

Dear Sung,

A sentence in the December issue of the SPACE magazine, in the article by Park Gye Hyun, gives me pause for reflection. The sentence reads: "He (meaning you) reasoned that the 'floor area ratio has the hidden power to change Korean cities and architecture, and is directly connected (to) everyone's life across urban and rural life, the rich and the poor, the intellectual and working people'. Therefore he is willing to show (the correct English would be he endeavors to show) creative attempts to criticize, analyze and overcome the phenomenon.

FAR in the literal sense of Floor Area Ratio, is important everywhere because it everywhere frames the economics of real estate development and drives the geographic distribution of development density. We already know from much literature how density has effects on other things, from congestion to pollution, from cultural creativity to economic innovation. [None of this is news. The critical importance of FAR per se cannot be the core message.](#)

If one had a sharp comparison between FAR values in various cities (Meta Berghauer Pont might be of some help) then one might be able to support further, and with graphic elegance, the claim you have always made, that Seoul is exceptionally dense. In this it is of special interest, along with few other dense cities. Thus, the magnitude of FAR can be part of the message. But I do not think it is a strong enough message.

The strong message is [how architecture and culture at large has responded to FAR](#). This takes us from FAR to far. The far-reaching consequences of FAR are positive because of the creative ways in which architects have explored was to be innovative while responding to real estate pressures to maximize allowable FAR. The far-reaching consequences of high FAR – not simply of FAR – have to do with the peculiarities and strengths of contemporary Korean culture, that your exhibition must show.

[Thus the sentence should be: " He reasoned that the far-reaching consequences of the high FAR values that have been prevalent in Korea include: first, a distinctive path in the evolution of modern Korean architecture that gives it identity and strength; second, a vibrant evolution in urban culture as Korean society has creatively absorbed high density and turned it in strength. Thus, the specifically architectural, and the more broad cultural responses to FAR offer us a useful lens to better understand the current frontiers of Korean society as expressed in the architecture of the physical environment at the scale of buildings, urban areas, and cities."](#)

John