Negotiating the Polycentric City-region: Developmental State Politics of New Town Development in the Seoul Capital Region

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Abstract

This study seeks to distinguish patterns and processes of contemporary urbanisation in the east Asian context by investigating contemporary developments at the edge of the Seoul capital city over the past two decades. Through the analytical angle of local politics, the aim is to examine the nature, driving forces and outcomes of these new town developments in the context of South Korean urbanisation through the case of the Pangyo new town development. It is argued that a new form of governance with regard to city-region formation is gradually emerging, while the state still holds significant institutional power and policy tools in the context of new town development. This study utilises triangulation techniques that employ multiple methods of observations, such as interviewing (informal, formal and semi-formal), listening, document analysis and site visits.

1. Introduction

A prominent feature of urban landscapes in North America and western Europe is the emergence of post-suburbia, which involves new substantial developments at the edge of major cities. These developments—variously termed technoburbs (Fishman, 1987), edge cities (Garreau, 1992), edgeless cities (Lang, 2003), metroburbia (Knox, 2008) and post-suburbia (Phelps et al., 2010)—speak to new forms of settlements, urban issues and politics in city-regions. Many scholars have examined the diverse variations of this contemporary form of urbanisation, its implications for urban politics and governance, and its applicability in settings outside the US; however, there are comparatively few parallel studies covering east Asia.

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This study seeks to distinguish patterns and processes of contemporary urbanisation in the east Asian context by investigating contemporary developments at the edge of Seoul capital city, where 15 new towns characterised by large apartment and office complexes and gigantic malls have been built over the past two decades.\(^1\) In particular, through the analytical angle of local politics, we examine the nature, driving forces and outcomes of these new town developments in South Korean urbanisation through the case of the Pangyo new town development. A closer look at the contemporary Pangyo new development at the edge of Seoul can shed light on how it resembles or differs from the urban patterns and politics of contemporary urbanisation in North American and Western contexts.

The new town projects in the Seoul capital region have been planned by the state since the late 1980s for the purpose of supplying affordable housing in the Seoul metropolitan region, which has had chronic housing shortages caused by massive population inflows since industrialisation began. For the first five new town projects (1988–92), state investment companies, the Korea Land Development Corporation (KLDC) and the Korea National Housing Corporation (KNHC),\(^2\) dominated the development processes as the principal developers. After the 1997 financial crisis, however, not only did city and provincial governments and city corporations emerge as new developers, but multiple other actors, such as private construction companies, environment groups, citizens and civil organisations, demanded a role in housing construction.

The Pangyo new town development, which was planned and constructed in the period 2003–09, exemplifies a new form of governance arrangement, associated with the involvement of multiple actors in the development process and an associated fragmentation of consensus-making. The Pangyo new town development process reveals tensions that exist between pro-growth and environmental conservation groups, friction between the municipal and provincial governments and the central government (including dissenting opinions among various ministries) and conflicting interests among diverse actors in relation to deregulation. Based on empirical evidence arising from the Pangyo new town development, we argue that a new form of governance arrangement with regard to city-region formation is gradually emerging, while at the same time the state still holds significant institutional power and policy tools. We also examine the peculiar ‘publicness’ of the South Korean public sector, which embodies a particular kind of compromise with the private sector that is composed by building close relationships with agents within the private sector through formal and informal channels.

For a deeper understanding of the governance arrangement and politics of new town development, we focus on the single case study of the Pangyo new town development. Our approach builds on Massey’s (1991) understanding of place as characterised by both uniqueness and as having ties to more generalised processes; and Burawoy’s (1991) elaboration of the extended case method, which demonstrates how research can be relevant at a generalised level through the specification of “some particular feature of the social situation that requires explanation by reference to particular forces external to itself” (Burawoy, 1991, pp. 8–9). Thus, our purpose is not to argue that Pangyo’s specific experiences can be generalised to all other cities. Rather, we suggest that the case study of Pangyo is useful in the way that it sheds light on the workings of wider processes that constitute all places, while intersecting in unique ways in the context of each individual place.
For this case study, we utilised triangulation in order to reflect the multiple lines of sight as to the complex politics and partnerships among diverse actors involved in the new town development. We employed interviewing (formal, informal and semi-formal), document analysis and site visits. Twelve interviewees were selected from the public and voluntary sectors and the media. For the public sector, we focused on the staff of the Blue House (the South Korean presidential office), politicians in the Democratic Party, the majority political party under the Kim Dae Jung administration, and the Ministry of Construction and Transport, as well as members of governmental organisations such as the Korea Land Development Corporation (KLDC) and Korea National Housing Corporation (KNHC). University professors, a staff member from the Citizen’s Coalition for Economic Justice and a newspaper reporter were also interviewed. We chose interviewees based on whether they were considered to be leaders of or had influence in the process of the Pangyo new town development or were known by the public to have knowledge of the process. We also cross-checked stories from archives of government and media with the narratives of our interview subjects.

In section 2 of this paper, we review the debates on city-region developments from a comparative analytical angle. In section 3, we provide a historical analysis of the role of the developmental state in South Korean new town developments. Next, in section 4, we examine the Pangyo new town development and analyse the main issues and politics arising from the development. Lastly, we conclude with the theoretical and policy implications arising from the Pangyo new town development.

2. City-region Developments and the New Urban Politics: A Comparative Analysis

The process of suburbanisation, with its conspicuous consumption, a reliance upon the private automobile, upward mobility, the separation of the family into nuclear units, the widening division between work and leisure, and a tendency towards racial and economic exclusiveness (Jackson, 1985, p. 4) became the American mode of urbanisation in the 20th century. As part of the process, the Chicago School’s modern metropolis came to be invested with a clear divide between the city and suburbs as a form of settlement space. The ideological content of suburbia has been assumed to be connected to the pursuit of personal and economic freedom and escape from the city. However, more recently, these characteristics have been contrasted with the patterns of post-modern urbanisation that characterise Los Angeles (Dear, 2002). The spatial forms of post-suburbia in Los Angeles are far removed from the conventional divide between city and suburb and instead are a mixture of land uses in an extended and polycentric metropolitan area (Phelps et al., 2009). The Los Angeles case demonstrates a greater role for organised business interests in post-suburban than in suburban politics and political coalitions that are much more complicated and fragmented as a result of ideological, cultural and political ‘hybridisation’ (Dear and Dahmann, 2008). With a history of local initiative and local private-sector involvement, the politics of the Los Angeles suburb developments evolved from growth machine politics to a more fractured growth politics. The process of fragmentation of growth coalitions was begun by the
private sector, which threatened public-sector planning and injected the private sector’s entrepreneurial norms. At the same time, the emergence of anti-growth groups as a result of new concerns over the social and environmental limits of growth made a focus on growth increasingly ambiguous (Fulton, 1997). Social consensus on urban growth became harder to achieve; pro-growth coalitions also became increasingly complicated as a result of the greater number and range of participants.

These trends towards post-suburbia are dominant in North America and the UK and are also present in most city-regions in continental Europe. Los Angeles, in particular, has been so influential that Milton Keynes has been termed ‘the Little Los Angeles in North Buckinghamshire’ (Clapson, 2004). Although Los Angeles has been regarded as a prototype of post-suburbia, the specific patterns, characteristics and politics of post-suburbia are quite different in other city-region contexts. Post-suburbia in continental Europe is developing closer to and in more interrelated fashion with traditional core cities of city-regions by intensifying the space use within the boundaries of existing, functional urban regions. Moreover, since the mid 1980s, the core cities of these countries have dramatically recovered. The most recent city-region trends in continental Europe involve a parallel growth of city centres and post-suburbia (Bontje and Burdack, 2009).

Extended metropolitan areas or mega urban regions have also developed in Asia, but these are quite different morphologically and politically from their Western counterparts in the US and UK contexts. As McGee’s conceptualisation of the desakota region indicates, Asia’s sprawling urban settlements, which combine the village (desa) and city (kota), are quite unique. They display a mixed rural/urban character, which demonstrates that the growth of mega urban regions is not always accompanied by processes of economic development and industrialisation. Hence, inevitable conflicts between urban élites and rural masses and growing urban-based centralism and authoritarianism arise among the populations that compose these extended metropolitan areas (McGee, 1991; McGee and Robinson, 1995). To date, suburbanisation has been muted in Asia and it has been associated with low-income rather than higher-income groups (Laquian, 2005). Another feature of the Asian mega urban regions is that the core cities still remain the primate city centres (McGee, 1991; Douglass, 2000). These core cities are thriving in Asia, providing the primate city functions of finance, corporate and producer service functions. Although Asian mega urban regions share these characteristics, they are not uniform and can be divided into several types, such as technologically advanced east Asian cities, the mega cities of China, primate cities of south-east Asia and south Asian cities (Laquian, 2005).

The technologically advanced east Asian cities, such as Tokyo and Seoul, have relatively well-defined administrative and political jurisdictions encompassing highly urbanised areas and have experienced substantial economic growth (Laquian, 2005). They are themselves manifestations of economic, social, cultural and political dominance. Through this centripetal force, statist systems of land and housing development, stronger national political organisations and more extensive national land use policies are more distinctive in the development processes of these east Asian mega cities (Bae and Sellers, 2007; Laquian, 2005). Among them, in particular, the Seoul mega urban region has been developed under the centralised governance system, whereby the central government holds the effective power to make policies and local governments merely implement central decisions in urban developments (Kim, 1999). This centralised system was developed under the developmental state, which uses.
public funding, planning and goal setting as the means to achieve national economic development (Johnson, 1982; Wade, 1990; Amsden, 1989; Hill and Kim, 2000). In this system, local units were substantially involved in the implementation of planning, but local governments did not have independent power to make regional development plans and were not significantly involved in making decisions regarding urban planning. In this system, civil society had no place in the policy-making process.

The centralised model of city-region governance has, however, been challenged in the age of globalisation. In particular, after the Asian economic crisis of 1997, both the private sector and local governments began to demand the elimination or significant reduction of regulations governing land use and development in order to enhance the international competitiveness of Korean cities (Lee, 1998; Kim, 1999). In addition, citizens, who had been affected by various government land-related policies, began to demand that their property rights be restored. Among neo-liberal reformers, deregulation was believed to be the solution for all the ills created by past government intervention (Kim, 1999). In this milieu of globalisation, devolution and privatisation, new governance arrangements for the city-region evolved in South Korea and the contemporary new town developments at the edge of Seoul capital city were created.

This brief comparative discussion presents the distinctiveness of the South Korean case, while acknowledging some similarities with recent politics and governance of the city-regions in North America, Europe and Asia, such as the involvement of the private sector in city-region politics, the emergence of diverse actors involved and fragmentation in consensus building. With regard to these tendencies, three main themes of new town development emerge out of these changing governance arrangements.

The first of these is tension over growth versus conservation. There is a general tension that has emerged as a product of new urbanisation in many places. This tension is shown clearly in the case of Los Angeles. As Teaford (1997) says, the tension is between suburban ideals including notions of small village life with abundant green space, and new economic realities in the outer suburbs that have to accommodate growing populations and rising costs. It represents a change in suburban ideology and is arguably the kind of political tension that can emerge in many settings. This kind of tension has existed around South Korean urbanisation policies for the Seoul city-region. The driving-force of the policies has swayed between environmental preservation through greenbelt and growth through new town development. As the nation and the state have been increasingly exposed to processes of globalisation, devolution and privatisation, the local government and the private sector that are in favour of local growth have become more actively involved in the growth politics of city-regions.

Secondly, tension over questions about the density and morphology of new town development is quite common in city-regions across the globe; this tension, however, manifests itself very differently in the technologically advanced east Asian city-region. The tension is mediated primarily by the market in the Western context, while it is still mediated via the state in the east Asian developmental state context. Since the centripetal force of the capital region is still powerful and the demand for development is quite strong, pro-growth groups (who are in favour of high density) and environmental groups (in favour of low density) are sharply divided over the issue of density and morphology in new town development. In the context of changing governance arrangements, the state’s role as a mediator has forced it into greater
engagement and negotiation with civic groups and the private sector.

Thirdly, there is also tension over the degree of self-containment of new town development on the fringes of larger metropolitan areas. The planning orthodoxy of new towns traditionally has stressed self-containment, but in reality new towns on the edge of metropolitan areas often turn out to function as satellites. In the US, new towns have been less important to the accommodation of new population growth than in Asia, and new town growth there has appeared more spontaneously as a result of private-sector forces promoting outer suburban and edge city development (Aldridge, 1979). In theory, the carefully planned accommodation of growth in the planning of new towns should have produced self-contained and less dysfunctional settlements than those that arise spontaneously. However, if new towns remain as dormitory settlements to serve the greater city-region at the outset, they cannot ensure self-containment. In the context of changing governance arrangements, local governments and civil groups are able to and often do raise this issue of the degree of self-containment.

3. Historical Analysis of New Town Development in South Korea

South Korean urbanisation has been shaped by state-led land and housing developments. The state has shaped the characteristics of the Seoul city-region through new town projects. The Seoul city-region (Seoul, Incheon and Gyeonggi province) has been strictly regulated and managed by the state government based on the Capital Region Management Law, which was enacted in 1984. To reach a better understanding of the historical context of new town projects, and the strength of state power within these projects, we need to trace a history of government involvement in land and housing development back to the beginning of South Korean industrialisation, in the early 1960s.

3.1 State-led Land and Housing Development under the Developmental State

A distinctive characteristic of the South Korean land and housing development is extensive state involvement. Large land and housing development projects are virtually monopolised by the public sector (Grange and Jung, 2004; Kim and Kim, 2000). The state’s involvement in these development projects has been justified by the legacy of the developmental state because it considered land and housing as public goods.

The South Korean state was a developmental state with autonomous power during the state-led industrialisation periods of the 1960s and 1970s. The power and autonomy of the developmental state was based on the weakness of other classes and institutions. The developmental state created a huge public sector during the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation that accelerated after 1960. To pursue and implement its industrialisation and urbanisation projects, the state needed a large amount of land, thus enacting the Land Expropriation Act in 1962. Based on this act, the state was able to wield expropriation power very widely for ‘public projects’ (Kim and Ahn, 2002), using this power to access and use land for industrial and urban development projects. Unlike in most developed market economies, which greatly restrict state expropriation of land, the developmental state was able to expropriate land not only for industrial development but also for commercial residential development in South Korea.

To control the allocation of land and housing effectively, the state also rationed
land through public or quasi-public mechanisms in order to sustain state-owned companies (Kim and Ahn, 2002). The state set up the Korea Land Development Corporation (KLDC), which has the power to expropriate private lands and develop them into construction sites that were then sold to public and private builders. For public housing construction, the state established the Korea National Housing Corporation (KNHC). Both KLDC and KNHC monopolised land and housing development projects (gains), while the private sector was excluded from the land development process and restricted to housing and infrastructure construction. Thus, the purpose of this institutional structure was to prevent the private sector and private developers from collecting large windfall profits.

During the state-led industrialisation period of the 1960s–1970s, the state’s priority was industrial development, implemented under the slogan, “Growth first and distribution second”. For industrial land development, the state heavily relied on the Land Expropriation Act. However, because the state could not afford compensation for the expropriated land due to steeply rising land prices, the state enacted the National Land Use and Management Act in 1972. This act introduced the basic land prices system, which aimed to promote land use by maintaining a controlled level of land prices. These so-called basic land prices were much lower than market prices (sometimes only one-tenth of market value) (Kim and Ahn, 2002). Between 1975 and 2001, the government established a two-tier land expropriation system: contract-based land acquisition by agreement and compulsory expropriation procedures. Land that could not be acquired by mutual agreement was subject to compulsory purchase according to compulsory expropriation procedures.

Due to its emphasis on industrial development, the state paid little attention to land development for residential use in the early stages of industrialisation; that is, until housing shortages arose. As the state faced chronic housing shortages and unaffordable rising housing prices, it began to focus on developing land for residential use. For this, the state enacted the Land Readjustment (LR) Act in 1966 and pursued LR projects for urban development during the 1960s and 1970s (Grange and Jung, 2004).

The state replaced LR projects with public management development (PMD) projects because housing speculation was rife in the big cities. The state enacted the Residential Site Development Promotion Act in 1980 and prohibited the use of LR in big cities, such as Seoul and Pusan, beginning in 1984 (Grange and Jung, 2004). The act permitted not only the purchase of land in project areas from landowners at appraised prices (usually below market prices) for site formation purposes and resale to private residential developers, but also compulsory expropriation procedures. Since the 1980s, PMD has become the basic tool for developing residential sites for housing and infrastructure. The private sector was granted permission to conduct PMD projects in 2000 (Grange and Jung, 2004).

Throughout the evolution of housing development processes, the state has directly regulated the housing markets through various tools. Price controls on new apartments and the advanced sale system have been the key elements of the state’s regulation tools (Kim and Kim, 2000). To control the price of new apartments, for example, in the late 1970s the state introduced price limits for newly built apartment units. Due to these price limits, private developments could not maximise development profits. On the other hand, house buyers benefited from these apartment price controls because they guaranteed low construction costs and subsidised sales prices. Through this system, buyers enjoyed gains made from the difference
between the prices that existed due to rent control, versus prices that would have been much higher in an open market.

For the financing of housing construction, the state did not end up having to enlarge public funds, instead taking another tack: the introduction of the advanced sale system. Instead, home buyers had to pay in advance for their apartments in instalments before taking occupancy. Based on this advanced sale system, the home buyers had to pay 20 per cent of the whole purchase price when signing a sale-purchase contract with the construction company and then pay another 60 per cent of the purchase price in three-monthly instalments while the housing unit’s construction was in progress. The remaining 20 per cent was to be paid when the apartment was ready to be occupied. Thus, private savings became the main source of construction finance and enabled the state to make land available at no cost to itself.

Although the state monopolised land development, it did sell building sites to public and private construction companies for housing construction. The private sector became involved in housing construction, especially new apartment construction. To maximise their profits in housing construction, construction companies and private developers continued to lobby for the removal of price controls and regulations on the size distribution of apartments. To promote housing supply on a massive scale, the state built up close relationships with construction companies, especially those run by the chaebol, the South Korean conglomerates (Park, 1998; Kim and Ahn, 2002). Although large land and housing development projects have been consistently dominated by the public sector in South Korea’s post-war era, the private sector has nonetheless enjoyed windfall profits due to its close relationship with the state. Thus, the state’s housing policies embody a particular kind of compromise between a market and a state-controlled approach.

### 3.2 Democratisation, Financial Crisis and the New Town Development Projects

With democratisation in the late 1980s, the Korean people began to raise critical questions about housing shortages and land and housing speculation, and the state began to pay attention. The housing system became a political target in the late 1980s. The state rarely regarded housing as a component of a social welfare system but attempted to meet Koreans’ housing needs in order to appease the dissatisfaction of the urban population. To avoid public dissatisfaction, the state under the Roh Tae Woo government (1988–93) pursued the first new town development project, which resulted in the construction of 2 million housing units in five years (1988–92) in the capital metropolitan region.

The main aims of the project were to stabilise housing prices, increase housing supply and promote equity between various social classes. The five first-generation new towns were constructed within a 25-kilometre radius of Seoul’s city centre: Bundang, Ilsan, Pyeongchon, Sanbon and Jungdong (see Table 1 for details). The public sector built 900,000 dwelling units (45 per cent) and the private sector built 1.1 million dwelling units (55 per cent) (Chu, 2000). The 2 million unit target was achieved one year ahead of the schedule owing to the strong will of the state.

Private-sector involvement in the housing development processes increased significantly in the 1990s. In particular, the Asian financial crisis accelerated processes of deregulation and marketisation, with both land and housing development becoming more market-oriented. During the crisis, many financially weak construction
companies went bankrupt, many apartment blocks under construction were left unfinished and many newly built apartment units went unsold. In this context, the private sector and local governments demanded more deregulation of land use and planning (Kim, 1999). They strongly criticised the national state’s involvement in housing development, characterising it as over-regulatory and overplanned. They claimed that high land prices could be attributed to policy failures by the central government, including the tight land supply policies imposed by strict planning schemes, such as the greenbelt policy and decrees regulating the Seoul capital region based on the Capital Region Management Law. As land prices as well as the criticisms by private developers soared, the state abolished eligibility conditions for people applying for newly built apartment units and price controls on newly built apartment units. Furthermore, the state removed a ban that had been implemented on resale within a specified time-period for recently purchased apartment units. The state also deregulated greenbelts, where previously construction activities had been prohibited. These greenbelt restrictions were eliminated for the sake of the construction of 10 more new town projects, the second generation of projects (Figure 1; Table 2). Unlike predications made by private developers, the deregulation of greenbelt areas and the Capital Region Management Law unfortunately resulted in more explosions of land prices.

Overall, the state ended up stimulating speculation on land and apartments through new town construction—which was one method by which the economy was boosted as a whole. The general tendency in government policy after the 1997 crisis was deregulation and marketisation. As a result, a few years after the financial crisis, capital became concentrated in the stock and real estate market, and the price of stock and real estate began to rise. The rising tide of housing speculation, the skyrocketing price of land and housing units, and unearned land-based incomes of large companies and the wealthy threatened the legitimacy of the state under the Roh government (2003–08). The Roh government seriously reconsidered the ‘publicness’ of the Panyo new town development.

4. Pangyo New Town Development

New town development has been at the centre of growth politics since its inception in South Korea, because it made an enormous impact on the housing market, transport and the environment. The Pangyo case in particular has involved all of the issues that have erupted in the 30-year history of new town policies in South Korea (Jung Ang Sunday Newspaper, 2009). The development
witnessed the rise of different interest groups from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

4.1 (Re)articulating the Pangyo New Town Development

The location of Pangyo was one of the reasons that made the Pangyo new town development a ‘hot’ issue. It is located between Seoul and Bundang; it was and is understood to have a beneficial location as it is closer to Seoul. Pangyo’s proximity to Seoul has made it an attractive candidate for real estate development for a long time. However, any development within 66.8 square kilometres of the Pangyo area was restricted until 2001 from being developed since it was designated as part of the Nam Dan Green Area by the central government in May 1976. Although the legal basis of the government’s designation was weak because it was not a greenbelt but a green area, it was possible because the power of the military president, Park Jung Hee, was

Figure 1. New towns in the Seoul metropolitan area.
enormous at that time. The planned end of the restriction was 2001, so this situation made the diverse actors involved plan with regard to the future of Pangyo in various ways. The city of Sungnam, where Pangyo geographically belongs, initiated a development plan for the area in 1999. The Ministry of Construction and Transport (MCT) and the Democratic Party, which had cooperative relations with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), suggested in 2000 to take a year to make a decision on what to do about the Pangyo area after the Green Area restriction ended. Development was approved in 2001.

Four participants were officially involved in the development, in addition to the MCT, which led the whole process. The participants were Gyeonggi province, the city of Sungnam, the KLDC and the KNHC. Ultimately, it was decided that each of these four participants would be responsible for

### Table 2. The 10 second generation new towns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size (square km)</th>
<th>Planned population</th>
<th>Housing units</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Developer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pangyo</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>88 000</td>
<td>29 000</td>
<td>2003–09 Gyeonggi province\ Seongnam city\ KLDC\ KNHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dontan 1</td>
<td>9.03</td>
<td>124 000</td>
<td>41 000</td>
<td>2001–08 KLDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dontan 2</td>
<td>23.97</td>
<td>282 000</td>
<td>113 000</td>
<td>2008–15 Gyeonggi Urban Innovation corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimpo-hangang</td>
<td>11.73</td>
<td>160 000</td>
<td>57 000</td>
<td>2006–12 KLDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paju</td>
<td>16.48</td>
<td>217 000</td>
<td>80 000</td>
<td>2003–13 Paju city\ KNHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GwangGyo</td>
<td>11.28</td>
<td>78 000</td>
<td>31 000</td>
<td>2005–11 Gyeonggi province\ Suwon city\ Yongin city\ Gyeonggi Urban Innovation corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yangjoo</td>
<td>11.42</td>
<td>157 000</td>
<td>59 000</td>
<td>2007–13 KLDC\ KNHC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirye</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>115 000</td>
<td>46 000</td>
<td>2008–14 KLDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goduck</td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>136 000</td>
<td>54 000</td>
<td>2007–13 Gyeonggi province\ KLDC\ Gyeonggi Urban Innovation Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incheon Geomdan</td>
<td>11.24</td>
<td>177 000</td>
<td>66 000</td>
<td>2008–14 Incheon city\ KLDC\ Incheon Urban Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

one piece of a total of three divided pieces of the Pangyo area.

This result was not easy to come to and was not uncontroversial. Some of the interviewees for this study said that it was a political decision to get these particular four involved. As for issues in coming up with how to allocate responsibility, a staff member at the central government said:

There were many problems. Everyone wanted to have a good portion and pay little. We had three options. First, doing the development together … Second, each one be allocated with a certain portion of the land for development. Working together needed the creation of another agency, which the city of Sungnam could not afford. Another problem was how to form the committee. Everybody had an opinion but remained quiet. I met them separately and realised that everyone was for the land division … I suggested that each should pay for the development price, with the development profit to be returned to the area … We discussed for two days in a hotel until we achieved consensus (former staff member, central government agency for Pangyo development, 5 January 2009).

This statement demonstrates the complicated negotiating process involved in growth politics. Compromises were made under which each key stakeholder had its own boundary to develop, rather than integrating different perspectives. The tension among the participants was sometimes so high that voices were raised at the negotiation tables (politician, political party, 31 December 2008). Such dynamic growth politics prolonged the timeline and brought about revisions to the plan. Finally, the decisions on the different roles among the four participants were made. The role of...
the KLDC was decided to be to prepare land for the development by buying it from previous owners. The KNHC would be involved in actual construction, as a developer, along with private developers. As each of the four participants had a different approach for the future of Pangyo, an agreement was made that the land be divided among the four so that each could develop the designated land in its own way. The KLDC established the basic plan and developed 50 per cent, the KNHC 30 per cent and the city of Sungnam 20 per cent. In terms of the number of housing units, the KNHC provided about 18 000 household units, while the KLDC provided the rest. The division among the four participants was a result of complicated conflicts of interest, conflicts which would eventually cause 11 revisions to the development plan over the years 2001–08. The major changes are summarised in Table 3.

### 4.2 The Politics of the Pangyo New Town Development

As diverse actors emerged in the process of the Pangyo new town development, interest-groups were fragmented and diversified over the following three issues: growth politics, density and self-sustainability. Each issue was debated and aroused tension among different interest-groups. The power relationships that existed between the groups influenced the political discourse.

#### Tension over growth versus conservation

The Pangyo case shows the struggle between the pressure for development and the reluctance to continue development that increasingly resulted in fragmentation of interest-groups. Basically, growth politics pitted pro-growth groups who pursued big construction projects against anti-growth groups who preferred conservation and public housing. However, the divided interests were much more complicated than those between the public and private sectors in the Korean context. Some public-sector groups, such as the MCT and local governments, advocated growth in close relationship with the private sector. They wanted to construct more (high-density) housing units for the purposes of growth. The Ministry of Environment (ME), the Blue House and the National Assembly approached Pangyo differently, as they had other concerns: they preferred low-density growth for the sake of environmental preservation.

Private developers have clearly been supportive of new town development. Although

### Table 3. Major changes in the Pangyo new town development plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Population (units)</th>
<th>Households (units)</th>
<th>Population density (people per hectare)</th>
<th>Total land (square metres)</th>
<th>Public housing (units)</th>
<th>Industrial land (square metres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001b</td>
<td>59 100</td>
<td>19 700</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9 315 000</td>
<td>5 940</td>
<td>165 000 (1.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003c</td>
<td>89 100</td>
<td>29 700</td>
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<td>2005d</td>
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<td>2008e</td>
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*aPercentages are shown in parentheses.
Sources:
bMCT (2001); Gyeonggi Province et al. (2003).
cMLTMA (2004).
dJung Ang Sunday Newspaper (2009).
eMLTMA (2008).
their participation and influence did not appear explicitly, some interviewees pointed out that they shared an ideological goal towards land development with the MCT. There has been lobbying by private developers of governmental officials and politicians: private developers have tried very hard, for instance, to lobby the MCT to remove price controls in their own interests (politician, political party, 31 December 2008).

Throughout the development of Pangyo, official and unofficial meetings between government officials and members of the private sector have been held frequently. Private developer associations such as the Housing Association and Land Association have held regular meetings with MCT staff members, so official channels to the MCT have developed and remain open to private developers’ associations. To serve as a bridge between the public and private sectors, for instance, the Housing Association and Land Association established the Korea Housing Institute (KHI) and the Construction and Economy Research Institute of Korea (CERIK) in 1995, under MCT authorisation dating to 1994. Informal, but crucial, collaborations also exist. It is quite common for the private-sector associations and research institutes to recruit those who used to work in the ministry. The relationship is close to the point that central government officials regard the private associations and research institutes as a place for themselves to go after retirement (reporter, media, 26 February 2009). These associations and institutes create new positions for retiring officials. In this context, there is no tradition of ideological bias against public–private interpenetration and the government and industry share overriding interests. Overall, the official and unofficial meetings give the MCT latitude to discuss problems, work out differences and build consensus with the private sector. These meetings show the intimacy of interaction between the private sector and the MCT and indirectly demonstrate that bribery and corruption are widespread in the construction process of new towns at all levels of governments in South Korea.7

Within the public sector, the MCT has been the leading growth participant, in collaboration with private developers. In addition, semi-governmental agencies, such as KLDC and KNHC, as well as local governments, have been on the side of pro-growth. They argue that new town development is necessary in order to resolve housing problems by providing more housing. The MCT in the central government was commonly said by interviewees to have significant power over new town development. A former staff member in the ministry explained the active role of the MCT

We [MCT] lead the whole process. The Ministry of Environment is passive, the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Agriculture also only respond rather than lead... We fight with everyone and persuade the media, the National Assembly and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. The city of Sungnam and the Gyeonggi province are all passively playing their roles. The leading body is the Ministry of Construction and Transport. ... The Blue House looks at the whole and helps (former staff member, central government agency for Pangyo development, 5 January 2009).

Although the MCT has been a strong leader of the pro-growth effort, its own voice has sometimes not been united, according to another interviewee (former official, MCT, 7 January 2009). The MCT itself is constituted by a number of internal bodies. These include the Land Bureau, which develops land, and the Housing Bureau, which is concerned about housing prices; these groups supported the Pangyo development. They also include the National Planning Bureau and the City Bureau which, in contrast,
argued that Pangyo should be sustained and protected for future generations. The conflict between the two results from the peculiar public nature of the MCT, which plays two, ambivalent, roles, as a public developer (institutionalised as the Land and Housing departments) and a public regulator (the National Planning Department and the City Department), thus making the decision-making process complicated.

Other dynamics, outside the MCT, included strong criticism about the development of Pangyo from civil society, criticisms supported by the Democratic Party. In this conflicting context, members of the Planning and Management Office of the MCT were asked to mediate the conflict and they attempted to convince participants that an environmentally friendly development could satisfy both needs. Nevertheless, the MCT as a whole was motivated to promote economic growth and the housing supply for the future, so they took the pro-growth side. This demonstrates another aspect of the peculiar publicness of the MCT, in that it is a public organisation, but one which represents its own organisational interest rather than the public interest.

The media’s role in growth politics deserves attention because it has played a role as a bridge between the MCT and private developers. One respondent, a reporter in the media, highlights the role of the media as a mediator

The government always tries to contact the media … the private companies and the government meet with reporters informally and separately. Sometimes reporters request a meeting for information-seeking or sometimes staff in the government request the meeting (reporter, media, 26 February 2009).

Another former official in the MCT confirmed that 80 per cent of his weekend schedule was arranged for meetings with media people because it was very important to be supported by them. The same reporters regularly visit the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs and private developers, so they end up playing the role of messenger between private and public groups (reporter, media, 26 February 2009). Our reporter interviewee said

By going to both, in Pangyo’s case, we pass messages of the market to the Ministry of Construction and Transport. In fact, they know what the market wants better than anyone else … The private developers’ needs are regularly passed on through to the associations.

One of the reasons why the media are considered to have a friendly relationship with private real estate developers is that apartment advertising contributes to advertising profit more than any other advertising (Daein Sun, 2005). Conservative newspapers are a particularly preferred method for housing advertising because it is known that people get information on housing from newspapers, an interview subject in the media said. Private developers lobby newspaper reporters. The media are a vehicle to reinforce the peculiar publicness of the MCT.

The Korea Land Development Corporation (KLDC) was also keen on developing a new town, according to an interviewee (staff member, Korean Research Institute for Human Settlement, 2 January 2009), because it was a good way to sustain itself and its 3000 employees. Another interview subject who works at the KLDC stated

The Korea Land Development Corporation’s role was to provide a logic why a development is needed for this area managing the whole project … We thought that we can argue that, by planning a new town, we could
provide roads and railways with the development profit ... Basically, we support and implement policy decisions (staff member KLDC, 20 January 2009).

These pro-growth participants are ideologically buttressed by the KHI and the CERIK, which were founded by the private developers’ associations, such as the Construction Association of Korea and the Korea Housing Builders Association. The KHI and CERIK have provided the logic of why growth (housing supply) is inevitable in the Seoul metropolitan area.

Local governments (city-level governments) for development candidates are likely to belong to the pro-growth side. According to the Local Finance Law, the local governments make income by receiving acquisition and registration taxes, which come mainly from housing, not from industry (MPAS, 2010). The government of Gyeonggi province wanted deregulation of the Seoul metropolitan area, on the one hand, and autonomy for the development, on the other hand. The provincial government wanted to promote independent industry to promote autonomy for the development. Initially, for independent industry, it requested areas as large as 3 305 800 square metres for IT industry in Pangyo, but later one-fifth of this size was agreed.

On the anti-growth side, the ME, civic organisations and progressive scholars criticised private developers as well as governmental organisations for making enormous profits from new town developments. They also argued that, even if more housing units were provided in Pangyo, it would not reduce housing prices in Gangnam because the housing supply would stimulate more speculation in the area. Their activities challenged and pressured the MCT. Under the Kim Dae Jung administration (1998–2002), in particular, a number of people from civic organisations held positions in the central government, allowing them to make a strong challenge to the pro-growth side. As well, environmentalist organisations raised their voices against the development and motivated the Democratic Party to oppose the development (politician, political party, 30 December 2008; former official, Presidential Committee, 29 December 2008).

The ME played an important role in raising environmental issues within the central government, but its position in the power structure was weaker than the MCT. Environmentalists were strongly against the development in the beginning because there is a lot of humid green space in Pangyo which, from an ecological perspective, should be preserved. They also argued that low-income residents, who should be protected by housing policy, are at a relative disadvantage when the whole housing market gets stimulated. Environmentalists effectively pressured the Kim Dae Jung government (1998–2002) not to convert land use. Co-operation between academic professionals and civic organisations was witnessed also in 2000, something that is not likely to happen today. During the Kim administration and the subsequent Roh administration (2003–08), the Blue House listened to civic organisations, but the current Lee regime is much less interested in discussions with civil society groups (current professor and former researcher, Korean Research Institute of Human Settlement, 10 January 2009). Another interviewee who works in a civic organisation defined the Pangyo new town development as a failure of governmental real estate policy (staff member, Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice, 5 January 2009). He called the private developers along with the central government, politicians, conservative media and conservative scholars the “five culprits” of the corrupt construction economy.
Tension over density and morphology of development. Despite strong voices of opposition from the ME and environmentalists, the development was approved in 2001 by the MCT, which decided that 9.3 square km of Pangyo would be developed as a new town. The development area would include residential areas of 3 square km, industrial areas of 661,160 square metres, public infrastructure areas of 3.3 square km, green space of 2.2 square km, and commercial areas of 165,290 square metres (Gyeonggi Province et al., 2003). To address some of the concerns of anti-development groups, the pro-growth groups, especially the MCT, suggested a development strategy that would result in low density—64 people per hectare—and leaving plenty of green space, so as to make an environmentally friendly new town. Compared with the density of Bundang, at 198 people per hectare, and Gwachun, with 274 people per hectare (MCT, 2001), this indeed represented significantly lower density than previous new towns. The planned population for Pangyo was set at 59,100; and the total number of planned housing units at 19,700, including 3,400 single-family housing units, 1,800 attached housing units and 14,500 apartments. A former central government official confirmed the crucial role of the MCT in setting out these plans.

People in the Ministry of Construction and Transport first persuaded the Blue House … suggesting that Pangyo be developed in an environmentally friendly way (former official, Presidential Committee, 29 December 2008).

According to an interviewee in academia (university professor, 30 December 2008), the MCT agreed on the 64 persons per hectare figure in order to please the ME, without seriously considering any potential side-effects. However, the MCT realised later that development costs of residential sites in the context of this scheme were too high for them to be able to provide affordable housing. They asked the Korean Research Institute of Human Settlement (KRIHS), which is a national research agency for land use policy formulation, to develop a density plan. The KRIHS suggested that more small housing units should be provided and the advice was taken by the MCT, although there was disagreement about this within the ministry.

Based on KRIHS’ suggestion, the density plan was renegotiated between the MCT and the majority Democratic Party without the ME, and the MCT announced in 2003 that the density would go up to 96 people per hectare (representing a 150 per cent higher density). The number of housing units would also be increased, to 29,700, and the size of the industrial site was increased. The increased density and exclusive process caused serious conflicts between the MCT and the ME, and the ME refused to accept the adjusted plan. Civic organisations also submitted an opinion against the population density increase. The ME insisted that the 64 people per hectare plan be maintained and postponed a discussion on an environmental impact evaluation in order to hinder the process. The MCT was criticised by the Office for Government Policy Co-ordination for the conflict between the two ministries because it avoided negotiations with the ME at first, and tried to resolve the conflict only later. To find a solution, both ministries held a forum, invited environmental organisations and came to an agreement that the density should be adjusted, but set within 135 per cent of the original plan (86 people per hectare) and that more housing units should be given to low-income residents as public housing (Gyeonggi Province et al., 2003). It was also agreed that experts on environmental issues and environmental
organisations should be involved as consultants and monitor the implementation of the development plan. This shows that the tension over density was between civic groups and the MCT in collusion with the private sector, and the role of the civic group was crucial in resolving the tension.

It should be noted, however, that civic organisations’ arguments were ignored later in the process, as the development plan stimulated the real estate market. Beginning in March 2005, the real estate market of Bundang rose dramatically, and the housing market in Gangnam, which is the most affluent area of Seoul, faced a dramatic rise (an interview with a person in the media). Severe public criticism arose due to rising housing prices and speculation. The state, especially the president’s group in the Blue House, began to limit the private sector’s involvement; and the 31 August housing policy was released as a response in 2005. Conflicting interests appeared again as it was decided that the whole plan was to be remade. The MCT and private developers argued for an increase in big apartments, while the Blue House, the ME and civic organisations, such as the Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ), supported more public housing and small-sized apartments. According to a former presidential committee member, President Roh, by presidential decree, blocked the sale of apartment units by the private sector and reduced the share of the sale of apartment units by the private sector to prevent overheated competition for the units among buyers (former official, Presidential Committee, 29 December 2008). The initial plan was that the Korea Land Development Corporation would carry out advanced sales to private developers in June 2005, all at once. The shift was to a longer-term plan to divide the sale into four rounds over the next two years, with increases of public rental apartment units for the low-income bracket. For the latter, an additional 20,000 new apartment units were provided by presidential decree.

To prevent possible speculation on apartments in Pangyo, the president and his group imposed tighter measures to curb illegal transactions and increased the share of public housing units and small-sized apartment units. Eventually, 10,168 public apartment units and 24,191 private apartment units were provided. Among the 24,191 private units, small-sized units (below 60 square metres) numbered 403, medium-sized units (between 60–85 square metres) 7274 and large-sized units (over 85 square metres) 6343 (Byeon, 2005). The presidential group also introduced a new type of price control over all units below 85 square metres for low-income home buyers. The Blue House’s power was most visible in the Pangyo case. Stopping the whole process right before the sale and increasing the number of public housing units was something only the Blue House was able to do.

Due to the 31 August housing policy, the private sector’s profits became increasingly constrained. Before Pangyo, private developers could put their brands on the facades of the apartments that they built. However, after the 31 August housing policy, it was decided that only the brand name referring to apartments built through the regulation of the Korea National Housing Corporation, Humansia, was to appear. The development plan was then renegotiated by what became the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs (MLTMA) under the new Lee administration, replacing the old MCT. As a result of renegotiations, it was decided that both the brands of the Korean National Housing Corporation and the private developers would be placed on apartment façades. Before the 31 August policy, the private sector’s involvement was bigger (60 per
cent) than the public sector’s, but the public sector’s involvement increased after the policy (former official, Presidential Committee, 29 December 2008).

Although the Blue House returned to publicness by suggesting the 31 August policy, which supported the ME and the civic organisations, it was criticised by both the pro-growth and the anti-growth sides. A former staff member’s remark in the Blue House confirms this:

We [the Blue House] pondered what to do, being stuck between the two arguments, and were criticised by both sides (former official, Presidential Committee, 29 December 2009).

Tension over the degree of self-containment. Self-sustainability was a hot issue between local governments and the central government in the Pangyo new town case. Local governments, including Gyeonggi province government and the Sungnam city government, aimed to have self-sustaining business facilities, while the central government wanted to provide more housing units in order to stabilise real estate prices.

In spite of the long history of extensive developmental state involvement in land and housing development, the state began to devolve public land development and management to local governments, beginning in the 1990s. Because construction restrictions were set to expire at the end of 2001, Sungnam city called for a well-planned development in order to prohibit disorderly development. To ensure a well-planned development, Sungnam city designated some parts (694 hectares) of the Nam Dan Green Area as a residential development area, based on its basic city plan of 1998. Sungnam city submitted its original plan, which aimed to build an ‘eco-knowledge town’ in Pangyo, to the Gyeonggi province. However, Gyeonggi province gave it back to Sungnam city and took independent action to make Pangyo a ‘venture district’, which refers to an industrial park for venture business for future industry.

Although Sungnam city and Gyeonggi province disagreed on the size of the venture district, they shared a vision of self-sustaining business facilities to avoid Pangyo from becoming a ‘dormitory’ for Seoul. However, the MCT wanted to develop Pangyo as residential complexes so as to supply affordable houses, fight real estate inflation and stabilise the housing markets in the Seoul metropolitan area; and was less interested in a significant venture district than either Sungnam city or Gyeonggi province. The MCT argued for a venture district covering an area of only 100 000 pyeong (1 pyeong: 330 000 square metres) in its first plan, a steep drop from the suggestion made by Sungnam and Gyeonggi of a 1 million pyeong-sized district. In the revised plan between the MCT and Sungnam city, the venture district was reduced to 550 000 pyeong. Gyeonggi province reacted against the revised plan between the MCT and the Sungnam city government and argued for 733 000 pyeong as a venture district. The MCT finally allocated 200 000 pyeong as a venture district in the third version of the agreement after several negotiations with Gyeonggi province. This shows that local governments have emerged as significant actors in the land and housing development processes, but the state, especially the MCT, is still the crucial decision-maker based on its institutional power.

5. Conclusion

Through this case study of South Korean new town development, we have demonstrated that the emerging new towns in the
Seoul metropolitan area are developing closer to and are more interrelated with Seoul, without an accompanying deurbanisation of Seoul. Contemporary urbanisation processes in South Korea are still under state control and management due to the legacies of the developmental state, despite the strong tendency towards deregulation and marketisation after the 1997 crisis. The Korean case thus shows the unique nature of developmental state politics in urbanisation cases. Through the construction of multiple new towns, the polycentric city-region is forming under developmental state politics in the Seoul metropolitan region. These new towns in the polycentric city-region are in contrast to the modest suburbanisation associated with low-income groups in south-east Asia, as well as to suburban sprawl led by local governments and the private sector in the US and the UK.

Despite their seemingly clear differences, these cases demonstrate the emergence of increasingly complicated governance and politics in polycentric city-regions. In these cases, emerging new actors are involved in the politics of city-region development. They form a new governance structure of city-region development and discourse politics regarding various issues. It is not simply privatisation. Rather, it is a reflection of the struggles that the public sector, the private sector and the voluntary sector undergo in order to shape development according to each one’s aspirations. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to generalise concerning whether divergence or convergence is happening among different national contexts, apparent similarities may not be all that they seem; specific exploration of specific contexts would be necessary.

The framework of the shift from managerial to entrepreneurial modes of governance should also be reconsidered in the South Korean context. It would be fair to say that local governance has become entrepreneurial as a result of the emergence of entrepreneurial collaboration between the public sector and the private sector. However, it has not been caused by the public sector’s changing approach from managerial modes. Rather, it has been caused by the emergence of multiple actors taking on entrepreneurial modes. The public sector as dominated by the nation-state has continued to be rather aggressively pro-growth anyway, as the label of ‘developmental state’ indicates. The contemporary shift seen in the Pangyo case is that the private sector has been increasingly empowered to collaborate with the public sector, and even to work through the public sector. As local governments have emerged with the beginning of local elections, local governments have become empowered; they have become entrepreneurial. This entrepreneurialism has been promoted by neo-liberal responses to global or national environment changes. At the same time, criticism of the entrepreneurial approach has also increased, even within the public sector. Here, we suggest that critical questions of the entrepreneurial government (whether central or local) can be raised as a result of the public sector’s entrepreneurial collaboration with the private sector. This suggests the need for careful investigation of the micro and macro politics of city-region development.

Notes

1. Seoul offers an important source of insight into the process of new town development in contemporary Asia. The emerging new towns of the Seoul metropolitan area are developing closer to and are more inter-related with the capital without an accompanying de-urbanisation of central Seoul; other Asian core cities of city-regions also remain rather compact (McGee, 1991; Douglass, 2000; Laquian, 2005).

2. These two corporations were merged into the Korea Land and Housing Corporation in 2009.
3. Building on a post-colonial urbanism perspective (McFarlane, 2010; Ward, 2010), we take a critical approach to any attempt that uncritically accepts any urban area as replicating directly the urban spread and other experiences of Los Angeles. We argue that the experiences on the part of urban areas transferred from elsewhere are forged as complex politico-ideological hybrids derived from adaptations and negotiations between advocates and opponents of experiences being transferred from one local context to another. We attempt to build our analytical framework based on a post-colonial conception of the city in the Asian context. We examine the Los Angeles case as a reference to clarify how the Asian or South Korean case resembles or differs from it.

4. We do not intend to examine whether the current South Korean state is a developmental state in this paper. Yet, due to the developmental state legacy, the current state utilises many development state policy tools to regulate land development/use and housing development. Our aim is to investigate which state tools are still effective in new town development.

5. Refer to Chu (2000) about the first new town development project and Bae and Sellers (2007) about the growth politics that have emerged in Ilsan.

6. Transport was also a big issue in the Pangyo case and neighbouring cities such as Bundang and Seoul emerged as participants in relation to the transport issue because the construction of the Pangyo new town would influence their transport conditions. Residents in Bundang and the Seoul metropolitan government were against the Pangyo development because, as Pangyo is located between Seoul and Bundang, they would be likely to have more traffic jams. However, the tension over transport was solved easily once the Korea Land Development Corporation proposed a plan to construct high-level roads and extra roads so that there would be reduced impact on traffic conditions in both cities.

7. This is also supported by the fact that, between 1993 and 2005, 320 out of 584 bribery cases were related to construction and 64.2 per cent of the total arrests were for construction in South Korea (Citizens’ Coalition for Economic Justice, 2006).

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