

Dear Sung,

It is now dusk and I am sitting on the balcony facing towards the sea. We have been in Athens for a while, visited my mother in law, run to an exhibition on Le Corbusier's vacation cabin in France which is due to come down tomorrow, dealt with a flat tire...

The days in Venice were magical. First, it was of course both a pleasure and an honor to be there as your guest, to celebrate your achievement. Second, it was great to see Ricky and Marc act their part, and also great to touch base with them and other friends, including the many Greek friends that share the same flight back to Athens, several carrying a bag from your Pavilion, and all having extremely positive comments to make, whether seasoned professors or recent doctoral graduates or young practicing architects.

There is no doubt your pavilion was a great success: welcoming and pleasant; packed with well-organized analysis; clearly narrated; very beautifully presented in graphic formats. It had a story to tell, it told the story with confidence, it was clearly a story grounded on serious research. We have already discussed how your pavilion was the only research oriented national pavilion. As I read the book, drinking Campari and watching the sea, I am struck by the clarity that would attract non-specialists as was your intention.

If I allow myself to think about you rather than the pavilion and the work in it, these are my main thoughts.

1. You have taken an important step up. Take time to digest it and become comfortable with it. Frankfurt was great. Venice was more mature, more on target, more aimed, and more accomplished.
2. You have demonstrated an ability to motivate a fair-sized team of mostly younger people. The ability to mobilize others to a common aim is the most important characteristic of leadership.
3. You have commanded the respect of peers who are objectively competitors. You are now competitors in a common arena, rather than you getting in through a wall they defend. And, in my opinion, those competitors stand with respect and honesty not with malice. So the competition can be turned into a positive force, if you were to join them in specifying the agenda, leaving disagreements to develop as they might. I trust ideas and good arguments, I do not worry about exposing them to competition.

So several things come next. Perhaps companion edited volumes on: (1) Rules and policies as reflections of intentions/desires normative values – for example how to sustain diversity of investment and investors, of uses and functions, of architectural languages; (2) Architectural outcomes and values, maybe highlighted by organized discussions with architects and their clients with academic critics from different fields; (3) cultural values and practices enabled by the architecture – the “living in the city” theme. Perhaps these volumes could follow upon workshops/forum events/panel discussions.

Your own book “Seoul” is quite a different matter. I imagine it having a history part, of course, and the history part includes the history of key regulations/legislation. I imagine it having a descriptive/phenomenological part, “the city today” and this part has to make room for many voices, and perhaps, with you as author, these voices can be the voices of architecture. Perhaps the architecture of buildings is the entry into culture. One model for that is Balfour's book on Berlin or even the more recent one on Temple Mount. I also imagine it having a part on paths forward, an

identification of kernels of DNA that could be projected into the future, including, for example Gangnam Urbanism. If I allow myself a cheap pun based on sound: Seoul is about soul. The soul is the middle of the book, the genesis of the city is part 1 and the DNAs of the future are the third part.

But I will keep reflecting and maybe write more. For now, I celebrate in silence as the dusk come in, and I will celebrate in society once my friends arrive for a spaghetti.

You have been a wonderful friend and a wonderful colleague. Or, to be precise, you have been a generous friend and an inspiring colleague.

Thank you.

John

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