



Urban regeneration and gentrification: Land use impacts of the Cheonggye Stream Restoration Project on the Seoul's central business district



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The definition of gentrification has expanded significantly since its initial application in the US and UK nearly 50 years ago to cover any process by which urban space is produced for more affluent users. Some authors are now questioning the utility of such a broad concept, arguing that it is virtually indistinguishable from the process of urban regeneration. Through an exploration of land use changes in Seoul's historical central business district in the wake of the widely touted Cheonggye Stream Restoration Project, this paper argues that urban regeneration and gentrification are irreducible views of the same process that concentrate on the interests of different stakeholders. Therefore, the paper concludes that the broad definition of gentrification is more useful since it focuses public debate on the ideological and ethical question of favoring some stakeholders' interests over those of others.

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Introduction

In 2003 the Seoul Metropolitan Government began tearing down an elevated highway that ran through the center of the historic downtown, opening Cheonggye Stream to the air for the first time in almost 50 years. Completed in 2005 at a cost of roughly US\$325 million, the Cheonggye Stream Restoration Project created a 5.8 km long linear park. The project had multiple, complementary goals: restore one part of Seoul's urban history, improve environmental conditions, and economically revitalize the area. This restoration project has been a widely acclaimed success. Despite some controversy, the stream was restored and historic bridges were replaced. Environmentally, Kim et al. (2008) estimated that the project reduced near-surface temperature by 0.4–0.9 °C and found that the cooler air temperatures are evident along the streets traversing the stream. And the stream has become a destination for tourists, local residents and workers, and shoppers (Yang, 2008), which has contributed to the regeneration of the surrounding area.

Despite these positive outcomes, the project faced opposition from parties who feared that the project would lead to commercial

gentrification and the displacement of clusters of small industrial firms (Song, 2003). The pollution and noise from the elevated highway had created a hospitable environment for small firms, and over the decades, printing, trophy, or metalworking clusters had formed in the area (Song, 2003). Opposed parties argued that improved environmental quality and attractive open space would raise land prices and rents beyond the reach of these small firms. This concern was aggravated by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG)'s economic regeneration plan to strengthen the business services and commercial cluster in the historic central business district (SMG, 2004). Because these clusters are ecologically linked to the surrounding businesses, another concern was that displacing them from the area might not only threaten the livelihoods of these small businessmen but also increase operating costs for the surrounding businesses (Kang, 1995; Song, 2003).

The importance and value of urban parks and open spaces, as well as their impacts on their surrounding neighborhoods, is not easy to measure, although there have been several notable exceptions (Darling, 1973; Geoghegan, 2002; Tyrvaainen & Miettinen, 2000). In particular, Darling attempted to quantify the value of urban water parks, demonstrating that the value of the parks can be measurable and that the value of urban water resources is large (Darling, 1973). In addition, several studies found that the accessibility and cityscape of urban parks increased the property value

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around the parks (Hammer, Coughlin, & Horn, 1974; More, Stevens, & Allen, 1988). Tajima (2003) also identified the value of the urban open spaces resulting from Boston's Big Dig Project on the surrounding neighborhoods. These studies employed hedonic pricing models to evaluate changes in property prices. However, urban open spaces can impact not only the value of surrounding property but also the character of their use. Therefore, this study asks how a new large-scale open space in a city center impacts land use in adjacent areas. We hypothesize that land uses dependent on lower property values will be displaced by more affluent uses.

This study seeks to contribute to this literature by examining the land use impacts of the Cheonggye Stream Restoration Project, a large-scale open space megaproject in Seoul, Korea. To evaluate the impact of this newly created open space on land use in the surrounding area, this study employs a novel research method by examining government records of land use changes in four megablocks at the heart of Seoul's central business district (CBD) that straddle the stream over the decade before and after the project. The next section briefly sketches the current literature about the impacts of open space on gentrification and regeneration. The following section explains the methodology and scope of this study. The paper then illustrates the project's impact on the study blocks with a focus on analyzing patterns of land use change. Finally, these findings are evaluated in light of the literature review.

Literature review

It is widely recognized that urban environmental quality is a key element in economic regeneration (Stanners & Bourdeau, 1995). In particular, public spaces function as useful components of urban regeneration strategies by improving the image of a city and thus a regeneration site's attractiveness to potential inward investors (McInroy, 2000). Open space also figures prominently in Richard Florida's recipes for attracting the so-called creative class that he claims are vital to urban growth in developed economies (Florida, 2002). Open space not only contributes to the visual appeal of a neighborhood but also provides recreational spaces that increase non-vehicular traffic, which in turn boosts retail sales (Choi & Shin, 2001). Thus, in the last decade, several cities have attempted to create large-scale open spaces in central districts, such as the Big Dig in Boston and the Highline in New York City, seeking not only to provide open space within the cities but also to regenerate the areas surrounding the projects.

On the other hand, urban environments that have been improved by open space may result in gentrification. The definition of gentrification has been under debate since at least the 1980s (Marcuse, 1986; Redfern, 2003; Slater, 2006). It has expanded from its narrow concentration on middle-class individuals who buy homes in poorer neighborhoods for personal consumption (Glass, 1964) to take on Hackworth's very broad definition of "the production of space for progressively more affluent users" (Hackworth, 2002). Overall, the definition of gentrification has expanded in at least three ways. First, the term has expanded from its concrete roots in London and New York City to incorporate urban processes throughout the world. Smith and Timberlake (2002), for example, offer a long list of locations, including Seoul, which they claim indicates that gentrification is now a global process.

Second, the nature of the gentrifier and gentrified have expanded from the original emphasis on young, middle-class couples gentrifying working class neighborhoods to include a variety of actors. Early conceptions of gentrifiers focused primarily on middle-class owner-occupiers. However, in their study of the transformation of Stockholm's CBD, Clark and Gullberg (1991) show that office development may also function as a gentrifying force. Additionally, commercial enterprises have been considered

gentrifiers in studies of Amsterdam and Rotterdam (Kloosterman & Leun, 1999), in San Francisco and Cambridge (Thrash, 2001), and in New York City's Lower East Side (Zukin & Kosta, 2004). Notably absent from this expansion of the list of gentrifiers are industries. On the other side of the equation, those whose neighborhoods have been gentrified were originally identified as low-income, working class families. As the commercial gentrification claims suggest, commercial activities can also become subject to displacement by higher profit enterprises. And from at least the early 1980s, industrial firms have been subject to displacement as loft living has become more appealing (Zukin, 1982). More recently, Curran (2007) has examined industrial displacement in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, illustrating uneven outcomes for various industrial residents. These studies (and many others) reinforces Hackworth's 2002 claim that the concept of gentrification has been "usefully applied to nonresidential urban change" in support of the broad definition above.

Third, though originally the prime movers in gentrification were considered households responding to market incentives (often characterized as the "rent-gap" [Smith, 1996]). According to Hackworth (2002), these smaller actors have now been displaced by larger, corporate real estate interests. He also argues that government involvement emerged actively during the 1970s, as local governments began to counter decline from deindustrialization by actively encouraging gentrification. After receding to indirect intervention in the 1980s, governments at all levels (in the US) have intervened much more actively, as entrepreneurial cities seek to compensate for declining state funding by raising property tax revenues. In the process of urban regeneration, which emerged in the UK during the 1990s, government intervention in upgrading neighborhoods has become conscious, active, and intentional, even a source of pride (Slater, 2006).

Ultimately, as many have argued (Maloutas, 2012; Slater, 2006; Smith & Timberlake, 2002), gentrification became synonymous with urban regeneration. If we adopt Hackworth's broad definition, it is clear that at heart the two are one. Both seek to produce space that will appeal to, attract, and serve the interests of more affluent users. And both involve displacing existing residents. Thus, we suggest a parallel with Clark's 1992 attempt to draw the supply and demand arguments over the cause of gentrification together as complementary but irreducible concepts that both describe important aspects of the same phenomenon. While both gentrification and urban regeneration conceptualize the same phenomenon, the former pays attention to the losers and the latter to the winners. The name one uses is only a matter of whose interests one prizes most highly.

Maloutas (2012), however, has recently argued that this generalization of the concept has produced a "half-way de-contextualization". That is, in the effort to apply a theory that explained a historically and geographically specific phenomenon to changing socioeconomic conditions and to a wider variety of national contexts, gentrification has been uprooted from its original Anglo-American context and applied uncritically and unproductively, shifting the emphasis of analysis to identifying similar outcomes rather than causal mechanisms. In particular, he argues that this de-contextualization has only proceeded half-way, as the particular historical circumstances under which the concept aspects was developed, such as deindustrialization, neoliberalism, and urban abandonment, are uncritically retained and assumed to be pertinent to other contexts. Instead Maloutas argues that scholars assessing development outside the Anglo-American setting should not assume gentrification as the cause of change but rather be attentive to "gentrification-like processes" taking place within locally specific institutional and economic conditions (cf. Beauregard, 1986). Contrary to Maloutas (2012: 42), the authors

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