



e² transport — Seoul: The Stream of Consciousness

After the Korean War, Cheonggyecheon, a stream that had once been the center of the city of Seoul, both geographically and culturally, had devolved into what was essentially a sewer. It was dirty and surrounded by shantytowns where vendors sold items for low prices, but there was also a significant amount of criminal activity. Even though it had at one time held special significance to the people of Seoul, because of its deterioration, there was little protest in the 1960s when the government decided to pave over the stream and build an elevated highway directly above it.

During the period of rapid development following the war, the road systems in Seoul were overwhelmed with traffic. The accepted strategy at the time was to increase the supply of road space to keep the traffic flowing. New roads were built on a regular basis, but often by the time they were finished the demand had already exceeded their capacity. It wasn't until the early 1990s that this method was called into question. What started as a casual conversation between two university professors soon became a massive project that dramatically changed the future development of Seoul.

In 2002, rather than building more roads to meet the traffic demands, the newly elected mayor of Seoul, Lee Myung Bak, made a decision to do the opposite. He destroyed the Cheonggyecheon expressway and restored the 6 km. long stream below it, which has already played host to more than 24,000 social and cultural activities. While many were concerned that removing road space would create traffic problems, in fact, it has not. The city took steps to encourage the use of alternative transportation by extending subway hours, introducing a central bus lane, raising prices of government-operated parking spaces and encouraging businesses to begin the work day during less congested times. According to Jeff Kenworthy from the Sustainable Policy Institute at Curtin University, often times when road space is removed traffic simply disappears rather than spilling over to nearby roadways as some may expect.

While the majority of people in Seoul are pleased with the return of Cheonggyecheon, there has been harsh criticism from some environmental groups. Lee Chul Jeh, the Director of the Water Conservation Center at the Korean Federation for Environmental Movements, points out that some of the historical, cultural and environmental aspects of the project were not carried out as originally planned. One of his main concerns is the maintenance water for the stream. Rather than getting it from the wastewater treatment plant, as was originally planned, or the nearby mountains, a better alternative, the water is being pumped in from the Han River. An enormous amount of electricity and therefore fossil fuels are used to pump that water, which makes the stream a greenhouse gas contributor.



Another group of citizens who are not satisfied are those who lived near the banks of the stream before the restoration project began. Many of them have been displaced and now cannot afford to move back to their former neighborhood. Many businessowners are also suffering because their stores are no longer accessible to customers. While the government recognizes that mistakes were made in the treatment of the former residents, many argue that not enough has been done to rectify the situation.

To find out more about tourism in Seoul, visit <http://english.visitseoul.net/visit2007en/index.jsp> (Cheonggyecheon is listed under outdoor attractions)

To find out more about Cheonggyecheon, visit <http://english.seoul.go.kr/cheonggye/>

To find out more about the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project, visit <http://www.metro.seoul.kr/kor2000/chungaehome/en/seoul/main.htm>



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PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

- 1) What effect does traffic have on the quality of life of the citizens of a city? Be specific. How does it affect the temperature, the air quality, noise levels, etc.?
 - 2) How do parks, waterways and green spaces affect the quality of life of the citizens of a city? In your community are these places more accessible to certain demographic groups than others? Why do you think that is the case? Be specific.
 - 3) What is the most common form of transportation in your community? List all of the public transportation options available to you. If you had more options, would you use them? Why or why not?
 - 4) What role does the city government play in deciding how the citizens get around? How can the city encourage one mode of transportation over another?
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POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS

- 1) What impact has the restoration project had on the citizens of Seoul? How has it improved their quality of life? How has it negatively affected them?
- 2) Who were the stakeholders in the Cheonggyecheon Restoration Project? How were those people or groups of people affected by the project? Were the interests of all of the groups considered in the planning and implementation of the project? Use specific examples from the episode to explain your answer.
- 3) What are some of the environmental benefits of the stream? Be specific and use examples from the video.
- 4) Why have environmental groups criticized the project? What can be done to reduce the environmental impacts that they describe?



- 5) What effect did politics have on the creation of the restoration project? Explain why it was surprising that Lee Myung Bak supported the project from the start.
- 6) What mistakes were made in the implementation of the project? Can those mistakes be rectified now? If so, what actions could be taken to rectify those mistakes?



NATIONAL STANDARDS FROM MCREL STANDARD

Civics

Standard 19.5 - Understands the influence that public opinion has on public policy and the behavior of public officials

Standard 21.2 - Understands the processes by which public policy concerning a local, state, or national issue is formed and carried out

Engineering Education

Standard 14.4: Understands how societal interests, economics, ergonomics, and environmental considerations influence a solution.

Standard 17.6: Understands tradeoffs among characteristics such as safety, function, cost, ease of operation, quality of post-purchase support, and environmental impact when selecting systems for specific purposes.

Life Skills/Life Work

Standard 6.2 - Uses public transportation effectively (e.g., identifies transportation alternatives, determines transportation needs).

Technology

Standard 4.5 - Knows that since there is no such thing as a perfect design, trade-offs of one criterion for another must occur to find an optimized solution.

Standard 4.6 - Knows that a design involves different design factors (e.g., ergonomics, maintenance and repair, environmental concerns) and design principles (e.g., flexibility, proportion, function).



Standard 6.6 - Knows that modern transportation systems are diverse (allowing humans to combine types of transportation for the most direct and convenient route), intelligent (requiring coordinated subsystems, such as a traffic light system), and are necessary in the functioning of most other technologies.