

Dear John,

I have been sick for the last 3 days, and I just kept thinking about the title and theme. Although FAR of FARMAX is Floor Area Ratio, their proposal is to make vertical architecture and compact city in the context of low-density and sprawled Dutch cities. So there is something common in the concept, but the context is quite opposite. I discussed with our curating team - 3 associate curators and 2 assistant curators, and we really like a double meaning of "The Far Game," you suggested. But I would avoid "Enabling Density." (The sub title of FARMAX is Excursion on Density.). The statement that "the real front in Korean Architecture is the center" seems another key point with the FAR Game. (Although the FAR Game applies to everywhere in Korea, even to rural areas)

As you pointed out, the real question is what the values of the expanded, encroached, or surplus space by the Far Game are. The question can be distinctively contextualized in the city of Seoul. Yes, mid-size residential and commercial projects within super blocks, particularly in LR areas such as Gangnam.

I argued the idea of '*medium architecture*' at the 2nd book on Seoul.
http://newsletter.klti.or.kr/newsletter/85st/eng/nonfiction_01.htm (The Translation is not good though)

But, I need to absorb the idea of open, democratic, and non-polarized city, plus the media and networks, and Samsung as a player, when we discuss in Athens.

While our team discusses about approaches and strategies, the idea of density discrepancy comes up. My previous analysis tells the average FAR of Seoul is about 150% in 2007 (perhaps slightly above now, let's say 175%). As Seoul is the city of triple crown in density - the most populated, densest, and most concentrated - there is a great discrepancy between population density and building density, and thus tremendous pressure of development. (Comparing Manhattan, London, and Tokyo, Seoul current FAR is a lot lower). Suppose the current building ordinances allow about the average 200%. The market tries to fill in the gap, 25%, by various ways, often illegal ones. Architects come in the scene. They satisfy clients by suggesting maximum rentable spaces on the one hand, they tries to make space of openness, freedom, and accessibility particularly on the other hand. These space has to be planned and made by government money and public institution. The Far Game fills in the gap between the role of government and the desire of the private. Within the triangle of the Far Game players- Consumer, Supplier, and Controller - architects come as a supplier, and suspends the ethical judgments about the market demand overtly, but they put social and cultural values in buildings covertly. This is a crude summary of our discussion

I am sure you are busy with wrapping up the semester like me. I hope I can prepare more materials when we meet in Athens. The two hotels near Evita's palace and beach recommended by the travel agency are not good, so I may have to make a reservation at the city center. I can roam around myself and take public transportation to your place.

Sung.