
The Rise of Zone-Cities in East Asia: The Symbiosis or an Antinomy for Urban Development?

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Résumé

As a matter of fact, some city-regions have become as the engines which connect their situating national economic activities with the broader world economy in the current mosaic global economy, the Zone-city (Free Economy Zone (FEZ) and its city-region) becomes the key node for the host state to hold down the global spaces of flow. Among others, the New Songdo City in the Korean Incheon FEZ and the proposed Taoyuan Aerotropolis Project (TAP) in Taiwan are two well-noted examples. In these zone-cities, the urban facilities are bounded around the zone and the zone provides the entry point to global networks for the modern city, and the zone-city symbiosis has provided the fast "solution" with the imagination of disconnection with local problems of urbanization such as broken facilities and environmental chaos in the new East Asian urban contexts since the neoliberalization process accelerated after 2000. But, the zone-city is a term of antinomy. This case study of the TAP demonstrated that while the zone performs to separate from the contiguous areas with a designated exceptionalism, the city stages to connect with the world afar with a spontaneous encounter. The zone is planned and even pretended to be a liberal territory, the city is intrinsically a public space for social encounters. But it caused intense contradiction of the land expropriation and potential superexploitation of labor. Accordingly, the assemblage of the zone-city is a contradictory coexistence which is doomed to instability. But, instability does not necessarily lead to collapse, and stabilizers, such as the discourses and technologies of smart city, would be always called on to re-assemble the zone-cities to certain configuration of stability under certain situations of (geo)political economy.

Mots-Clés: Aerotropolis, Urban megaproject, the Global South, Zone, Cities, Land grabbing, labor superexploitation

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