Neville and Soik, it was a pleasure to chat at the noisy café in Dutch and Korean ways. Let's see what can be unfolded in 2016, 2017, and 2030. Neville, here is a dry academic paper, but you can get a feel for what have been happing in Seoul. I also attach a crude draft statement for the Korean Pavilion, VB 2016. Enjoy with your family while you are in the city of Triple Crown of density. Cheers, Sung.

http://ocean.kisti.re.kr/downfile/volume/aik/DHGCFS/2013/v15n3/DHGCFS_2013_v15n3_133.pdf

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The FAR Game (Subtitles are being explores further)
The Korean Pavilion, the 15th International Architecture Exhibition, 2016 Venice Biennale

The FAR Game is played on the front lines of Korean architecture.

A clear identity for Korean architecture has been blurred amid the struggle between conflicting agendas: demolition vs. regeneration, private interests vs public welfare, the aesthetics of high-end architecture vs the mediocrity of functional buildings. But underneath all of these considerations, the FAR Game always rages. It touches the everyday lives of both the rich and the poor, the white-collar and the blue-collar. It has been a driving force behind the growth and amplification of Korea and its architecture for the last 50 years.

Seoul is the capital of South Korea, but one could go so far as to say it essentially *is* South Korea. It holds the Triple Crown of density: the most populated, densest, and most concentrated. Half of the population of South Korea resides in the Greater Seoul Metropolitan Area, with about half of that, or over 10 million people, living in the capital city proper. It took only 45 years for Seoul's population to reach 10 million from 1 million. Compare that with London, which went from 1 million to 8 million in 150 years, or New York City which took 170 years to accomplish the same feat. Seoul's land price has grown 1,176 times over this period, and a portion land in Gangnam, site of a new commercial and business center, has risen in value by a factor of 300,000.

The average FAR of the 640,000 buildings in Seoul is only 124%. The great discrepancy between population and building density creates tremendous pressure on development. Today, 200% is expected as the minimum threshold for new development. However, the irregular and heterogeneous urban grain, coupled with plot-based building ordinances, provides very limited opportunity to increase the city's overall FAR.

Being knowledgeable about and skillful at the FAR Game is thus not only desirable for architects; it is a prerequisite for their survival. The game is played using a triad of variables (land, law, and building) through the interactions of three players: the consumer desiring maximum volume, the supplier attempting to achieve it, and the controller restricting it.
This is the background of the FAR game currently underpinning all Korean architecture. Hence the theme of the 2016 Korean Pavilion. The exhibition will explore:

1. The context of the FAR game described above.

2. The creative responses of Korean architects seeking to maximize FAR while creating a sense of spaciousness and freedom. The extraordinary geometrical and compositional inventiveness that characterizes current architecture is the outcome of this effort.

3. The distinctive, culturally inspired aims that have driven the efforts of architects, such as the extension of openly accessible and visibly connected spaces to upper floors.

4. The larger cultural trends that define the adjustment of Korea architecture urbanism and society to higher density.

None of these patterns had yet been explicitly and fully theorized. The exhibition is a contribution to understanding the front at the core of the current transformation of Korean architecture and culture. Korean architecture that gives the emerging dense city a distinctive identity. It is part of an urban culture which creatively absorbs high density and turns it into a strength. Thus the specifically architectural and the broader cultural responses to FAR offer 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.

The FAR Game, rooted in our past, will continue to exert itself on the development of architecture in Korea well into the future. A *far game*, indeed.