South Korean environmentalists protect Gyeyang Mountain against golf course development, Incheon, 2006-2011.

- (mainly or initiated by) people of color [1]
- local community or neighborhood-level campaign [2]

Timing
June 2006 to 22 June 2011

Location and Goals
Country: South Korea
Location City/State/Province: Incheon
Location Description: Incheon is a city near the West Sea coast of South Korea.

Goals:
Citizens of Incheon city demanded Lotte abandon plans to construct a golf course on Gyeyang Mountain.

Methods
Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › The Citizens’ Committee released a statement in which they claimed that 80% of city residents were now opposed to the Golf Course construction.
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › organizing Incheon citizen committee for blocking the Gyeyang Mountain Golf field
- 016. Picketing › One person picketed in front of Incheon City Hall from 10 August to 6 November 2006.
- 173. Nonviolent occupation › Shin Jeong occupied a tree on Gyeyang mountain from 26 October to 20 December.

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 034. Vigils › Committee organized candlelit vigils weekly in front of Incheon City Hall.
• 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Occupiers held day-long fasts while in tree.
• 173. Nonviolent occupation › Rotating activists continued the tree occupation.

Methods in 3rd segment:

• 034. Vigils › Committee organized candlelit vigils weekly in front of Incheon City Hall.
• 038. Marches › Marching with Samboilbae (three walk, one bow - It's a traditional buddhism practice for reflection, In korean culture, it has been used as a form of march)
• 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Occupiers held day-long fasts while in tree.
• 173. Nonviolent occupation › Rotating activists continued the tree occupation.

Methods in 4th segment:

• 016. Picketing › Rotating activists stood outside of Incheon City Hall daily.
• 034. Vigils › Committee organized candlelit vigils weekly in front of Incheon City Hall.

Methods in 5th segment:

• 016. Picketing › Rotating activists stood outside of Incheon City Hall daily.
• 034. Vigils › Committee organized candlelit vigils weekly in front of Incheon City Hall.

Methods in 6th segment:

• 016. Picketing › Rotating activists stood outside of Incheon City Hall daily.
• 034. Vigils › Committee organized candlelit vigils weekly in front of Incheon City Hall.

Notes on Methods:
Picketing from 10 August 2006 to 6 November 2006 and Samboilbae march were included by a past researcher. Details are not known.

Segment Length:
11 months

Classifications
Classification:
Defense
Cluster:
Environment
Group characterization:

• democratic and ecological citizen and religious people.
• environmental activists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites
Leaders:
Citizens’ Committee Against the Planning of Gyeyang Mountain Golf Course, Green Union, Incheon churches and non-profits, Shin Jeong, Pastor Yun In Jung.
External allies:
Democratic United Party, local business leaders not associated with Lotte

Involvement of social elites:
Song Young Kil (Mayoral candidate for the Democratic United Party)

**Joining/exiting order of social groups**
Groups in 1st Segment:
Groups in 2nd Segment:

- local business leaders (enter)
Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:

- Democratic United Party (enter)
- Song Young Kil (enter)

Segment Length:
11 months

**Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence**
Opponents:
Lotte corporation - one of the largest international corporations in southeast Asia, Incheon Urban Planning Committee
Nonviolent responses of opponent:
not known
Campaigner violence:
not known
Repressive Violence:
not known

**Success Outcome**
Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
6 points out of 6 points
Survival:
1 point out of 1 points
Growth:
3 points out of 3 points
Total points:
10 out of 10 points

Incheon is a dense city of 3 million in the northern part of South Korea. One significant destination in the area is Gyeyang Mountain, which lies adjacent to the city and attracts 10,000 tourists daily. Gyeyang is largely
undeveloped and is home to over 600 endangered species. Since 1989, there have been four attempts by corporations to develop the slopes of the mountain, but all plans have been rejected by the regional government.

In June 2006 Lotte, Incorporated, proposed a golf course on the mountain. Lotte is an international conglomerate with subsidiaries throughout Asia that markets everything from consumer products to hotels.

Lotte’s proposal required removing many pine trees and leveling a significant portion of the mountainside, but the company said the development would benefit the regional economy. The Incheon Urban Planning Committee was sympathetic to the idea. The Urban Planning Committee claimed that the targeted section of the mountain was not as ecologically valuable as other portions and that the project would help popularize golf, which is generally seen by Koreans as elitist.

The Incheon Green Union -- a local non-governmental organization -- was outraged by the proposal. Over the following months, The Green Union formed a coalition with local churches, other non-profits and the city residents at large, called the “Citizens’ Committee Against the Planning of Gyeyang Mountain Golf Course”. The coalition immediately faced the difficulty that the area proposed for development was already owned privately, by the Chief Executive Officer of Lotte, Shin Kyuk Ho. This gave the company a legal advantage. Furthermore, the Ministry of Environment was hesitant to label the land as an endangered habitat, despite the many endangered species living there.

By October, the Incheon Urban Planning Committee began its formal process of evaluating the proposal from Lotte. The Citizens’ Committee felt they had not been properly informed of the process and believed that the proposal would soon be ratified. This is when the group chose to take direct action.

Shin Jeong Eun was a 28-year-old woman and an activist with the Incheon Green Union. On 26 October 2006, she ascended Mt. Gyeyang to the place of the proposed golf course. There, Shin scaled a 10 meter tall tree and installed a plastic platform for standing and sleeping. For the next 56 consecutive days, Shin stayed on her platform in the tree, attracting considerable local attention.

The Citizens’ Committee organized community members to bring food and other essentials to the tree, and petitions that showed support for Shin’s efforts. Finally, on 20 December 2006, Shin left her perch and ended her occupation.

However, Pastor Yun In Jung of a local “Peace Church “ resumed the occupation when Shin left the mountain. Yun occupied the same tree for an additional 154 days, bringing the occupation to a total of 210 consecutive days. Pastor Yun was forced to end his occupation when his health declined and he required medical attention.

These staged actions were measurably shifting public opinion. On 23 May 2007 – shortly after Yun left the tree – the Citizens’ Committee released a statement in which they claimed that 80% of city residents were now opposed to the golf course construction. Nevertheless, in August the Incheon Urban Planning Committee officially ratified the proposal from Lotte, allowing the golf course to proceed to the next stages of development.

In response, the Citizens’ Committee began to accelerate its actions, operating three tactics simultaneously. The tree occupation was continued, but now with a relay system; a different activist would ascend the mountain each day and hold a hunger strike in the same tree, but he or she would be replaced the following day, thereby insuring all remained healthy. This process continued for over a year into late 2008, if not longer.

At the same time, the Citizens’ Committee organized a candlelight vigil in front of the Incheon City Hall every Wednesday evening; the duration of the vigils is not known but may have lasted through 2010. Local business
leaders became involved with the vigils also, citing concerns with the dominating business practices of Lotte.

Lastly, the Citizens’ Committee wished to prove that the proposed development site in fact served as an important habitat, and it submitted a formal application with the Ministry of Environment to have the land assessed. However, the Ministry refused to recognize a series of these requests, and the official status of the land did not change.

General elections – both for local and national political positions – were planned for June 2010. The Citizens Committee worked to capitalize on the situation by playing off political rivalries. The conservative National Frontier Party dominated national and city politics, and the committee hoped to weaken the party’s positive position on the golf course. The Committee reached to the minority Democratic United Party, which in November 2009 formed the “Truth Commission on the Manipulation of Evidence Regarding the Planning of Gyeyang Mountain Golf Course.” The party claimed that the Urban Planning Committee and the National Frontier Party had used corruption to force the Golf Course through on behalf of Lotte.

In an asserted effort to bring attention to these accusations, on 2 November 2009 the site of daily citizen occupations was moved from Mt. Gyeyang to the front of City Hall.

The mayoral candidate for the Democratic United Party, Song Young Kil, pledged to make the repeal of the golf course a priority of his administration if elected. After the 2 June 2010 elections, Song was announced as the winner, and the Citizens’ Committee declared victory. The incumbent National Frontier Mayor Ahn Sang Su, acknowledged that he had lost, because the Golf Course issue shifted public opinion.

A year later, on 22 June 2011, the Urban Planning Committee voted to overturn its earlier decision and repealed the Lotte golf course proposal. Lotte incorporated objected to the overruling and sued Incheon city government.

The lawsuit was finally resolved on 6 February 2014 in the Incheon Regional Court, which ruled that the company had no right to construct a golf course on the mountain. Mt. Gyeyang remained safe.

Research Notes
Influences:

The tree occupation was inspired by the same kind of demonstration by Julia Butterfly Hill in the United States.

Sources:
You can find many kinds of informations about this movement at this site, cafe.daum.net/nogolfyespark. But unfortunately, English translation cannot be offered.
Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Jinkwon Lee, 29/03/2012 and Hayden Dahmm 15/05/2014
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