
Urban Nesting

ERIC D. REEDER

Konkuk University

Urban nesting project is conceived from three main points; first, the shifting demographics of Seoul, second, the reuse of aging apartments in the city, and finally, strategizing reuse as method in connecting with the Han River/ natural systems corridor. We see this project as a model of in-situ responsibility, demonstrating the viability of adaptive response (and reuse) in the aging city and in doing so, diversifying housing options for a shifting population. Further, adaptations gives us second chances, to situate ourselves more integrally, within the complex urban milieu of Seoul.

DOMESTIC FORMULATIONS

For a majority of Korean citizens, achieving residence in a high rise apartment in Seoul is a lifelong dream. However, in the eyes of some preservationists and residents, these clustered developments (know as APT Dangi) are devouring the city's neighborhoods. The Seoul city government itself has been an enabler in developing and redeveloping the apartment type to make way for the latest models in high density, high rise housing. Approximately 80% of newly constructed residential projects in Seoul are apartments (2008 city records). Some estimates today put the number of families living in APT at more than 50% of the city's residential population. This is 13 times higher than in 1970 when APTs first emerged as the national choice for urban living. We recognize now though, a movement is taking shape to challenge practices in APT development, particularly that of demolish and rebuild.

There are two major issues challenging residential needs in Korea today. For one, the nuclear family is quickly declining with more and more single people choosing to marry late, if at all. With shrinking family sizes (and lower birthrates) there is a new class of housing seekers. The second issue facing housing today is the exponential growth of the elderly population. As of 2009, the percentage of the Korean population over the age of 60 was approximately 15.1% (UN report). This number is projected to grow substantially over the next 50 years. The aging population increase is greatly altering urban housing needs and we can surmise today that smaller housing alternatives will be necessary in years to come.

URBAN SYSTEMS

The Han River corridor is the lifeline of Seoul. For centuries, it has been the desirable location of domestic and economic sustenance. The rivers industrial misuse and ensuing engineered reconstruction through the later part of the 20th century, is today being reclaimed. The water corridor has re-emerged as place of pocketed ecology where species thrive independent of the surrounding metropolis. By example, seasonal migratory birds nest through winter months on their journey's from north to south and back again. The Han River, in a sense, is now a vibrant point of interconnected contact for urban residents and a renewed nature. Thus, our proposition launches from this point, at rivers edge, where many aging apartments are situated; as we see it, a new confluence of domesticity.

