

Preliminary Survey Study on Trend of Gentrification Phenomenon in Seoul City

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Abstract: A characteristic of gentrification in South Korea involves a process by which general residential zones and semi-industrial zones, once classified as non-commercial zones within high-density regions that have met certain criteria, convert to general commercial zones. This process entails the continued introduction of commercial facilities for outsiders rather than existing residents. This study examined the process by which gentrification occurs and forms and analyzed current cases of gentrification. The aim of this study is to establish the basic and foundational materials to be used in preparation for future regions that may be subject to gentrification and to explore the shared common criteria that are expected to have further significance in the application as basic research materials regarding the gentrification of city centers and urban restoration projects.

Key words: Gentrification, seoul city center, residential space, commercial space, materials, restoration

INTRODUCTION

Background and purpose of research: The Republic of Korea was able to achieve unprecedented levels of economic growth during the years following the 1960's. Such economic growth accelerated the growth of cities within Korea and resulted in the formation of certain high-density regions within the cities.

According to resource materials regarding the comprehensive policies to address gentrification in Seoul, such high-density regions were found to gradually expand gentrification within Seoul. Gentrification is an inevitable process of urban development and generally refers to the influx of middle-class households into low-income or underdeveloped residential regions that result in changes to the local community as well as changes to the types of housing and residences within the region. Recently in South Korea, however, gentrification has become more closely defined as a phenomenon in which existing renters are forced to leave a region due to increases in rent resulting from improved perceptions of a region. Regional experts regard such occurrences in a positive light, considering them as opportunities to renew and revitalize underdeveloped urban areas. Past studies regarding the gentrification of commercial zones also consider gentrification as a part of the urban revitalization process and claim that it has a positive effect from the perspective of consumer culture.

Conversely, despite its vitalizing effects on local communities, gentrification is also associated with rapid increases in rent, noise pollution and the development of waste resulting in an environment wrought with inconveniences to existing residents and the involuntary relocation of existing renters. Gentrification may also result in the loss of local identities and the collapse communities.

Specific areas within Seoul that have been identified as exhibiting signs of gentrification include Seochon, Yeonnam-dong and Gyeongnidan-gil as well as Seongsu-dong and Samcheong-dong. Unlike the past in which the process of gentrification gradually occurred over an extended period of approximately 20 years, recent cases of gentrification have only taken 4-5 years. Moreover, the speed at which the process of gentrification is progressing is increasing. As the process of gentrification progresses more rapidly, the loss of regional identity and the collapse of communities become more susceptible even before government policies and management practices are applied to address such adverse characteristics of a region.

A characteristic of gentrification in South Korea involves a process by which general residential zones and semi-industrial zones, once classified as non-commercial zones within high-density regions that have met certain criteria, convert to general commercial zones. This process entails the continued introduction of commercial facilities

for outsiders rather than existing residents. Such processes may largely damage the characteristics and distinctive features of existing residential zones. Since, existing residents living in general residential zones are directly subjected to the effects of gentrification, changes in living environments due to gentrification must be gradually improved with a specific concern for the residents of an area. To respond to such changes associated with gentrification while satisfying such items of improvement, there is a need to establish an understanding of the basic status of the areas in which gentrification occurs.

This study was undertaken to break the cycle of lacking or insufficient government responses to the rapidly accelerating progression of the current forms of gentrification compared to the forms of gentrification in the past. In doing so, the common criteria regarding the gentrification processes that were undertaken in key areas within the city center of Seoul were analyzed. The fact that the speed by which the gentrification processes has rapidly progressed indicates that urban growth and decline cycles are becoming shorter. In addition, an examination of recent trends reveals that the vitalization of a new region may lead to damaging effects on the characteristics and distinct features of existing areas. A basic understanding of regions potentially subject to gentrification must be developed. This can be achieved by establishing common criteria by studying the regions in which gentrification have already occurred. In doing so, the researchers of this study believe that it will be possible to prioritize the need for appropriate responses by the government and determine the implications of regional management practices.

Scope and method of research: This research explored the methods by which gentrification occurs and the process by which it progresses based on a literature review of existing resource materials. The research also examined materials regarding the comprehensive policy measures to address the issue of gentrification in Seoul as published by the Office of Planning and Coordination of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. The scope of research was established with regard to regions within the city center of Seoul as shown in Table 1.

This research focused on analyzing the regions presented in Table 1 and developed common criteria regarding the process and location of gentrification through a literature review and the analysis of case studies. The overall research process was undertaken as shown in Fig. 1.

Table 1: Classification according to the occurrence process of the gentry reservation

Classification by process of occurrence	Region
Regions subject to occurrences in the past	Sinchon Front of Ewha Womans University Apgujeong Rodeo Street
Regions subject to current occurrences	Hongdae area Yeonnam-dong Garosu-gil Samcheong-dong Gyeongnidan-gil Bukchon Seochon Insa-dong Daehakro Seongsu-dong Seongmisan Maeul
Regions expected to be subjected to occurrences in the future	Haebangchon Mullae-dong
Regions subject to restoration projects	

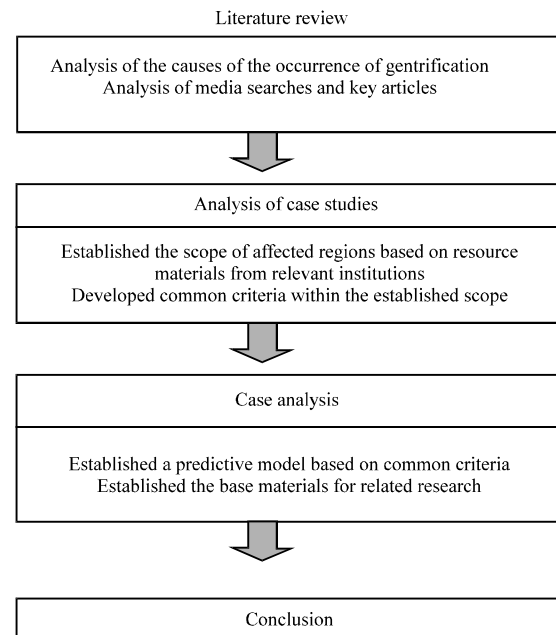


Fig. 1: Research procedure

Literature review: Most studies regarding gentrification in the past mainly involved research undertaken from a traditional standpoint. These studies primarily involved a study of theory and issues surrounding residential spaces. This differs from the more complex current processes of gentrification that involve interactions between both residential and commercial spaces. Because of this, the history of studies on such complex types of gentrification is short. Incidentally, since, gentrification in South Korea typically manifests across entire regions, most studies on gentrification are undertaken by region and include areas such as Garosu-gil, Yeonnam-dong, Haebangchon and Sinchon.

Studies on Garosu-gil include that by Lee *et al.* (2011) in which physical changes regarding neighborhood blocks and land lots were analyzed. Lee *et al.* (2011) studied a method of urban vitalization that was developed upon conducting surveys entered on unique aspects found in previous studies. Both studies are significant in that they record an actual process by which gentrification occurs rather than pursue discourse on theory.

Studies on Yeonnam-dong include that of Jin (2013) in which the introduction of external factors induced the departure of existing residents from the neighborhood due to the revitalization of underdeveloped residential spaces. Kim (2015) compared and analyzed the process by which low-income residential spaces converted to commercial spaces as the area affected by the consumer culture of Yeonnam-dong expanded according to the concept of cultural consumption by Pierre Bourdieu. Both analyses have value in that specific issues were revealed with respect to the most recently presented complex forms of gentrification.

Studies on Gyeongnidan-gil include that by Kim and Lee (2016) in which gentrification spontaneously catalyzed by existing residents resulted not only in the expansion of the commercial space but also the introduction of new cultural spaces. The method in which the study took place was via interviews. Upon discussing 5 factors that led to changes in Gyeongnidan-gil, a new perspective from a cultural standpoint was proposed. Such studies on gentrification are valuable in that they attempt to understand gentrification by focusing on cultural uniqueness.

Previous studies on gentrification in South Korea are all undoubtedly and uniquely valuable. However, studies on recent and more complex forms of gentrification require comprehensive and comparative analyses of the relations of residential and commercial zones. Unfortunately, these types of studies are currently lacking.

Theoretical background: In the past, discussions among Western academic circles were mostly centered on the gentrification of residential spaces. Despite this in recent times, gentrification has introduced a revitalization of commercial areas and rapid rises in rent that have resulted in the involuntary departure of existing residents. In South Korea, gentrification has reached a point in which the introduction of franchises into neighborhoods within Seoul is increasingly considered a negative

aspect and an issue eliciting a response. Today, the issues surrounding residential gentrification in South Korea have expanded to include issues regarding commercial gentrification, resulting in complex problems. Such complex forms of gentrification draw greater public recognition of the region resulting in that region becoming newly inundated with elements of tourism that attract outsiders.

The problems typically associated with current forms of gentrification primarily pertain to sharp increases in rent. Relatively low rental costs in existing areas have resulted in the development of various types of urban amenities and attractions. Such developments have subsequently increased the influx of outsiders. With greater public recognition and expansion of regional commercial activity due to such occurrences, both residents and landlords are impacted. Existing residents confront greater inconveniences and landlords set aside contracts with existing renters to enter into contracts with large franchise businesses. That is the establishment of “hot spots” results in the involuntary relocation of existing renters.

Recent cases of gentrification have close ties to the local economy. In many cases, the government has taken a leading role in vitalizing commercial districts based on regional characteristics and features and have encouraged the influx of outsiders by permitting certain elements of tourism to a region. Consequently, there is a high possibility that the unique identities established in existing regional communities will be lost and that a one-sided interest in vitalizing commercial activity will result in the establishment of standardized identities.

Selection of study sites: The scope of the sites analyzed in this study was established by referring to the ‘Comprehensive Solution on Gentrification in Seoul’ published by the Office of Planning and Coordination of the Seoul Metropolitan Government. Of the total 17 sites, including those that experienced gentrification in the past, those that are currently experiencing gentrification and those expected to experience gentrification, 6 sites were selected for further study and 11 sites were excluded. The specific standard by which the sites were selected involved the selection of locations that presented a large degree of representativeness with regard to identity among the 17 sites as shown in Fig. 2 (Kwon, 2013).



Fig. 2: Research Area

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method of analysis: The key impacts of gentrification currently occurring within Seoul are being discussed with respect to the conflicts associated with existing residents, the influx of outsiders and the issues of involuntary relocation due to shifting dynamics between renters and landlords. Despite such efforts, general discussions are largely lacking with respect to other issues. These include issues associated with the factors of complex forms of gentrification as having a damaging effect on the unique features of a region and the means of separating residential and commercial spaces. Considering this, the

following methods were applied to explain the current forms of gentrification that exist. The method of analysis first entailed the identification of problems and the study of the process by which gentrification occurs by reviewing existing research and case studies. Second, urban elements that were revealed as being commonly present in each region through the review of existing research and case studies were established. The establishment of common urban elements signifies that it will be possible to predict and apply appropriate solutions to future regions that expected to experience increasingly accelerated forms of gentrification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of types of cases (Insa-dong, Daehakro)

Insa-dong: Antique markets that originally formed during the period of Japanese colonial rule became the basis of the present-day Insa-dong. As the personal items of the Yangban class were placed on the market for sale in antique markets during the Late Periods of the Joseon Dynasty, antiques from across the nation gathered in shops along the streets of Insa-dong. These activities became the basis for and formed the Insa-dong antique market as it is known today. Insa-dong became well-established as the center of distribution for antiques following the restoration of national independence of South Korea and grew to become one of the most representative concentrated cultural districts of Seoul.

As the cultural influence of Insa-dong increased, the value of real estate along the streets of Insa-dong started to be reevaluated. This led to an increase in real estate value and as a result, several existing traditional businesses were replaced by other types of businesses due to rent increases. According to statistics from the Jongno-gu Office, despite protective measures being implemented for certain businesses deemed representative of regional characteristics upon designating Insa-dong as a cultural district, Insa-dong still shows signs of gradual decline. In addition, even those existing businesses that have survived to the present are considered by some to be mismatched with the region's characteristics as they largely serve as elements of tourism.

Daehakro: Daehakro is a concentrated cultural district devoted to the arts and theater. The area has been designated, protected and managed as a cultural district, since, 2004. Upon its designation as a cultural district, the number of performance halls and theaters continued to increase from its original 57 locations to 164 locations by 2014 an increase of 187%. However, as was the case of Insa-dong, the increasing cultural influence of Daehakro resulted in the introduction of large performance halls and visual arts theaters as well as rising real estate values due to the regional commercialization. Today, some have voiced the opinion that the regional characteristics are disappearing as cultural spaces are increasingly becoming standardized and small theaters and individual artists are increasingly leaving theater companies.

Sub-conclusion: Insa-dong and Daehakro are regions that have been designated as cultural districts. The process of gentrification is currently continuing today. As presented in Table 2 and 3, businesses that strongly represent regional characteristics are increasingly losing

Table 2: Insa-dong street industry distribution status

Businesses that have been involuntarily relocated	Businesses that have been newly introduced
Art galleries, arts and crafts shops, calligraphy shops, paper manufacturers, mounting businesses, antique shops, etc	Food and beverage shops, gift shops, cosmetics shops, clothing and apparel shops, franchise shops, etc

Table 3: Daehak-ro industry distribution status

Businesses that have been involuntarily relocated	Businesses that have been newly introduced
Small theaters, personal art studios, small art galleries theaters	Large performance halls, multiplex cultural facilities, large movie

competitiveness against businesses largely associated with elements of tourism. As shown in Table 3, both regions are formed along a strip of land of similar width that is connected to several alleys and adjacent to other main roads. Classification of specific points along the roads was undertaken according to the street name standard classification system of the Ministry of the Interior and Safety.

Analysis of cases (Hongdae, Seongsu-dong)

Hongdae: Hongdae, commonly referred to as the area in front of Hongik University was first designated as a general residential zone. Up until the 1980's, several personal art studios, art academies, workshops, art galleries and materials handlers formed a cluster of art and culture near the main entrance of Hongik University. Following the 1990's, greater accessibility to the area due to the opening of subway stations accelerated the growth of underground culture, clubs and live music cafes along certain areas. Such a turn of events led to the influx of art and music-related offices to the Hongdae Region and Hongdae became widely recognized as a cultural space. However, following the 2002 World Cup, several national projects centered on the cultural characteristics of Hongdae were successfully carried out in the region. The new developments as in other cases, resulted in increased real estate value within the central areas of Hongdae and the subsequent and involuntary relocation of artists and small shops to other nearby areas such as Hapjeong-dong or Sangsu-dong.

Seongsu-dong: Seongsu-dong was a relatively underdeveloped semi-industrial area that was largely occupied by mid to small-sized factories and aging multi-unit housing complexes. Because of these attributes from its earlier stages, the area was extremely attractive to artists and start-up businesses due to the low-cost rent. However, due to its proximity to Seoul Forest and the Han River and its logistical advantages including its convenient access to Line 2 and Bundang Line subway stations, the area became largely recognized as a hot

spot. Despite the rapid progression of gentrification in the area, the local government appropriately responded to the issue through early responses that slowed the speed at which gentrification occurred. Since then the local government has been able to impose a degree of self-regulation over the region. However, there is a lack of higher legislation involvement and response to the fundamental aspects of gentrification in the region. Thus, the ordinances imposed in Seongsu-dong by the local government are expected to weaken considerably, eventually limiting its capacity to address the issue.

Sub-conclusion: Hongdae and Seongsu-dong were areas previously classified as general residential zones. They are still considered some of the most popular areas that attract artists seeking workspaces and are still subjected to gentrification. Hongdae, as shown in Table 4, experienced gentrification at an astonishing rate upon the introduction of an underground culture and clubs as well as the concentration of arts and culture related hot spots as presented in the mass media. Seongsu-dong is an area that experienced gentrification due to the introduction of luxury residential complexes such as the Hanhwa Galleria Foret Apartment complexes as well as its proximity to the Han River and its access to transit (Table 4-6).

Analysis of cases (Samcheong-dong, Gyeongnidan-gil)

Samcheong-dong: Samcheong-dong was a community commercial district from 1970-1990. Due to relatively low levels of rent compared to nearby areas, a number of artists relocated to Samcheong-dong following the gentrification of Insa-dong. Upon the introduction of artists to Samcheong-dong an area that had already exhibited features of a commercial district, the area gradually changed entirely into a commercial district as its public popularity increased. Up until the late 2000's, the number of art galleries in Samcheong-dong gradually increased to form the culture and commercial district of Samcheong-dong as it is known today and further accelerated the process of regional gentrification (Park and Lee, 2016; Park and Nam, 2016).

Gyeongnidan-gil: Gyeongnidan-gil continued to develop as a community commercial district during the 1980's. The area later became subject to gentrification due its proximity to the 8th US Army Garrison in Yongsan, the Namsan No. 2 Tunnel and Itaewon. The construction of a nearby Line 6 subway station, Noksapyeong also fueled this process. As in the case of Samcheong-dong, during its earlier years, Gyeongnidan-gil was able to establish a new culture that was popularized by members of the younger generations as well as foreigners who sought low rent. However, gentrification came with the

Table 4: Hongdae industry distribution status

Businesses that have been involuntarily relocated	Businesses that have been newly introduced
Art galleries, arts and crafts shops, art academies, personal art studios, etc	Clubs, live music cafes, luxury restaurants, band practice studios, etc

Table 5: Seongsu-dong industry distribution status

Businesses that have been involuntarily relocated	Businesses that have been newly introduced
Small housing units, mid to small-sized industrial complexes, etc	Luxury apartments, cafes, social enterprises, etc

Table 6: Samcheong-dong industry distribution status

Businesses that have been involuntarily relocated	Businesses that have been newly introduced
Community shops and stores, small housing units, antique shops, etc	Luxury restaurants, cafes, personal galleries, etc

Table 7: Gyeongnidan-gil industry distribution status

Businesses that have been involuntarily relocated	Businesses that have been newly introduced
Community shops and stores, small housing units, coffee houses, etc	Large franchise businesses, mid to low priced restaurants, cafes, etc

introduction of large franchise businesses and the unique culture of the region, originally characterized by local community shops, began its gradual decline to what it is today.

Sub-conclusion: Samcheong-dong and Gyeongnidan-gil were both areas that displayed community commercial features. Upon their influx into the areas to seek relatively low rent compared to nearby areas, artists and members of the younger generation created a new culture that defined the characteristics of the regions. However, as both areas became increasingly popular among the public, existing community shops and stores were involuntarily relocated due to the effects of gentrification (Table 7).

CONCLUSION

The process of gentrification in this research was not examined from a localized perspective of a limited area. Rather, it analyzed general trends and cases found throughout Seoul to establish the common criteria attributed to the occurrence of gentrification.

The process and characteristics of gentrification were studied by reviewing previous studies and literature. Using resource materials regarding comprehensive policies in response to gentrification as published by the Seoul Metropolitan Government in addition to the reviewed material, several common criteria associated with the process gentrification in each of the cases were found.

As presented in each of the cases, a common criterion of regions experiencing gentrification included, foremost, a strong regional identity. As indicated in Case Analysis 4.1 (Daehakro, Insa-dong), the process of gentrification occurred when the scope of cultural

activities was expanded in regions featuring strong historical significance. In this case, however, the characteristics of the region became standardized and the region became strongly subject to the elements of tourism.

Second, gentrification was found to progress more quickly in the cases where external elements were introduced rather than in the cases of self-induced forms of gentrification. As indicated in Case Analysis 4.2 (Hongdae, Seongsu-dong), a push by the government to further develop upon the features of the already-established concentrated culture district of Hongdae resulted in the involuntary relocation of artists and community shops and stores.

This study examined the process by which gentrification occurs and forms and analyzed current cases of gentrification. The aim of this study is to establish the basic and foundational materials to be used in preparation for future regions that may be subject to gentrification and to explore the shared common criteria that are expected to have further significance in the application as basic research materials regarding the gentrification of city centers and urban restoration projects.

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