Among the several debates that attempt to characterise urban change in Tokyo and Japan’s other largest cities, until quite recently gentrification has only made sporadic appearances. In this presentation, I ask why that should be and attempt to define gentrification by placing it within a comparative regional perspective. Gentrification is widely seen to be a global phenomenon today. In a recent contribution, I identified several different types of gentrification in East Asian cities, including gentrification based on heritage promotion, inner-city clearance programmes and gentrification through the construction of satellite cities on the urban edge. Despite a vertiginous degree and pace of change in Tokyo, gentrification processes in this city do not appear entirely to conform to these categories. Here I will identify locations within Tokyo that have experienced gentrification and suggest how they might best be conceptualised in relation to the broader categories I have defined for the East Asian region. This exercise in comparative urbanism at a regional level provides a conceptual berth for discussion of gentrification in Japanese cities. At the same time, it enriches our sense of the applicability of gentrification as a concept and term and our understanding of the forms of gentrification that are present in the world today.

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