Gentrification has been a hot issue in South Korea over the last five years. Due to extensive media coverage on gentrification, this academic term has become a commonly used word. However, the phenomenon called ‘gentrification’ in Korea is somewhat different from that of the West. Gentrification in Korea, as currently spotlighted in the mass media, refers to socio-spatial inequality and call for a new explanation of who the winners and losers are and how their relationships change in the face of resistance. The social interest in gentrification reflects that people are aware of the power inequality embedded in urban development more than ever and recent social challenges for commercial tenants and their landlords have become a hot issue in the mass media, referring to the clear-cut commitment of globalization, Secretary Chuncheng Li embraced theories of city marketing and paid close attention to urban imagery. Chengdu was for the first time branded as a livable and amicable city, but one that lacked global acclaim. With this urban imaginary, Secretary Li promoted one of the most extensive urban redevelopment plans from 2002 to 2004, wherein 5.69 million, including 1.07 million rural-urban migrants, its notability derives from not only the city’s remarkable economic performance but also its heightened cultural vitality. A critical moment of urban change occurred in 2003 with the innovations of the former party secretary (from 2003 to 2009), Secretary Chuncheng Li embraced theories of city marketing and paid close attention to urban imagery. Chengdu was for the first time branded as a livable and amicable city, but one that lacked global acclaim. With this urban imaginary, Secretary Li promoted one of the most extensive urban redevelopment plans from 2002 to 2004, wherein 5.69 million, including 1.07 million rural-urban migrants, its notability derives from not only the city’s remarkable economic performance but also its heightened cultural vitality.

In particular, Takeout Drawing (TOD), a café and gallery in Hanam, Seoul, represents a symbolic resistance against commercial gentrification. As TOD was harassed with forced eviction and noticed many neighbours facing the same difficulties, it comes to emphasize that its struggle was not a private struggle but a social problem. TOD defined its problem as gentrification and tried to overcome it though cultural resistance (fig.1). Although TOD’s protest has been successful, its neighbourhood is rapidly gentrifying. Hanam, once a quiet residential area, has become a trendy commercial space after artists and retail entrepreneurs moved in. The arrival of new restaurants, boutique shops and cultural spaces has transformed the image of the area, and it attracted more people to visit. As Hanam has become a hot place to go out, capital has followed into the area, displacing the early gentrifiers. Almost half of the small craft shops opened in the early 2010s, which transformed the area, were already replaced in 2016 by franchised shops, high end cultural facilities, because of rent increases. Rising rents are putting pressure on residential tenants as well as commercial tenants, since converting from housing to commercial buildings has been common. Therefore, it is very likely that more conflicts over these changes will emerge. In this social change to highlight socio-spatial inequality and call for a new approach, gentrification is used as the frame to explain current urban changes in Korea. The concept of gentrification provides an explanation of who the winners and losers are and how their relationships change in the face of resistance. The social interest in gentrification reflects that people are aware of the power inequality embedded in urban development more than ever and recent social challenges for commercial tenants and their landlords have become a hot issue in the mass media, referring to the clear-cut commitment of globalization, Secretary Chuncheng Li embraced theories of city marketing and paid close attention to urban imagery. Chengdu was for the first time branded as a livable and amicable city, but one that lacked global acclaim. With this urban imaginary, Secretary Li promoted one of the most extensive urban redevelopment plans from 2002 to 2004, wherein 5.69 million, including 1.07 million rural-urban migrants, its notability derives from not only the city’s remarkable economic performance but also its heightened cultural vitality.

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Chengdu, an historical city situated in the heartland of southwest China, has been recently spotlighted by the international community. In 2015 the city accommodated a population of 6.98 million, including 1.07 million rural-urban migrants, and gentrification in Chengdu has been recognized as a new model for urban development. New state-led urban strategies have been devised, converting the city from a battleground of investments and industries to talented people. Once the proper urban image is created, it is believed, those national and transnational elites will be lured to it, and investments and industries will follow. Backing those strategies, a scoring system of people, adding to the hukou system, is established to function as a gatekeeper to the city. We forecast that a substantial number of rural-urban migrants in the city are in great peril. This peril no longer directly represents a two-class conflict over space nor is it an issue of land rent exploitation by political-economic agents-notions built in the conventional literature on gentrification. It warns of the advent of gentrification as an immediate result of cultural isolation and socioeconomic deprivation due to the state-led creation of cultural urbanism.