

# DDP Controversy and the Dilemma of H-Sang Seung's "Landscape"

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## Abstract

Zaha Hadid's design of the DDP (2007-13) in Seoul has been criticized for its seeming disinterest in the site's sense of place. The most consistent critic against the design is H-Sang Seung (b. 1952), one of the participants in the 2007 competition for the project. For Seung, careful consideration of "the record and story of our lives...written on the land," which was to be theorized under the name "landscape" (2009), should have been the starting point of the present DDP. Though very cogent, however, his opinion cannot but encounter a dilemma in the fact that the futuristic DDP will also be established as one layer of the "landscape" on the site. In addition, his "landscape" theory, partly supported by Heidegger's concept of place, could be criticized based on criticism of Heidegger. For example, Neil Leach (1998)—after Jean-François Lyotard (1987)—sensed "a potential violence" and "the logic of exclusion" in the Heideggerian place. In the contemporary context of "the heterogeneous, open cosmopolis," Leach argues, we should pursue "cosmopolitan architectures" transcending "the rigid constraints of the *genius loci*." On the basis of Leach's argument, this paper aims for a critical re-reading of Seung's "landscape," revealing his dilemma in the DDP controversy.

**Keywords:** DDP controversy; H-Sang Seung; landscape; place; criticism of Heidegger

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## 1. Introduction

The Dongdaemun Design Plaza & Park, or DDP, which was completed in November 2013 following the design of Zaha Hadid (1950-2016), must be one of the most controversial buildings in Seoul, Korea. So far, the DDP has aroused numerous arguments in newspapers, magazines, and symposiums, in which many have assaulted this alien object, while some defended it for the potential for new architecture.<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of a global architectural trend, it is undoubtedly a fascinating design with the architect's typical fluid form, made possible by the so-called "parametricism" that Hadid's collaborator Patrick Schumacher (b. 1961) advocates as "the great new style of the 21st century."<sup>2</sup> As originally depicted in her competition-winning entry in 2007, entitled "Metonymic Landscape," the completed building seems to blur "the boundary between architecture and park" with its curvaceous metallic body, despite some design alterations during the prolonged seven-year project period. In addition, it creates a striking landscape in one of the busiest spots

in the metropolis, whether or not it is really metonymic with the whole city, as first proposed. Truly, this unusual building has presented visitors with a fresh experience of space and vista since its opening to the public in March 2014, and it has now become a must-see in Seoul. From the start of the project, the Seoul Metropolitan Government hoped for a sort of "Bilbao effect" in order to restore the diminished commercial district around Dongdaemun, the east gate of old Seoul in the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910).<sup>3</sup>

However, the intention of the city government was derived to a large degree from the political ambitions of Mayor Se-Hoon Oh. This is an important background to the criticism of the DDP project. Right after his term of office began in July 2006, Oh initiated various architectural projects, which were soon to be supported by the catchphrase "Design Seoul." Among them, the DDP is representative. This building was to have been completed by early 2010 as a brilliant landmark, not only because Seoul was designated as "World Design Capital 2010" by ICSID (International Council of Societies of Industrial Design) in 2007, but also because Oh would run for a second term as mayor in June 2010.<sup>4</sup> (It is evident that he bore in mind the route of former Mayor Myung-Bak Lee, who sparked a national and international issue through similar works—notably the Cheonggyecheon Restoration project between 2003 and 2005—and was eventually elected 17th President of the Republic of Korea in December 2007.) This hasty schedule for the DDP

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project seemed to omit serious consideration of a number of small merchants working in the area—namely, how they could be relocated—and of its contents—namely, what kinds of specific programs the building should contain. The argument has been made that what the Seoul Metropolitan Government really wanted was simply the iconic surface created by the world "starchitect."<sup>5</sup> What is worse, the city authority could not have had enough time to carry out more insightful archaeological research of the building site before the project was initiated. Abutting Dongdaemun, the DDP site has accumulated various layers of time, such as remains of the old city wall of the Joseon Dynasty and the football and baseball stadium, first built in 1925 during the Japanese colonial period (1910-45) and remodeled in the 1950s and 60s. Additionally, a local market spontaneously formed around the site, part of which still exists now. Though not inconceivable, the historic Dongdaemun area turned out to have preserved many more historic artifacts beneath the earth than ever expected, and expanded archaeological investigations into the site suspended the DDP's construction work for a year. Therefore, we may infer that the most crucial criticism of the project relates to the historicity of the site and the "spirit of place," in addition to its political twist. How seriously did Hadid try to understand the historical context of the DDP area? How much did her "great new style" acknowledge its sense of place?



Fig.1. The Present DDP, Designed by Zaha Hadid  
(Courtesy of Eugene Lim, Wikimedia Commons)



Fig.2. Seung's Competition Entry for the DDP, 2007  
(Courtesy of IROJE architects & planners)

H-Sang Seung (b. 1952), currently the most influential architect in Korea and a prolific writer, is obviously the most consistent critic against the DDP design by Hadid. As one of the eight architects invited to the DDP competition, he proposed a scheme entitled "Culturescape" that would preserve the "placeness" of the site and highlight its "expression of history," rather than building another monument. According to his project description, there were three concrete strategies for this: "to recover the original topography by creating an artificial urban hill; to restore history by rebuilding the Old City Wall; and to leave the stadium open, and thus reserve it as modern remains."<sup>6</sup> The accompanying drawings also vividly illustrate the complex layers of topography and history. Seung's idea was exactly opposite that of Hadid, whose splendid monument appears to be self-sufficient and not significantly involved in its context.<sup>7</sup> It has been a decade since the competition, but Seung still argues that his design is much better than the winner's.<sup>8</sup> His basis for criticism against Hadid is, of course, consideration of the given site, which is partly supported by Heidegger, among others. For Seung, because each place has its own record and memory, its "placeness" should be a starting point of every project. He developed this idea of place into the concept of "landscript" and published it in an eponymous book (2009): "The record and story of our lives are written on the land. The land is thus a grand and noble book of history, and thus is as precious as precious can be. Let us call this the landscript... Architecture must begin by carefully listening to the new demands of the land."<sup>9</sup>

The "landscript," his "first theoretical, methodological statement since *Beauty of Poverty*"<sup>10</sup> (1992; 1996), appears to have appealed to the public just as greatly. Not only has the book been reprinted several times, but Seung's frequent public lectures have also centered on this fancy word and idea, "landscript." However, this idea is in fact nothing new, no matter how fresh it may look. Although we cannot deny the importance of place, Seung's overemphasis on it appears at times naïve, in particular to those who have come through diverse discourses after modernism—from Martin Heidegger's "dwelling" (1951) to Marc Augé's "non-places" (1995), from Christian Norberg-Schulz's "genius loci" (1980) to Neil Leach's "the dark side of the domus" (1998). In addition, the concept of "landscript" alludes strongly to that of a "palimpsest"—rewriting of text on traces of other erased texts, to reuse expensive parchment in the medieval era—the popularity of which has waned in architecture since Peter Eisenman's active employment of the literary metaphor for his projects in the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> Concerning Seung's criticism of Hadid's DDP, which is always accompanied by discussion of "landscript," it is arguable that his outlook could attract counter-criticism in return. This is because the currently unfamiliar DDP will also be established as another unique layer of

"landscript" on the site. If so, how can we understand the DDP controversy and Seung's architectural idea? On the basis of various discussions related to the concept of place, primarily Leach's critical view of Heidegger, this paper aims for a critical re-reading of Seung's "landscript," revealing the dilemma that he faces in the present DDP.

## 2. The Architect H-Sang Seung and the Genesis of "Landscript"

To begin with, we need a basic understanding of Seung and his architecture. Born in 1952, he studied architecture at Seoul National University and worked for Swoo-Geun Kim (1931-86) at Space Group of Korea for 15 years, starting in 1974. The strict training that he underwent through his master Swoo-Geun Kim, the most renowned architect in 20th-century Korea, became a firm foundation for Seung's growth as the next leader in Korean architecture. After establishing his own office in 1989, which was soon named "IROJE,"<sup>12</sup> he strove to leave his master's shadow and find his own architectural language. His membership in the "4.3 Group" was very decisive at that time because it provided him with a valuable chance to crystallize and express his ideas. The 4.3 Group was a meeting of 14 young independent architects in Korea in the 1990s. They met regularly to provide criticism of each other's projects and to study together; they went on fieldtrips in Korea and abroad; and they held an exhibition of their architecture together with a publication. Through these activities, which lasted four to five years, the young architects' group deepened their architectural thinking and broadened their intellectual scope, eventually becoming a seed to upgrade Korean architectural culture in retrospect.<sup>13</sup>

Seung regards himself as the principal beneficiary of the 4.3 Group.<sup>14</sup> This is true, above all, in terms of his theorizing of the "beauty of poverty," now a kind of brand name for H-Sang Seung's architecture. His short essay "Beauty of Poverty," written for the 4.3 Group exhibition catalogue in 1992, was enlarged and published in 1996 as a book with the same title.<sup>15</sup> At the beginning of the book, he argues for "purposefulness," "sense of place," and "sense of the era" as three conditions of architecture needed to overcome another fin-de-siècle mood in Korea. On this premise, he asserts the "beauty of poverty," in which "it is more important to use than to have, to share than to add, to empty than to fill." Thus far, this paradoxical beauty—rooted both in the spirit of the traditional Korean literati and the Puritanism of Christianity—has been not only highly lauded but also harshly criticized.<sup>16</sup> However, this aesthetic is indubitably the basic conceptual frame through which Seung's architecture has been interpreted from the Sujoldang residence (1992-93) onwards, and Seung himself came to underline it as "a critique towards Western culture of the 20th century."<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, his coordination

of the Paju Book City (1998-2007) is notable among his numerous projects to date because of his use of the term "landscape script," borrowing from Florian Beigel (b. 1941), who collaborated with him in the planning of Paju Book City. In an essay for the design guideline, Beigel compares the city plan to a painting by Paul Klee that seems like a "parchment"—of which the reused page is a "palimpsest"—and argues that the proposed plan resembles "a script in the landscape."<sup>18</sup> Surely, Seung's coining of the term "landscript" was indebted to Beigel's "landscape script," and the concepts of the two overlap to a large degree.<sup>19</sup>

As suggested in the introduction, Seung regards the "landscript" as his next theory to follow the "beauty of poverty," and always presents his DDP scheme as its example. We have also seen his definition of the "landscript": "the record and story of our lives... written on the land." This concept of "landscript" can be better understood through his explanation of Korean words based on Chinese letters. The Korean equivalent of "landscript" is "jimun," or "지문 (地文)," as Seung wrote, in which "ji" means "land" and "mun" means "script." Interestingly, "jimun" can also be written as "지문 (地紋)." Its pronunciation (that is, its Korean word) is the same, but the final Chinese letter is replaced by "紋," meaning "pattern." Thus, the word can be literally translated as "land-pattern." Here, Seung was smart enough to link this "jimun" to the pure Korean word "터무늬 / 터무니"—pronounced "teomuni"—which means "a pattern inscribed on the ground," and also to another "jimun" (指紋), meaning "fingerprint." He explains, "as every fingerprint is unique, so is the pattern of every piece of land."<sup>20</sup> Seung's interweaving of these words and meanings is certainly fascinating. Through this etymological play of words,<sup>21</sup> he enriches the meaning of "landscript" and ultimately stresses the importance of the records and memories of each place—in short, "placeness." From this point of view, it becomes clear that the "landscript" is not a theory independent of the "beauty of poverty," but a derivative of it. We must recollect that one of the three conditions of architecture in *Beauty of Poverty* (1996) was its "sense of place": "Occupying a unique piece of land, architecture must respond to the particular conditions of the place... Only thus can it recuperate its sense of place."<sup>22</sup> This description exactly parallels the idea of "landscript." What differs is that the latter is clothed in an elaborate word in both English and Korean. One of the premises of the "beauty of poverty" was picked up, embossed, and theorized for Seung's updated concept.

Seung's "landscript" theory is very attractive, and has logical validity with various references. For example, "aerial photographs of ruins" by Georg Gerster (b. 1928) showed him "the history imbedded deep in the land" and Italo Calvino's (1923-85) novel *Invisible Cities* told him that "the city contains its past like the lines of a hand"<sup>23</sup>—a concept that directly relates to



Seung's fingerprint "jimun" ( 指紋 ). However, his citation of Heidegger seems more essential to the idea of "landscipt" and place: "Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) declared that being is achieved through dwelling and that only poetic man can dwell. Dwelling leaves traces on the land; it is a process that stores memory."<sup>24</sup> As is well known, referring to Heidegger for the concept of place has been a fashion in architecture, particularly since Christian Norberg-Schulz's *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980). Acknowledging his debt to Heidegger's ideas of "dwelling," Norberg-Schulz pointed out the dwelling's implication that "the spaces where life occurs are places." For him, "the task of the architect is to create meaningful places." In other words, "architecture means to visualize the *genius loci*" or "spirit of place."<sup>25</sup> Seung's theory of "landscipt" can be understood as belonging to this trend, which has endured for the last several decades or more.

### 3. Heideggerian "Place" and the Myth of the *Domus*

If Seung's theory of "landscipt" is fundamentally rooted in—or at least shares a great deal in common with—Heideggerian thought, it is possible to critically assess the former based on criticism of the latter. The German philosopher is best known for his phenomenological and existentialist thinking, which has been highly influential on later thinkers and, also, on architects. His ontological pursuit of "Being" and "Dasein"—literally "there-being" or "being-there"—was accompanied by the question of man's "situatedness" in the world. This question is intimately related to the question of dwelling and, ultimately, the question of place. It is in his essay "Bauen, Wohnen, Denken," or "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (1951), that these issues, which are involved in architecture, were deeply explored.<sup>26</sup> As the title implies, this essay emphasizes the interrelation between "building" and "dwelling" (and "thinking"), grounded in etymological explanations. Yet the order of priority was reversed: "Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build." To build, one must first learn how to dwell. Thus, "what is it to dwell?" is the key question in this essay. For Heidegger, dwelling, or etymologically 'stay[ing] in a place' (the High German word *buan*), is "being on the earth" with "everyday experience." Here, the condition of "on the earth" for human beings, who are destined to die, already includes the other important conditions of dwelling: "being under the sky" and "remaining before the divinities." Altogether, they form the famous Heideggerian "fourfold" of earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Building belongs to dwelling by bringing the four together into one, as a bridge within its concrete reality "gathers together" the banks of a river. (Heidegger's subsequent essay "...Poetically Man Dwells..." argues that to dwell authentically is to dwell poetically, and that "authentic building occurs so far as there are poets."<sup>27</sup>) In this discussion, the concept of "place"—"Ort" as well as "Platz" in German<sup>28</sup>—

is crucial. This is not only because a place allows "a site for the fourfold," but also because its specificity within a clearly bounded area is distinctive from the abstractness of space. If a space, as "spatium" and "extensio," is based on a mathematical dimension and universal application, a place, as a particular spot on the earth, is based on life experiences and specific realities. It is in these places that we dwell. This specificity of place is confirmed by the discussion of a Greek temple in Heidegger's earlier essay "The origin of the work of art" (1935). The temple was originally no more than a building, but it now "opens up a world" because it "stands there," growing out of "the rock-cleft valley" and its unique cultural context.<sup>29</sup> Heidegger's emphasis on the temple's "standing there" resonates with the notion of "being-there" and reveals the concept of place.

This attractive Heideggerian sense of place has inspired many architects and critics, those who try to overcome the alienation of modernism and to restore regional qualities, confronting "the ubiquitous placelessness" of the contemporary megalopolis.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, it has not been without challengers.<sup>31</sup> Among them, the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1924-98) is notable. In the essay "*Domus* and the megalopolis" (1987), Lyotard attacked "potential violence" implied in Heidegger's philosophy of the soil.<sup>32</sup> This criticism is indebted to the revelation of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism and anti-Semitism (which Lyotard also problematized in *Heidegger and "the jews"*).<sup>33</sup> The *domus* of this essay signifies the Heideggerian ideal home rooted in a native soil, which everyone wants to return to. In the "domestic community," however, outsiders should always be "domesticated"; otherwise, they are to be repressed: "*Homo re-domesticus* in power kills in the street shouting 'You are not one of ours.'" It is obvious that an overemphasis on the *domus*, or on belonging to the soil, homeland, and nation, is dangerous and should thus be avoided. In fact, with the emergence of the megalopolis, Lyotard argues that "domesticity is over, and probably it never existed, except as a dream of the old child awakening and destroying it on awakening." In other words, the *domus* is not just bucolic, but it also contains something "untamable," which is given "a chance to appear" from time to time. In this argument, he was supported by Freud's thesis of the uncanny (1919), in which the seemingly familiar and comfortable home also has a repressed and uncanny ("unheimlich"; unhomely) aspect.<sup>34</sup> For Lyotard, the only way to inhabit this megalopolis is "citing the lost *domus*" and "hoping for a *cosmopolitès*."

It is the architect and critic Neil Leach who took up Lyotard's argument from the architectural domain and expanded it with better-articulated ideas for the architectural audience. In the article "The dark side of the *domus*" (1998),<sup>35</sup> Leach concedes that "there is much to be praised in his [Heidegger's] work" and

that it may be wrong to read Heidegger only from the viewpoint of nationalism. Nonetheless, he asserts that there is enough room for this reading all through the philosopher's thoughts. For example, if the essay "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" argues for belonging to a place in terms of architecture, his Freiburg rectoral address in 1933 shows a much more vivid association with the propaganda of National Socialism by linking "the essence of Being" to rootedness "in the *soil and blood* of a Volk."<sup>36</sup> On this premise, Leach succeeds Lyotard. For him, Heidegger's philosophy of the "Heimat," or homeland, implies "an antagonism towards all that cannot be identified with the soil" and excludes "all minority groups" and "the other" signified by Lyotard's "the jews."<sup>37</sup> In particular, Leach uncovers the mythic face of the *domus*: "the concept of the *domus* as the stable site of 'dwelling'" is not only a myth, but "a *nostalgic* myth." According to him, a myth is not bad in itself; what is problematic is that it is "potentially deceptive...because its own identity as myth is often concealed." For this reason, Leach suspects Heidegger's reliance on "the myth of the *domus*"—that is, "the myth of place." Furthermore, Leach leads this discussion into the cultural context of late capitalism addressed by Fredric Jameson. In that context, "place" as "difference" can be considered "a product of the market." Thus, "postmodern calls for 'place' echo postmodern calls for the *domus*." Leach's alternative to the *domus* with "a single totalizing vision" is "the heterogeneous, open cosmopolis," which he apparently derived from Lyotard's "*cosmopolitès*." The cosmopolis represents the cultural conditions of contemporary society: transitory and fleeting as well as complex and pluralistic, consequently welcoming all wanderers and outsiders without exclusion. Though the city in general is at times criticized due to its alienating character, the cosmopolis can retain a tolerance that accommodates differences and "the other" because of its own anonymity. Leach is convinced of human beings' capacity to quickly adapt to new and unfamiliar conditions.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, he argues, architecture should be "open" to this heterogeneous context, transcending "the rigid constraints of the *genius loci*." This architecture is cosmopolitan, and it could be regarded as one of "cosmopolitan architectures" to reflect its pluralistic condition.

#### 4. The Present DDP and Seung's Dilemma

Leach's criticism of Heidegger is scathing and persuasive, but some do not totally agree with his judgment. For example, the Korean critic Jong-Geon Lee (2014) felt uneasy with Leach's simplification of the principles of the two opposite models—"the *domus*" vs. "the megalopolis"—without any dialectical relations, although he wholeheartedly welcomed Leach's openness to "the other." To Lee's East Asian conception, "nothing could stand alone, independent of its opposite." The two models cannot help but coexist.<sup>39</sup>

Lee's response to Leach appears valid, considering that we need not only the city but also the countryside, and that the two depend on each other in reality. However, Lee may have misread Leach's frame of argument, as Leach's point is not to polarize the two models but to reveal the negative implication of the *domus* that was concealed. In fact, Lee's claim for the dialectical coexistence of the opposites is exactly what Leach hoped for. This can be proven by Leach's reliance on Freud's concept of home (after Lyotard) that is both homely and unhomely at the same time: "Thus any definition of the term *heimlich* made 'against' the term *unheimlich* is clearly a false one."<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, this paper argues that Leach's criticism of Heidegger is still effective, without significant devaluation. Moreover, the criticism is timely and necessary, especially in the Korean context, because Heidegger has been extensively cited and relied upon in the architectural field with relatively few critical voices.<sup>41</sup>

If we accept Leach's critical view of Heidegger, we can rethink Seung's "landscript" from this viewpoint, as suggested in the introduction. Though there might be a gap between Seung's theory and Heidegger's philosophy, it is certain that the two share "the myth of place" in their fundamental ideas, to say nothing of the former's reference to the latter. Therefore, we can find some valuable lessons from Leach's reading of Heidegger in critically appraising Seung's "landscript." For example, we should be wary of excluding "the other" due to their differences from us; we should be aware of the "capitalist machine"—borrowing the Deleuzian term—that commodifies everything, including the differences of place in this late capitalist society; and, ultimately, architecture of the present city should be open to its heterogeneous context as cosmopolitan architecture(s).

Let us revisit Seung's DDP scheme "Culturescape." His attempt to revive historical and topographical memories was visualized very effectively in his competition drawings as mentioned in the introduction. He reserved part of the Dongdaemun Stadium and restored the Old City Wall and the hill abutting on the wall. We can certainly trace the overlapped memories of the area's history of the last 600 years here and breathe in a sense of place from this "landscript." Arguably, however, Seung's scheme itself—as another artificial creation—is no less unfamiliar than Hadid's owing to its artificial cuttings of historical layers and collage-like stitching up of them, and it is reminiscent of not only Eisenman's palimpsest but also Lebbeus Woods's uncanny 'scar' in the "war and architecture" project (1992).<sup>42</sup> It means that Seung's theory and practice form a very complex relation, which is often paradoxical. Considering his DDP scheme's focus on the sense of place, the intention indicates the underlying logic of exclusion; the emphasis on the difference of place can eventually be regarded as a commercial strategy in this capitalist condition; and

so, the scheme should have been more open to the heterogeneous context of the cosmopolis Seoul—as we learned from the critical reading of Heidegger. In contrast, though, because Seung's scheme looks as unfamiliar as it is nostalgic, it catches our eyes (on a different level) and hints at another possibility of increasing its commercial value in the present architectural market as Hadid's designs usually do. This is an obvious irony implied in Seung's "Culturescape" and "landscript."

It has been several years since the DDP was completed based on Hadid's design. Though we must still wait to declare that the DDP is perfectly "of the place," it can definitely be regarded as a new record inscribed onto the historic site of Seoul. For the last several years, the DDP has been settling down as one layer of the palimpsest of the Dongdaemun area and we have seemingly already become accustomed to the "Metonymic Landscape" that looked so strange at first. Our capacity to adapt to new environments is what Leach argued for under the name of "camouflage,"<sup>43</sup> against Heidegger's concept of dwelling. Here lies Seung's dilemma. We must recall that old Seoul's city wall beside the Dongdaemun was demolished by colonial Japan almost a century ago, and the sports stadium was built over it. This event may be comparable with the present building of the DDP on the site after demolishing the historic Dongdaemun stadium. In Seung's argument, though, he hardly considers the earlier conflict between old city wall and modern sports stadium, at least as concerns this DDP project. Rather, he regards the overlapping of the two conflicting factors as an accumulation of diverse historic strata, and he made the most of this for his design proposal in a positive way. This being the case, Seung's denial of Hadid's DDP is unfair. This is not because her design is impeccable and the demolition of the stadium easily justifiable, but because it was built in reality. Doesn't Seung then have to accept the unfamiliar landscape that Hadid's DDP produced, and to regard it as another layer of "landscript" on the place? Not only gradual transformation, but also abrupt change—in retrospect, this may be the actual process that most historic cities have undergone in their growth. This process embraces the unfamiliar and heterogeneous as well as the familiar and nostalgic. The future should not be bound by past memories only.

Answering a question regarding this dilemma in a recent forum,<sup>44</sup> Seung himself stated, "It is regrettable that the DDP is to become ours in our land, and it is also regrettable that I have to not only accept it but also promote it as a city architect of Seoul." This statement reveals another dilemma he is caught in. As a city architect of the Seoul Metropolitan Government, he was obligated to "promote" the DDP and to maximize its projected "Bilbao effect," no matter his reluctance.<sup>45</sup> Seung's unfavorable attitude towards the present DDP is understandable to a degree, given the

foreign architect's less serious consideration of the place along with the project's political inclination and the competition's rather unfair rules.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, Seung's remark on the present DDP also deserves criticism because it unwittingly discloses his tendency to exclude a "landscript" of the heterogeneous and a "landscript" of the future. This indicates a tendency to exclude "the other," though he would deny it.<sup>47</sup> This plausible "logic of exclusion" means a possible repression of the other, and could lead to "a potential nationalism" and, in the worst case, "a potential violence" that Leach read from (Lyotard's reading of) Heidegger. At the same forum, Seung also maintained, "If we have lost a sense of place and community in architecture, don't we have to try to restore it rather than to aggravate the loss even further?" This is a cogent answer and, probably, the best argument Seung can raise from his side. Nevertheless, his position is still nostalgic and alludes to the exclusion logic because he has not stepped out of Heidegger's *domus*. What if not only have we lost a sense of place/community, but also the place/community in fact "never existed," as Lyotard argued?<sup>48</sup> If so, this "myth of place" would be the worst dilemma Seung has to resolve.

## 5. Conclusion: Closed Past, or Open Future?

To conclude this paper, it appears necessary to further ruminate on the lessons Leach's criticism of Heidegger gives to the DDP controversy and Seung's concept of "landscript." The first lesson has been emphasized time and again: to guard against the "logic of exclusion" that might be implied in Seung's idea. In short, we should no longer deny the existence of the DDP as "the other," but accept it as a new layer of "landscript" on the place. Second, we should recognize that the place itself, owing to its difference, is a commodity in the present marketplace. The place is no longer resistant to global capitalism, as was believed before. Just as the splendid monument created by international star Hadid is a commodity, so would Seung's "Culturescape" visualizing the diverse memories of the DDP site be a commodity in the global market, had it been realized. This fact may inspire promoters of city marketing, but the phenomenon is far removed from Seung's original intention with the "landscript," and farther still from the ascetic aesthetic of the "beauty of poverty." It is another matter to discuss this all-consuming force of late capitalism, but what is certain is that Seung himself is a bestselling product in the Korean architectural market. The third and final lesson is that we should accept the cosmopolitan conditions of contemporary cities like Seoul, and aspire towards cosmopolitan architecture(s) open to a heterogeneous context. Within the tolerance that the cosmopolis and cosmopolitan architecture(s) assume, we can accommodate the differences of "the other," in turn making the cityscape richer. Here, the pursuit of "landscript" and historicity of Seoul



could be one important mode of architecture among many others, inasmuch as it is not too restrictive. The DDP as it was built, though scandalous in its early development, will eventually prove metonymic with Seoul the cosmopolis.

Despite this paper's critical stance on Seung's architecture, it does not deny that "there is much to be praised" in his idea of "landscript." The ground for this paper's criticism is, rather, the belief that he is the most prominent architect in Korea. Arguably, his prominence is attributable to his ability to describe his architectural ideas in lucid words, both spoken and written. It is an ability to persuade not only his own clients but also the general public. Risking a slight exaggeration, he is the only architect in Korea who can communicate with the general public. Because of that, however, his words seem rhetorical and often deviate from his real buildings. What matters is that both his words and his buildings have been circulated by and large in a unidirectional way, without "a process to go through an unsparing interrogation."<sup>49</sup> This paper is meaningful as a part of such interrogation. Critical understanding of Seung's architecture is expected to give us a balanced view of contemporary Korean architecture as a whole. Korea is happy with the architect H-Sang Seung, but would be much happier if his "landscript" in the DDP dilemma were more open to the other and to the future.

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The conflicts caused by the project were partly documented in *Dongdaemun Design Plaza & Park 1* (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2013), though from the Seoul Metropolitan Government's point of view. The sharpest criticism can be found in Park, E. (ed.) (2013) *Hidden History of Dongdaemun Design Park and the Star Architect*, Seoul: Listen to the City; and an open advocacy for the DDP in Lee, K. (2014) *Civically Incorrect Buildings*, Seoul: Prunsoop, pp.278-317. On the other hand, In-Sung Kim has recently published a series of beautiful essays on the DDP and Baroque from his Deleuzian point of view in *Architectural Critics Association* 4-6 (2015-2016).
- <sup>2</sup> Schumacher, P. (2013) "Dongdaemun Design Plaza as milestone of parametricism," *Space*, 549, pp.55-56.
- <sup>3</sup> Regarding the background of the DDP as a "city marketing" strategy, see *Dongdaemun Design Plaza & Park 1*, op. cit., pp.11-76.
- <sup>4</sup> Kyung-Hoon Lee, one of the DDP project committee members, reported that it needed to be completed by March 2010 because of the next mayoral election scheduled in June. KAAH (2008) "symposium record: *World Design Park & Complex and Korean Architects*, Korean Association of Architectural Historians symposium, March 15, 2008," *Journal of Architectural History*, 17(3), pp.89-119.
- <sup>5</sup> Shim, Y. (2013) "Unfamiliar metonymy in the urban landscape," *Space*, 549, pp.70-71.
- <sup>6</sup> Seung, H. (2007) "Participant Seung H-Sang," *Space*, 478, pp.132-133.
- <sup>7</sup> This does not mean that Hadid totally erased the traces of history. The city wall was restored in part and some remains were preserved on site or relocated. However, this minimum treatment is not at all comparable with Seung's active consideration of the place.

- <sup>8</sup> H-Sang Seung's presentation at the 2nd ACA (Architectural Critics Association) Forum of 2016, entitled "Foundation for H-Sang Seung Architecture," held in Junglim Architecture, Seoul, on April 30, 2016.
- <sup>9</sup> Seung, H. (2009) *Landscript: The Inscription of Nature and Life on the Land*, Seoul: Youlhwadang, pp.79-80.
- <sup>10</sup> Seung (2009), op. cit., p.9.
- <sup>11</sup> The Wexner Center in Columbus, Ohio (1983-89) is one example in which the palimpsest idea was realized. See Blundell Jones, P. and Canniffe, E. (2007) *Modern Architecture Through Case Studies 1945-1990*, London: Architectural Press, pp.201-212. The allusion of "landscript" to "palimpsest" was suggested in Lee, J. (2013) "Everyday architecture, fusion and landscript," *WIDE*, 33.
- <sup>12</sup> Originating in a Chinese classic, this name means "a house of a poor Confucian scholar." Seung, H. (2015) *Seung H-Sang Document*, Seoul: Youlhwadang, p.166.
- <sup>13</sup> The name of the group originated from the date of first meeting, on April 3, 1990, and at that time, all members were in their 30s and 40s. The members were, for example, Sung-Yong Joh, In-Cheurl Kim, Hyun-Sik Min, and H-Sang Seung. For the historical record and assessment of the 4.3 Group, see Pai, H. et al. (2014) *Korean Architecture in the Transitional Period and the 4.3 Group*, Seoul: Zip.
- <sup>14</sup> H-Sang Seung's remark at the Forum of Modern Architecture Research Group & Mokchon Architecture Archive, entitled "Korean Architecture in the Transitional Period and the 4.3 Group," held in KCDF Gallery, Seoul, on December 6, 2012.
- <sup>15</sup> Seung, H. (1996) *Beauty of Poverty*, Seoul: Migeonsa. This Korean-English bilingual book had its English translation improved and came to be republished as a part of Pai, P. (2007) *Sensuous Plan: The Architecture of Seung, H-Sang*, Paju: Dongnyok, pp.495-547. The English expressions cited in this paper follow this new edition.
- <sup>16</sup> For example, Sang-Hae Lee regarded it as "a great phrase" with a more profound meaning than Seung ever knew. Seung, H. "Afterword: A small wish." In: Pai (2007), op. cit., p.551. For Jong-Geon Lee, however, the beauty of poverty is too focused on aesthetics than ethics, and irrelevant to Seung, who is far removed from "poverty" in the Korean architectural context. Lee, J. (2001) *Narcissism of Deviating from the Center*, Seoul: Iseok Media, pp.89-96.
- <sup>17</sup> Seung (2009), op. cit., p.135.
- <sup>18</sup> Beigel, F. (1999) "Paju landscape script design strategies 06.99." Republished in: Seung, H. (ed.) (2010) *Paju Bookcity Culturescape*, Seoul: Kimoondang, pp.46-52. This book also gives an account of the collaboration between Seung and Beigel in London.
- <sup>19</sup> Strangely, however, Seung never mentions Beigel in his discussion of "landscript."
- <sup>20</sup> Seung (2009), op. cit., pp.70-80.
- <sup>21</sup> This is reminiscent of the "word games" that Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman played concerning "chora" in their collaboration on a part of Parc de la Villette in the 1980s.
- <sup>22</sup> Seung, *Beauty of Poverty*. In: Pai (2007), op. cit., pp.499-501.
- <sup>23</sup> Seung (2009), op. cit., pp.74-75.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70.
- <sup>25</sup> Norberg-Schulz, C. (1980) *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York: Rizzoli, p.5.
- <sup>26</sup> Heidegger, M. (1951) "Building, Dwelling, Thinking." Reprinted in: Leach (ed.) (1997) *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, London: Routledge, pp.100-109.
- <sup>27</sup> Heidegger, M. (1951) "...Poetically Man Dwells..." Reprinted in: Leach (ed.) (1997), op. cit., pp.109-119. Seung's citation of Heidegger also refers to this essay, but all of Heidegger's "jargon of authenticity" was harshly criticized by Theodor Adorno (*Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, 1964). Thus, it is doubtful that Seung's "Culturescape," borrowed from Adorno's "Kulturlandschaft," is really compatible with his Heideggerian idea.

<sup>29</sup> Although the standard English version of the essay follows the convention of translating the German "Ort" as "location" and "Platz" as "place" to distinguish the two different words, the English "place" reflects the proper meaning of both German words in Heidegger's sense. Regarding this translation matter, see Sharr, A. (2007) *Heidegger for Architects*, London: Routledge, pp.50-52. It is confirmed in the German edition of Norberg-Schulz (1980), which translates "the spirit of place" into "der Geist des Ortes." Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci. Landschaft, Lebensraum, Baukunst*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982.

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, M. (1935) "The origin of the work of art." Reprinted in: Leach (ed.) (1997), *op. cit.*, pp.119-124.

<sup>31</sup> Frampton, K. (1983) "Towards a critical regionalism." In: Foster, H. (ed.) *The Anti-Aesthetic*, Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, pp.16-30.

<sup>32</sup> For example, Hilde Heynen contrasted Norberg-Schulz's Heidegger reading with that of Massimo Cacciari, for whom "Non-dwelling is the characteristic of life in the metropolis" and "the home is past, it no longer is" ("Eupalinos or architecture," *Oppositions* 21, 1980). The latter's view resonates with earlier critiques of Heidegger by Adorno (1964), Emmanuel Levinas ("Heidegger, Gargarine et nous", *Information Juive* 131, 1961), etc. Heynen argues that Heidegger's idea of dwelling is inevitably opposed to our present condition of "modernity." Heynen, H. (1993) "Worthy of question: Heidegger's role in architectural theory," *Archis*, 12, pp.42-49.

<sup>33</sup> Lyotard, J. (1987) "Domus and the megalopolis." Reprinted in: Leach (ed.) (1997), *op. cit.*, pp.271-279.

<sup>34</sup> Lyotard, J. (1990) *Heidegger and "the jews"*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Here, Lyotard uses "the jews" (lowercase, plural, with quotation marks) to indicate not only actual Jews but also all outsiders.

<sup>35</sup> Freud, S. (2003) *The Uncanny*, London: Penguin, pp.123-162.

<sup>36</sup> Leach, N. (1998) "The dark side of the domus," *The Journal of Architecture*, 3(1), pp.31-42.

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, M. (1933) "The self-assertion of the German university." Cited in: Leach (1998), *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> See note 33.

<sup>39</sup> In this article, Leach's argument for the capacity is only concerned with technological objects. However, he expands the discussion and locates our "chameleon-like" adaptability within broader surroundings, including the architectural environment. Leach, N. (2006) *Camouflage*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

<sup>40</sup> Lee, J. (2014) *Problems*, Seoul: Spacetime, pp.122-130.

<sup>41</sup> Leach (1998), *op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> See note 31. However, Leach's critical voice sounds more determined than any other's, and even urges us to "forget Heidegger" in another writing *Forget Heidegger* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006).

<sup>43</sup> Kim, H. (2013), "A Study on Symbolic Expression of Crises in Lebbeus Woods's Architecture," *Journal of the Architectural Institute of Korea*, 301, pp.201-208.

<sup>44</sup> See note 38.

<sup>45</sup> The 2nd ACA Forum of 2016. See note 8.

<sup>46</sup> Seung has recently completed his role as the first City Architect of Seoul Metropolitan Government (2014-16). Though he was not directly responsible for the management of the DDP, all policies concerning public architectural activities in Seoul had to come through his review.

<sup>47</sup> For example, Korean participants in the competition also had to make a presentation of their design in English.

Though he argued in the ACA Forum of 2016 that he dislikes a dichotomous way of thinking, it is unfortunate that he often hints at this tendency in his public lectures. In brief, the modern West is hierarchical, functionalistic, and aesthetic, while the traditional Korea is non-hierarchical, spiritual, and ethical. This argument misleads the audience to conclude that the former is bad while the latter is good. See Kim, H. (2012) "[Review] East Asian architecture in-between the regional responsibility and the freedom of consciousness," *Architect*, 258, pp.26-28.

<sup>48</sup> Lyotard's argument parallels Adorno's and Cacciari's. See note 31.

<sup>49</sup> Lee, J. (2016) "Limitations and possibilities of H-Sang Seung's architecture," *Architectural Critics Association*, 6, pp.196-213.

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