Recreating Dongdaemun Stadium in South Korea: Beyond Japanese Colonial Memories and towards a Global City*

Hyun Kyung Lee

Built in 1925 during the Japanese colonial period, Dongdaemun Stadium was the first modern sports stadium in Seoul, the capital of Korea. During the Japanese colonial occupation and after liberation, especially in the 1960s–80s, Korean sports fans experienced numerous significant victories at Dongdaemun. This article investigates how Dongdaemun Stadium, part of the Japanese colonial legacy, became the Dongdaemun Design Plaza and Park (DDP), a landmark of the new Seoul and a social, cultural, and economic hub. From the perspectives of heritage studies, it illuminates how colonial legacies were dealt with in post-colonial Korean society, and how urban heritage sites influence the re-creation of city identities and represent city memory. In particular, it examines memory conflicts between city authorities and a diverse cohort of opponents: civic groups, sports fans, baseball professionals, and small-scale merchants. Analyzing three main conflicts—concerning the site's history, sporting events, and the surrounding market as a space to live and work—this article scrutinizes how the stadium’s accumulated city memories were negotiated and managed, and how selected memories have been visually represented here as an outcome of these memory conflicts. Finally, considering the controversies regarding the DDP project, this article addresses how new

* This work is based, in part, on the author’s Ph.D. dissertation, “Dealing with ‘difficult heritage’: South Korea’s responses to Japanese colonial occupation architecture” (University of Cambridge, 2015). This is an extension of that work, investigating new research questions in the context of Asian global cities. When Romanizing Korean words, I use ‘the Revised Romanization of Korean’. However, in the case of internationally known proper nouns and terms, such as the names of Korean Presidents, I follow the spelling as internationally used.

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Hyun Kyung Lee (hklee2278@gmail.com) is a post-doctoral researcher at the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University, and at the Centre for Research in Arts, Social Sciences, Humanities (CRASSH), University of Cambridge.

Introduction: Dongdaemun Stadium as a Japanese Colonial legacy and an Urban Heritage

Dongdaemun Stadium, located near Seoul’s East Gate and built in 1925 during the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea (1910–45), was Korea’s first modern sports stadium. Hosting fixtures in soccer and baseball, the site assumed a special place in the memories of Korean sports fans, who found at the site cathartic release from their suffering under both colonial rule and the military dictatorships that followed from the 1960s to 1980s. This article investigates how this stadium, an unmistakable component of the Japanese colonial legacy, came to be converted in the early twenty-first century into the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (hereafter DDP), a cultural and economic landmark of the new Seoul. In particular, it explores the transforming relationship between the stadium and its surroundings, a neighbourhood that since the early 1980s has been a hub for the Korean fashion industry (Han 2004; Yi and Kim 2010). Exploring the transformation of the site illuminates how the creation of urban heritage sites influences the recreation of city identities and represents people’s memories of a city. This aids the understanding of approaches to dealing with colonial legacies in the context not only of post-colonial Korean society, but also across globalized Asian countries.

In order to trace these transformation processes of the Dongdaemun Stadium site, I use the lens of heritage studies in the context of Korean studies. According to current perspectives of heritage studies, heritage is seen as a social process (e.g. Byrne 2003; Smith 2006; Dolff-Bonekämper 2008), and is highly constructed through “the selective use of the past for contemporary purposes” (Ashworth and Graham 2017, 7; see also Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Graham et al. 2000; Graham and Howard 2008). Due to present-centered perspectives, heritage is also made through “a highly politicized process that is subject to contestation and bound up in construction, reconstruction and

visual representations and newly constructed narratives affect city identities.

Keywords: South Korea, Japanese colonial memories, Dongdaemun Stadium, DDP (Dongdaemun Design Plaza and Park) project, urban heritage, memory conflict, place biography

1. The site is known commonly as Dongdaemun (東大門), but its official name in the Joseon Dynasty was Heunginjimun (興仁之門).
deconstruction of memory and identity” (Whelan 2003, quoted in McDowell 2008, 43). Hence, a heritage-making process, called heritagization, is frequently used to legitimate the present politics, and inevitably implies political conflicts, memory conflicts, and social contradictions (Lowenthal 1985, 2; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Graham et al. 2000, 17; Bell 2003, 73; McDowell 2008, 43). As a result of heritagization, a heritage site significantly affects to shape particular place-identities to support the winners of these conflicts (e.g. Ashworth and Larkham 2013).

From the perspectives of heritage studies, the Dongdaemun Stadium site can be seen as a colonial and urban “heritage,” and its transformation processes can be called “heritagization,” entailing political and memory conflicts between various stakeholders who have endeavored to visually represent certain memories and politics. In scrutinizing the heritagization of the Dongdaemun Stadium site, “place biography” is applied as a core method and suitable concept for teasing out the complicated dynamics surrounding it. Place biography entails investigating involvements and events around a single place in chronological order (e.g. Ashmore 2007; Brown 2009; Sørensen and Viejo-Rose 2015). As a place can be regarded as a living area connected to people and the wider landscape, the place biography technique used in this article not only investigates the linear lifespan of a place but also explores the mutual dynamics among the people, other places, and things attached to the place (Sørensen and Viejo-Rose 2015). In the case of Dongdaemun Stadium, place biography simultaneously highlights the complicated dynamics linking the stadium to its surroundings and elucidates popular involvement in decision-making processes that relate to the reconstruction of Seoul’s identity as a whole. The approach allows us to investigate the relationships between sites, people, and memories, and, moreover, the factors that generate the shifting meanings of the site over time.

This place biography focuses on two main aspects of the site’s social construction and political uses: 1) memory formation, and 2) heritagization. In these processes, I pay particular attention to the formation of collective memory hand in hand with heritagization. Collective memory is understood as a socially articulated process similar to heritage through which the past is selected and reconstructed according to how the present intends to remember it (Halbwachs 1992; Irwin-Zaercka 1994; Olick and Levy 1997; Podoler 2011). On the level of society, the formation of collective memory and heritagization is the core element of the construction of the collective stories/narratives/perceptions of the past that enhance the identity of a society (Takei 1998; Bell 2003; Podoler 2007; Graham and Howard 2008). Placing the collective memory and
heritagization of Dongdaemun in the context of Asian global cities, with respect to the first point, I explain how diverse memories of the Dongdaemun Stadium site have been formulated, paying attention to the site’s original significance and changing roles. Considering how dramatically the Japanese colonial period changed this place, I divide the processes of memory formation into three historical layers, representing respectively the periods before, during, and after the Japanese occupation. Stratifying the various memories accumulated in the Dongdaemun Stadium site thus permits a deeper understanding of why it was preferable to preserve or obliterate certain memories during heritagization. With regard to heritagization, I shed light on how an urban heritage site was created through power struggles and memory conflicts during the negotiation of the stadium’s fate. This analysis shows us how the memories attached to the place were deconstructed and reconstructed in the course of conflicts between diverse stakeholders (namely the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), historians, sportspeople, and merchants), and how the processes influenced the reconstruction of a city identity and memory. Finally, in light of the controversies that surrounded the DDP project, this article addresses the extent to which new visual representations and newly constructed narratives affect city identities.

The research is based on archival investigation, interviews with professionals and site visitors, and participant observation at the site. With regard to archival research, two government reports (Jungwon munhwajae yonguwon 2011; hereafter JCPI [Jungwon Cultural Property Institute] 2011 and Seoul Metropolitan Government 2013; hereafter SMG 2013) help us understand the historical background to this place and the entire process of converting the site into the DDP. Acknowledging that these two reports were written from a central administrative perspective, this study also analyzes articles from newspapers to gain additional viewpoints. In particular, articles from the Gyeongseong ilbo and Donga ilbo allow us to understand how this stadium was consumed and used during Japanese colonial rule. Also, I conducted semi-structured interviews with public officials, curators, and archaeologists who worked for the DDP project in order to comprehend the complexities of the conflicts regarding the transformation of Dongdaemun Stadium. The interview data gives insight into the actual dynamics of the conflicts and internal perspectives on the DDP project that do not appear in official written documents. Opinions from different stakeholders are also examined through interview articles in newspapers and journals in order to grasp a different dimension to these conflicts. In addition, data from participant observation and interviews with site visitors were collected via eight site visits from 2011 to 2016, and are used to analyze the current meaning of the site.
This article provides a new analytical approach towards understanding the development of a historic site from the perspectives of heritage studies. Due to its inter-disciplinary nature, linking history, sociology, memory studies, archaeology, anthropology, and geography, this approach facilitates multi-dimensional ways of investigating a site relating to a significant historic event. Also, for Korean/East Asian Studies, this new tool of heritage helps not only expand the scope of research materials from (non-)official written works to visualized and tangible data, but also deal with these expanded sources. Finally, this article offers a detailed and comprehensive study of Dongdaemun Stadium from its birth to re-birth in the wider context of Asian global cities.

Memory Formation for Dongdaemun Stadium and its Surroundings

Memories of historical layer 1: before Japanese Colonial Rule (1392–1905)

The Dongdaemun Stadium site is located just inside the eastern part of the Hanyang City Wall, between the East Gate and the Southern Minor Gate (Namsomun 南小門 or Gwanghuimun 光熙門, see Figure 1). The wall was constructed to protect the center of the Joseon Dynasty from foreign powers, and the four main and four minor gates were the only points through which the wall could be traversed. Hence, both the wall and the East Gate were essential components of the city structure during the Joseon Dynasty. The fact that the East Gate and the Hanyang City Wall are designated national treasures shows Korea’s appreciation for the historic significance of the site as part of the “invention of tradition/heritage” (see Hobsbawn 1983 and Lowenthal 1985).

Archaeological investigations carried out at the former Dongdaemun Stadium site in 2008 and 2009 allow us to trace its geographical character and uses during the Joseon Dynasty. First, part of the Hanyang City Wall that connected the East Gate and Southern Minor Gate lay within what became the stadium’s football field (JCPI 2011, 17). Igansumun (a sluice) and Chiseoung (a bastion) were found within this area; these are supposed to have been constructed in order to counteract the geographic disadvantage imposed by the site’s low elevation (JCPI 2011, 43).

The twentieth-century baseball ground of Dongdaemun Stadium stood on what had during the Joseon Dynasty been a significant military site known as Hadogam 下都監 (Chung 2009, 166). Hadogam was one of five detached garrisons that comprised Hullyeondogam 訓練都監; the center of the military
institution) during the late Joseon Dynasty. As part of *Hullyeondogam*, Hadogam’s functions were to defend the capital, protect Joseon kings, train local armies, and keep public order (JCPI 2011, 17). Besides the area’s early military uses, from the early eighteenth century this part of the city hosted one of Seoul’s three main markets (SMG 2013, 22), *Ihyeon* (circle) (Source: map by Kim Jong-geun and illustration by Eom Eun-hye).

Figure 1. The location of Dongdaemun Stadium (dot) and the areas surrounding Dongdaemun Stadium showing the location of Dongdaemun Market (oval shape) and *Ihyeon* (circle) (Source: map by Kim Jong-geun and illustration by Eom Eun-hye)

Swelled by the ranks of Joseon private merchants settling in Ihyeon, this area grew more rapidly than other markets; consequently, the Dongdaemun area in this period emerged as a prominent center of unlicensed trading (Chung 2009, 167).
The area, used thus for military and economic purposes during the Joseon Dynasty, underwent significant changes after the opening of the city’s port in the late nineteenth century. At this dangerous time of imperialist intrusions, King Gojong in 1897 proclaimed the “Daehan Empire” (Daehan jeguk 大韓帝國) instead of the Joseon Dynasty. He adopted the title of Emperor Gwangmu and sought both to promote the nation’s sovereignty and to reassert the power of the throne (Henry 2014, 25). He launched the Gwangmu Reforms (1897–1904) under the slogan of “old foundation, new participation,” (Gubon sincham 舊本新參) seeking to pilot Korea towards gradual, self-propelled modernization based on the royal tradition, rather than through the indiscriminate absorption of Western culture and technology (Henry 2014, 25). During his reign (1897–1907) the soldiers of his new, modern army, Byeolgigun 別技軍, trained under Japanese drill instructors at Hadogam, on the site that was to become Dongdaemun Stadium (JCPI 2011, 70). Simultaneously, the city’s first tramline reached the neighborhood in 1899, promoting the growth of a larger marketplace in the East Gate area but also necessitating the demolition of parts of the fortress there (Jeong 2014, 68). This visually represented the way in which developing Korean modernity had become a national priority, even at the expense of preserving Joseon royal power.

Throughout the Joseon period, these dramatic processes of modernization transfigured the site’s physical structures and specific narratives, although the area’s general military and economic role did not shift. What is of interest is that the uses of the area were driven by Korea’s emerging modern culture, an emergence which was itself instigated by Korean authorities: in other words, this was a “home-grown” change, one with endogenous drivers. It was in the next period, under Japanese imperial power, that exogenous legacies for the area emerged—ones that Koreans typically perceive to have deliberately damaged and altered Korean traditions, and that therefore continue to provoke Korean hostility (see Podoler 2007; Oh 2009; Youn 2014).

These pre-colonial collective memories of the Dongdaemun Stadium site were not paid attention to in public until its excavation was carried out in 2008 and 2009. As debate began on demolishing Dongdaemun Stadium, its pre-colonial meanings were highlighted, and the story-making of this phase was constructed according to the official collective memory of the Joseon Dynasty constructed by post-liberation Korea. As the South Korean collective memory of that period has been positively formed, the pre-colonial meaning of this site has tended to be more positively evaluated. It can be seen that most legacies of the Joseon Dynasty are designated as national heritage sites in order to support the idea of Korea’s golden past and enhance national identity. This collective
memory formation stands in stark contrast to that of the Japanese colonial period, which is negatively described as Korea’s shameful and dark past (e.g. Podoler 2007; Youn 2014). Now, we move to the second phase of collective memories of Dongdaemun Stadium.

**Memories of historical layer 2: during Japanese Colonial Rule**

During the Japanese colonial occupation of 1905 to 1945, the Dongdaemun Stadium site and its surroundings entered a new historic phase. One of the Japanese government’s first acts following the Japanese–Korean treaty of 1905 was to implement a currency reform, which wiped out numerous Korean merchants who had established their businesses in the Jongno area (Jeong 2007, 148). Traditional Korean markets disappeared, while Japanese merchants expanded their businesses in Bonjeong (current Myeong-dong and Chungmu-ro) (Jeong 2007, 148). In response, in the same year four Korean business magnates in the East Gate area established Gwangjang Co. Ltd., the first Korean-operated permanent market, aiming to protect native Korean capital and interests against Japanese merchants (Chung 2009, 167). This Gwangjang Market in the Dongdaemun area would prove to be the only one in the city to survive under Japanese rule (Jeong 2007, 151).

While the East Gate area evolved into a distinctly representative Korean market, military usage of what would become the Dongdaemun Stadium site largely ceased, with the city wall structures there mostly demolished after 1907 (Jeong 2007, 151). The site was for at least a decade a public park. In the 1920s, however, plans to establish an athletics track and a ballpark there were co-opted to the cause of honoring Crown Prince Hirohito’s wedding in 1924 (Son 2003, 35). Aware that Hirohito was a sports enthusiast, the authorities in Gyeongseong (as Seoul was known during the Japanese occupation) decided to commemorate his wedding by building a stadium at Dongdaemun (Son 2003, 35).

Gyeongseong Stadium—“The Mecca of Modern Sport in Korea”—opened on 15 October, 1925 (JCPI 2011, 80). Trumpeted as “the second biggest stadium [in Asia] following Goshien Stadium in Japan” (Kim and Pak 2010, 50), it included an athletics field, ballpark, football field, tennis courts, swimming pool, horseracing tracks, and greenery (Kim and Pak 2010, 53). It was reportedly the first multi-sports complex in Asia apart from the Meiji Shinto Shrine Stadium in Japan (Son 2003, 36).

From 1926 to 1945 fixtures in football, baseball, tennis, and athletics were held in Gyeongseong Stadium under the auspices of sports councils, newspaper
organizations, and schools (JCPI 2011, 82). Qualification matches also took place for the Olympic Games and the Far Eastern Championship Games (Son 2003, 42). The facility was popular, with the stadium packed with spectators on match days, especially for Yeonhui–Boseong University rival fixtures and for football matches between Gyeongseong and Pyongyang (Chosun ilbo on 8 October, 1929; Donga ilbo on 19 September, 1927, 24 October, 1930, and 5 November, 1937; quoted in Yu and Jo 2014, 338). Despite being subject to thoroughgoing Japanese oppression, Korean fans followed these matches with avid enjoyment and felt victorious when local teams beat Japanese sides (Yu and Jo 2014, 338).

Sporting matches between Korea and Japan were seen as symbolic fights between the nations, turning them into de facto national battles—albeit without violence. In this light, Korean sports players were equated with warriors: in the Japanese colonial context playing sports matches against Japan could be seen as a form of Korean independence activity. Paralleling the players themselves, Korean spectators could experience emotional, nationalistic connections through these contests. In this sense, as Gyeongseong Stadium was the site of many important national “battles” between Japan and Korea, Korean collective emotions towards victory and independence made manifest within this stadium, and Korean sports players and supporters collectively symbolized anti-Japanese resistance. Therefore, Gyeongseong Stadium can be seen as “a symbolic place of Korean resistance against Japan through sports” (Kim and Pak 2010, 49).

The experience of such victories at Gyeongseong Stadium rendered the place a site for escape, where Koreans could release the deep sorrow and repressed feelings (Korean: han) that emanated from Japanese colonial rule. The type of sharp conflict between Korean tradition and Japanese modernization that often evoked Koreans’ intense hostility towards Japan, and which characterizes the legacy of other colonial sites, was not to be found in this site. Rather, modern sports—used for political purposes by the Japanese authorities—instead brought victorious joy to the oppressed Koreans, thereby inscribing positive memories in this stadium.

These colonial memories of Dongdaemun Stadium are not popular, rather they have remained hidden from the public, and I have reconstructed them, reflecting the shared views of academic scholars and newspaper articles dealing with the episodes and sports history relating to Dongdaemun Stadium during the colonial period. Despite being run by Japanese colonial sport politics, Dongdaemun Stadium seems to have had a positive function for colonized

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2. For details, see Lee 2018.
Koreans. Hence, this case can in fact be a unique example of colonial/urban heritage with a rather positive image, an image which is not situated in the general or official narratives of Japanese colonial rule.

Most official narratives of South Korea regarding Japanese colonial rule are constructed to provoke hostility towards Japan and to enhance Koreans’ patriotism. Hence, after liberation, Japanese colonial architecture has often been at risk, as the public perceive that as remnants of painful and shameful history it must be removed from the landscape. Now, however, some sites are designated and protected since 2001 as “Registered Heritage” sites. It is interesting to note that, contrary to the official Korean collective memory of Japanese colonial rule, Dongdaemun Stadium is not a site of painful and shameful heritage.

Memories of historical layer 3: after liberation (1945–2008)

The Japanese defeat in the Pacific War on 15 August 1945 brought about an abrupt end to Japanese rule. Subsequently, the Korean peninsula—including the capital city—became the theatre for a series of overwhelming historic events, including the division of the country at the 38th parallel (1945), an era of US military rule (1945–8), the establishment of the Republic of Korea (1948), and the Korean War (1950–3). Amidst these dramatic changes to Korean society, Gyeongseong Stadium was renamed Seoul Stadium, reflecting the change in the name of the capital city. Just as Gyeongseong Stadium had been the symbolic center of sport in Korea under Japanese rule, Seoul Stadium signified the new sporting center of the Republic of Korea.

Gwangjang Market was ravaged during the Korean War (1950–3), but subsequently emerged as a wholesale clothing market, trading in “items donated by relief agencies and products illegally taken out of American military bases” (Chung 2009, 167). Thereafter, per a directive given by the first Korean President, Rhee Syngman (1948–60), to establish international-scale markets, the site—renamed Dongdaemun Market—developed as one of Seoul’s three main market areas and became the center of the national clothing industry (Yi and Kim 2010, 249). During the 1990s it took on a more modern character, with high-rise malls and fashion stores (Son and Kim 2005, 52). It expanded into its modern form, featuring traditional marketplaces and modern wholesale and retail shops across a site extending from Jong-ro 5-ga (Gwangjang Market) to Cheonggye 8-ga (Sinsol Market) (SMG 2013, 23 and 52). Today one million people pass through Dongdaemun Market each day, spending circa 42.1 billion KRW (circa 37.6 million USD) (Yi and Kim 2010, 249). It has been labelled “the paradise of shopping in Korea” (Kim 2001, 84) and has become an
international shopping destination and one of the city’s main tourist attractions, visited by around 2.5 million foreigners each year (An C. 2007, 238).

The stadium, meanwhile, also underwent a transformation. Between 1945 and 1950 it was used mainly for political rallies rather than as a sports complex (JCPI 2011, 82). Immediately following liberation, a welcoming ceremony for the provisional government was held at the stadium to celebrate the return of Kim Ku and other members of Korea’s Provisional Government from Shanghai in China (Chung 2009, 166). In 1946, Labor Day rallies were held across the stadium, with rightists supporting UN trusteeship gathering at the soccer stadium and leftists, opposed to this trusteeship, gathering at the baseball stadium (Kim and Pak 2010, 54). In addition, the stadium hosted national funerals for Lyuh Woon-Hyung (Yeo Unhyeong, 1947) and Kim Ku (1949), leaders of the Korean independence movement (Chung 2009, 166). In sum, Seoul Stadium witnessed key events that helped shape the memory of liberation, encompassing the sharp ideological conflicts between democracy and communism, the sorrow of the losses of the main Korean leaders, and the general political turmoil and confusions that ensued in Korea during that period.

Seoul Stadium was to encounter a new fate during the Korean War (1950–3). Seoul was recaptured by the South on 28 September 1950, and Seoul Stadium was subsequently occupied by the US military (JCPI 2011, 82). After the armistice in 1953, the facility was used as a stadium by the eighth US army, but the army did not allow hosting any sports matches organized by the Korean Sport Federation (JCPI 2011, 83). Indeed, throughout Syngman Rhee’s presidency (1948–60) Seoul Stadium did not truly function as a sports complex, because sport was not seen as a priority during this time of economic trouble (Ha and Mangan 2003, 241). This climate shifted under Rhee’s successor, Park Chung-hee (1962–79), himself “a distinguished sportsman and an admirer of the martial mentality” (Podoler 2008, 5), under whom the stadium would come to enjoy its heyday. Beyond a personal interest in sport, Park held the belief that the “Korean nation flourished when the martial arts were revered and the people were physically strong” (Daetongnyeong gongbo biseogwansil 1967, 248), and viewed sport and physical education as “a key for a strong and self-reliant nation” (Bang and Amara 2014, 622). He engaged actively in sports politics in the 1960s and 1970s, enacting the National Sport Promotion law in 1962 under the slogan “Physical Fitness is National Strength,” and promoting both elite and popular sports (Bang and Amara 2014, 622).

In this atmosphere, Seoul Stadium came to be viewed as a symbol of a reenergized Korean sporting world, and major renovation and expansion of the
facilities occurred in the 1960s. Refurbished sports grounds and new, modernized facilities such as floodlights and scoreboards enabled the stadium to host diverse matches, from amateur domestic games to professional international fixtures (Kim and Pak 2010, 57). While President Rhee had prohibited football matches involving Japanese teams in Korea due to “the Japanese colonial memory,” President Park, a pragmatist, attempted to soften Korea’s relationship with Japan through sport, hosting a series of matches between the two nations (Bang and Amara 2014, 629). The stadium reached the height of its popularity with the High School Baseball Championships in the 1970s (Kim and Pak 2010, 58).

It has been argued that President Park hoped to legitimate his military dictatorship through sports politics, and thus to “win popular support” for his rule (Ha and Mangan 2003, 229). As part of his approach to nation-building, President Park may have attempted to “strengthen his domestic position and improve his international image” by attracting international sports fixtures (Podoler 2008, 5). Through Park’s sport politics, the Seoul Stadium of the 1960s and the 1970s has been remembered as a place that, through sporting fixtures, entertained and gave hope to the people (Kim and Pak 2010, 55). Victories snatched from the jaws of defeat helped Korean spectators forget momentarily about their financial difficulties and dream of a better future that would mirror the results of the matches (Kim and Pak 2010, 57).

After this prime period, the role of Seoul Stadium as a center for Korean sport diminished. Following President Park’s assassination, President Chun Doo-hwan (1980–88) seized power through a military coup on 12 December 1980, and while the new president’s regime ostensibly continued President Park’s positive sports politics, his policies have been criticized as political tools intended to suppress the people’s desire for democracy and to divert popular attention from political realities (Reaves 1998, 159). In the 1980s, with the support of the new President Chun, Korean sport recovered (Ha and Mangan 2003, 231–233): Chun managed to secure Seoul’s role as host for the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games, and to establish professional baseball in the city in 1982, professional football in 1983, and professional traditional Korean wrestling in 1983 (Ha and Mangan 2003, 232–234). The stadium at Dongdaemun, though, had been eclipsed. In 1984 the government built the new Jamshil Sports Complex in another neighborhood, Gangnam, in

3. For details of the renovation and expansion works, see Chung (2009).
4. Before 1980, the only professional sports in Korea were boxing and golf (Ha and Mangan 2003, 233).
preparation for the forthcoming international and professional tournaments. With this new sports complex anointed as South Korea’s most important stadium, Seoul Stadium reverted to its former name “Dongdaemun Stadium.” The more humble district (rather than city) appellation revealed the diminished, local role of the stadium (Yu and Jo 2014, 337).

As Dongdaemun Stadium, the site now came to be used only for amateur and student matches, and its popularity and condition declined along with falling interest in these contests (Yu and Jo 2014, 337). The number of people using Dongdaemun Stadium decreased from 103,373 in 1998 to 26,516 in 2002, and its finances fell into the red from 1993 to 1996 (Han 2004, 712). However, a new use for the site emerged in 2003, when, in the course of the Cheonggye Restoration Project, Seoul Mayor Lee Myung-bak promised to give the displaced street vendors of the Cheonggye Creek a new place for their business, and selected the former football field of Dongdaemun Stadium as the site for a new flea market (Kim and Pak 2010, 55). Part of Dongdaemun Stadium was also used as a car park, although the ballpark remained in use for amateur baseball matches and high school baseball games until 2007 (JCPI 2011, 84).

To reiterate, while the surroundings of Dongdaemun Stadium became “the Mecca of the Korean fashion industry and design” and a major tourist attraction, designated by the Culture and Tourism Ministry as a Special Tourist Zone in 2002 (Yi and Kim 2010, 249), Dongdaemun Stadium itself lost its original functions and deteriorated physically. Many observers opined that its structure was out of keeping with its modernized surroundings and landscape, and viewed it as “a set of ancient fossil remains” isolated from the world (Kim and Jo 2006, 240). Hence, in the 2000s, an urban planning discussion began over whether to demolish or renovate Dongdaemun Stadium.

As seen above, the post-colonial memories of Dongdaemun Stadium are diverse and not unified, having reacted with heightened sensitivity to the political climate as official collective memories of South Korea’s contemporary period are being contested. Such diverse memories of this site have converted into factors for memory conflicts during heritagization, as varied memories have transformed into powerful tools for various stakeholders to justify their economic or political interests. Now, we move to the heritagization of the Dongdaemun Stadium site.
Heritagization: Memory Conflicts and Memory Politics (2006–8)

So far, this article has investigated how the meanings and roles of Dongdaemun Stadium and its surroundings shifted according to changes in political power. We have seen how diverse narratives and memories were constructed and accumulated over the three historical layers. Building on this understanding, we turn now to examine how these memories were deconstructed and reconstructed in the process of creating a new urban heritage site.

Reflecting the imbalance between Dongdaemun Market’s development and Dongdaemun Stadium’s deterioration, plans for regional redevelopment began to moot the stadium’s removal. A proposal to demolish the stadium was formulated at the Dongdaemun Forum, initiated in March 2000 by civic participants, including merchants, academics, researchers, and urban planners, who wanted to turn the stadium into a park, thereby creating a new landscape for the development of Dongdaemun Market (Chung 2009, 169). However, this plan was forestalled by a 2003 decision by Seoul Mayor Lee Myung-bak (2002–6) to form “an internationally recognised flea market” within the precincts of Dongdaemun Stadium (Chung 2009, 169).

Immediately following Lee’s term as mayor, his successor Oh Se-hoon (2006–11) announced a plan to dismantle Dongdaemun Stadium, along with the flea market, and construct a Design World Plaza for the Dongdaemun area (Kim 2013, 63). Oh’s speech, quoted below, highlights his ambition to make Seoul a global city with its own special brand:

The Seoul that I dream of and hope for is an economically vibrant city like New York, a city of culture like Paris, a city of dignity like London, a city of fashion like Milan, and a city having a symbolic landmark like Sydney. Seoul will be one of the world’s top cities that has a harmony with all these values. I will make Seoul a global city that has a special brand, using the uniqueness of Seoul.


In accordance with his master plan “Branding Global City Seoul,” Oh chose Dongdaemun as a core area for enhancing “the brand value of Seoul culture, art, design and environment” (Ji 2008, 539). Besides this, under the catchphrase “Design Seoul,” in February 2007 Mayor Oh unveiled plans for a new project,
“Dongdaemun Design Plaza and Park (DDP),” centered on the site of Dongdaemun Stadium. Aiming to create a social and cultural hub, the SMG planned to redevelop this area of Seoul in the Seoul Downtown Revival Project of June 2007 (Ji 2008, 540–542). Oh’s project picked up momentum when Seoul was selected as the “2010 World Design Capital” by the International Design Alliance (IDA) on 21 October 2007 (Kim 2008).

However, the DDP project encountered opposition from various civic groups, baseball professionals, and Dongdaemun merchants. Conflicts between stakeholders, stemming from the different perspectives and memories each group had of Dongdaemun Stadium, continued until the stadium was fully demolished in 2008. This section analyzes these conflicts between the SMG and a range of groups during heritagization (2006–8), considering conflicts of three types: 1) conflicts concerning history, 2) conflicts concerning sport, and 3) conflicts concerning the market as a space to live and work. The discussion also investigates which conflicts were resolved, and how compromises were reached in the heritagization of Dongdaemun Stadium.

Conflicts concerning history

Strong opposition to Mayor Oh’s proposed demolition of Dongdaemun Stadium emerged from civil groups such as “Cultural Solidarity” (Munhwa yeondae) (Ji 2008, 541). They insisted that Dongdaemun Stadium should be preserved and designated a “Registered Heritage” site (SMG 2013, 19). Some also suggested that, rather than being demolished, Dongdaemun Stadium could be used as a sport-for-all facility, comprising a new public park and playground (Ji 2008, 541). Such groups perceived Dongdaemun Stadium as an important resource for demonstrating modern sport in Korea, and appreciated the nostalgic memories attached to the stadium (Kim and Pak 2010, 48–50). Despite the fact that this stadium was part of the Japanese colonial legacy, with associated negative connotations, its supporters viewed it as part of a positive heritage that included the development of Korean modernity and history.

However, in 2006 the SMG stated that Dongdaemun Stadium could not be
a candidate for Registered Heritage status, as only structures over fifty years old could receive that designation (Ji 2008, 541). Although original building work on Dongdaemun Stadium had begun in 1925, the SMG argued that it was difficult to determine the exact construction year of the extant stadium due to the ceaseless extension and renovation that it had undergone (Ji 2008, 541). As the Dongdaemun Stadium ballpark was built only in 1959, the city authority ruled that the stadium did not satisfy the criterion.

While these arguments raged, historians and archaeologists raised the issue of the area’s history as part of the Hanyang City Wall, insisting that archaeological research and excavations be conducted before construction could commence on the new DDP (JCPI 2011, 43–45). This gave the SMG a new rhetorical strategy to use against the civic groups who opposed demolition: they argued that the broader site had traditional value derived from the remnants of the Joseon Dynasty, and that these remnants were quite distinct from any imagined worth of the twentieth-century stadium buildings. As the Hanyang City Wall was being prepared for nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015, the SMG urged that demolishing the stadium was essential for the restoration of the historic wall (SMG 2013 20). They stated that “the wall would be buried forever if Dongdaemun Stadium was preserved as a Registered Heritage site” (SMG 2013, 19). Having previously ignored the historic value of Dongdaemun Stadium, these authorities now used preservation rhetoric borrowed from professional cultural groups to argue for the preservation of Joseon archaeology. This rhetoric allowed them both to acknowledge the value of Dongdaemun Stadium as an example of Japanese colonial architecture and nonetheless to show why they had to sacrifice it, in order to preserve the greater traditional value of the site’s Joseon Dynasty legacy. In other words, the period of the Joseon Dynasty was prioritized in this memory conflict as the focus of the DDP project.

Following this decision, from May 2008 to July 2009 excavations were conducted at Dongdaemun Stadium (JCPI 2011, 45). Along with various relics and materials, the remains of 142 (out of an original total of 265) metres of the Hanyang City Wall between the East Gate and South Minor Gate were found and restored to their original state (JCPI 2011, 47). Vestiges of the remaining 123 metres of the wall could not be found, although their location was marked on the map and a section was rebuilt from scratch and opened for visitors to walk along (SMG 2013, 318). The Igan sumun sluice was also restored in its original location (JCPI 2011, 47). The relics found in the football field and the ballpark were moved to different sites and, in 2009, displayed on the site of the DDP (JCPI 2011, 47). The Cultural Heritage Committee also requested that a
Dongdaemun History Hall be built to exhibit further finds. The SMG accepted, and the Dongdaemun History Hall was completed for the public opening of the Dongdaemun History and Culture Park within the DDP site on 27 October 2009 (SMG 2013).

Conflicts concerning sport

To reiterate, SMG’s promotion of the DDP project as a symbolic landmark in Seoul relied upon the argument that this plan could be accomplished only by destroying the derelict Dongdaemun Stadium. Despite the DDP project’s apparent promise of a “positive future,” many fans and sporting figures opposed it and sought to protect Dongdaemun Stadium (SMG 2013, 384). These opponents valued Dongdaemun Stadium’s historic value not only as the birthplace of modern sport in Korea, but also as the site of significant political events between 1945 and 1950 (SMG 2013, 384). Some sports fans evoked nostalgia, describing the place as the “hometown of Korean sport” (Kim and Pak 2010, 62). They insisted that the DDP project was inappropriate as it focused on economic profit and development and hence deprived them of the collective memories that were shared with sports fans (Kim and Pak 2010, 63). In particular, the baseball community strongly opposed the stadium’s destruction. Even after the football field’s conversion into a flea market in 2003, the ballpark within Dongdaemun Stadium had remained in use for amateur baseball matches. While the provision of football fields in Seoul was relatively adequate, the number of ballparks for amateurs was small, meaning there were few places to play baseball beyond this stadium (SMG 2013, 384).

In order to collect opinions from the world of Korean baseball regarding the destruction of Dongdaemun Stadium, the SMG held an advisory conference in August 2006 (SMG 2013, 399). Although the SMG’s objective had been to agree on the construction of alternative ballparks after the stadium’s demolition, advisory committee members who were engaged with baseball asked that the stadium be retained. After the meeting, the Dongdaemun Baseball Emergency Planning Committee (DBEPC) convened: the SMG and DBEPC held 13 meetings and finally reached an agreement in March 2007, following which the DBEPC agreed to support the DDP project and the SMG promised to construct seven alternative ballparks before the demolition of Dongdaemun Stadium.7

Nevertheless, these plans remained deeply unpopular in the sports world,

7. The DBEPC was composed of nine members, most of whom belonged to the Korean Baseball Association (KBA) (SMG 2013, 400).
where many still wanted to preserve the site as it was. The Sport Civic Organization (SCO, Cheyuk yeondae), formed in February 2006, in August 2007 proclaimed the “One Hundred People’s Declaration,” petitioning for the stadium’s renovation as a sports arena for athletes and citizens, a sports museum, and a park (SMG 2013, 385). In addition, it called for the site to be designated a historic park and to become “the holy ground of modern sport” (SMG 2013, 385).

Through over 150 meetings from 8–12 December 2007 with these opponents and the DBEPC, the SMG at length secured their support for demolishing Dongdaemun Stadium and the building was pulled down on 18 December 2007. Thus, despite the strong desire in some quarters to preserve the memories of Dongdaemun Stadium, this aim ultimately did not prevail over the ambition to redevelop the area as a center for fashion and design.

Concessions made to secure the support of the sports world included a decision to preserve two lighting towers and the stadium’s flame-holder (SMG 2013, 392). These symbolic installations reminded people of the site’s identity as a bastion of Korean sport. A Dongdaemun Stadium History Hall was also constructed, in accordance with requests from the sports world, and was opened along with the Dongdaemun History Hall. The seven alternative ballparks were also constructed as promised (SMG 2013, 425). Memories relating to sporting events at the stadium thus underwent a physical transformation into three symbolic objects and a memorial.

**Conflicts concerning the market as a space to live and work**

The third conflict concerned the Dongdaemun Stadium site as a flea market. Those who were involved in this conflict were largely divided into three distinct groups: 1) merchants in the main flea market, which occupied part of the football field; 2) street vendors based around Dongdaemun Stadium; and 3) merchants with shops inside Dongdaemun Stadium (SMG 2013, 426). Members of these groups criticized the SMG’s decision to demolish Dongdaemun Stadium on the grounds that it hosted their working and living places. The SMG acknowledged that these groups’ resistance to the demolition was more passionate than that of the other two groups discussed above (see SMG 2013).

The SMG proclaimed that it valued highly the economic potential of the Dongdaemun area, including the stadium and markets (SMG 2013). However, it pointed out that traffic congestion in this area was blocking its development. They perceived that “the worse traffic congestion stemmed from the opening of the flea market in Dongdaemun Stadium in January 2004” (SMG 2013, 446),
and noted that “street vendors exacerbated the mess” (SMG 2013, 446) and were “one of the main factors to decrease the brand value of this region” (SMG 2013, 70). In other words, the SMG believed that if the flea market and vendors of Dongdaemun Stadium were removed from the area, its value (and presentability) would increase. The SMG concluded that street vendors marred the urban landscape, looked old-fashioned, and made the area seem disorganized. The SMG sought to create a clean, modern, and fashionable urban landscape at Dongdaemun, for the sake of the high number of foreign tourists who visited this area (SMG 2013, 433), and thus made the stadium’s demolition a fundamental aspect of its DDP project to rebrand Seoul.

The SMG’s determination to demolish Dongdaemun Stadium particularly perplexed those vendors in the flea market within the stadium: as noted, they had moved to the site only in 2003, as part of the Cheonggye Creek Restoration spearheaded by Seoul Mayor Lee Myung-bak (An J. 2007, 133–135). At that time, Lee had pledged to form an internationally distinguished flea market at Dongdaemun Stadium: now, just three years later, a new Seoul mayor was giving them notice to leave (Pak 2008, 75). They strongly protested the sudden decision, arguing that the SMG had not duly considered their livelihood (SMG 2013, 433). Some citizens also supported this merchant group, viewing the flea market as a memory repository of the 1950s and 1960s and “a mirror of the ordinary people’s life and sentiments” (Choe 2008, 161).

On 19 September 2006 the SMG commenced efforts to persuade the merchant group to support their decision (SMG 2013, 433). Attempting to placate their concerns that relocation would devastate the market, the SMG held 845 meetings with this merchant group and eventually put together a plan to improve Seoul’s flagship flea market to the point where it would attract 12 million tourists (SMG 2013, 436). Finally, on 21 August 2007 SMG reached an agreement with this merchant group, and 894 merchants from the Dongdaemun Stadium flea market moved to the new marketplace (SMG 2013, 448). The construction of the new market cost 14 billion KRW (circa 10.5 million USD) and the market was opened in April 2008 (SMG 2013, 436).

The second opposing group, comprising local street vendors, protested against the demolition of Dongdaemun Stadium through all-night demonstrations and visits to the SMG (SMG 2013, 446). Their protests became more serious when the National Labor Association also involved itself in the conflict (Dongdaemun jungang sanginhoe 2009, 68–70). Although street vending is nominally illegal in Korea, the SMG classified the vendors into a livelihood type and agreed to allow them to continue to conduct their business (SMG 2013, 447). After several meetings with the vendors the SMG helped 335 of them
move to the periphery of the Dongdaemun Market (SMG 2013, 447).

Members of the third opposing group, merchants with businesses inside Dongdaemun Stadium, also ended their dispute by moving, in this case to alternative locations in the Eulji-ro 4-ga Station on 7 April 2008 (SMG 2013, 447). After these three groups had moved to their respective new areas, in 2008 the demolition of Dongdaemun Stadium was completed.

Recreating a New Landscape and City Identity through the DDP Project

After a conflict period of two years and seven months, the SMG and the three major conflict groups had at last come to an agreement. By finding a middle ground with each of the three groups, the SMG was able to carry out the DDP project. The new buildings constructed at the site were named the Dongdaemun Design Plaza (DDP), and were designed by world famous Iraqi-born British start architect Zaha Hadid (SMG 2013, 306). At the same time, a great number of Joseon cultural artefacts having now been excavated, the former Dongdaemun Stadium area was renamed the Dongdaemun History and Culture Park in order to reflect the site’s historical and cultural value (Kim 2013, 64).

The DDP project was completed with a 500 billion KRW (circa 446.4 million USD) investment and opened in March 2014 (Online News Department 2014). The SMG emphasized the “positive future” of economic development that the DDP project would bring about, and highlighted their efforts to create a new landscape through the design of the DDP buildings and park. Thus, the SMG actively promoted their endeavor of creating the DDP to support the desires of multiple stakeholders, which included embracing historic values (Dongdaemun Memorial Hall), sharing colonial experiences (Dongdaemun Stadium Memorial Hall), and rapid economic growth (the entire DDP site).

Nevertheless, despite SMG’s efforts, many architects, historians, and media commentators continued to criticize the DDP project. Many noted that SMG’s measures were short-term solutions to deal with the conflicts. Further critical opinions of the DDP project were concerned with the construction of the Dongdaemun Stadium History Hall and Dongdaemun History Hall. An anonymous interviewee in a senior role in the memorial halls suggested that SMG had prioritized Zaha Hadid’s design for the DDP project, with little regard for the significance of the two memorial halls (interview on August 10, 2012). This interviewee suggested that the memorial halls had been inserted into the plans in such a way that they would not harm Hadid’s overall design,
rather than giving detailed consideration to the inherent requirements for these memorials. The interviewee added that neither space was sufficient to adequately display the full range of objects that would reflect the history of Dongdaemun and Dongdaemun Stadium. Considering that the preparation period for installing these memorials lasted only three months, there was some doubt over whether adequate consideration had been given to showcasing the historic value of the former Dongdaemun Stadium site, raising the possibility that they were mere token concessions to the project’s opponents, rather than reflecting a real change in SMG’s priorities. In addition, many stakeholders’ complaints still remain unaddressed. In particular, stakeholders relating to the former market in the stadium grounds strongly insist that the conversation processes with the SMG were not sufficient and decision-making was not fair to them. Also, the DDP project broke the local identity, which is now overshadowed by globalization.

However, the completed DDP project is an outcome of the SMG’s ambition to make Seoul a global city. Its characteristics are closely associated with urban imaging plans in which new cultural spaces and places are created in order to remake local places and identities in the context of global city strategies (see Philo and Kearns 1993; Chang 1997; Logan 2002; Kong 2007; Sassen 2013). Pursuing a global city making along with a rapid economic development, many Asian cities that underwent colonization but which have now entered into the critical phases of globalization have tended to erase the marks of colonization to emphasize their new, independent societies (Logan 2005, 561). The goal of urban boosterism has led such cities to aim to project a positive image of a vibrant city that would attract investors, professionals, and tourists, by constructing “imaginative and striking buildings, often designed by famous international architects, distinctive heritage structures, world-renowned performances and exhibitions” (Kong 2007, 386). On the other hand, as seen in Logan’s book The Disappearing ‘Asian City,’ the visualization of global cities in Asian countries reflects a growing interest in local history, traditions, and heritage and cultural identity (Logan 2002).

Considering these general trends both for making global cities and for preserving cities’ specific characters, the DDP project can be seen as a typical case of following the formula for branding a city for both economic and cultural globalization. Since its opening, this gigantic building has attracted many tourists, brought about positive economic effects, and has received significant media exposure as the setting for fashion shows and as a backdrop for the filming of several TV programs (Yi 2014). For visitors emerging from the first exit of the Dongdaemun History and Culture Park subway station (the
new name of the former Dongdaemun Stadium Station), the DDP buildings dominate the view (Kim 2013, 82). It is said that the entire shape of the DDP is reminiscent of a spaceship when seen from the side, or of high heels when seen from above (Sin 2014). The visual spectacle of the site overpowers the landscape of the Dongdaemun district (Kim 2014, 81). Yet to a certain extent, this project has achieved the goals that the SMG intended by providing “some social, cultural, and emotional anchors” of the type that a rapidly urbanizing and globalizing world pursues (Logan 2005, 575).

Yet despite the DDP project’s positive contribution to recreating Seoul’s city identity, the controversies and discontent concerning the project have not faded away but continue to contribute significant aspects of meaning to this new urban place. During its development, the DDP project attracted criticism, being dubbed “a waste of the tax-payers’ precious money on an unnecessary project” and “a monstrosity that does not fit its surroundings” (Yi 2014). One group continues to see the DDP’s design as “too abstract and strange,” whilst another deems it “beautiful and artistic” (Song 2014, 17).

Zaha Hadid designed the DDP with the theme “Metonymic Landscape” in mind (Gil 2007, 160). According to her design notes, she tried to “integrate the diverse values of history, culture, city, society, and economics in this site and these integrated ideas created a new landscape by metonymic expression” (Song 2014, 17). It is said that the flexibility of the design helps to combine the park and the design plaza into one organic structure, and that it expresses the continual cultural changes that extend from Korean tradition to the future of design art (Gil 2007, 160).

Although Hadid endeavored to present an organic combination of fragmented time and space in the Dongdaemun district, people have still commented on “the lack of visual cohesion” between the DDP and the Dongdaemun Market area (Kim 2014, 83). As Korean architect Song Jongnyeol points out, the DDP does not seem to show “the layers of memory of the Dongdaemun area” (Song 2014, 19). From this point of view, the DDP does not represent the character of the Dongdaemun area and looks like a sudden invasion from the future, erasing the site’s memory of the past.

As discussed above, the construction of the Dongdaemun History Hall and the Dongdaemun Stadium History Hall reflect the SMG’s efforts to represent the historic values and memories attached to the site. However, some visitors and a curator in charge of both memorial halls have indicated that the two history halls are not spacious enough to display the entire story of the site; that their design emphasizes form more than function (Interview on August 10 2012). One British visitor in his late fifties mentioned that he had doubts that
visitors were engaged with the outdoor exhibition of artefacts, being distracted by the futuristic design (Interview on June 1 2016). Thus, although the DDP seems to be a highly valued piece of architecture with a high-tech and artistic aspect, this new park may be failing to tell the regional narrative or signify its historic value.

Critics have argued that the DDP project seems to have overlooked Seoul’s status as a historic city (Ji 2008). Korean cultural geographer Heesun Chung, approaching this project critically in terms of memory politics, argues that the DDP project has manifested capitalist mechanisms at the cost of sacrificing historic edifices (Chung 2009). Chung notes that the urban spatial restructuring reflected in the DDP project pursues an artificial hyper-reality, rather than the reality that is represented in the memories that have accumulated in the site (Chung 2009). In addition, some have viewed the DDP project as actively “damaging Seoul’s history and culture” (Ji 2008, 538) and harming “Seoul’s unique identity” (Kim 2008, 281). Regarding these critics, one might argue that Seoul’s ‘unique’ values are also created and re-shaped through heritagization. However, as Logan (2002) indicated, instead of filling the city with completely new buildings for a global city, it is necessary to consider how a global city tells stories about key stages in the evolution of its societies and sites, dealing with the multi-layered cultural character of Asian cities. Then, this might help reinterpret what some see as the “Asian-ness” of Asian cities, often thought to be rapidly disappearing at the speed of globalization.

In sum, the DDP project was completed as an outcome of “confluences and contradictions between global city aspirations, national imperatives, and local everyday lives” (Kong 2007, 387). Admittedly, the DDP buildings and historic parks play a significant role in revitalizing this locale, recreating a visual spectacle, and attracting global human and economic flows. However, following the general trend of many global cities and emphasizing the newness of Seoul, this project may have neglected to embrace Seoul’s unique historic values despite the endeavors to represent the city’s history.

Conclusion: Between Historic Values, Colonial Memories, and a Positive Future

Dongdaemun is a historic place that holds the memories of the demise of a kingdom, the days of the colonial era, the struggles to overcome the destruction of war, and rapid modernization. We hope that the ‘DDP spaceship’ will create the harmony among these memories and prove to be the start of new history ... Is the
DDP a rubbish work or a masterpiece? I will answer this question through citizens’ power.

Seoul mayor Park Won-Soon’s address
on opening the DDP, 21 March 2014 (Online News Department 2014)8

This quote from Seoul mayor Park gets to the heart of the identity of the DDP project and its continued controversies. The former Dongdaemun Stadium site, a center of military power during the pre-conflict period, became a symbol for modern sport through the conflict and post-conflict periods. Meanwhile, throughout Japanese colonial rule and the post-liberation period its surroundings developed from the traditional market of the Joseon Dynasty into a hub of Korean fashion and design. Whilst the economic value of the Dongdaemun Market surged, the utility value of the Dongdaemun Stadium went downhill. To secure its economic future, the former Dongdaemun Stadium site was recreated as the Dongdaemun Design Plaza and Park, retaining the pre-colonial/colonial/post-colonial memories of the Dongdaemun Stadium site, in both Dongdaemun and Dongdaemun Stadium Memorial halls, as set in South Korea’s official collective story-lines.

This article has followed the processes of negotiating three main memory conflicts between diverse stakeholders. In particular, the Dongdaemun Stadium case illustrates the SMG’s endeavors to communicate and reach a compromise with each stakeholder group. Although Dongdaemun Stadium was demolished as the SMG had planned, the DDP project was modified to include the construction of the Dongdaemun History and Culture Park according to the requests of the history and sports groups. This outcome represents both strengthened civic power and the operation of a democratic government in the construction of the national collective memory.

To conclude, I reflect on three key aspects in the heritagization of the Dongdaemun Stadium site. First, this case demonstrates the current trend of heritage management through the negotiation of memory conflicts. Although the political power of the government remains strong, the processes of communication between multiple stakeholders and the SMG over this case reflect the changing political situation in Korea. This opens the possibility for active public engagement in place-making in Korea. Second, this case denotes the Korean style of dealing with Japanese colonial legacies. Although the stadium is unusual in retaining positive connotations by comparison to other colonial heritage sites, which typically provoke painful and traumatic memories

8. All English translations in this paragraph are quoted from the original English descriptions.
relating to the Japanese occupation, nonetheless in the process of heritagization the strategies associated with global city-making were still prioritized over the site’s historic value. Third, this case is particular insofar that diverse memories from different historic layers have been maintained in the form of a memorial hall despite the demolition of the original structure. In Korea, architectural memories frequently vanish with the destruction of architecture. However, this case can be taken as an architectural model for retaining memories regardless of the changes to their meanings and roles.

Today, the former Dongdaemun Stadium site can be interpreted as an economic resource bringing a positive future to Korea, a cultural icon symbolizing Seoul as a global city, a hectic marketplace that represents modern life, and a locus of joyful and nostalgic memories of the past. The DDP was created not only to reflect the diverse perspectives of Seoul citizens, but also to achieve the SMG’s ambition of receiving positive evaluations from global onlookers. Hence, diverse stories relating to this site are visually juxtaposed in the DDP. This coexistence of stories about the past, present, and future may create a new and positive identity at the former Dongdaemun Stadium site, or may turn it into a hybrid monster that will generate confusions. Its evaluation will emerge along with the continual development of competing and contesting perspectives between political agendas and civil powers.

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