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Master's Thesis of Eliot Seungwu Choe

Commercial Gentrification Effect  
on Nearby Neighborhoods from  
Residential Redevelopment: A Case  
Study of the Wangsimni New Town Area

주택 재개발 사업이 주변지역 상업  
젠트리피케이션에 미치는 영향:  
왕십리 뉴타운 지역 사례 연구

August 2023

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Examiner: In Kwon Park

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# Abstract

Since the 2000s, redevelopment projects in dilapidated neighborhoods in Seoul have been rapaciously deployed to meet the high demand for housing and balanced development within the city. Even though the complete clearance approach of residential redevelopment resembles the effect of gentrification through the displacement of original residents by replacing them with the middle-class populace and the physical improvement of the neighborhood, the body of research has largely separated the two processes. Due to the various actors that are involved in the process of gentrification, researchers have long separated the two processes in the context of Korea as the role of the developmental state played a crucial role in the history of urban development in Seoul. Additionally, as commercial gentrification quickly attracted media attention in Korea, the discussion around gentrification heavily revolved around the issue between commercial landlords and tenants. Consequently, the issue of gentrification and redevelopment largely remained as separate urban processes despite the resembling impact of the two phenomena.

However, as more recent cases of inner-city redevelopment recompose the formally dilapidated areas in Seoul with a new middle-class population and the rate of commercial gentrification increases in Seoul, it is important to closely examine the dynamics between the two processes. The Wangsimni New Town Area, first designated for redevelopment in 2004 and completed its first sections in 2014, showcases how large-scale residential redevelopment can trigger subsidiary commercial gentrification in surrounding neighborhoods outside of the redevelopment zone. Originally a home for the working-class manufacturing industry and traditional market merchants with affordable housing, the area experienced a rapid change since the completion of the project. Uniquely, as the redevelopment project is located on an administrative boundary of two different municipal gu districts in

Seoul, the subsidiary consequences that the surrounding neighborhoods also differ as well.

This study will closely examine how commercial gentrification has been triggered by residential redevelopment projects. The paper will build a case study around Wangsimni New Town Area and its surrounding neighborhoods of Hwanghak-dong and Doseon-dong as the two neighborhoods share the same event of redevelopment in their neighboring area but have received different subsequent policy interventions based on their municipal boundaries and different distribution of local industries. This study constructs a case study by collecting historical archives, media coverage, census data, and business data to understand the gentrification effect from the point of view of residential redevelopment. Then, through conducting semi-structured interviews with current business owners and local organizations, the study aims to investigate the subsequent commercial gentrification effect of residential redevelopment that seeps into the surrounding area.

A brief finding of the study can be summarized as follows: first, the state-led large-scale inner-city redevelopment project creates the initial gentrification condition. Through population and business change in the area, initial conditions for gentrification are formed once the redevelopment project is completed. Second, the study identifies several internal and external factors that can influence the consequences of the gentrification process. The interview data reveals the different actors that are involved in influencing the rate and intensity of gentrification that may occur in surrounding neighborhoods. Third, the study also identifies a group of active gentrifiers that lead the change in the neighborhood and their motivations and position through the process of subsequent commercial gentrification.

This study suggests that residential redevelopment, although traditionally separated process from classic literature on gentrification, forms the initial conditions for subsequent gentrification in the nearby areas. However, the rate and intensity of the process are also dependent on a number of factors with different

scales of political force having its agency in influencing the outcome. While the state still holds the power in enabling or constraining the process, it is also the agency of the local community and organization that can influence the consequences of gentrification as well. This study suggests that local support and organization can play a crucial role in equitable development in the area and potentially curve the negative impact of displacement and even reinforce the capability of old local businesses through cooperation between the local state and the community.

**Keywords:** Gentrification, Comercial gentrification, Residential redevelopment, Neighborhood change, Wangsimni, Case Study

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Study Background

In 2015, Gentrification quickly captures public attention in Korea as media coverage regarding the topic increased from 45 reports to 813 reports in one year (이선영, 2016). With accompanying rhetoric such as ‘cultural bleaching’, ‘urban revitalization’, and ‘nest-dislodging’, the dominant narrative of gentrification has been the issue of rent increase in commercial areas and conflict between commercial landlords and tenants and the eventual displacement of small businesses. With no comparable precedents of such phenomena, gentrification has largely been covered as a new emerging urban phenomenon, triggering a series of immediate local and political responses through media coverage, publication, research, and counter-measuring regulations and ordinances related to the issue.

However, Korean society—particularly in the urban experience of Seoul—has a familiar history of gentrification when expanding the discussion to uneven development and the issue of displacement through large-scale block and neighborhood demolishing in residential areas of the city through redevelopment projects (신현방, 2018). But redevelopment discussion has largely been separated from the gentrification discourse in Korea due to its compressed history of urban development, pointing out the fact that Korean cities were not able to form such dilapidated inner-city slums ripened for the process of gentrification to unroll. The discussion also remained largely revolving around evaluating the impact of state-led projects on the neighborhoods (구경민 외, 2009; 권은선·김광중, 2011; 김종현 외, 2008; 김철홍·박재홍, 2009; 남진·김진하, 2009; 박현정, 2012; 정동규, 2016; 이창무·김미경, 2009; 임은선 외, 2010; 최막중·김준형, 2006; 최해동 외, 2011; 하성규·김태섭, 2001; 한승혜·배현희, 2021), largely neglecting the agencies of local actors during the process of neighborhood change in Korea. Additionally, literature on gentrification in Korea remained mostly in the exploratory stage by

focusing on categorizing different processes based on each specific case thus focusing on the process of each specific type of gentrification such as residential, commercial, and cultural gentrification (신정엽·김감영, 2014; 박태원 외, 2016; 이기훈 외; 2018).

However, as neighborhoods in Seoul face increasing numbers of neighborhood redevelopment, the apparent patterns of middle-class remaking of working-class urban neighborhoods have increasingly been more apparent. While most redevelopment projects were initiated by large-scale state-led redevelopment projects, with the increase in commercial gentrification as a form of urban change in Seoul, the two processes of redevelopment and commercial gentrification began to synchronize, expanding the impact of redevelopment outside of its initial boundaries with the neighborhood change seeps through the nearby neighborhoods by new incoming gentrifiers in the neighborhood. However, as a huge body of literature on gentrification focuses on how the commercial and cultural forces change the commercial area, research on how the residential process influences the process of gentrification is largely unexplored.

While categorizing different types of gentrifications may be a useful tool to understand each separate case, there are limitations to exploring and understanding the motivations or ways in which the actors and agents carry out the process. This disconnection between the two literatures even though they share similar outcomes of spatial change and inequality is due to the lack of research understanding gentrification through a more holistic approach of change encompassing different types of gentrifications. Therefore, there needs to be a more holistic investigation of the process of gentrification to understand the diversified aspects of residential and commercial change that occurs through gentrification and redevelopment in Korea.

## 1.2. Purpose of Research

This research aims to explore and analyze how the sizable external event of block redevelopment impacts the neighboring areas of the project and investigate why certain neighborhoods experience gentrification-like changes while some parts may experience less sound of an effect of such change. Therefore, this study constructs its research questions as follows:

1. How does a residential redevelopment project trigger changes in adjacent neighborhoods as it causes scenic and social change within the neighborhood?
2. Why does some parts of the neighborhood experience greater and faster change in its commercial and retail landscape while some part does not?

To answer the following sets of questions, the research builds a case study from the Wangsimni New Town Redevelopment Project. The redeveloped area in Wangsimni and its nearing neighborhoods are suitable for such a case study as the area experienced a kind of large-scale block redevelopment and experience a subsequent change in the retail and commercial environment within the neighborhood.

Wangsimni neighborhood originally provided homes and jobs for working-class residents in Seoul but experienced a rapid social and scenic change within the neighborhood due to the redevelopment project. The redevelopment also was one of the three pilot redevelopment projects that laid the foundation for a series of subsequent inner-city redevelopment projects popularized in Seoul under the name of “New Town Development”, thus securing representative characteristics for such large-scale block redevelopment projects happening within the city.

From the experience of Wangsimni New Town redevelopment, the first question attempts to establish the dynamic relationship between residential redevelopment and commercial gentrification but focuses on how the residential change synchronizes with the subsequent changes in nearby spaces of consumption. Through

establishing the connection between the two largely separated processes in the literature of gentrification in Korea, this study aims to develop a framework that could capture the holistic process of gentrification from residential change to changes in service and urban amenities within the neighborhood.

The Second question attempts to contextualize how such change occurs in differing contexts. Even though the impact of such a large-scale external event of redevelopment provides the same initial impact and shockwave that radiates to the surrounding area, the actual change may differ based on the existing community of the surrounding area, especially when the scale of the redevelopment includes an entire city block as big as 337,200m<sup>2</sup>. From existing land use conditions and different local industry that is settled in the area, there are a lot of contextual social, cultural, economic, and political factors that may alter the trajectories of the process, ultimately resulting in differing outcomes of gentrification. This study aims to examine some contextual factors that may influence such a process and how it influences the outcome of gentrification.

### **1.3. Research Methodology**

To examine the relationship between urban residential redevelopment and gentrification, this study employs a case study as its research methodology. Case study is regarded as an effective methodology to understand how or why some complex social phenomenon works in a contemporary context, and especially useful when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be evident (Yin, 2018).

One of the advantages of designing and employing case study research as a methodology is its ability to collect data from multiple sources to evaluate a contemporary event. Yin (2018) suggests that case studies can mainly pull evidence from the following six types of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. This study will collect the data for analysis in two phases. This study first

extensively collects data from documentation and archival records consisting of official statistical data, archival research and interviews done by historians, and publicly available records of urban planning and political documentation to track the changes that the neighborhood experienced from the beginning of the project. Then second, this study conducts in-depth and semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data from the groups of individuals that experience the contemporary change that occurs within the neighborhood. Then the final analysis of the case study will use a combination of the collected data from multiple sources through methods of triangulation and investigate the type of change in how and why residential redevelopment may cause certain changes in some parts of the neighborhood while some parts do not.

The content of this research is in the following order. Chapter 2 provides theoretical grounds for analysis by reviewing the literature on gentrification and previous research done on redevelopment and gentrification in Korea. Chapter 3 then establishes the theoretical and conceptual framework for later analysis. Chapter 4 presents and analyzes collected data from documentation, archival records, and interviews. Lastly, Chapter 5 will discuss the findings and concluding remarks of the research.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Review

#### 2.1.1 Brief Review of Gentrification

Since British Sociologist Ruth Glass (1964) coined the term “gentrification” based on her observation of urban change in London, the concept has expanded and mutated over time. The first iteration of the definition provides a versatile ground that encapsulates the complexity of urban change that could happen even at a small neighborhood scale. Glass (1964), first defines the process as follows:

“One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages... have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period—which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupations—have been upgraded once again ... Once this process of ‘gentrification’ starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced.” (Glass, 1964)

Glass (1964) defines gentrification as capturing the essential components of the process. First, gentrification implies a gradual class restructuring of the area typically composed of the lower-income or working-class population as Glass (1964) first defines, by the incoming middle-class population. The second component relies on a physical and aesthetic change in the neighborhood landscape through the sweat equity of the incoming middle class. Lastly, and most importantly, the process results in the displacement of original residents in the neighborhood. Though this original explanation of gentrification is only representative of an urban change attached to a specific time and place, the definition encompasses a change in

social, economic, and physical structure within the city comprehensively and paved a new ground for research.

From this classic definition, two pillars of theoretical arguments emerged. Commonly known as the production and consumption explanations, the discussion between the two theoretical arguments led to advancing the discourse and constructing the theory of gentrification. The production side explanation was spearheaded by the Marxist approach of Neil Smith and his thesis on Rent Gap which provided structural factors and root causes of gentrification through its political economic perspective (Smith, 1979, 1982; Lees et al, 2008). On the other end of the spectrum lies the consumption side explanation largely credited to David Ley's thesis based on the post-industrial city. The consumption explanation develops its argument from the perspective of the post-industrial city where the decline of inner-city manufacturing is replaced with the in-moving managerial and professional class, triggering a series of changes that occur within the city (Hamnett, 1991). The two explanations enriched the classic definition of gentrification by providing additional explanations of the root causes of the phenomenon to move the concept beyond its original spatiotemporal context. However, reducing the phenomenon to a single explanation fails to address the diverse forms and regional contexts of how gentrification happens as an outcome. As a result, later research attempted to move away from this dichotomous approach into developing a more integrated approach to understanding and analyzing diverse ways in which gentrification occurs.

By the 1980s gentrification literature began to integrate the two seemingly opposing explanations. Beauregard (1984) suggested that gentrification be interpreted as a chaotic concept rather than being conceptualized through a single causal explanation. This idea stems mainly from the critique on the limitation of Neil Smith's production side explanation in that it does not address the diverse nature of consequences of gentrification, and the role of reproduction and consumption during the process (Beauregard, 1984). However, the production side explanation based on the theory of rent gap is still



acknowledged as an explanation that is closest to the essence of the process, Beauregard (1984) suggests a framework that encapsulates the process in two general phases. The first phase is based on the production argument where three conditions of gentrification are produced for gentrification to occur in a neighborhood. The conditions are composed of three parts: (1) Production of gentrifiable space, (2) Existence of middle-class gentry, (3) Potentially displaced or gentrified. The key aspect of Beauregard's (1984) explanation is the incorporation of the agency of active gentrifiers and their willingness to carry out the process that constitutes the process of gentrification. Separating the roles between passive gentries and active gentrifiers establishes the explanation for why gentrification occurs in certain inner-city neighborhoods despite the presence of a rent gap as the production argument claims. By incorporating the agency of active gentrifiers, it also provides a framework that also considers the arguments of consumption side explanation as well. Following such an integrated approach, following studies attempted to define gentrification outside of the context of specific spatial and temporal contexts, and reduce the definition to its essence of change in the class constitution and the built environment in the inner-city (Jager, 1986; Clark, 2005), or defining the process as simultaneously a change in the physical, economic, social, and cultural aspect of a place (Hamnett, 1991).

### 2.1.2 Mutation and emergence of contemporary gentrification

As the literature on gentrification moved towards incorporating the two initially dichotomous theoretical grounds through abstracting the concept outside of the temporal and spatial context of its first iteration, the concept undergoes a process of mutation through conceptual expansion (Lees et al, 2008). This is in part due to the process of gentrification maturing and adapting to changes in political, social, and economic environment over time, as well as the conceptual abstraction providing grounds for gentrification to be identified in contexts outside of Anglo-American contexts (Davidson

& Lees, 2005; Smith, 2002; Shin & Lee, 2016).

	Characteristics
First-wave (1950s–1973)	Sporadic gentrification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process isolated in the northeastern USA and Western Europe</li> <li>• Change led by ‘green lining’ activities</li> </ul>
Second-wave (1970s–1980s)	“The anchoring of gentrification” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process is now common in smaller, non-global cities.</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial spirit intensifies and process of gentrification stabilizes during this period</li> <li>• Intense political struggles over the displacement of the poorest residents</li> </ul>
Third-wave (mid–1990s–)	Gentrification returns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The prophecies of ‘degentrification’ from economic recession fails to happen</li> <li>• Process expands to areas outside of inner-city</li> <li>• More linked to large-scale capital than ever, as large developers rework entire neighborhoods with state support</li> </ul>

<Table 1. Three waves of Gentrification from Hackworth & Smith (2001), reorganized.>

The first theoretical turn towards encompassing this process of mutation is thoroughly reviewed in the chronicling of gentrification by Hackworth & Smith (2001) which Lees et al. (2008) regard as the backbone of what they label “contemporary gentrification”. In this timeline of gentrification, the process evolves and mutates through three distinctive waves of change, with the most dramatic change happening in the 1990s (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Smith, 2002). As gentrification approached its contemporary wave, the role of the state was heightened in inducing and promoting gentrification as neoliberal legacies lifted public policies that constrained the negative

effects of gentrification in the 1990s of the West (Smith, 2002). As the state assumes a more active role in inducing gentrification, the language of gentrification no longer presents to be discrete as it gets labeled in a collection of sugarcoated labels such as urban regeneration or renaissance, concealing the class and political implication of the process (Smith, 2002). Now with its expanded definition encompassing new actors and different political and economic climates from its original conception, gentrification expands its frontier to several fields. Most notably, Davidson and Lees (2005) argue for a concept of ‘new-build gentrification’ moving away from the incremental change involving the sweat equity of the middle class. From the waterfront development along the Thames in London, they argue a case for new-build gentrification on brownfield sites with four of the wide interpretation of gentrification: (1) reinvestment of capital; (2) social upgrading of the locale by incoming high-income groups; (3) landscape change; and (4) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups (Davidson & Lees, 2005). A noticeable contribution of the concept of new-build gentrification is that it expands the scope of displacement to indirect forms of displacement expanding on Marcuse (1986)’s typology of exclusionary displacement<sup>1</sup>.

The contemporary expansion of gentrification in concepts such as new-build gentrification provides a useful theoretical framework to locate gentrification in regional and temporal contexts outside of the typically debated geographies of gentrification in Anglo-American Context. Ley & Teo (2014) employs this new contemporary concept to evaluate and interpret urban changes in Hong Kong through redevelopment as gentrification. Common characteristics of gentrification such as displacement, the intervention of capital investment, and upgrading of the built

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<sup>1</sup> Marcuse (1986) establishes four types of displacement that occurs from gentrification: (1) direct last-resident displacement, (2) direct chain displacement, (3) exclusionary displacement, and (4) displacement pressure. While the first two refers to direct replacement, the latter two typology provides useful conceptual explanation to indirect forms of displacement that occurs during the process.

environment were identified in their analysis of Hong Kong but also point out some distinct characteristics that may attribute to local contexts such as a strong and centralized form of state power and its switch to post-industrial society after 1997 (Ley & Teo, 2014, 2016). Shin and Kim (2016) also attempt to identify such gentrification in the regional context of Seoul, expanding upon comparative literature on gentrification based on its contemporary concept. Similar to findings in Hong Kong, Shin and Kim (2016) deploy a wider definition of gentrification, arguing that gentrification in Seoul occurred through the demolition and displacement of entire neighborhoods for high-rise new build housing estates catered towards the rising middle-class population through its chronicle of urban development. This gentrification emerging from the direction of strong developmental state aid towards speculative urban development is even claimed as an endogenous process that is not a simple emulation of the Western model of gentrification. 신현준·이기웅 (2016) also conducts a comparative study between four cities of Tokyo, Hanoi, Taipei, and Beijing, and attempts to locate gentrification in the East Asian context beyond the discussion of urban redevelopment. 신현준·이기웅 (2016) mines differing aspects and local contexts that lead to different forms of gentrification from experiences of four East and South East Asian cities and concludes that amidst strong state-led urban changes, smaller agencies of newly emerging commercial and cultural gentrifiers leading to 'alternative urbanism' in line with ideas from consumption explanation of gentrification from its local practices.

Though gentrification was first coined as a record of change in a specific time and place in London in the 1960s, the essence of the phenomenon that captures complex neighborhood change provided a foundation of what Smith (1982) calls a 'leading edge' of urban change. The theoretical discussion pulled interdisciplinary attention where seminal scholars come from different academic backgrounds ranging from mainstream sociology to geography and economy, indicating the complex nature of gentrification that can be interpreted in multiple ways. Such interdisciplinary debate and the changing climate of politics and economy led to conceptual mutations and

evolution boiling down the concept to its essential form of neighborhood change through a cycle of investment that results in class restructuring and population change. Through this process, the conceptual expansion now occurs throughout geographical boundaries outside of its original Anglo-American context.

From the review of theoretical literature on gentrification, this study employs the definition gentrification in its broadest definition, in which the change in the built environment is enabled through the investment in fixed capital causing a dramatic change in the urban landscape, and subsequent change in population is caused in following ways: first, the inflow of higher income groups through commodification of the neighborhood, and second, subsequent direct and indirect displacement of low-income groups.

### 2.1.3 Commercial Gentrification

As gentrification literature enters the contemporary phase of change encompassing gentrification in a global context and dichotomy beyond the production and consumption debate, the theoretical scope expands beyond residential change. Noticing the parallel relationship between change in retail space with new forms and types of consumption happening researchers now expand the scope of gentrification towards retail or commercial gentrification (Bridge & Dowling, 2001; Zukin 2008; Zukin et al, 2009; Sullivan & Shaw, 2011; Gonzalez and Waley, 2013; 윤윤채·박진아, 2016). Residential upgrading and change caused by gentrification are often accompanied by the visibility of consumption practice of a new urbane middle class, which creates a distinctive marker that sets apart the new incoming gentrifiers from the mainstream middle-class populace settled outside the inner-city area (Zukin 1987, Ley 1996, Bridge & Dowling 2001).

Though the change in retail space has been acknowledged in earlier iterations of consumption explanations (Ley, 1996; Bridge & Dowling 2001), the retailing aspect and change in consumption space was mostly marginalized from the argument as gentrification

discussion revolved around residential change. Attempts to conceptualize the change in consumption space are largely credited to the works of Sharon Zukin and her colleagues in their theoretical and empirical research based in New York (Zukin, 1987, 2008; Zukin et al, 2009). First introduced with the phrase ‘consuming authenticity’ where distinctive cultural practices of artists<sup>2</sup> create a type of culture and consumption spaces desirable by the middle class with higher capital, resulting in an economic accumulation through artistic and cultural activities (Zukin, 1987, 2008). This approach of cultural accumulation places the role of artists at the forefront of retail gentrification, empirical studies also suggest the consumption of food and beverages as restaurants, bars, and cafes play an important role in changing the consumption landscape in a neighborhood (Dowling & Bridge, 2001; Gonzalez & Waley, 2013; Hagemans et al 2015; 윤윤채-박진아, 2016).

The first conceptualization interpreting this change in retail and consumption activities as a separate process was first suggested in an empirical study by Zukin et al (2009), where the study examines two paths to gentrification: one led by the state, and another led by the market. Through a comparative case study of two neighborhoods of Harlem and Williamsburg in New York, the study identifies a noticeable group of actors that are involved in the retail gentrification process as well as a brief staged model showing the temporal aspects of change as well. As the neighborhood goes under this process of commercial gentrification, ‘new retail entrepreneurs’ with disposable income and an interest in the cultural community along with corporate chain stores replace and create pressures on old local stores that served affordable goods and services of longtime residents (Zukin et al, 2009). This pressure is

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<sup>2</sup> Jacobs (1998), Ley (2003) and Zukin (2008) provides more detailed description on role of artist and the process of aestheticization linked to gentrification. Ley (2003) and Zukin (2008)’s work is also important in identifying the ambivalent position of artists with high cultural capital, but low economic capital contributes to the early initiation of gentrification but later be vulnerable as gentrifiers with higher level of capital moves into the area.

often led by rent increases as new stores serve the needs and consumption demand of a higher economic and cultural background, but also through an alteration in the sense of place where the new retail landscape signifies a safe environment attracting both domestic and international tourist as the area attracts attention through mainstream media (Zukin 2008; Zukin et al, 2009). Gonzalez & Waley' s (2013) study of London' s traditional market renovation expands the field of gentrification: first by examining how the state acts as one of the initiators of retail change and second by interpreting the process of change in traditional markets as a new frontier of retail gentrification. One key difference is that Gonzalez & Waley (2013) identifies this gentrification process mainly as a consequence of state-led regeneration projects in London exclusive from the process of residential gentrification.

While this change in commercial areas as a process of gentrification is a more contemporary issue outside of the conventional discussion of gentrification in the context of the Global North, the term' s popularization in Korea was through this precise concept of commercial gentrification. To begin with, the first official policy documentation regarding gentrification in Seoul explicitly mentions that the issue of gentrification in Seoul revolves around commercial areas (Seoul, 2015). Seoul Metropolitan Government' s (from here on, SMG) Comprehensive Measure for Gentrification (CMG from this point on) explicitly defines this process as the clustering of artists in an old inner-city area with affordable rent accompanied by a group of restaurants and cafés attracting more visitor population in the area ultimately increasing rent and causing displacement of old local businesses and the first wave of artist that revitalized the area (SMG, 2015). The CMG policy guidelines also designated several commercial districts and neighborhoods in Seoul that have gone through or face potential gentrification based on the city' s analysis, commencing a series of empirical studies and analyses that sought to identify the cause and effect of commercial gentrification in Seoul and Korea at large.

#### 2.1.4 Gentrification in the Context of Korea

With contemporary gentrification's conceptual expansion, gentrification in Seoul could be interpreted from two perspectives. The first is through the lens of contemporary third-wave gentrification emphasizing the central role of the state and inclusion of landscape change through new-build gentrification that is different from the classic notion of incremental change through sweat equity of the middle class. Though gentrification was not part of the mainstream discussion of Seoul's urban change due to its presence of a strong authoritarian government and the history of state-led urban development, a historical review of the city's redevelopment policies and early empirical studies attempted to establish a connection between the two process (Ha, 2004; 김걸, 2006; 이선영, 2009; 이희연 외; 2009, Shin and Kim, 2016). From the displacement of the lower economic class, residential upgrading through high-rise apartments, an influx of new urban middle class, and the creation of a rent gap during the redevelopment process is drawn during this process of redevelopment. However, often unnoticed in the gentrification studies of Seoul is the policy-driven geography of uneven development. The old inner-city areas dispersed in the region of Gangbuk faced decades of urban decay as a result of the state's deliberate effort of urbanizing the region of Gangnam<sup>3</sup>. As the development of Gangnam and population dispersion was a national priority, from mass construction of apartment complexes for middle-class, restriction on new business permits and construction in Gangbuk, as well as the relocation of prestigious high schools were strategically carried out for the development of Gangnam movement (손정목, 2003; 오제연, 2015; 양재섭 외, 2022; 김수현, 2022). Such concentrated development led to uneven development within Seoul which provided the ground for the introduction of the New Town

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<sup>3</sup> Though Gangnam is also a name of municipal district in Seoul, this study use this term in a broad area south of Han River. Similarly, the term 'Gangbuk; will refer to the area north of Han River.



Program (NTP) redevelopment projects of the Seoul Metropolitan Government that sought to ‘improve civic quality of life’ and ‘solve intra-city uneven development’ (양재섭 외, 2022). It is apparent that the state on every level of governance played a central role in shaping the background and landscape of gentrification in Seoul throughout its history of urban development. Shin and Kim (2016) remark on this centralized role of the state as one of the key differences between new-build gentrification in Western literature where state involvement is mainly through the process of neoliberal policies that induce gentrification. This perspective however presents limitation in that by placing heavy emphasis on the role of state power, it marginalizes the diverse agency of the middle-class gentrifiers.

Even though the state traditionally acts as a dominant agent in the process of new-build gentrification in Korea, the popularization of the term followed a different set of urban changes in Seoul. Researchers attempt to find alternative explanations for the redevelopment and state-centered experience of gentrification claiming that urbanism in Seoul cannot be simply reduced as a product of the strong developmental state (신현준 이기웅, 2016). This body of alternative explanations also identifies gentrification from its contemporary sense that focuses on the process of retailing or commercial change based on the consumption and creative agency of artists and cultural producers (신현준 외, 2016). One noticeable concept is Kim (2015)’ s suggestion of ‘rip-current gentrification’ referring to Hackworth & Smith's (2001) chronicling of gentrification’ s three waves. From a comparative case study of the retail gentrification process in two neighborhoods of Gangnam, 김필호 (2015) describes that form of incremental neighborhood change from a distinguishable group of gentrifiers resemblant of the characteristics of the classic first-wave gentrification came at a contemporary age after processes of new-build urban development of third wave gentrification have already taken place, implying a rip-current flow of event against the western waves of gentrification. Rather than placing this reversed temporal transition as a process

that retrogresses the Western model, 김필호 (2015) interprets this localized rip-current flow of gentrification as a manifestation of the desire for alternative urbanism against the uniform landscape produced in the Korean trajectory of development. Such practice of producing alternative urbanism is producing new types of commercial and cultural landscapes within the city fluidly moving between the characteristics and components of the three waves of gentrification rather than following a sequential flow. This is in part due to the different regional contexts and history of urban development where thorough and careful review and analysis of gentrification is needed.

Both approaches from state-led redevelopment and the expression of alternative urbanism provide a good starting point in understanding how gentrification is manifested and its process unravels in a context outside of Anglo-American cities. However, the two approaches largely remain as a separate explanation of gentrification in Seoul, similar to how theoretical discussion of gentrification in its early phase remained dichotomous rather than complementary. In this respect, this paper attempts to explore and explain how the two processes work in tandem. While the explanation based on redevelopment through state involvement can translate how structural factors caused changes in neighborhoods and provide a framework of analysis related to mass displacement, and landscape change capital investment, it is the alternative urbanism explanation that provides more rich insight into how culture and consumption practice can shape changes within the neighborhood. As the neighborhood redevelopments also result in middle-class restructuring within previously working or lower economic-class neighborhoods,

## 2.2. Review of Previous Studies

### 2.2.1 Gentrification Research in Korea

Early gentrification studies in Korea used the concept of gentrification to explain subsidiary effects of redevelopment such as

neighborhood improvement and population change (Ha, 2004; Kim, 2006; 이선영·주경식, 2008; 이희연·심재현, 2009). The intent of the studies remained mostly exploratory, placing the concept of gentrification as more of a concept that could assist in understanding the impact and scope of redevelopment rather than being a central and core conceptual framework of analysis. (이선영·주경식, 2008). This is due to the discussion of Korean urban development being centered around either high-density suburbanization or urban expansion of metropolitan areas on its outer rim. (이선영·최병두, 2018). The redevelopment experience also largely focused on supplying large-scale, high-density apartment complexes in the city than small-scale incremental development of old inner-city areas as the typical western gentrification process focuses on (이선영·주경식 2008).

However, the research on gentrification rapidly increased after 2015 as the concept quickly popularized in the media catching public attention and academic research at the same time. A semantic network analysis of the gentrification issue suggests that gentrification in Korea is largely linked to the public policy-led urban regeneration projects which had the subsidiary effect of touristization, loss of regional identity, and rapid commercialization due to the sudden inflow of capital that flows the project (안지현, 2017). This is also reflected in the Comprehensive Measures against Gentrification announced by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, as the city defines gentrification as a process of small neighborhood stores being replaced by high-end restaurants or boutiques and an eventual influx of chain and franchise stores accelerating commercialization and creating a series of ordinances to prevent such change in business structure. The city also designated 16 neighborhoods in Seoul that have already experienced or currently experiencing gentrification within the city's Comprehensive Measures, triggering a body of research focusing on the commercial gentrification in the designated areas (윤윤채·박진아 2016; 이기훈 외, 2018).

According to the literature on commercial gentrification, the rate of change began increasing in the decade of 2000s, and share common characteristics of neighborhood-based businesses such as laundromats, public bathing industry, barber shops, instantly-available food manufacturing or processing business decreased as new businesses such as cafes and restaurants serving foreign cuisine increase in the area (윤윤채·박진아, 2016). A survey-based case study analyzing the perception of gentrification by local residents focusing on a group of homeowners and renters in the residential neighborhood of Seochon (서촌) suggests homeowners positively react to real estate changes in the neighborhood while renters negatively react to the same matter, indicating gentrification can have a differential effect towards the local residents (최막중·양옥재, 2018). An empirical study by 박재희·김태형 (2020) analyzed determinants and locational characteristics of gentrification in Seoul, identifying the determinants of gentrification as low population density, and inert urban economy, but has a high ratio of people with a college degree and diversity in household type. Furthermore, once gentrification occurs, the area experiences an increase in population but has a disparate effect on the residents depending on their economic status as the process influences the change in population, housing, and social diversity.

Experiential research on gentrification in Seoul is mostly composed of case studies focusing on a specific site of gentrification as they attempt to explore the different contexts and consequences of gentrification by identifying the groups that form as the process occurs. 신현준 (2015) identifies four types of groups that emerge during the gentrification composed of ‘artists’, ‘native residents’, ‘civic organization’, and ‘creative entrepreneurs’ from a case study of the Seochon (서촌) neighborhood. 이기웅 (2016) follows the displacement and spillover of gentrification through the case of the Hongdae neighborhood, known as one of the first cases of gentrification in Seoul, as the displaced residents and business owners spread the local culture and demonstrate an act of resistance

towards the process as they are displaced into nearby neighborhoods of Sangsoo-dong(상수동) and Yeonnam-dong(연남동). 김필호 (2015) analyzes the formation of independent commercial culture within the wealthy/well-off neighborhoods of Garosu-gil(가로수길) and alleyways of Bangbae-dong (방배동) as an alternative urbanization process as the incoming business owners simultaneously assume the role of gentrifiers promoting new urban lifestyle in the neighborhood while also being vulnerable to displacement compared to the well-off residents at the same time.

These case study-based, experiential qualitative research on gentrification can enrich the discourse on gentrification by detecting contextual factors and detailing how the process unravels which may not have been identified in the quantitative approach, yet still mainly focuses on changes within commercial areas within the city and still lacks the linkage between change in residential areas having an impact on the surrounding business. Therefore, this study aims to explore the linkage between change in population due to residential development in a neighborhood having an impact on commercial gentrification in its surrounding area through the influx of new residents and explore the agency of newly incoming gentrifiers that enact such change.

### 2.2.2 Research on Redevelopment and Change in Nearby Areas

Research bodies on nearby areas of inner-city redevelopment projects in Korea are consisting of three main themes: first, change in land and housing price of the nearby area; second, change in population due to clearance of neighborhoods, and lastly change in local business due to redevelopment. Some empirical studies suggest that proximity to the project boundary has a negative effect on housing prices in nearby areas at the time of designating the redevelopment zone. This may be due to endogenous factors like run-down conditions of old urban areas signifying no visible change or improvement in its early stage of redevelopment, thus having no direct influence on the area. Additionally, previous research shows

that factors influencing housing price in nearby areas are determined by housing area, public transit accessibility, or the branding of apartments and suggest that nearby areas may not share positive external influences of redevelopment projects at their early stages. (홍재현, 2005; 정효진·이지영, 2015). However, as the redevelopment project proceeds it begins to influence the housing price of nearby areas. Due to the nature of the redevelopment project's neighborhood clearance, housing price in nearby areas increase at the point of residential displacement but slowly begins decreasing at the point of completion of the project (남진·김진하 2009, 이창무 외 2011).

Previous research suggest that resettlement rate of original residents remains around 20% to 30%, criticizing that if the project proceeds focusing only on physical improvement of housing, efficiency, and profitability of the operation, it can result in disparate effect on original residents based on their socio-economic status ultimately deepening the residential separation among them (하성규·김태섭, 2001; 최막중·김준형, 2006; 한승혜·배현희, 2021). Regarding the dispersion of displaced residents, research suggests that those population tends to cluster in areas with similar characteristics to their original residency such as affordable housing, and typically experience a shift from ownership of single-family housing to leasing or renting an apartment unit, and has a differentiating effect on the distance of relocation based on their age (김영관 외, 2007; 임은선 외, 2010; 이창무 외 2013). Moreover, 임은선 외 (2010)'s study of in-depth interviews with the residents revealed that the compensation from the city government was not sufficient enough to relocate and find new housing within Seoul and that the residents typically experience a feeling of isolation and loneliness, while small business owners experience greater distress due to losing their basis to maintain their business

Such a direct impact on loss of community has a more profound effect on local businesses in the surrounding area as it was shown that the longer each business has maintained in the area may have a

stronger opposition towards neighborhood redevelopment as their income may directly be impacted due to loss of customers or storefront (김철홍·박재홍, 2009). While residential redevelopment project is used as one of the main tools for urban development as it efficiently improves the physical condition of the neighborhood, supply more housing in the inner-city area, and thus gain profitability by raising the overall real estate value, it also could have a discriminatory effect on original residents living in poor urban condition deepening the inequality within the city if proper financial compensation or resettlement plans are not established.

### 2.3. Differentiation from Previous Studies

As Smith (1982) suggests, gentrification and its multilayered explanation encapsulating physical, social, economic, and cultural change in the neighborhood represents the leading edge of spatial restructuring at the urban scale. Although the process has gone through a considerable conceptual expansion, most discussion is still limited to the context and perspectives rooted in Western Cities, namely in New York or London. However, the complex nature of the term still provides a useful framework to analyze the dynamic relationship between political, social, economic, and cultural factors at an urban scale. Although a clear definition of gentrification has not been established in the Korean context, the previous research as well as media and public attention that the term amassed recently in Korea indicates that the essence of gentrification is present in a context outside of the usual Western research. However, the existing body of research on gentrification in Korea is still constructed in a fragmented fashion, mainly in two bodies of research of establishing a connection between state-led redevelopment and its subsequent effect as a process of gentrification, and more recent contemporary changes led by cultural and consumption agency of gentrifiers generating what 이기웅 (2016) calls alternative urbanism referencing the dominant narrative of state-led gentrification. However, as

aggressive redevelopment attracts and retains urban middle classes into the old urban fabrics of Seoul, the possibility of synchronization between the two narratives of research could establish where an increase in the middle-class populace can lead to commercial gentrification of nearby areas to meet the demand of the new emerging population. Current gentrification literature in Korea is lacking in examining the relationship between the two processes of residential gentrification and commercial gentrification and further investigation is needed. Additionally, research approaching residential gentrification has largely focused on a quantitative approach based on a city-wide geographical scope from census data, having shortcomings in contextualizing a detailed physical or cultural change that occurs in the neighborhood.

This study aims to differentiate from previous literature in the following ways. First, the study aims to contextualize how the local change occurs by focusing on a specific case study analysis of a major redevelopment area, particularly of the Wangsimni neighborhood. Second, by expanding the geographical scope of the research to *dong* areas surrounding the redeveloped area, the research aims to establish the connection between redevelopment and the subsequent changes that are triggered after the neighborhood redevelopment has been completed. Third, by focusing on a case outside of the gentrification literature of major Western cities, the study aims to identify what are some of the essential characteristics of the process in sync with the existing literature and additional contextual conditions that may result in regional variants of the process.



## Chapter 3. Research Design

### 3.1. Framework of Analysis

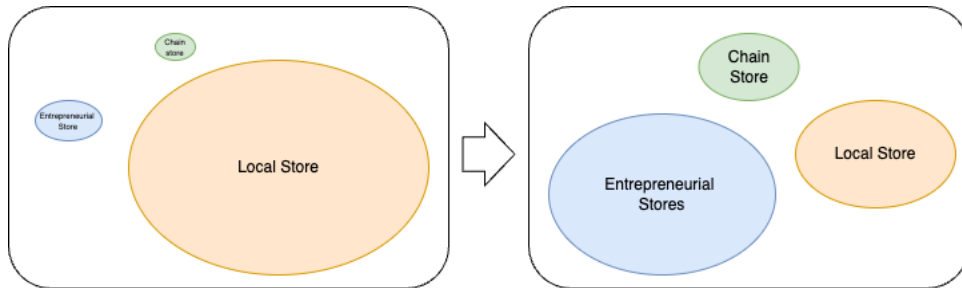
This study builds the theoretical framework from Beauregard (1984)'s theoretical framework that identifies different actors and conditions for gentrification. The three conditions for gentrification are as follows:

1. Production of potential gentry
2. Generation of potentially gentrifiable neighborhoods
3. Creation of the potentially gentrified

However, Beauregard (1984) suggests that gentrification does not always occur when those conditions are met but happen when active agents of gentrification in addition to the potential gentry inflow, as only certain inner-city areas with inexpensive opportunities are gentrified (Beauregard, 1984). This active facilitator role can be assumed both by the public sector and the private sector, as gentrification could provide direct benefits to local governments as the recomposing population may enhance its local tax base and result in additional investments into the neighborhood while some clearance and restructuring can be voluntarily done by the pioneering individual gentrifiers (Beauregard, 1984).

This active role and characteristics of pioneering gentrifiers are covered in Zukin et al (2009)'s study on commercial gentrification in detail. Through a case study in neighborhoods of Harlem and Williamsburg in New York City, among the three groups, Zukin suggests the formation of three retail groups of 'old local shops', 'new retail entrepreneurs', and 'chain stores' through its commercial gentrification process, showing the change in the composition of the three stores in the two neighborhoods as gentrification occurred. As <figure 3.1> shows in a simplified diagram, old local stores are the most dominant form of retail stores in the neighborhood composing around 80 percent of the area's business, but as gentrification occurs

the percentage of entrepreneurial stores increases greatly where the case of Williamsburg, the percentage of newly opened entrepreneurial stores formed a similar percentage of store composition within the neighborhood as the local stores. Corporate chain stores also expand in its percentage and show greater increases when gentrification is caused by a state-led approach with inductive policies (Zukin et al, 2009).

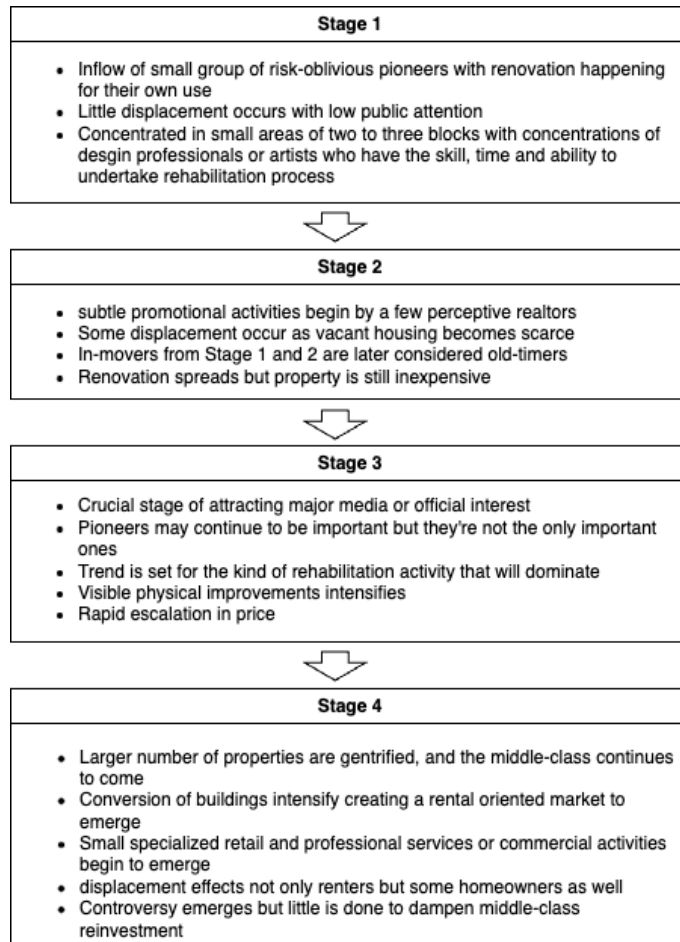


<figure 3.1> Retail change through commercial gentrification  
(Diagram based on Zukin, 2009)

Chain stores and entrepreneurial stores, therefore, assume the role of active facilitator of gentrification as they share motivations to seize the economic opportunity and shows strong interest in forming a new cultural community as they share similar cultural background and taste (Zukin et al, 2009). Additionally, while chain stores typically indicate stores with a large distribution network or franchised brands, in the Korean context, franchised chain stores often are the entryway for the middle class for opening their own retail business, thus representative of both large corporate retail ventures as well as middle-class business that may share overlapping characteristics with independent retail entrepreneurs (조권중 외, 2016). Lastly, old local stores face potential displacement or displacement pressure, thus sharing similarities with potentially gentrified residents within the neighborhood.

Although gentrification is often referred to as a cyclical process of investment and disinvestment embedded in its spatial fixity (Smith, 1979), early studies of gentrification attempted to create a staged model of gentrification that defines discernible

phases that suggest a generalized trajectory of the process. Clay (1979) is widely recognized as one of the first widely recognized stage models that explain the flow of gentrification from the inflow of pioneers to a finalized stage of wealthy developers and elite social class settlement in the neighborhood. The stage model provides a useful framework for identifying the sequential flow of events related to changes that happen during the gentrification process while identifying the social groups of interest that emerge during the process. Clay (1979) notices the role of major media attention and official interest in the area as a tipping point that intensifies the process, and that early in movers could even earn the status of old residents as the process intensifies, assuming a paradoxical role of both the gentrifier and the potentially displaced as gentries of higher capital and status continue to carry out the process.

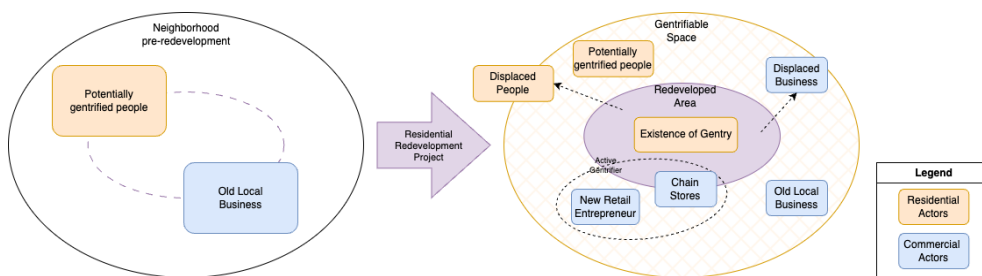


<figure 3.2> Stage Model of Gentrification (organized based on Clay, 1979; Lees et al, 2008)

Considering that local governments can reap benefits from gentrification by enhancing the tax base by attracting new middle-class residents to the area, the city government can efficiently get such results from redevelopment projects as it produces a similar outcome at the end of each gentrification process.

Combining the previous research and theoretical review, the change in the neighborhood and its surrounding area could be summarized graphically in Figure 3.3. Before redevelopment occurs, the neighborhood would be mostly composed of potentially displaced people and old local businesses nested in the dilapidated and disinvested neighborhood, until the redevelopment project occurs which then creates two separate social topologies of the redeveloped

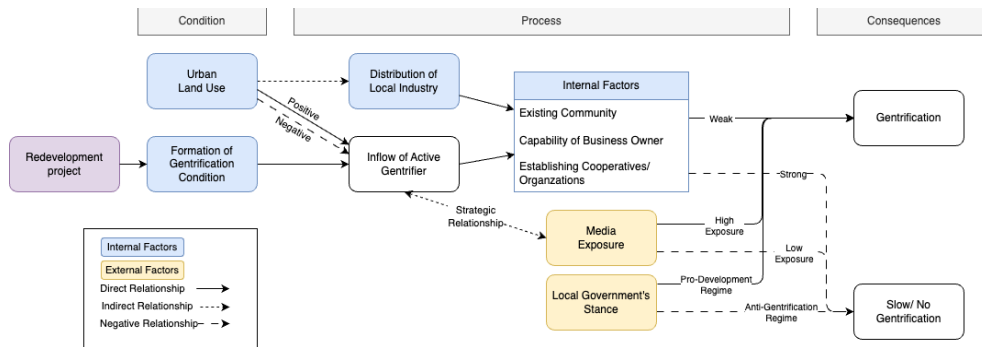
area and potentially gentrifiable space around it. After the area finishes its redevelopment, potential gentries are now produced and settled within the redeveloped area as old local businesses and residents who can relocate are now displaced to neighboring areas. Then a group of active gentrifiers now an influx of new retail entrepreneurs starts penetrating the gentrifiable space, coexisting with old local businesses while chain stores settle in both areas as they may be able to afford the space that is created within the redeveloped area as well.



<figure 3.3> Spatial Framework of Research

Finally, the research follows the flow of the theoretical framework represented in Figure 3.4. In continuation to the sequential flow of the staged model of gentrification, this redevelopment project acts as the initial condition for change to occur in the area that forms the gentrification condition specified by Beauregard (1984). Existing land use of each neighborhood then influences the inflow of active gentrifiers in nearby areas as areas with higher commercial land use provide more flexible benefits for new businesses to open, while residential areas may provide a more rigid environment for creative entrepreneurs to test experimental ideas around the neighborhood. Additionally, the previous distribution of local industry may influence the kind of community and social network that's formed among old-timers, which may have an impact on how they react to the influx of new businesses or changing landscape of the area, where stronger ties and existence of community or establishment of formal organization may slow down or stop the process from happening.

However, external factors such as media exposure and the local government's stance on gentrification or development can also influence the outcome. With highly mobile and accessible forms of independent internet, media can be easily accessed by new opening businesses, forming a strategic relationship where media exposure allows more gentrifiers to enter the area and their activities providing materials that would attract media attention as well. Local government's stance on gentrification also may have an effect as gentrification presents a controversial topic even for the local government. While a development-friendly regime may assist the process to reap the benefits, the government may also act against gentrification to install prevention measures citing inequality and the differential effect it may have on its residents. Ultimately these combinations of internal and external factors lead to consequences where the gentrification process might occur and be accelerated or be constrained and slow down the process allowing original residents to persist within the area.



<figure 3.4> Conceptual Framework of Research

## 3.2. Research Scope and Data

### 3.2.1 Statistical Data and Research Scope

To understand and analyze the current population and business status of the area from the beginning of the redevelopment project, this study sets the research timeframe from 2002 to 2022. As there may be issues of administrative boundary change over the years, this

study organizes the administrative Dong boundary to 2022. To track the population, change in the area this study utilizes the census tract-based population data provided by Statistical Geographic Information Service (SGIS) from Statistics Korea. To track the business change, the study collected data from the Regional Administrative Business Approval and Permit Data provided by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Republic of Korea. To track the difference in land value, this study utilizes the Officially assessed individual land price data provided by the Seoul Open Data Plaza of the Metropolitan Government. Additionally, to understand and track the contextual change of the area in local culture and industrial composition before the area went under redevelopment, this study utilizes the Seoul Local Life and Culture Survey and Archive conducted by the Seoul Museum of History as it provides a combination of rich qualitative and quantitative data related to the region that's been cleared for redevelopment.

The study sets its geographic boundaries to administrative blocks (Dong) adjacent to the redevelopment area. Particularly, the two areas of Hwanghak-dong (the area adjacent to the westward boundary of the Wangsimni New Town) and Doseon-dong (the area adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Wangsimni New Town) were chosen as the main area of study to collect data as the two area shows contrasting pace and degree of gentrification. Hwanghak-dong, with the presence of the Jungang Market first established in 1962, is a neighborhood largely known for a mixture of different old street market fronts selling secondhand appliances or retail services for the nearby area (서울역사박물관, 2015). The area is largely designated as a commercial area in terms of land use and has gone through significant changes from patches of small-scale high-rise redevelopment, as well as the conversion of old market storefronts into more trendy bars and restaurants, signifying a concurrent residential and commercial gentrification within the area. Doseon-dong on the other side, shares the administrative boundaries with the Wangsimni New Town apartment complex, but experiences a relatively slower pace of gentrification in the area, though some

trendy cafes and restaurants are sporadically opening in the area. The area's main industrial landscape consists of small-scale independent garment factories, even though a majority of the land use is designated as a residential area. The housing in the area consists of low-rise four to five-story buildings and multifamily housing units. From the landscape of housing to storefronts, the two areas provide a contrasting change even though both neighborhoods experience similar changes in the neighborhood based on their locational proximity to the Wangsimni New Town area. Hence, the research focuses on the two administrative areas of Hwnaghak-dong and Doseon-dong to investigate the second part of the research question.

The area north of the redevelopment site is excluded from the study site as it is separated by Cheongyecheon(청계천) stream and park. Additionally, to evaluate the immediate effect of new incoming residents on the nearby area, this study limits its geographical boundary to a nearby area of 500 meters in distance. This boundary is in part based on the local archiving project by the Seoul Museum of History where the old residents interacted with local markets and amenities within the 500m radius of the redevelopment site. Specific boundaries and locations of the study site are represented in Figure 3.5.



<figure 3.5> Spatial Scope of Research



### 3.2.2 Interview Data

Based on the statistical data, archival research, and media coverage Wangsimni area forms the conditions for the gentrification process to occur. However, it is still unclear how active gentrifiers penetrate the area with what kind of motivation and carry out the change. To investigate the motivation of newly incoming active gentrifiers and explore the linkage between gentrification and the residential redevelopment process, the study conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with local business owners.

	Gender	Year of business opening	Dong Location of the Business	Business Type
A	Male	2012	Doseon- dong	Café
B	Female	2018	Doseon- dong	Garment Worker's Organization
C	Male	2020	Hwanghak- dong	Market Business
D	Female	2019	Doseon- dong	Cultural exhibition space
E	Female	2020	Doseon- dong	Café
F	Male	2021	Doseon- dong	Café
G	Male	1993	Doseon- dong	Garment Factory
H	Male	2022	Hwanghak- dong	Café
J	Male	2016	Hwanghak- Dong	Market Merchants' Association Manager

<Table 2. List of Interviewees>

## Chapter 4. Changes in the Wangsimni New Town Area

### 4.1. Brief History of the Wangsimni Neighborhood

The Wangsimni area traditionally had a close relationship with the inner-city area of Seoul as it is indicated in its name. The region's history ties back to the late 1300s at the beginning of the Joseon dynasty with its search for a new royal capital. The tale indicates that the old monk searching for the capital was met by a farmer who told the monk to proceed 10 more ri (about 450m) eastward, where the royal palace was later built and acted as the traditional center of present-day Seoul and giving the town famous name Wangsimni from its tale. Though the Wangsimni area during Joseon Dynasty sat at the boundary of the eastern city wall providing a marketplace and agricultural land just outside the capital wall, the area underwent modernization during the Japanese Occupation Era as urbanization began along the railroads that were built. The railway provided a foundation for light industrial factories to develop in the area with primarily textile factories and steel mills to agglomerate in the area. The Wangsimni neighborhood as of today started forming around the 1960s during the post-Korean War reconstruction time as the proximity to the city's central business district and affordable housing in the area provided a locational advantage for incoming migrants from the countryside. As a diverse range of workers and inter-country migrants settle in the area, the Wangsimni neighborhood formed a cluster of mixed industries unlike other regions of industrial Seoul where each neighborhood took part in a specialized industry.

Wangsimni's industry can be summarized into four categories of garment industry, injection molding, nacre cabinet, and tripe barbecue cluster. The garment industry was dispersed in the deeper alleyways throughout the neighborhood with its proximity to

Dongdaemun (동대문) garment market. The small-scale injection molding industry is mostly clustered along the main roads and boulevards of the block. Nacre workers clustered around the alleyway near Nangye-ro as one of the first Nacre craftsmen settled in that area and other craftsmen clustered around him. Lastly, the tripe barbecue cluster was formed from the area's proximity to the Majang livestock industry and market located in the nearby neighborhood as the restaurants were able to get tripes and other meat byproducts supplied freshly from the market and provide affordable dining options for the industrial workers clustered around the area. The area's industrial history is developed organically through patterns of inner-city migration, post-war reconstruction, and urbanization of the time. The affordable housing of the area attracted low-skilled workers to cluster in the area with existing industrial and transport infrastructures from the occupation era provided a prime location for low-skilled workers to agglomerate in the neighborhood. The cluster of low-skilled worker provided a tolerance towards various industries to settle in the area as noise and air pollution was an inevitable part of everyday life in the neighborhood, allowing a diverse range of industries to coexist in the area.

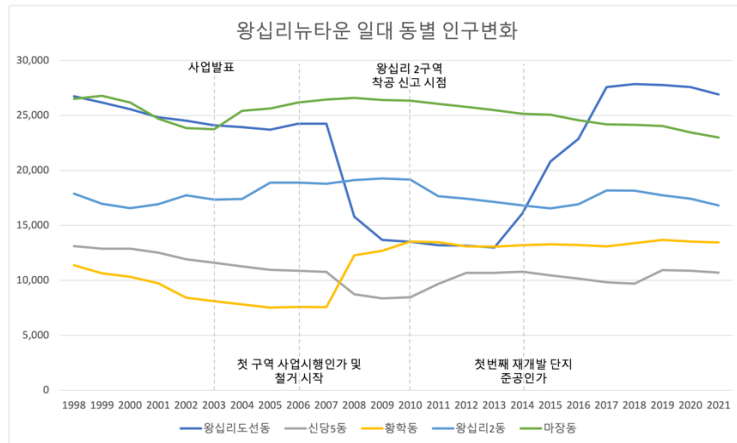
Although Wangsimni has strong manufacturing and industrial characteristic in the area, the resident's stance on redevelopment largely remained conflicted. The first discussion in the area began in 1984 with the block being designated for redevelopment but was lapsed in 1989 as the residents opposed the decision. However, the area was designated for redevelopment once again in the city's 1998 city redevelopment master plan, signifying that redevelopment in the area remained a frequently contested topic within the area. This is in part due to the interdependent nature of the existing industries in the neighborhood. The injection molding industry's production system forms a division of labor process where each factory part takes a specific step in production to create the final product. While this Fordist production ecosystem allowed the industry to efficiently operate and coexist in the area, it also leaves the industry vulnerable

to external shock as the industry's heavy dependency. The garment industry was also vulnerable to redevelopment as the industry first settled in the area based on its proximity to Dongdaemun Market establishing a heavy dependency in supplying their product almost exclusively through the market. However, the area's lack of educational facilities and aging infrastructure provided a basis for the New Town development project of the Seoul city government, designating the area for redevelopment in 2002. After the state-led project took off, the area began clearing in 2006, and finished its final phase of constructing the apartment complexes in 2016, completing the Wangsimni neighborhood that stands today.

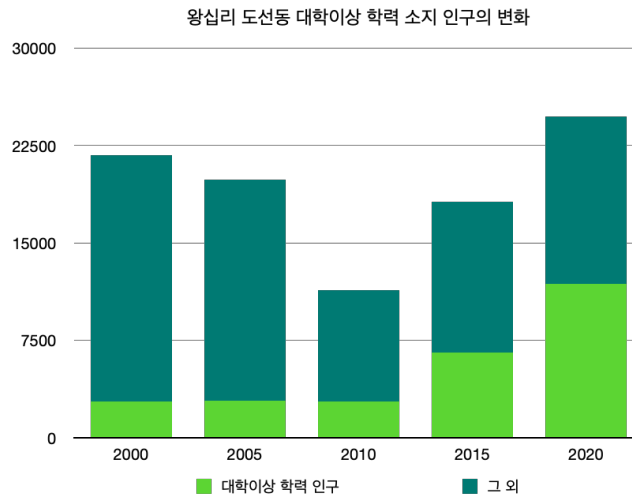
## **4.2. Formation of Gentrification Condition in the Wangsimni Area**

### **4.2.1 Production of Potential Gentry**

With the redevelopment project, Wangsimni New Town and its nearby area underwent a rapid recomposition in population. As indicated in Figure 4.1 indicates, the Wangsimni-Doseon Dong experienced a significant drop in population once clearance begins and stays at a relatively low population until the first site of redevelopment completed its construction and experienced a rapid increase in population until the end of the construction. A similar trend can be found in the neighboring Hwanghak-Dong area where a smaller-scale redevelopment project took place in the area experiencing a sudden increase in population around the completion of the project in 2008.



<figure 4.1> Population Change of Administrative Dongs Near New Town



<figure 4.2> Change in Population with College degree or higher in Wangsimini Doseon-dong area

This sudden shift in population also shows that the population did not merely grow in numbers as the number of populations with university degrees or higher within the administrative block remained constantly low until the completion of the project. The ratio of those with higher educational degrees increased from 12% in the year 2000 to a near 50% by the time the project was completed in the year 2020. This change in numbers indicates that a large majority of incoming residents in the area have received better education and a shift in social class may have occurred. Additionally, the population

change in nearby administrative dong having relatively no increase in population and a constant decrease might also indicate that relocation of residents to place in places farther away from their original residency.

#### 4.2.2 Generation of Potentially Gentrifiable Land

As mentioned in the brief history, the Wangsimni area has long benefitted from its proximity to the city center and is located between other secondary centers of the city, presenting a locational advantage. The adjacent neighborhoods of redeveloped areas can be clustered into two areas. The first cluster is formed within the boundaries of Doseon-dong and Wangsimni 2-dong where the majority of the buildings in the area have been built for more than 20 years and is designated as residential area according to their land use. Though the Doseon-dong area shares an administrative border with the redeveloped area, the landscape and the culture of the area remain largely separated. This area east of the redeveloped area still provides a home for the small garment factories within the alleyways where the majority of the traffic is related to the garment business during the weekdays. However, signs of change are starting to emerge as small cafes and bakeries are opening in the neighborhood. With small scale renovations happen in residential buildings in the area.



<figure 4.3> Current building deterioration of the study area

On the other side, the Hwanghak-dong area is designated mostly as a commercial area for its land use and has experienced rampant development along the adjacent road next to the redeveloped area. The rapid mixed-use development in the area was enabled by the local government's effort in developing the area in tandem with Wangsimni as the local politicians pushed for pro-development policies in the area.<sup>4</sup> According to the regional archival study by the Seoul Museum of History, the area's Jungang Market provided the primary retail location for old residents before redevelopment where residents frequently visited the market for shopping. The area is also home to the city's largest secondhand goods and antiques specializing in commercial kitchen equipment and kitchenware today. However, the neighborhood's history is rooted in the formation and expansion of Jungang Market. The market first began as a grain exchange center in the 1960s and expanded its territoriality over time as merchants selling a variety of goods settled on both storefronts and street stalls. The golden age of the market was

<sup>4</sup> 박성현. (2011년07월20일). 최창식 “건축물 최고 높이지정, 황학동개발 촉진 시킬 것”. 더 리더.



largely regarded in the 1990s with the economic crisis of Korea, an influx of secondhand kitchenware and electronics flooded the market, providing the basis for the regional identity that still stands today. Though grain exchange moved out of the market in the 1970s, the large storage spaces that were created in the beginning provided flexible usage for new businesses to open in the area over time.

Development pressure in the Hwanghak-dong area began with the reconstruction of the Cheongyecheon stream area. The first designation for the redevelopment of the block occurred in 1984 in relation to the upcoming Olympics at the time but faced immediate opposition from local merchants in the area. As a result, only a small portion of the area adjacent to the Cheongyecheon area was in favor of redevelopment, which resulted in the renovation of the area in 2004 in tandem with reviving the Cheongyecheon stream. Hwanghak-dong also forms great proximity to the city center and the rest of the city as the local subway station connects two lines of the city metro system, facing greater development pressure. With the area's existing land use being commercial, the area's facing rampant leapfrog development as high-density mixed-use renovation of the area took over the area.

The difference between the two areas also varies in media coverage as well. As Hwanghak-dong area receives high media exposure originating from a few local restaurants around the Jungang market that were featured in popular television shows. With its proximity to the market's nearby Sindang station, the market area has even earned the name 'hipdang-dong' which puts mashups the word 'hipster' and the name of the subway station together for its eccentric aesthetics of new restaurants that are opening amidst the popular representation on the media. There may be a combination of influences in the creation of this new neighborhood identity as the area's basement arcade was renovated as city-owned art studios that are leased to local artists and the lack of touristification of the traditional market presenting the space as 'one of the last remaining

authentic urban markets in the city.’<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, Doseon-dong area has not attracted as heavy of a media attention, as the only coverage in news media introduces the neighborhood as mostly quiet with its peaceful atmosphere of alleyways.<sup>6</sup> The area’s media coverage is often overshadowed by the real estate section covering the newly redeveloped area more extensively.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Presence of the Potentially Gentrified.

The presence of the potentially gentrified is the most important part of the gentrification condition as Beauregard even goes on to mention that the whole process ceases to exist without this group. If the focus on displacement is centered exclusively on the movement of original residents, it may seem as if displacement has been completed in the area as previous research indicated a low resettlement rate in the area. However, displacement pressure continues to expand in the nearby commercial area as more businesses serve the new in moving residents and visitors from the outside as the area gains popularity.

The most vulnerable population in this commercial shift can be found in the change in the area’s business permit and closure data. Restaurants and cafés are usually regarded as one of the indicators of commercial gentrification in Korea. In the permit issued for food and beverage-related business in the research site, numbers increase rapidly around the time of completion of the redevelopment in 2014, with business permits for rest restaurants and bakeries increasing with the completion of the apartment complexes. In business closure, the data indicates that closure intensifies from the beginning of the project until 2008 when clearance for construction began, and then decreases in closure until completion of the project,

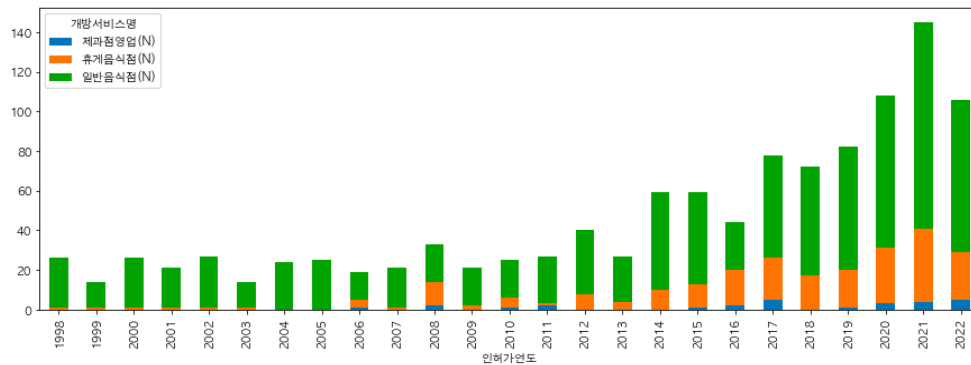
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<sup>5</sup>서영상. (2021년11월23일). [르포]“곡식창고가 힙한 상점으로”...‘힙당동’을 아시나요?. 해럴드경제.

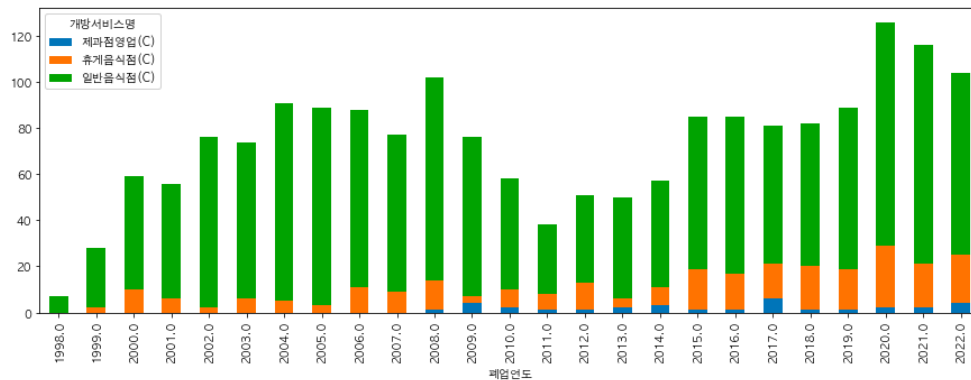
<sup>6</sup> 김천. (2020년3월9일). [골목 내시경] 왕십리 골목-신화와 전설과 문학과 예술이 넘치는 곳. 주간경향.

<sup>7</sup> 한상혁. (2016년11월11일) 폭탄세일했던 왕십리뉴타운의 기막힌반전. 조선일보.

then intensifies again as new residents move in.



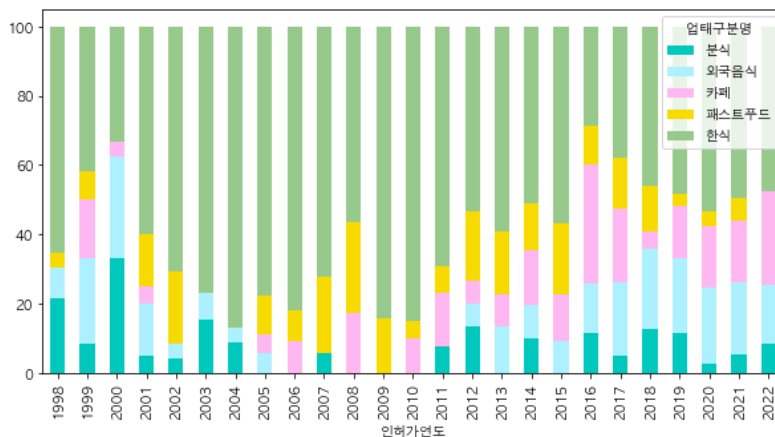
<figure 4.4> Change in restaurant-related permits issued in the study area.



<figure 4.5> Change in restaurant-related business closure in the study area

In terms of the composition of the food and beverage industry, a higher percentage of foreign food and café-related businesses increase towards the completion of the project after 2014, with the smallest ratio of permits being issued for Korean cuisine in 2016 which marks the completion of the last sector of redevelopment. Foreign cuisine and café continue to make up a significant portion of restaurant businesses in the area afterward as well. This is consistent with previous research (윤윤채·박진아, 2016) on commercial gentrification in how the neighborhood business regarding the food and beverage industry occurs. However, as the

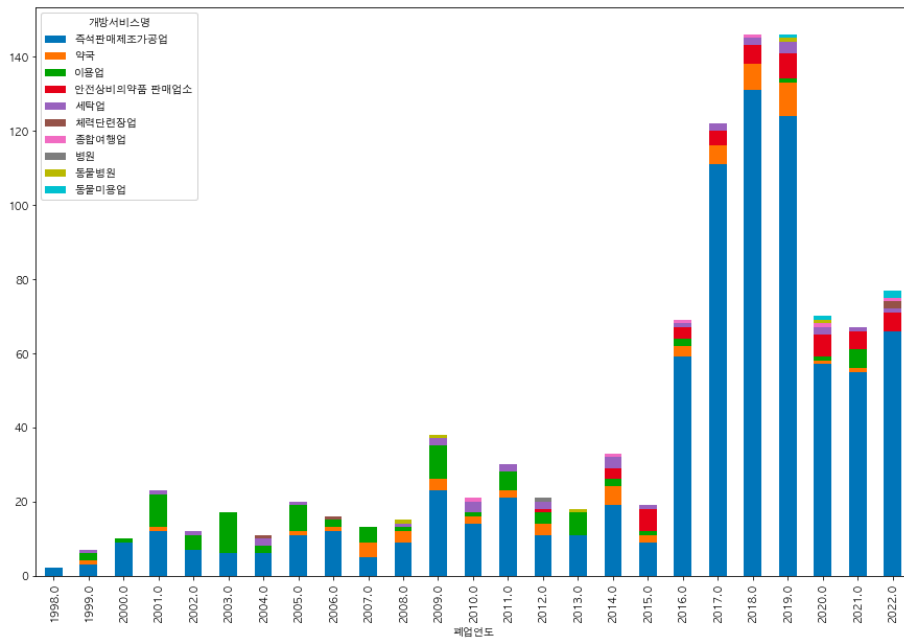
ratio of closure for café and foreign food remains high in closure, it indicates that high competition still exists among new incoming businesses potentially shortening the cycle of opening and closing within the area. This may also suggest that commercial gentrifiers in the food and beverage industry could be performing paradoxical roles as they assume the role of active gentrifiers and still face rapid replacement from high competition.



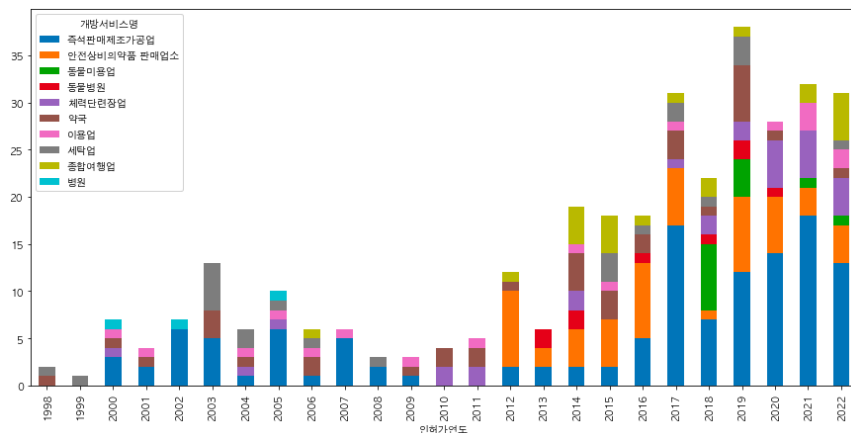
<figure 4.6> Change in composition of food-related permits by types of restaurants in the study area

The closure of neighborhood-related businesses excluding restaurants and cafes showcases more dramatic change in local business. The permit for instantly-available food manufacturing or processing business—which are mainly composed of businesses located in the traditional market area—recorded the highest number of closures among other businesses, with the closure most actively happening between 2016 to 2019 in the early stage of settlement for the incoming residents after the completion of the apartment complex. As the closure intensifies until 2019, it can also be assumed that such intense closure may be free of the effect of COVID-19 as most of the closures were concentrated heavily during the first phase of settlement. Compared to the widespread closure, the permits for the same kind of business issue during the time recorded much lower numbers. Permits for convenience stores increased greatly towards

the end of redevelopment in 2012, and previously scarce business categories such as veterinary clinics, pet beauty clinics, sports facilities, travel businesses, and pharmacies also actively opened in the neighborhood. This indicates the shifting demands of the neighborhood residents as traditional markets rapidly lose their customer base while new businesses for pet animal care, travel business, or sports facility indicate a new kind of lifestyle that the incoming residents may pursue.



<figure 4.7> Change in permits issued for neighborhood stores excluding restaurants in the study area



<figure 4.8> Change in business closure for neighborhood stores excluding restaurants in the study area

## 4.3. Analysis of Gentrification Factors

### 4.3.1 Impacts of Redevelopment Project: Changes in Landscape and Community

When asked about their opinion on redevelopment there was a consensus on the positive effect of redevelopment in terms of neighborhood improvement. This was more apparent among old timers as they were able to see the neighborhood change from the industrial environment to the now renovated apartment complexes of the area.

“Well thinking about it, there sure is some good to redevelopment. There definitely is some good to it but it’s double-sided... [skip] When I first came to this area the block was kind of a shanty town on a hillside. Someone asked for a hand when they were moving and we couldn’t even get a pushcart up the hill...[skip] After the redevelopment the town sure tidied up and it’s nice, but it starts dividing boundaries within the town. Daerim, Hanshin, Centlas—all separated. I think redevelopment ultimately led to a bit of a polarizing situation. Those who made it in there and those who aren’t. It’s becoming a space of their own and the sense of togetherness and sharing seems to fade away” (G, Garment Worker).

A garment factory owner and an old-time resident in the area G refers to the redevelopment as having a double-sided effect. While he acknowledges that the neighborhood infrastructure could greatly improve recalling the time in the past when moving somebody into the neighborhood required a whole day's worth of work as the town did not have sufficient roads for cars to enter. However, G also points out how block redevelopments could disconnect the neighborhoods where each apartment complex becomes its own territory causing spatial division within the neighborhood. G even goes on to point out that the feeling of togetherness and community is starting to weaken across the neighborhoods as interactions

between residents began to internalize within the boundaries of each site rather than blending in with the rest of the neighborhoods. G's observation of change goes as far as to mention that there may be a polarizing effect where such change categorizes people depending on the place of residency within the neighborhood. G's observation suggests the kind of stigmatization and separation the original residents could feel as they experience a sudden change in the neighborhood. However, this experience of separation may feel differently for the newly incoming population. Café owner A has opened his business in town and stayed for just over 10 years as of fall 2022. When asked about the change in the neighborhood from when he first opened his business he replied,

"It was different. It was before the complex was completed, but the development boom already began so businesses started changing. A lot of tripe barbecue restaurants started selling their stores and leaving the area. You know, this whole street used to be full of those tripe places. This whole neighborhood. From here to the end of the street. Really Shabby. A little bit scary to walk around (laughter)" (A, Café owner, Doseon-dong)

A indicates that the area used to be shabby and even a little bit scary to walk around in the beginning. He specifically pointed out the presence of tripe barbecue restaurants that constituted a major identity of the town. Due to A's business being primarily a roastery and a café, his business is especially sensitive to smell. A's description of the neighborhood was delivered in primarily a negative tone describing the area as 'scary to walk around' and 'shabby' indicating that in addition to smell, the old local industry of the neighborhood might have presented challenges in attracting customers by foot. In addition, the neighborhood atmosphere A describes may signify the area is more susceptible to risk for potential gentrifiers to open businesses, as the local industry still held a strong presence in the area. However, as redevelopment took place and the process of neighborhood clearance began, the

presence of local industry weakened. Garment factory owner G's description of the changes that the garment industry in the area faced supports this aspect of neighborhood change. G recalled,

“Well, then there was a time of the exodus of garment factories from the [redevelopment area] and filled up any available space around the neighborhood from the basement to the top floors. Anyone who didn't act quickly enough had to relocate to the outer rim of the city, and that's just how it was during the time” (G, Garment Worker, Doseon-dong).

Although G did not experience direct displacement from redevelopment as his business was located outside of the project boundary, G still witnessed a dramatic change that took place. The garment factories within the redevelopment zone had to compete for new space to maintain their business. This is mainly due to the production network of the garment industry's structure being a radiant network where designers and wholesalers at the Dongdaemun Market hold a central position in the production (정선희, 2020). Archival research also indicated Wangsimni's proximity to the Dongdaemun market as the central factor of garment factories sporadically settling across the Wangsimni area as their production is reliant on the demand of fashion wholesalers of the Dongdaemun Market (서울역사박물관, 2009). Although some early out movers from the redevelopment area were able to resettle in nearby vacant areas G also indicated that the production conditions typically worsened as factories relocated to basements or floors above ground level to maintain business in the area. As the clearance continued, garment industries had to face competition among each other, with later movers being relocated to areas further away from Dongdaemun, losing their locational advantage in running their business.

This process of increased competition that occurred among garment factories is resemblant to two types of displacement suggested by Marcuse (1986). The spatial competition that fills vacancies and subsequent rise in rent due to higher demand



eventually led to a form of exclusionary displacement where existing businesses cannot easily relocate to space with similar conditions of rent and business, and more importantly, create a pressure of displacement (Marcuse, 1986). Although originally the types of displacement were developed based on residential changes in terms of housing stock that gentrification initiates, the experiences of garment workers and their displacement indicates that concept can be applied in industrial change as well.

Such an increase in competition was also expressed by café owner A as well. Although redevelopment and the subsequent improvement in the neighborhood environment and inflow of new population could lead to an increase in customer visits, A shared a different story. When asked about any changes in customer after redevelopment was completed, A replied,

“I certainly had some expectation of better business... well but more coffee shops opened hoping for similar outcomes. And we all have to share and slice the same pie of customers. So, I ended up having even fewer customers after the redevelopment” (A, Café owner)”

A indicated that more cafes opened in the block between where his business is located and the apartment complex, ultimately increasing competition in attracting customers. A recalled in another part of the interview that there were only 3 other coffee shops when he first opened his business, but the number has increased since with 29 other cafes operating within the block. Although A indicated having a roastery along with his usual beverage menu helped him maintain business amidst the increasing competition, the population change, and neighborhood improvement led to increased competition among cafes as well.

From the experience of two different business type owners, it was indicated that the redevelopment brought out increased competition in two ways: through displacement and inflow of new businesses. The two factors were directly related to the process of gentrification. Garment industries were directly displaced from the

redevelopment area due to clearance and demolition which resulted in increased competition for space in the nearby area. The change for more consumption-based businesses, such as café occurred towards the completion phase of the redevelopment as the new population moves into the area and stores that cater to the needs and services of those new customers opened in the area. Although the interview from the two business owners didn't mention the presence of one another, their experience of increasing competition indicates that such competition for space had already begun in the area indicating that gentrification conditions were met, and changes could occur with redevelopment settling in the area.

#### 4.3.2 Impacts from Redevelopment: Inflow of Active Gentrifiers

With the conditions of gentrification being set from the changes that occurred with redevelopment, the process is initiated with the inflow of active gentrifiers that brings out a change in the neighborhood. A group of new business owners that move into the area bring new amenities and services that are distinguishable from the original industrial characteristics of the Wangsimni and the Doseon-dong area or traditional market retail landscape of Hwanghak-dong.

As previous studies indicated, café is one of the more common indicators of gentrification (Bridge & Dowling, 2001; Zukin, 2009; 김필호, 2015; 윤윤채, 박진아, 2016). Although the consumption and culture of cafes in Korea are formed around the strong presence of chain stores with the lack of local-based independent café, (see 전상인 (2021) for a more detailed description of the culture of coffee consumption in Korea), the interview with local storeowners indicated the early movers into the nearby areas of redevelopment consisted of independent cafes. These gentrifiers typically consisted of higher cultural or social capital through their experience in higher education or living abroad.

Café owner A, when asked about how he developed an interest in opening a café, shared his experience in visiting Japan in the early 1990s. A elaborated,

“Being a freelancer, I’d get a call any time of the week or get a last-minute project so I couldn’t really be away for a while. So, Europe was out of the option. The easiest travel I can make was to Japan with the theme of coffee, so I made some twenty-five trips to Japan. I went whenever I could” (A, Café owner)

Besides maintaining the café business, A also holds a job as a freelancer in the broadcasting field. Although A earned enough income from his freelance work, A sought to open his business due to the unstable nature of being a freelancer. As café owner A’s main motivation in opening a business was to work in a field that he enjoyed on the side, A ultimately decided to open a café. At the time A decided to open a café, self-roasteries or coffee drinking was not popularized in Korea. Utilizing the flexibility of freelance work, A made frequent trips to Japan to visit and shadow different cafes. During the interview, A pointed out different inspirations he drew from his observation of Japanese local cafés during those trips. The idea of roasting the beans at the café was also an inspiration he took from Japanese local cafés, as it was one of the trends he witnessed during his trips.

Another Café Owner H shares a similar story of his experiences abroad being a core inspiration in opening his business. When asked about how he started a career in the coffee business, H explained,

“It was after I was dispatched from the military, I did a language exchange program in a small city in Ireland. At the time I thought to myself, I wanted to work in an industry related to coffee or wine or beer when I go back to Korea, and that’s how I started to learn how to make coffee. But I thought that wasn’t enough training, so I went to Italy and traveled around Europe to learn their ways. Then when I came back, barista was becoming popularized as a job, so I was able to get a job at a hotel. I was the executive barista for about 7 years and then there’s an Australian coffee brand that was opening a branch in Korea, so I worked for them for about 7 years. But I still wanted to run my own business from how I wanted to run it and ended up opening this

store.” (H, Café owner).

From Ireland to Italy and managing branches of a foreign coffee chain store in Korea, H’s experience and training as a barista came from around the world. Additionally, before opening his own business, H had experience in developing a menu and received training as a barista overseas, giving him an advantage and capital before he opens his own store. This diverse cultural experience of H was reflected in different aspects of the store from the location choice to interior design of the store. Later in the interview, H recalled his experience of living in Ireland where he witnessed how integrated the local café was to traditional markets, providing space for all ages.

H explained that his initial idea came from a language exchange trip he participated in in Ireland. Later, as he switched his college major to hotel management, he had an opportunity to learn how to be a barista in Italy and began his career as a barista working for hotel chains and a manager of an Australian coffee chain store that expanded its business in Korea. From his career as a barista, H was able to also experience and visit different types of coffee cultures around the world before he opened his business. H elaborated,

“When I was in Ireland, I was in a small city called Cork. I was there for a year and a half, and the oldest traditional market in Europe is located there. It’s called the English Market. Since I was a student at the time, I would frequently visit there, and I noticed how the place was always crowded at any time of the day. For example, market merchants would be there in the morning, visitors in the afternoon, and in the evening, people stopping by for a cup of coffee or a pint of beer. So, the café at the market always had people coming in and out. I thought that kind of space that’s timeless and authentic in a market space would be an appealing concept for a café at the time. So, when I was looking for a space, I was mainly looking for a unit within a traditional market.” (H, café owner)

Café owner H’s decision to open a store within a traditional market like Jungang Market was a deliberate choice rooted in his

experience of living abroad. H found the timeless and inclusive nature of the cafes at an old traditional local market intriguing. The broad customer base from local market merchants to tourists while staying authentic to the place inspired the initial idea for the business. In addition to this cultural experience from abroad, H's career as a barista at a major hotel chain and a manager in another global coffee chain provided him with experience in developing menus and business operations. From majoring in Hotel management in college to experience living abroad in Europe, H's interview indicates that H constructed his business based on his diverse cultural experience and educational background. Like Café owners A and F's experience with other cultures inspiring them to open a store, some of the media interviews of the restaurant and bar owners that led to the change in Hwanghak-dong also share some characteristics derived from the interview data. From trendy bars and cafes weaving local history into their menu and interior design of the store,<sup>8</sup> taco stand run by an internationally experienced chef trained in Mexico,<sup>9</sup> to F&B enterprise with experience in dining and restaurant management seeking business expansion,<sup>10</sup> the pioneers leading the changes in the Market area consists of a population rich with economic and cultural capital.

However, interviews also indicated that these active gentrifiers leading the change in the neighborhood could also be in a vulnerable position as some of the interviewees shared experiences of gentrification from previous locations. Café owner A has a rich history with gentrification as his first two coffee shops were in Cheongdam-dong and Yeonnam-dong, both known as famous cases for the gentrification process occurring in Seoul. Café owner A

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<sup>8</sup>이지은. (2023년01월04일). “응? 여기가 술집?”...상상초월 콘셉트로 MZ 홀리는 사장님. 조선일보.

<sup>9</sup>(2022년07월11일) 영 셰프 해외 키친 경험기, 전통 멕시칸을 전하다 진우범 셰프. 식품외식경영.

<sup>10</sup> (2021년03월30일) 3인 3색, 서로 다른 경험·가치의 시너지 코리아미트클럽 김재균·신재우·조준모 공동대표. 월간식당.

recalls his experience:

“I started in 2007 though I didn’t originally mean to start a cafe. I started at a loss and thought to myself I’ll never open a coffee shop at a place with high rent, and then my buddy asked me for some help at his business in 2011, so I was helping him out for a little while, but I stopped over there because of rent again... They started raising rent by 100% every year. I just couldn’t bear it financially” (A, Café Owner).

One of the strongest motivations for A to settle in Wangsimni at the time was because the area did not seem to be subject to high rent increases and had the pressure of maintaining the business from financial reasons. His experience in Cheongdam-dong was extremely burdensome as he was not initially prepared to start a business. His first two experiences in maintaining the business were with a partner as A’s main source of income generates from freelance work in the broadcasting industry rather than coffee shops alone. In that regard, A’s priority became looking for an area with affordable rent if he were to start his own coffee business.

Another Café owner F, whose business is located in the same block as A, also opened his first shop in Euljiro, another well-known case of gentrification in Seoul. F explains his motivation for opening the store in the Doseon-dong area by saying:

“I ran my business in Euljiro for a while. My shop was a take-out-only store and I started getting a little ambitious as I was doing well with my business—also the trend nowadays are opening cafes with larger space, and thinking back on it I kind of wanted to do something like they do it in Seongsu-dong with a big hall so I’ve moved to the area and expanded my business” (F, Café owner)

F is one of the younger business owners this study has interviewed and seemed to be more astute towards what is the most up-to-date and trendy in maintaining a coffee shop. Even though F came from one of the trendier areas in Seoul of Euljiro, F explicitly mentions the kind of larger, trendy café space in Seongsu-dong as

his inspiration for opening and moving his business. Although he did not discuss any issue of rent increase from his time in Euljiro at the time of the official interview, during a later conversation the researcher had with F, F revealed that one of the challenges he faced in Euljiro was a bit different from a typical case of rent increase. Instead of having a dramatic rent increase, one of the larger companies that had its headquarters near F's business ended up moving its headquarters to another location within Seoul, where F suddenly lost one of the main customer bases that helped him maintain his business in the area. Afterward, F decided to relocate to Wangsimni with the motivation to expand his business.

An interesting experience of gentrification also comes from H, a café owner who has previously worked in a managerial position for a global coffee chain from Australia that operated a couple of stores in Korea. Unlike other café owners this paper interviewed, H had experience with operating corporate chain stores thus being more knowledgeable in market research and experienced gentrification from a different angle of market research. In answering about the motivations behind opening his business, H explains,

“And then there was the issue of gentrification. Once that sweeps the area, stores just cannot survive. So I tried to establish my business by not following the trend in how I constructed my menu or the store interior design. I thought that could be an appeal for consumers as well” (H, Café owner)

Although H did not have much experience running and owning his own business, H was aware of the issue of gentrification with opening a coffee shop. In terms of maintaining his business, H's interpretation of the problem of gentrification is regarding the almost instantaneous change that the process brings about. H points out some intentional choices he made to make sure the space did not blindly follow the trend but rather construct a feel that's more closely attached to the existing community and environment of the market. H's stance and thoughts on gentrification capture the

ambivalence of inflowing gentrifiers during the process. While some gentrifiers may be motivated to seize the economic opportunity, some gentrifiers are interested in encompassing a wider appeal that's tied to the community. An interesting point that could be explored in H's response regarding his diagnosis of the gentrification process is that he is also expressing an economic motivation from the standpoint of maintaining the business in the area.

From the experiences shown in the interview data, these new incoming gentrifiers constitute the characteristics of new retail entrepreneurs identified in Zukin (2009). Although their primary goal is to seize an economic opportunity both in the sense of low rent the area holds, they are also drawn to some of the cultural aspects of areas such as the traditional market environment, or create a place of social gathering to form a community (Zukin 2009). The retail entrepreneurs interviewed in the area also often come from rich cultural and educational backgrounds. Some restaurants even employ the concept of authenticity rooted in the style of cuisine or local history and characteristics resemblant to the characteristics of a typical gentrifier (Ley, 2003; Zukin, 2009; 김필호, 2015). Additionally, some of the independent early in-movers indicated that they may hold an ambivalent position in this process of gentrification. Although they are largely credited as the early pioneers that revitalized the area, they could also be vulnerable once gentrifiers of higher capital or corporate stores enter the area.

The inflow of gentrifiers is not limited to retail entrepreneurs opening boutiques or café. The interview with Jungang Market's merchant association manager revealed the pressure that arises from corporate chain stores and large-scale wholesalers that enters the area after redevelopment. When asked about the change in a business operation initiated by or related to the redevelopment of apartment complexes, merchant association manager J specifically pointed out the increased competition that the market had to bear against new services. J replied,

“As apartment complexes get built around the area, like the case of E-



mart or GS I talked about earlier, there's also a new wholesale produce store about 300m from here that operates for 24 hours on the ground floor. So we've been losing customers lately. ... (중략) What was the name... oh, Acro Tower it's on the first floor of Acro Tower. I've been checking on their prices periodically and it's hard to beat their prices since they're so cheap..." (J, Traditional Market Merchant Association Manager).

The first impact of redevelopment that J recalled was the inflow of corporate chain wholesale stores that open within the apartment complexes, namely E-mart and a mart run by GS, both conglomerates in the distribution industry in Korea. As residential redevelopment also accompanies the development of shopping strips, it provides spaces for corporate wholesale stores to open that provide better locational and price advantages for apartment residents than the traditional market. Though this in-moving of corporate wholesalers opening with redevelopment is typically a familiar tale in Korea, J points out an independent produce wholesaler that opened in the same block as a bigger trouble for the market. The independent wholesale mart provides competition against the traditional market merchants in several ways from its twenty-four-hour business hours, and low prices, but most notably as J also mentions later in the interview, the lack of policy intervention measures against those types of non-conglomerate chain stores. J elaborated,

"But the biggest damage is this [pointing at the discount catalog of wholesale supermarket]. They're not part of a big corporate chain, and it's an independent business so there's really no room for policy intervention either. Those are some big issues these days" (J, Traditional Market Merchant Association Manager)

Though policy measures exist to protect local traditional markets by regulating business hours of corporate chain wholesale markets in Korea, J raises the issue of smaller wholesale markets that can operate outside of those restrictions. These wholesale markets

provide better services from longer business hours and delivery services and have a locational advantage by being located on the streetside of a redeveloped mixed-use apartment within the same block. The locational and service advantage of such an independent wholesale market proposes a direct threat to the traditional market's retail business. During an unofficial interview with the market store owner and association chair C, C mentions that the retail stands and storefronts are the ones that are the most vulnerable against those wholesale stores.

The interview data with local business owners and association personnel and review of mainstream media coverage on the area confirms the presence of active gentrifiers consisting of new retail entrepreneurs and corporate chain stores. On top of the conditional changes that occurred following the redevelopment project, various types of active gentrifiers with diverse and rich cultural or economic capital enters the area, leading to additional changes in the commercial landscape adjacent to the redevelopment area.

#### 4.3.3 External Factors: Government's stance and role on Gentrification

Though Seoul does not have a rich history or experience of bottom-up local governance due to the country's strong history of top-down developmental state, stances of local politics could still influence the change in the neighborhood. This section draws from the administrative boundary that forms by the western side of the Wangsimni New Town apartment complex dividing *gu* between areas further west of the Wangsimni New Town, and the rest of the case study site.

First, the area of Wangsimini New Town and Doseon-dong is part of Seongdong-gu under the three-term serving Mayor of Seongdong-gu Won-oh Chong. Mayor Chong's most notable work in his continuing term is incorporating the term gentrification into the frontier of urban planning and local politics. Chong formed the first-ever gentrification task force in response to the changes that

occurred in Seongsu-dong<sup>11</sup> and created a number of policy measures that could curve and ease gentrification, which later provided the basis for Seoul's Comprehensive Measures for Gentrification. Mayor Chong is arguably one of the most vocal public figures on combating gentrification, even publishing a book introducing the concept of gentrification and the threats and opportunities he had witnessed as he crafted preventative and reactionary policy measures against the phenomenon (정원오, 2016). Chong introduces several new experimental policies implemented in Seongdong-gu to incorporate the voices of local residents and increase community engagement in the book. From adopting a community board system in the decision-making process to the introduction of Coexistence Agreements(상생협약서) that encourages voluntary rent control by the landlords to guarantee businesses to persevere in the area, Chong is vocal about creating community-based policies. Garment factory owner G, who served as the founding chair of the Union of garment cooperatives, explained that the foundation for garment workers' collectivization can be attributed to collaboration with the state. G recalled,

“It was designated in 2016 by Seongdong-gu. For the first time, the city designated our neighborhood as the special social enterprise zone for the fashion and garment industry. That was the beginning of the project and where I developed an interest in cooperatives since that was one of the promoted business models of the project. I thought the cooperative could be something that can make a difference. I still have the business proposal documents today—it was for a budget of a little under 600,000,000 won for three years. We were able to start the project in collaboration with local activists. (G, Garment factory owner).

The formation of garment cooperatives and later a union was initially a joint effort by the local government and the workers. Although the historical archiving in the area confirms that the

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<sup>11</sup> 박용태 (2016년03월09일). ‘뜯 동네 역설’ 최초 대응 성동구 실천도 착착. 한겨레. <https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/PRINT/734071.html>

garment industry formed in the area for a long time, the formation of the cooperative traces back to 2016. G explained that the Gu government's designation and advertisement for local social enterprises inspired him to first develop and organize the garment workers to form the cooperatives. From this, the role of the gu-government could be inferred during the initial formative stage of the garment cooperatives. The policies of local government in preserving the area not only provided protective measures but also policies that can mobilize the community. Marston (2000) highlights the role of the state at different scales having the political power to either enable or constrain opportunities for communities to mobilize or social movements to emerge. In the case of the Doseong-dong area, the initial platform for the factories to organize was enabled by the gu government policies that sought to empower local industries. The formation of garment cooperatives in Doseon-dong provides a unique case of a formal organization being initiated simultaneously at both the scale of the community and the urban as Smith (1993) suggests. The cluster of garment factories and the workers have traditionally lived in the same area, constructing a shared identity that is rooted within the neighborhood that is specific to the Wangsimni area. This is apparent in the interview with both administrative manager B and the garment factory owner G, where they emphasized how the type of work and culture is different compared to other garment factory clusters around the city. In a way, the garment workers have shared a collective identity and culture based on the geographical scale of the community but lacked sufficient form of organization until recently when the industry began to decline. The city government however, especially in the case of Seongdong-gu, provided policies and a platform for workers to be able to organize together, essentially acting as a facilitator that can connect different local activities or social enterprises in the area so that the projects can be generated and meet the actual operational demand generated from the garment workers rather than taking charge of the project. Though the process was largely experimental at first, the continuing support and communication between the local government and state

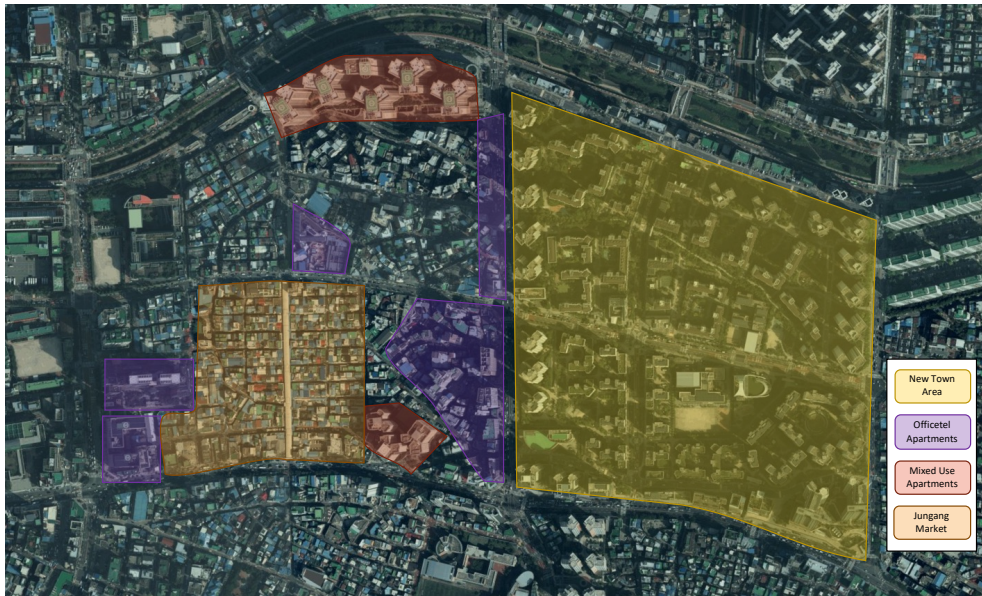
helped the garment workers to continue their business within the area, without feeling any noticeable threats of gentrification.

On the contrary, Jung-gu has a history of electing pro-development mayors. From the official press release that was made during Choi's term in the Jung-gu office related to Hwanghak-dong, most policies were geared towards physical improvements in the area easing restrictions on building heights or even designating the 'Zone for Building Remodeling Activation.'<sup>12</sup> Such a series of pro-redevelopment policies could also be traced to Choi's previous experience being part of the cabinet of the previous Mayor of Seoul Myungbak Lee as the chief of the New Town Program redevelopment.<sup>13</sup> As his career and series of policies allude, the policy interventions around the area of Hwnaghak-dong were centered around developing the area through renovation and redevelopment of the built environment. The effect of such pro-redevelopment and construction stance to revitalize the area is apparent from the chain construction of mixed-use single studio apartment buildings—known as 'officetels' in Korea—around Hwanghak-dong, with the majority of the construction of those officetels being completed in the timeframe between 2013 to 2018.

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<sup>12</sup> 서승아 (2014년11월18일) 서울 중구, 노후 황학동 일대 규제 나선다... 리모델링 활성화 구역 선정. 아유경제.

<sup>13</sup> '土建'으로 승부하는 최창식 서울 중구청장 "MB보다 '半걸음'만 앞서가면 되는 거야"



<Figure 4.9> Distribution of redevelopments in Hwanghak-dong and the Wangsimni New Town Area

The impact and policy move to redevelop the area continue to prevail in the area. Merchants' Association manager J shared that one of the major projects that the current association chair is spearheading applying for the Metropolitan government's Design Innovation Market project. J explained as following:

"That project I believe is inspired by Mayor Se-hoon Oh's trip to a traditional market in Spain. The idea was to create a traditional and fashionable, but modern traditional market where it provides a place to relax or run errands in the city utilizing traditional markets in Seoul. The metropolitan government announced the project earlier this year to all the traditional markets to apply for the program. There are about some 300 traditional markets in the 25 gus in Korea... and they've ultimately selected two markets which are Jungang Market in Jung-gu and Tongin Market in Jongro-gu. Those two small markets were selected and will receive full funding for renovation from the city" (J market merchants' Association manager).

Noticeable here from J's comment is the role that metropolitan mayor Oh's involvement in conceiving the project. Although the

project is still in its initial stage of planning after designating two markets for funding, the core intention of the project is at improving the physical environment of the market. Due to the designation as a traditional market, the Jungang market was typically left out of the area designation for redevelopment in Hwanghak-dong. The promotional placards and sample images of the project indicate that the funding will ultimately result in a major renovation of the market façade and streetscape aiming to dramatically improve the physical environment of the space. Such regeneration efforts of traditional markets as Gonzelez & Waley's (2013) study indicates, could result in commercial gentrification where affordable products and services of the old market businesses ultimately face issues of displacement and displacement pressure. Although preventative measures for rent increase could be achieved through the Coexistence Agreement, the record J shared with the researcher indicated only about half of the building owners have agreed to sign the Coexistence Agreement form even though above 90% of them signed to agree with alteration and renovation from the market renovation. While it is still too early to hastily conclude the impact of such a regeneration project, the already ongoing incremental commercial gentrification taking place in Hwanghak-dong and Jungang Market area alludes to a potential intensification of gentrification once renovation takes place.

Agency and the role of the state in understanding gentrification in Korea largely revolved around the narrative of a centralized authoritarian government. However, the political context in Korea has changed over time and the experience of two major organizations in the two nearby areas indicates that local-level policy can have a considerable impact on neighborhood-level change. Particularly, the case of Seongdong-gu with its support for locally based industry and the anti-gentrification ideology of the mayor could have an impact in curbing the gentrification effect. Although such impact was not explicitly mentioned in the data collected from the interviews, their activities and the described relationship between the state indicate that the state's stance could have an impact on how the business persists within the neighborhood. On the contrary, the multiple

small-scale leapfrog redevelopment that was enabled by a more pro-construction and development policy stance of the local government in Jung-gu showed dramatic landscape differences in the area as well. Although a more recent project of traditional market renovation project does include an aspect of preventative measures for gentrification with the inclusion of coexistence agreement forms that building owners can sign, the interview data revealed that agreement for rent control after the renovation was more of a voluntary courtesy than a required criterion. Overall, the interview and media coverage on the area indicates that the policy stance and ideology of the local government could have an indirect relationship to how gentrification occurs in the neighborhood, acting as either a preventative or accelerating agent of the process depending on its political stance.

#### 4.3.4 Internal Factors: Fortifying the Community Through Organization

One of the most noticeable differences between the two nearby areas of Hwanghak-dong and Doseon-dong was the effect of community and organization and its impact on preserving their place within the neighborhood. First, Doseon-dong's main industry is centered around small garment factories. One interesting characteristic of the garment industry is that, unlike a typical cluster of garment factories operating their business through the division of labor among each factory forming a network, factories in Doseon-dong produce the product from its raw textile into the final product in one factory. G explains the process as follows:

“But garment factories in Seongdong-gu have a system of getting the textile early morning and supplying finalized products the night of the same day. In order to maintain that system, we cannot specialize in small parts between factories, we make the product efficiently with only a fraction of skilled workers that can take on a diverse range of tasks in making our product. We don't specialize in using one tool as we need to be flexible with what the market demands” (G, Garment factory



owner).

G indicates that garment workers based in Seongdong-gu are more capable of handling a diverse range of products. G elaborates that, unlike a typical garment production operation in Seoul where each worker specializes in one specific task through division of labor, each worker is skilled enough to produce a finished product on their own. This caused each factory to operate independently without frequent interaction among them, thus providing no opportunity to form any official or formal organization. However, factories began coming together through industrial cooperatives based on loose social connections between each factory around 2016. The founding member of the now non-profit garment workers' cooperative and a factory owner G shared that the survival of the industry was one of the key motivators for bringing the garment factories into the neighborhood through a formal organization.

“Well, the industry is changing. But with old ideas and thoughts, can we trigger any change within our industry? That’s not possible. We need to also change. The environment is inevitably going to change, and people need to adapt to change—like how we all use smartphones today. But we didn’t have any voice that advocated for change internally and there wasn’t a single person outside of our industry that explained to us what kind of changes are coming. So, as I started looking for new ways of production and ways to survive, I started to change my mind first. When I first saw those smart new devices for production, I thought if those kinds of machines and technology was in our neighborhood, things would be different. That’s why I started to work on this cooperative” (G, Garment factory owner)

Although the cluster of garment factories initially formed within the Wangsimni area due to its proximity to the Dongdaemun Market, as the sales and the revenues in the Dongdaemun Market diminished, the garment factories in Wangsimni also faced hardship in

maintaining a stable production cycle<sup>14</sup>. Additionally, with fewer workers coming into the factories, the factory owners faced issues on two fronts in both declining industry and development pressure. The garment factory owner G recognized this problem not just as an individual level of his factory, but rather as a crisis that the industry and the neighborhood faced all together. Even though each factory is competing for work, factory owner G recognized that to maintain his business within the area, more collective action was necessary. This was reinforced with G encountered new types of production technology and how garment factories in other countries operated. However, due to the nature of small garment factories in Seoul and the unviable industry ecosystem, installing new machines and technologies in each factory would not have been feasible. In this regard, G sought alternative ways to sustain the business through cooperation among the cluster of garment factories.

At the early stage of the formation, two main cooperatives of Seongdong Fashion Garment Cooperative (here on Seongdong Co-op) and Nanum Garment Cooperative (here on Nanum Co-op) emerged based on loose and personal social ties. During the early stage of forming each cooperative, various levels of conflict arose between the two cooperatives, sometimes creating competitive tension between them as well. Administrative Manager B, of the now unified nonprofit organization of the two garment cooperatives, explained some of the early conflicts that occurred as follows:

“Well, there were times when each cooperative would even fight, and situations would escalate. Sometimes it would escalate over dinner gatherings when Seongdong Co-op and Nanum Co-op would start arguing with each other about who was doing a better job or start complaining if something that one cooperative is doing doesn’t happen with the other, they would just throw tantrums at each other and kept on arguing on who’s doing what and so on” (B, Garment Non-Profit manager).

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<sup>14</sup> For more description on the production ecosystem of Dongdaemun Market and the role of small garment factories, see name (year).

B indicated that at first, the two cooperatives had minor conflicts in operating their business even though they were ultimately applying for the same project to get aides from the local government in operating their business. These minor conflicts sometimes even escalated into bigger arguments even though mostly the two cooperatives were formed with similar goals and projects and aid they receive from the local government. G partook in a crucial role in bringing the two cooperatives together and even launching an official non-profit organization to expand upon the works of the cooperatives. G explained his motivation in his effort to organize and unify the garment workers as follows:

“If us garment industry wants to survive in our town, and if I want to maintain my business, I can’t do that alone. As I told you before, we need to be able to take in a diverse range of products within our cluster. We need to be able to share. Ultimately that’s going to benefit us economically and I am doing all this work because I wanted to build a system. I really believe that if it is ‘we’ not ‘I’, there is nothing we can’t do together” (G, Garment factory owner).

Despite the initial conflict among the factory owners within the Doseon-dong area, factory owner G and his firm belief in communal and collective action played a significant role in creating a formal organizational structure within the garment cluster of the area. Although the idea of establishing a cooperative and later non-profit organization was first enabled by the gu government policies, it was the actions of the garment workers that ultimately played a central role in gaining the foundation to stay within the area.

Although the process of bringing the industry within the neighborhood together was a difficult task, the payoff of such an organizational structure is slowly coming together. In explaining an incident during COVID-19 where the cooperative took charge as a control tower for producing reusable fabric masks for the city, B explained that their experience in organizing and ability to work

together formed the basis for both local and greater city government to recognize their capability and role within the region. This allowed them to be able to have a collective voice in not only persevering the industry within the neighborhood but also started working with the city government to be able to expand their production infrastructure by purchasing more advanced machinery or production technology that they needed the city government. Building stronger resiliency of their industry within the city.

#### 4.3.5. Internal Factors: Inert Community and the Lack of Formal Organization

However, such community bonds and organizations are not as present in the Hwanghak-dong area where gentrification seems to happen at a faster pace than Doseon-dong. Although Jungang Market had a longer history of having an organization among market merchants since the 1960s, the kind of collective activities isn't as strong as those of garment workers. The most noticeable part is that, unlike the garment union that eventually came together as one non-profit organization, the only formal type of association is related to storefronts and stalls that are located within the central arcade of the market. The adjacent furniture quarters or the old grain quarter of the market where the most apparent gentrification takes place is excluded from the formal Jungang market merchants' association.

Though the scope of the association is limited to the central arcade street of the market, J still shared some trouble when it comes to organizing the merchants together. Even though at an early part of the interview, J indicated and emphasized how the merchant association was able to put together their proposal to renovate market facilities to earn funding from the city, J shared some frustration on an operational level to organize any collective projects within the market. J shared,

“As an association, we do have formal structures. We host periodical association board meetings and a general assembly that happens once

or twice a year. But people rarely show up. I've been organizing the meeting since last year and the maximum turnout's been like 15 people per meeting."

"How many stores did you say are part of the association earlier?"

"Well over a 100. Well, even excluding the street stalls a good 40-50 storekeepers need to show up for us to have some conversation, but it's always the same few people that show up to the meeting."

(J, Traditional Market Merchant Association Manager)

J's main frustration with managing the association comes from the lack of communication and participation that comes from the market merchants. Although the association includes formal structures from having board members or implementing a direct election system for deciding the association chair, J's response indicates that the association members do not mobilize easily. J indicated that even the few people that might show up to the association meetings are of the same people and indicate that it is hard to push any agendas forward or start any conversations to address any issues of the market despite the formal structure of the association. A degree of passivity was apparent in the operation of the merchants' association even through a successful case of collective action as well. Even though the association achieved almost unanimous agreement from the merchants and building owners in the area for proposing the market renovation funding from the city government, this was achieved through the time and effort of the association office workers rather than a voluntary movement of the workers. Based on his experience of this passive nature of the merchant's involvement in association activities, J elaborates his perspective on the limitation of the association and the conditions of the market by following,

"Yes, Well I said the word "software" but there's a lot that needs to be addressed. Like ensuring the quality and taste of the food, merchant's and the associated workers' cultural competency, propriety of the

customer service, keeping a tidy environment... well there's a lot to be done now. But with the new association chair, we've been able to have some happy contemplations. As you know, hardware's no good without proper software. New future visitors could say "Wow, Jungang market didn't used to be like this but it's so fashionable now," but have bad customer service or bad quality food. For another example, we also need to make sure the customer service has some propriety, but this traditional market environment is... well it could have more affability (original word, '정'), but I personally don't feel such an atmosphere around here. That's really lacking here" (J, Traditional Market Merchant Association Manager).

Even though Jungang market was designated as one of the two traditional markets in Seoul to receive funding for renovation at the time of the interview, J separates the matter of what he phrases as 'software' improvement and 'hardware' improvement. The improvements that occur through the potential renovation of the market would constitute the 'hardware' improvement providing a cleaner, more organized, and more modern façade for the market. However, J is acutely aware that the long-term survival and retention of customers cannot be achieved solely based on the improvement of the built environment. J points out that additional changes are needed for the humane aspects of better customer service and products is also needed. One striking part about J's comment is that part of the issue raising lies with the lack of affability—more precisely using the term *Jeong* (정)—when J explains the overall atmosphere of the market. The terminology that often describes warmth, affection, or affirmation in a collective setting is often associated with traditional market spaces in Korea. J's comment on this lack of affability and warmth, or more precisely, *Jeong*, from the market along with his earlier frustration in encouraging participation in events within the association hints at a looser form of connection and sense of community that may exist among the market community.

Moving beyond more formal and organizational community bonds, such effect can also be discovered on the business level as well.

When asked about any local interaction with other businesses to Café Owner H, H responded that he is aware that there is some kind of union among business owners of the market and even an elected representative of the union but has not been contacted or seen any activity from them. In describing his desire to find ways to interact with the market community more actively and contribute what he could, H explained,

“Sometimes I do pitch my ideas when I meet the business owners here and have a drink, but nothing happens. One time when there was a market festival here, they really do it the old ways like they do it in the countryside. But if you go down just around the corner there are quite a bit of younger generation of business owners here. They have their own parties with DJs but it’s only with themselves. I think what’s important is to create an environment and explore more ideas that can include all generations and let in young people. Ultimately... what’s the word? We need to do this together... oh, harmonious. this has to be a harmonious environment” (H, Café owner in Hwanghak-dong).

When asked about any efforts in reaching out, H expressed mild frustration with the lack of response and enthusiasm for his idea of working together within the market. As H comes from a rich cultural and corporate background having experienced different market cultures in Europe and the United States, H opened his business with a vision to transplant his cultural experience into the area. However, the Hwanghak-dong market area does not present to have a strong community within the market as the market’s formally recognized organization only covers the main arcade and not the subsidiary alleyways that extend throughout the block. Most of the social networks and relations are formed based on the business’s proximity to each other. H also notices a kind of generational disparity between the new incoming business owners and old timers as he explains through the different kinds of festivity that the two groups celebrate. H feels the need for more cooperation and interaction among each generation of business owners within the market community.

Though not as large scale as cooperative or official associations,

casual and small-scale communities may also have an impact on the survival of newly incoming businesses in the area. A, as he's maintained his business for 10 years, when asked about his business and what the space means to him, responded,

“To be honest, it's not the most financially flourishing job, but it does give me peace of mind and provide a nice gathering place for the community or whenever any of my friends visit the area. I've also formed so many precious connections here it's really special to me. It's a very good place here. A store might just turn into a party room some days, Of course, I've been interested and studying coffee for twenty years but that's really why I started this” (A, Café owner).

A emphasizes the importance of connection and community over financial earnings and asked about what the space meant for him. He goes on to explain that an area is a special place indicating that the place holds more meaning than just a mere place for economic activity but rather a place where he can build social relationships and provide a place for locals. This is apparent in that the store used to have at least one foreign student worker at the counter at any given time as regular customers and students living in nearby areas would often visit to find community through the coffee shop. In one of the visits to A's café, one of the workers even expressed that the space feels comfortable to the point where it feels more like their own 'playground' that they can always stop by and hang out with the people in the café.

For the more recent establishment such as H's café in Jungang Market and F's café in Doseon-dong, both businesses opened recently in the area with less than two years spent doing their business at their current location. While H, with his vision of creating a community-oriented coffee shop that blends in with the market, already has multiple regular customers that visit the café, even as some of the older customers would even ask H to hold their packages or bags while they shop in the market. H explained when two customers visited the store during the interview,



“Those two are also regulars from around. They often leave their stuff before going to the market. They often offer me some rice cakes too. You know in Boknal (복날), they offered me three bowls of Samgyetang.” (H, Café owner in Hwanghak-dong).

Although H has only been around the market for less than a year at the time of the interview, H was able to point out several regular customers that either passed by the storefront or stopped by for a cup of coffee. More interesting is how fast H was able to establish trusting enough relationships where regular customers would share and celebrate little occasions or feel even comfortable asking for a favor around town. However, F has a bit of a different story when it comes to maintaining business in Doseon-dong. F explained his frustration when asked about customers. F explained,

“It’s been hard for business when You only get two days out of seven for a weekend and sales are only high during that time. Of course, sales and money are tight but you know I am human after all and it’s getting harder. It’s like I’m starting to lose motivation. I’d be happy being busy during the weekend and feeling empty when weekdays come around. Doesn’t matter what I make and put out on display we just don’t really have that many people coming by. There’s quite a gap there” (F, Café owner, Doseon-dong).

Although F has been operating his business for a longer amount of time compared to in the area, F’s biggest struggle and frustration in operating his business in Doseon-dong is because he is not able to capture such regular customers in the area. While this may be an endogenous issue where Doseon-dong does not generate much foot traffic during the weekdays as opposed to a marketplace where there are frequent strollers who pass by the area, F still struggles to attract enough regular customer to the point where it’s getting harder to maintain the business not just financially, but also psychologically. One of the key differences between F and H’s interview in expressing their motivation is that H put community and

connection upfront, whereas F's experience with business mostly revolved around financial matters. It is still too early to foretell the outcome of the two stores given the short history the two stores have with the neighborhood, but the case of A's business can suggest that community may play a strong factor in being able to maintain the business in the area for a long time.

#### 4.3.6 External Factors: Role of Media

The role of media plays a significant role in revitalizing an area. The increase or the lack of media attention was apparent in how the neighborhood undergoes the process of gentrification between the nearby neighborhoods of Hwanghak-dong and Doseon-dong. In an unofficial interview with the Jungang market merchant association's chair, he indicated that one of the major turning points of the business was a popular culinary television show that introduced a couple of restaurants within the market. After the episode, he noticed an increase in visitors to restaurants that were featured in the show segment with a couple of businesses that attracted customers expanding their businesses into other store units as well as new establishments seeking business opening within the area. This is also expressed by café owner H, who witnessed the change in visitors after a celebrity posted a video episode visiting restaurants in the area. H explains,

“To think about it, media influence could really be all. Sung Si Kyong or YouTubers and influencers started marketing the place and then our younger business owners started their own Instagram and started to get featured on YouTube and other influencer's channels and suddenly the place caught so much attention” (H, café owner).

H when asked about recallable events that generated more visitors to the market, H drew a connection to the role of media, particularly of social media such as YouTube. As both store owners and merchant associations indicated, the role of media plays a major

role in attracting outside visitors and shows that the type of coverage is not just limited to old media. The area of Hwanghak-dong is subjected to diverse and intensified media attention from various independent content creators as well as major news and magazine media as well. On why such attention has been drawn to the area, merchant association manager J provided some insight. J commented,

“We’ve also been gaining media coverage from famous YouTube channels and broadcasting companies, and with the atmosphere of an old market street that young people may not have experienced turned the market into a new hot place to visit. They’ve combined the word ‘hip’ and the name of the intersection by the market of ‘Sindang’ and created a nickname ‘hip-dang dong’. So new businesses are opening within the market attracting young visitors from outside” (J, Traditional Market Merchant Association Manager)

J explains the atmosphere of the old market street as one of the appeals of the market area and broader construction of ‘hip-dang dong.’ This terminology as J explained it combines the word hipster with the name of the neighborhood,<sup>15</sup> indicating the kind of attention the area has gathered for a group of so-called hipsters in Korea. Utilizing the word ‘hip’ as a prefix that combines the name of the neighborhood was first popularized with the gentrification of Euljiro in Seoul where the area was often referred to as ‘hipjiro’ similar to the case of hipdang-dong (김은택 외, 2019). This terminology is even popularly introduced in news media, where some of the restaurant clusters and the market area are being referred to and introduced as ‘hipdang-dong’,<sup>16</sup> reproducing the terminology to the point where the

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<sup>15</sup> Although the research site of Jungang market is located within the administrative boundary of Hwanghak dong, the place is more known to association of adjacent neighborhood of Sindang-dong. Though J refers to the nearby intersection, this place association may be rooted in the name of the closest subway station named after Sindang-dong.

<sup>16</sup> 서영상 (2022년11월23일). [르포]“곡식창고가 힙한 상점으로”...‘힙당동’을 아시나요? [부동산360]. 헤럴드경제.;  
김영은 (2023년05월16일) 무당과 떡볶이의 동네에서 ‘힙당동’으로, 신당동의

merchant association has even embraced the notion.



<Figure 4.10> Placard of Jungang Market promoting upcoming renovation change

The gentrification nature of media attention is apparent in the type of media coverage associated to the term ‘hipdang-dong.’ A common theme that appears in the media introducing the area is how the articles reference previously gentrified neighborhoods in Seoul. For example, 서영상 (November, 2022) mentions the “trendy interior design of preserving architectural frame” of rehabilitated restaurants resembles landscapes of Seongsu-dong or Munllae-dong, 김영은 (May, 2023) references to the presence of secondhand kitchenware stores in the area’s resemblance of print shops of Euljiro, and 김현유 (January, 2023) opens the report on the neighborhood asking whether Sindang-dong could be the next Euljiro and references the term ‘hipjiro’ and drawing similarities in how the two neighborhood changed. The reports on changing process of Sindang-dong constantly place the area in relation to previous cases of

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변신[상권 리포트⑦]. 한경비즈니스.;  
김현유(2023년01월30일) '힙당동'이 된 신당동에는 을지로와는 다른 바이브가 흐른다. 에스콰이어 코리아.

gentrification, mainly of Seongsu-dong and Euljiro.<sup>17</sup> Though it is primarily the agency of business owners and gentrifiers that initially construct the place-based identity, the role of media comes into play in confirming and reproducing the landscape of gentrification by describing those neighborhoods in relation to previously gentrified neighborhoods within Seoul.

Although mainstream media could act as a means to introduce, reproduce and confirm the gentrification happening within the neighborhood, potentially placing independent businesses under the pressure of the negative effect of gentrification, business owners expressed their need to rely on social media to maintain business. With utilizing social media, Café owner H commented,

“Yes, I need to build some reputation and accumulate enough stories from running my business. just having a tasty coffee isn’t enough for now because customers make a very cold-headed judgment. And maybe this is just my opinion, but potential customers would be able to tell real reviews from those paid reviews. But that doesn’t mean that the reviews are obsolete. It’s very ironic in a way. And that’s why I’m approaching this cautiously” (H, café owner, Hwanghak-dong)

H shows a cautious stance when it comes to the role of social media, as it is a tool to promote his business. Even though H shows a slight skepticism towards online reviews mentioning that they are easily manipulated, he also expresses the desire for establishing a reputation through collecting stories. This is tied to H’s desire to grow his business rooted in the local culture and community rather than being solely known for the quality and taste of his product. From this point of view, H takes a cautious stance on the media presence of his store as he is seeking to establish his business

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<sup>17</sup> Coincidentally, the case study site is located in between the frequently referenced Seongsu-dong and Euljiro. This locational proximity could indicate a pattern of dispersion resemblant of 이기웅 (2016)’s study on hongdae where displaced gentrifiers settle in nearby areas.

around the culture and community. Café owner F, whose business is located in Doseon-dong where mainstream media coverage is not as rampant as in Hwanghak-dong also acknowledges the role of social media in attracting customers. F mentioned,

“Well thinking about it, I do have moments where I feel the influence of social media in running my business. Although I’m not really that active on social media, the fact that the place gets packed with customers during the weekend probably finds this place through social media. It does remind me how important that can be in operating a business in areas like this” (F, café owner).

F expresses one of the challenges of running his business in the Doseon-dong area compared to Euljiro has been the low sales during the weekdays due to the low number of customers that visit the area. However, he presumes that the increase in customers visiting is due to the small amount of coverage his business gets through social media. Although F notes that he is not actively promoting the space on social media, he is able to secure a stable number of customers during the weekend. F’s experience could signify the role that looser grass-root style coverage of social media could still influence in attracting visitors to the area, as qualitative case studies of Instagram data and urban revitalization have shown that results of Instagram data analysis provide similar narratives and results as popular media analysis (김은택 외, 2019).

Overall, the type of coverage that could be discovered in Doseon-dong and Hwanghak-dong and the business owners’ experience with them alludes to how the role of media might influence accelerating the process of gentrification. Place-based characterizations and descriptive portrayals of a neighborhood could result in introducing, reproducing, or confirming processes of gentrification. The case of the Jungang market and their voluntary appropriation of the terminology of being ‘hip’ shows how media portrayal can even lead to new construction of placeness around the area. The smaller case of Doseon-dong where major mainstream

coverage related to gentrification is not present, still shows that social media could play a role in attracting customers for the business, alluding to the scope of media role to be expanded beyond mainstream media and include grass-rooted self-producing forms of media.

## Chapter 5. Conclusion

The word gentrification got quickly popularized in Korea focusing on the conflict and issues between renters and landlords in commercial areas. Nevertheless, the tale of gentrification has been a familiar story as the process of redevelopment that played a major role in shaping the landscape of Seoul resembles the characteristics of gentrification through displacement and reconstitution of population, and dramatic changes in the built environment. Hence the research approaches on gentrification have followed a fragmented approach placing each process of the two processes as an exclusive process rather than developing a holistic approach to examining the dynamic relationship between the two processes.

To investigate the relationship between residential redevelopment and subsequent changes in nearby commercial areas that are triggered by redevelopment, the research suggested a procedural framework based on the theoretical works of Beauregard (1984) and the stage model of gentrification suggested by Clay (1979) and contextualized different agents of gentrifiers that lead change in commercial area from Zukin (2009). The empirical data from business opening and closing, population change, and building age indicated that redevelopment contributes greatly to forming the conditions for gentrification. As redevelopment projects proceeded in the area, certain types of neighborhood-based businesses serving the needs of existing local residents closed down and get replaced with new types of businesses that meet the demand of an incoming population. Additionally, the displacement based on the neighborhood clearance not only displaces residents but also local businesses and industries that are nested within the area. In the case of manufacturing-based industries as it was shown in regional archival documents and interviews with garment factories showed, redevelopment could greatly disturb the industrial ecosystem of the area depending on its interdependency among other businesses or to nearby regions. Afterward, commercial change intensifies old local businesses continue to displace due to increasing rent or disruption



in continuing their business due to redevelopment, making space for new retail entrepreneurs or chain stores to take over the space. As residual sporadic residential redevelopment continues in the case of Hwanghak-dong, the pressure of displacement for old local businesses also intensifies as the mixed-use development takes away affordable spaces for business and thus gets replaced by corporate stores with higher economic capital. Ultimately, the combination of interview data and review of the area's change over time from empirical sources indicate that residential redevelopment forms the necessary conditions for potential commercial gentrification as the old local businesses that prevail increasingly face displacement pressure.

The experiences and appearance of change in two nearby neighborhoods of Doseon-dong and Hwanghak-dong provided different factors that could influence the outcome of gentrification. First, a couple of internal factors like preexisting community, the capability of individual business owners, the distribution of industry, and given land use seemed to have an impact on the rate of gentrification. Though both nearby neighborhoods experienced the same initiating event of redevelopment, depending on the actions taken by the locals in the area, the commercial restructuring or change occurred in differing. Doseon-dong experienced a relatively slow process of gentrification. This could be attributed to the Internal factors of community bond and the capability of the factory owners in organizing to build up their voice within the community by forming a non-profit union. Additionally, a local government with a supportive stance on local-based activities and anti-gentrification policies combined with less media exposure on the neighborhood could have had an external influence on curving the outcome of gentrification.

However, the case of the Hwanghak-dong and Jungang markets presented a more intense outcome of gentrification. Noticeably, the area has caught major attention in mainstream media for the distinctive restaurants, bars, and café that are leading the change in the area. The area also had a history of pro-construction and the

development of local government policies that led to patches of additional redevelopment in the area. The role of the market merchants' association also revolves more towards renovation and modernization of the facility, ultimately all contributing to gentrification without considerable actions being taken to slow down the process.

Even though the two nearby neighborhoods experienced the same shock wave of major residential redevelopment, the outcome of gentrification differed in the two areas. From the qualitative analysis of the interview data, the research was able to identify several internal and external factors that encouraged or curved the outcome of gentrification after the residential redevelopment has taken place.

The study faces limitations in the following ways. First, although the study was able to collect a diverse range of interview data from the nearby commercial areas it does not include the perspectives of the in-moving residential new middle-class gentries who become the new users of nearby commercial areas. Incorporating such a perspective could greatly enhance the understanding of the geographical scope and boundaries of commercial gentrification.

Second, due to the limitation of data sources, the study relied on analysis based on collected qualitative interview data to identify potential factors that establish a connection between residential redevelopment and commercial gentrification. While the research suggests a procedural framework of gentrification, a further empirical study is needed to verify and inspect the significance of the conceptual framework this study suggests.

This study aimed to enhance the discussion within gentrification literature through the experience of Seoul where two competing interpretation of gentrification exists: one interpretation based on the dominant legacy of state-led gentrification and another interpretation based on agency of alternative urbanism based on culture and consumption. Though the two interpretations seem to present a kind of diametrical relationship like the early production and consumption debate of gentrification, combining the two interpretations could provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon requiring future

studies to explore a more concrete and dynamic relationship between the two interpretations of gentrification.

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## 언론문헌

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## 국문 초록

2000 년대를 기점으로 서울의 도심 내 균형발전과 주택공급의 문제를 해결하기 위해 낙후된 지역을 대상으로 재개발 사업이 활발히 발생한다. 이러한 재개발 과정에서 주로 활용되는 전면 철거 재개발 방식은 기존 지역 내 주민들의 비자발적 이주와 새로운 중산층의 유입을 통해 발생하는 계급적 변화와 같이 서구의 젠트리피케이션 과정과 유사한 효과를 공유하지만 한국에서 재개발과 젠트리피케이션의 관계를 파악하는 연구는 활발하게 이루어지지 못하고 있는 실정이다. 더불어 한국 도시 발전의 맥락에서 젠트리피케이션 논의는 발생 과정에서 나타나는 다양한 행위자의 존재와 주로 상업지역 내 변화를 중심으로 전개되어 발전주의 정부가 주도적으로 진행해온 재개발 논의와는 분리되어 진행 되어온 실정이다.

하지만 도심 내 재개발 사업으로 인해 낙후했던 지역에 새로운 중산층 인구가 유입되고, 2010년대를 기점으로 다양한 상업 젠트리피케이션의 속도와 규모가 확산함에 따라 두 과정이 가지는 동태적인 관계를 면밀히 파악하고 분석할 필요가 있다. 일례로 2004년 재개발 지구로 지정되어 첫 구역이 2014년에 완료된 왕십리 뉴타운 지역은 대규모 주거 재개발로 인해 주변지역에 상업 젠트리피케이션 효과가 촉발되기도 한다는 점을 제시한다. 재개발 이전 다양한 소규모 제조업 공장이 입지하여 저렴한 주택지를 제공하고 이와 연계된 전통시장 상권이 형성되어 있던 왕십리 지역은 재개발의 진행과 함께 급격한 변화를 맞이하여 주택 재개발 사업이 상업 젠트리피케이션과 연동된 과정으로 작동할 수 있다는 점을 시사한다.

본 연구는 주택재개발로 인해 촉진되는 주변 지역의 상업 젠트리피케이션 효과를 면밀히 분석하는 것을 목적으로 한다. 이를 위해 2000년대 이후 진행된 뉴타운 재개발 사업의 시범 사업으로써 서울의 도심 내 주택 재개발에 대한 대표성을 확보하는 왕십리 뉴타운 지역을 중심으로 사례연구를 설계한다. 왕십리 뉴타운의 주변 지역으로는 재개발 단지와 경계를 맞닿은 황학동과 도선동 지역으로 설정한다. 이 두 지역은 재개발 지역과 지리적으로 밀접하고 역사적으로도 관계를 맺었으며, 서울 시 내 중구와 성동구의 경계에 형성되어 있는 뉴타운 지역의 특성상 재개발 이후의 근린 변화에 있어서 작용하는 정책적인 요인을 비교하고 분석할 수 있기에 사례지역으로 선정한다. 또한

재개발로 인하여 유기적으로 연결되어 있던 기존 지역 산업의 분포 역시 변화를 맞이 하였기에 주거 재개발로 인해서 발생하는 주변지역의 변화에 다양한 동태적인 관계와 요인을 도출해낼 수 있는데 적합한 지역으로 판단된다. 주거 재개발과 상업 젠트리피케이션 현상간의 관계를 규명하기 위하여, 본 연구는 지역 내 인구 및 산업 현황에 대한 분석을 통하여 재개발 사업의 진행과정에서 발생하는 지역의 변화와 젠트리피케이션 조건의 형성을 파악한다. 최종적으로 파악된 현황을 기반으로 주변 지역인 황학동과 도선동 내 자리잡은 소상공인들과의 반구조화 인터뷰 자료를 통해 주거 재개발로 인해 그 주변지역으로 스며드는 상업 젠트리피케이션 효과를 분석한다.

연구의 결과를 요약하면 다음과 같다. 첫째로, 도심 내 정부 주도적이고 대규모로 발생하는 주거 재개발 사업은 젠트리피케이션이 발생할 수 있는 초기조건을 형성한다. 사업이 완료되는 시점에서 발생하는 인구 구성의 변화로 인해 발생하는 상업 환경의 변화가 발생하며 초기조건이 형성된다. 둘째로, 젠트리피케이션 과정의 진행과 결과를 만드는데 있어서 작용되는 내부 및 외부 요인을 파악한다. 주변지역 내 소상공인들과의 인터뷰를 통하여 젠트리피케이션 발생의 정도와 속도를 조절할 수 있는 다양한 주체들을 도출해낸다. 셋째로, 젠트리피케이션의 초기 형성 조건 이후 그 과정을 발생시키는데 중요한 역할을 하는 활동적인 젠트리파이어들의 동기와 위치성을 파악한다.

본 연구는 젠트리피케이션의 고전적인 정의에 입각하여 그 효과를 공유하는 주거 재개발 사업이 어떻게 지정된 사업 구역의 주변지역에 상업 젠트리피케이션이 발생할 수 있는 조건을 형성하는지 파악한다. 하지만 초기 조건이 형성된이후 젠트리피케이션의 발생에 있어서 그 정도와 규모는 다양한 스케일의 정치적인 협상과정과 지역 내 다양한 주체들의 활동으로 인해 조절되는 것을 확인하였다. 젠트리피케이션의 발생에 있어서 주거 재개발의 시행이나 지역 내 다양한 협동조합이나 주민 협의체를 구성하는 등 정부의 역할이 존재하지만, 후발적으로 발생하는 젠트리피케이션의 과정에 있어서 지역 내 커뮤니티와 협의체의 주체적인 행위성 역시 그 과정과 결과에 영향을 미치는 것을 확인하였다. 본 연구는 젠트리피케이션의 진행에 있어서 도출되는 다양한 행위집단과 그들의 영향을 통해 상업 젠트리피케이션에 있어서 젠트리피케이션의 가계의 비자발적 이주를 방지하거나 지자체와 기존 커뮤니티간의 교류 및 협동을 통해 역량을 강화하는 등 젠트리피케이션의 부정적인 효과를 조절할 수 있다는 점을 시사한다.

**주요어** : 젠트리피케이션, 상업 젠트리피케이션, 주택재개발, 근린 변화,  
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