Influence and Sustainability of the Concept of Landscape Seen in Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley Restoration Projects

Dai Whan An 1,*, and Jae-Young Lee 2,*

1 Department of Architecture, Chungbuk National University, Cheongju 28644, Korea
2 Institute of Engineering Research, Yonsei University, Seoul 03722, Korea
* Correspondence: an4229@cbnu.ac.kr (D.W.A.); miryumok@hotmail.com (J.-Y.L.);
   Tel.: +82-43-261-2434 (D.W.A.); +82-2-2123-8064 (J.-Y.L.)

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Abstract: This study considered that the pursuit of nature in a city in the restoration projects of Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong valley was the main motive of the landscape concept premised on humanity and, furthermore, found that it originated from Korean thoughts and cultures about nature. Based on these findings, the study aimed to investigate the influence and sustainability of historical and cultural backgrounds in the planning features of nature in the two restoration projects. The concept of landscape that started from the desire to go out of a city is premised on the secular world of humans. In Korean society, the concept has been developed based on the above common premise, through cultural exchanges with China, and in its regional specificity. In particular, the Korean culture of singing and painting the beauty of landscape using the words “Gyeong (경)” and “Gok (국)” can be found in the backgrounds and landscape architecture plans of the Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley restoration projects. Therefore, the historical and cultural thoughts that pursued natural beauty were in the work for the restoration of the two streams, and these concepts should be considered for sustainable development for harmony between the city with nature and between nature with cultures.

Keywords: Cheonggye Stream; Suseongdong Valley; restoration; concept of landscape; Korean culture

1. Introduction

Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley restoration projects are the representative examples of natural river restoration projects that have been conducted since the 2000s in cities of South Korea. This study examined the underlying motive of these two projects that pursued nature in a city from a viewpoint of landscape, a historical and cultural concept of society.

The concept of landscape that has pursued natural beauty is premised on humanity. The most important aspect of humanity is the fact that humans are the ones who live in the human world, given that Heidegger refers to humans as “being-in-the-world” [1]. Consistent with this basic idea, the French cultural geographer Augustin Bergeaud said that landscape is an aesthetic consciousness in which objects continue to be signified within relationships to the human world and that the social motive of landscape is the desire to go out and to get away from a secular city into the wilderness (野) or into nature [2]. That means that the consciousness of a landscape is based upon a city, which is the center of the human world. From this viewpoint, if we look into the historical intention of landscapes, we can see examples of why societies pursue natural beauty and the ways in which they realize it.

River restoration is already a global trend. In modern times, concrete banks and embankments have been built in rivers for flood prevention and water supply, but now, they are on the
“re-naturalization” of the river by dismantling the concrete bank and embankment. Typically, there is the European Rhine. In the 19th century, river management removing tributaries and straightening rivers caused more floods. To restore the old waterways since the late 1990s, re-naturalization has been promoted by reconnecting the tributaries and the mainstream and creating a wide flooding area. This change is not only a more efficient management of nature but also an ecological restoration and is culturally providing more opportunities for people to enjoy nature. Furthermore, historic value is added from the restoration of a landscape. The Florence Charter (1981) and the European Landscape Convention (2000) established criteria for the protection and management of historic gardens and landscapes, emphasizing that these are important aspects of peoples’ quality of life [3,4].

Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley restoration projects lie in the flow of South Korea’s river ecological restoration projects from the late 1990s to the 2000s. Although the ideas and planning of the river restoration projects at the time contained redevelopment reasonings and ecological reasonings in the contemporary city planning, these two restoration projects originally contained the common reason of a landscape concept and the local specificity that had been formed historically and culturally in the process of its realization in South Korea. Therefore, this paper will verify which traditional and cultural aspects on nature influences and sustains the planning of two restorations projects.

Concerning the process of the study, we firstly examined the discovery and evolution of the landscape concept and then investigated the evolution of the landscape concept and garden in Korea. This examination showed how the general concepts of landscape were specifically characterized in Korean society. Also, by examining the historical and cultural background of the Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley restoration projects as well as the discussions in the restoration processes, we found out what kind of meanings were given to streams and valleys in the contemporary urban planning. Finally, by examining the landscapes plans in the restoration projects and the experiences within them, we found out how the historically and culturally formed concept of landscape has been working and what kind of meaning it has had from the viewpoint of sustainability.

2. Discovery of the Concept of Landscape and Evolution of Garden and Korea’s Landscape and Gardens

2.1. Discovery of the Concept of Landscape and Evolution of Gardens and Parks

The aesthetic consciousness of landscape is a cultural concept that has been formed historically. Landscape is a concept that has been discovered and cultivated in the human world among some social reasons. If we trace the occurrence of that historical and cultural concept, we can see why we feel an aesthetic consciousness when we look at nature and why we are creating a garden and a park for the representation of nature.

In Asia, the beginning of the landscape concept can be found in China’s “hermits” during the 3rd century [2]. The urban noble men called “Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove (竹林七賢)” revered Laozi and Zhuangzi’s action in inaction (無為) philosophy, despised the mundaneness of the city, and praised nature while hiding in the wild mountain. These poems sang personal relief by leaving the mundane world, by staying away from political power, and by taking refuge in the natural world. In addition, it was after two generations that praising a hermit life in the natural world by leaving the mundane world developed into some aesthetic consciousness by “Landscape Painting (山水畫)” by Tsung Ping (宗炳, 375–443) [2]. Natural beauty was praised through poetry and landscape paintings. This aesthetic reason was materialized into gardens inside cities. So, the form of these gardens became “the forest of a mountain inside a city”. That means that the outside world was represented within the inner world of the city. This is a historical moment in that the humans’ aesthetic consciousness about nature dubbed as “landscape” was discovered for the first time.

In Europe, since the Renaissance, the aesthetic consciousness of landscape was discovered and widely spread. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the villas and gardens of Florence and Rome were built by aristocrats to enjoy the view of the garden and the scenery around the city beyond the gardens.
The change of landscape in the suburbs of Florence by the suburban large-scale reclamation project in Florence and the reverence of the Renaissance era for the ancient Roman culture developed into a culture of enjoying a quiet life in the countryside. Also, villas and gardens in the suburbs are used as places of relaxation and escape from busy urban life. It is well-described by Pliny the Younger (61–113), an ancient Roman scholar who was rediscovered at that time, in his writing life in villas: “a good life and a genuine one, which is happy and honorable, [is] more rewarding than any ‘business’ can be. You should take the first opportunity to leave the din, the futile bustle, and useless occupations of the city and devote yourself to literature or to leisure.” [5]. Villas and garden cultures developed during the Renaissance era will later affect the villas and gardens of France and England.

In France, Tuileries gardens in the 16th century and Luxembourg’s parks and boulevards lined with trees in the 17th century were intended to create a walkway through greenery in public places. These are the examples of pursuing natural beauty through scenery in the city. Particularly, in the 19th century, green space systems such as forests, parks, small squares, gardens, and boulevards were installed in Paris by Georges-Eugène Haussmann, which created the identity of today’s Parisian road landscape [6]. The motive for the completion of the green systems in Paris in the nineteenth century was not limited to the beautification of the city through nature. Here, hygienism played an important part. The statement by Adolphe Alphand, who was the director of the “Promenade and Plantations Administration” shows that hygienic motive was very important: “In the old days, we had to walk a quite long distance or get out of Paris in order to breathe fresh air and to get sunshine; Today, Parisians have gardens near the Parisian districts.” (Verne, 1985–1986) [6].

The aesthetic pursuit of nature and hygienism are the thoughts inseparably intertwined in the pursuit of nature. The development of a park was a simultaneous pursuit of natural beauty and hygiene in a city. Creating gardens and parks and planting roadside trees in the inner world city of the city is like planting a landscape symbolizing the outside world inside a complex city and providing a place for rest and relaxation. This is to feel the beauty of the outside nature inside the city without having to go out to the suburbs. The aesthetic pursuit of nature in urban history has been a major part of urban beautification. Also, hygienism, which was popular together with aesthetic motivation from the 19th century to the early 20th century, was another important motive for planting nature in a city. In the history of European cities, thoughts about the beautification of a city through nature have been accompanied by the development of landscape concept.

2.2. Evolution of the Concept of Landscape and Garden Culture in South Korea

The beginning of the concept of landscape in South Korea dates back to the Three Kingdoms period during the 5th–6th century AD, when Taoism was introduced from China. As the first record that described “Jeong (情, sentiment)” about nature, the word “Pungryu (風流)” appeared in this age. Pungryu was considered to be a profound enlightenment integrating Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, and “Hwarang (Flowering Knights)”, the students of the educational institute established by the Silla Dynasty, had to learn about “Pungryu”. As part of their doctrines, they received physical trainings together, enjoyed themselves by singing and dancing, and traveled to famous mountains and big rivers in order to cultivate the spirit of “Pungryu.” The spirit of “Pungryu” to find enlightenment in nature was to pursue spiritual communication with nature [7]. This was the beginning of the discussion about “Jeong” in connection with nature in South Korea. Afterwards, “Pungryu” was a religious custom of worshiping mountains during the Goryeo Dynasty. However, during the Joseon Dynasty, it was considered not as a unique ideological tradition or a religious custom but as an attitude toward life to get close to nature and to enjoy grace and scenic beauty [8]. This spirit of “Pungryu” is often used to refer to the origin of Korean garden culture.

When we look at Koreans’ thinking about nature, their ideas about nature was greatly influenced by Confucianism and Taoism introduced from China. Nevertheless, given that Koreans had unique “Sin-Seon” (immortality) thoughts similar to Taoism and the spirit of “Pungryu” that integrated Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, Koreans’ thoughts about nature is considered as
characteristic thoughts they accepted Confucianism and Taoism from China. First, Taoism’s “what is so of itself (自然)” had a huge influence on Koreans’ traditional view of nature. This thought followed the path (道, the principle of nature), referred to as “what is so of itself” and had a strong objection to something artificial. Korean gardens show a strong influence by the thought of “what is so of itself.” This thought is also associated with the characteristics of a typical Korean garden that did not have artificial landscapes like Japanese stone gardens (石庭) or Chinese stone forests (石林) [7] (Figure 1). The evaluation of Korean arts and culture as “artless artifice and harmony with nature” is related to “what is so of itself.” The view of nature of both Confucianism and Taoism deeply influenced Koreans’ view of nature. Given that Confucianism was the national religion of the Joseon Dynasty, which was the last Korean dynasty, and that the gardens of the Joseon Dynasty was built by the scholars who studied Confucianism, Confucianism is a great ideological background for Koreans’ view of nature and garden culture. Confucianism’s view of nature thought of “Do (path, 道)” as the law of nature, which was Taoism’s view of nature. “Do” was considered as the cosmos and interpreted as “the sky that gives birth to nature”, and “Do” was linked to “In (仁, benevolence)”, which is the highest virtue of Confucianism [9]. The law of nature was developed into the ethical ideal of the human world. The Confucianists enjoyed nature within nature; cultivated their virtue by following “Do”, the law of nature; and practiced the virtue as their practical ethics in society. In this culture, the literary men of Joseon wrote poems to praise the beauty of nature by comparing it with the mundane world within nature, and these poems, landscape paintings, and literary painting were manifested into the gardens of Joseon.

Figure 1. Gardens of China, Japan, and Korea: (a) the Chinese stone forest (石林, Yunnan), (b) the Japanese stone garden (石庭, Ryoanji), and (c) the Korean Garden (Soswaewon).

During the Joseon Dynasty, places with scenic landscapes were named with “Gyeong (景, scenic landscape)” and “Gok (曲, valley)”, as seen in the names of places such as “Dan-Yang-Pal-Gyeong (丹陽八景, Eight Scenic Views of Danyang)”, “Gwan-Dong-Pal-Gyeong (關東八景, Eight Scenic Views of Gwandong)”, “Jang-Dong-Pal-Gyeong (壯洞八景, Eight Scenic Views of Jangdong)”, “Hwa-Yang-Gu-Gok (華陽九曲, Nine valleys at Hwayang, 華陽九曲)”, and “Go-San-Gu-Gok (高山九曲, Nine valleys at Gosan)”. These expressions are the literary terms and words that have been commonly used until today to refer to scenic landscapes. Choi Gi-Soo reported that the pursuit of natural beauty which was expressed with “Gyeong (景, scenic landscape)” and “Gok (曲, valley)” seemed to be influenced by China [10]. “Gyeong” (scenic landscape) was used to refer to a place with a space smaller than a region that had outstanding and beautiful sceneries. After “So-Sang-Pal-Gyeong-Do (瀟湘八景圖, Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang Rivers)” during the North Song Dynasty of China was introduced to Korea (Goryeo Dynasty period), these places and paintings came to represent scenic landscapes, and the introduction of these paintings led to a vogue of landscape paintings; the word “Gyeong” became naturalized as an expression to refer to eight scenic landscapes in South Korea (Figure 2). For instance, “Dan-Yang-Pal-Gyeong” means eight scenic landscapes in the Danyang region. People enjoyed nature in the places dubbed as “Gyeong” and praised their beauty with poems and paintings, which became a culture. The word “Gok” had two meanings; “bending” in a morphological meaning. This word was used to refer to a place that had water-streaming valleys with mystifying rocks, waterfalls, and
ponds. For instance, Song Si-Yeol, a scholar of Joseon Dynasty, named the outstandingly scenic valleys of Hwayang-dong of Mt. Sokri as “Hwa-Yang-Gu-Gok (華陽九曲, Nine Valleys of Hwayang)” and praised the beauty with his poem (Figure 3).

Figure 2. The Eight Views of Xiao and Xiang Rivers (瀟湘八景圖) (known to be painted by An Gyeon).

Figure 3. Hwa-Yang-Gu-Gok (華陽九曲), (9th Valley: Pacheon): (a) Photography and (b) painting by Gwon Sin-Eung (1728–1878).

It became a culture that the beautiful scenery of nature was named with “Gyeong” and “Gok” and that the beauty of nature was pursued with poems and paintings. Together with landscape paintings depicting scenic beauty, Takjokdo (濯足圖, Feet-Washing Painting) that contrasted the human world against nature with a beautiful landscape reveals the noble class’s thoughts of the world during the Joseon Dynasty (Figure 4). In the figure painting titled “Painting of Sage Washing His Feet”, a scholar or sage’ act of washing his feet represents his intention to get away from the chaos of the mundane world and to live by the law of nature within nature.
This pursuit of natural beauty that embraces a human world develops into the “Retreat Villa Garden (別墅庭園)”, a type of garden during the Joseon Dynasty. These gardens were mostly made by government officials in exile or by scholars who had given up on going into the political world, so the gardens served as quiet shelters for those who wanted to forget the world and live in nature. It can be said that the garden was made for hermits like the “Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove” in China. The garden was built not inside a house but at a distant place with a scenic landscape, and it was a small garden with a pavilion which was surrounded by walls. The representative garden is “Soswaewon (瀟灑園)” [11]. Yang San-Bo (1503–1557), who built the Soswaewon garden, was a central government official during the Joseon Dynasty and was a nobleman who later abandoned the mundane world after the literati purges and went into seclusion there. The garden was created by walls around an existing valley and stream, by constructing pavilions inside the walls, and by creating an artificial hill near the stream (Figure 5). As seen in Soswaewon, the culture of naming the mountains and streams with scenic beauty with “Gyeong” or “Gok” and going outside to praise the natural beauty has developed into a garden culture of bringing those mountains and streams near or inside houses to admire the natural beauty.

Figure 4. Gosa-Takjokdo (高士濯足圖, Painting of Sage Washing His Feet) by Lee Gyeong-Yoon (1545–1611).

Figure 5. The pavilion in Soswaewon: Gwangpung (光風閣, Bright Sun and Fresh Wind after Raining) Pavilion.
Also, traditionally, urban dwellers in Korea like to go out to look for nature to enjoy themselves. The genre paintings by Shin Yun-Bok (1758–1817) such as “Sang-Chun-Yha-Heung (賞春野興)” and “Dan-Ho-Pung-Jeong (端午風情)” provide a glimpse into the life of that time [12]. “Sang-Chun” means enjoying the scenery of spring. The painting depicts a story that when azaleas were in bloom in the spring, the nobles and Gisaengs (female courtesans) went to the suburbs or to the garden of a noble man to enjoy the natural beauty (Figure 6). This shows the entertainment life of the urban noble men at that time. The painting “Dan-Ho-Pung-Jeong” depicts the women washing their hair near a stream, resting under the shades, or riding a swing (Figure 6). On May 5th of the lunar calendar, when the summer heat begins, people stopped working in fields for a while, put on new clothes, and gathered together to cook and eat delicious food. On this festive day, women washed their bodies in the stream and their heads with water infused with iris and enjoyed the scenery. Likewise, the culture of enjoying nature has been an everyday culture for Koreans.

![Figure 6. “Sang-Chun-Yha-Heung” and “Dan-Ho-Pung-Jeong” by Shin Yun-Bok.](image)

3. Discourse on History and Restoration Process of Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley

3.1. Discussions on History and Restoration Process of Cheonggye Stream

The discussions on the Cheonggye Stream restoration process are related to the history of Cheonggye Stream and also to the urban development theory and ecology of the contemporary time. The project itself was one of the then Seoul mayor’s election promises. Given that the planning restoration projects were determined by the political decision of the Seoul mayor, the discourses on the restoration process of Cheonggye Stream were also related to the politics. Therefore, the discussions on the restoration process of Cheonggye Stream were conducted in various aspects [13]. However, in this part, we will examine the meaning of Cheonggye Stream in terms of the relationship between nature and humans by looking into the discussions of the history and restoration process.

After Hanyang (the old Seoul) was designated as the capital city of Joseon Dynasty, the Cheonggye Stream was managed as the main river of the capital as Seoul. Originally, it was a wide creek where its tributaries coming from the surrounding valleys converged, and because of the unique climate conditions of Korea with floods in summer and little rain in winter, it had frequent floods during summer and had no flow of water during winter. As the population increased, houses were built around the stream. Flooding in the summer often led to human damages, and the stream was polluted with waste water of the city. For this reason, stone works and dredging were carried out during three periods of Joseon Dynasty: 1411, 1422–1434, and 1760–1773. If we look into the discussion on Cheonggye Stream by the king and bureaucrats in 1444, we can see how they considered Cheonggye Stream in those days. On the issue of the maintenance of Cheonggye Stream, some opinions said that the stream must be kept clean by preventing people from throwing away stinking wastes, whereas the opposing opinions said that the city could be kept clean by letting dirty and smelly things flow away
through the stream. In the end, the latter argument was adopted, and therefore, Cheonggye Stream of the Joseon Dynasty was utilized as the drainage or sewer of the city [14]. Because Cheonggye Stream was very close to the life of people, the life scenes around Cheonggye Stream are meaningful in history. Because the upper stream was relatively clean, it was a place for the lower classes to wash clothes and for children to bathe because the lower stream was dirty and unhygienic with floating wastes and trashes. Cheonggye Stream had a long strip of open space, which was used as the festival place for folk plays. On the lunar fifteenth day of the new year, many people gathered around the bridges over Cheonggye Stream to fly kites and do the stepping-on-bridge play [15]. As the stone walls and stone bridges of Cheonggye Stream often appeared in poems and novels, it was a cultural space with various meanings for the life of the citizens (Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 7. The location of Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley in Seoul.

Figure 8. The stepping-on-bridge play on the lunar fifteenth day of the new year.
Cheonggye Stream had the meaning as a drainage stream and became recognized as a sewer rather than a stream during the period of Japanese colonial rule and modernization. In 1937, some sections of the upper stream were covered with reinforced concrete by the Japanese colonial government, and all sections of the stream were completely covered during the period of 1955–1977 after independence and the Korean War. As South Korea underwent modernization, the population increased more and more, raising concerns about hygiene problems, safety problems, and traffic problems. For these reasons, roads were constructed by covering up Cheonggye Stream for its sole function as a sewer, and then the overpass was built on it, which became a symbol of economic development and modernization. Since then, many small factories of light industry and shops which sold electronic parts, machine tools, and clothing wholesales gathered together under the elevated rods around Cheonggye Stream to establish itself as a specialized commercial area for light industry and wholesale business. The area also had places with cultural diversity in the heart of the city (for instance, Hwanghakdong (second-hand market), but the part of the downtown area became more and more dilapidated until 2003 (Figure 9).

![Figure 9. The waterside of Cheonggye Stream: (a) 1920s, (b) 1980s, and (c) 2018.](image)

The movement to dismantle the overpasses and to remove the concrete covering Cheonggye Stream in order to restore the stream started in the 1990s and came into full swing in the early 2000s. The famous Korean novelist Park Kyung-Ri claimed for the restoration of Cheonggye Stream in an ecological direction for coexistence between nature and humans by saying “Cheonggye Stream with clean water and trees with fish in it” [16]. The environmentalist Noh Soo-Hong also insisted on the restoration of Cheonggye Stream in order to enable Seoul citizens who were far away from nature to feel the importance of environment in everyday life. In particular, people wanted to reduce the energy and time wasted on the highway, which often turned into almost a parking lot because of the heavy traffic jams of vehicles heading to seas and mountains on weekends and holidays [17]. In addition, it was designed to be reconstructed as a historic and cultural space that could show old traditional life styles and cultural plays of the past carried out around the stream by restoring historical objects such as the old bridges and stone walls of Cheonggye Stream. Instead of the development of the dilapidated downtown, they focused on the restoration of a natural environment and cultural space through the restoration of Cheonggye Stream. On the other hand, the Cheonggye Stream Promotion Headquarters, which was the core body of the Cheonggye Stream restoration project, intended to revitalize the stagnant economy of the northern part of Seoul through the regrowth of the surrounding shopping districts by creating an environmentally friendly waterfront space and, furthermore, to reinvigorate itself as an international financial and business hub. In other words, although it pursued multi-values as a historic, cultural, and environmentally friendly restoration, it focused mainly on growth [18]. In contrast, there were scholars who opposed the restoration of Cheonggye Stream. Some people opposed the idea of restoring Cheonggye Stream by pumping water from the Han River and flowing it through the stream, arguing that it was not a genuine restoration of nature but a transformation into an artificial stream and that it was focused on the development of rather than the restoration of nature.

These three different positions can be broadly divided into two kinds from the viewpoint of nature. Those who were for restoration with an emphasis either on environment and culture or on development had an urban planning viewpoint of re-gardening in downtown, while those who
opposed restoration had an idea similar to the ecological culturalism of rewilding to restore the ecological system of Cheonggye Stream as much as possible. However, either the restoration plan of Cheonggye Stream with the focus on environment or the other restoration plan to restore the watershed ecosystem as much as possible had the possibility of being abandoned because it could require a long time to change the water supply and drainage system of the whole watershed of Cheonggye Stream and the urban infrastructure system. Amid all these discussions, the Cheonggye Stream Restoration Headquarters of Seoul City decided to proceed with a restoration plan lacking environmental and historical restoration, to dismantle the overpasses within 2 years and 2 months, and to construct an artificial river (Figure 9).

The restoration project raised concerns and future problems including an excessive energy use to maintain an artificial river, a need for restoration of historical and cultural properties, and a development without the consideration of the context with the surrounding areas. It is worth noting that many people were in favor of the Cheonggye Stream restoration project despite an artificial restoration of nature and visited the stream as a resting place and historic place.

3.2. Discussions on History and Restoration Process of Suseongdong Valley

Suseongdong Valley (also known as Okryudong or Okindong) is one of the scenic spots that people have visited to enjoy beautiful landscape since the early Joseon Dynasty. Hanyang, the capital of Joseon Dynasty, was surrounded by a fortress, and the majority of people lived in a densely populated space within the fortress. Among them, Suseongdong Valley was one of the origins of Cheonggye Stream and was located at the foot of Mt. Bukhan. It was not far from Gyeongbok Palace and was located very close to the center. The name Suseongdong means a valley with a big sound of flowing water, and it was a place where the water flows with a scenic beauty of rocks and trees, which was used as the motive for the works of many writers and painters. Together with Baekundong valley, it was a place where the literary society held meetings (Figures 10–12).

![Figure 10. Suseongdong Valley and Baekundong valley on the map of Hanyang (old Seoul).](image)
Sustainability under rains” [19]: landscape and lampooned the world with his poem titled “Watch waterfall at Suseongdong valley.

Kim Jeong Hui, a famous scholar and potter during the Joseon Dynasty, praised the beauty of the Suseongdong Valley. He wrote that it was a place to escape out of the city center and out of the human world. It shows that the concept of landscape originated from the motivation to communion with nature was recognized as another world outside of the fortress and another world outside of the human world.

The reason for its designation as a cultural heritage is as follows:

The Suseongdong Valley was influenced by the ecological restoration projects of streams in cities since the 2000s. In particular, the Cheonggye Stream restoration project was recognized as a city planning Metropolitan City’s Monument No. 31 in 2010, its historic value as a cultural asset was recognized.

Suseongdong Valley was the background of one of the landscape paintings titled “8 Scenes of Jang Dong (壯洞八景)” by Jeong Seon (Gyeomjae) (Figure 11). Because the valley (Gok) with a beautiful landscape was named with “Gyeong” (scene), it was beautified by literary men and painters. Kim Jeong Hui, a famous scholar and potter during the Joseon Dynasty, praised the beauty of the landscape and lampooned the world with his poem titled “Watch waterfall at Suseongdong valley under rains” [19]:

Go just a few steps into the valley (入谷不數武)
Under the feet, the thundering sound of flowing water (吼雷殷履下)
Mountain fog shrouding and wetting my body in blue color (濕翠似裹身)
Came in the daytime, but it felt like night (晝行復疑夜)
Neat and clean moss spread out as a bed (淨苔當鋪席)
A round pine tree looking like a roof turned upside down (圓松敵覆瓦)
The cascading water sounded like the song of a bird in the old days (曩留昔啁啾)
But today, it sounds like the song of my friend (如今聽大雅)
Feel solemn naturally in front of the upright mind of the mountain (山心正肅然)

Figure 11. Landscape paintings of Suseongdong Valley and Okryudong by Jeong Seon.

Figure 12. Literary Society of the Middle Class: a picture album of the Geumran Group (金蘭契帖, 1857).

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The cascading water sounded like the song of a bird in the old days (曩留昔啁啾)
But today, it sounds like the song of my friend (如今聽大雅)
Feel solemn naturally in front of the upright mind of the mountain (山心正肅然)
I can’t hear the birds singing anymore (鳥雀無暄者)
I wish I could let the world hear this sound (願將此聲歸)
I wish it can enlighten the unscrupulous (砭彼俗而野)
Night clouds suddenly appear in black color (夕雲忽潑墨)
It tells me to draw a paint like writing a poem to you (君詩意寫)

The poem wholly embodies Confucianism’s view of nature, which has developed the principles of nature into the ethical ideal for the human world. In addition, the landscape of Suseongdong Valley was praised in Jonjae’s Anthology Vol. 23 titled “Excursion to Suseongdong (遊水聲洞記)”, which is the collection of the literary works of Park Yoon-Muk (with the pen name of Jonjae (存齋)), one of the great maestros of the “Literature of the Middle Class” of the latter Joseon Dynasty [19]:

Sometimes flying water droplets are wetting clothes (時飛沫濕衣)
Cold chill cuts to the bone (意逼骨)
But my soul becomes refreshed and my mind becomes clear (魂神爽)
The mind becomes comfortable, and the will grows within (情逸意蕩)
I feel a vast-flowing spirit like the Creator (浩然如與造物者)
It seems to be playing in a good place out of this world (遊於物之外也)
Finally, drunken with alcohol, pleasure becomes greater (遂大醉樂極)
So, I untie my hair and sing a long song (散髮長歌)

The author felt being outside the world while communicating with nature. In other words, the communion with nature was recognized as another world outside of the fortress and another world outside of the human world. It shows that the concept of landscape originated from the motivation to escape out of the city center and out of the human world.

However, in 1971, when a rapid modernization and urbanization was under way, the Okin apartment was constructed across Suseongdong valley, and its stream was covered to make roads. In the dismantlement process of the old Okin apartment since 2008, the remains of Suseongdong valley came to light, which promoted the restoration of the valley. As it was designated as the Seoul Metropolitan City’s Monument No. 31 in 2010, its historic value as a cultural asset was recognized. The reason for its designation as a cultural heritage is as follows:

“It is worth preserving it as a ‘traditional scenic spot’ because it still retains the scenery of the past. In addition, given that this area also served as the main stage for the literary activities of the middle class during the latter Joseon Dynasty, it is also meaningful from the perspective of literature history. The stone bridge hanging below the valley also appeared in the painting by Jeong Seon (with the pen name of Gyeomjae), and it is very valuable in the viewpoint of the bridge engineering history because it is the only bridge that has remained in its original location and condition within the old fortress of the capital city and also the longest bridge made of uncut stones. Therefore, it is intended to preserve the old scenery of Suseongdong by designating the entire stream and valley including a stone bridge as one of the Monuments of the Seoul Metropolitan City.” [20].

Later, the restoration project started in 2011 and was completed in 2012. The restoration of Suseongdong Valley was influenced by the ecological restoration projects of streams in cities since the 2000s. In particular, the Cheonggye Stream restoration project was recognized as a city planning project that was most successfully carried out by the citizens. This revival of nature encouraged the restoration of the Suseongdong Valley, which evolved into the revival of its cultural value as an old historic place with scenic areas (Figures 7 and 13).
was installed on the walls next to the banks, which became not a landscape but an artificial event. A water-friendly space in the city center. For example, the Mural of the Royal Procession of King Jeongjo was designed to create a natural and ecological space based on the recovery of nature. Under these three major themes, eight landscapes of Cheonggye Stream were constructed: the 1st landscape, Cheonggye Square (waterfall, eight-stone pond); the 2nd landscape, Gwangtong Bridge; the 3rd landscape, the Mural of the Royal Procession of King Jeongjo; the 4th landscape, cultural space (“Wall of Culture” and “Wall with Color Spectrum”); the 5th landscape, Washing Place; the 6th landscape, Wall of Hope; the 7th landscape, Maintained Piers and Sky Fountain); and the 8th landscape, Wetland with Willow Trees (Figures 14 and 15). These 8 landscapes can be perceived as artificial in that these natural stream landscapes were built on places where they did not exist before, under a monotonous structure of Cheonggye Stream with concrete banks running in parallel. Especially in the 1st construction section, it created an artificial landscape with various facilities of the city under the concept of providing a water-friendly space in the city center. For example, the Mural of the Royal Procession of King Jeongjo was installed on the walls next to the banks, which became not a landscape but an artificial event. However, it is important to divide the landscape of a natural stream into eight landscapes and to borrow the traditional concept of “Gyeong” to describe them. If we select two major landscapes of Cheonggye Stream from the viewpoint of “Gyeong”, one landscape is created by the connection of urban installments like bridges and banks with the open space of the stream, while the other landscape is created by the connection of waterfront installments (stepping stones, steps leading to waterfront, washing places, etc.) with the waterside trails and plants. These two landscapes are the typical ones that people can enjoy in a natural stream and are also cultural and continuous spaces. Inside these two major landscapes, citizens can experience nature for resting and relaxation in the city center. Citizens can appreciate waterside landscapes from bridges or walkways on the banks lined with trees or can take a stroll. In addition, cafes and restaurants were newly moved into the waterside buildings around the promenade. Experiences at the waterfront provide important opportunities for people to enjoy nature in the Cheonggye Stream. People can appreciate the waterside landscapes by taking a stroll along the stream, crossing the stepping bridge, sitting on the steps leading to the waterfront, listening to the sound of rolling water or wind, and watching the fish and birds. In particular, the scene of citizens

Figure 13. Suseongdong Valley: (a) Suseongdong Valley before its restoration (with Okin Apartments) and (b) a bird’s-eye view of the restoration plan.

4. Influence and Sustainability of Korean concept of landscape in Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley Restoration Projects

4.1. Landscapes and Experiences in Landscape Architecture Plans of Restoration Projects

The landscape architecture of Cheonggye Stream was planned and constructed by dividing it into three sections: upstream, midstream, and downstream. The first construction section located in the city center was planned to reveal the history of the city and to create plazas in consideration of cultural activities in the city. The second construction section where small-scale commerce and industry activities were actively conducted was designed as a buffer zone for coexistence between the city and nature. The third construction section with a high concentration of low-rising multi-household houses was designed to create a natural and ecological space based on the recovery of nature. Under these three major themes, eight landscapes of Cheonggye Stream were constructed: the 1st landscape, Cheonggye Square (waterfall, eight-stone pond); the 2nd landscape, Gwangtong Bridge; the 3rd landscape, the Mural of the Royal Procession of King Jeongjo; the 4th landscape, cultural space (“Wall of Culture” and “Wall with Color Spectrum”); the 5th landscape, Washing Place; the 6th landscape, Wall of Hope; the 7th landscape, Maintained Piers and Sky Fountain); and the 8th landscape, Wetland with Willow Trees (Figures 14 and 15). These 8 landscapes can be perceived as artificial in that these natural stream landscapes were built on places where they did not exist before, under a monotonous structure of Cheonggye Stream with concrete banks running in parallel. Especially in the 1st construction section, it created an artificial landscape with various facilities of the city under the concept of providing a water-friendly space in the city center. For example, the Mural of the Royal Procession of King Jeongjo was installed on the walls next to the banks, which became not a landscape but an artificial event. However, it is important to divide the landscape of a natural stream into eight landscapes and to borrow the traditional concept of “Gyeong” to describe them. If we select two major landscapes of Cheonggye Stream from the viewpoint of “Gyeong”, one landscape is created by the connection of urban installments like bridges and banks with the open space of the stream, while the other landscape is created by the connection of waterfront installments (stepping stones, steps leading to waterfront, washing places, etc.) with the waterside trails and plants. These two landscapes are the typical ones that people can enjoy in a natural stream and are also cultural and continuous spaces. Inside these two major landscapes, citizens can experience nature for resting and relaxation in the city center. Citizens can appreciate waterside landscapes from bridges or walkways on the banks lined with trees or can take a stroll. In addition, cafes and restaurants were newly moved into the waterside buildings around the promenade. Experiences at the waterfront provide important opportunities for people to enjoy nature in the Cheonggye Stream. People can appreciate the waterside landscapes by taking a stroll along the stream, crossing the stepping bridge, sitting on the steps leading to the waterfront, listening to the sound of rolling water or wind, and watching the fish and birds. In particular, the scene of citizens
sitting with their feet soaked into the water is similar to the scene of the scholars of Joseon Dynasty in the “Feet-Washing Painting” (Figure 16). Like the will of the scholars of the Joseon Dynasty who left the chaotic world and tried to live in nature according to the law of nature, it can provide a time that people can experience nature in the city center where nature seems so far away from it.

Figure 14. The restored Cheonggye Stream.

Figure 15. Eight landscapes of Cheonggye Stream: (a) 1st landscape, Cheonggye Square; (b) 2nd, Gwangtong Bridge; (c) 3rd, Mural of the Royal Procession of King Jeongjo; (d) 4th, Wall of Culture and Wall with Color Spectrum; (e) 5th, Washing Place; (f) 6th, Wall of Hope; (g) 7th, Maintained Piers and Sky Fountain; and (h) 8th, Wetland with Willow Trees.

The restoration plan of Suseongdong Valley was to restore the valley below the mountain into the original condition based on the passed-down paintings: Suseongdong Valley and Okryudong Valley among Eight Scenes of Jang Dong by Jeong Seon (Gyeomjae). It was to find out the original rock formation of the picturesque valley at the foot of Mt. Bukhan. Therefore, it exposed the rock mass in the mountain torrent area as much as possible to restore the natural beauty, and the traditional trees and landscaping plans were used to restore the traditional natural landscapes. It minimized the use of artificial installments including one pavilion built of stone and wood, a wooden bridge, and a wooden deck. In terms of trees, the acacia tree that was introduced during the modern time was removed, and pine, oak, and fir trees as well as and mountain azalea were planted instead (Figure 17).
The act of composing poems and painting landscapes on a pavilion overlooking the valley while enjoying the scenic beauty was a traditional way of appreciating nature. It is close to the city center but offers an escape from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The restoration of Suseongdong Valley was to revive these traditional landscapes and the natural sensibility. Mountain trekkers walk along the path beneath a picturesque mountain watching the restored rocks and sitting on rocks or the pavilion to enjoy the nature such as mountains, valleys, water, wind, trees, flowers, birds, and insects (Figure 18). The act of composing poems and painting landscapes on a pavilion overlooking the valley while enjoying the scenic beauty was a traditional way of appreciating nature. It is close to the city center but offers an escape from the hustle and bustle of the city.
4.2. Cultural Function and Sustainability of Landscape Concept in Restoration Projects

We can confirm the influence and sustainability of a historical and cultural concept of landscape through the Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong Valley restoration projects.

First, the appreciation of natural beauty is the most fundamental motive of both projects. They restored the places where citizens could appreciate nature in the city center or in a place close to the city center. The old streams were restored into the original conditions and into the places that could improve the wellbeing of citizens. We reason that the concept of landscape, the driving force of these projects, was the citizens’ desire to have a place for resting and relaxation to appreciate nature in a place with insufficient green space like the city center of Seoul. Since more than 76% of the green area of all the parks in Seoul was concentrated in the outskirts of the city, the creation of green space through the restoration of streams received much support from the citizens in the situation where the green areas were not enough within the life zone [13].

Second, both projects are the restoration of historical heritage in that they are the revitalization of the past. The discussion on the Cheonggye Stream restoration project was started by environmental scientists and novelists. Their discussion started with a nostalgia for the life of people in the waterfront landscape before being covered with concrete and overpasses. It is the restoration into a historic and cultural space such as life scenes and cultural plays around Cheonggye Stream and the restoration of a waterfront landscape as an intangible cultural heritage. The restoration projects were to plant new nature with a new landscape planning different from the past landscape projects. In the case of Suseongdong Valley, it can be said as the restoration of the cultural heritage in that it restored a place famous since the old days as a scenic spot and the landscape that has been passed down through poems and paintings. Once again, this is influenced by Korea’s long-stranding Pungryu (風流), Taoism,
and Confucianism cultures to appreciate nature and by their landscapes and garden culture that has been passed down from the past.

Third, both projects have an influence on the sustainable development of the surrounding areas. The Cheonggye Stream project was originally planned to create a water-friendly space and to induce urban redevelopment in the surrounding areas within the city center. Although such a development-oriented concept can be criticized for using nature like Cheonggye Stream as a means, the surrounding areas which were dilapidated slums before the restoration are now lined with new buildings and shops, shaping up the identity as a waterfront place. However, it brings with it a challenge of striking balance with the existing area and community. The restoration of Suseongdong Valley produces synergy effects as a historical and cultural place, together with the historical and cultural heritage of Gyeongbok Palace and with the Seochon Village located between Gyeongbok Palace and Suseongdong Valley. Gyeongbokgung Palace is the biggest palace during the Joseon Dynasty and a major sightseeing spot in Seoul. As Seochon Village and its alleys are lined with small restaurants and craft shops, the whole area is a sightseeing spot. Suseongdong Valley is a starting point for trekking to Mt. Bukhan. Therefore, the restoration project of Suseongdong Valley is being considered as the sustainability of a local identity connecting history, culture, and nature.

5. Conclusions

The Cheonggye Stream and Suseongdong valley restoration projects are the representative examples of South Korea’s river restoration projects carried out since the 2000s. These two streams were covered with overpasses and apartments during the 1960s and 1970s in the middle of the full-fledged urbanization and modernization of South Korea. Now they are restored into green spaces to promote natural ecosystems and to provide places for citizens to rest and relax. The Cheonggye Stream project was carried out using the concept of the re-gardening of nature. This concept considers nature as a means for urban development. Even though this project used an artificial water flowing system, it satisfied the citizens’ desire to appreciate nature in the city center. Being encouraged by such a stream restoration trend, the Suseongdong Valley restoration project was carried out. This project was not only the restoration of green space but also the restoration of an old famous scenic spot as a cultural heritage. These two restoration projects are the representative examples of breaking away from the modern function-oriented mindset to use urban streams as sewers and the beginning of examples which consider nature as an ecosystem and as a historic and cultural heritage that enhances the quality of life. These projects involve human’s desires to enjoy suburban nature within the city center, which has evolved with time, as well as a global and contemporary trend toward the protection and management of historic gardens and landscapes. The projects were also influenced by local ideas and culture regarding nature. From the Pungryu (風流) spirit that emphasized inspiration within nature to those old poems and paintings named with “Gyeong (景)” and “Gok (曲)” which embodied natural beauty and also to gardens, the Korean culture to enjoy nature was recreated into the landscape and waterfront facilities designed for the restoration project of Cheonggye Stream in order to provide an opportunity to enjoy nature. Furthermore, the Suseongdong Valley restoration project is the historical and cultural transmission of Korean landscape in that it was restored based on the landscape depicted in the poems and paintings by old sages. In the end, the historical and cultural concept of landscape as well as a common and specific background of a society were reflected in the restoration projects of both streams. These historical and cultural backgrounds are taken into consideration for sustainable development with harmony between cities and nature and between nature and culture.

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References


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