GLOBALIZING THE CITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: UTOPIA ON THE URBAN EDGE – THE CASE OF PHU MY HUNG, SAIGON

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ABSTRACT

The accelerated urban transition now taking place in Southeast Asia focuses on a handful of mega-urban regions that are absorbing hundreds of thousands of people into their expanding urban sphere every year. The certainty of the continued rapid geographical expansion of urban landscapes into rural hinterlands is allowing for a particular global process that magnifies what is also happening in other parts of the world: the creation by international land developers of gigantic new towns presented as exclusive utopia for an emerging urban upper middle class. With vast areas of rural land soon to be absorbed into expanding metropolitan regions, these developers have what appears to be a clean slate for the construction of private new towns. Among the most ambitious is Saigon South covering 3,300 hectares of land and slated to be the home of one million people. Located just across the Doi Canal and Ben Luc River from central Saigon, this development scheme is totally planned with, no mechanism for community planning, no lower classes or slums. Although portrayed as a great advance for the people of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC, Saigon) metropolis, what and where its public spaces and civic life are questions without ready answers.

GLOBALIZING THE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In the peri-urban area to the south of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) a new urban complex is emerging in one of the largest urban land development schemes in the world. Phu My Hung (PMH, also known as Saigon South) covers 33 km² of land and is larger than the central districts of HCMC (Figure 1). It is purported by its Taiwanese developers to be "the answer to the need of HCMC's rapid population growth" (CT&D 2007: 1) through its intention to eventually be the home of one million people with 100,000–200,000 to be accommodated in the current phase. Containing a full range of shopping, recreation and global facilities, such as a branch of the already operating Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, it is also imagined to become a self-contained edge-city.
PMH is just one of a host of burgeoning urban mega-projects rising in the peri-urban areas of major Southeast Asian cities. Around HCMC alone, several other similar projects are appearing. The Thu Thiem development across the Saigon River to the east of central HCMC is a US$600 million mega-project slated for 130,000 people on 6 km\(^2\) of land that is to be phased in place over a 20-year period (Figure 2). Like PMH, it is gated and exclusively middle-class.

Figure 1. Master plan of PMH (Saigon South)

Source: PMHC (2004)

Figure 2. Thu Thiem new urban development area, HCMC

Source: Skyscrapercity (2007)
To the south just beyond PMH is Nah Be New Town, a Korean developer's urban venture modelled after its new towns in Korea that is slated for 68,000 residents, a hospital, schools, commercial complex, and airport. It is designed to be a "self-supporting city in southern HCMC". Initiated in 2007, it is to be completed by 2019. Further south is a massive industrial estate complex at Hiep Phouc. To the east, a Hong Kong company, the Chuang Group, is looking for an 18 hectare US$500 million residential project site (Luan 2007), and a New Zealand based company, Contue Jinwan Enterprise Group, is looking for a 300 hectare area for a new city development.

On the other side of HCMC about 30 km from the city center is one of the biggest new edge-city projects, North-West Metropolitan Area, for which designs are being made to turn agricultural land into "a modern ecological metropolitan area with the harmony of urban and social infrastructures" (Thanh Nien News 2007: 1). Initiated by a Malaysian firm and expected to cost US$3 billion, it is to have residential areas, an international university campus, trade-apartment-hotel complex, civic and administration zone, a river port, recreation parks, and sporting venues. Its area is as vast as 6,000 hectares in total with a width of 3–5 km, stretching some 18 km in length adjoining the Trans-Asia highway. Currently the area has 30,000 inhabitants who will be resettled to make room for the mega-project (TPC 2007). The population to be supported in the area when the project is completed is to be 300,000 (Investmentmart 2007).

With all of these projects, HCMC is steadily becoming a donut of mega-projects surrounding the existing city that will effectively occupy the city's potential paths of expansion in all directions (Figure 3). With no low-cost housing or, due to their private management and multiple gates, access for the vast majority of HCMC residents, it is like a moat in reverse that instead of preventing entry into HCMC, it prevents the masses in the city from exiting to obtain land and housing with the expanding urban field.

In northern Vietnam, Hanoi is also the focus of mega-projects transforming the city as it expands into its rural periphery. The most well-known is Ciputra, a huge US$2.1 billion scheme financed by an Indonesian Chinese developer whose personal name is given to this project (Figure 4). Well underway on 368 hectares filled with "Las Vegas" style architecture, it is located next to the city's magnificent West Lake. Ciputra includes 2,000 luxury houses, 50 blocks of high rise apartments, offices, golf course, hospital, shopping malls, a United Nations International School, diplomatic precinct, foreign investment center and other sports facilities in what is, like most of the other urban edge mega-projects, also billed as "a self-contained city" (PKG 2007).
Figure 3. Major edge-city and industrial zone project in peri-urban HCMC

Source: Authors; GS E&C (2007)

Figure 4. Ciputra Hanoi International City

To the southwest of Hanoi an even more ambitious An Khanh – Star World is underway by a Korean developer (Figure 5).\footnote{Korean developers in 2006 also began construction of the 70 story Landmark city mostly composed of two storey buildings.} At more than US$2 billion, it is to be built on 264 hectares of land only 15 km from Hanoi along a new highway. It is planned to have about 3,600 villas and condominiums plus shopping centers, public service facilities, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, and entertainment facilities (Phong 2006). Star World is to be the key hub for surrounding large-scale projects including tourism complexes, golf courses, the Village of Vietnam national cultures, Hoa Lac High-Technology Zone, and the National University. Consultants from Australia, Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore are working on its design. A total of 6,440 apartments and 1,300 villas will be constructed on the site. As with all other urban edge mega-projects, only a fraction, about US$100 million, will be invested by the developers, with the remainder to come from secondary investors, including global as well as local investors and house buyers.

![An Khanh – Star World, Hanoi](source: POSCO E&C (2006))

With only slightly more than half of the per capita income of Vietnam, Cambodia is now becoming the target of edge-city mega-projects as well.\footnote{In 2005, Vietnam had a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) adjusted GDP/capita of 620, placing in 145 in the world; Cambodia had a PPP of 380, ranking it 163 (World Bank 2007).} Camko City, indicating Cambodia-Korea joint development, is
underway on 120 hectares of land (Figure 6). Estimated to cost US$2 billion, it is a South Korean project on land reclamation from Boeung Kak Lake. It will include skyscrapers, high-rise condominiums, and glass-walled office towers that will stand high above the buildings of the capital city of today. Model houses and condominium units are already in place, and managers say that sales are brisk.

![Figure 6. Camko, Phnom Penh's "1st Global City" – Phase 1](image)

Source: Authors' photograph of Camko billboard, July 2007

In Indonesia, in the 1990s the extended metropolitan region of Jakarta was the locale for at least 25 edge-city projects in the Jakarta Metropolitan Area ranging from 500 to 30,000 hectares in size. Hundreds of small projects of less than 500 hectares were also undertaken (Firman 1997). The largest were built to accommodate more than one-half million people. Bumi Serpong Demai, Lippo City, Kota Wisata and Kota Legenda are but a few of them (Douglass 2007a). In Thailand, Bangkok, too, has experienced massive edge-city development from the 1990s, the most well-known of which is Muang Thong Thani (MTT), a US$2.5 billion edge-city that by 1996 had completed housing for 250,000 people and 8 million square feet of commercial space. With the 1997 financial collapse of the Thai economy, MTT became a ghost town of empty houses and buildings and remains so today (Douglass & Boonchuen 2006; Sutiprapa et al. 2007; Douglass 2007b).

Malaysia represents an interesting case of state-driven new towns that are so numerous that it has become a country "where utopian mega-projects, meant to wow the world, have become a cornerstone of nation building" (Gatsiouinis 2007: 1). Under Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahatir Mohamad, the government built a new capital city, Putrajaya, a would-be technopolis called the Multimedia Super Corridor and a host of transportation developments, including what was built as a regional hub airport for
Southeast Asia. More recently, the Sultan of Johor State announced that in 2006 the establishment of the "Iskandar (the Sultan's name) Development Region" (IDR), which although located in southern Peninsular Malaysia, is also a peri-urban area of Singapore (Figure 7) that has remained "surprisingly undeveloped" (OPM 2007). Despite this condition, its promoters say that at almost three times the land area of Singapore, it is "positioned to be an international city" that will become a hub of global corporate activity. As such, it expects that about 15 per cent of its population will be foreigners "with high skills and income".

![Figure 7. IDR, Johor, Malaysia](image)

**Source:** OPM (2007)

IDR is now enshrined in Malaysia's official national development plan. This not only changed the previous name from Southern Belt Economic Zone to IDR, but also heroically raised the levels of both government and private sector financing to new heights. Some US$1.5 billion in private sector financing is hoped for during the first five years (OPM 2007). Unlike the other edge-city mega-projects in Southeast Asia, the target for private investment is the Middle East rather than East and Southeast Asia. Malaysia's current Prime Minister likens it to Shenzen, China, which grew from a very small settlement to a city region of 4 million people in less than two decades from its founding as a low-wage extension of Hong Kong into China. Its promotional video states that it will offer "shopping as splendid as the grand bazaar in Istanbul" and "a beehive of activity at night where stars won't just be in the sky, but on the stage" (Gatsiounis 2007: 1).

The Philippines, too, has its share of edge-city mega-projects. Eastwood, designed as a "premier satellite city", is distinguished by its Mediterranean-inspired design (Megaworld Corporation 2007a). Ringed by about 20 high-rise corporate buildings and "exclusive" condominiums, its
centerpiece is called "City Walk". Global City in Fort Bonifacio has all the edge-city components: residential complexes, shopping malls, eateries, regional corporate headquarters, schools, and even some embassies such as Singapore's.

Several reasons can be put forth to explain why these mammoth projects are coming to the edge of cities in medium and lower income countries of the world (Flyvbjerg et al. 2003; Altshuler & Luberoff 2003):

• Technological breakthroughs in engineering, e.g., for very tall buildings.
• Institutional innovations in global financial systems to syndicate investment packages, including the globalization of law making the running of projects vastly easier from afar with lower transaction costs in all phases of project development.
• Rapid economic growth in countries experiencing a rapid urban transition, which invariably focuses on one or a few very large cities and results in very high rates of profit from converting rural to urban land as well as encourages speculative investment by buyers of land, housing and other elements of urban mega-projects.
• Emergence of a significantly large and affluent urban middle class desiring to "leap" out of the "poor" city of slums, environmental degradation, fear of crime and violence, desire for a high level of amenities.
• The advent of a new era of intercity competition for global investment leading to increasing explicit and implicit subsidies to investors to locate in a given city.
• Widespread adoption of neo-liberal policies leading, *inter alia*, to the privatization of public assets such as land.

Without trying to comprehensively list and describe the many other edge-city mega-projects that are planned or already underway in Southeast Asia today, the sample described above is sufficient to indicate that these projects have become powerful forces in shaping the ongoing urban transition in Southeast Asia. As such, exploring their impact on city life goes beyond assessing a single project; at a larger scale it is about the transformation of entire cities, including the meaning of the city itself. All of these projects have common features that are not just about physical
planning but also have a great deal to say about the type of society they envisage in the spaces they are producing. In emphasizing how they will create a new type of city and society, they join a long history of proposals about the city that are presented as grand solutions to existing urban ills and thus fit into the realm of utopian planning.

The concern of this paper is not technological miracles, global financing or intercity competition as a driver of urban development but is instead about their consequences for the production of urban space and its meaning for the future of core urban regions in Southeast Asia as they expand into their rural hinterlands. No room is given in these edge-city projects for the poor, the vernacular or a public sphere of governance. They are being wrapped in utopian visions of urban living that are intentionally and explicitly changing the idea of the big city from one of an inclusive Cosmopolis governed by its inhabitants through local municipal government to a fragmented ensemble of "privatopias" (McKenzie 1996; Harvey 2000) managed by corporations.

UTOPIA ON THE GLOBAL URBAN EDGE

Utopian visions of the city have a long tradition covering centuries and emanating from many parts of the world (Eaton 2001; Harvey 2000; Mazlish 2003; Kumar 2003; Shoshkes 2004). Modernist planning in the West had its origins in 19th century utopian socialist as it was filtered into such ideas as Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities of Tomorrow, which in addition to laying out principles of spatial design, justified public intervention in the making of cities for a higher common good than was being produced under the unbridled Industrial Revolution (Hall 2002; MacLeod & Ward 2002). With all its pretensions of expert knowledge, early 20th century utopianism spoke of a common good, popular governance, and of broader intentions to alleviate social problems (Mumford 1922; Turner 2003). By the mid-20th century, the realities of capitalist society had transformed Garden Cities into what Fishman termed "bourgeois utopia" where "suburbia represents a collective assertion of class wealth and privilege as impressive as any medieval castle" (Fishman 1987: 3). For many progressive and radical thinkers, utopia had become dystopia in the latter half of the 20th century (Harvey 2000: Alexander 2001).

Harvey (2000: 152) goes further than Fishman to identify two more recent types utopias that have relevance to Southeast Asia's new edge-cities. Both center on "the urban spectacle as a commodity". "Privatopia" is manifested in the "gated communities – ghettos of affluence that undermine
concepts of citizenship, social belonging, and mutual support". "Degenerate utopias" are likened to "Disneyland's supposedly happy, harmonious, and non-conflictual space set aside from the 'real' world 'outside', in such a way as to soothe and mollify, to entertain, to invent history and to cultivate a nostalgia for some mythical past, perpetuate the fetish of community culture rather than critique it" (Harvey 2000: 167). Shopping malls, "conceived of as a fantasy world in which the commodity reigned supreme" (Harvey 2000: 168), typify this category. These utopias comprise the "new urbanism" that is a "reification of a nostalgic community that quells chaos" by "exclusion favoring the affluent, inequality and larger missions of social change and civilization". They are also a far cry from the multicultural Cosmopolis that other contemporary writers put forth as their utopia (Sandercock 1998; Pinder 2002), although expatriates are more than welcome in Southeast Asia's edge cities if they are of the right class or represent global corporations. They also create private, gated enclaves in a manner that "undermines the very concept of civitas – organized community life" from which the word "city" is derived (Blakely 1997, cited in Platt 2001: 22).

In other terms, these utopias comprise not just replications of the suburbs of the mid-20th century; they are instead Southeast Asia's versions of what Knox (2005: 33), referring to contemporary America, calls "Vulgaria – the re-enchantment of suburbia":

They are landscapes of bigness and spectacle, characterized by packaged developments, simulated settings, and conspicuous consumption, and they have naturalized an ideology of competitive consumption, moral minimalism, and disengagement from notions of social justice and civil society.

Through their grand visions they present a vast new "hyper-city" that is consistently coded in the same way.

Global

One of the most consistent aspects of edge-city mega-projects is their appeal to and actual practices of going global. "Global" is invoked repeatedly along at least three dimensions:

• Global identity

Almost all of these projects invoke the term global (or equivalents such as "world" or "international"). For example, the Fort Bonifacio project is called
"Global City". Camko is put forth as Phnom Penh's first "Global City" (Figure 8). The Megaworld Corporation builds Eastwood Ciputra is officially labelled "International City". By appealing to global linkages, these projects reorient the identity of city away from its basis in the local culture, and indigenous production of space. In doing so, it serves to give legitimacy to global corporate production and control over these projects before, during and after their completion.

![Figure 8. Entrance to Camko construction site: "1st global city in Phnom Penh – New history is coming"](image)

**Global consumption**

As complete new towns, these projects typically include shopping centers/malls and more scattered convenience stores that are composed of global franchises, chain stores, and name-brand merchandise. None seems to be without a KFC, Loteria, Mos Burger, McDonald's, California Chicken or any number of global fast food franchises (Figure 9). Shopping malls have Euro-design clothing and accessories with posters of twice human scale of young women and men gazing provocatively down at shoppers or upward to a global stratosphere. Local food products are displaced by global canned and preserved goods in supermarkets. The relationship between edge-cities and global consumption is reciprocal. The projects are dependent on having these fast food and haute couture fashion, cosmetics, and accessories as a means of validating their global worth. At the same time, the shops require

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3 Residents of Ciputra, Hanoi, are unhappy with food and other prices, noting, for example, that "an ice cream is four times more than in other places" (Phong 2006: 1).
affluent consumers, the air-conditioned comfort of shopping malls, and a certain level of agglomeration with shops to become a shopping Mecca. Neither edge-city nor global retail consumption can do without the other.

Figure 9. Global franchise as local PMH eateries

New Urban Culture

• Modernity

The projects openly claim that their mission is to create a new urban culture. A major dimension of the new culture is "modernity", a slippery term that tends to suggest not only modern technology and the latest architecture but also ways in which people will act toward each other. As reflected in Vietnam's current national slogan that society should become "modern and civilized", intentions of people acting in a certain, though unspecified, way are implied in new urban culture slogans. For example, PMH developers declare that it "brings a modern and brand new lifestyle to people in Vietnam" (CT&D Group 2007). Not to be outdone, Korean developers of Na Bhe New Town south of PMH say that they will "introduce a new residential culture." Ciputra developers from Indonesia stress their intention to create a new urban society in its main gate (PKG 2007: 1) (see Figure 10):

The Main Gate to Ciputra Hanoi International City has been dubbed 'The Gate to a New Lifestyle'. The elaborate gate highlights the entrance to a new existence, connecting all those who pass under its arches into a new modern
living concept. The modifications of this gate, with its intricate detailing, and sixteen statues of horses taking flight, can be seen as a reflection of the community's transition to a modern urban lifestyle.

This gate is replicated in Ciputra's new project in India, Kolkata West International City, where residents will be "Living Life Completely" (Ciputra Group 2007: 1).

![Main Gate of Ciputra, Hanoi](image.png)

**Figure 10.** Main Gate of Ciputra, Hanoi

**New identities in hyperspaces with hyper-realities**

The shift toward new culture finds material expressions in the architecture and signage posted around the edge-city projects. In total they create hyperspaces of hyper-realities that have no reference to locality. Further, in de-territorializing place-making, the projects deftly subordinate aesthetics to commodity, community to global, and freedom to choose to corporate control by confusing and disorienting identities (Jameson 1991, 1998). Thus, to be modern and sophisticated means to be global. All the projects underscore their great pride in their motifs, landscaping and architectural styles they claim to have imported from other parts of the world. Eastwood's description of one of its "Grandiose Residences" is illustrative of the hyperbolic identity confusion (EPH 2005: 1):

> The Olympic Heights are three modern high-rise condominiums reminiscent of the sun kissed dwellings of the Grecian isles. Thirty-seven stories high, this magnificent residential work-of-art is an embodiment of true architectural craftsmanship – a blend of postmodern styled structures sitting on top of a classic grand Grecian podium.
Rather than draw from local urban traditions, Star World has ordained that "the principle of 'not reiterating any existing urban area in Hanoi'" will be followed (Phong 2006). Nha Be New Town in HCMC is touted as a "future-oriented Korean style town" (GS E&C 2007). Kota Wisata, built through a consortium of Japanese (Marubeni), Korean (LG Group), Thai (Land and Houses Public Company Limited) and Indonesian (Sinarmas) developers and finance arrangers in suburban Jakarta, consists of "five continents" of neighborhoods in the "City of Millions Enchantments". Each continent has six clusters, including themes touted as being from such cities as Kyoto, Marseilles, Orlando, Montreal and Beverly Hills (Kota Wisata 2007). Figure 11 shows the America complex entrance with cowboy, Indian fronting the Statue of Liberty. Mimicking other places and other cultures in the world, these projects have surprisingly little, if any, reference to local architectural styles and traditions.

Hyper-realities are magnified by the huge scales of buildings, housing, and signage that make all people feel small and inconsequential. The projects generally have the largest and tallest buildings. Housing areas is vast and appear even more so as each is filled with cookie cutter housing of the same type. Global corporate signage and billboards abound. Human interaction is dwarfed and visually marginalized by gigantic landscaping

Figure 11. "America" Sector of Kota Wisata, Jakarta – Statue of Liberty, Indian, Cowboy
schemes, buildings and commercial graphics. Star World, for example declares that its visual focus will be 70-storey twin towers with "tens of thousands of square meters for offices, trade centers, and high-grade apartments". More than one hundred 15- to 25-storey buildings will surround the twin towers – all next to a city, Hanoi, where the tallest buildings in the recent past were 4 or 5 stories. The intention is to impress its inhabitants and, equally, the world of global investors. It implicitly also seems to intend to justify corporate control and management through the grandeur of the built environment and the expert knowledge required for it to be realized and kept in good order.

Figure 12. "Sharing fond memories", "Strolling with the family" in "Your city", Eastwood City (Manila)

In attempts to appropriate local culture and values into global city ventures, Orwellian imagery is called upon to create new identities. Figure 12 shows posters on light poles throughout Eastwood's City Walk that tell visitors that, although this is a wholly private business operation full of global franchises and hired security guards, it is "your city" where you will make "fond memories" while "strolling with your family". The associated presentation on its website continues (Megaworld 2007b: 1):
The Eastwood City Walk is a leisure town of bars, restaurants and cafes. Destined to be the 'happening' place of the hip and fashionable, the Eastwood City Walk features an eclectic Mediterranean design theme with its salmon and blue landscape. Palm trees and ornate pottery line the main entrance … A new center of culture and entertainment, the City Walk is the perfect counterpoint to the work buzz in the neighbouring row of office buildings.

Private

Consisting of the prevailing worldwide wave of neo-liberal ideology and policy, which stress limited government and market-driven provision of goods and services, these edge-city projects extol the virtues of being "private" in at least three ways:

• Private ownership

Every aspect of these projects stresses private ownership of land and resources. Public space is exceptionally limited, and those areas that are landscaped to replicate common images of public space, such as open areas in shopping malls, are, in fact, privately owned and subject to private rather than public rules of access and use. Invoking private ownership allows owners and managers of these spaces to severely limit social uses both through lengthy documents of rules and regulations and by such landscape and design devices as having no benches for restful conversations or other spaces for people to gather. Ciputra proudly explains how its parent operation in Indonesia long ago pioneered the elimination of any connection to public space in its shopping malls (PKG 2007: 1):

As early as 1961, Ciputra and the Jaya Group reversed the traditional approach to city planning by creating Indonesia's first "Island Concept" shopping centre, in which the retail orientation faced inwards onto an attractive central plaza, instead of onto the surrounding streets.

Most of these projects have no spaces that can truly be called public, i.e., where people can freely associate without overt management control severely limiting what they can do other than stroll or shop. Houses entirely fill up their lots with almost no open spaces between house and street. Sidewalks are absent in so-called neighborhoods, and with cars parked in the tiny lanes; there is little space to even walk (Douglass et al. 2007).
Privatization and commodification of urban(izing) space

Privatization allows for nearly total commodification and marketing of space inside of the edge-city mega-projects. Except for public goods such as roads, space in these mega-projects is a commodity to be packaged, branded with commercial identities, and sold to investors and users. As previously noted, free spaces for spontaneous social interaction and associational life are limited and highly regulated. Religious and cultural institutions are glaring by their absence. For example, Kota Wisata, "city of a million people" (Kota Sejuta Persona) has just one mosque and one catholic church. This is in a country with many different religions and sects of each religion (Kota Wisata 2007). In almost all cases described above, public land was provided to private developers for the projects. The explicit and implicit subsidies to investors are huge. Once public land is yielded to private ownership, it rarely returns to the public. As detailed in the PMH case below, the absence and loss of public space is a glaring feature of edge-cities.

Private corporate management

The mega-projects uniformly extol the ways in which their privately owned and managed edge-cities offer a much desired alternative to the "chaos" of city life in the urban core. As proclaimed by the developer of MTT, "We have all intentions to develop MTT as a complete city run by private-sector people. It was not a stroke of genius. It was logic" (Kristof & Sanger 1999: 1).

The privatization of entire cities is one of the most profound changes in the idea of the city that these projects project. With no public sphere or public spaces, they have no governance structures or civic places beyond corporate management and its offices. As such they have no mechanisms for popular participation in governance except through grievances about the poor quality of buildings, maintenance and fees or other dissatisfactions. As summarized by Dear (2000) in the US case, they form a "shadow government" that can collect revenues, regulate and police without accountability through democratic governance and "is often responsive largely to the whims of globally oriented wealth creation" (MacLeod & Ward 2002: 166).

With many of the projects opened quickly to get cash flows into them even before all infrastructure and services are in place, occasions for grievances abound. Residents in Ciputra, Hanoi, for example, have complained that services in the complex are poor, and they are unhappy
about the lack of children's playgrounds, public parks, hospitals, kindergartens and tennis courts. In some parts of the project, houses handed over long ago still have no telephone lines (VIR 2007c). One year after operation, a school for Vietnamese people, a supermarket, and health care centers still do not exist. Residents also found their service charges to be the highest among the edge-city projects in Vietnam. In 2006, residents sent a letter to Ciputra's management board, claiming that they would not pay the VND40 mil (US$2,667) annual service charges until more suitable rates were defined (Phong 2006). They said that they received no response from the developer or management. The Ciputra experience is reported in its variations in other countries as well (Shatkin 2007). The underlying issue is that governance structures fall into the private domain of the site managers, with "citizen" input reduced to a reactive process of complaint management without mechanisms for proactive engagement to improve the project through consultative partnerships between management and residents.

**Exclusive and Secure**

A selling point universally used in these projects is exclusivity of just about everything, beginning with the housing and moving gate by gate across the edge-city through all of its services and amenities (Hogan & Houston 2002; Waibel 2006). Many amenities, such as swimming pools, which can have extra fees levied on resident users, are separately gated for exclusive use of a particular set of residents, often according to the price and assigned status of each area. Exclusive can also be instrumental in resident's identifying with their "neighborhood" as the process of self-selection groups like people according to lifestyle preferences associated with various levels of purchase prices for housing.

Exclusive by definition means exclusion, which first occurs at the level of the entire project by gating major roads into it, or at least into each major housing area. This becomes a selling point that increases the value of real estate by promoting fear of the rest of the city of chaos, crime and subaltern lifestyles of its denizens. As stated by Hogan and Houston (2002: 240) in the case of Jakarta, this also takes advantage of authoritarian government actions in the city:

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4 They also fault the management for making monthly fees paid by residents cover empty apartments as well as their own. Car parking, use of gymnasium and swimming pool each require extra per head, not just per household, fees. Many had to spend their own money for interior repairs due to poor construction.
… the emphasis was and continues to be on linking these new urban spaces and segregating their subjects from the streets and kampungs of the urban poor. The new middle classes learn to perceive the poor and their living spaces as a danger to both their own hopes and the development of the nation state… In the words of Governor Sadikin for example, because the poor lacked 'urban rationality' they were a constant danger to the state's modernization project and therefore required continuous surveillance.

Such government pronouncements add to other sources of pejorative attitudes among the new middle class about the rest of the urban population, making the promise of tight security both essential and an added attraction to the gated cities in the suburbs. Gates are added within the edge-city as well as to differentiate neighborhoods and provide multiple layers of security. Various internal sections are sometimes intentionally not connected by road, which is another element of making sub-areas both exclusive and secure. Residents of lower status housing cannot drive or even readily walk to the areas of higher status, and vice versa. Fortification and surveillance is also achieved through large private security forces, video cameras on lamp posts, and landscape design, the latter of which uses hedges, tall bushes and other plants are effectively deployed to ensure that people will follow planned pathways and be unable to physically make their way through the thick plant to other areas.

**Self-contained**

The edge-cities pride themselves on being self-contained, complete with all functions for urban living. The master plans all carefully display the location of each function. An Khanh city, for example, is said by its parent company, POSCO (Busan, Korea) to be Vietnam's "first-ever self-contained urban area" (POSCO E&C 2007: 1). Yet in the same city, Ciputra, which begin construction well before An Khanh, announces that it is "a self-contained city" (PKG 2007: 1). MTT, Bangkok, used the same term, and the developer of Kota Wisata in Jakarta says that "an alive self-contained city" is its "end purpose" (Kota Wisata 2007: 1). Megaworld announces that its "Laguna Bel Air IV" residential development in peri-urban Manila is "a self-contained, master planned community that fulfills the needs for good living, leisure and learning."

The meaning of self-contained is not only about the array of functions thought to be complete for city life. It is also a signal that the project is of sufficient scale and scope to be autonomous from the metropolitan region in which it is located. This is important in attracting investors and residents by
telling them that they need not frequent the undesirable conditions of Manila, Bangkok, Jakarta, or any other polluted, congested, poor urban habitat nearby. In this sense, as "global cities" they could be anywhere, and perhaps that is one of their main selling points. In reality, however, most remain bed-towns from which a majority of the working population commutes to the urban core everyday for work.

Together all of these self-proclaimed and stylized attributes of the new edge-cities – global, larger-than-life scale, new urban culture, private, exclusive, secure, and self-contained – sum to a fundamental reconstruction and re-imaging of the idea of the city. This idea is not that of Jane Jacob's image of local community life played out in neighborhoods of small local shops along public sidewalks (Jacobs 1961). Nor is it the convivial city with spaces where a sense of community emerges from unscripted encounters and people gather for "pure socialability" rather than playing functional roles (Peattie 1998: 248). In the view of Carr et al. (1992: 3), a key missing element in such controlled cities is public spaces:

Public space is the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds. The streets, squares, and parks of a city give form to the ebb and flow of human exchange. These dynamic spaces are an essential counterpart to the more settled places and routines of work and home life, providing the channels for movement, the modes of communication, and the common grounds for play and relaxation. There are pressing needs that public space can help people to satisfy, significant human rights that it can be shaped to define and protect, and special cultural meanings that it can best convey.

The next section further explores PMH in HCMC in terms of the idea of public space as an integral part of convivial city life.

HCMC AND PMH (SAIGON SOUTH)

HCMC

HCMC, the largest city of Vietnam, has been growing rapidly following doi moi economic reform towards a market economy adopted at the end of the 1980s, which unleashed the current era of massive rural-urban migration. From 1989 to 1999, census data shows that the population of its core urban area increased at the rate of 3.8 per cent per annum due mainly to
The urban core of HCMC is extremely densely settled. At 19,000 people per km$^2$, which does not include the growing number of temporary migrants who are daily present, living and working in these districts, and in the absence of high-rise housing units, it is among the most densely settled cities in the world. More critically, with average housing area per capita at a meager 6.3 m$^2$, it has the highest density of multiple families sharing housing units in the nation. Three-fifths of its housing units are classified as semi-permanent, and earlier estimates indicate that there are 67,000 slum dwellings accommodating more than 300,000 inhabitants (Bolay et al. 1997).

The transition to a market economy does not readily provide land or housing for lower income households. The new private sector housing developments have no provision for low-cost housing. The result has been the growth of illegal and unauthorized settlements, mostly on public land, such as landfill sites, graveyards, riverbanks, and space below bridges, along canals or dykes in HCMC. In such a situation of high density living, public space becomes even more vital in enabling people to get out of cramped quarters to enjoy open spaces and the associational life of neighborhoods.

However, public space is also not abundant. The city's parks comprise only about 235 hectares in total, or about 0.4 m$^2$ per capita. This is well below the goal of 1.7 m$^2$ per capita city in 1999 (PCHCMC 1999; Douglass et al. 2002). The parks that exist are exceptionally well used, but public streets and sidewalks are the places that have become the spaces of community and city life (Figure 13). Along these streets people meet and engage in conversations, dwellers of shops put out chairs and spend their day in the public's eye. Men play board games, and children play sports and

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5 Migration to HCMC is seriously underestimated due to requirements to obtain permission to shift residence to or among cities; people without permission, which are thought to total as many as 2 million people, are not counted as urban residents in the census (Dang 2007).

6 The figure is probably underestimated as the definition of the HCMC slums is based mainly on housing conditions, not on access to safe water, sanitary environment and basic facilities.
practice traditional dancing. At night motorcycles with entire families on them slowly ride through central areas in the cool air to see other people doing the same. Benches in public squares become filled with families.

All of these scenes in public spaces reveal the liveliness of the city in its own forms of conviviality through the variety of social uses of these spaces. Although motorcycles now tend to occupy sidewalks and store owners occupy as much space as they can with their goods and their families, the public spaces of HCMC substantially provide for the social life of the city. Even Vietnam travel agencies proclaim that "Life in HCMC resides in the city streets, markets, shops, pavement cafés and vendors selling their goods on the sidewalks."

Figures 13. Street scenes in central HCMC

However, current urban planning for the city risks diminishing these types of public spaces. High-rise buildings, global franchises and chain stores are rapidly appearing in the urban core, displacing families and small-scale shops:

The production of globally orientated spaces in the inner city cores can be seen in the massive and continuing construction of office and hotel space mostly by transnational corporations… The production of consumption spaces can be observed by the immense conversion of living space into commercial space in the city cores…[which] are increasingly developing into a place of consumption, with modern supermarkets, fancy restaurants, and posh coffee and retail shops…in the urban periphery, large shopping complexes have been established. (Waibel 2006: 43–44)
Resettlement in peri-urban areas is equally problematic because huge areas of land are being yielded to edge-city development that has little actual public spaces. The most massive of such developments is PMH.

**PMH**

This plan has its roots in the history of city-making, with its geometry derived from the history of the land. It serves as an example for other mega-developments that are occurring in areas like Asia and Southeast Asia, as it is sensitive to the cultures, site and urban traditions. Statement by the American Institute of Architect in giving Saigon South its Honor Award for best urban design (1997), the first ever given to an Asian city. (PMH & TTC 2001)

The planned suburban city of PMH or Saigon South, does not call itself a utopia, but its self-stated mission to bring a new standard and new urban society to Vietnam in a privately run global city has all the hallmarks of utopian visions. In seeking to restructure society through a grand physical plan that, once in place, is perfect, command planning and management appears to be the logical governance option to fulfill such a vision (Harvey 2000; Mazlish 2003). Tight control over its spaces is required to achieve this reproduction of sameness overtime while preventing encroachment from unwanted people and activities.

Managed by a corporate entity with state support, one of principal intentions of PMH is to keep the teeming city of eight million people – most of whom are classified as low-income – held back by hired guards, surveillance, gates within gates and all manner of rules about what residents can and cannot do. While its cameras follow people around, visitors are forbidden to take photos in this 300-hectare city that, when finished, has the ambitious goal of being the home of one million middle-class residents. The management is proud of PMH being the area of highest security level in HCMC, with guard service 24 hours/7 days a week at three levels: the first at the gates of communities or on the ground floor of the buildings, the

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7 Special acknowledgment and appreciation is extended to Ms. Ly Cam Duong Nguyen, Urban Planning Faculty, University of Architecture of HCMC, for participating in and conducting field research for this section on PMH.

8 The name PMH has its roots in the name of a commune, Phu My, a poor undeveloped area in Nha Be District. "Hung" means "getting rich and developed". The other name given to it, Saigon South, can be understood as "going to the South" as the direction to create this new world of living.
second consisting of security guards going around the neighborhood by motorcycle, and the third at the PMH service centre.

PMH has been under construction since 1993 on alum swampland with interlacing rivers and canals of Phu My Commune in Nha Be District (now District 7) located south of the existing inner city (see Figure 1). The project is locally constituted as the PMHC, with 70 per cent of its capital coming from the Central Trading & Development Group (CT&D, Taiwan) and 30 per cent from Tan Thuan Industrial Development Company, a representative of HCMC Municipality.

From its pre-existing agricultural economy, this area is changing to an industrial and service economy. The master plan of the new township was designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill Corp. (USA) and approved by the Prime Minister on December 8, 1994. With the support of the HCMC municipal authority, PMH has already become one of the most successful and the most well-known urban planning and construction project in Vietnam and beyond. In addition to vast residential areas, the "bright future" of the new urban centre is composed of five sectors: sector A – new city center (planned for 100,000 people), sector B – university village, sector C – high-tech center, sectors D and E – commodity circulation center 1 and 2 with universities, parks, golf course, sport center, which will make Saigon South become the new satellite city of HCMC with all the social and physical amenities.

PMH's promotional representations of the project declare that "Its carefully planned environment boasts the most modern infrastructure and amenities in Southeast Asia." Who is to enjoy all of this modernity? The answer is suggested in Figure 14, which depicts the desired "citizens" of PMH – white collar workers, engineers, foreigners, well dressed peasants and security guards. Given the prices at PMH, however, most of these people could not afford to live there. Some of its housing is double those of a villa or an apartment in other areas of the city. Even the cheapest apartment is more than VND1 billion (approximately US$62,000), which is equivalent to nearly 85 times the per capita GDP of $726 (USDS 2006). Figure 15 shows how the citizens of HCMC live next to the new highway linking PMH to HCMC.
As initially planned, the less luxurious apartments were intended for Vietnamese customers, and the PMH detached houses were to be leased to foreign tenants. This strategy ultimately failed because, on the one hand, the cheaper (and smaller) ones were too expensive for the Vietnamese middle-class, and, on the other hand, the super-wealthy in Vietnam wanted detached houses. The luxury houses sold out within six weeks after being put on the market. The apartments were not sold out until two years later. More recently, demand for luxury apartments costing an average of US$200,000
has been so great that PMH began to hold coupon drawings for 42 lucky winners of the right to buy (VIR 2007a). In other words, PMH is exclusively for very rich Vietnamese and foreigners. Factory workers, small shop owners, most government employees and others that comprise the great majority of Saigon dwellers cannot buy into it.

Competition among real estate ventures is heightening in HCMC, but PMH is still considered to be a model for many Vietnamese urban planners and policy makers. For most Vietnamese policy makers, the city is smart in supporting the grand project because local government can exchange underutilized and undeveloped land use rights for the complete construction of a huge edge-city accomplished totally through the private sector, which also pays taxes on its various types of development projects and lease sales. This also lends an appearance of taking enormous pressure off government to deal with problems such as slum upgrading, affordable housing, water source cleaning, urban flooding, traffic jam, air pollution and greening the city. At the same time, construction and maintenance of the PMH generates a substantial demand for Vietnamese workers to construct this new city.

Among the elements of highest attraction to residential buyers include:

- Building architecture with fresh air, clean waterfront, well maintained landscape.
- Relative proximity to central HCMC.
- Underground power grid and telecommunication systems, on site water supply and treatment.
- High level of security.
- Foreign social services with many international schools, a hospital and other functions that attract the middle and upper classes of HCMC who are not satisfied with the services of the Vietnamese school and the foreign businessmen and officers.
- For the first time, a site for practicing religious (which religion is not yet clear) has been planned in PMH.

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9 Other luxury developments are experiencing the same rapid selling out of units. Villa Riviera on the banks of the Saigon River in HCMC sold out all 101 of its villas at prices of at least $400,000 (VIR 2007a).
Names of the neighborhoods in PMH reflect the dream of Vietnamese and Chinese people, such as Phu Gia ("rich family"), Hung Vuong and Hung Thai ("getting rich and developed"), My Kim ("US dollars").

The name PMH as a reputable brand means high status for its residents, because only Vietnamese high-income class and foreigners can afford its real estate prices.

Among the criticisms of PMH are:

- As noted above, the price of real estate in PMH is too high for the vast majority of Vietnamese people. Speculators, the very rich, and those with insider connections, including government officials, are buying a large share of housing.

- The architecture has no apparent Vietnamese aspects in design or function.

- Amenities and services are not adequate. For example, sector A is planned for 100,000 people but as of 2003 it had only two kindergartens and one semi-private grammar school. Most of the Vietnamese children have to go to school located very far in the inner city or in other areas if they cannot afford the international school. Whether more kindergartens and schools are planned is not clear.

- The longer term ecological impacts of building a massive city on swampland have not been assessed and are of potential concern.

- A general lack of everyday commercial activities and services prevails, requiring residents to go to other districts for basic shopping needs.

- The last concern is the absence of public spaces in PMH.

Public Spaces in PMH?

One of the long-standing assumptions about the city is that while private residential areas and private buildings fill the majority of land area, they are glued together into an urban fabric by the provision of public space, whether it is in the form of roads, public goods or public spaces such as plaza, parks, monuments or public services. The new edge-cities defy all assumptions about the city being public or for civil society at large. PMH is illustrative of
the lack of public spaces in the new edge-cities and what it means for daily life.

As previously noted, the PMHC portrays Saigon South as a new type of urban area with an international standard lifestyle. To accomplish this goal, PMHC has put in place social infrastructure such as parks, the Saigon Wonderland theme park, kindergartens, international schools, universities and hospitals as complements to its housing projects intended to attract residents from the inner city and abroad. However, none of these activities are public in the usual sense of the word except that some are accessible to anyone for a fee. In the Vietnam context, the fees for activities that are open to non-residents are unaffordable for most Vietnamese people.

Most of the amenities are reserved for residents only, who must also pay a user fee to use their privileged access. In fact, living in Saigon South incurs many fees, including an annual resident fee charged for shared infrastructure and services such as the power grid, public lighting, water supply and drainage, post and telecommunication, internal roads, landscape, elevators for high-rise apartment residents and security guards. Such fees justify their exclusive use by those who are qualified to pay for them, keeping them from being accessed as public goods open to non-residents. Gating and security guards ensure this exclusion from many internal roads and residential areas.

Vietnam presents its own particular context of public versus private space that bears upon the provision of public space in PMH. In Vietnam, a house or building can be public, common (of a special group of person) or private property, but all land is legally the property of the state representing all Vietnamese people. Real estate developers can only lease the land for a fee and for specific approved uses. Once a development such as housing is sold to a buyer, the lease is also transferred to that person or entity. From the perspective of land ownership, then, in principal all land use has an underlying public interest and potential source of regulation for the public good. In practice, however, as leases extend over many decades, and as Vietnam moves into a market economy, land use is, in fact, increasingly privatized even when requiring government approval.

Thus, in the case of PMH where a private investor has leased the entirety of the area, what constitutes public land in actual practice is paradoxically more vague than it would be in a wholly private economy in which land is privately owned but regulated by the state. In other words, whether, for example, a road in PMH is "public" in the sense of being open to all people is not clear. This becomes a critical issue when, for example, a hired guard tells a visitor on a PMH road that she is not allowed to take photographs there or anywhere in the entire project area. The authority for
such restrictions is not clear. Does it rest with the state or with PMH? Without a ready way to know, a person, whether resident or outsider, has no one entity to turn to for redress.

The second issue centers on the idea of a public good. This is a classic issue in market economies as well, since there are many urban infrastructure and service needs that either do not generate sufficient profit (such as a public park), have too many free riders (such as a non-toll public road) or, more generally, cannot produce desired outcomes (such as housing for the poor) through the market. In Vietnam, based on the Land Law of Socialist Republic of Vietnam, land used for public purpose include: roads, bridges, sewers, pavements, water supply and drainage systems, rivers, lakes, dykes, dams, schools, hospitals, markets, parks, children's playgrounds, squares, stadiums, airports and other public amenities as defined by state regulation. Also Vietnamese Standard 4449/1987 concerning Urban Construction Planning and Design Criteria, clearly defines the system of constructions to be used for public purpose in the socialist urban context, including all buildings for education, trading, commerce, services, amenities, entertainment, administration and health purposes.

The identification and standards of public goods were set in 1987 when most of them were supplied by the socialist state system of distribution. Since then, with nearly 20 years of doi moi (renovation), the situation has changed as the state increasingly accepts the emergence of the private economic sector and facilitates foreign investment. However, the Design Criteria have not been reviewed. At the same time, the provision of public goods throughout the world has experienced a fundamental change from direct construction and management by government to turnkey and other methods that substantially shift them to the private sector to build, manage and even own (Altshuler & Luberoff 2004). PMH represents a case in point. Public goods are to be provided and managed by this project management, to be paid for through service fees to residents and building owners. However, once again, what constitutes "the public" remains unclear. Does it mean residents only, and does it mean for all residents or only those behind gated zones in the project? With such unknowns, the PMH authorities act at will to prohibit or allow people to use its spaces.

The idea of public space in the context of Vietnam is not straightforward. Questions of ownership blur under a leasehold system, and thus so do private-public distinctions in land-use rights. This confusion is revealed in the design of so-called public and civic spaces in PMH, which includes streets, pavements, small parks and squares. The pavements – one of major spaces for interchange and communication – are usually narrow
and often planted with shrubbery in a manner that compels walkers to have to move into the street with cars and motorcycles.

Some children use the internal streets as playgrounds; some people like to gather along the street, and parents play and walk around with their little children. Meanwhile the officially dedicated green spaces at the corner are nearly empty even on Sunday afternoon. The reasons might be the lack of seating places. The observations of day and night life do not reveal much activities in these parks, except that of some outsiders from other areas in the city who come by motorcycle to enjoy the landscape in PMH.

The idea of public space shrinks even more when more costly amenities appear in PMH. Swimming pools, gymnasiums and gardens are all located within its gated communities. Only residents who live in these communities have the right to use these amenities, which are provided through management and maintenance fees. Other residents who live in PMH but not in these gated inner zones cannot use them. Similarly, the community service center with a community room and a small library with more than 3,000 books, place for children to watch television, to play Lego, to draw while their parents can read the newspaper, are all restricted to immediate gated neighborhood residents.

Commercial spaces that charge fees for the public from outside as well as inside PMH are also available. A 9-hole golf course, 4 tennis courts, and Saigon Wonderland fall into this category. Tennis and golf are still considered as luxury sports for Vietnamese people; Saigon Wonderland with its swimming pool, judo club, and many other attractions such as video games and electrical cars are accessible with entry tickets priced at VND30,000 for an adult and VND20,000 for a child. It is questionable whether low-income families find them affordable.

Private establishments open to the public in PMH include shops and restaurants located along the commercial streets. During the day and the evening, these are the most lively parts of PMH where some Vietnamese residents, workers and foreigners gathered around the tables in Vietnamese pho restaurants, fast-food restaurants and coffee shops. Like HCMC, the shop owners provide commodities, chairs and tables out on the pavements, and motorcycles park on the grass. However, the absence of a freewheeling sidewalk and street life similar to that found in Saigon outside of PMH means that though something approximating public space exists, its uses are confined to those related to eating and, to a lesser extent, shopping.

Uninvited visitors from nearby communities do come to PMH to use its as yet vacant, undeveloped sites to fly kites, play soccer, or just invent games to play. People who would not be allowed to play elsewhere at PMH appear every weekend in the afternoon on these spaces along with venders
who bring movable chairs and tables to serve their periodic clients. Some of the vendors, who are not officially allowed by PMH, are elderly people who help each other to remain together in these places. As the built up area of PMH expands, such activities will be eliminated. In the already built up areas of PMH, small local shops, family stores, and local vendors that provide the economic life of HCMC are virtually absent.

In looking at the ways in which spaces are physically produced and socially managed in PMH, the lasting impressions are of social barrenness in its neighborhood under a regime of planned social fragmentation and private policing (Figure 16) (Waibel 2004). The "no photo" signs posted outside of gated communities in PMH are among the many revelations that what used to be public is now private and rigorously restricted. PMH tends to try to "civilize" its residents by sterilizing communities – no strangers, no noise, no street vendors, no large spontaneous or unsponsored gatherings – through layers of gates and guards (Figure 17). The contrast with the sidewalks of Saigon could not be greater (see Figure 13). Even PMH's playgrounds are overly structured on very small plots of land, allowing for little imaginative play for children (Figure 18). The small vernacular shops that are the hallmark of HCMC's charm have been replaced by global franchises that appear the same no matter where they are found (see Figure 9).

Figure 16. Sidewalks on a typical day in PMH
By mid-2005 the resident population of PMH reached only around 6,000, though the numbers were increasing rapidly. Despite this small number compared to the 500,000 to 1 million resident capacity for which it is being built, the free playgrounds with activities are not in sufficient supply for children in PMH, especially those who are from 6 to 15 years old. The other open spaces require admission or membership fees to enter.

PMH's lack of open social life leaves it devoid of a sense of liveliness and conviviality. Restaurants and shops, which are much more expensive than that in HCMC, are sparsely used, and neighborhoods seem to have little social interaction in the narrow streets without sidewalks or front yards of houses. The planning, design and management of PMH are not neutral to this outcome; they are integral to the discouragement of associational life. In this and many other aspects, it typifies the new vast global edge-cities of Southeast Asia.
CONCLUSIONS

Variations among the edge-city mega-projects undoubtedly exist. Some, for example, might allow buyers to build their own houses, as does PMH on small plots in a limited portion of the project. Others might have host or create local festivals on their sites in attempts to create a sense of linkage with local culture. Yet, every exception seems to succumb to overriding impulses to be private, commodified, exclusive, homogeneous, secure and global in new urban culture. As such, their capacity to serve larger social needs such as the provision of low-cost housing or equity in collective consumption will continue to be exceptionally limited.

As an economic venture, however, all of the edge-city mega-project, including PMH, seem destined to be great successes. Land values will continue to increase in and around all of their host city regions, each of which continues to be a vortex of economic growth for their respective economies. Those with a financial stake in these ventures are likely to see tremendous returns on their investments.\(^\text{10}\) For the strata of upper middle and elite classes able to buy into the project, the amenities and policed environment will also help them escape the fears and problems they perceive to be rife in the publicly governed metropolis.

As human habitats of the future, the intentions of the new edge-cities contrast fundamentally with the idea of a spontaneous, vibrant city that is a "heteropolis" of various, often oppositional, landscapes that are not just the privy of a single class or authority but are instead made by the people themselves with all their differences (Foucault 1967). HCMC is such a city, and PMH is designed to be just the opposite of the Cosmopolis Utopia put forth by Sandercock (1998) where the value of "living together in difference". Criticizing North American and Australian cities, she observes that urban planners are all too often "engaged in an ongoing battle to keep 'them' out of our communities" through regulatory and law-making mechanisms:

\(^{10}\) The originators of these mega-projects are not coming from North America or Europe but from nearly every country in East and Southeast (Pacific) Asia, illustrating that the globalization of the city is not simply a "Global North – Global South" equation, but is instead one that is rising from within in the Pacific Asia region.
Such is our fear of the other – a fear of those who are culturally different and of people whose symbolic and real presence speaks of economic instability – that we try to make them invisible, by removing them – legally, of course... – from our neighborhoods, our communities, our parts of the city. And what we can't do collectively, we try to make up for by individual security systems, patrolled neighborhoods, gated communities. (Sandercock 1998: 21)

The new edge-cities have taken this penchant for exclusion a giant step further through the mechanisms described in this paper. Instead of removing the lower classes from the city, an impossibility in the Southeast Asian context, from their inception the vast new private cities are designed with the explicit purpose of excluding the majority of people. A great paradox in this regard is that while the boosterism for them touts these privatopia as being the most exciting, cutting edge forms of human habitat in world history (see Figure 8), the opposite is a more likely outcome:

Living in them means the end of novelty, fantasy and curiosity; everything would become routine, never adventure, the death-knell to the human spirit. (Merrifield 2000: 479)

During the accelerated urban transition now being experienced in Southeast Asia, big cities are under great stress. Congestion, pollution, high population densities with slums and endemic poverty, lack of reliable infrastructure, inadequate housing – the list goes on – permeate the urban experience. To escape all of this "chaos" in one-step way that excludes almost all traces of it is surely very attractive, even miraculous, and this is what the edge-cities offer.

Widening income gaps, with a small but significant segment of society now having immense wealth, by at least local standards, also results in real dangers of criminal targeting of the rich. Individual home fortification is inadequate in the face of targeted burglaries, but large

Similarly, Dear (2000: 166) argues that the mechanisms Sandercock identifies allow for a "shadow government" in North America that is rarely accountable through a democratic consent but is instead responsive largely to the "whims of globally oriented wealth creation". In the private edge cities, corporate management as government is not in the shadows but is instead an explicit facet of the entire arrangement. The management and amenity fees that flow to the global corporate interests are seen by residents as the cost of retaining the exclusivity they desire, and despite complaints about exorbitant fees for low quality or non-existent services, routine fee payments serve to legitimize the corporate management system.
housing estates fortified with gates, guards, landscaping and other elements of urban design such as bright lights at night offer a much more effective form of security, and this is also what the new edge-cities provide. However, security is not enough. To enchant the attraction, developers add visions of the worthy resident-investors being vanguards of a new society in a new type of advanced city life.

If these edge-cities were minor either in scale or population, they might be viewed only as a curiosity or a modest form of postmodern playfulness in urban design. But they are not minor. Throughout Southeast Asia these utopian schemes are growing prodigiously in number and scale. Some are designed for half a million residents or more. They are already surrounding cities such as Saigon and Jakarta. With land prices rising along with the polarization of national economic growth and population in them, profits from converting peri-urban rural land to urban uses are impressive. Despite the possibility that some might not realize for many years the magnificent numbers for which they are being built, no end is in sight for the increase in these types of projects.

These projects sustain their autonomy from the urbanization processes around them by including infrastructure for self-containment. Along with customized energy, water, site maintenance, refuse collection and informational services, the creation of large private security systems tantamount to the appropriation of police powers from municipal government is crucial to avoid reliance on the nearby central city and its government. Recreation and entertainment are also key to resident feelings of being in self-contained settlements. Taken together all of these requirements generate a need for scales beyond the level of housing estates that take them into the realm of immense edge-cities. The result is that major aspects of the city that were once assumed to be public – streets, sidewalks, plaza, parks and other forms of collective experiences such as cultural festivals – are suddenly private spaces that are immersed in the dynamics of commodification, simulation and new global identities explicitly programmed into the production of new urban space.

At a higher spatial scale, the edge-city mega-projects can be seen as one component of what Graham and Marvin (2001) term "secessionary networked spaces" – a territorial-ectomy of nodes and their linkages through privatization of urban spaces. In and beyond the edge-cities, previously public and local spaces are being displaced by the private spaces in the form of shopping malls, business parks, gated communities, recreation facilities and theme parks. Spatial friction that would have previously severely hindered the flows among these sites is greatly reduced through attendant mega-projects to build state-of-the-art world airports, superhighways linked
with edge-cities, and light rail systems, as well as by high-speed internet and other informational linkages. All combine to form a "premium networked infrastructure" that comprises a substantially robust sphere of accumulation that is able to resist unwanted aspects of territorial governance while accruing public subsidies and other benefits (Graham & Marvin 2001).

In enhancing the lives of the privileged few, the private authority over the various components of these networks exclude the many. Together they form "interdictory spaces" designed and constructed to systematically exclude the citizenry who do not fit the targeted market profile desired by developers (Flusty 2001). Where they cannot be excluded, such as in shopping malls, their behavior can be limited to expected functions, such as shopping, through architectural design and private police forces (Douglass 2007c). Through this manner of exclusion and control, each of the sites in its own way depoliticize space through extrication from the public sphere of political inquiry and oversight.

As such, the new edge-cities of Southeast Asia are key constituents of a much larger emergent spatial system that is intentionally engaged in the "desocialization of space" (Gleeson 2006), countering utopian visions of cities as "spaces of hope" (Harvey 2000) for more democratic forms of governance, equity and diversity with a new utopia of professional management for the privileged without regard to the politics of inclusion.

All of these trends are enhanced by tremendously expanded global capacities to finance, build and manage mega-projects at great distances from the actual sites where they are being constructed. In addition to mobilizing consortia of financial institutions from many parts of the world, architects, too, can be hired from afar. They are also validated from afar by prestigious professional awards presented by institutions that, by the very language they use in making the awards, seem to have no significant knowledge about the place, people or cultural milieu where their plans will be implemented, as the case of PMH illustrates.

The income requirements for residing in edge cities suggest that they are unlikely to account more than 5–10 per cent of the total population of their host city regions over the long-term. Even with the phenomenal replication of private edge-cities, the great urban regions in which they locate are projected to have much greater population increases. All of these urban regions are now greater than five million in population, with Jakarta and Manila already over 20 million (Jones & Douglass 2007). Most are doubling in population size every 20 years or so, and in the next few decades, what are edge-cities today will be completely surrounded by the expanding metropolis, becoming suburban enclaves rather than mega-projects in the countryside.
In this regard, among the most important questions about the future of Southeast Asia's great city regions is whether the power of wealth represented in these private urban enclaves can continue to be used to escape accountability beyond their gates. Even these self-contained settlements will be hard pressed to sustain themselves in regions in which environmental degradation, particularly in air quality and regional water supply, traffic congestion, lack of decent housing, and other crises are already overwhelming local government capacities and are destined to worsen before they get better. The prudent course for these mega-projects would be to engage in helping to make improvements in their surrounding peri-urban areas. Whether the long view of sustaining the larger territorial sphere for their own self-interest can be internalized in the development of these new "global cities" remains to be seen.

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