



Songdo, South Korea: The Smartest Smart City In The World

Technocrats have found their Nirvana in Songdo, South Korea - a smart city built from the ground up with the latest Orwellian technology available. Companies like Cisco and Nvidia will make billions while perfecting such technology to bring back to American shores. □ TN Editor

On Saturday morning, Mr. Lee brings the trash downstairs, one bag with combustible waste, the other with organic. His wife is already working at the cafe they own in “Central Park.” There are two high-tech garbage chutes — green and red — in the collection point of the high-rise building where the Lee family lives.

Lee holds his identity card over the sensor. The hatch opens. Inside, he places the bags, which he purchased at the supermarket for about fifty cents. At the collection point, there are other bins for glass and [plastic bottles](#) and other sorts of refuse. A sign overhead warns: “24-hour video surveillance.” Sensors in the garbage chute determine whether Lee has properly separated his trash and used the correct bags. If the machine

accepts the deposit, they will be sucked through the pipe system under high pressure from a central station.

This system means that no garbage trucks rumble through the planned community, which belongs to Incheon, a metropolis of three million residents west of Seoul. It's one reason why Songdo likes to call itself "the smartest of the world's [smart cities](#)."

Unlike Europe or Japan, South Korea still builds entire cities from the ground up — for example, the de facto administrative capital Sejong. The country has already planned the next "Smart City Korea" with financial assistance from Dubai.

In June, at the [New Cities Summit in Songdo](#), an urbanists conference, Tom Murcott of the New York-based real estate development company Gale International, recounted the early years of Songdo. In 2001 his colleagues had flown in a helicopter with the former mayor of Incheon over a nearby tidal basin. "Can you see it?" Murcott recalls the mayor saying, as he enthusiastically pointed below. They couldn't see anything. But then the mayor explained his vision, and Gale International signed on to the project: that of building a turn-key city on an artificial island.

Big Brother is here

Gale brought Cisco, the so-called "plumber" of the Internet, on board. Within a decade, where Murcott's colleagues had once peered at the sea, \$35 billion worth of resident and office high-rises had been erected on elevated ground. Around 100,000 people are now living in Songdo, and some 60,000 [jobs have been created](#). Large corporations like the construction group Posco have relocated here. It is forecast that Songdo will eventually be home to 600,000 people.

Cisco is wiring the new city and installing a communications system, which would allow people to contact the municipal administration from their televisions. Additionally, developers have installed 300 interactive security cameras, equipped with emergency call systems. Everything is monitored in a control center with a gigantic data screen.

In Songdo, everything has a "U" in front of it: U-traffic, U-safety, U-

governance, U-health, and of course U-entertainment. The “U” stands for “ubiquitous,” omnipresent. In other words: Big Brother is here.

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