



Unraveling the factors determining the redevelopment of Seoul's historic hanoks



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Recent studies found that the number of traditional Korean houses—called *hanoks*—in Seoul has decreased substantially over the last 50 years. Yet very little was known about the specific causes of large-scale demolition and redevelopment of *hanoks*. Here, based upon newly built parcel-level datasets of all *hanoks* in Seoul's 1936 boundary, our probit regression models showed that the combined effects of parcel, neighborhood, and urban-scale factors may explain the probability of *hanoks*' loss between 2002 and 2013. The results indicated that *hanoks* that were relatively new, large, and previously converted to a different use were more likely to be lost than older, smaller, and single-family residential-use *hanoks*. Those with desirable environmental qualities, such as a southern orientation and being part of a cluster of *hanoks*, were more resistant to redevelopment. The induced-development impacts of nearby urban projects were significant but this relationship varied substantially depending on the locations of the affected *hanoks*.

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Introduction

Historic urban artifacts—including traditional houses, industrial heritage sites, or classical gardens—have tangible qualities that have sustained their long-term presence in cities. The benefits of preserving historic areas were explained by several related factors. The area, for instance, may serve as an important cultural resource in both procedural terms, e.g., providing a sense of community, and substantive considerations, e.g., being part of local landmarks, collective memories, and psychological stability (Barthel, 1996; Fitch, 1990; Rose, 1981). The pluralistic built environments associated with culture and history may contribute to the growth of the local economy with greater tourism activities (Rypkema, 1994). Additionally, adaptive re-use of historic assets may become a source of affordable housing and provide a socially desirable alternative to bulldozer-type urban renewal (Rose, 1981; Tyler, Ligibel, & Tyler, 1994). The merits seemed to progressively

infiltrate into an urban planners' decision-making processes, despite some occasional differences in planning goals, forming a so-called “uneasy alliance” between planning and preservation (Birch & Roby, 1984). But the alliance did not always lead to the careful selection of urban areas worthy of protection. In Seoul, for instance, *hanoks*—the traditional Korean house—were demolished at an alarming rate and scale over the last fifty years.

The term *hanok* (한옥, 韓屋) began to be used since the late 19th century, although its origin dates back to much earlier periods, to classify houses that were constructed with a traditional wooden structure and a style. *Hanoks* have three archetypal elements: *bueok* (a kitchen with a fireplace and a lower earthen floor), *maru* (a wooden-floor common space) and *ondol* (an underfloor-heated room) with columns and beams forming a grid system (Fig. 1). A traditional, curved roof structure is located on top of the columns. The relative term, *yangok* (양옥, 洋屋)—the Western-style house—was used to indicate brick or block houses with a western style introduced by foreign architects and engineers who came to Korea around the late 19th century. *Hanoks* comprised the majority of residential buildings in Seoul until the 1940s. Yet, *hanoks*' dominance has declined since the 1950s when the construction of *yangoks* became widespread due to the development of mass production technology. In the 1960s, newly constructed *hanoks* became very few in number

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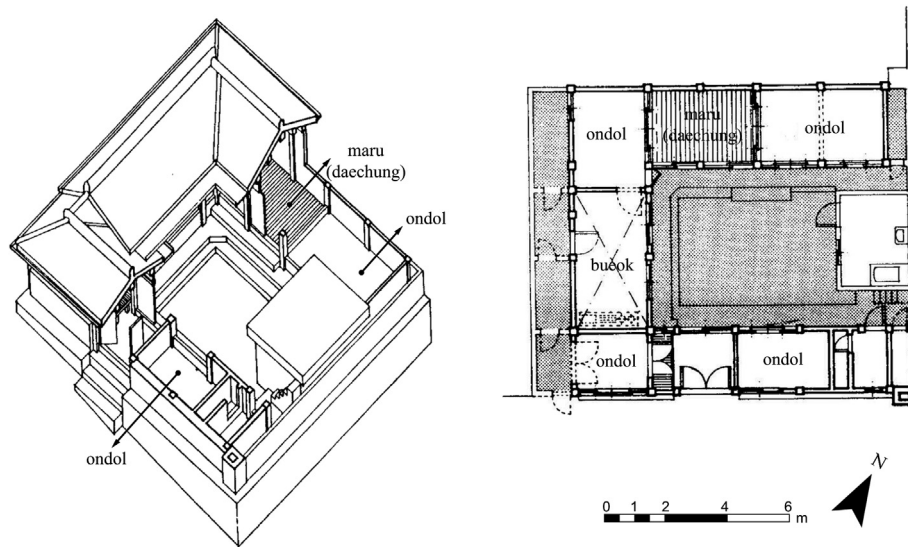


Fig. 1. A typical urban *hanok* constructed roughly between the 1930s and the 1960s in Seoul. Compared to a non-urban-type *hanok*, the plan was standardized for mass production. (Song, 1990, 126. Modified by the authors)

and were increasingly replaced by *yangoks*. From the 1980s, high-rise apartment towers with a reinforced concrete structure became a dominant type of housing in Seoul.

Prior research estimated that the number of *hanoks* in Seoul decreased from approximately 130,000 in the early 1960s to 24,000 in the early 2000s (Jeong, 2006; Jeon & Kwon, 2012; Song, 1990). The number of newly constructed *hanoks* in Seoul declined to a few hundred or less per year in the late 1960s, with only a small number of enthusiasts continuing to preserve them. Along with the decline in the number of newly built *hanoks* in the 1970s and 1980s, the Seoul Metropolitan Government proposed a number of downtown redevelopment projects, transforming the urban fabrics into office towers, hotels, and shopping malls. Districts like Gwancheol-dong and Mugyo-dong, for instance, became filled with mid- to high-rise office towers with an average FAR of 4.6 and 7.0, respectively (Rowe, Kim, & Jung, 2011). Thus, redevelopment projects involving low-rise *hanoks* were neither financially profitable nor feasible due to their limited floor areas.

Beginning in the late 1990s, *hanoks* have received increasing attention since preservationists and urban planners began to find an alternative way of reusing and converting their value: they began to be associated with cultural assets and a potential means of tapping into the tourism industry (Jeon & Kwon, 2012). This changing view of preservation was partly motivated by economic reasons (Jeon, 2009). Instead of risky investment in redevelopment, social enthusiasm began to shift toward keeping and re-using *hanoks*. Meanwhile, the “heavy hand” of Korea’s major corporations entered a buy-*hanok* market that turned a sizable number of *hanoks* into high-end second homes or private libraries (Kang, 2012). In the 2000s, several preservation policy tests were successfully implemented, such as in Insa-dong, where *hanoks* were mostly converted into redesigned non-residential buildings; and in Bukchon, where they were mostly renovated as high-quality residential buildings. The success was followed by the announcement of the Seoul *Hanok* Declaration in 2008 (by the Seoul Metropolitan Government) and the Promotion Policy of *Hanok* Architecture in 2009 (by the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs). The *Hanok* Declaration, for instance, led to the local government’s financing of the repairing expenses of *hanoks* and subsidizing the new construction of *hanoks*. Additionally, different types of *hanoks*

typo-morphological adaptation to an urban setting began to be documented (Song & Cho, 2004). More recently, the preservation and marketing of *hanoks* as “Han-Style” was included in the national government’s policy. The branding efforts were intended for the support of the globalization and industrialization of the nation’s original cultural products, such as the Korean housing (*hanok*), letter, clothing, food, paper, and music (Lee, 2011).

The changing social perception of *hanoks* provided the fertile ground for better understanding the causes of their loss. A few studies have suggested mixed preliminary results. They found that the extensive loss of *hanoks* was either due to the lack of state mandates for preservation (Jeong, 2006) or the combined consequence of area-wide deterioration of buildings, the significant aging of occupants, and financial disinvestment (Sim & Jin, 2012). These studies illuminated some of the potentially important factors influencing *hanok* redevelopment but focused on a limited number of cases for investigation. The most recent and notable attempt explored the relationship between demolished *hanoks* and their urban morphological characteristics, such as road patterns and the shape of buildings (Baek, 2012; Baek & Ahn, 2012). This important research, however, was not designed to control for a number of district-level variables, and examined only 12 districts covering a minuscule area of Seoul. Another recent attempt proposed to build comprehensive datasets about *hanoks* in Seoul (Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2011). But full-scale development of data and models analyzing *hanok* loss was not realized.

Thus, it is still unknown whether a set of urban influences explain the loss of *hanoks* across the city of Seoul when substantial variations in the individual buildings’ characteristics and their spatial locations are controlled for. The objective of this study is to respond to the following questions: how many *hanoks* were lost—either demolished from the site or redeveloped into a non-*hanok*-type building—in Seoul between 2002 and 2013? More importantly, what set of parcel, neighborhood, and urban planning determinants are associated with *hanok* loss?

In this study, we made a complete list of all the *hanoks* in Seoul between 2002 and 2013. During the period, the Seoul Metropolitan Government already embarked on a comprehensive program of historic preservation, which moved planners, preservationists, and property owners closer to each other. Thus, an economic rationale,

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