone
NEAT Tower	North East Asian Trade Tower
NSIC	New Songdo International City
POSCO E & C	POSCO Engineering and Construction
PRT	Personal Rapid Transport
S+CC	Smart and Connected Communities
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SGUC (IGC)	Songdo Global University Campus (Incheon Global Campus)
SUNY	State University of New York
TEU	Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit
TFT	Task Force Team
USGBC	United States Green Building Council

## Korean Terms

<i>Chaebol</i>	Korean conglomerate (e.g. Samsung, Hyundai)
<i>Chimaek</i>	Korean fried chicken and beer
<i>Model House</i>	Temporary showroom to display apartments under construction
<i>Tanji</i>	Korean apartment complex
<i>Teumsae Ramyeon</i>	A popular brand of Korean instant noodles

# CHAPTER 1 Approaching a ‘Zone City’: Urban Imagination *of* and *in* Songdo

## 1.1 Crossing into Songdo

Visiting Songdo from downtown Incheon is fairly straightforward. A subway ride on the city’s recently extended line will get you there. This line, the only one serving Incheon proper, opened its extension from Dongmak Station into Songdo in 2009, the same year the city ‘opened for business’. Riding the subway, as I did almost daily during my four months of fieldwork in Songdo,<sup>1</sup> takes one through almost a dozen stations in Incheon before the train crosses into Songdo. The train circulates deep underground and traverses the narrow passage of water separating the two places without passengers ever knowing it. There are other indicators to mark a threshold however. The last six stations of the Incheon line have curious names, all in English. After leaving Dongmak Station in Incheon, passengers arrive at Campus Town. As the train pulls up to the station, the overhead video monitors installed in each car display images of Songdo Global University Campus (SGUC) accompanied by lively music and an assertive voice informing passengers of the world-class foreign universities at this location.

The subsequent stations, also with English names, perform in similar fashion. The next station is Technopark, a research cluster for private enterprises researching and developing today’s most cutting edge technologies. The following station is Bio-Information Technology Zone (BIT Zone), another research cluster for scientific entrepreneurship, where Samsung BioLogics and Celltrion are developing the latest

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<sup>1</sup> I lived in Incheon over the course of my fieldwork because Songdo apartment rates were too steep for my research budget.

biosimilars<sup>2</sup> to compete with the world’s most heavily consumed drugs once their patents have expired. Next is Incheon National University Station, recently moved into Songdo to take advantage of the city’s prestigious status.<sup>3</sup> Following this is Central Park Station. Named after and inspired by New York City’s own, Central Park is Songdo’s flagship green space, with docile deer, a rabbit island, and a Venice-inspired river that runs through it. The last station is the International Business District, intended to house multinational companies that engage in frictionless trade across East Asia and the world. The train’s exterior offers no indication that one has crossed a boundary, but from the inside of the cars, it is evident that one has entered into a different place.

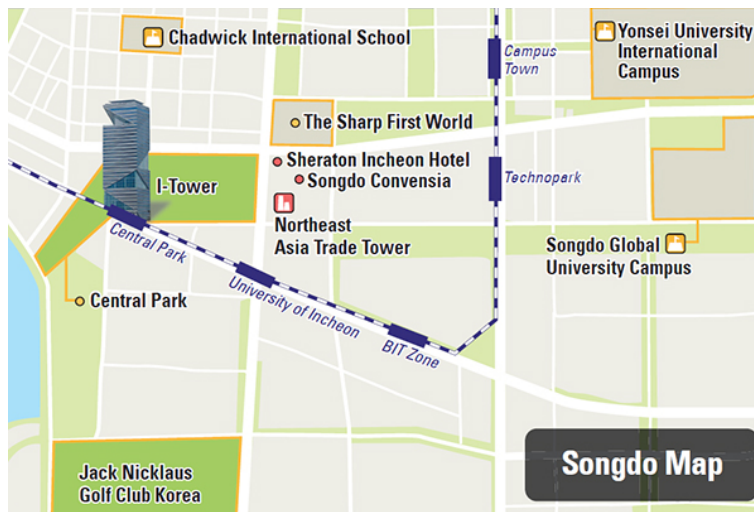


Figure 1.1 – Songdo subway stations (Kim 2012). Songdo International Business District Station follows Central Park Station. Note: I-Tower was changed to G-Tower (G for ‘green’) in 2013 when the Green Climate Fund (GCF) came to Songdo.

The train stations across the line and the cars’ interiors are sporadically lined with advertisements about Songdo. A prominent one exhibited in large characters, “외국에

<sup>2</sup> A biosimilar is a pharmaceutical product that is a copy of the original from another company. Biosimilars are approved for sale once the patent of the original product expires (see [samsungbiologics.com](http://samsungbiologics.com) and [celltrion.com](http://celltrion.com)).

<sup>3</sup> Park (2011) reveals the consequences of Incheon National University’s relocation to Songdo. The university has taken with it the student population onto which the neighborhood where it was formerly housed relied for its economic sustenance. Since the university moved, the neighborhood has lost most of its residents as they have been forced to relocate in search of a source of income elsewhere.

산다? 송도에 산다!” [“Live abroad? Live in Songdo!”].<sup>4</sup> Concurrently, while walking outside in Songdo, one cannot avoid the obnoxiously large and unexpectedly small “Incheon Free Economic Zone” (IFEZ) logos nearly suffusing one’s field of vision. IFEZ banners temporarily line the walls of construction sites, the medians of roads, the edges of sidewalks, the entrances of parks, and they are also durably inscribed on the city’s drainage covers and park benches, light poles and sidewalk interlocks, and other oddly mundane surfaces. One is incessantly – almost forcefully – induced to imagine that one has somehow stepped outside of Korea and into a transnational zone, a global place.



Figure 1.2 – IFEZ insignia peppered throughout the city. Photographed by author (28 June 2014).

The sensory experience of Songdo also feels dislocated and dislocating. The city juxtaposes multiple landscapes of time and space: glistening new buildings next to dusty construction sites, recently completed infrastructures already covered by dirt and wildflowers; many sections of the city remain quiet, completely absent from human voices and footsteps, while one is never far from the humming and banging of machines

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<sup>4</sup> This advertisement seems intentionally vague, at once engaging in conversation with the observer in second person – “Do you want to live abroad? Come live in Songdo!” – while also allowing the observer to imagine themselves as the first person speaker – “Do you think I live abroad? I live in Songdo!”

busily assembling the city; some areas conjure urban futurescapes, a tranquil park, or a barren wasteland. Songdo is a city in formation with manifold and shifting sites, such that one never feels in place, as though the city is perpetually elsewhere.

The most stable and powerful signifiers of Songdo's orientation are its postmodern architectural panoramas and attendant promotional materials, conjuring dramatic urban fantasies that hover over its landscape, like a "foggy geography of meanings" suspended above (see de Certeau 1984, cf. Hansen and Verkaaik 2009, 6). The symbolic presence that hangs over the city also seeps into its spaces and inhabitants, suffusing Songdo's urban landscape with a 'soul' or a mythology<sup>5</sup> that oversaturates with exceptional significance the sensory experience of the city. While Songdo may in many ways look like a "ghost town" – as Incheonites would often say,<sup>6</sup> the city aims to evoke an urban form on track towards redefining urbanism for humanity's future.



Figure 1.3 – View of the city from Central Park (myphotodump.com).

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<sup>5</sup> See Hansen and Verkaaik (2009) who describe cities as "living props" with souls, spirits, mythologies, and fantasmic presence.

<sup>6</sup> Evidently, Songdo's mythologies resonate with some but not with all. Cities are always multiple sites that afford multiple readings (Hansen and Verkaaik 2009; Harms 2011), but the groups I follow in this thesis have intimate relationships with the 'soul' of Songdo I describe here.



Figure 1.4 – Promotional image of Songdo (galeintl.com).



Figure 1.5 – Songdo nightscape (galeintl.com).

## 1.2 Approaching Songdo

Export zones, loosely defined as enclosed areas within national territories that offer lower regulations and tariffs to private companies in order to facilitate the circulation of capital, goods and people, are powerfully conjured as a universal means of gaining allure, wealth, and ascension into the global order for the host nation (Orenstein 2011, 39). Over the last few decades, zones have rapidly surged in number, from a small handful in the 1960s to over 5000 in many parts of the world today (Bach 2011a, 98-100). Most recently, a new

zone breed has evolved from the export zone. A ‘new zone paradigm’ has emerged from “a pragmatic *space* for the production of exports” into a stable urban form, “a *place*, imagined and lived” (Bach 2011a, 99; see also Easterling 2014). The watershed moment came when ‘zone’ and ‘city’ congealed into one, out of which have arisen unique urban imaginations. Jonathan Bach (2011a) writes that while the dramatic expansion of export zones has elicited a flurry of scholarship attentive to economic and political dimensions, little has been explored about the cultural logics of the new zone form, the ‘zone city’.

Bach (2011a) outlines a loose continuum between the export zone and the zone city: at one end, zones can be temporarily and superficially embedded spaces specifically and narrowly designated for export processing with low-wage, low-skill labor that have little integration with their host state, while at the other end, a zone can be a city that resembles any other city in form and integration with the host territory, thus dissolving its zone status. The zone form that tends towards the latter polarity – the ‘zone city’, with a permanently integrated and comprehensive urban repertoire of residential, commercial, business and cultural amenities – has come to shape situated urban fantasies of the future. The zone city is an “exhibition city”, made to display and continuously reach for modernity: the future of how humanity is imagined to live (Bach 2011a, 110). In this thesis, I approach Songdo as a zone city with its own particular urban fantasies.<sup>7</sup>

Songdo presents three central urban fantasies. First, Songdo is a grand national project envisioned to transform the entire country; second, the city is a completely blank slate onto which an organized and efficient utopic urban form can be erected; third, Songdo exists in a frictionless and singularly unified world, positioned to support the

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<sup>7</sup> Inspired by Bach (2011a) and Easterling (2014), I employ the term ‘fantasy’ to characterize the urban imagination of Songdo in order to highlight that the city is imagined in dramatic and sensational terms.



seamless and continuous circulation of capital, goods, and people. In practice however, Songdo is not entirely distinct from any other city in Korea. Recent scholarship on the city reveals that Songdo is much closer to a wealthy suburb built to serve the country's elite (see Kim and Ahn 2011; Shin, forthcoming; Shwayri 2013). Yet Songdo is so heavily imbued with powerful fantasies that it is these founding narratives that come to determine the experience of the city itself (see Hansen and Verkaaik 2009), as planners and residents of Songdo persistently define it as a unique transnational urban formation. In the present thesis, I attempt to demonstrate that the city's fantasies do not reflect its actual development but are rather fantasies *for* Songdo that effectively shape the behaviors, perceptions, and material practices of people working and living in the city, who in turn interpret and act upon Songdo's physical and symbolic spaces.<sup>8</sup>

To address the fantasies of Songdo and the ways in which people apprehend and rehearse them in their daily lives, I am drawn to the work of urban anthropologists. Anthropology has had a rather distant relationship with cities, for which the study has primarily been undertaken by disciplines with inclinations towards large-scale processes, such as sociology and geography. Anthropology's pedigree has predominantly focused on the 'exotic' Other and on an ethnographic approach to everyday life that seeks to apprehend a holistic reading of small-scale communities (Toulson 2015). While anthropologists have explored peoples' everyday practices in cities since the 1950s, the city itself was largely absent from the analytical script, that is, these were ethnographies that happened to take place *in* the city but were not *of* the city. The urban was surmised as

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<sup>8</sup> The argument I make here is inspired by the work of Erik Harms (2011) who examines how people on the urban periphery of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam continually reproduce ideal oppositions between the city and the country despite the everyday contradictions of those categories. As he writes, myth is "not a reflection of everyday reality [but rather] a form of myth-making itself" (22).

a silent context – an empty receptacle – docilely conforming to the agency of its inhabitants (Toulson 2015, 33).

An important transition came about in the 1980s with the integration of political economy in anthropology. The angle of analysis shifted from the agency of people to the wider structural forces that shaped everyday practices. Consequently, some anthropologists sought to introduce studies *of* the city to attend to ways in which cities shaped their inhabitants, but these approaches were criticized at the time for over-emphasizing – and therefore essentializing – the city (Low 1996, 384-386). In her important review article, Setha Low (1996) advocates to re-enliven this latter approach and bring it into concert with studies *in* the city. She writes: “The city as a site of everyday practices provides valuable insights into the linkages of macroprocesses with the texture and fabric of human experience” (384). The city here is not the entire story, but rather a character in the script in ongoing relations with its inhabitants (Toulson 2015, 30).

An anthropology *of* and *in* the city remains relevant to the discipline today. Barker et al. (2013) have recently addressed a similar problematic between individuals in the city and the larger processes that inform their practices. The authors contextualize their approach between the work of Friedrich Engels who approached people *of* the city as “instantiations of a structurally defined sociological type” and Georg Simmel who observed the subjective individual *in* the city, with “phenomenological depth, but without historical specificity” (162). Barker et al. (2013) dialectically ‘toggle back and forth’ between these two oppositions to describe the agency of individuals *in* the city and the larger social-structural context *of* the urban terrain (166). The authors approach people in

the city as “urban figures” and see them as both products and forces of the ground onto which they stand.

In this thesis, I attempt to present an anthropology *of* and *in* the city by exploring the linkages between, on the one hand, the fantasies that suffuse the physical spaces *of* Songdo and, on the other hand, how the city is apprehended and “acted upon” in the everyday practices of people working and living *in* Songdo (see Hansen and Verkaaik 2009, 12). As an approach that specifically examines the relations between the mythologies *of* and *in* the city, I find Hansen and Verkaaik’s (2009) notion of “urban charisma” uniquely suited for the purposes of my research. The concept of urban charisma does not relate to a unique and trans-historical attribute of special individuals but rather to a context of two relational forms. On the one hand, charisma *of* the city conveys the mythical presence permeating its physical spaces, buildings, infrastructures, people; its advertisements, maps, promotional documents. This form is “a reservoir of myth” that soaks through the city and makes itself available to its inhabitants who can identify themselves in reference to the urban landscape. As the authors write, charisma can be “attributed and distributed as unique powers and potentials embedded in people, things, places and situations” (8).

On the other hand, charisma *in* the city refers to individuals who know the city well and can confidently and authoritatively interpret and define its spaces as well as manage its production with their knowledge, skills, and abilities to make connections. These individuals can include powerful politicians and bureaucrats, city planners and technicians, as well as residents in the city. Each chapter in this thesis will follow different ‘urban types’: a powerful bureaucrat, wealthy residents, and state officials who

promote and sell the city. These two forms – the mythical charisma *of* the city and the performative charisma *in* the city – are relationally entwined and support one another. Hansen and Verkaaik (2009) write, “the charisma of the city functions as a reservoir of myth and narrative that can be re-interpreted, re-invented and re-enacted by those who claim charisma in the city in a variety of forms” (9). As I aim to show, fantasies *of* Songdo can render transnational connections, transform landscapes, create massive property speculation, conjure social and historical contexts, refashion identities, reproduce class distinctions, and determine visibility and invisibility in the urban fabric through the ways in which people interpret and perform Songdo’s urban fantasies *in* the city.

The chapters in this thesis each elucidate situated aspects of Songdo’s charisma as different groups in the city deploy it. In chapter 2, I follow the story of an “urban specialist”, a high-level politician who ‘divined’ the idea of Songdo in the mid-1980s and subsequently undertook the task of making connections with powerful state actors and transnational developers to bring his idea into production. This individual effectively deployed the idealic form of his dream city and performed it with the help of his skills, knowledge, and ability to take risks, infusing a charismatic allure onto himself and his idea, which eventually situated a zone city within the borders of Korea. In chapter 3, I demonstrate that though Songdo is far from a transnational urban formation, the city’s charisma permeates from its urban forms and in its residents. I first examine residential units *of* the city that encourage situated fantasies of transnationalism and modernity. I then follow the accounts of a small group of residents *in* the city who interpret Songdo’s urban forms and define Songdo and themselves alongside. The fantasies of these

residents are not in opposition to state power or transnational forces of capital, but rather entwined in these processes, reinforcing them in surprisingly creative ways.<sup>9</sup> In chapter 4, I follow the work of public city makers to illustrate ways in which they rehearse the vision of a transnational zone city built on a flexibly configured terrain. These agents *in* the city perform Songdo's charisma through routinized practices, while the charisma *of* the city bestows upon these city makers 'gifts' of professional success as they promote and sell the city. The chapters will each illustrate relations between the dominant fantasies *of* Songdo and different aspects of their charismatic powers performed *in* people's everyday lives and experiences.

This introductory chapter will serve to contextualize Songdo and this study. First, I will offer a historical background of zones in the East Asian region to illustrate the conditions of possibility for the formation of Songdo along the western shores of Korea. Second, I will outline the three founding narratives of Songdo – a grand state project, a blank slate, and a frictionless world – and describe how they have been deployed in the city. Third, I will position myself in this study and unpack the methodologies that frame its narrative.

### **1.3 A Historical Context of Songdo**

The pre-history of the zone city lies in colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism's propensity to maintain spaces of ambiguity in order to facilitate the circulation of people, goods and capital (see Bach 2011a, 100; Orenstein 2011, 39). Zones first appeared in the East Asian context in Singapore (1819) and Hong Kong (1841). In conjunction with its

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<sup>9</sup> Michel de Certeau (1984) makes an opposition between planners who attempt to make the city congruent with an idealized concept, and the city's dwellers who practice 'microbe-like', 'swarming' activities that the 'concept-city' can never fully capture. In the case I present here, the concept of the city and the ways in which people live and imagine their city are not oppositional but rather align in often surprising ways.

sister colony in Singapore, Hong Kong initially acted as an “entrepot” to mediate trade between Britain and China. It was a free port: “free of import and export restrictions and dues” (McCalla 1990, 126). Over this period up until the 1940s, Hong Kong also mediated trade relations with Japan, some European countries, and the US (McCalla 1990, 126).

The 1950s to the 1980s witnessed a global rise of export-processing zones (EPZs), zones oriented towards manufacturing for export. This breed proliferated rapidly: eleven EPZs existed in 1970; by 1981, there were 96 (Chen 1995, 600); and by 1986, there were 307 (McCalla 1990, 130). Hong Kong came center stage as a pivot in the formation of EPZs in East Asia. The city had little success reemerging as an entrepot after the Second World War. While China had consistently absorbed forty percent of its exports, the Korean War (1950-1953) would see those exports come to a halt as China’s attention was directed against the US. Concomitantly, the United Nations imposed embargos on Chinese imports to thwart the country’s trade flows (McCalla 1990, 128).

As a means to promote exports and attract foreign capital, Hong Kong moved away from its role as an entrepot and shifted towards becoming an EPZ – though not named as such at the time – specializing in the production of textiles and clothing. By 1955, textiles and clothing comprised sixty percent of Hong Kong’s exports. This transformation is attributable to a plethora of elective affinities: large numbers of Chinese refugees granted few rights, formerly established trade networks, enforced political stability, deregulated wages and working hours, subjugated labour unions, rising worldwide demand for clothing, among others (McCalla 1990, 128).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, a similar phenomenon was taking shape in Shannon, Ireland, but rather than a seaport, Shannon served as a customs-free airport (McCalla 1990, 128), exporting the majority of its production to

Emulating the ‘success stories’ of Hong Kong and Shannon, Taiwan would establish its own zone, officially coined an “export processing zone”, in Kaohsiung in 1965 (heretofore ‘KEPZ’). KEPZ was remarkably successful in attracting capital: in its second and third years, it attracted USD 26 million; in 1985, it attracted USD 167 million (Chen 1994, 8). As such, it became an exemplar of economic success for other countries. From 1970 to 1986, representatives from Asia, South America, and Africa came in droves to learn about KEPZ’s model for growth (Chen 1995, 598; McCalla 1990, 129). KEPZ’s real economic advantage however primarily came from the exploited labour of young women between the ages of 16 and 24 who would work for low wages and extended hours, conditions far worst than outside the zone (Chen 1994, 11; McCalla 1990, 129; Ong 2006, 103). By 1985, the ratio of female to male workers in the zone was 572:1 (McCalla 1990, 129).

KEPZ was not a frictionless site seamlessly plugged into transnational circuits of capital. Rather, its growth was tied to webs of connections in its regional context. KEPZ had historically sedimented ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and structural ties with nearby Hong Kong, China, and Japan. Taiwan was already part of “loosely connected alliances”, linked by informal activities between private firms, common markets, and low government intervention (Chen 1995, 606). To illustrate, virtually all foreign investors in KEPZ hailed from the region. In 1975, the largest investor was Japan, with its recent and long-held colonial presence in Taiwan, and China. Only nine percent came from the US, Europe, and other countries (Chen 1994, 9). Over time, the China-Hong Kong-Taiwan triad formed an economic triangle, involving “heavily interdependent ties of trade,

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Europe (electronics, textiles, industrial diamonds). Shannon’s story as well is one of potential demise to one of development into a “generator of employment and trade” (McCalla 1990, 129).

investment, manufacturing, and marketing among the three... economies” (Chen 1995, 607).

Some of the first foreign delegates to visit the KEPZ hailed from South Korea. These delegates undertook “study tours” to learn from Taiwan, which led Korea to establish its own EPZ in Masan in 1970 (Chen 1995, 598). Masan (heretofore “MEPZ”) was strategically positioned near Busan’s port with Japan just across a small body of water. It was also along the peninsula’s industrial corridor connecting Seoul and Busan (Douglass 2000, 9-10). MEPZ’s story is quite similar to KEPZ. It was successful in attracting foreign investment: from USD 5.3 million in 1971 to USD 235 million by the 1980s (Chen 1994, 8-9). Most investment came from nearby Japan: in 1975, of the 105 foreign firms in Masan, 75 were Japanese and an additional 22 were Korean-Japanese joint ventures (Chen 1994, 9). The labour force was highly gendered: women comprised between seventy to ninety percent of the workforce over the lifespan of MEPZ, while men were on average ten years older and held higher managerial positions (Chen 1994, 11).

Both Kaohsiung and Masan served as reified icons of the economic success zones could bring to a host nation, and they played a central part in inducing a worldwide proliferation of EPZs along with a new breed of zone: the special economic zone (SEZ). The SEZ is different from the EPZ in a number of ways. For example, it aims to offer greater investment incentives while it is more heavily regulated by the central state. It is also far larger in size. The first SEZ to come to life in East Asia was Shenzhen in 1980, located in southeast China just north of Hong Kong. To illustrate the difference in scale: Kaohsiung and Masan covered 170 and 431 acres, respectively; at its inception,



Shenzhen's scale comprised 77,120 acres (Chen 1994, 7). Shenzhen was indeed a new form of zone, one inspired by the 'successes' of the former two EPZs. To create Shenzhen's model, the Chinese state studied the experience of both Kaohsiung and Masan by contacting business people in Hong Kong who conducted business in these EPZs (Chen 1995, 598; Hays 2013). Shenzhen was primarily instituted as a "social laboratory for market-oriented reforms in China", and the form it took was a highly diversified and comprehensive economic zone, balancing multiple economic sectors (Chen 1995, 600). It thus became a particular urban form, a "metropolis that welcomes every conceivable residential, business, and cultural program" (Easterling 2014, 42). Shenzhen was the first *zone city*.

An important distinction between the zone city and the EPZ is that the former is a permanently integrated place in the national territory rather than a mobile space with a temporary lifespan. Zone cities are intended to "connect to regional policies and act as portals to generalize a liberal trade regime to the whole country" (Bach 2011a, 103). Shenzhen emerged in 1980, three years after Deng Xiaoping came to power. Deng is generally associated with China's "Open Door" policy and his popular invocation: "To get rich is glorious" (cf. Bach 2011b), but the Chinese leader emerged less as a grand visionary than a crafty politician able to nimbly and flexibly negotiate the changing social circumstances in China and ensure that the Communist Party stay afloat (Hays 2013). Deng's era thus witnessed economic, industrial, and planning reforms that relied heavily on attracting foreign investment, technologies, and knowledge (Hays 2013). Shenzhen was the first urban manifestation to bring to life these policy changes.

Shenzhen also appeared successful on the surface of it, much like Kaohsiung and Masan. In its first three years, the zone city attracted USD 200 million; by 1989, the figure was USD 2.9 billion. However, foreign investment actually accounted for only 25 percent of total investment – the rest of which was borne by the state – while 93 percent of that figure came from nearby Hong Kong and Macau (Chen 1994, 9). Shenzhen would form a “city cluster” along with Hong Kong and Macau, which would lead to rapid and sustained economic growth for each locale (Easterling 2014, 44).<sup>11</sup> With Shenzhen’s success, the Chinese state subsequently established additional zones. In 1984, fourteen more zones were set up in coastal cities, and between 1988 and 1993, nearly one hundred more were instituted in various guises throughout China (Chen 1995, 603).

The rapid spread of zones in China did not go unnoticed, especially in nearby Korea, as policy makers were growing uneasy with China’s opening up. The shift in Korea however would happen over a decade later<sup>12</sup> in April 2002, when President Kim Dae-jung’s administration revealed an ambitious plan to transform the Korean peninsula into a Northeast Asian Business Hub. By November 2002, the National Parliament enacted a bill entitled “Free Economic Zone (FEZ)” that gave the government permission to provide various tax incentives, cash grants, deregulated land use, and more flexible labor conditions in designated areas in Korea, measures aimed at attracting foreign firms and promoting private economic activity (Park 2005, 856-858; Lee and Hobday 2003, 498). The first designated area was Incheon Free Economic Zone (IFEZ), officially established in August 2003, and by March 2004, the subsequent president, Roh Moo-

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<sup>11</sup> Shenzhen sustained a 27 percent annual growth rate since it broke ground, and is today a distinctive place: the average age of the population is 28 – ninety five percent of which were born elsewhere, and the city is a unique “desiring machine”, imagined as a place with the potential for a new wealthy life (Bach 2011b).

<sup>12</sup> Importing the idea of a zone city into the situated context of Korea is the subject of chapter 2.

hyun, established two more zones in the south, Busan/Jinhae FEZ and Gwangyang Bay FEZ (Park 2005, 856). Today, there are a total of eight FEZs throughout Korea, all of which are not intended as temporary spaces but rather as permanent, expansive and highly comprehensive places.

Songdo is Korea's founding zone city, positioned on one of the three poles of IFEZ. Located on the northwest coast of Korea fifty kilometers west of Seoul, IFEZ projects a total area of 132 square kilometers with an anticipated population of over five hundred thousand by 2020. The three points of IFEZ consist of Songdo, for commerce and (bio)technology research and development; Yeongjong Island – where the Incheon International Airport is located – for logistics and tourism; and Cheongna, for finance, tourism, and technology research and development. Songdo itself is built on a projected 53 square kilometer landfill on the coast of Incheon,<sup>13</sup> with a planned population of over 250 thousand. As of June 2015, the city's population is 88,268, with 1,971 expats hailing from China (436), the US (409), Japan (119), Canada (84), and other East Asian nations (ifez.go.kr). The first memorandum of understanding to begin constructing Songdo was signed in July 2001 between Gale International, a Boston-based real estate developer, and POSCO Engineering and Construction (E&C), a subsidiary of the Korean steel giant POSCO, establishing a 70/30 joint venture partnership, called New Songdo International City (NSIC), to develop Songdo International Business District (IBD) in sections one and three (Segel 2007, 4-5). The city comprises eleven sections, for which the construction is distributed across an array of public and private stakeholders, but the IBD sections, as the inaugural and most developed portions of the city, generally stand in for the city as a whole. Virtually all promotional images and events of the city revolve around Central

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<sup>13</sup> As of 2011, about 33 square kilometers of land have been filled (Ko et al. 2011, 12).

Park and its surrounding structures, at the center of Songdo IBD. As such, though I discuss other sections of the city, I will generally focus on the initial development of Songdo.

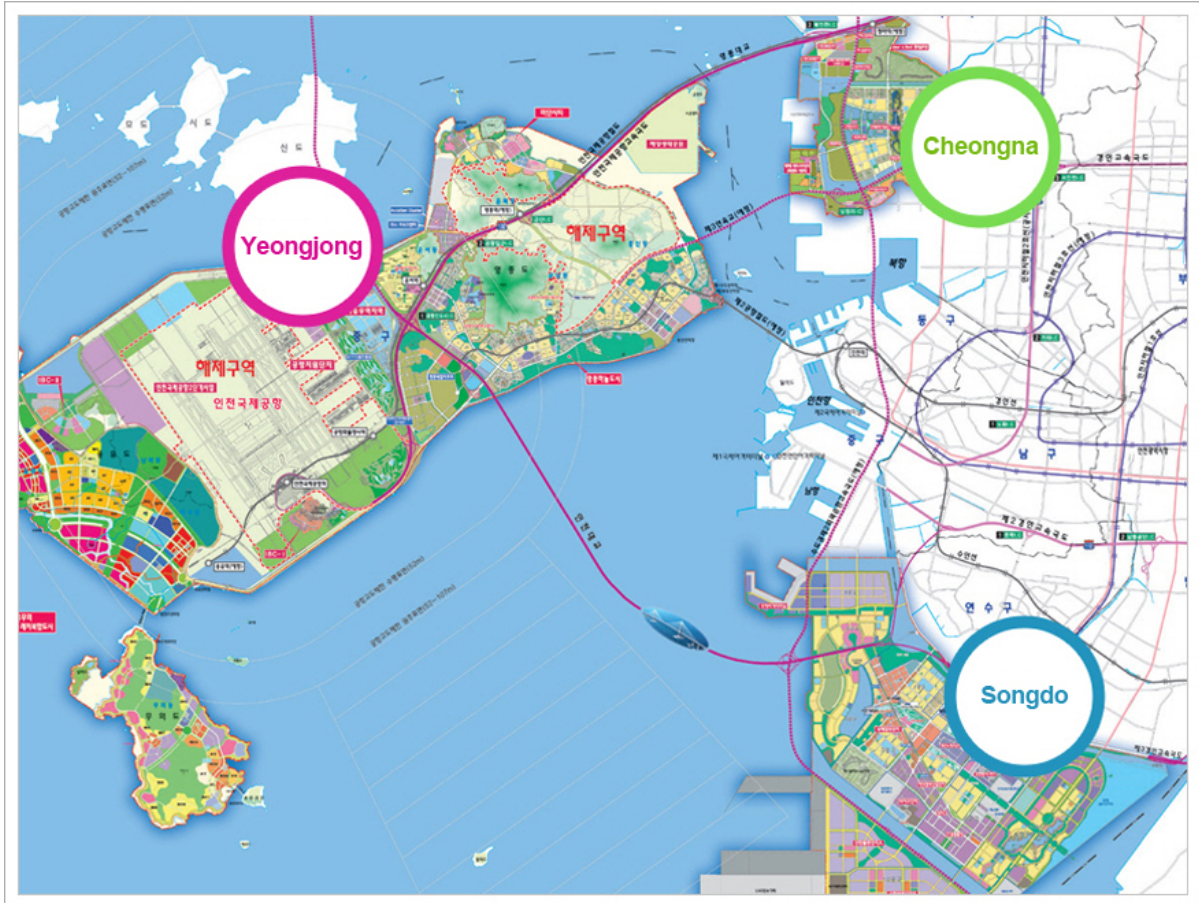


Figure 1.6 – IFEZ development map – Korea’s “Golden Triangle” (ifez.go.kr). Songdo is the southeast point of the zone, directly connected to Yeongjong Island and the Incheon International Airport to the northwest via the twenty one kilometer Incheon Grand Bridge.

Location	Project title	Usage	Size km <sup>2</sup>	Projected cost (won)	Main Developer(s)
Sections 1, 3	International Business District	Business, industry, residential	5.77	24.4 trillion	Incheon Municipality, NSIC
Section 4	Knowledge & Information Industry Complex	Research and development	2.4	555.5 billion	Incheon Municipality
Section 2	City Construction Complex	Residential and commercial	1.3	130.8 billion	Incheon Municipality
Section 1	Fisherman Living Countermeasure Complex	Residential	0.3	28.1 billion	Incheon Municipality

Sections 6, 8	Songdo Landmark City	Business, tourism, and residential	5.8	18.8 trillion	Incheon Municipality, NSIC, Portman Holdings
Section 4	Bio Complex	Research and development, medical tourism	1.3	16.8 billion	Incheon Municipality
Section 7	Songdo International Complex	Education, research and development	1.4	2.75 trillion	Incheon Municipality, Songdo Global Complex Development Company
Sections 5, 7, 11	High-tech Industrial Cluster	Education, research and development	4	772.3 billion	Incheon Municipality
Section 9	Aam Distribution Complex	Distribution harbor	2.6	343.8 billion	Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Incheon Port Authority
Section 10	New Port Distribution Complex	Distribution harbor	12.5	5.4735 trillion	Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Incheon Port Authority

Table 1.1 – Songdo development sections (table compiled from ifez.go.kr).



Figure 1.7 – Songdo development map (ifez.go.kr). The shaded portion of the map represents Songdo IBD, section one (northeast) and section three (southwest). To the north are Songdo Landmark City (sections 6 and 8) and the Aam Distribution Complex (Section 9). To the southeast are sections 2, 4, 5, 7 and 11. The large triangular landfill to the south is the New Port Distribution Complex (Section 10).

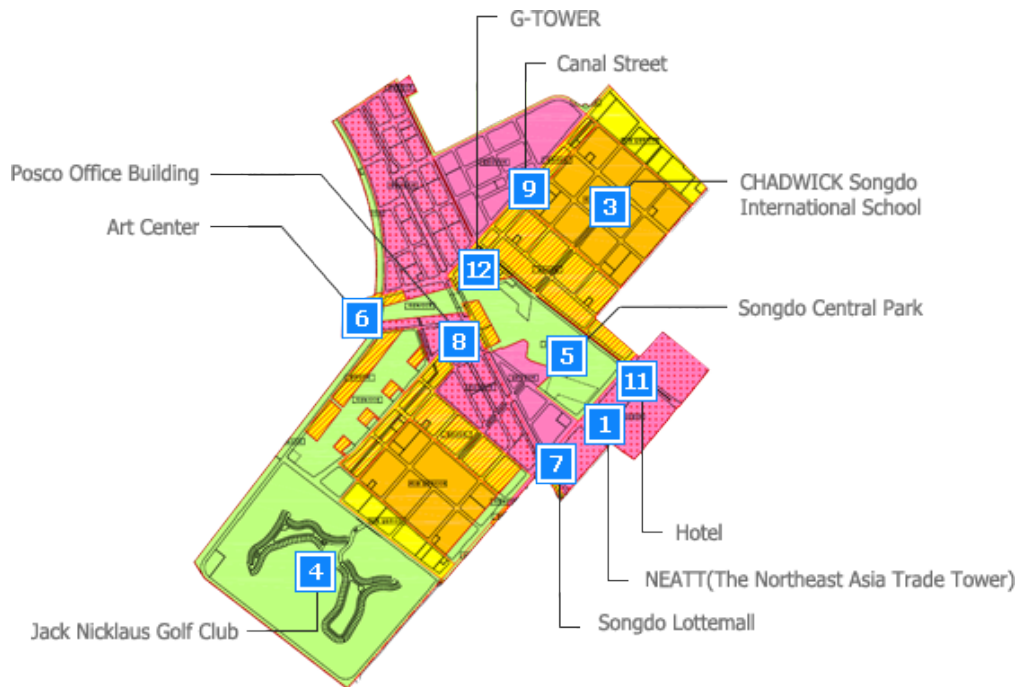


Figure 1.8 – Songdo IBD development map with labels (ifez.go.kr).

## 1.4 Songdo’s Fantasies

The development of Songdo is a process borne by public and private actors. To attract and engage private stakeholders, state rule is variously and selectively applied (see Ong 2006; Park 2005), allowing for greater integration between national and transnational development projects and visions, a process that forges unique fantasies and aspirations of future modernities. I outline below three of Songdo’s central fantasies along with a descriptive account of how these imaginaries have been deployed by public and private actors to shape a unique and highly mythologized city. These fantasies, in their ideal forms, serve as the infrastructure linking the chapters of this thesis, as I follow how different people in the city deploy these urban fantasies in their everyday lives and practices.

### *1.4.1 The Zone City is a Grand State Project*

The zone city is “a powerful political pawn” for national state projects (Easterling 2014, 27). Since their inception in 2002, Free Economic Zones (FEZs) have multiplied in Korea with the inauguration of each new administration, rounding to eight FEZs at present, with the exception of other permutations, for example Jeju Island and Masan Free Trade Zones.<sup>14</sup> Park Bae-gyoon (2005) argues that FEZs are delimited areas in which Korea’s historically sedimented developmental state can implement liberalization policies that would otherwise meet pronounced political resistance in the national territory, a practice he calls “spatially selective liberalization”. But in implementing FEZs throughout Korea, the state has also imagined and promoted FEZs as pivotal nodes that direct the future of the country. These zones have thus been conjured as places of oncoming modernity, the borders of which are envisioned to wash over the entire peninsula. As former Prime Minister Kim Duck-woo stated in 2002 at the advent of the first FEZ: “Let’s hope that the boundary of the FEZ gradually expands to cover the entire nation through a learning process” (cf. Park 2005, 864).

As each new presidential administration follows in turn, so do their visions for the country’s future. Songdo serves as the placeholder for these shifting visions, each of which act upon and manipulate the city’s production. As the privileged site of envisioned futures, the state’s idealized modern nation, Songdo is an orchestrated zone of exception in the way Aihwa Ong (2006) deploys the concept. Ong (2006) defines the exception not as a suspension of rights for the maintenance of political stability but rather “positive kinds of exception that create opportunities, usually for a minority, who enjoy political

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<sup>14</sup> Kim Dae-jung instituted Incheon FEZ; Roh Moo-hyun established Busan/Jinhae and Gwangyang Bay FEZs; Lee Myung-bak established Yellow Sea, Saemangeum/Gunsan and Daegu/Gyeongbuk FEZs; and Park Geun-hye instituted Chungbuk and East Coast FEZs (fez.co.kr).

accommodations and conditions not granted to the rest of the population” (101).<sup>15</sup>

Songdo is thus a terrain made to grow and nurture new privileged classes that come to support the central state and thus aid in the management of less privileged classes.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, while state projects perpetually change, Songdo has remained the site to implement these grand imaginaries, and has in turn gained allure and prestige within the national territory and abroad.

The initial Kim Dae-jung administration (1998-2003) implemented the first economic zone before leaving office in 2002 and envisioned the entire country becoming an international business hub. The zone would be the seed to sow this grand scale transformation. The following Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008) continued the trend by installing two additional FEZs and focusing specifically on logistics, finance, and industry, imagining FEZs would recreate the nation into a knowledge-based service economy (Lee and Hobday 2003, 489). The following president, Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013), had a more substantial and high profile impact on Songdo. He adopted a ‘green’ agenda and intended to fundamentally reconfigure the country towards his vision of “Green Growth”. Green Growth intends to promote eco-friendly development, raise quality of life, and assist in a worldwide effort to fight climate change (oecd.org). This proposition elicited international recognition for President Lee. For example, a United Nations Environmental Program praised South Korea, stating that the vision “represents a

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<sup>15</sup> According to Ong (2006), variously applying state rule across a fragmented territory allows the state to simultaneously confront transnational economic challenges and secure control over the national population (19).

<sup>16</sup> Valérie Gelézeau (2003) makes a similar case with regards to the formation of the Korean apartment complex (*tanji*) during Korea’s rapid economic transformation. The *tanji* became the site of modernity and facilitated the formation of new privileged classes that would garner support for national state projects.



major attempt to fundamentally transform the country's growth paradigm from 'quantitative growth' to low-carbon, 'qualitative growth'" (cf. Kuecker 2013, 22).<sup>17</sup>

Songdo's development would integrate President Lee's Green Growth policies. In 2008, Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF)<sup>18</sup> revised its plan of the city and placed environmental sustainability at centre stage of Songdo's design. The planning document claims that Songdo will offer a carbon-free network of transportation and mobility, eco-friendly water sanitation technologies, energy-efficient heating and cooling systems, a hydraulically powered central waste management system, and measures to preserve biodiversity and wildlife habitats (KPF 2008, 46-63). Furthermore, Songdo's developers aligned their vision with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), a "green metric" established under the US Green Building Council (USGBC).<sup>19</sup> The city's planners intend to have eighty percent of its buildings LEED certified – designed to purportedly consume twenty percent less water and fourteen percent less electricity than ordinary structures – making the city "the largest private LEED development site in the world" (DAC and Cities 2014).

Another development in Songdo's 'greening' is the coming of the United Nation's Green Climate Fund (GCF)<sup>20</sup> in late 2013. Songdo won the bid to host the GCF

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<sup>17</sup> "Green Growth" has also spurred much protest from local and international environmental groups (see for example Ko et al. 2011).

<sup>18</sup> KPF is a large US architectural firm that was contracted by the planners of Songdo to design the city's master plan.

<sup>19</sup> The USGBC claims that LEED certification "provides independent verification of a building or neighbourhood's green features, allowing for the design, construction, operations and maintenance of resource-efficient, high-performing, healthy, cost-effective buildings" (leed.usgbc.org).

<sup>20</sup> The GCF is an organization that is intended to accept funds from wealthy countries in order to fund environmentally sustainable development projects in less wealthy countries. According to its website, the fund aims to "promote the paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways by providing support to developing countries to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, taking into account the needs of those developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change" (gcfund.org).

in 2012 over Germany, Mexico, Namibia, Poland, and Switzerland, in part because President Lee “aggressively” lobbied other national leaders to back Korea (de Nevers 2012). Winning the bid gave a critical boost to President Lee’s declining popularity in Korea, and he took it as an opportunity to promote the GCF as “a blessing for the Korean people”. Lee continued: “For the first time in our history, we will host one of the biggest international organizations” (cf. Goldsea 2012).

The GCF has become caught in a flurry of promotions. It intends to raise USD 100 billion per year from wealthy countries by 2020 to become a source of funding for environmentally sustainable development projects undertaken in less wealthy countries (Khan 2015). If this actually unfolds, it is estimated that the GCF will grow to USD 800 billion by 2027 (Goldsea 2012). The Lee administration has exclaimed that the GCF could become bigger than the IMF or the World Bank; meanwhile, the Korea Development Institute (KDI) estimated that hosting the GCF could affect local business by almost USD 400 billion; the mayor of Incheon, Song Young-gil, also stated that the GCF will have “ripple effects on the local economy” (Goldsea 2012; de Nevers 2012; Kim 2012).<sup>21</sup>

In addition, the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), a Korean state-backed organization started in 2010 that aims to promote Lee Myung-bak’s “Green Growth” policies worldwide, opened a liaison office in Songdo shortly after the GCF came in 2013. The GGGI came in collaboration with the Incheon Municipal Government and

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<sup>21</sup> In actuality, the GCF has been rather moot since coming to Songdo. The more recent Park Geun-hae administration, focused on the “Creative Economy”, does not directly support “Green Growth”, and local funds to sustain the GCF have faded (Business Korea 2014); the GCF has only raised USD 10.2 billion so far, about one percent of which has actually been paid out (Goldenberg 2015; Khan 2015); and most recently, some of the GCF funds have gone towards financing coal plants, what has been called “brown” development. The latest undertakings, as campaigners say, “make a mockery of the fund” (Goldenberg 2015).

IFEZ Authority that together aim to work synergistically to “promote the global green future” (PRNewswire 2013). The Director-General at GGGI, Howard Bamsey, stated, “We intend to change the whole way in which development works around the world. When we succeed in doing that, much credit will devolve to Incheon City for assisting us as well as to the Korean government” (cf. PRNewswire 2013).

Since 2008, in its interaction with Lee Myung-bak’s grand national vision, Songdo’s design has been dramatically redefined and reshaped, both physically and symbolically. Since implementing LEED and bringing the GCF and the GGGI to the city, Songdo has conjured its position as a global ‘green’ hub, raising its profile in Asia and the world, while presenting itself as an antidote to an exteriorized and vague enemy: the imminent ecological catastrophe that threatens the existence of life on Earth (see Swyngedouw 2009). LEED, the GCF, and the GGGI together engage Songdo as a pivotal node in enacting an infrastructure of hope and possibility for ‘green’ futurescapes that reaches “for the global register” (see Hetherington and Campbell 2014, 194; Tsing 2005).<sup>22</sup>

Songdo has thus been significantly shaped by national state visions. It has served as the initial starting point of these grand imaginaries, and as such, has been contrived as the manifestation of the country’s future direction, of the nation’s onward push towards

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<sup>22</sup> Since Park Geun-hae took office in 2013, she has pursued Creative Economy policies, based on the notion that ideas lead to profit. According to President Park, the creative economy is driven by “talented individuals” who should aim to become world leaders in their industries (cf. Yoon 2014). In a simultaneously individualizing and collectivizing narrative, as well as one that calls on the past when Korea, despite significant human rights violations, experienced rapid economic growth, President Park urges Korea’s youth and young workers to do their best “in order to serve as a driving force of the country’s national development” (Yoon 2014; see also [president.go.kr](http://president.go.kr)). Indicative of President Park’s lack of interest in “Green Growth”, central state support for the GCF has waned (Business Korea 2014) and in general, according to promoters and planners at IFEZ Authority, Park’s rhetoric has focused almost entirely on facilitating foreign investment and promoting Songdo’s research clusters. In conjunction, Songdo has recently been presented as “the optimal testbed for deregulation and the Creative Economy” (Cho 2015).

modernity. Walking through the city, one's eyes are drawn to the "I (heart) GCF" flags and banners that line the main boulevards of Songdo, reminding the visitor, the resident, and the worker, that this city has a global presence. In particular, this has caught the eye of Incheon's wealthier classes, who have come to populate the city's opulent high-rise condominiums in search of prestige and distinction.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 1.9 – The GCF comes to Songdo (Allen 2012).

#### ***1.4.2 The Zone City is a Blank Slate***

Near the end of my time in Korea, I managed to arrange an interview with Joon-seo,<sup>24</sup> an architect who had formerly worked for KPF during the early 2000s and who had played a central role in putting together Songdo's master plan. He had been trained at Cornell's graduate school of architecture and then went to work for KPF in New York City. He was promptly recruited in the Songdo project for his design skills, leadership, and ability to speak Korean.

Joon-seo looked back on his time designing Songdo with excitement, pride, and a hint of nostalgia. Those were days where he could let his imaginative and creative

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<sup>23</sup> Songdo's residents and their fantasies is the subject of chapter 3.

<sup>24</sup> This name is a pseudonym.

faculties guide his hand, where he could design buildings, neighborhoods, an entire city, with the most elaborate and inventive details. He brought with him his laptop to show me some 3D renderings of gleaming buildings and perfectly symmetrical landscapes. He offhandedly informed me that when he showed his ornate designs to other architects, they would react with disbelief and skepticism over how anyone would finance such structures. But Joon-seo was involved in a project where these landscapes were possible. There was a promised overabundance of capital and no hindrances in his way. Joon-seo and his team had been given instructions to make a world-class city, something never before seen, directly onto a blank canvas.

The blank slate is not only symbolic, but dramatically material as well. Songdo is built on an expansive patch of land along the west coast of Incheon, dredged up from the bottom of the sea. This ‘reclaimed’ terrain is physically separated from Incheon by a narrow body of water, over which a series of bridges connect the two places. Songdo thus stands as symbolically and materially separate from Incheon and the rest of Korea. As illustrated by Joon-seo’s narrative, the city is fantasized as an archetypal “creation city”, starting from a *tabula rasa* and built precisely the way it was envisioned and planned, made perfectly geometrical, and wholly separate from its host nation (see Doevendans and Schram 2005, 30-31). Songdo is conjured as a place of unrestrained development, a place without a history or sedimented customs, a place of pure possibility.

To clarify Songdo’s blank landscape, Joon-seo employed the Ferrari Company as an example: what makes Ferrari Italian when the division of labour in the automobile’s production process involves places around the world, and the car’s expert design team hails from various places outside Italy? For Joon-seo, Ferrari may have an Italian name,

but the car itself does not come from any one place. Likewise, while Songdo finds itself along the shores of Korea, it is situated in a hollow elsewhere, and can thus become anything one can dream.<sup>25</sup>

The blank slate also opens an imaginative space for the creation of a utopian community, where order and efficiency of circulation is maximized. As a “test-bed” for new forms of urbanism, Songdo has over its short lifespan attracted a large number of planners interested in testing out new technologies on populations, experimenting on human behavior and consumption, and monetizing ‘big data’ findings (see Halpern et al. 2013; Lohr 2012). In the early 2000s, Songdo was initially presented as an “intelligent city”, composed of discrete zones - industrial, commercial, residential, recreational - weaved together by a carefully planned and integrated transportation system (Holusha 2003). The concept of an intelligent city became more granular when NSIC joined efforts with LG CNS in 2006, a Korean company that specializes in large scale IT infrastructures. This partnership was branded under the name “U-Life”, “U” standing in for “ubiquitous” ([songdoulife.com](http://songdoulife.com)). Since that period, Songdo has been conceived as a singular and bounded urban space in which technologies are seamlessly integrated into the everyday micropractices of its residents, aiming to provide them with a “convenient life”, a “peaceful life”, and a “safe life” ([songdoulife.com](http://songdoulife.com)). According to Steiner (2007), the planners intend to build the world's largest “ubiquitous city”, “where wireless

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<sup>25</sup> In practice, the story of Songdo is quite distant from its placeless fantasy. Joon-seo would later leave the development because it became overly “Korean” and only a distant shadow of KPF’s master plan would actually materialize on Songdo’s canvas (I examine Songdo’s development in chapter 3). Too many obstructions came in his way and Joon-seo was no longer able to express himself creatively. The fantasy of the blank slate however remains unscathed and rather healthy, as it continues to inform future developments. IFEZ is heavily saturated with other master planned cities – projects not turning out as envisioned (see for example Jun 2013 and Stradbroke 2013), for example Midan City ([midancity.com](http://midancity.com)), a resort city, or Eightcity ([eightcity.kr](http://eightcity.kr)), a casino city of massive proportions intended to compete with Macau’s City of Dreams ([cityofdreamsmacau.com](http://cityofdreamsmacau.com)).

networks and radio-frequency identification will link all information systems - every laptop, stoplight, cellphone, TV and toaster”.

Though Cisco, a California-based network company, had signed on as a partner in Songdo's development from as early as 2002 (Lyne 2002), the company would claim a minority stake in U-Life in 2011 to integrate its own brand of ‘intelligence’ called “Smart + Connected Communities” (S+CC) (Marketwire 2011), technologies the company had already been developing since 2003 (Carter and Saxena 2010). The city has most recently been promoted as an organic, self-aware nervous system that “operates at the synaptic level of its inhabitants” (Halpern et al. 2013, 279). From this point, Songdo has been marketed as a “smart city” and appears not only intended to breed a new urban form but also a new form of urbanism in which the city’s residents, cars, buildings, all behave as a singular organism (Arlidge 2010; Lobo 2014).

During my time in Songdo, I visited the Cisco office and was given, in a serendipitous turn of events, a private tour of their showroom. The tour began with the underlying premise, “the internet of everything” (IoE), and I was subsequently shown a world where assisting technologies encapsulate virtually every sphere of life. Here are a few examples to illustrate. A centralized monitoring system, integrated with roads and other facilities that service cars, is ordered to keep track of license plates, make of the car, color, etc. To monitor on this scale without the use of magnets or other sensors, the system requires powerful algorithms to sort through a massive amount of visual information. With their cars registered into the system, drivers can, for example, program their building’s elevator to await them once they’ve parked their car. Additionally, vehicles are captured into a virtual safety net, where car theft is simply not possible. I was

told of an instance where a car-owner's son borrowed the car without notice and once he crossed the bridge to exit the city, the owner was promptly notified by phone of his car's whereabouts.

People too can be registered into the system. For example, if parents want their child to remain in a designated zone, say a school zone, and the child should exit the zone for whatever reason, the control centre is automatically notified and can track the child's location, while the video screens installed throughout the city immediately alert passersby of the child's zonal exit. The child's picture is magnified on all video screens, with the flashing caption "Have you seen this child?" A watchful safety net is thus cast over the city and all its public spaces.

Other spaces are integrated with these kinds of technologies: classrooms, offices, and even stadiums. The stadium is a particular case because integrated information systems tend to encourage people to remain in private spaces. If one can work, take classes, shop, etc. all from home, there is less reason to go out at all. Thus, Cisco encourages people to frequent public spaces by making stadiums more convenient for consumption. When customers arrive at the stadium, they are invited to log onto their Facebook accounts. This allows them to keep track of what's trending in real time as well as access a service through which they can order food, drinks, and anything else available for purchase. This system is connected to their credit card account to streamline consumption.

In the private sphere, every household has an integrated command screen, a system called "TelePresence", to centrally control the domestic space, connect with other homes, access classrooms, and even offer medical services. There are also default



settings one can set, for example “party mode” (this mode was actually part of the presentation, during which a disco ball emerged from the ceiling!). Cisco is also working on ensuring the health of Songdo’s residents by furnishing the city’s luxury high-rises with in-house medical stations from which one can remotely receive medical treatment via special cameras. The technical term here is “remote diagnosis”. Clients can receive low-cost diagnoses for minor conditions, outsourced to countries like India, as my guide explained. Additionally, for security purposes, if one so wishes, one can allow the control centre visual access, via cameras, into one’s entire apartment in case of emergency. For legal reasons, Cisco is not allowed to employ these technologies to their full capacities in Songdo, but as my guide reported, they are working with the government to make medical laws more flexible to allow the use of “remote diagnosis” throughout the city.

The smart city intersects with notions of environmental sustainability. Cisco’s S+CC project is designed to “transform physical communities to connected communities that run on networked information to enable economic, social and environmental sustainability” (Halpern et. al. 2013, 277). Sustainability is achieved by monitoring and managing urban life in order to ensure that residents remain within the system’s designated circuits, and thus require as little movement as possible. Buildings, cars, bicycles, people, are all streamlined into a singular data grid such that time is spent and distance is covered ‘optimally’, ultimately lowering the city’s carbon footprint. As a POSCO employee informed me: “Green and ubiquitous go hand in hand - ubiquitous services for more efficient lifestyle and work environment which can save energy, cut down gas emission, save time” (email correspondence, July 8, 2014). Wim Elfrink of Cisco iterates a similar point: “Telepresence can cut the number of journeys in the city by

twenty percent” (cf. Arlidge 2010). The fantasy of the “creation city” has thus attracted a wide array of designers and planners hoping to assemble designs, ideas and products that would not be possible in other contexts. In their relentless pursuit of modernity, these city makers ultimately hope to create what they imagine is the future of how humanity will live next.



Figure 1.10 – KPF master plan of Songdo IBD (KPF 2008).

### ***1.4.3 The Zone City Exists in a Frictionless World***

I had set up an appointment with a guide at Compact & Smart City, an exhibition hall located at the northern edge of Central Park, across the road from POSCO’s twin-tower headquarters. The tour began in a large viewing room with about two hundred seats. I had the theatre all to myself as I watched the latest IFEZ promotional video in the dark. The video dramatically opens with a view orbiting the globe, hovering high over land and ocean until it locates the Korean peninsula. Accompanied by inspiring music, the view begins to zoom in on the city of Incheon, on the northwest coast of South Korea. As it does, other cities in the region appear on the map – Shanghai, Tianjin, Beijing, Tokyo – each with a line drawn converging onto Incheon.<sup>26</sup> A deep resonating voice presents

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<sup>26</sup> The opening image resembles a dartboard as Incheon forms the bull’s eye of regional trade. This is very similar to the 1950s maps of the *puertos libres* in Mexico that made no reference to nations, and through

IFEZ and begins an exposition of the location's strategic connectivity and supporting infrastructure – its air and sea ports for rapid transit. A flash of light, and the view is transported over Songdo's dazzling urban panorama of skyscrapers that blend into the clear blue sky.

The video goes on to display the high quality of life the zone offers, its luxury resorts and beaches for relaxation, and at one point, the word “culture” is uttered as the video displays large casino halls with smiling white people gambling their money. This is an idealized and synergistically singularized world for unhindered consumption and flow.<sup>27</sup> The zone city calls to mind Kenichi Ohmae's (1993) “region state”: a place with a small, easily manageable and largely homogenous (and wealthy) population, endowed with air and seaports in order to maximize circulation and accumulation of capital. The logic of the region state is to closely connect itself with regional and global economies, while dissociating itself from the host state and its concomitant disruptive, overly complex, and regulatory government bureaucracy. To solidify its definition, the zone city distances itself from oversized and overwhelmingly complex global cities – New York, London, Tokyo. It is the new global city-lite, a “one-stop” corporate enclave to serve the needs of capital (Easterling 2014, 26).

The zone city's infrastructure is exceedingly conspicuous,<sup>28</sup> made to conjure an aesthetically efficient landscape. For example, the video will show a white businessman

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direct connections with faraway places, collapsed space as though the local was global (Orenstein 2011, 48).

<sup>27</sup> See [ifez.go.kr](http://ifez.go.kr) for a variety of similar videos.

<sup>28</sup> Songdo's infrastructure is central to the city's promotional materials. These make sure to flex Songdo's muscle by pointing out the metric capacities of its airport, seaport, bridge and highways. The city's infrastructure specifications are as follows: as of 2012, the Incheon International Airport has a cargo capacity of 2.4 million tons, the second greatest in the world; it moves 28 million people a year, placing ninth in the world; it is connected to 1/3 of the world's population in a 3.5 hour flight radius, which also includes 61 cities with over one million in population; it is connected to 181 cities worldwide. At present,

standing at the foot of a tall glass tower as an airplane hovers overhead, reminding the viewer of a city wedded to an airport, or as Kasarda and Lindsay (2011) call this urban form, an “aerotropolis”. In similar fashion, the video shows a child looking out the window of a car traversing the Incheon Bridge. The bridge’s pillars are reflected off the tinted glass, while below, a large cargo ship passes under. These moving images elide the purely technical character of infrastructures with aesthetic dimensions, and in so doing, turn the city’s infrastructure into a “grand spectacle” (see Larkin 2013), a dramatic performance of a possible futurescape: a city embedded in a scale much larger than the actual geographical terrain it occupies, enveloping faraway places into its domain and enabling its occupants to move seamlessly across vast spaces. The zone city conjures a formless node of constant motion that envisions a smooth un-striated world (see Hardt and Negri 2000) where one is not required to answer to local governments. It essentially takes the correlation between circulation and accumulation of capital to its apogee: “the brisker the flow, the greater the wealth... of the city” (see Swyngedouw 2006, 112).

The zone city is additionally supported by an infrastructure of ‘world-class’ “global” education institutions, the most prominent of which is Songdo Global University Campus (SGUC), Songdo’s ‘brain’ as it were.<sup>29</sup> At present, SGUC houses three US universities (SUNY at Stony Brook, George Mason, and Utah) and one Belgian university (Ghent).<sup>30</sup> The campus envisions shaping “global leaders” and intends to offer

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the Incheon Seaport occupies 61 percent of Korea’s cargo volume with China and by 2020, the port will have an annual handling capacity of 2.4 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU). The Incheon Grand Bridge, a ten billion USD project exclusively funded by the Korean government, covers the 12.3 kilometers between Songdo and the airport on Yongjeong Island and facilitates a fifteen minute commute between both places. Songdo is also connected to an array of major highways directly connected to Seoul, Korea’s capital and most populous urban center.

<sup>29</sup> SGUC was recently renamed to Incheon Global Campus (IGC) ([sgu.or.kr](http://sgu.or.kr)).

<sup>30</sup> According to the website, only SUNY has launched its graduate program; the rest are in planning stages ([sgu.or.kr](http://sgu.or.kr)).

classes such as “World Literature” and “World History”, all taught in a “World Language”, that is, in English (Looser 2012, 104). The curriculums are streamlined into a single frame such that relations and dialogue between disciplines are evacuated “in favor of a more simply nondisciplinary terrain, with a single and unified perspective” (Looser 2012, 106). According to a Korean student (Chang 2015), there are great pressures to become a “global citizen” in the present “global” context, and SGUC offers an entry point into this singular world.

A recent SGUC video (Incheon Global Campus 2014) candidly explains the symbiotic relation intended between Songdo’s universities and corporations. The premise follows that corporations fund university research they require, and universities in turn provide corporations with a “global” workforce.<sup>31</sup> The video states it as follows:

In this virtuous educational circle, corporations donate scholarships, nurture human resources, and fund research to develop fundamental technologies, while students are grown into global talents that the corporations demand.

The zone city is a corporate paradise. According to the intended vision of SGUC, the human population itself is an infrastructure made to support the needs and desires of capital. The frictionless fantasy of the zone city chimes with the utopian community of the “creation city”, where “people are secondary to production... and everyone is to behave according to their role” (see Bach 2011a, 109).<sup>32</sup>

Correlatively, a comprehensive brochure made to showcase the Korean FEZ and its population presents the “average Korean” by gender, Mr. Kim and Ms. Lee (KFEZ

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<sup>31</sup> This relation is taking shape in Songdo’s Technopark where universities aim to “incubate companies and increase the technological competitiveness of small- and medium-sized enterprises” (itp.or.kr).

<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note here that in Korea, large corporations, *chaebol*, are not approached negatively. Having served as pivotal actors in Korea’s rapid development since the 1960s, *chaebol* are often considered a source of pride and securing employment at a *chaebol* is commonly regarded as prestigious. This exemplifies the situatedness of this imagined modern world (see Tsing 2005).

2015). Mr. Kim is highly educated with a degree in science and engineering and has “a global mindset”; he is a man of integrity, fully committed to his work like his nation’s former generations who “helped Korea achieve miraculous economic growth”; he is always connected to his smartphone, able to work on-the-go; and he studies after work in his unending pursuit for personal growth. Mr. Kim’s entire existence appears to revolve around *production*. Ms. Lee, on the other hand, performs secretarial work in an English environment, preparing reports for her foreign boss; she enjoys *Teumsae Ramyeon*<sup>33</sup> for lunch; she has *chimaek* – Korean fried chicken and beer – in the evening with friends, goes shopping and drinks “a cup of coffee with foreign friends”, and finally watches “quality TV” to relax at the end of her day. Ms. Kim spends her daily life primarily for the purpose of *consumption* (KFEZ 2015, 31-35). These two characters are indeed imagined as the ideal ‘infrastructure’ for corporations: the man produces, the woman consumes, and their citizenship no longer belongs to either of them, for it has been farmed out by the state to “global economic actors” (see Sassen 1996 cf. Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 33). As a unit, Mr. Kim and Ms. Lee together form a circular cog continuously spinning for a globally connected conveyor belt, simultaneously fuelled by and fuelling the movement of capital.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> According to the brochure, *Teumsae Ramyeon* has become more popular worldwide than Japanese ramen (34).

<sup>34</sup> As I will show in chapter 3, Songdo’s residential units are materially configured to support and encourage these kinds of gendered behaviors, while these units are simultaneously conjured as transnational spaces into which wealthy buyers can envision themselves.



Figure 1.11 – Songdo’s frictionless connectivity (songdo.com).

Songdo’s three dominant fantasies – a national state project, a blank slate, and a frictionless world – together conjure modern futurescapes that have powerfully shaped and informed the city’s ongoing production. These fantasies are highly variegated and in constant mutation, but their ideal types remain intact as empty placeholders for new and improved versions of modernity awaiting humanity around the corner. National and transnational processes are not mutually exclusive in the zone city, but neither do they seamlessly blend into one another. While the zone city relentlessly conjures a world in which the separation between inside and outside has been flattened out and the whole world has been domesticated in one place (see Bach 2011a, 110; Hardt and Negri 2000, 187-188), the national state is a crucial player in this grand urban drama, exercising “graduated sovereignty” to manage its territory and populations (see Ong 2006). As one interviewee from IFEZ Authority makes clear: “The nation state is holding the knife” (cf Shin et al., forthcoming).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> In the context of Songdo, the national state seeks to attract private investors and developers into the city, but the state reserved final judgment in every case. The private sector must always verify its projects with the state, while the state can change its policies and make decisions over the city’s development regardless of consent from the private sector.

The manifestations of Songdo's fantasies are thus not to be construed as generalizable principles about all zone cities that authoritatively tend towards a homogenous and coherent urban form. Rather, while zone cities may present themselves as universal urban formations, their particularities are also universal (see Harms 2011; Tsing 2005). Songdo's idealized fantasies link to global trends while locally reworked permutations reflect the city's territorial embeddedness (see Harms 2011, 8). In this regard, this thesis positions itself alongside scholarship that challenges overarching universals and essentialized particulars in and beyond urban contexts, for example studies in relational comparison<sup>36</sup> (Edensor and Jayne 2012), urban assemblages<sup>37</sup> (Farias and Bender 2010; McCann et al. 2013; McFarlane 2011), cyborg urbanization<sup>38</sup> (Gandy 2005), flexible planning<sup>39</sup> (Gururani 2013), situated urban binaries<sup>40</sup> (Harms 2011;

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<sup>36</sup> Edensor and Jayne (2012) take after Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) to decenter Western-centric theories and approach the comparison of cities not seeking to bring out absolute similarity and difference between mutually exclusive places but rather as urban forms that share "interconnected trajectories and identities" entangled across various scales while also grounded in local processes and dynamics (6).

<sup>37</sup> Farias and Bender (2010), McCann et al. (2013), and McFarlane (2011) approach cities as ongoing socio-material assemblages characterized as heterogeneous, contingent, highly unstable, and always incomplete. These activities do not clearly define spatial boundaries but rather come together through connected lines across various scales, thus illustrating a continuous relationship between "global-relationality and territorial embeddedness" (McCann 2013, 583).

<sup>38</sup> Matthew Gandy (2005) approaches cities not as large sociotechnical systems but rather as shifting sites of interconnection between people and infrastructures. He deploys the metaphor of the cyborg to think of the city as a prosthesis of the human body relationally constituted in specific sites, such as homes, hospitals, schools, etc., thereby collapsing the clear distinction between nature and culture and the corresponding teleology of Western modernity (see also Latour 1993).

<sup>39</sup> Shubhra Gururani (2013) approaches the development of India's "Millennium City" Gurgaon neither as a spectacle of Indian neoliberal economic success or an urban formation of completely unregulated planning. Rather, Gurgaon is a 'flexibly planned' urban form made to accommodate the ongoing and shifting "desires and demands of the wealthy and political elite". The notion of "flexible planning" is not specific only to India but can also relate to Western contexts, consequently challenging the reductionist and highly simplistic theoretical foundations of Western modernist urban planning.

<sup>40</sup> Erik Harms (2011) follows people who live in HokMon, a suburb of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam to illustrate the situatedness and particularities of a universal binary between the country and the city and inside and outside. His interest is not in the binaries themselves but in the ways people variously practice them in their everyday lives. See Cronon (1991) for a similar yet differently approached problematization of the city and country opposition.



Cronon 1991), worlding<sup>41</sup> (Roy and Ong 2011; Simone 2001), ontological politics<sup>42</sup> (Oppenheim 2008), policy mobilities<sup>43</sup> (Peck 2011; Lee and Hwang 2012), theorizing beyond neoliberalism<sup>44</sup> (Robinson 2011), urban informality<sup>45</sup> (Roy 2005), as well as technocracy<sup>46</sup> (Mitchell 2002) and fragments<sup>47</sup> (Tsing 2005), that may serve as comparative heuristics across multiple urban places and processes.

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<sup>41</sup> Roy and Ong (2011) aim to challenge theories that approach Asian cities as mere recipients of Western urban forms or sites that seamlessly integrate Western-issued neoliberalism. Rather, Asian cities are urban sites that produce their own situated visions and practices of what “can count as ‘global’” (2). Worlding also interrupts a top-down analysis: worlding practices are also assembled from ‘below’, bringing together a mass dream co-constituted between states and citizens (see also Simone 2001).

<sup>42</sup> Robert Oppenheim (2008) approaches the formation of place as a constitution of socio-material practices. Place is an outcome of practices that form a “density” in one location but these convergences are simultaneously tied to multiple scales that can span across transnational spaces (14; see also Latour 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Jamie Peck (2011) aims to challenge the notion that policies begin in the West and are transferred to the non-West. Rather, everyone is making policies and they circulate in multi-directional ways that are far too messy to be rendered mappable and traced to any foundational origin. For an applied example of policy mobilities, see Lee and Hwang (2012) who explore how ‘creative city’ policies are manipulated, refashioned, and integrated into the situated context of Seoul, South Korea.

<sup>44</sup> Jennifer Robinson (2011) contends that urban theory should take into account a wider range of urban experiences rather than focus strictly on the “rolling out” (Peck and Tickell 2002) of neoliberal policies and practices. Overemphasizing neoliberal urbanism tends to elide and silence a wide array of factors and experiences, consequently reproducing the hegemonic dominance of Western thought.

<sup>45</sup> Ananya Roy (2005) contends that the notion of urban informality, once relegated only to ‘third world’ cities, may be the dominant mode of urbanization in most of the urban world. Urban informality challenges the opposition between formal and informal and instead approaches the making of cities as variegated forms *within* shifting parameters of informality. All cities vary in their treatment of the urban poor, access to markets and property, and various applications of exception and sovereignty, placing into question the very notion of formality.

<sup>46</sup> Timothy Mitchell (2002) addresses histories of expert knowledge not as human endeavors but rather as webs of connections between human and nonhuman processes. By decentering the human as the main protagonist of the story, history no longer appears linear. Since the human and nonhuman opposition and the centrality of the human are Western products, deploying these models invariably positions Europe at the center, while other places are measured in relation to Europe’s particularized history, as either a replica or variation (Mitchell 2002, 28-29). Decentering the human and foregrounding human and nonhuman relations in social analysis thus presents an effective means to problematize the Archimedean unity of historicism, through which a singular history of humanity begins in Europe and the West and serves as the ‘measuring stick’ (Latour 1993) against which non-European societies are positioned (Chakrabarty 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Anna Tsing (2005) examines global connections that present themselves as universal truths as what she calls “engaged universals”. Universals are always practical, ephemeral, and culturally specific projects brought into being in a heterogeneous world. The scales of these projects are not reflections of the world but rather fashion the world in particular ways for the limited duration of their existence. Universals are thus not global totalities but rather situated and limited “fragments” of time and place.

## **1.5 Methodology**

In this thesis, I approach myself, as the researcher, and the site as relationally constitutive. Everything I have gathered, interpreted, and ‘written up’ in the following pages, ‘came to me’ through an “intersubjective experience in the ethnographic encounter” (see Riles 2006, 1-2), an encounter comprised of connections between myself and particular groups (see Abu-Lughod 1991) across multiple sites which are themselves multiple (see Hannerz 2003; Marcus 1999; Mol 2002). To be clear, in no way do I intend to allude to a seamlessly blended intersubjective encounter where the site and I congeal into one. An intersubjective construction is a messy and often times frustrating encounter, riddled with far more misunderstandings, contradictions, and loose ends than connections, a process that is correspondingly mentally, emotionally, and physically taxing. This includes conducting interviews just as much as writing this ethnography. In this section, though the methodological themes in this study are inexhaustible, I will explain a number of important themes, specifically the formations of the ethnographic site and myself in the process.

### ***1.5.1 Field Site(s)***

Gupta and Ferguson (1997) offer an important discussion on archetypal spatial and temporal categories related to ethnographic fieldwork. In the present project, one in which I travelled to a far away place to conduct fieldwork and later returned home to write, “field” and “home” could easily be contrived as wholly separate, both spatially and temporally. The separation is problematic however because it contributes to constructing the boundedness and absolute difference of the field site, and, correlatively, the archetypal self and other. These spatial and temporal tropes of home and field reproduce

difference, a process that intersects with forms and expressions of imperialism (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 12-15; 1992, 14-16). These are elements I attempt not to reproduce.

The research site is not a bounded thing; it is rather comprised of “shifting locations” that continuously extend into the past, into the “field”, and into this very moment, as I write these words (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 38). Consider the writing process. During my time in Songdo, I did not record the voice of a single person; instead, I took light notes during discussions and fleshed them out immediately after parting ways. These ‘raw field notes’ contained summaries of what people said, situational observations, reflections on the larger picture of what I understood at the time, and various other thoughts. Very few words from my interlocutors directly made their way onto my field notes. These notes then travelled with me to Canada, where they would play a role in assembling this ethnography. They became enmeshed with a large selection of formal academic texts, theories, and a wide array of news articles, gathered in years prior and over this last year. The field notes themselves were continually reinterpreted in relation to these newly added textual actors and shifted according to the fluidity of my memories over time. Many of my field notes were not found to be meaningful to the unified narrative of the present text, which is required to have a singular thread traversing its core. Indeed, the vast majority of the ethnographic encounter in this study is ‘set ablaze’<sup>48</sup> and relies on pronounced elision to keep the script streamlined. Importantly, in

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<sup>48</sup> The idea of ‘setting ablaze’ relates to the notion of “fire space”, a concept used to approach a site that holds its shape “*as an effect of discontinuity*” (Law and Mol 2001, 615). The constancy of my field site in this thesis is achieved through discontinuity with other expressions of Songdo. We might think of it as a single space supported by a multitude of othered others. Law and Mol summarize: “To say that there is a fire topology is to say that *there are stable shapes created in patterns of conjoined alterity*” (616). For example, a mathematical formalism that defines the physics of an airplane’s trajectory would never hold together were it not to elide the messy history of its conception and all the actors involved, to which the formalism owes its very existence (616-618).

no way does the attempt at coherence in this text aim to convey a sense of coherence in the field, as though its immanent logic were seamlessly translated here (see Asad 1986).

Elisions and continual reinterpretations of what was gathered in the field site present important political implications. This study indeed expresses pronounced representational violence,<sup>49</sup> which is especially significant if I were to claim innocence or omniscience as a researcher (see Rosaldo 1989; Said 1989). In this written work however, assembling and assembled through a multitude of texts and forms of writing, the questions that I have wondered about are: where is the actual site of Songdo? What kind of authority can be bestowed on this text, if any? How much ownership and control can I claim over these words? With a bit of reflexivity, the texts with which I surround myself as I write – my field notes, academic texts, news sources, promotional documents – are not silent representatives of an independent reality; rather, they are actively engaged in the production of situated realities, that is, they produce the various sites of Songdo in this text (see Clifford 1983; Riles 2006; Stoler 2002, 2009; Zeitlyn 2012). This text is thus an assemblage of reformulated and translated materials “bricolaged” (Hebdige 1979)<sup>50</sup> into a thematically streamlined narrative, itself always “partial”, “incomplete”, and contingent upon a whole series of unmappable factors (see Clifford 1986). Any number of factors could have redirected the narrative elsewhere.

My objective here is to problematize the authority of this text by highlighting that it enacts particular realities. However, I simultaneously wish to authorize it to the extent of any other version of reality: the text, in effect, rehearses ways through which reality is

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<sup>49</sup> Representational violence relates to the reduction of reality as an outcome of rendering the narrative of this thesis intelligible and coherent.

<sup>50</sup> Bricolage refers to an improvised assemblage of various components to generate new meanings out of them (Hebdige 1979, 104).

enacted, just like any other version (see Law and Mol 2001).<sup>51</sup> Bruno Latour (1993) claims that reality can never fully gel into an essence, for there is no stable and fixed essence to be discovered from the beginning. In conjunction, Theodor Adorno contends that reality can never completely close the gap between the concept and the thing, that is, there will always remain “nonidentity”, a residual excess that resists reconciliation (cf Bennett 2004). Despite vigilance to capture every detail, the world simply cannot be grasped to its full extent, and will obdurately remain far more complex, ungraspable, and unpredictable than human thought can ever hope to capture (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987). This text thus enacts positioned realities of Songdo, and in doing so, follows Anna Tsing (2005) in attempting to highlight the situated fragmentedness of the world in order to interrupt more powerful realities, those that claim to reflect a stable reality of “unified and successful regimes of global self-management” (271). In other words, reality can never be the reflection of a universal truth; a universal is always an engaged, specific and practical project, tentatively accomplished for a moment in history, enacted in a heterogeneous world (Tsing 2005). I now turn to my positionality in relation to the field to elucidate the contingencies and power-laden dimensions of my ethnographic encounter.

### ***1.5.2 Positionalities***

The form of this project is contingent upon my own positionality, defined here in archetypal terms as a white male English-speaking Westerner in Korea (see Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 11). In Korea, these factors variously position me at particular

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<sup>51</sup> Empiricism and fiction – which this thesis is an example of the latter – are fundamentally similar forms of story telling. The former however is assumed to have an immediate relationship to the external material world and thus comes to stand as ‘truth’ (Cameron and Ronen 2004). I offer an example of this in chapter 2.

intersections, depending on the group with whom and the material with which I interact. In the most archetypal terms, the white Westerner in Korea is seen to hail from a 'modern' country with a higher quality of life than in Korea. For example, a Westerner may have more leisure time and generally enjoy a well-balanced work/leisure lifestyle. This concomitantly facilitates mobility, as per the Westerner's very presence in Korea. On this point, the lifestyle of the Westerner may be an object of envy. On the flipside however, a Westerner may be looked on with disdain. The Westerner is individualistic and cares little of the opinions of others. They may thus be selfish, untrustworthy, and even promiscuous (see Abelman and Lie (1995) and Kim (2006) for similar dualisms). Certainly, the two largest Western expatriate populations in South Korea, English teachers and US soldiers, in many ways act out and even hyperbolize these stereotypes, as many behave in ways they never would in their home countries, but they are simultaneously seen from situated vantage points in Korea.<sup>52</sup>

As a Western graduate researcher in the field however, I was not so straightforwardly categorized. I was an international student, and seen as a wealthy one. Korean graduate programs generally do not fund their graduate students beyond covering tuition fees, and so those who attend must cover the costs of their livelihoods. Furthermore, the general trend in Korea – which may not actually relate to most Koreans – follows that one should secure a job in a company right before university graduation. Attending a graduate program can signal that one has not found a job and thus requires additional training. Otherwise, graduate students are in it for the long haul to eventually become scholars. This is how I was generally approached, and since I could afford to

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<sup>52</sup> Similar depictions of Western foreignness can be observed in other East Asian contexts, for example in China (Henry 2013) and Taiwan (Muskowitz 2008).

come to Korea for graduate research, I was seen as someone with significant financial means. This assumption is quite accurate in relation to the Korean context: I am a highly privileged Westerner with the means to devote a summer in Korea and the subsequent year to engage in research about Songdo.

I was encountered in various ways, depending on certain groups. Korean residents of Incheon and Songdo, for example, often saw me as an object of curiosity, and because I could hold a conversation in Korean, many were delighted to speak with me. Government officials generally saw me as a well-funded researcher. They were sometimes pleased that I would take an interest in their city and their work, and were keen to tell me about Songdo as an important achievement for Korea. Some of these informants were also interested in speaking with me to rehearse their English or make a foreign friend, while others had little interest, if any, or were generally too busy. Mr. Park, to whom I devote chapter 2, was a particular case: he was markedly interested in advising me as a student and in conveying, as lucidly as he could, his visions for Songdo. After my first meeting with Mr. Park, as Ye-joon (the interpreter I had hired for our first meeting) and I were walking back to the subway, he told me an ‘ordinary Korean’ would never have the opportunity to speak so candidly with such an important political figure. Evidently, my Western-ness – and perhaps my whiteness – was an influential factor that afforded me access to an elite bureaucrat.<sup>53</sup>

An important factor to consider, one of the most influential and limiting in this project, is the English language, which today occupies a complex position in Korea. It carries associations with American imperialism, liberatory possibilities, cosmopolitanism, and powerful symbolic markers for professional success, all of which can be variously

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<sup>53</sup> Perhaps my gender might come into the equation here, but this I can only speculate.

regarded depending upon one's class position (see Collins 2005; Lee et al. 2010; Park 2011; Park and Abelman 2004). English is very challenging to learn from a Korean language background, and in the context of the overly rigorous and highly systematized Korean education system, it is even harder to master. Generally, middle to upper class groups, those who can afford to send their children to international schools or to an English speaking country, can master English. Thus, from my position as a fluent English speaker, I occupied a certain status of privileged authority. For example, it is very common for Koreans to apologize because their English is not 'good enough'; meanwhile my broken Korean is hardly ever assessed on the same basis. English is indeed "enmeshed in conditions of power" (Asad 1986, 163) from which many Koreans may express "deference and inferiority" (Kim 2006, 387).

While in Korea, I attended evening Korean classes in the hopes that I would use it on a daily basis with informants, and while this did happen early on in the study, with residents of Songdo for example, the field would eventually lead me to highly educated specialists who are at least highly proficient in English, if not completely fluent. For some of these informants who very often speak with foreign investors in English, I was perhaps a curious presence who fit the appearance of the foreign investor but made strange and at times probing queries. I discovered that other researchers had come to Songdo before me and had visited the offices at IFEZ Authority, but these were researchers of disciplines such as business management or urban planning, not researchers of anthropology, interested in the everyday lives and histories of these people.

English paved paths of inquiry but also limited others. Other non-English speaking specialists integral to making Songdo were difficult to access. They had little



interest in speaking with me, especially in my broken Korean. Also, though in my eyes their English was excellent, some informants were uncomfortable speaking with me because it was straining for them to hold a one to two hour conversation in English, as much as it would be for me to converse in Korean for an hour, as I attempted. This is indeed exhausting and certainly a source of considerable stress.

The written sources that inform the narrative of this text are primarily written in English, and some in French. Though I read some Korean news sources, they did not find their way directly into this narrative. While the vast majority of what's written on Korea will be written in Korean, this project does not directly come into conversation with this rich literature. I do however bring in many sources written by Koreans who include a wide array of Korean sources. The present study is thus limited linguistically, which can only offer a situated angle of analysis. This is not to say that Korean texts offer access to a more 'real' or 'total' conception of 'Korean culture', which I, as a Western researcher, could potentially capture as a whole; Korean texts as well would render a situated standpoint. Ultimately, whatever the angle of analysis, it will always render particular "singularities" excerpted from a horizon of inexhaustible, overabundant, and excessive factors and events (see Augé 1995).

## **CHAPTER 2 Dreaming and Performing Songdo: Situating a Zone City in Korea**

### **2.1 Mr. Park's Epiphany**

On a bright early summer day in 1985, upon returning from seven years spent in the southeast as a government official, Mr. Park found himself on the shores of his hometown of Incheon, just west of Seoul. As he stood looking out onto the sea, in a serendipitous moment of clarity, it all came to him. Excitement ensued. Incheon may not have looked like much at the time but Mr. Park suddenly realized that it was destined for greatness. It had all the properties to become the new center of Asia.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Park looked back at the city. It wasn't very impressive. It looked more like a patchwork of awkwardly juxtaposed urban and rural spaces. Incheon had grown quickly since the 1960s but most of its growth was in heavy chemical industry, and the majority of its factories were rusty and decrepit, having undergone little maintenance over the years. Incheon was less 'city' than it was 'factory zone' for the neighboring capital. Meanwhile, large companies were moving to Seoul and so were the city's residents, at least the ones who could afford it. Property value was too low to sell and so residents who could not find a buyer had to remain in Incheon. And many took the long and inconvenient commute to Seoul for work. With little speculation, hardly any residences were built and those that had been constructed all had the same generic look.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on a series of meetings with Mr. Park, during which I did not use a recording device; I only employed a notebook. Mainly because he thought his English was not adequately polished, he felt uneasy about having his voice recorded. As such, I cannot include block quotes of his statements. The quotes I do use are of words or expressions he repeated consistently, those he felt were most important to convey. The opening vignette of this chapter is Mr. Park's genuine vision of Songdo, a story he felt pleased to communicate.

Regulations imposed on Incheon were increasing in the 1980s. Public funds were cut and private investment was increasingly limited. The construction of highways connecting Incheon to Seoul was also restricted. These were the measures taken by the central state from the late 1970s to stifle the rapid population influx into Seoul (see Park 2005, 860; Douglass 2000, 13). To redistribute and scatter the population, developments were redirected to other parts of the country far away from Seoul. Cities in Seoul's immediate proximity, like Incheon, were heavily restricted by the central state. Also, Incheon's port was stagnant, such that the city did not perceive direct access to the sea as a boon; rather, the shoreline was approached as a barrier to the city's industrial growth.

Incheon's destiny could not be perceived beneath the smokestacks and uniform apartment blocks, but the time was right to awaken the city's true purpose. To do this, Mr. Park would have to go to the field, but not limit his purview to Incheon, nor to Korea proper. To free Incheon from its regulatory shackles, Mr. Park had to take on the role of a true "visionary" and look to the outside. It was the time of the Cold War but things were stirring in nearby China, as it appeared to be on course to opening up to the world. To connect to China, the shoreline of Incheon had to be mapped as an opportunity rather than a barrier.

The growth model of Korea up to this point relied most heavily on low wage labor, and if China were to open its massive workforce to the world, Korea would never be able to compete. Cheap labor was thus an unsustainable growth engine for the small peninsula. Korea's growth model had to be reconfigured. It had to upgrade from a low wage manufacturing center to a high wage service economy, and Incheon would lead the way to this paradigm shift.

There was the need for a specific place to start Korea on its quest for economic renewal, and Seoul, as Korea's major urban center, was not the ideal location to do this. Seoul was already densely built and land prices were very high. The plan required a blank slate, an untouched drawing board to construct a brand new city.

Mr. Park saw three factors to bring his plan to fruition. First, to create an entirely blank slate for a new city, Incheon's coast would be 'reclaimed'. Second, the city would need a large international airport to bring the city into transnational circulation. And third, a tourist destination would ensure that the city become known around the world by continuously attracting tourists. Under these conditions, the new city would eventually become a place where everyone would want to live.

The relation between the city and its land would engender its own engine of capital accumulation through a circular logic of exchange. 'Reclaimed' land could be sold again at much higher land prices, from which the subsequent profit could then be reinvested into the city's infrastructure and would then add further value to the land. Through this cycle of speculation and reinvestment, the city would eventually grow to become the center of Asia, casting its shadow over the likes of Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Singapore, the new city's simultaneous benchmarks and competitors.

The new city would blend nature and technology to nurture a harmonious community. The category of nature would be captured in the city's 'green' properties. These include both ecological (such as parks and efficient buildings) and security (for a safe and pleasant life) measures to establish a foundation of comfort and care for its residents. These properties would simultaneously make the city stand out among its competitors and attract people of the "highest quality". The category of technology would

be present in the city's 'intelligent' dimensions. It would be an IT-based city wired together by high quality, cutting-edge technology, assimilated into the everyday lives of its residents.

The city's blend of green and intelligent properties, when fused into the lifestyles of its residents, would give rise to an integrated community. The city would be located in a Free Economic Zone so that people from around the world could easily come live in this new city. Indeed, people of the 'highest quality' could come from anywhere, but in the city's integrated green and intelligent infrastructure, the differences between people's specific historical, social and cultural backgrounds would wither away, and they could then live comfortably together as a "fusion" community. As a city designed to "keep life inside", where its residents would not want to leave, it would offer everything one can imagine, the whole world all in one place. In the city, life would become art, and enable its residents to live "beautiful lives".

Upon having his vision, Mr. Park would go straight to the office of the Incheon Mayor. It would take much work to transform the trajectory and the transnational position of an entire nation, with many powerful people to persuade, but Mr. Park felt up to the task and had the charisma to render such a dream possible.

## **2.2 Approaching Mr. Park**

Standing on the shores of his nation, Mr. Park dreamed a utopic city, one that lucidly rehearsed the three central fantasies of the zone city. The city would be a grand state project that would induce a paradigm shift in Korea's future growth model, from a low-wage industrial base to a knowledge hub of transnational proportions; the city would be built on a clean slate and developed into a utopian community, where difference would

be eradicated and urban life would operate as a uniform system; the city would be seamlessly connected to the entire globe, where the whole world would be drawn to the city's irresistible charismatic appeal.

In this chapter, I wish to explore how these fantasies come alive and how they are deployed to bring the zone city into production. To examine this dual process, I engage with Mr. Park's narrative and track the path he laid out. On the one hand, in the experience of envisioning his dream city, Mr. Park is "traversed" (see Biehl 2005, cf Barker et al. 2013) by the transformation of Korea during the 1980s and the shifting political, economic, and cultural terrain across the way in China, where zone cities are proliferating rapidly. In this sense, Mr. Park is a 'personification' of the wider political economic factors that give rise to his vision, setting the conditions through which he comes to dream a mythical urban form (see Mitchell 2002).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Mr. Park is an "urban specialist", a performative 'diviner' of the city by virtue of his skills, knowledge, ability to establish connections, and willingness to take risks at opportunistic moments (see Hansen and Verkaaik 2009).

These two elements, the mythical urban form that 'traverses' Mr. Park and his decisive actions, support one another, imparting onto the other a powerful charismatic appeal. The vision of the city is a "reservoir of myth" conferring onto Mr. Park the fantasmic charisma of a visionary capable of "conjuring" (Tsing 2005)<sup>3</sup> far away processes in both space and time – processes occurring across the world and the direction

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of personification comes from Karl Marx who conceived of individual capitalists not as sovereign actors but rather, through their relations with capital, as personifications of its power. Capitalist history is thus not about the will and intention of individuals but "the expansion of value through the exchange of commodities, in particular the exchange of labor power" (see Mitchell 2002, 30).

<sup>3</sup> "Conjuring" visions of the world that span across vast scales of time and space refers not to a reflection of these processes but rather their situated creation (Tsing 2005).

to which they tend, while Mr. Park bestows onto his imagined city performative charisma as he skillfully and adaptively presents the vision, intelligibly explains its necessity, convinces and recruits powerful actors, and even enacts sovereign power to influence the fate of his nation in order to bring his vision to reality.

In this chapter, I retell Mr. Park's story as he explained it to me, but by attempting to mediate the relationship between Mr. Park and the social-structural context of his actions, I 'toggle back and forth' between "a fine-grained analysis of agency and the wider social context of political economy" (Barker et al. 2013, 166). I approach Mr. Park as both a product and a force of his context.<sup>4</sup>

### **2.3 Meeting Mr. Park**

Mr. Park was the first informant I met during my time in Korea. A contact at a research institute put me in touch with him. He was described as someone who had been there from the inception of Songdo and, based on word-of-mouth, was *the* individual to meet.<sup>5</sup> After a series of email exchanges with Mr. Park, we eventually organized to meet at his office at Korea University in Seoul – his alma mater, where he was teaching graduate-level classes in city planning and engineering. I brought with me an interpreter in case of difficulties communicating, but Mr. Park's English was advanced and so an interpreter was not necessary for future visits.

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<sup>4</sup> The method of this chapter also resonates with the way in which William Cronon (1991) approaches the human imagination/object world problematic. As Cronon writes, "[Chicago]'s history may have begun in the human dreams that prophesied its rise, but those dreams laid their foundations on solid earth, tracing their destiny onto the land's own patterns" (23). In other words, in the early days of Chicago, boosters imagined the city and laid it out over the landscape, and that landscape concomitantly inspired the booster's imagination. Cronon's study lucidly illustrates that there is no clear separation between the imagined and the material world, that is, the landscape is simultaneously cultural and physical.

<sup>5</sup> Joon-seo of KPF also corroborated this when he informed me that Mr. Park was pivotal in bringing people together towards the undertaking of the project.

During my first moments with Mr. Park, I took note of his confident body language and mannerisms. He wasn't imposing, but very calm and open, like a man who walked through the world with ease. He smiled naturally and made us feel comfortable. Sitting behind his desk in his office at a prestigious Korean university, he came off as a man of great charisma.<sup>6</sup> He offered my interpreter and I each a beverage, and as he opened them, he wiped with a tissue the brim of the bottles before handing them to us, very calmly and gently, as he recited his story.

For our first meeting, he seemed to have prepared a narrative to present a sort of prepackaged idea of Songdo. But I realized later that he had rehearsed his story countless times, to the extent that it was imprinted in his muscle memory. He had even written a book about it, his own autobiography. He offered me a copy, personally signed, of his book, and I graciously accepted.<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Park and I would meet multiple times over the course of my fieldwork, and successively had longer discussions at each meeting. He considered me one of his students, and he wanted to advise me on how I should write about Songdo. He would have liked that I write about the potential benefits Songdo could bring to Korea, and what the city would require to turn its envisioned plan into reality.

It was challenging at times speaking with Mr. Park. I often felt disingenuous, asking him questions about Songdo and smiling outwardly at his answers while recoiling inside at his profound sense of entitlement and willingness to decide on the fate of an entire nation. He was truly committed to transforming Korea, and was blindly convinced that his creation was the key to the country's future. Being in the presence of such an

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<sup>6</sup> I mean to refer to charisma in a situational sense, not as a strictly individual attribute.

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Park's autobiography is written in difficult and extremely florid Korean prose. I was only able to read a small portion of it; the account here is based on my personal interactions with Mr. Park.



individual was fascinating for me, but part of me was also subtly terrified by the sheer determination and calculated risk of his actions. I take Mr. Park's story at his word, and I will stay close to his narrative as he relayed it to me, while integrating larger forces at work in his context.

## **2.4 The Context of the Dream City's Charisma**

After receiving a doctorate in civil engineering from Korea University in 1977, Mr. Park went to work for the central government in Seoul and was relocated to a satellite city of Busan in the southeast of Korea, where he would spend seven years working as a high-ranking city official. These two factors, his alma mater and the southeast of Korea, are significant if one considers the regional and educational bias in the Korean state's recruiting methods, along with the peninsula's uneven regional development. From 1961 to 1979 during President Park Chung-hee's authoritarian rule, the Korean state began showing pronounced regional and educational bias in the recruitment of its officers, privileging those from Seoul and the southeast – from where President Park himself hailed<sup>8</sup> – and hiring primarily graduates from Seoul National, Yonsei, and Korea Universities, the country's most prestigious institutions.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, under President

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<sup>8</sup> Following Park Chung-hee's military coup in 1961, state bureaucracy began showing signs of regional bias in the way bureaucrats were recruited, with particular preference given to the southeast, from where Park himself hailed. The southwest, on the other hand, was neglected in its governmental representation. The disparity escalated to the extent that by the 1980s, when regional preference did not exist twenty years prior, bureaucrats from the southeast outnumbered those from the southwest nearly four to one (Ha and Kang 2011, 84). The pattern here illustrates the extent to which the central government sought to mobilize legitimacy and loyalty from its bureaucrats while mitigating uncertainty in policy implementation by recruiting those with close personal ties to the leader and to those doing the recruiting. In promoting candidates, though these practices were framed as merit-based, higher officials generally preferred candidates from their own regional backgrounds, which tended to be from the southeast. Those from the southwest simply had less opportunity to show their abilities (Ha and Kang 2011, 90).

<sup>9</sup> Under President Park's rule, there was a preference over a candidate's alma mater. At the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MCI) for example, between 1961 and 1979, about 65% of new recruits had graduated from Korea's three top-ranked universities: South National, Yonsei, and Korea Universities (Ha and Kang 2011, 91). Regional ties were important in these institutions, as high school students from the

Park, Seoul and Busan became the privileged urban regions to lead in the country's rapid growth, where most of the industrial development took place.<sup>10</sup> As a graduate from Korea University working in a rapidly growing part of the country, Mr. Park was thus well positioned among the country's bureaucratic elite.

Mr. Park was then relocated to his hometown of Incheon in 1985, to become the Director General of the Incheon Planning Bureau. He explained that during this period, there was insistent chatter among policy makers that an imminent change was upon East Asia, and many of Mr. Park's colleagues were busily seeking out possible solutions for how Korea could absorb the oncoming impact of these changing tides. Nearby China was the main cause for concern, for it had begun 'opening up' under Deng Xiaoping's rule and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were cropping up very close to the shores of Incheon and Korea. Oppressive labour conditions and export-led growth had supplied

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southeast attended these universities. Recruiting personally and ideologically loyal bureaucrats was important for President Park, especially as he was implementing ambitious programs for economic development. Through these large-scale programs, his state would gain political legitimacy, but he needed legitimacy among his workforce to ensure that his policies follow through (Ha and Kang 2011, 93). Concomitantly, the private sector emulated the state in its regional and scholarly bias, which facilitated and strengthened the relationship between the public and the private sectors. Korea's 'economic miracle' is thus not explained by a strong state imposing its will on the private sector but rather an informal congealing of state/market relations (Boyd and Ngo 2005; Glassman 2011; Ha and Kang 2011; Jessop 2005; Koo 2005). State practice and its relation to the private sector thus had much more to do with *informal social ties*.

<sup>10</sup> Spacio-structural factors are deeply involved in the formation of regional inequality in Korea. Park Chung-hee's export-led growth strategy focused primarily on low-wage labour industries such as textiles, shoes, and wigs (Park 2008, 48). In this endeavor, the state gave precedence to areas of the country that already had a well-established infrastructure for industrial production. These areas were the Seoul and Busan regions (Bae and Sellers 2007, 546; Park 2008, 48). Though Seoul had been largely devastated by the Korean War (Minns 2001), it had the most well established infrastructure by virtue of its role as the Japanese colonial administrative capital. As a result of Park's growth strategies, the capital region captured 56 percent of the country's population growth from 1966 to 1977 (Douglass 2000, 10). Busan, relatively undamaged by the war, took advantage of its proximity with Japan, Korea's greatest supplier of industrial technologies (Douglass 2000, 12; Park 2008, 49). Seoul and Busan were connected by a railway line built during the Japanese occupation that crossed the peninsula and had brought with it industrial development to these major urban centres (Park 2005, 49). Park supplemented the rail line with Korea's first major expressway built in the early 1970s (Douglass 2000, 9). These factors formed a corridor between Seoul and Busan that polarized development to select regions in Korea.

Korea with a competitive edge over other economies,<sup>11</sup> but it was not a sustainable means of development. Korea would need to diversify its economy towards adopting novel approaches for development and growth. If China made its labour force available for transnational markets, Korea would likely not survive under its present economic model.

According to Mr. Park, technological development as a new model for growth was not a viable option. New technologies on a nationwide scale require substantial resources, investment, and training throughout the country, and policy makers, in their pursuit to ‘catch up’ to other wealthy nations, found this to be an unlikely solution. Mr. Park imagined that the change would thus have to come from human labour and the creation of new jobs, that is, to turn Korea’s human capital from low-wage labour manufacturing to high quality labour service. The solution would be in intellect-based commercial growth model, including trade and logistics, banks and finance, located in an urban center and modeled after places like Shenzhen, Hong Kong, London, New York. In his mind, the solution had to be urban. The new city would offer high paying knowledge-based labour for Koreans, thereby establishing the nucleus that would set a new trend to reconfigure Korea’s growth engine on a national scale.

To prompt this dramatic transformation, one that would completely refashion the country, Korea correspondingly needed a specific *place*, a blank canvas to build a brand new city from scratch. The basic strategy was twofold: first, create a competitive new town; second, bring talent and expertise into the city. A new transnational hub city would hereafter not approach nearby China as a threat, but rather as an opportunity from which the world could employ Korea as a logistical base by which to engage the opening up of its neighboring giant. The imminent tides of change in Asia could thus be reinterpreted as

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<sup>11</sup> See for example Koo (2005), Minns (2001) and Park (2005).

a boon for Korea. Mr. Park became convinced that Incheon could become the solution for the impending turning point in Asia. As a city on the western shores of Korea between China and Seoul, it would become the “key” for Korea’s new development model.

Mr. Park’s dream city was a version of Shenzhen and other important ‘global cities’, with a situated twist from his engineering background. His imagination was not unlike sci-fi author William Gibson’s (2001), who begins his imaginary tales with technological artifacts and unravels cultural practices and historical trajectories from these stabilized objects.<sup>12</sup> In similar fashion, Mr. Park described the world through ahistorical technological mechanisms that would invariably and seamlessly determine human behavior. His elaborations on technological systems were crystal clear, describing objects over which he had clearly spent much time thinking. Mr. Park dreamed of a car-free city, a city designed to ensure that distances between places are short enough for people to walk or bicycle. If they need to go further, the city would be equipped with a Personal Rapid Transport (PRT) system, convenient enough for visitors to park their cars outside the city’s boundaries before entering. To get to the airport nearby, Mr. Park saw in his mind’s eye a high-speed maglev rapidly transporting people over the sea.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to William Gibson’s stories however, Mr. Park’s imagination was a legitimate form of knowledge for the creation of cities. He hailed from Korea University with a doctorate in engineering and years of experience managing urban spaces, and therefore his ideas carried *authority*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In Gibson’s (2001) words: “all cultural change is essentially technologically driven”.

<sup>13</sup> In Mr. Park’s vision, the human was a faint and indistinct shadow, a sort of “generic absolute” (Herzog 2013, 14-15). The human was bland, faceless, and quietly conformed to the city’s configuration. In fact, Mr. Park could not clearly describe the avatar for his city in any clear way. The most specific attribute was a person of “high-quality” for a “high-quality” city.

<sup>14</sup> Historiographer Paul Ricoeur (1981) claimed that theories and stories employ essentially the same techniques, both being very similar forms of story telling. The difference is in their relationship to the

Mr. Park's dream city also intersected with two significant factors shaping the growth of Korea during the 1980s: land reclamation and rising property value.<sup>15</sup> Reflective of larger social-structural processes in Korea, Mr. Park spontaneously imagined a city built on a massive landfill site capable of converting its value into a source of profit of city-making proportions. Land reclamation projects in Korea date back to Japanese occupation as a powerful tool to manage the population, eventually becoming Japan's central colonial program in Korea. Following Independence, land reclamation became a method to produce large rice fields to nourish the population and symbolically demonstrate Korea's ability to reconstruct. Together, these two elements crystalized to conjure a "reclamation myth" that promised to bring Korea out of poverty (Choi 2014, 428-434).

By the 1970s, land reclamation had grown into mega-scale engineering projects for the development of infrastructure and the expansion of territory. It also became a method to 'incubate' the overaccumulation of capital, as Korean conglomerates, *chaebol*, that were stagnant in the country were offered mega-scale reclamation projects. This process allowed the Korean construction industry to develop, and slowly solidified the justification for reclamation projects as a practice for the production of land in itself. By the 1980s, when Mr. Park came to dream his city, land reclamation was a well-established practice across Korea, and was intensifying rapidly (Choi 2014, 434).

The 1980s was also a time of accelerated real estate construction in Korea as the population was undergoing rapid urbanization, through which real estate speculation

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'external' world: theories are different "in the ways they are deployed, consumed and reproduced as representations of objective reality – as truth" (cf. Cameron and Ronen 2004). In similar fashion, while Mr. Park's imagined landscapes may resemble Gibson's stories, they extend further than from the pages of a book.

<sup>15</sup> For a comprehensive historical account of land reclamation and speculation in Korea, see Choi (2014).

“was becoming the nation’s most lucrative investment field” (Choi 2014, 434). To illustrate, in the capital region, where most growth took place, property value rose almost 800 percent from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s (Douglass 2000, 15-16). As a commodity with such formidable exchange value, real estate construction became a means to its own end, irrespective of the actual population coming to urban centers (Choi 2014, 434). Imagining a city that could produce itself purely from speculation and reinvestment was not a far stretch under the social-structural trends of Mr. Park’s time. As he explained, land reclamation was very economical. He estimated a production cost of USD 300 per square meter, and by adding design and location value, the profit could reach in the many thousands.<sup>16</sup>

Mr. Park thus had the ideal solution for Korea’s future amid the shifting terrains of the regional and global economy. His dream city potentially had great charismatic appeal for the country and abroad; it was a question of intelligibly and resourcefully spreading his vision and recruiting the right people who could help him bring it to life. And he was the man for the job. As an engineer trained at one of the country’s top institution, he was an authority over technological systems and urban layouts; he had experience as a public official in a rapidly developing urban context; and he had the attributes of a “visionary”, capable of seeing far beyond the borders of Korea and understanding the trends and patterns of where the world was heading.

## **2.5 Performing the Dream City Charismatically**

In preparation to present his dream city, Mr. Park needed to arm himself with “weapons” of persuasion, material anchors from which the charismatic appeal of the city could

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<sup>16</sup> Indeed, as the following chapter will show, this is precisely what happened in Songdo.

emerge: presentation documents. Mr. Park was a very charismatic man but his charisma was tied to particular myth-making objects, such as his presentation materials. In his extensive experience with presentations and persuading audiences, he found that numerical figures/statistics and images generally catered to everyone. Some may like images while others may like figures, so the aim was to include both elements. Effective presentation documents needed to present backup material, follow a uniform logic, and make things seem simple and straightforward. While images, color, font, and arrangement were all important elements, content and logic were paramount.

Mr. Park made a distinction between power point and paper presentations. While power point was effective for large groups, it created distance between the presenter and the audience. In contrast, according to Mr. Park, paper closed this gap, and if one wanted to zero in on the individual when trying to make a connection, paper served as the more effective tool.<sup>17</sup> Paper brought closeness and intimacy, powerful elements of persuasion.

Paper also made the interaction more durable. Mr. Park used the following analogy: ‘talking is talking; it goes away, like a fleeting fragrance. Paper is materially there, like a seed from which a plant may grow’ (field notes, 10 August 2014). Paper thus made the interaction crystalize. Mr. Park made yet another distinction with paper documents: official documents for signing and decision-making, and documents to explain, report, and persuade. The latter he equated to a “weapon” with which to fight

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<sup>17</sup> Matthew Hull (2012) similarly describes the material and symbolic effectiveness of paper. See also Manning (2012).

(field notes, 10 August 2014). Thus, with his “weapons” in hand, Mr. Park was off to make his first connection.<sup>18</sup>

Mr. Park first went to meet with Incheon Mayor Park Bae-geun in 1986. As an official appointed by the central state to look over a heavily regulated satellite city of Seoul, erecting a new city along the shores of Incheon was something entirely absent from the mayor’s purview of possibility. Nonetheless, as Mr. Park’s vision adaptively catered to the future of the entire nation, as a pivotal node that could transform Korea’s growth model, Mayor Park Bae-geun was captivated by the idea and endorsed Mr. Park, organizing a visit to the Blue House in Seoul to meet with the state president’s entourage.

Things did not go well at the Blue house. None of the officials there could fathom Mr. Park’s plan, and adding additional infrastructure to Incheon would facilitate the influx of people into Seoul, already overcrowded as it was. Limiting the population of Seoul was the most important national measure for the country at the time, and Mr. Park’s vision could not overpower the obduracy of this paradigm. According to Mr. Park, these officials were too small-minded to understand his vision, and he left the Blue House with renewed conviction. Back in Incheon, he began spreading the word publicly of Incheon’s destiny, writing in newspapers and giving lectures at various venues. He would wait patiently for his next opportunity.

The following year, President Jeon Doo-hwan (1980-1988) would visit Incheon, which afforded Mr. Park the opportunity to meet directly with the president and present his vision. President Jeon was not completely convinced by Mr. Park but he was nonetheless open to the idea and approvingly allowed him to make an attempt. The

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<sup>18</sup> Mr. Park never showed me the specific documents he employed in his presentations from the 1980s. He was intent however on describing his techniques and strategies to materially leverage his performative charisma and consequently the mythical charisma of his dream city.



president's entourage however was fervently opposed to Mr. Park's dream city. There were three reasons for this. First, Mr. Park's plan for Incheon was directly at odds with the central government policy of restricting development and would enable more people to come to Seoul. Second, building an airport in Incheon contradicted the already-established plans to build the Cheongju Airport, which was intended to service Seoul and for which the land had already been purchased. Third, Yeongjong Island next to Incheon – where Mr. Park envisioned building an airport and a tourist destination – did not belong to Incheon proper; it was designated as part of the surrounding Gyeonggi Province.

Following these unsuccessful encounters, Mr. Park would eventually establish a strong connection. On 23 April 1988, just three days before the general election, presidential candidate Roh Tae-woo paid a visit to Incheon. Candidate Roh was a former head of the green berets in Incheon and, according to Mr. Park, a great “visionary” capable of seeing far into the future of his country and intent on developing Korea. Roh was persuaded by Mr. Park's vision and displayed full commitment to Incheon's plans, which also enabled him to raise his profile in the city and gain voter confidence. Roh made a firm promise to build an airport on Yeongjong Island and begin filling the land around Songdo Island, off the coast of Incheon. Upon his election, President Roh (1988-1993) immediately endowed Incheon with Yeongjong Island, which he would designate as the construction site for the Incheon International Airport the following year. Mr. Park thought highly of President Roh, who he claimed had vastly developed the country by inaugurating the construction of the airport as well as the Korean Train Express (KTX) connecting Seoul and Busan.

With the central state backing him, Mr. Park instituted a new branch in the Incheon government designated to oversee the development of the landfill and what would become the city of Songdo.<sup>19</sup> The new branch was called the Incheon Public Development Agency (IPDA), and Mr. Park would serve as the commissioner. Filling the land around Songdo Island was scheduled to begin in 1991, but the central state postponed the development, stating that the ongoing construction of the airport was already exacerbating Seoul's regional traffic circulation (Shwayri 2013, 44). Land reclamation around Songdo Island would eventually begin in September 1994 (Shin, forthcoming).

After passing through a variety of potential plans for their new city of Songdo, IPDA and the Incheon government eventually signed a memorandum of understanding with seventeen local private firms to begin construction of what would hopefully become Korea's "Silicon Valley" (Shin, forthcoming). With lack of financing and a declining interest in the project from the central state however, the plan would never materialize, and whatever hopes floated about in Incheon were quickly extinguished when the Asian Financial Crisis hit Korea late 1997 and extended into the following year (Shin, forthcoming). With the real estate downturn, Incheon was unable to make substantial returns from land sales to finance the continued land filling around Songdo Island. The financial crisis thus brought state support and investment to a halt, immobilizing the realization of Mr. Park's vision mid way.

In a significant turn of events, the financial crisis would become a boon for Incheon and Mr. Park's plan. By accepting a USD 58 billion bailout from the

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<sup>19</sup> According to Mr. Park, state presidents were the only ones to understand the plan of Songdo; they were the only 'visionaries' whose purview could grasp the largest scale of the country, of both space and time; and they were the most important individuals to recruit in order to implement his city.

International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Fund insisted that Korea seek outside investment in order to increase its foreign reserves. The central government agreed to this and gave Incheon permission to recruit a foreign developer (Steiner 2007). Mr. Park had meanwhile been attempting to recruit investors locally but following the crisis, he found that local firms were particularly reluctant to part with their finances. Seeking investors abroad was thus a welcome option, but it was also a perilous one, for, according to Mr. Park, most transnational investors who claim to seek to finance large-scale project are at best looking for a quick turnover profit, and at worst, outright “swindlers”.

Mr. Park thus went through an acquaintance. He found a distant contact in the US named Jay Kim in 2000. Jay Kim was a Korean-American who had graduated from Mr. Park’s own alma mater, attended Stanford University for urban planning, and was working as a scientist in the nuclear industry in California. Kim would become Mr. Park’s transnational liaison, and approached a number of American developers but failed to recruit interest in the project at first. After hearing about Stan Gale, a large Boston-based real estate developer, and his company’s success with One Lincoln Street in Boston, he called John Hynes, Gale’s associate in Boston. The two met for a brief encounter over a cup of coffee, and Kim invited Hynes to come to Korea and build a city. In disbelief over the size to which Kim was referring, Hynes was invited to come to Korea in person to see through his own eyes what Korea was constructing off its shoreline. Two days later, Hynes called Stan Gale directly from the shores of Incheon and excitedly reported to his partner, “Stan, you’ve got to get over here. These guys are serious. This is for real.” (Segel 2007, 4; Steiner 2007).

A few days later, Mr. Park and Stan Gale were on the phone. Gale was intrigued by what his partner was telling him: was Korea really making an entire city from scratch? Mr. Park replied, “Come and look with your eyes and I will explain everything” (field notes, 22 August 2014). With Stan Gale on his way to Korea, Mr. Park had to prepare himself and adapt his strategy to convince a foreign patron to agree to undertake the development of an entire city in another country than his own.

In engaging Stan Gale, Mr. Park had to adapt his performance of Songdo from a national economic project to a transnational connector. He performed this feat simultaneously as an idea and a practice. Thus, Mr. Park had a two-step strategy: first, he would explain his idea of Songdo, the region, and its population; second, he would employ the city to build a close transnational relationship with Gale. The charisma of the city would thus emerge as the mythical object it could become as well as the performative infrastructure it would facilitate.

First, Mr. Park focused on the business hub dimension of Songdo. China was the principal target, and the intent was to make China and its markets attractive to Gale. Songdo would be presented as the springboard to China, Japan, and the rest of the region’s markets. Furthermore, to attract “high quality” business classes, aside from location and profitable business conditions, the city would require high living standards, be green, and be intelligent. To persuade Gale, Mr. Park told him that he would be making not a mere development, but an entire city, blazing new frontiers among private developers. Songdo could not settle for the status of an ordinary city; it would have to be a spectacular and “top quality” urban creation. According to Mr. Park, Stan Gale became fascinated by this idea, and he perceived in Gale a “great mind”, a visionary that could

fathom building an entire master-planned city onto the expansive yet completely empty terrain along the edges of Incheon.<sup>20</sup> Finally, along with being the first private developer to make a city, Mr. Park fervently guaranteed Gale profit at the end of the road. There were thus two charismatic visions that arose to which Gale could become associated: make a world famous city – becoming a world-renowned developer by extension – and make a sizable profit, and Mr. Park presented himself as the one to give Gale that opportunity.

Mr. Park gave Gale as much information as he could in the form of paper documents, which piqued Gale's interest, but he remained uncertain. These informative documents were interesting in themselves, but they required a human touch to enliven their charismatic power. Mr. Park henceforth sought to develop a close personal relationship with Gale, one based on friendship, trust, mutual understanding, and "opening one's mind to the other". It was about constructing a common vision and becoming accountable to the other. Mr. Park thus made it a point to meet with Gale frequently and share personalities, flying to Boston and inviting Gale to Korea. As Mr. Park explained it, the project of Songdo was like the infrastructure in their relationship, performatively demonstrating the transnational connections the city could facilitate. The idea of the city was thus performed in practice, and would eventually win over Stan Gale's heart.

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<sup>20</sup> Stan Gale would become convinced that Songdo could be "a model assembly-line city, ready to be rolled out anywhere from Colombia to China", developing twenty new Songdo's around the world: "The G20 – Gale 20" (Arlidge 2010). In his engagement with Songdo, Gale considers himself a "risk-taker", but 'calculated' enough to the extent that "destiny and demographics are on his side" (Arlidge 2010). He is also a 'warrior' of sorts. Gale and John Hynes, his partner – in hyper-masculine and racially charged prose – have compared themselves to General MacArthur who came sixty years ago to "conquer" the shores of Incheon (Steiner 2007).

Mr. Park's relationship building extended over the duration of one full year. When Mr. Park and Gale met to finalize the agreement in early 2001, Gale showed up in Korea with his cohort of lawyers and the Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) architectural design team that he had recruited. Mr. Park took this display as a clear message: Gale was serious, committed, and trustworthy. In finalizing the agreement, the Incheon Mayor had given Mr. Park independent authority to make the final decision. At the moment of signing, Stan Gale remarked that this practice was different from Japanese officials, who constantly needed to go 'upstairs' to finalize an agreement. In contrast, Mr. Park had been bestowed by the state a 'fragment of sovereignty'<sup>21</sup> (see Hansen and Stepputat 2005), from which he could determine the outcome of a large-scale national project. He used it to his advantage towards what he believed would bring his city to life.

Mr. Park laid out three conditions before signing with Gale: first, the Incheon government would build a subway running through Songdo. Second, the national government would build a bridge connecting Songdo to the Incheon International Airport. Third, the national government would designate Songdo part of a Free Economic Zone. Mr. Park required it of Gale to inscribe these measures in the memorandum of understanding, or he would not finalize the deal. Mr. Park essentially leveraged the official agreement with Gale to enforce a series of requirements onto the Korean state.<sup>22</sup> Once the agreement was signed between the Incheon Government and Gale, the partners decided to perform the signing ceremony in New York City in order to capture

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<sup>21</sup> Fragmented sovereignty relates to the notion that central state power does not homogeneously 'penetrate' the national territory. In practice, certain spaces can be made semi-autonomous. The signing with Gale demonstrates an instance during which Mr. Park 'wielded informal sovereignty' (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 31).

<sup>22</sup> This is not to say that Mr. Park was the sole reason for bringing Free Economic Zones (FEZs) to Korea, but I submit that he was a pivotal figure – as both a product and a force – in inducing their proliferation in the country.

international attention and elicit excitement to get the project moving, both in Korea and abroad. The signing ceremony rehearsed a partnership between two countries, presented as a global event with global exposure: New York City brought Songdo into its charismatic halo of global proportions. As Mr. Park remarked, had the signing ceremony been performed in Seoul, it would not have garnered the same degree of attention. The signing needed to be performed in a well-established ‘global city’.

It had indeed been a long journey for Mr. Park, full of obstacles and setbacks, but through his incessant determination and hard work, he eventually managed to present his dream city to the world. Mr. Park had never had any doubts through his peregrinations: Songdo’s destiny was unfolding as it should.

By mid-2001, Gale and POSCO signed a memorandum of understanding and set up a 70/30 joint venture named New Songdo International City (NSIC). The following year in April 2002, President Kim Dae-Jung revealed his grand national plan to transform Korea into a Northeast Asian Business Hub, and by November 2002, the National Parliament enacted the “Free Economic Zone” bill. Incheon Free Economic Zone (IFEZ) was officially established in August 2003, solidifying Songdo’s definition as Korea’s first zone city.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

My objective in this chapter was to explore ways in which zone city fantasies come to life and how they are deployed to bring a new urban form into production in Korea. The three fantasies of the zone city – grand state projects, the blank slate, and a frictionless world – were not reflections of the world; rather, they were powerful fantasies *for* the world. The main character in this chapter was Mr. Park, while I also attempted to bring in

conversation with his actions the wider social-structural context of his time. In dreaming his city, Mr. Park was informed by the cultural, political, and economic circumstances in Korea and East Asia in the 1980s, namely Korea's growth model and China's rapidly transforming economy. His dream city became a solution to Korea's imminent struggles ahead, gaining mythical power as the beacon that could illuminate the future of Mr. Park's nation. Mr. Park was also a performative 'diviner' of his city with special skills, conjuring visions across vast geographical spaces and deep into temporal trends. He was also a highly educated engineer at a top institution and a political leader with experience in a rapidly growing urban area of Korea. He was able to make calculated connections and recruit powerful figures towards his project, both in Korea and in foreign contexts. And he was finally given a 'fragment of sovereignty' to prompt the Korean state to conform to his dream. This relational process, Mr. Park's mythical urban form and his decisive and calculated actions, constituted a sharing of 'gifts', reinforcing and infusing a charismatic allure onto the other, which would eventually situate a zone city within the borders of Korea.

At his home during our last meeting together, Mr. Park showed me a prized possession of his, a modest binder containing about two hundred pages. It was a copy of the original memorandum of understanding between he and Stan Gale, the Incheon Government and Gale International. It contained various plans, agreements with pricing, and stipulation over which party would incur which expenses. He made sure to show me the three conditions he had required Gale to sign for: the subway, the bridge, and the Free Economic Zone. Mr. Park took full credit for this, and showed me the many signatures at the end of the document. Going through the document together, I saw his vision on the



paper, and as he spoke and illustrated his ideas, I could feel his performative charisma shine through as a powerful figure that had reshaped the landscape of Korea. Mr. Park's fantasies for the world however can never completely tame it, but nor can the world, in its unruly messiness, break the obdurate will of these ideals, as I will show in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3 Living in Korea's Future: Apartments *of* and Residents *in* Songdo**

### **3.1 A Visit Through Songdo**

Before visiting Songdo in early June 2014, I had developed expectations of the place. I had read that Songdo was an 'international city' where English was widely spoken, and though I was not completely taken by the city's promotional materials, the images and narratives of these promotions had invariably infiltrated the imaginary of what I came to anticipate. I thought perhaps that it would be easier to conduct my first research project there on the account that there was a chance English would be more common than in other areas of Korea.

On my first visit to Songdo, I went with the intention of finding a place to stay. When I arrived at Campus Town Station, I went directly to the nearest real estate office. Campus Town Station is near Songdo Global University Campus (SGUC) and so has the largest number of short-term apartments for rent. When I met with an agent, I began the conversation in Korean but proceeded to ask if he spoke English. He answered that he could not. We continued our conversation in Korean and he informed me that the apartments in his building were all occupied, but kindly directed me to other real estate offices nearby. After visiting a number of other apartments, strolling through the streets, stopping in a variety of small shops, and passing by a few restaurants, I was surprised to find that I had to draw on my Korean to the best of my abilities, and though I enjoyed this element of my discovery, I distinctly thought to myself that it would be very difficult for a foreign resident to come live in Songdo without a background in the local language. As

I continued my walking tour through residential neighbourhoods, these spaces felt like quiet suburbs far removed from major urban centres, and I was noticeably gazed at as an anomaly passing through these spaces. These were the southeastern sections of the city. Perhaps things would be different in sections one and three to the northwest. Sections one and three were the inaugural sections of Songdo, where Gale, POSCO, and the Incheon municipal government, along with the design expertise of Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF), were together making the Songdo International Business District (IBD), the first material exemplar of the zone city.



Figure 3.1 – Songdo Central Park. Photographed by author (1 August 2014).

I arrived in Central Park. The panorama was indeed majestic, and the place felt vast. The buildings along Central Park stood as towering synecdochical icons of transnational design in the sense that they were not connected to any particular place. Joon-seo, KPF's architect, explained to me that these buildings were zone city structures, connected in inspiration and design to transnational elsewhere. The dazzling exteriors of these buildings were primarily the product of a large influx of capital during the early 2000s, a time during which Songdo was a fresh new concept and hopes were high. It was

then that KPF architects could design to their heart's content. And those skeptical of Joon-seo's designs would have undoubtedly swallowed their words, as they would have witnessed the rise of intricately designed luxury glass towers line the borders of Central Park (field notes, 4 August 2014). However, beyond Central Park's opulent edifices sat residential buildings powerfully associated with Korean design. In comparison with Songdo's international luxury high-rises, with flowing edgeless lines and glass facades that reflected the clouds in the sky, Korean residential buildings illustrated an urban landscape of hard-edged concrete box-like designs. This was how Joon-seo described the design contrasts, and the Gale team saw it in the same way. According to Joon-seo, one of the main reasons John Hynes, Stan Gale's partner, left the development in 2012 was because he witnessed too many Korean residential units rise up on Songdo's soil for his liking. KPF and Gale defined Korean designs as local objects, while the glass towers were apprehended as open designs of transnational circulation (field notes, 4 August 2014).<sup>1</sup>

As I visited the residential neighbourhoods in zone one, these too had a calm and quiet feel. Further northwest to the edge of Songdo IBD sat a handful of tall glass commercial towers, built to house the many offices of multinational companies that should have come to Songdo. This was the official International Business District (IBD) area. The buildings here were lifeless however, as foreign firms had not been induced<sup>2</sup> by

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<sup>1</sup> The contrast between these two styles of residential units is actually more complex than a simple case of clear-cut binaries. Historically speaking, Korean apartment complexes, called *tanji*, bring together an array of properties from outside the peninsula. Valerie Gelézeau (2003), in her comprehensive account of the *tanji*'s history, demonstrates, for example, how the emerging *tanji* from the 1960s were financed publicly from internationally-derived funds, while the designs brought together elements of international modernist architecture made to conform to – and intentionally manage – the political, social and economic circumstances of a rapidly changing society.

<sup>2</sup> This was the term city promoters at IFEZ Authority used to describe the purpose of their work.

Songdo's charisma, and while the streets that fed these buildings were open for driving, there were no noticeable tire marks on the smooth concrete.



Figure 3.2 – Central Park condominiums. The man with a camera in the image exemplifies a common sight around Central Park, as many Koreans (and expats) came to take pictures of Songdo's futuristic panoramas. Photographed by author (1 August 2014).



Figure 3.3 – Along the edge of Songdo International Business District (IBD), with one of its empty office towers. Photographed by author (28 June 2014).

The above reading of Songdo reveals a rather different city than the one captured through the lens of zone city fantasies. Looking past the veneer of its ceaseless promotions, Songdo would evidently appear to have undergone, as Sofia Shwayri (2013) argues, a thorough “Koreanization” of its landscape. Correlatively, Shin Hyun-bang (forthcoming)

and Kim Jun-woo and Ahn Young-jin (2011) contend that Songdo is not actually about transnational investments and the conception of new economies but rather about the creation of land and real estate for the country's elite. The empirical record of the city's development will corroborate these claims. However, in its connections to powerful fantasies of modern futures, Songdo's urban imagination as a zone city remains intact and stable in the city's residences and residents. In a highly variegated city like Songdo, fantasies are fashioned in highly creative and adaptive ways, and always conjure a modern future. However, as one resident will show, fantasies of future modernities can also conjure, like infrastructures, "the foreclosing of that possibility and a resulting experience of abjection" (see Larkin 2013, 333).

In this chapter, I focus, on the one hand, on charisma *of* Songdo and its props: people, objects, buildings, sidewalks, goods. Like a gift, charisma can be bestowed onto objects in the ways they are presented, while people can become charismatic in their associations with the city. On the other hand, I examine charisma *in* the city as I follow the narratives of residents who confidently and assertively interpret, define and correspondingly act upon the city. Songdo is a place of overflowing charisma that can be liberally shared and distributed between and among its spaces and privileged residents (see Hansen and Verkaaik 2009). This also suggests that the zone city is a highly exclusive and exclusionary place, and its powerful charisma obliterates the zone city's shadows, those who always remain absent despite their constant presence. Songdo's shadow figures include people displaced from Incheon's shoreline for the construction of the city, those in Incheon affected by the relocation of institutions and the corresponding redirection of capital (for example Incheon National University), construction workers,

gardeners, and anyone else working in the backstage to ensure the proper functioning of the city (see Park 2010). I did not speak with nor can I claim to know their relations to Songdo's charisma, but it was evident that these groups did not share a place in the city's singularized urban imagination.

In an effort to capture the lived experiences of Songdo's wealthy residents, I present the narratives of four people. My sample consists of two Koreans and two expats who related anecdotes about their everyday lives and the ways in which they understood the city.<sup>3</sup> These are people who permanently – or over the long term – live and work/study in the city. As such, they are part of a well-to-do class and in no way represent the majority of people who occupy the city in the daytime. While each individual had a different relation with the city, notions of modernity and the future were always entwined in their narratives. Furthermore, the residents I present here problematize the opposition between state and society. They deployed highly reductionist and power-laden fantasies that did not counteract state power and circuits of capital, but actually reinforced and integrated these fantasies into the operation of the zone city in remarkably creative ways.

I divide my discussion into three parts. First, I offer an empirical account of Songdo's production since 2001, one that will show the material production of a city rather distinct from its fantasies. Second, I offer a walkthrough of one of POSCO's apartments being developed in section three of the city. Residential units have come to command Songdo's landscape and production, and while these will display, as Joon-seo would say, Korean design, they also exhibit situated transnational elements that give

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<sup>3</sup> Though there is a distinction between Koreans and expats in Songdo, there is also overlap in their fantasies. As such, I've decided to place both groups under the same heading to emphasize the continuity in their fantasies.

impetus to the charisma *of* Songdo. Finally, I examine the accounts of residents of how they express charisma *in* the city and actively fashion their identities alongside.

### **3.2 Making Songdo**

Upon signing a memorandum of understanding in July 2001, Gale and POSCO would form a 70/30 joint venture named New Songdo International City (NSIC). Gale would oversee the design – contracted to KPF – and financing, while POSCO would undertake the construction of the city. In its promotions, Songdo claimed a speculated value of anywhere from twenty all the way to forty billion USD (McNeill 2009), nearly all of which would be borne by the NSIC joint venture (Shin, forthcoming). However, and to basically give the plot away right here, virtually no foreign capital actually made its way into Songdo. To illustrate, a recent article published in *The Korean Herald*, a source whose primary purpose is hyperbolized promotion and publicity, proudly claims that IFEZ has attracted 94 percent of Korea’s FDI among its seven other FEZ competitors in the country, rounding a total sum of USD 1.7 billion since its inception in 2001 (Sang 2015). This is well off the speculated mark. In actual practice, the financing for Songdo has come almost exclusively from Korean Banks.<sup>4</sup>

To repay bank loans, NSIC has had to look to the city’s local real estate as the main source of its revenue. From the beginning of the development, Korean banks seem to have been well aware of the risks and potential profits in financing Songdo. Contrary to Incheon Government’s hopes for office development, Korean banks underwrote their loans based exclusively on the revenue from real estate, with the implicit agreement in

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<sup>4</sup> Though Morgan Stanley, a US financial services corporation, did offer NSIC USD forty million in 2003, all other investments came from local banks: USD fifty million in 2003, USD 180 million in 2004, USD 1.5 billion in 2005, USD 2.7 billion in 2007, and USD 2.2 billion in 2013 (Segel 2007; Shin, forthcoming; see also Bruns 2008 and Ramstad 2007).



further financing down the road (Segel 2007, 10). As the banks would have predicted, Songdo's real estate market was a massive success: in 2006 when the first 2,600 apartments went up for sale, they were over-subscribed by about eight to one (McNeill 2009). Frommer (2012) reports the figure in different yet equally impressive terms: 62,000 buyers came for the first 2,600 apartments. After the 2008 downturn, things seem to have slowed down in the real estate sector, and these lower sales have correspondingly slowed Songdo's growth. As of May 2012, according to a Gale developer, seventy percent of the apartments in a new complex have been pre-sold (see Frommer 2012). However, later in that same year, after it was announced that the GCF would be housed in Songdo, real estate agents reported that one thousand new apartments had been sold (Kim 2012). Indeed, hosting the GCF feeds into the fantasy of a city of international stature, and subsequently provides impetus in the rise of real estate speculation and purchase.

As Songdo has attracted a substantial local population for real estate, the land use plan of the city was modified between 2005 and 2009. Over this period, land for international business was reduced by 38.4 percent while residential land increased by 24 percent (Shin, forthcoming). Unsurprisingly, the profit margin for residential land is remarkable. The Incheon Government sold reclaimed land to NSIC in 2002 for KRW 160,000 per sq. meter and by 2007, the land was valued at KRW 4,200,000 per sq. meter (Shin, forthcoming). Indeed, living in Songdo is for the select few. Apartments are priced on average at 500,000 USD and some go for two to three times that price, while tuition at Chadwick International School starts at USD 25,000 (McNeill 2009). Most recently, POSCO has been given full rights to build the city's entire residential units, and since office space has been in low demand, the Incheon Government has allowed POSCO to

cover section three in its entirety with what it considers “temporary” residential units (Nam 2013).

Other private developers also see Songdo as a wealthy Korean suburb, and have designed their projects accordingly. For example, Morgan Parker, Taubman Asia’s president does not share “optimism in Songdo becoming north-east Asia’s trade hub” (cf. Oliver 2009). Parker’s commercial projects are “wholly based on Koreans [rather than foreigners] looking for variety in shopping” (Oliver 2009). An American researcher similarly notes that though the commercial developments in Songdo display a “cookie cutter” Western appearance, “the most avid consumers of this type of lifestyle will be eager Korean middle class residents who are drawn to promises of a modern Western-style life” (Stokols 2014).

As for Gale, although stories vary according to who tells them, the company appears no longer interested in the outcome of Songdo as an international model for future cities. Gale’s sole interest now is coming away with a return on their investment and getting out of the deal, as a prominent Gale planner pointed out to me. In my conversation with this planner, he offhandedly discussed the intended resident of Songdo as a Korean individual and left out foreign residents from the picture. It appeared rather clear that the city was no longer conjured in his mind as a transnational hub, and attracting a foreign population now seemed off the table (field notes, 28 July 2014). Correlatively, John Hynes, the chief executive at Gale, stated in 2013 that though the project may have begun with the intention of creating a transnational hub city, “it basically became a Korean project with an American name only at the wheel” (cf. Nam 2013).

Has Songdo become a purely national place, completely cut from its transnational connections? This would appear to be the trend. But fantasies in the zone city have “tremendous staying power” (see Harms 2011, 25), and though the actual development of the city would seem to render Songdo’s fantasies irrelevant, they persist in the city’s urban forms and in the perceptions and practices of its residents. To illustrate the material reproduction of these fantasies, I offer here an account of a visit to POSCO’s apartment showroom in section three, under construction at the time of my fieldwork.

### 3.3 POSCO Apartments *of* Songdo



Figure 3.4 – POSCO apartments under construction in section three. Photographed by author’s friend (22 August 2014).



Figure 3.5 – Map of section three development. The three lightly shaded squares to the southwest is where POSCO was constructing the apartment complexes I visited (songdo.com).

Section three is located to the southwest of section one. It was initially designed by KPF and is now headed entirely by POSCO. To fund the construction of residential units, private firms in Korea pre-sell apartments. In order to attract buyers, firms set up a show room, coined ‘모델하우스’ [*model house*], with fully built and luxuriously furnished apartment units inside for viewing. I visited POSCO’s section three viewing station on 22 August 2014 with a friend, as we travelled the city on bicycles.

We were riding the boundary road lining the Jack Nicklaus golf course to the southwestern edge of section three and we came across a bulky white windowless box-like structure with a large “POSCO” logo above. There were many cars parked along the road, far more than we had seen visiting these parts. We locked up our bicycles outside and entered the building for a tour. Our presence was met with noticeable confusion. Instantly, employees scrambled to find someone, anyone who could speak at least some English. Evidently not many (Western) foreigners visited this place. We were promptly presented with a guide who could speak very little English, but she was pleasantly surprised to hear us willing to speak with her in our own broken Korean.

We were first directed to a centerpiece in the airy and very crowded foyer area. It was a scale model of section three. There was the Jack Nicklaus golf course to the southwest and Central Park to the northeast. Between these points were light-colored residential buildings all of similar height, and in the center was an international school servicing the area. It looked near identical to the configuration of section one, with Chadwick International School as the nucleus. It also looked oddly similar to the optimal

design format for the video game “SimCity”, where building residential units around service facilities ensures the highest level of citizen ‘happiness’.<sup>5</sup>

We were then guided to the two full size apartment replicas. The first was a medium-sized three-bedroom apartment with basic furniture, and the second was a very large three-bedroom luxury suite with opulent chandeliers and oak furniture. We were informed that the front doors of these apartments could be unlocked via fingerprint scanner; the living room would have a screen with which residents can control temperature, lights, blinds, fans, make video calls, and even look out directly onto the courtyard to monitor one’s children; there would be additional video screens in the bathroom as well as the kitchen so one won’t miss their favorite shows; the kitchen sink was equipped with a pedal to ensure that water is not wasted; and the kitchen was even equipped with an oven. The oven was particularly interesting: in an odd contradiction, while ovens are not used in Korean cooking, the apartment’s oven only operated in Korean language. Indeed, the oven seemed to exclusively invite Koreans to cook Western style cuisine. Also, the larger apartment was supplied with a yoga room, with soft wood floors and caricatured images of women holding yoga poses lining the walls.

The apartment complex as a whole also presented many facilities for its residents. The complex would include a fitness center, a six-lane swimming pool, and a screen golf driving range to practice one’s swing. It would also be equipped with a reading room for quiet study; there would be “Mom’s Lounge” for mothers to get together, and if they had to bring their children along, mothers could spend their afternoon at the “Kid’s Café”, where their child could play while they enjoy a cup of coffee or tea in peace. Indeed, the

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<sup>5</sup> For a compelling article on the intersection between SimCity and neoliberal urban planning, see Kofman (2015).

apartment units and the complex were configured to support female sociability in the private sphere, while the male was out making an income. The embedded technologies and facilities in these apartment units and complexes would seem to materially and spatially encourage self-regulation and surveillance (see Foucault 1982, 1986) over gender roles, class distinction, Western-style living, a healthy lifestyle, and environmental friendliness, the last of which is particularly curious when one takes notice of how all these gadgets, say a digital scanner, would effectively consume more energy than a mechanical keyhole.

The prices for these units were similar to mid-range prices in Seoul's wealthier areas, starting at around KRW 500 million, but since there was an international school in the works, this was considered a bargain. Our sales agent was very enthusiastic to point out the comparison between Songdo and Seoul. In Songdo, one can get international school living at a lower price than Gangnam, Seoul's wealthiest area. Based on this narrative, it seemed evident that Songdo was competing against the "existing geography of prestige" of Seoul.<sup>6</sup> Our guide informed us that we were fortunate for having come early enough to secure an apartment on the second or third floor. Units on upper levels had already been purchased. Evidently, these properties were selling well.<sup>7</sup>

What would Joon-seo, in search of his elusive blank slate populated with transnational designs, find in these POSCO apartments? Though to him they are

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<sup>6</sup> Llerena Searle (2013) finds a similar distinction between the marketing of apartment in Gurgaon in contrast with the centrality of Delhi, India.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, in a recent article (Viser 2014), John Hynes discusses his experience in developing Songdo. Initially, he wanted Songdo to emulate certain small-scale elements of his hometown of Boston. According to the article, as the development took on different directions, Hynes and Gale, with large unfettered egos, started "banging heads" and Hynes eventually left, vowing never to do business with Gale again. In his most recent development project in Boston, Hynes is transferring what he learned from Songdo and is attempting to pair houses with an international school, much like zone one and three. Boston's mayor, Martin Walsh, is purportedly not opposed to the idea.

obdurately Korean products, would he perhaps come across a wisp of charisma secreted from their walls and props? While these apartments may be Korean, they evoke “futuristic, transnational representation, with localized characteristics”, as Bach (2011a) points out of zone city structures in general (110). And while some Western commentators may find residential units such as these intrusive (for example Werly 2014; Arlidge 2010), others may find them “pretty slick”, and even “familiar and mundane” (Arbes and Bethea 2014). These apartments may belong to the national order, but they simultaneously incorporate and domesticate situated transnational fantasies, intersecting in creative ways to conjure modern futurescapes.

Mr. Kim and M(r)s. Lee (from chapter 1), state-issued “average Koreans”, would find these apartments highly suitable for and supportive of their lifestyles in the zone city. Mr. Kim would spend his long workdays at his global IT company doing his part to help grow the national economy, and in the evening, he could study in a quiet reading room to keep growing as a successful and competitive individual. Mrs. Lee, after quitting her menial office job, could look over the household, practice yoga, watch TV or monitor her children in the courtyard from any of the “TelePresence” monitors throughout the apartment. She could spend time with the other mothers on the complex at the lounge or the café, and she could prepare Western meals for her occasional Western guests, all the while saving water – an important responsibility for any resident of a green city.

Valérie Gelézeau (2003) argues that the history of Korean apartments can be described as a history of “laboratories” for the manipulation of customs, one that brings into concert surveillance and safety. Accordingly, the idea of technologies shaping and observing urban subjects, of embedded technologies and ubiquitous cameras in and

around domestic spaces, is perhaps not worthy of apprehension for certain groups in Korea. In this case, Songdo may be read as a safe and secure city. Correspondingly, Songdo's population may be perfectly fine to live the experimentation of these technologies and act as "technological pioneers" for future forms of urbanism, for orderly and efficient ways of life, as Werly (2014) reports. Indeed, technological pioneering, Western cuisine, health and the environment, safety and security, international schools, these are some of the ingredients for charismatic fantasies of a modern urban future for Korea, a new "way of being" in a global world (see Hansen and Verkaaik 2009, 12), all condensed into the "total environments" of Songdo.<sup>8</sup> I will now turn to the narratives of residents in Songdo who imagine and define their zone city in creative and often surprising ways.

### **3.4 Residents *in* Songdo**

The residents I present here<sup>9</sup> are part of Songdo's wealthy population, at present almost ninety thousand with slightly fewer than two thousand expats (ifez.go.kr). I relay the narratives of two Koreans who relocated to Songdo from Incheon, and two expats, one from Germany and one from Australia. The urban imaginations of these residents are distinct in many ways, yet they intersect with the structures of power that shape the city. As both products and forces of Songdo, these residents perform charisma *in* the zone city in relation with the mythical charisma *of* Songdo.

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<sup>8</sup> Total environments relate to integrated and master-planned community complexes in which residents need not leave to fulfill their everyday needs (Searle 2013, 290-291).

<sup>9</sup> All names are pseudonyms.



### ***3.4.1 Do-hyun***

Do-hyun was an engineer who oversaw waste-management projects in the city. He took me on a tour one day of Songdo's water treatment plants and incinerator. He was pleased about this since he could spend the day speaking English with a Western foreigner. He would have liked to do this more often in Songdo, but Western foreigners were difficult to meet and communicate with, and his relations with them were generally fleeting.

Expats were a mobile bunch. They came and went as they pleased and, according to Do-hyun, there was no strong sense of a foreign community in Songdo.

Do-hyun came to Songdo two years ago from Incheon, primarily for the education of his two children. While he lived comfortably, he didn't consider himself wealthy. Do-hyun could not for example afford the USD 25,000 annual tuition from Chadwick International School, nor could he afford to live in the newly built towers in section one. I was rather surprised by this, especially since as we toured his facilities, other office workers acted overly courteous with him. As a highly positioned project manager, he rarely visited these sites, and so local workers were surprised to be in the presence of a high-ranking manager.

According to Do-hyun, having his children attend Chadwick or living in Songdo's most expensive properties were not the most important factors of living in the city. Simply living there was adequate to access its aura of high-quality education. It was the exceptional residents of Songdo themselves who engendered the city's charisma. Do-hyun informed me that the young people of Songdo had a clear idea of their futures early on in life, as opposed to young people in other parts of Incheon. Young people here knew what they wanted out of life and would decisively act in accordance with successfully attaining this end goal. Bringing his children to a place populated by these kinds of

people, where they could mingle with citizens destined for success, would invariably afford them a better life later on (field notes, July 17, 2014).

It has been well documented in Korea that wealthy families move to where the most prestigious schools are located. This tendency, rooted in a Confucian tradition that valorizes intellectual professions, continues today as a means to affirm one's place among Korea's urban bourgeoisie (see Gelézeau 2003). One of the central reasons Gangnam has become so wealthy in comparison with other districts in Seoul is because highly-ranked schools were relocated to southern Seoul from the 1970s (Kim 2011). Today, properties in Dogok at the southernmost point of Gangnam are the most expensive properties in the country (Gelézeau 2008). According to Do-hyun's narrative, Songdo too is following the same logic to attract residents to the city, who simultaneously shape it into a place for wealthy Koreans and reproduce class and spatial distinctions with the rest of Incheon.

Do-hyun fantasized a city of exceptional people, destined to join the ranks of the nation's future elite. The charisma of a brand new, planned and organized urban form spills into its inhabitants and correspondingly fashions them as highly civilized people, with 'correct' values, behaviors, desires, and who collectively seek individual success. The zone city is entirely devoid of social vices. Do-hyun's fantasy chimes with the more recent transformation of Songdo into a creative city. Since President Park Geun-hye took office in 2013, government officials at IFEZ Authority informed me that her 'Creative Economy' policies have focused entirely on facilitating foreign investment and promoting Songdo's research and development clusters. Correspondingly, Songdo has recently been presented as "the optimal testbed for deregulation and the Creative

Economy” (Cho 2015). If the creative economy is to take off, it will indeed require the well-bred brainpower of Songdo’s exceptional population.

### 3.4.2 *Mi-yeon*

I met Mi-yeon at her mother’s church.<sup>10</sup> Her mother was a priestess who runs a church around Bu-pyeong, Incheon’s downtown core. We had just finished the main ceremony and, as the only white foreigner there, the churchgoers invited me to have lunch with them on the floor above the main hall. I sat to eat lunch with the students in a separate room from the adults. I was basically the centre of attention. Everyone was very interested in my presence and eager to ask me questions about my life and what I thought of Korea. I told them about my research project and Mi-yeon informed me that she had recently moved to Songdo from Incheon. She appeared very eager to talk about her city.

Songdo, she told me, was completely different from the rest of Incheon. Incheon was poor while Songdo was rich. With the aim of making her point unambiguous, she emphasized the contrast using body movements and grimaces to express disdain for Incheon and smilingly raised her thumbs up for Songdo. I was quite surprised by this display, since she was the only one in the room who lived in Songdo. The other students however seemed perfectly fine with this and openly agreed with her assertions. She continued: Songdo was international because one could find foreign products there. These were expensive luxury items that could not be found in Incheon. She evoked European bread as an example. Songdo’s *Paris Baguette* franchises were special and carried products exclusive to Songdo.

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<sup>10</sup> I do not identify as religious, but I was invited to this church for a sermon and gladly accepted because I was informed that the priestess lived in Songdo.

“European bread” came from the outside and carried with it the charisma of the origin of the Western world. In its association with this foreign object, Songdo as well was conferred European charisma, making it an exceptional place with transnational connections. In her utterance, Mi-yeon too was simultaneously indexed under the same guise, by which she enacted her own class distinction, mobilized in that very room. Mi-yeon appeared rather rude and inconsiderate in front of her peers during her exposition, and I suspect it had much to do with her status as the daughter of the church’s priestess. Nevertheless, her point was clear: Songdo had greater value than Incheon because it afforded, through access to and consumption of outside products, access to the foreign. Incheon was not only poor, but also closed, isolated, and therefore, irrelevant.

Songdo’s population was imagined as exceptional from its developers as well. For example, a promoter at IFEZ Authority described the population of Songdo as very “picky” individuals who expected a different quality city than the rest of Incheon. She offered an example: *HomePlus*, an affiliate of the large British distributor Tesco that now has an established presence in the Korean market, changed its name to *PlusMall* in Songdo in order to differentiate itself from ‘ordinary’ Korean cities (field notes, 31 July 2014). This example, along with Mi-yeon’s differentiation with Incheon, conjures a distinction between Songdo and Incheon, much like the distinction between Seoul and Gangnam.

Mi-yeon continued in her exposition, this time employing Songdo’s many parks. Incheon was composed of dirty streets and buildings, while Songdo was filled with green spaces. Additionally, these spaces were different from any other city in Korea because they were not crowded. For many Incheonites however, Songdo was a “ghost town”, but

Mi-yeon framed this as something positive and refreshing. She also lived in a POSCO apartment building inside zone one. Her apartment was new, clean, and modern. I let her know that I had visited a First World Tower apartment recently and discovered that many amenities frequently break down in these buildings.<sup>11</sup> She was aware of these issues, and told me that the amenities in her building work properly and that the neighbourhood is safe and calm. Evidently, Mi-yeon didn't make the same distinction Joon-seo from KPF made between transnational placeless and local Korean designs. For Mi-yeon, the modern emerged from the technologies with which her apartment was furnished, irrespective of the building's outside appearance. Songdo's charisma was conferred to all buildings in the city by the simple fact that they were in Songdo, and thus wholly separate from Incheon and connected to Korea's outside.

### **3.4.3 Brunhilda**

Brunhilda hailed from Germany. She came to Songdo because her husband, an engineer of a famous German car brand, was relocated for a two-year contract in Songdo. His company had brought one of its production facilities to the city. She had two young children and was not permitted to hold a job herself because her spousal visa would not allow it. She also had a dog, a very large German Sheppard named Felix. I first met

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<sup>11</sup> When I visited a First World Tower apartment, the doorbell was broken, the air conditioner needed servicing, and the whole place was uncomfortably hot. The issue gets worst during the cold and windy winter months. For example, in 2013, large banners were posted at the summit of three of Songdo's Central Park I buildings, the city's most luxurious properties. These read as follows. Banner one: "악덕기업포스코건설! 참는데도한계가있다!" ["Vicious POSCO! We've endured a lot, but there is a limit!"]; banner two: "추워서못살겠다! 포스코건설은이중창을설치하라!" ["It's so cold that we can't live here. Build double windows, POSCO!"]; banner three: "입주민을무시하는포스코건설은각성하라!" ["POSCO, which has ignored residents, wake up (do something)!"] (Medimorec 2013). Though these buildings are LEED certified, they were built with single-pane windows that allowed ice to form around the window's borders. When I asked Joon-seo about this issue, he put the blame directly onto POSCO. While KPF was in charge of design, POSCO would handle construction, but the company was unhappy taking orders from a foreign architectural firm. POSCO built the designs according to KPF's plans, but evidently cut costs in other ways.

Brunhilda at Central Park along with her dog. During our first meeting, we decided to walk together along the park's paths. As we began talking, she jumped right into what was really on her mind. She began telling me about her and Felix's vicissitudes while living in Songdo. Everyone was afraid of her dog; she couldn't ride the elevator with him in her building; adults looked at her and her dog with disapproval and at times distress; children taunted him and threw things at him. Evidently, life was difficult for her and Felix in the city. Locals, she told me, only like small and/or cute, submissive dogs, not dogs like Felix, with a solid built, large paws, and a mouth that could easily clasp a human neck in one bite. While he seemed friendly to me, he admittedly might just as easily have come across as an oversized law enforcement canine.

Brunhilda wanted to open up a dog park in Songdo. She was not the only one. She was part of a group of dog owners in the city who also felt alienated from public spaces along with their canine companions. The city purportedly has, depending on how one counts it (including planned yet un-built areas of the city), 65 green spaces. According to Brunhilda, the least the government could do was to give her group of dog-lovers one of these spaces so they and their dogs could enjoy themselves away from the judging gaze of local dog non-lovers. Her group was a mix of both Koreans and expats, but the informal club had recently split. She and a Korean individual wanted a different outcome for the club. The other person was interested in monetizing the club by establishing a membership fee while Brunhilda had no interest in this sort of thing. She wanted a dog park in the city simply for the sake of it, and she was blindingly committed to this goal. I explained to her on a number of occasions that, according to Songdo's logic, her dog park would need to render profit in some form, or perhaps she might consider establishing one

in a suburb outside the city, but she remained firm in her conviction. Brunhilda wanted to make a dog park in Songdo, full stop.

Brunhilda showed me a document she intended to present to the Incheon Government. The document had pictures of dog meat soup and presented Korea as a particular and oddly-placed country in the teleological path of modernization. As Brunhilda explained, Korea remained behind Europe at this point in its history, and as all societies do, Korea would eventually climb the ranks. By embracing animals and animal rights, with dogs as leading examples, Korea could show itself on its way to the next stage. The country needed only a small push, and Brunhilda, on her civilizing mission, could actuate this by placing a mirror before the government to make them realize that they still had some work to do. Songdo, as Korea's most advanced city, was the place to showcase Korea's modernity.

Brunhilda had lived near Itaewon in Seoul ten years ago with her husband when he had had a contract job in the city. She looked back positively on her life in Seoul, but when she came to Korea for the second time and arrived in Songdo, she was astounded at how Korea could have changed so dramatically in a decade. Though she and her dog had trouble with Songdo's residents, she admitted that Songdo offered a high quality of life. Everything was new, orderly, and well designed; the city was a safe place for her children; her husband was well paid and they were given an apartment in the First World Towers, and though amenities often broke down, it offered more space than her family required; Songdo also offered many international products that she could never have come across in Itaewon a decade ago. In Brunhilda's eyes, Korea had made leaps and bounds into the future. It had come close to the West, with only a few more steps to go.

I let Brunhilda know that perhaps her document would not have the effect she anticipated, and proposed to inquire with IFEZ Authority to gain a sense of the feasibility of her project. As expected, the idea of a dog park did not gel well with Songdo's logic. City makers in IFEZ Authority either saw it as a foreign idea or as something that would not render profit. There were other projects that the government would implement. For example, when residents in section one petitioned for the construction of a kindergarten on residential land, designated usage regulations were promptly modified. On another occasion, residents living in the northernmost Central Park I condominiums petitioned to have a pedestrian bridge built to shorten the walking distance between their building and Central Park Station, and the government made it so. By making life slightly more convenient for residents, these projects added value to their properties and to the city as a whole. Concomitantly, the demands for these projects came from a multitude, a community that could come together and turn a demand into an important issue for the city.<sup>12</sup>

A dog park, in contrast, has absolutely no place in Songdo. It is of a different order of modernity. A clean, organized, and singularized utopian community in a frictionless world has no place for dogs. But in Brunhilda's situated universal modernization path, she hoped that Songdo would conform, for in her eyes, the city displayed an image of a future she perceived as familiar, with greater charismatic appeal than the rest of Korea.

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<sup>12</sup> The kindergarten and the pedestrian bridge were projects I followed briefly during my visits to the offices at IFEZ Authority.



#### **3.4.4 Jenny**

Jenny hailed from Australia. She had a doctorate in biology and secured a job at an international environmental NGO housed in Songdo. She lived alone, enjoyed running, and spent her weekends mostly at home and occasionally went out with some friends.

When I first met her on a visit to her office, she saw our discussion together mainly as an opportunity to vent about her life in Songdo and how miserable the city was.

As we walked and talked along Songdo's boulevards, Jenny drew my attention to the sidewalk. I noticed crooked cinder blocks and what looks like small sinkholes in haphazard formation. The edges of the blocks were inaccurately cut and the whole path looked like a slapdash bricolage. For Jenny, Songdo's infrastructure was not a sign of a new modern city, but rather an under-financed and rushed development that illustrated a sense of backwardness. Songdo's infrastructures indeed enact a multiple landscape: while the Incheon Bridge may be conjured as a "grand spectacle" of a modern future in promotional documents and videos, Jenny saw a sidewalk that came to represent the foreclosing of that future and "abjection" to the past (see Larkin 2013, 333-336). She imagined a place of a failed future.

Jenny was not a happy resident in Songdo. She found the city boring and at times displayed a tinge of resentment in her descriptions. Being an environmental scientist, she was acutely aware of Songdo's dark (green) secret. Songdo is built on reclaimed land that was not formerly deserted, as the city's promotions insist. One of the central elements of Songdo's presentation in IFEZ Authority's promotions headquarters illustrates the dramatic transformation of Incheon's coastline in order to display the prowess of Korea's construction sector. To add emphasis – and depoliticize the issue, the comparison between the past and the present is entwined with an aesthetic flare, from unsightly mud

to a beautiful urban panorama. In reality however, the mudflats were used by large populations of migratory birds along with people who used the shoreline to fish. With the new city in place, substantial populations of birds have died and people have been unhappily relocated (see [birdskorea.org](http://birdskorea.org) and Park 2010).

In their article, Ko et al. (2011) make a distinction between two green developmental approaches. On the one hand, “systematic green” development refers to a broad vision that seeks “a balance among economic growth, environmental protection, and social justice” (Ko et al. 2011, 5). On the other hand, “segmented green” development denotes a narrower definition of sustainable development, stripped of its social justice dimensions. “Green Growth” exemplifies this truncated version by strictly focusing on “economic growth while reducing environmental impact” (Ko et al. 2011, 5). Songdo is built on a landfill that formerly comprised coastal wetlands populated by an array of migratory birds, some of which are national heritage species (Ko et al. 2011, 11). Songdo’s ‘land reclamation’, alongside other aggressive “Green Growth” projects, has impelled environmental NGOs and scientists to express their concerns with the consequences and impacts of the country’s present developmental trajectory (Ko et al. 2011, 13).

Jenny was one of these scientists. She made a clear distinction between society and nature, and the latter should be left alone in order to thrive. The impact of the city’s destruction was evident in her visceral disdain for this place. But it was too late for Songdo; the tidal flats were long gone, stamped out by this colossal city of dirt, concrete and glass. Her efforts were redirected at the Saemangeum development, at present Korea’s largest reclamation project and the leading cause of death for migratory birds in

Korea (birdskorea.org). Jenny hoped that something could still be salvaged there. It is indeed ironic that the environmental NGO for which she worked was housed in Songdo. Somehow, the city has been able to lure large environmental organizations, such as Jenny's and the GCF, by conjuring a green and healthy world populated by sustainable cities, for which Songdo could become a guiding light, a beacon of hope. How this happened completely baffled Jenny; through the charismatic veneer of Songdo, she could only see a dark and neglectful future.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored some of the ways in which Songdo's fantasies are reproduced by its urban forms and residents despite the empirical evidence that would contradict the validity of the city's mythologies. First, I gave an overview of Songdo's production since 2001 to demonstrate that the development of the city is largely undertaken by the state rather than through transnational connections and partnerships. Second, I took a tour of Songdo's POSCO apartments being developed in section three to elucidate the ways in which national and situated transnational categories materially congeal, giving rise to creative fantasies *of* modern urban futures. Third, I followed the accounts of a small group of Songdo's well-to-do residents to examine some of the ways in which they interpreted and apprehended the charisma *in* Songdo. Do-hyun imagined the charisma of the city endowing its unique and exceptional population with success-driven desires and future-oriented values; Mi-yeon bestowed upon the city transnational status in its association with foreign products, creating a pronounced rift between Songdo and Incheon, and her own distinction by extension; Brunhilda found great charisma in Songdo, but she hoped the city would produce more were it to conform to her own

visions on its stride along her situated universal path to modernity; Jenny imagined a dark future in Songdo, a city that may effectively appear charismatic on the surface but that also – both figuratively and literally – hides a nightmarish secret beneath.

The fantasies rehearsed by Songdo's residents are not in opposition to the dominant fantasies of the city. The residents themselves reproduce the ideal and highly reductionist categories of Songdo. They are therefore not in opposition to state power or transnational forces of capital, but rather entwined in these processes, reinforcing them in surprisingly creative ways.<sup>13</sup> Residents' fantasies inscribe themselves onto the urban spaces of Songdo, as the city's charisma domesticates an idealized future version of the foreign as civilized, orderly, and efficient, outlining the proper operation of the city and its occupants. The rehearsal of Songdo's fantasies from within the offices of the state is the subject to which I turn in the following chapter.

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<sup>13</sup> Jenny's narrative is an exception here, as the charisma of Songdo had little effect on her understanding of the city. But she is part of a silenced minority of dissidents, insufficient in number to shape the myths of the city, and correspondingly shape the material city and its urban life.

## CHAPTER 4 Promoting a Transnational Urban Form: Routinization and Institutional Charisma

### 4.1 Entering IFEZ Authority

In my ongoing attempt to understand city-making practices in Songdo, I visited IFEZ Authority on a regular basis and met with a variety of government officers. IFEZ Authority, instituted in 2005 and housed in G-Tower at the northwest edge of Central Park, is a special branch of the Incheon Government designated to oversee the development of Songdo.<sup>1</sup> IFEZ Authority is intended to independently facilitate private investment into the city, offering a “one-stop” service for interested parties.<sup>2</sup> The first point of contact for the potential investor is the Business Opportunity Headquarters. This HQ comprises four divisions, each with multiple teams to cater to the specific area of the investor. For example, hotels will go to the hospitality investment team, or a pharmaceutical company will be directed to the new growth investment team. The people who work on these teams are investment consultants that I will call *promoters*. Promoters are five-year contract workers – both women and men in a wide age range – who are highly proficient in English and generally hold an advanced degree in business management or a social science. Promoters are critical conduits of information and influence in the city making process and I present here an ethnographic snapshot of their

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<sup>1</sup> IFEZ Authority is similar to the Incheon Public Development Agency Mr. Park instituted in 1989 to oversee the landfilling around Songdo Island and the development of the city.

<sup>2</sup> A recent study by Shin et al. (forthcoming) illustrates the cooperative and conflictual relations between IFEZ Authority, the Incheon Government, and the central state. IFEZ Authority is densely connected to these scales of government, giving it very minimal independence as a special branch specific to Songdo. While the central state remains at a distance, Incheon and IFEZ Authority require central state funding to develop Songdo’s infrastructure. To complicate matters further, there are now eight FEZs in Korea, all of which compete for central state funds, the sum of which can only cover about 70 to 80 percent of a single zone (Shin et al., forthcoming).

roles.

Promoters have a number of functions, but their overall purpose is to attract, ‘induce’<sup>3</sup>, and ensure that investors smoothly and successfully pass through the investment procedure and attain their building permit to begin their development in the city. If investors come to Songdo with an interest to invest, promoters will be the first to welcome them and begin by presenting the Songdo project and explain the overall vision of the city. They will then assist the investor in navigating through the investment procedure. For example, they will listen to the investor’s interests and plans and answer questions accordingly; they will assemble a specific Task Force Team (TFT)<sup>4</sup> catered to the investor to help them set up; they will vouch for and support the investor’s interests should these interests not strictly conform to the city’s master plan.<sup>5</sup> Promoters will essentially look after investors and their interests throughout the process.

Promoters will also scour markets to find potential investors. For example, they will attend large international conferences to advertise the city and establish networks, or they will contact an institution or firm directly. Generally however, the investors they successfully approach will come through a referral from a ‘key’ person.<sup>6</sup> Once a connection is made, promoters will either invite or visit the potential investor and give a presentation of Songdo and promote the city, ultimately aiming to ‘induce’ the investor to

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<sup>3</sup> This is the specific term promoters employed to describe their work.

<sup>4</sup> A TFT is an assemblage of different consultants that assist investors in putting their investment and development proposals together. There are three types of teams: internal, mixed, and external. Internal consultant comes from IFEZ Authority, but consultants can be recruited from universities, civil organizations, and/or the central state.

<sup>5</sup> Promoters will also run background checks on potential investors to determine the feasibility of their interests, their sources of funding, and what references will reports about the investor.

<sup>6</sup> Contacting an institution directly, as promoters informed me, is almost never successful because it is almost impossible to get in touch with the ‘right’ person. Referrals are the most effective ways to make a connection. For example, SUNY came to Songdo Global Campus through a contact at a Korean university who personally knew the president of SUNY.

come develop in Songdo. The success of promoters is measured according to their ability to effectively attract, ‘induce’, and support the investor through the investment procedure. Thus, through their practices and the institutional arrangement through which they navigate, promoters develop a close relationship with the *investor*.

If investors are successfully ‘induced’, they will then present their proposed investment and development plans to the Songdo Business Headquarters, where one of the four divisions, each with multiple specialized teams, will receive the plans. This group I will call *planners*. Planners are tenured government officers who generally hold advanced engineering degrees. Once planners receive the investor’s proposal, they will examine the plans and assess them in comparison to the official laws and regulations of the city’s centralized plan. The planner’s overall purpose is to oversee the construction of the city and to ensure that it is developed according to the master plan.<sup>7</sup> Thus, unlike the promoter, planners have a close relationship with the *plan*.

This relationship is highly experiential. Planners will often go on fieldtrips to the city’s construction sites to assess the progress of development. They will oversee all public projects in the city, including the development and maintenance of infrastructures and city zoning. City zoning refers to the specific ways in which zones relate to each

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<sup>7</sup> The master plan is more than an inscription on paper. It constitutes an assemblage, via electronic documents, across multiple scales of government all onto one unified whole. The process is as follows. An electronic document representing a given component of the master plan begins on the planner’s computer screen, moves up for approval to the IFEZ Authority commissioner, up to the mayor of Incheon, and if required, all the way up to the national state. Electronic documents are signed on their way up and on their way down, so that planners receive the first and the final signature. Decisions over plans and regulations are rendered official as a result of the signatures they accumulate, cementing connections between sectors of the government. As an assemblage across various scales of government, a decision becomes a “collective agent” with “an impersonal tone, [that eliminates] information about who is responsible for what” (Hull 2012, 127). It thus becomes authoritative. Planners map the different scales of government as all the same, that is, they are a single unit of governance, and the master plan embodies this powerful singularity. In this unified process, planners describe themselves as intermediaries as opposed to mediators, cogs rather than delegates that can influence the decision itself. The work of planners is highly systematized. As such, they see themselves as purely systematic components in the city-making process. In their own word, they are a “system” (field notes, 20 July 2014).

other in the overall plan of the city. These are set like puzzle pieces in the sense that the modification of one zone will affect surrounding zones and the overall circulation and geometry of the city.<sup>8</sup> Planners are designated to specific sections of the city to ensure the successful completion of one or many infrastructural elements. These can include waste management, water pipes, and/or parks. In sum, planners are closely aligned with Songdo’s master plan, to the extent that they find themselves uneasy with the term “free” in Free Economic Zone because they understand it to mean “against regulations” (field notes, 1 September 2014).



Figure 4.1 – G-Tower, IFEZ Authority Headquarters. Photographed by author’s friend (22 August 2014).

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<sup>8</sup> City zones are also inscribed in planning documents in the form of maps and charts, which illustrate the measurements of each zone and their designated uses. If an investor wants to develop in a zone with a differently intended use, which purportedly happens often, then this affects the entire planned configuration of the city, along with the designated land price of the surrounding zones. Additionally, since the material infrastructure of the city is already constructed, these are installed in accordance with the zone and its use. If an investor wants to change the measurements or use of a zone, there are material constraints.



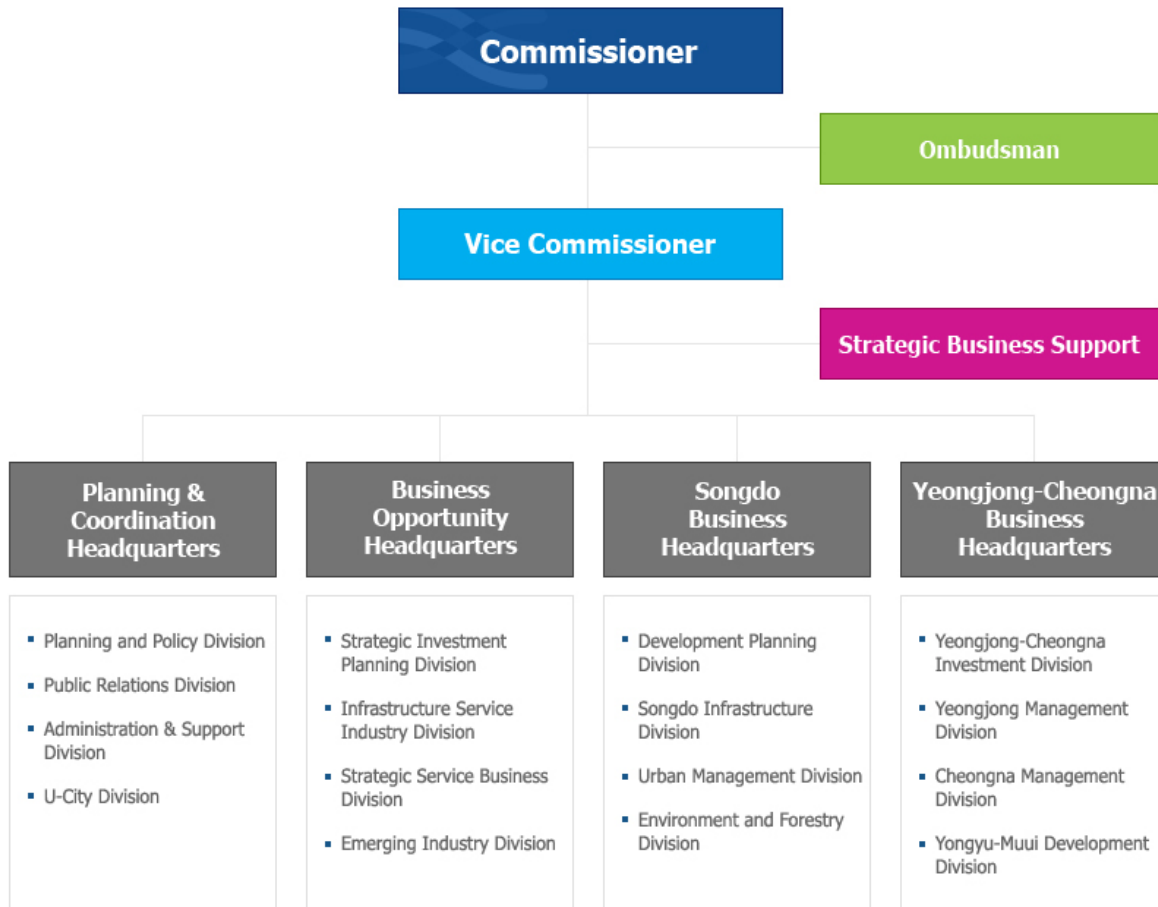


Figure 4.2 – IFEZ Authority organizational chart (ifez.go.kr). From left to right: Planning and Coordination HQ for public relations and investment grievances; Business Opportunity HQ for promotions; Songdo Business HQ for investment proposal assessments; Yeongjong-Cheongna Business HQ for all dealings with those sections of IFEZ.

In the idealized operation of IFEZ Authority, investors would be successfully ‘induced,’ submit their project plans, and planners would determine that everything aligns with the master plan, for which investors would subsequently be granted a building permit to begin construction on their designated lot. In practice however, investors rarely align with the plan, if ever. Investors come to IFEZ Authority with their own interests in hand and will generally be inclined to construct on lots that do not conform to the master plan and that do not align with the already constructed material infrastructure beneath the city. As promoters pointed out to me, investors are fundamentally interested in *location*. Indeed, while the master plan and the originally established infrastructure are made to expedite

the construction of private development projects, from the investor's vantage point, these elements are a hindrance to their own interests.

The tension between the investor and the plan correspondingly relates to an internal institutional tension between promoters and planners. While ideally, promoters and planners will aim to concede a balance between the investor's interests and the plan, in practice, promoters and planners develop pronounced differences in their approach to the city. Planners obdurately stick to the central plan, while promoters, in their close connections with investors, systematically deviate from it. This understanding of Songdo reflects two divergent renditions of the city. On the one hand, promoters tend to understand Songdo as an open blank slate in a frictionless world; it is a city built for private investment and the central purpose of IFEZ Authority is to attract investment to the city. On the other hand, planners tend to approach Songdo as a closed national project; it is the "heart" of Korea's national economy (field notes, 1 September 2014).<sup>9</sup> Their respective visions are systematically rehearsed in a systemized institutional context, that is, promoters and planners are institutionally conditioned to approach Songdo in their own deeply situated ways.

In this chapter, I focus on one of these groups.<sup>10</sup> I follow the work of promoters to gain an understanding of their relations to Songdo. Promoters, as agents *in* the city, routinely interact with promotional materials *of* the city. On the one hand, promoters ritually perform the city, bestowing upon it a reified and authoritative presence in their purview of reality. As one promoter pointed out, the city he was presenting reflected the

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<sup>9</sup> I employ the term 'tend' to signal that promoters and planners do in fact see both sides of the equation, but through their practices and the institutional structures they navigate, both groups are driven to isolate themselves from the other.

<sup>10</sup> The planner will also have a background presence in the narrative of the text.

“truth” about Songdo (field notes, 14 August 2014). It seemed evident that promoters’ vision for Songdo, anchored in promotional documents, had greater importance than the material production of the city, as it was actually unfolding on the ground.

On the other hand, making the city affords promoters professional assets with which they can build and develop their professional profiles. The institutional terrain in which they work, continuous with social-structural trends prevalent in Korea, collectively directs promoters towards individual pursuits for “specs”, that is, specifications they can inscribe onto their CVs. Successfully inducing investors to make the city is the means towards a promoter’s personal development. The analysis I present in this chapter demonstrates how knowledge practices and institutional arrangements “internally generate the effects of their own reality” (see Riles 2001, 3), where a city that “*might be*” comes to mean as much as the present state of Songdo (see Stoler 2009, 21).

## **4.2 Performing Charisma *in* the City: Routine, Authority, Reification**

I had an interview with Min-joon on 15 August 2014.<sup>11</sup> I had scheduled a meeting with him the night before over the phone and I was very impressed by his English fluency. From his tone, he seemed amicable and enthused by the idea of meeting with me. Min-joon was the director of the hospitality investment team at IFEZ Authority. He had a doctorate in business management and had worked in the corporate sector before joining IFEZ Authority in 2005. Questions in hand and a refreshing beverage as a gift for my interlocutor, I arrived at his office a few minutes early. Min-joon was there to greet me with a radiant smile. We shook hands and he led me into a meeting room with a lovely view of the city, where another individual awaited us. I was introduced to Geon-woo,

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<sup>11</sup> This name is a pseudonym, like all other names in this chapter.

another friendly character whose English was equally impeccable. Geon-woo was a team member on the education investment team. At the time, he was especially busy attracting foreign universities to occupy the many available offices and classrooms at Songdo Global University Campus (SGUC). I offered him my drink, which I intended to have together with Min-joon. Once we exchanged cards<sup>12</sup>, we sat and I began by informing my interlocutors of the general theme of my questions: their dealings and negotiations with potential investors.

Min-joon and Geon-woo were not attentive to the frame I attempted to lay out early on for our discussion. They first tried to connect me with the people who ran the local university residences, no doubt thinking that I was a newcomer to Korea, and had no place to stay in the city. I let them know my situation – that I had been in Korea for a couple of months by this point – and they segued right into their presentation of the city. They were clearly in full promotion-mode. Min-joon led the way. He had brought with him a stack of documents and had placed them at his side. There were promotional brochures of the city, of hotels, of international school, as well as full-blown maps of Songdo, Cheongna, and Yeongjong Island. But he first began with a very unassuming printout of his powerpoint slides, a presentation, I would later learn, homogenously shared across all divisions and teams in the Business Opportunity HQ (see appendix for presentation slides).

Min-joon fell back on his ritualized presentation, taking me through the broad

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<sup>12</sup> Name cards are important mediators in professional relations in Korea, and they are associated to a specific protocol. First of all, it is very important to have a name card, without which the formal exchange cannot take place. When exchanging cards, one always offers and accepts with both hands. However, those of higher status can do this with the right hand while the left hand cups the right forearm. Upon receiving a card, it is polite to take a moment to read the card, and one can then set the card aside or place it in one's wallet. But it is important to actively demonstrate care for the card, not bend it, and certainly not place it in one's rear pocket as one takes a seat. This was always an awkward procedure for me, and I would always try to exaggerate the protocol slightly, just to be safe.

strokes of the city. Something palpably conspicuous happened here, as though we became our assigned roles: I instantly fell back into spectator-mode and Min-joon was hailed into the spotlight. His presentation was heavily rehearsed. He had a memorized script for all the images we went through, seemingly imprinted into his muscle memory. Marcel Mauss (1973) would be quick to make a similar observation, just as he does when lecturing an audience on “techniques of the body”:

Everything in us is under command. I am a lecturer for you; you can tell it from my sitting posture and my voice, and you are listening to me seated and in silence. We have a set of permissible or impermissible, natural or unnatural attitudes (76).<sup>13</sup>

As I was made acutely conscious of the formation of these roles, my first inclination was to interrupt them. I had read through these documents countless times and I had my questions to pose, and a limited amount of time. While I was intent on setting the frame of our discussion, I was demonstrably unsuccessful at managing this dynamic. Their presentation was already in full swing, and I could not overcome the authoritative confidence of their corporeal presence. Evidently, I never had a chance. The only way I could come to terms with this event was to conclude that this presentation was a ritualized performance with deeply sedimented procedures, and my role as a quiet and attentive audience member, the one a potential investor might occupy, was involuntarily – spontaneously *and* unwillingly – assigned to me. I decided to set my intentions aside, go along with the situation, and listen to what these promoters had prepared and rehearsed innumerable times before.

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<sup>13</sup> Mauss coined the term “habitus” not to denote a metaphysical realm of ideas but a “gymnic art”, corporeally imitated and rehearsed in the mundane everyday. Moving his analysis from the concrete to the abstract, Mauss did not draw the distinction between the physical, the psychological, and the symbolic. Rather, and perhaps unlike his uncle Emile Durkheim, Mauss considered “moral and intellectual symbols” not the cause of one’s corporeal technique, but ‘cogs’ assembled in physical techniques efficiently rehearsed and historically instituted towards a specified goal (71-86).

I saw before me on the paper an image taken from the north side of Convensia Avenue in Songdo. With a clear sky in the backdrop, the image offered a view towards the POSCO First World towers and Songdo's flagship edifice, the North East Asian Trade (NEAT) Tower – also the tallest structure in Korea at present. A closer look revealed the side of the Sheraton and its logo between the First World and the NEAT Towers. The height of both towers extended beyond the frame of the shot, alluding to their dramatic size. Min-joon was less interested in pointing out these structures; he directed my attention to the large avenue in the foreground, partitioned by a median intermittently lined with national flags and company logos from around the world. He told me that these were all the countries represented in Songdo and below were the emblems of the multinational companies housed in the city. This was the important takeaway point of the opening slide: Songdo was an international business city, concisely captured in this image, and reiterated in Min-joon's words.

Min-joon turned to the next slide/page. The second slide provided an overview of IFEZ, with two subheadings: "Outline of IFEZ" and "Green City". Min-joon began with the first subheading. Passing his finger over the page, he showed me where we were on the image on the left hand side, and then again with his finger, went through reading the bullet points directly under the image. He echoed what was written on the page: "we are one-hour drive from Seoul; the total area of IFEZ is 169 square kilometers, etc." He then crossed over to the image on the right hand side, a blown up scale of Northeast Asia. Min-joon continued with his finger, passing his index over the circumferences of the area that encompassed the major cities, one by one, from smaller to larger, in the three-hour flight radius of IFEZ. Min-joon continued on with the larger bullet points below the

images focusing on the strategic location of Songdo and its access to large populations and markets inside and outside Korea. There was no mention of countries and borders, sovereignty and governments; the connections were made between urban centres, with a specific emphasis on large ones.

Min-joon continued in his exposition, guiding me through the details of the document. The next slide showed the projected development plan of all three points of IFEZ by 2020. He then placed enthusiastic emphasis on the dramatic transformation of Incheon's coastline, from "tidal mudflats" to "a land of green and premium city". Min-joon and Geon-woo together made sure to underscore the aesthetically charged contrast between both landscapes, between an ugly past and a beautiful future. The intention here was also to lucidly illustrate the capabilities of Korea and its vigorous construction sector to completely revamp its territory. Truly anything was possible on these lands, as though a clean and modern city could simply rise up out of the mud.

The next two slides provided an overview of Songdo's highly comprehensive infrastructures for a city of pure motion. Min-joon guided me through the various metrics outlined on the paper: "The Incheon International Airport is second in the world for cargo volume; a new port is being developed to be completed by 2020, etc." For the remainder, we lightly went over some of the financial incentives of investing in Songdo and closed the presentation with the international companies housed in IFEZ, firms referred to as 'anchor companies' that provide social proof to lure potential investors.

In sum, the presentation rehearsed by Min-joon and Geon-woo was of a transnational city erected on a blank slate. It housed an array of private firms hailing from various countries; it was regionally connected to "61 cities with over one million

population”; it housed the GCF; it emerged shiny and bright from a muddy tidal flat; it had an impressive infrastructure for frictionless circulation; and it offered tax breaks and various other incentives for private investors.

During this presentation, I was most struck by the enthusiasm of Min-joon and Geon-woo’s display. They were evidently very engaged with what they were helping put together. When I discovered that this presentation was performed across all teams in the Business Opportunity HQ, I became curious about their tactics and strategies in performing their city, only to soon discover that promoters had no such strategies or advice to teach novice presenters. Promoters simply learned the presentation about their city and delivered it according to the outline.

Ji-hoon, a promoter on the new growth investment team, pointed out to me one day – with a look of sincerity – that this presentation represented the “truth” about Songdo, and he was in no way interested in fabrications or in misrepresenting the city to potential investors (field notes, 14 August 2014). I inquired with other promoters about tactics and strategies in their presentations, but they unanimously made it clear that they had no intention of embellishing or pushing visions of the city that were not present in promotional documents. In fact, they felt a moral obligation to this end. In being a witness to this presentation, the only thing I became convinced of was that this presentation was for the promoter the definition of the city, and I took them at their word. They apprehended the promotional materials *of* the city with which they routinely interacted as the city itself. How did this vision become so dense as to blur out of existence the actual development of Songdo, the one that would seem to contradict the



promoter's vision?<sup>14</sup>

To approach this question, consider the presentation. As Min-joon spoke and pointed to each statement on the paper, he was repeating what was written before him, while Geon-woo was at his side nodding, adding the occasional “m-hmm” to stress a point. This performance resembled what Richard Bauman (2004) refers to as a “mediational speech event”. Bauman (2004) observes that when a mediator repeats the words of the original speaker, a sense of authority is then bestowed upon the original speaker and his or her words. The original speaker in this instance is the paper document, the text itself, establishing the outline of the presentation and navigating the central pillars of Songdo's vision.

Now consider the document. It was published by IFEZ Authority, the special government branch specifically instituted to oversee the development of Songdo. The official state insignia is inscribed at the bottom left of each page. Further, the main pillars of the presentation – the city's regional connectivity, the infrastructures that expand its reach, the dramatic transformation of Incheon's coastline – are elements that can be traced into the physical city. The few words, numbers, and images are not suggestions of what could be; they are physical realities in the actual world of the present that extend spatially to other places. Indeed, this document is not only a “projection” of the city but simultaneously continuous with elements of the physical city itself (Hull 2012, 5). The document also extends temporally into the past, where its statements about the transformation of land have already been confirmed and acknowledged: they are “*prior discourse*”, repetitions of formerly confirmed facts (see Bauman 2004, 151).

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<sup>14</sup> As per the empirical record of Songdo's actual development discussed in chapter 3 and the claims stated by Kim and Ahn (2011), Shin (forthcoming), and Shwayri (2013).

Furthermore, the discourse is dramatically reduced to a very small set of factors designed to convincingly drive a very limited yet concise set of points. As Bauman (2004) quotes Bakhtin (1981): “authoritative discourse is ‘sharply demarcated’; it allows ‘no play with its borders, no gradual or flexible transitions’; ‘it enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass’” (151). The dramatic transformation of Incheon’s coastline is not a highly politicized process riddled with economic setbacks; it just happened. The airport is not a place of lineups and delays; it is quite simply connected to 181 cities around the globe. Incheon’s highways to Seoul do not traverse overly crowded urban areas; they are merely colorful lines over which cars hover. These images and statements have no history of their own; they are singular and total.

Bauman (2004) continues on with Bahktin’s approach to explore *how* discourse becomes authoritative, or in relation to our scene, how the vision of the city becomes an authoritative reified object. The witness sits at the table with the presentation material before them, and they wait in anticipation at what the presenter will say. The presenter rehearses, or “relays”, the words on the page, and the witness nods at the utterance, but implicitly understands that the words originate from the page, the source of the presenter’s words, that arise from a formerly confirmed past and that were written by the state. These words already existed before the presenter uttered them. In repeating the words on the page, the presenter is not speaking freely; he or she is speaking “on behalf of a specific, identifiable source” (Bauman 2004, 151). The text thus exhibits *in situ* its authority over the presenter. As Bauman (2004) writes:

Such routines... *enact* the authorization of discourse, by making its authority manifest, objectifying it in overtly perceptible ways. Observe... that these routines prescribe that the mediator replicate the author’s discourse intact; the integrity of the author’s text must be preserved. Agency resides with the author; the mediator is

denied an active role in the formulation and entextualization of the message. Rather, he is bound to it (152).

The more accurately a presenter reproduces the text, the more they demonstrate their submission to it, and the more authority is ultimately bestowed upon the text itself (Bauman 2004, 153). Min-joon was basically quoting directly from the document. He was not expressing himself; rather, as Bakhtin (1981) puts it, he ‘exhibited’ the words, or ‘ventriloquated’ (cf. Hull 2012, 147).

The authority of the text over the mediator gains further momentum through the ritualization of the presentation by displacing authority (Hull 2012, 132). As Hull (2012) writes following Kelly and Kaplan:

The authority of ritual flows from the ability of the speaker to divorce speech from the immediate context of its production, to transform particular utterances made by the individual in particular circumstances into discourse that is autonomous, grounded in some order beyond the speaker’s intentions (132).

Min-joon’s presentation exemplified a heavily ritualized procedure to the point that he no longer needed to reflect on his words or comportment; these were automatized into a sedimented “habitus” (see Mauss 1973). Min-joon was no longer speaking; he was traversed, as Hull (2012) claims above, by an order separate from his own intentions: the particular and highly reduced elements of the city on the pages of the document.

While Min-joon authorized the content of the document in his actively displayed and highly routinized submission to it, he performatively situated himself as the promoter. Min-joon carried himself and executed his monologue with ease and confidence, displaying a certain sense of authority in his own composure (see Mauss 1934, 73-86). Indeed, to authorize the city to maximum effect, the presenter cannot simply be anyone repeating the words on the page. The presenter must also conform to

certain standards, and by doing so, demonstrates that they are the worthy candidate to undertake the mediation of the original text (Bauman 2004, 152-153).<sup>15</sup> As Min-joon read out the words on the page, he was taking on the role of the mediator that restated the words of the object that stood in for the city, infusing it with the authority to define the reality of the city as a reified urban form. At the same time, through his material interaction with the document, Min-joon identified himself as a city maker, a promoter engaged in the production of a zone city.

In that very room where the three of us were sitting, each simultaneously looking down at the paper on the table, took place the performative vision of the city. Through the routinized and authorizing performance of the city, promoters themselves came to interpret and understand the city as the one with which they interacted on a systematic basis, and tied their identities to it as the makers of this specific urban form. The city on those pages was the ‘true’ form of Songdo.

The presentation, however powerful in its routine mundaneness, is one element of the story. A ritual such as this one is not a stand-alone performance; it is concomitantly bound to social-structural mechanisms that bring to life the charismatic appeal of the zone city for promoters. Promoters find their work challenging, especially since drawing in capital from foreign businesses to the city has been largely unsuccessful. The common trend, they informed me, was that private firms were interested in leasing land in Songdo, not in its purchase. Consequently, the city’s growth had slowed as funds were incrementally injected into the development of its infrastructure. Thus, while their vision of a transnational city did not immediately relate to the actual development of Songdo,

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<sup>15</sup> Correlatively, as Foucault (1997) argued, documents “help produce the very individual and collective subjects who use them” (cf. Hull 2012, 114).

the reified vision of the zone city was kept alive by providing promoters with much sought after “specs”, with which they could forge their own successful future. Promoters perform urban charisma *in* the city while the charisma *of* the city – linked to larger social-structural trends in Korea today – affords promoters with ‘gifts’ for personal success, the latter of which I now discuss.

### **4.3 Mythical Charisma of the City: Accumulating “Specs”**

The first dimension to consider about the promoter is their outlook of their place of work, IFEZ Authority. From the promoter’s vantage point, IFEZ Authority’s primary purpose is to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Songdo is thus premised as a mega-scale real estate land lot made for private purchase. The fundamental logic of the city is as follows: sell land upfront and reinvest funds into Songdo’s infrastructure to expand purchasable lots, the justification for which is conferred in the city’s claim to offer employment for Korea’s highly-skilled and educated workforce. According to this logic, private investment is a fundamental ingredient to bring the vision of Songdo into fruition: if private investors do not come to purchase land and develop their assigned lot, the city quite simply cannot be built. The promoter is thus hired to present the city and negotiate terms of construction with the private investor. Correspondingly, promoters refer to themselves as “the frontier”, as those that constitute the face of the city to the outside world (field notes, 28 August 2014).

Promoters are contract workers, a factor that opposes them to government officers, like planners, who have permanent positions. A typical contract will extend over five years, and promoters will take this period in their careers as an opportunity to accumulate as many “specs” as possible. A “spec” – a contracted hybrid Korean-English

term for “specification” – constitutes the “building blocks” of one’s CV (Levine 2014). A spec is generally used in reference to objects, say a car or a phone, but in Korea, the term also relates to people. The most common specs are test scores, foreign languages – especially English, and computer proficiencies. Accumulating specs is most important to anyone seeking work in Korea, and employers often compare the specs of potential job candidates (Levine 2014).<sup>16</sup> As five-year contract workers, promoters are preoccupied with their future careers, and as such, they are interested in gaining as much experience – specs – as they can to build up their CVs over the duration of their contracts.

The promoter’s most important specs are their language skills in English, their advanced foreign degrees and/or experience living and working abroad over extended periods. For example, Ye-joon and Ji-min, promoters on arts and culture investment and new growth investment teams, respectively, had advanced US degrees from brand-name institutions, while Ye-eun, on the commercial retail investment team, had lived in the US for over ten years. English is of such importance that it evidently trumps other specs promoters may have. During my second interview with Geon-woo for example, we spent most of our time together discussing his work, and by the end of the conversation, he opened up about something over which he had admittedly felt ashamed. He had worked for almost a decade in the private medical industry prior to coming to IFEZ Authority, and he was now working to attract foreign universities to Songdo. While he had initially applied to work in the medical field, no positions were available, and he was placed in education, an area in which he had no experience whatsoever. He was concerned over this aspect of his present situation because he thought it took away from his positionality

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<sup>16</sup> The pursuit of specs demonstrates the continuity between state and society, as promoters work within the parameters of the state, yet also respond to the social-structural demands of society.

as an expert in the area of education, but it mattered little in the overall operation of the Business Opportunities HQ (field notes, 26 August 2014).

Promoters' work is assessed based on the size and number of companies they can attract to the city. Ideally, these companies should be prestigious, reputable, and willing to remain in Songdo for the long-term, where they can bring in their workforce to populate the city permanently, or over the long-term at the very least. Indeed, promoters are fundamentally salespeople, and their main task is to demonstrate or present a city that will ultimately bring profit to the investor. If promoters obtain signed contracts with these sorts of companies, they are rewarded. Generally, performing well will allow a promoter to move up in the team rankings in their division and be given greater responsibilities, which can in turn contribute to their professional experience and profile.

Gathering specs is highly important for contract workers, and while all promoters I met were working under five-year contracts, some were about to renew a second one, and others were in their second contract. For example, Ye-eun, having lived in the US for over ten years, was a pivotal agent in the shared urban project between her division – strategic investment planning – and the government of Ecuador, who became interested in Songdo. Ye-eun's division was serving as a consultant to help import some of Songdo's urban principles into Ecuador. A project of this scale temporally extends far beyond five years. From her experience living in the US, Ye-eun spoke fluent English and claimed she adapts well with people of other cultural backgrounds. She had, like many other promoters, become a highly valued specialist in IFEZ Authority (field notes, 31 July 2014).

### ***4.3.1 Risk-Taking***

In general, accumulating specs requires what promoters internally refer to as “risk-taking”. I noted two ways of doing this. First, to add variety to their experience as professionals, promoters often request to be moved to another team or division in the Business Opportunities HQ. For example, Ye-joon had moved from the bio-medical investment team to the arts and culture investment team in order to gain experience from different areas in IFEZ Authority and learn the associated skills and knowledge practices of those divisions (field notes, 28 August 2014). The promoter’s expertise, their English fluency first and foremost, enables them to easily move around in different divisions in the Business Opportunities HQ. The specific skills associated with different teams and divisions can be learned in the field, by which they gather experience. The promoter’s professional aspiration to explore different lines of work places them at odds with public officers, such as planners, who are generally “reluctant to take any action beyond their required responsibilities” (see Shin et al., forthcoming).

The second method of “risk-taking” is to cater to a greater degree to the interests of the investor rather than to the plan of the city. Promoters generally see the plan of the city as flexible, negotiable, and can thus be made to conform to the ways in which investors approach the city. The flexibility of the plan is proportional to the size of the investment, the brand name of the company, and how large a workforce they bring to Songdo. For small investments, promoters will generally not support the investor, but larger investors’ interests will have weight in how promoters negotiate with planners over changing the plan for the investor.<sup>17</sup> According to promoters, the interests of larger

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<sup>17</sup> Promoters and planners will hold meetings to determine how much IFEZ Authority should concede to a potential investor’s plans and interests. During the meeting, they will discuss the following central



investors, that is, capital, will shape the city's plan. The largest investors, for example Samsung BioLogics, "can do pretty much whatever they want" (field notes, 12 August 2014). Promoters thus tend to be on the side of the investor, and their objectives in selling the city places them there, for that is how they are assessed and how they can then rise in the ranks of their division and gather additional specs.

#### ***4.3.2 The (Un)Important Planning Document***

Songdo's master plan is inscribed into a bounded document and distributed across all divisions in IFEZ Authority. As a document shared among a diversity of group within the institution, it is correspondingly addressed in different ways. This document thus does not only "store" information; rather, the information it contains is "a potential quality... which may or may not become salient in the play of social interactions around [it]" (see Hetherington 2008, 53). The planning document is "fungible" and can become engaged in conjuring different cities, and while this document plays on creating diverging fantasies, it simultaneously establishes an "artifactual bridge" between promoters and planners (see Hetherington 2008, 61).

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question: "For whom is this development, for the investor or the nation?" Once opinions and arguments have been weighed, the final decision will be made by vote among high-ranking officials in IFEZ Authority, who are tied to the Incheon government and the central state.

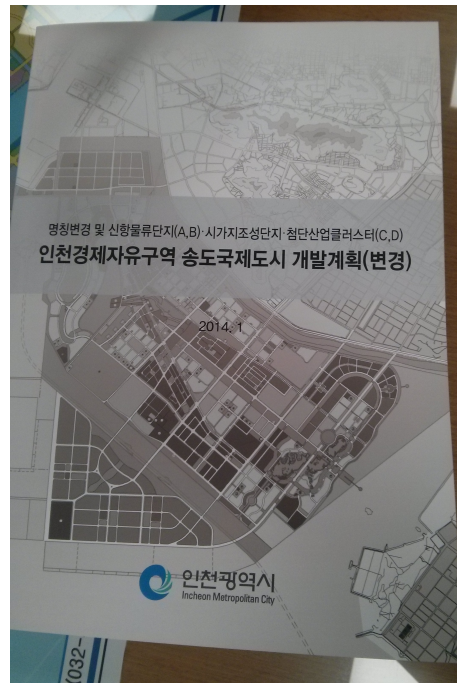


Figure 4.3 – The central planning document distributed across all division in IFEZ Authority. Photographed by author (28 August 2014).

The planning document contains the dimensions of each zone, their designated use, their relation to other zones, and road networks, all inscribed in maps and charts. It also keeps track of the changes to zonal dimensions over the course of Songdo's development. Promoters themselves have an ambiguous relationship to the planning document. It seems to straddle between importance and unimportance for them. For example, Ye-eun informed me that this document did not matter. When asked what her division would do if the document did not exist however, she told me that someone would have to produce one for the development to continue (field notes, 31 July 2014). I didn't know what to make of this at first, but then I came to understand that promoters approach this document as flexible, that is, while whatever is inscribed in it does serve as a guide, the information contained therein can be freely modified.

Promoters will not often use this book, but they are familiar with the specific areas they oversee. For example, a promoter on the education investment team will

occasionally refer to the book and become familiar with the education sections of the city. Some promoters become well versed in certain sections of this book. For example, Seo-yeon, a promoter in the bio-medical investment team, could accurately estimate the land price of particular zones in relation to other zones, as well as how changing the designated use of one zone could affect the price of surrounding zones. Evidently, she was quite apt with these calculations because she had often discussed changes with investors (field notes, 29 August 2014). Also, some promoters will find that certain regulations can be flexibly interpreted, from which they can develop an argument to support the proposal of a potential investor interested in modifying the master plan. Ji-min exhibited excitement and motivation over these sorts of negotiations because if she successfully supported the investor, she would be successfully doing her job to make the city and would then gain valuable experience in the process, that is, specs (field notes, 12 August 2014).

Overall, these practices elucidate the promoter's approach to the planning document: it can be changed. As I was often informed, investors are most interested in changing the plan of the city and selecting the location that fits their own interest. While the city's infrastructures have been formerly laid out to facilitate and speed up construction, investors seek to strategically develop their projects according to how they see the city's layout and configuration. For example, *PlusMall* (formerly *HomePlus*) established a shopping center, designated for a distribution zone, in a commercial zone because of its close proximity to residential zones. This is not a dramatic change to the city, but it does change the circulation of people and traffic and may make other nearby distribution zones less attractive and consequently more difficult to develop in the long

term. Indeed, changing the plan – like the plan itself – always presents new and unforeseeable obstacles. But promoters, in their efforts to gain specs of various kinds, are willing to ‘risk’ changing the plan, regardless of future implications.

In sum, accumulating specs to build their CVs, taking ‘risks’ in the process, which entails changing the city plan, are important elements by which promoters identify themselves. These endeavors rehearse the internal constitution of promoters as a unique group navigating IFEZ Authority’s terrain, and correspondingly urge them to produce a transnational city. The transnational city is highly charismatic for promoters, for helping it come to life promises many gifts in return: specs to build their professional profiles and futures.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I followed the work of promoters in order to elucidate their relations with their vision of a transnational zone city built on a flexibly configured terrain. The city they were making was to them a charismatic urban form developed through two relational processes. First, promoters systematically presented a city that, through authorization and routinization, became a reified object that internally generated the reality of the city for promoters. Second, in the institutional terrain of IFEZ Authority, connected with social-structural trends in Korea, promoters sought to make their city in order to accumulate specs. Making their city could therefore afford them the building blocks for their CVs and for their personal development that could then ensure more secure and successful futures in their careers. These two elements – promoters and the city – were relationally bound: promoters *in* the city performed Songdo’s charisma while the mythical charisma *of* the city afforded promoters with ‘gifts’ for personal success.

Though promoters found it a challenge to attract and induce investment, the strongest sense of difficulty came from *within* IFEZ Authority. Investors would bring their proposals but once these plans entered Songdo Business HQ and its armies of planners, these proposals were passed under the procedural microscope and thoroughly scrutinized to determine if the designs were congruent with the overall plans and regulations of the city. Ji-hoon in promotions told me frustratingly of planners: “They are crazy! They’re like goal keepers!” For him, planners were unflinching and obdurately “obsessed” with rules and regulations (field notes, 14 August 2014). Though planners hindered promoters from doing their work, promoters would only respond with greater resolve, for a transnational city fully developed by large investors is a treasure trove of specs.

## CHAPTER 5 Conclusion

Songdo, Korea's first and foremost zone city, has been conjured as a unique urban form through its association with the zone, a spatial entity dominantly defined as a universally recognized means to attain modernity and global stature for the host nation (see Bach 2011a; Orenstein 2011). This has in turn promoted the conditions through which Songdo has been imagined as a city for future forms of urban life. In the context of East Asia however, the zone is a historically assembled product of colonial, imperial, and capitalist encounters, giving rise to highly situated and exploitative spatial forms adopted by various states at opportune moments. Songdo emerged out of these regionally situated assemblages, modeled primarily after Shenzhen – the region's first zone city – and other 'globally connected' cities from around the world.

Songdo presents three central fantasies. First, Songdo is envisioned as a pivotal node to effect sweeping transformations across the peninsula, as the starting point for the nation's future. State presidents, for the limited duration of their respective tenures, have employed the zone city as a dramatic exemplification of their specific visions for the country's drive towards modernity. Second, the city is imagined as an entirely blank slate, one without history or sedimented customs, which could be molded and shaped into the utopic dreams of its planners. In this guise, the zone city has attracted an array of planners and developers seeking to test out what they fantasized as the future of urbanism. Third, Songdo is mythologized as part of a smooth, frictionless world of unhindered movement across compressed – or entirely collapsed – temporal and spatial scales. Songdo's infrastructures have been constructed to support and encourage streamlined movement across vast spaces, while its institutions have been intended to

culturally organize its urban population to maintain the circulation of capital, goods, and people.

In practice however, Songdo has been rather distinct from its fantasies, resembling more a wealthy suburb for the country's privileged elite. The city appears to have been more about the creation of land for real estate profit and the reproduction of privileged classes than about bringing its fantasies to reality. Yet the urban imagination of Songdo has flourished despite the contradictions of the everyday city. Songdo has been so thoroughly imbued with mythologies of future modernities that it is these fantasies that have come to define the city for the groups I followed in this thesis. The city's powerful mythologies have not been reflections of the actual city; rather, they have been fantasies *for* the city that have shaped the interpretations *of* the city and the ways in which people live their daily lives *in* the city.

To address the relations between fantasies *of* the city and city makers of various guises *in* the city, I have drawn on recent scholarly developments in urban anthropology. Specifically, I employed Hansen and Verkaaik's (2009) concept of "urban charisma", an approach that foregrounds two relational forms of charisma. On the one hand, I attempted to bring into the analytical script the presence of Songdo by exploring the mythical charisma *of* the city. This form represented the mythical presence that saturates Songdo's spaces, buildings, infrastructures, promotional documents, as well as people, who could use the city's charisma to fashion their identities. On the other hand, I followed the performative charisma of various 'urban types' *in* the city who confidently interpreted, apprehended, defined, and therefore acted upon the city. These individuals – Mr. Park, Songdo's wealthy residents, and IFEZ Authority promoters – actively rehearsed the city's

charisma, directing its development and defining its proper everyday operation. As I attempted to demonstrate, mythologies *of* Songdo were powerful actors in the ways through which people *in* the city deployed them. These fantasies rendered transnational connections, transformed landscapes, created massive property speculation, conjured social and historical contexts, refashioned identities, reproduced class distinctions, and determined visibility and invisibility in Songdo's cityscape.

In chapter 2, I explored how zone city fantasies came to life and how they were in turn deployed into the world. I followed Mr. Park, an 'urban specialist', while also cross-referencing his ideas and actions into the social-structural context of his time. In divining his city, Mr. Park 'personified' the cultural, political, and economic circumstances in Korea and East Asia in the 1980s, specifically Korea's growth model and China's dramatic transforming. His dream city was conjured as a remedy to Korea's purportedly unavoidable oncoming challenges, gaining mythical power as the light that could illuminate the future of the country. Mr. Park was simultaneously a performative agent of his dream city, armed with his particular skills and summoning visions across vast geographical spaces and deep into temporal trends. He was a highly educated engineer from a prestigious institution and a political force with years of experience in a rapidly developing part of Korea. He was able to make deliberate connections and recruit influential figures for his project, both in Korea and in foreign contexts. And he was finally given a 'fragment of sovereignty' to provoke the Korean state to comply with his dream. This relational process, Mr. Park's mythical urban form – charisma *of* the city – and his decisive and calculating actions – charisma *in* the city, constituted a sharing of



‘gifts’, reinforcing and infusing a charismatic allure onto the other, that would eventually fashion a zone city within Korea’s territory.

In chapter 3, I focused on ways in which fantasies *of* Songdo were rehearsed in its urban forms and how residents interpreted and deployed these fantasies *in* the city, despite the empirical evidence that would contradict the validity of the city’s mythologies. I first went on a tour of Songdo’s POSCO apartments being developed in section three in order to illustrate ways in which national and situated transnational categories materially congealed, giving rise to creative fantasies of modern futures. Next, I followed the accounts of a small group of Songdo’s well-to-do residents to elucidate ways in which they understood the city’s charisma. Do-hyun imagined the charisma of the city endowing its unique and exceptional population with success-driven desires and future-oriented values; Mi-yeon bestowed upon the city transnational status in its association with foreign products, creating a pronounced rift between Songdo and Incheon, and her own distinction by extension; Brunhilda found great charisma in Songdo, but she hoped the city would produce more were it to conform to her own visions on its stride along her situated universal path to modernity; Jenny imagined a dark future in Songdo, a city that may effectively appear charismatic on the surface but that also – both figuratively and literally – hid a nightmarish secret beneath. Though Jenny’s narrative was exceptional among the group of residents I presented, her narrative conjured a future for Korea.

The fantasies of Songdo’s residents were not in opposition to the dominant mythologies of the city. The residents themselves reproduced the ideal and highly reductionist categories of Songdo. They were therefore not in opposition to state power or

transnational forces of capital, but rather entwined in these processes, reinforcing them in surprisingly creative ways. Residents' fantasies inscribed themselves onto the urban spaces of Songdo, as the city's charisma domesticated an idealized future version of the foreign as civilized, orderly, and efficient, outlining the proper operation of the city and its occupants.

In chapter 4, I followed the work of promoters *in* the city to elucidate their relations to the rendition *of* the city in promotional materials with which they routinely interacted. The city they were making was to them a charismatic urban form developed through two interrelated processes. First, promoters systematically presented a city that, through authorization and routinization, became a reified object as – if not more – real than the actual city. Second, in the institutional terrain of IFEZ Authority and linked to social-structural trends in Korea, promoters sought to make their city in order to accumulate specs. Making their city could therefore afford them the building blocks for their CVs and to their personal development that could then ensure more secure and successful futures in their personal careers. By conforming to the everyday societal pressures of accumulating specs, promoters illustrated the continuous relations between people who work in the state and those outside its formalized boundaries.

In this project, I have argued that mythologies *of* Songdo conjured modern futurescapes that have powerfully shaped and informed the practices of various groups *in* the city, who have in turn acted upon Songdo's material and symbolic production. While these fantasies were interpreted and rehearsed in various ways, their ideal types offered placeholders for new and situated ways to imagine modern futurescapes. In the context of Songdo, as a zone city that ceaselessly summoned a singularized world contained in one

place, the Korean state was a pivotal force, exercising “graduated sovereignty” to manage its territory and populations (see Ong 2006). What took shape was a situated urban form made to house Korea’s powerful classes and redirect circuits of capital towards the hands of a few. Songdo is fundamentally distinct from its mythologies and evidently grounded in the circumstances of its territorial context.

The manifestation of Songdo is a situated example of a zone city, demonstrating that zone cities do not become their universal fantasies in refashioned worlds of utopic societies on a smooth, unstriated sphere. Zone cities – like all cities – are universally particular (see Harms 2011; Tsing 2005). While Songdo’s idealized fantasies linked to global processes, these were locally reconfigured on the soil of Korea. This thesis has thus sought to engage with the fragmented dimensions of global urban history, that urban forms, as global as they may present themselves to be, are always situated projects in a heterogeneous world, one that turns out to be an “arena of contention” (Tsing 2005) over which nobody can predict the outcome.

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# Appendix

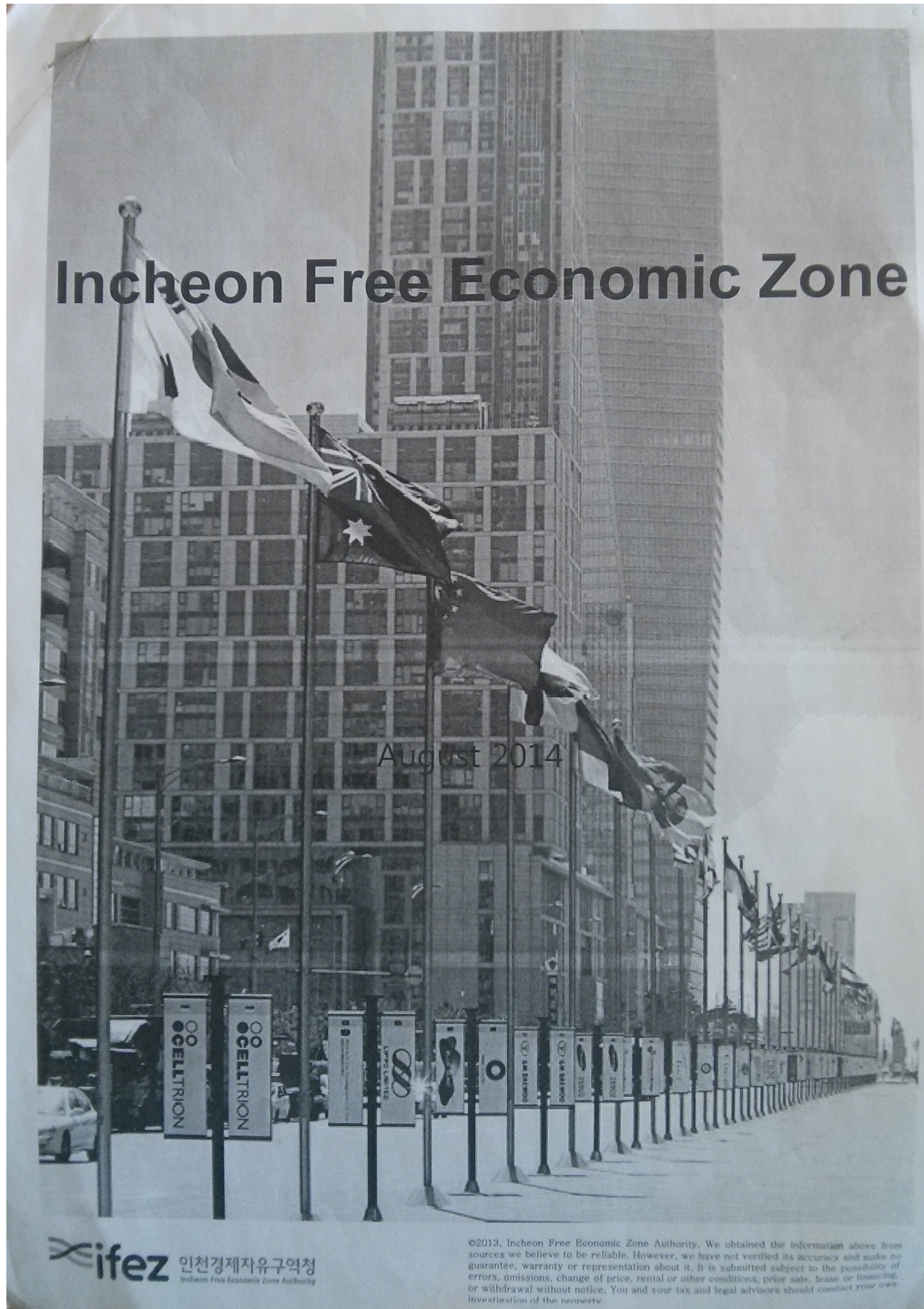
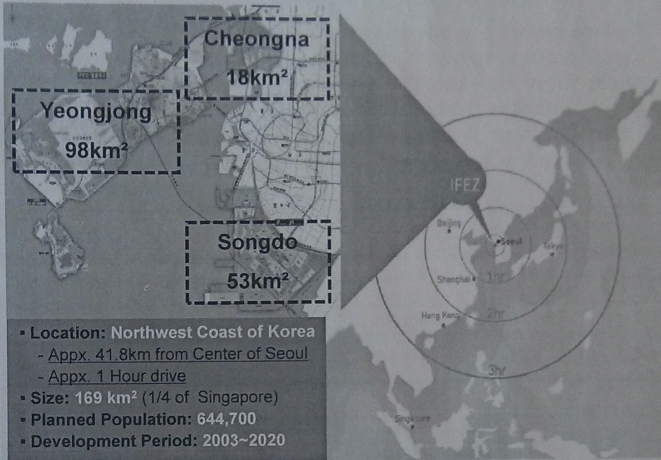


Figure A.1 – Presentation cover page.

# Overview

## Outline of IFEZ



- IFEZ was designated as the first Free Economic Zone in Korea in 2003
- IFEZ is located in the center of Northeast Asia
  - One of the 3rd largest trading blocks (24% of global GDP)
  - 1.5 billion of population (1/3 of world's population)
- IFEZ is connected to 61 cities with over 1 million population within 3 ½ hour flight
- 25 million domestic consumers are living in the vicinity of IFEZ

## Green City

- **GCF(Green Climate Fund) will be located in IFEZ**
  - Contribute to the global efforts towards attaining the goals set by the international community to combat climate change
  - Finance from industrialized countries to support climate action in the developing world (Fund Scale : US\$800 billion by 2020)
- **Green Growth Plan in Korea**

Green Policy	Green Technology
- 30% Emission Reduction Target	- Green Cars
- 2% GDP Investment	- Renewable Energy
- Emission Trading Scheme	- LED Lighting

Figure A.2 – Presentation overview.



# Incheon Free Economic Zone (IFEZ)

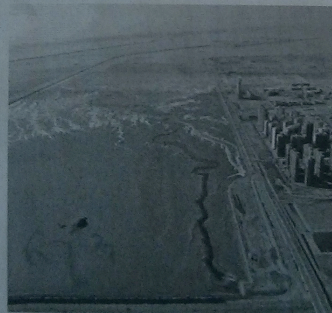
## Development Plan

The free economic zone refers to the area that guarantees the businesses and economic activities of foreign investors by promoting systems and conditions differentiated from other areas. Accordingly, the free economic zone is referred to as the international city that promotes tax support, free economic activity, simplified administrative services, and a convenient living environment.

Type	Songdo	Yeongjong	Cheongna
Location	Around Songdo-dong, Yeonsu-gu, Incheon	Around Yeongjongg/Yongyoo-do, Jung-gu, Incheon	Around Gyeongseo-dong, Seo-gu, Incheon
Area	53.4km	98.3km	17.8km
Project Cost	USD 10.4 billion	USD 4.6 billion	USD 6.3 billion
Period	2003~2020	2003~2020	2003~2020
Expected Population (households)	252,000 people (93,600)	294,000 people (109,800)	90,000 people (33,200)
Project Implementer	Incheon Metropolitan city, Songdo Techno Park, NSIC	Incheon Metropolitan city, Korea Land and Housing Corporation, Incheon Urban Development Corporation, Incheon International Airport Corporation	Incheon Metropolitan city, Korea Land and Housing Corporation, Korea Rural Community Corporation

## Dramatic Growth

### Tidal mudflats become a land of Green & Premium City



**Site Formation**  
 Appx. 117Km<sup>2</sup> (70% of IFEZ) Reclaimed  
 - Reclamation completed: 83Km<sup>2</sup>  
 - Reclamation under way: 34Km<sup>2</sup>

**ifez** 인천경제자유구역청  
Incheon Free Economic Zone Authority

Figure A.3 – Introduction to IFEZ.

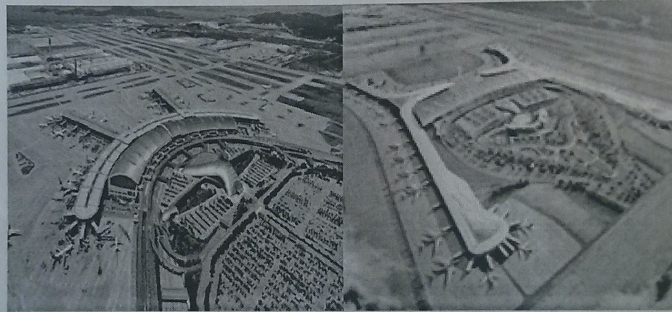
# Advantages in IFEZ

## Infrastructure

*Multi-facet transport system provides convenient and efficient access to IFEZ and major markets*

### ▪ Incheon Int'l Airport

- Cargo Volume: World's 2nd (2012: 2.4 million ton)
- Passenger Traffic: World's 9th (2012: 38 million travelers)
- Connected to 181 Cities Globally



### ▪ Seaport

- Cargo Volume : 140 million ton (2012)
- Container : 1.98 million TEU
- \* Occupying 61% of Cargo Volume from Korea to China
- Incheon Newport to be Completed by 2020  
(Berthing capacity: 8,000~10,000TEU, Annual handling capacity: 2.4 mil. TEU)

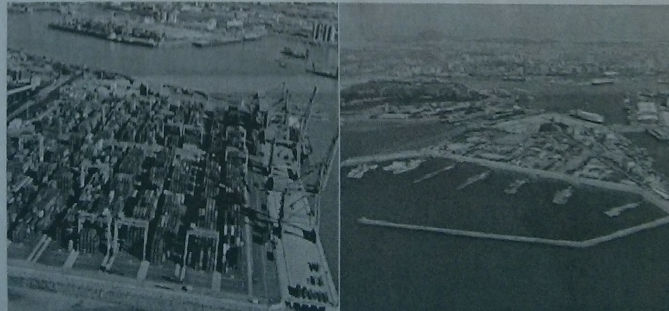


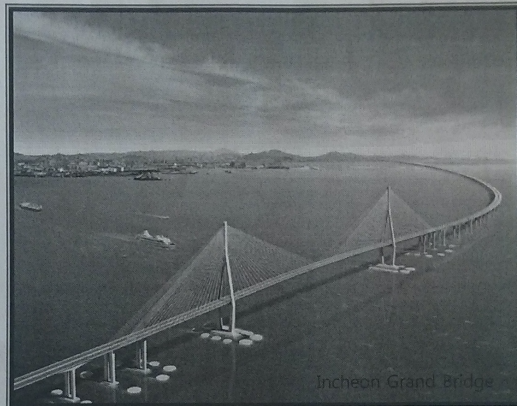
Figure A.4 – Infrastructures: airport and seaport.

# Advantages in IFEZ

## Infrastructure

### ▪ Inland transportation

- High-ways and Trains
- Diversified Mass Transit Systems



From the airport, it takes only 15 minutes to Songdo via Incheon Grand Bridge, opened on Sep., 2009.

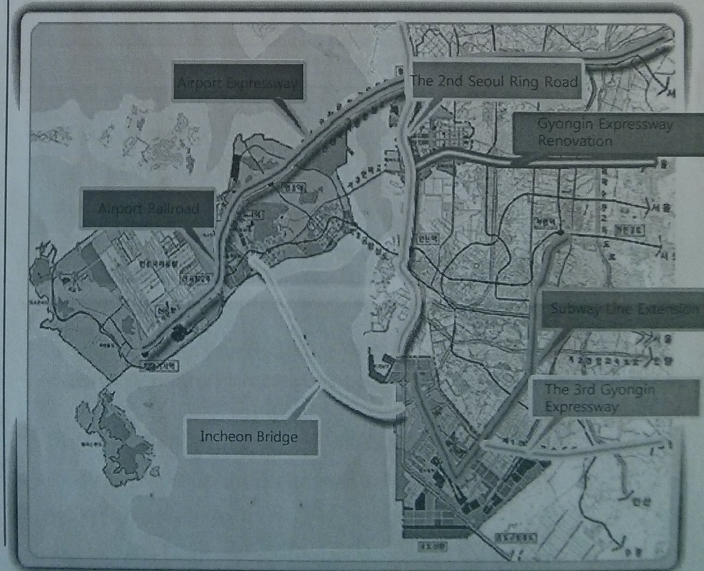


Figure A.5 – Infrastructures: bridge and highway connectivity.

# Advantages in IFEZ

## Incentives

### ▪ Tax Reduction

- Corporate tax, income tax : 100% for 3-5yrs, 50% for 2yrs
- Acquisition tax, Registration tax, Property tax : 10~15yrs 100%
- Tariff for capital goods : 3yrs

※ Eligibility : manufacturing, logistics, R&D, Tourism Industry with a certain amount of FDI

Tariff	3years : 100%	Imported capital goods
Corporate tax Income tax	5years: 100% +2years: 50%	Manufacturing : FDI 30million dollars or more Tourism : FDI 20million dollars or more Logistics : FDI 10million dollars or more R & D : FDI 2million dollars or more (master's degree; 3years; 10persons)
	3years: 100% +2years: 50%	Manufacturing : FDI 10million dollars or more Tourism : FDI 10million dollars or more Logistics : FDI 5million dollars or more Medical Institution : FDI 5million dollars or more
Acquisition tax Registration tax	15years: 100%	R & D : FDI 1million dollars or more (master's degree; 3years; 10persons)
Property tax	10years: 100% +3years: 50%	

### ▪ Land Benefits

- Offer a reasonable price for land purchase or lease : at a land development cost level
- Relatively low price in Seoul Metropolitan Area
- Reduction or exemption of rental fees for public land

### ▪ Cash Grant

- Funds for the construction of facilities or the purchase of equipment related to the investment

### ▪ Tailor-made Incentive Package

- Developing tailor-made incentive packages for global anchor companies

Figure A.6 – Business incentives.

# International Companies

Automobile Industry

## Major Companies

Company	Business / Location	Investor
GM	Auto R&D and manufacturing /Bupyong, Incheon	
	Proving Ground /Cheongna, IFEZ	
LG Electronics	Electric Auto Parts R&D /Kyungseodong, Incheon	 LG Electronics
Mando-Hella Electronics	ECU(Electronic Control Unit) R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
Mando-Brose	Motor (Electric Power Steering) R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	 Technik für Automobile
BMW Group	Driving Center /Yeongjong, IFEZ	
Kyungshin	Auto parts(Engine, Control Harness) R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	 SUMITOMO ELECTRIC
Piolax	Auto parts(Open&Close Mechanism, Harness) R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	

Figure A.7 – Anchor companies: Automobile industry.

# International Companies

Bio-Medical Industry

## Major Companies



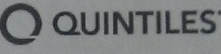

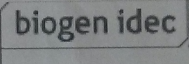
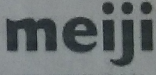
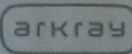
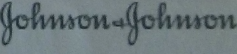

Company	Business / Location	Investor
 <b>Celltrion</b>	Bio Pharmaceutical(antibody bio-similar) R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	<b>TEMASEK HOLDINGS</b>
 <b>Samsung Biologics</b>	Bio Pharmaceutical(antibody cancer drug) R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
 <b>Samsung Bioepis</b>	Bio Pharmaceutical(antibody bio-similar) R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>Dong-a Pharm</b>	Bio Pharmaceutical R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	 明治製薬株式会社
<b>Ajinomoto Genexine</b>	Cell Media R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	おいしさ、そして、いのちへ。 Eat Well, Live Well. <b>AJINOMOTO.</b>
<b>i-Sens</b>	Blood Glucose Testing Device R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>Berna Biotech Korea</b>	Vaccine R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>Utah-Inha DDS</b>	Drug Delivery Systems and New Drug Tech Research Center /Songdo, IFEZ	 THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Figure A.8 – Anchor companies: Bio-medical industry.

# International Companies

IT & Aviation Industry

▪ Major Companies

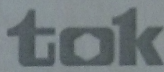



Company	Business / Location	Investor
<b>Amkor Tech. Korea</b>	Semiconductor Packaging/Test R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>TOK advanced materials</b>	Photoresist for Semiconductor R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>Kyobo-IBM Data Center</b>	IT Outsourcing, Electronic Information Processing and Server Hosting Services /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>Rittal</b>	Industrial Enclosures R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>Semikron Korea</b>	Industrial Inverters R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>Huned Technologies</b>	Communication & Data Link System R&D and Manufacturing /Songdo, IFEZ	
<b>Boeing</b>	Pilot Training Center /Yeongjong, IFEZ	
<b>Korean Air</b> <small>Excellence in Flight</small> <b>KOREAN AIR</b>	Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul Service for aircraft engine /Yeongjong, IFEZ	

Figure A.9 – Anchor companies: IT and aviation industries.

# Educational Institutions

Global Campus

## Major Universities

University	Program
 State Univ. of New York	Computer Science, Technology & Society, Quantitative Finance Certificate Program
 George Mason Univ.	Economics, Management, Global Affairs
 Ghent University	Bio Technology, Environmental Technology, Food Technology
 The Univ. of Utah	Social Work, Psychology, Communications

International Schools

## Major Schools



School	Location	Program
 CHADWICK INTERNATIONAL	Songdo, IFEZ	- World-class educational programs (WASC* accreditation ) - Kindergarten to grade 12
 Cheongna Dalton School	Cheongna, IFEZ	(K12) with advanced curriculums * WASC - Western Association of Schools and College

Figure A.10 – Anchor companies: educational institutions.