

## Central Hong Kong: Urbanism in the Heart of a Laissez-Faire City

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### Abstract

Hong Kong was originally founded by the British as a treaty port, and it was under this commercial context that the urban environment of Hong Kong was created and took form. In its one and a half centuries of colonial history, Hong Kong was developed as a port-city whose primary purpose was commerce. The rules and strategies that shaped colonial Hong Kong's urban environment were those of a laissez-faire economy in which business decisions and market forces ruled. The lack of predictable order and planning conventions in Hong Kong's laissez-faire urban environment is exactly what makes the city a most fascinating place. This paper details the physical and socio-economic factors that have created Hong Kong's phenomenally high-rise, high-density urban situation and examines the commercial forces that generated the kind of urban environment that is unique to Hong Kong.

### The Making of Hong Kong's Urban Environment

Hong Kong has a population of some six million people<sup>1</sup> and a total land area of just slightly over a thousand square kilometres.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the bulk of the population is concentrated within just two locations in the territory--on the southern triangular tip of Kowloon Peninsula and on a thin coastal strip on the northern side of Hong Kong Island. These are Hong Kong's main urban areas, which constitute only about one-tenth of the territory, and yet, they are where about three-quarters of Hong Kong's total population lives and works everyday.<sup>3</sup> This concentration of population in urban Hong Kong produces a staggering average density of more than 50,000 persons per square kilometre in many parts of the territory's urban areas,<sup>4</sup> and districts such as Wanchai, Mongkok and Yau Ma Tei have more than twice that population density,<sup>5</sup> ranking these places among the most densely populated places in the world.

One primary factor that gives rise to Hong Kong's high-rise, high-density urban situation is the topographic nature of Hong Kong. The terrain found in large parts of the territory is of such height and steepness--between 100 m to about 1,000 m above sea-level with gradients of more than 1:3--that it is considered technically difficult and economically unviable to carry out large scale urban development on such land.<sup>6</sup> Hence, Hong Kong's urban development is inherently restricted by the territory's topographic nature and confined to the small tracts of relatively flat land found in Kowloon Peninsula and northern Hong Kong Island. Expansion of these urban land areas is possible only by reclaiming more land along the coast or by forming buildable sites on the steep hill-slopes, both of which methods are costly. Given the limited supply of buildable land and a growing population, the only viable solution is to pack more people into smaller units and taller buildings, which thereby increases the density and height of the urban environment.<sup>7</sup>

The development of Hong Kong's high-rise, high-density urban environment began to gain momentum soon after the Second World War, when the population of Hong Kong increased rapidly at a steady rate of about a million people every decade. The following table illustrates Hong Kong's pre- and post-war population figures and growth rate in the 20th century.

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Year	Population <sup>8</sup>	Approx. increment from previous figure
1901	300,600	--
1911	456,739	0.2 million
1921	625,166	0.2 million
1931	840,473	0.2 million
1941	1,639,337	0.8 million
Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong (1941-1945)		
1946	1,550,000	1.1 million
1956	2,614,600	1.1 million
1966	3,708,920	0.7 million
1976	4,402,990	1.0 million
1989	5,395,997	0.8 million
1996	6,207,336	--

In 1946, just a year after the end of World War II, the population of Hong Kong stood at only one-and-a-half million. However, constant political and social turmoil in Mainland China from the 1940s to the 1970s brought successive waves of legal and illegal Mainland-Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong. During these times, the colonial Hong Kong Government adopted a humanitarian policy towards illegal immigrants from Mainland China. These illegal immigrants were allowed to settle in Hong Kong if they succeeded in reaching the urban areas without being caught by the border patrol or the police. However, the social and economic disruptions brought about by the constant influx of Chinese immigrants into the territory finally forced the authorities to abandon this policy in October 1980.<sup>9</sup>

By the early 1970s, the economy of Hong Kong began to grow steadily, and consequently, there was a great need to build offices, factories and other commercial buildings. At the same time, a fast growing population of four million people also urgently needed housing and other social facilities. This great demand exerted pressure on Hong Kong's very limited supply of buildable land in the urban areas, and soon set in motion the phenomenal escalation of real estate prices in the urban areas. By the late 1970s, there was simply no more usable land in the urban areas for large-scale residential development. Meanwhile, the demand for commercial development in the Central District soon edged out the less profitable residential developments. Such market forces prompted the development of mega-housing estates in satellite towns, called New Towns, in the rural New Territories to house the bulk of the population and free lands in the urban areas for commercial development. The urban areas thus gradually became the predominantly commercial high-rise environment that defines Hong Kong today.

### **Of Streets and Squares: Commercialism as the Generating Force for Urban Spaces**

Representing the very heart of Hong Kong's urban environment is the Central District on the Hong Kong Island. In 1841, the British picked this location as the very first development for a city. Although a place now filled with some of the world's most modern high-rise commercial buildings, the formal aspect of Central has the organic quality of a European medieval town. Indeed, the present urban form of Central District is the result of a cumulative growth process over time in the manner of such a town, rather than an artificial derivation of modern city planning.

The urban fabric of Central has been formed by successive stages of reclamation throughout its colonial history. Central was originally a stretch of steep rocky shoreline with hardly any flat land on which to develop buildings. Despite such a limitation, the locality was

chosen as the site for the "City of Victoria" (the predecessor of Central District) mainly because of its proximity to a sheltered deep-water harbour (the present Victoria Harbour), which was critical for Hong Kong's development as a trading port.

Reclamation was necessary for property development, and three major reclamations were carried out in the 1850s, 1890s and 1950s along the shore of Central. The original coastline roughly conformed to Queens Road Central, the first major road in the colonial city centre created from the first reclamation. The second reclamation that began in 1890 created the new coastal roads of Chater Road and Des Voeux Road Central, which were respectively named after businessman Paul Catchik Chater (who initiated and funded a large part of the reclamation) and the then-governor Sir William Des Voeux. The post-war reclamation of 1954 created a new coastal road--Connaught Road, named after the Duke of Connaught.<sup>10</sup> Hence, every new reclamation created a new coastal traffic path and set inland the previous one. Today, all these roads remain as Central's major traffic arteries and they are the main roads from which branches the entire street pattern in Central. These important urban traffic arteries were not created out of urban-planning considerations, but were incidental by-products of the economic necessity to create more reclaimed land for commercial development.

On a pedestrian level, there exists a web-like system of pathway in Central that is a product of more modern times. The interesting thing about this pathway is that it is the complete inversion of the conventional concept of "path": it is partly indoors; it runs through buildings instead of skirting around them; it is elevated rather than on the ground level. This pedestrian pathway is essentially made up of a network of elevated covered walkways connected to the internal circulation system of buildings owned by a common developer (Hongkong Land, one of the territory's largest and most well-established property developers).

This elevated pedestrian pathway is linked to a number of public facilities, such as the General Post Office, the Star Ferry, the Central Bus Terminus, and the Macau Ferry Terminal. This circulation system also takes pedestrians directly into commercial buildings that contain a comprehensive range of facilities, such as shops, restaurants, banks, offices, and hotels. Rather than being a creation of thoughtful urban planning, this convenient pedestrian pathway is a brilliant commercial strategy to inter-connect commercial facilities housed in scattered buildings so that consumers can get to them more readily.

The notion that commercial considerations are the prime driving force in the shaping of Central can also be seen in its open public spaces, or rather, the lack of them. As the British Empire set up its many colonies in Asia during the 19th century, the centres of their colonial cities were invariably planned with such spatial elements as the parade ground and the cricket field. The former space served the political purpose of showing the presence of military forces, whereas the latter catered to a quintessential British sports activity. Such spaces can be found in many former British colonial cities, such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and those in India, and their original functions as parade grounds and sports fields have continued in present days.

As the centre of a British colonial city, Central did at one time possess both a parade ground and cricket field. After the Second World War, the rising value of real estate and the mounting commercial pressure to develop these last remaining pieces of open urban land in Central soon rendered these symbols of a British presence expensively impractical. Thus, the Murray Barrack Parade Ground became the site of a much-needed multi-storey carpark and the Hilton Hotel (the latter was demolished in 1995 to make way for the 62-storey office building, the Cheung Kong Centre). The Cricket Ground was rendered so unsuitable for the sport by surrounding high-rise buildings and busy trafficways that it was converted into Chater Garden, an "urban green lung" and a thoroughfare for people emerging from the underground subway station. However, even this last pocket of open space in Hong Kong's

urban heart may soon make way for the extension of the adjacent Legislative Council Building if such a proposal is eventually confirmed.

Of course, Central still has Statue Square, which is the district's one and only true public square and a popular urban node for the local Filipino community on Sundays. The peculiar aspect of Statue Square is that this supposed "public" square is actually a private piece of property owned by the largest and most important commercial bank in the territory—Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC). In a 1901 agreement with the Hong Kong Government, the bank willingly allowed the land to be reserved for permanent public use as a civic square.<sup>11</sup> There is, in fact, a commercial motive for doing so. The open space in front of the bank allows the territory's top bank, which, significantly, is a bank founded by the British, to command a highly visible presence in a densely built urban environment. Hence, the true purpose of Statue Square is to lend visibility to an important bank building, while its function as a public urban space is only incidental to this commercial strategy.

History repeated itself in the early 1980s when the bank was redeveloped on the same site. The entire ground-level of the Lord Norman Foster-designed building is designated as a sheltered plaza open at all times to the public. The plaza also provides a continuous spatial link between the lush green behind the building and Statue Square in front of it. This sensitive and considerate urban design element was not part of the original design, but was subsequently incorporated for commercial reasons. In the current planning legislature, a development that provides spaces for public use may be compensated with bonus plot ratio. In the case of the HSBC redevelopment, it gained from the plaza an additional 20% increase in plot ratio, or about 18,600 m<sup>2</sup> of Gross Floor Area. It was undoubtedly an extremely sound business decision for the bank to make such a spatial donation for public benefit.

### **Conclusion**

The urban nature of Hong Kong is an interesting topic that deserves deeper analysis. Hong Kong was created from the conflict of commercial interests between Britain and China in the 19th century. It was founded as a place of commerce, and it has thrived and existed into the post-colonial era for the same purpose for which it was created. As a bona fide commercial city, Hong Kong's Central District is totally lacking in the socio-political aspirations that have created the long boulevards and grand plazas found in such political urban centres as Paris, Washington D.C. and Beijing. Although Hong Kong's urban environment may not be picturesque, it possesses the spontaneity and surprises of a *laissez-faire* society in which everything is strictly driven and shaped by unpredictable market forces. The urban environment of Hong Kong is a direct expression of the commercial resourcefulness and opportunities that have made Hong Kong such a successful commercial city. Compared to a city centre as meticulously planned and carefully regulated as Singapore, Hong Kong's Central District shows that an urban environment formed by the forces of free enterprise is definitely no less appealing or inefficient, but probably far more interesting and exciting. As Lord Norman Foster once said, "[Hong Kong] is certainly the most exciting place I've ever been. I've never known a place which could make Manhattan look like a kind of quiet Sunday afternoon."<sup>12</sup>

## Megacities 2000 Conference

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to the 1996 census, the population of Hong Kong was about 6.3 million (Census and Statistics Department).

<sup>2</sup> Due to successive reclamation carried out after the British possession of the territory in 1841, the total land area of Hong Kong has since been increasing. In the mid-1960s, the territory covered a total area of 1,034 km<sup>2</sup> (Lo 1976, 226), but by the mid-1980s, the figure rose to 1,069 km<sup>2</sup> (Chiu and So 1986, 35); in 1995, 1,092 km<sup>2</sup> (Census and Statistics Department 1995, 281). The latest reclamation works carried out in Central and Wanchai, Chek Lap Kok and West Kowloon in the late 1990s have added some 448 hectares (or 4.48 km<sup>2</sup>) of land to the territory (Information Services Department 1995, 200-201). In the near future, when the water adjacent to the Kai Tak airport runway in Kowloon Bay is reclaimed, the territory will gain another 300 hectares (or 3 km<sup>2</sup>) of reclaimed land (Census and Statistics Department 1995, 201).

<sup>3</sup> The combined area of urban districts in Hong Kong Island (excluding the semi-urban Southern District) and Kowloon (including districts in New Kowloon) is 87.71 km<sup>2</sup> (Census and Statistic Department 1995, 280). According to figures obtained from Hong Kong's Planning Department (based on the 1991 census), the same urban districts (classified as the "Metro" area) support over 70% of Hong Kong's population; this percentage figure, however, does not take into account the number of residents in the New Territories who travel to work (or to shop) in the urban districts everyday.

<sup>4</sup> Lo 1992, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Chiu and So 1986, 150.

<sup>6</sup> Areas of Hong Kong over 100 m above sea-level are illustrated in Lo 1992, fig. 1.1; for areas of Hong Kong exceeding 1:3 gradient, see: Chiu and So 1986, fig. 11.1 and Lo 1976, fig. 22.1.

<sup>7</sup> Lo 1976, 224.

<sup>8</sup> Main source of figures: Lo 1992, table 2.1; the 1941 population figure was based on an unofficial census by Air Raid Wardens; other post-war figures represent mid-year population; the 1996 figure is quoted from the Government Information Services website.

<sup>9</sup> Lo 1992, 27.

<sup>10</sup> See: Huang 1992, 37; Cameron 1979, 8, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Lambot and Chambers 1986, 90.

<sup>12</sup> Norman Foster, Frontiers of Design Lecture, September 1979, quoted in Foster Associates 1989, 114.

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Title: Trial for New Community Planning Approach -Machizukuri -Groundwork in Japan  
Collaboration Between Government and Residents for Town Revitalization

Author: Mr. Yoshinori Fujimoto

- (1) Trial for a new community planning approach -Machizukuri -Groundwork in Japan
  - (2) Collaboration between government and residents for town revitalization
  - (3) Machizukuri, groundwork, community planning
  - (4) Abstract
- 

How can we restore historic districts beyond the bounds of city planning?

Japan has been experiencing a downturn in economic development since the beginning of the 1990's, which has brought urban revitalization to an impasse. As a result, local governments and citizens are trying to find a new way for everyone to participate in the revitalization process.

The movement toward community planning by citizens themselves is called Groundwork (or "machizukuri" in Japanese) and has been underway since the 1960's when citizens began addressing environmental hazards and unilaterally decided official plans.

Groundwork is evolving from the original concept that only certain people could participate to the idea that everyone can and should take part. This change in philosophy occurred as citizens became increasingly aware of their role in managing a democratic town.

This is a feasibility survey supported by National Land Agency. It takes place in Toyokawa City, which is located in central Japan. The objective is to overcome past obstacles, such as a failed road planning project and unsuccessful measures to revitalize the downtown commercial district, by considering plans for development based on community ties.

Based on a proposal made by a housewife in the city, the proposer, citizens, storekeepers, city officers, prefectural planners, and NLA officials met together to discuss ways to revitalize Ushikubo, one of the oldest districts in the city.

They decided upon a plan to organize a new community based on their shared feelings of fondness for the town, not on blood relations or community ties.

However, after the official survey ended in March, 1999, the proposer and citizens succeeded in creating an original festival for exhibiting textile artworks and old prints with the assistance of volunteer artists and collectors at an old shrine two months later.

It was a memorable first step towards the next century.

(end)

Body of the paper

## 1. Introduction

The idea of town management that emphasizes participation of residents is being put into operation in earnest throughout Japan through community activities known as "machizukuri (groundwork)". We need to consider what is necessary from now on to bring individuals' wishes for the community to life and for creating administrative systems that can be continued as responsible social activities.

### (1) "Machizukuri"

"Machizukuri" is one of the most important key words when discussing residents' democracy and autonomy in the community in contemporary Japan.

The term "machizukuri" is new to the Japanese vocabulary and evolved after WWII. The Japanese characters consist of "town" and "creation", meaning organizing and planning.

The term "machizukuri" evolved as a result of neighborhood action. It is also used to refer to project planning by the country or municipalities today, but it also embraces city development, education, welfare, and the like, thereby making it difficult to define clearly.

Machizukuri evolved from the anti-pollution campaigns and neighborhood actions in the 1960s which opposed unilateral planning by the administration without respecting the residents' requests. This type of opposition movement regarding pollution subsided because its source was shifted or eliminated by fulfillment of countermeasures by corporations or changing industrial structure and implementation of public solutions. With regard to city planning, reflection of residents' wills by the administration became the norm to a certain degree.

From the 1970s to the 1980s, city development destroyed historic architecture and natural environments to such an extent that machizukuri expanded nationwide with the aim of preservation. Some municipalities even began to recognize publicly machizukuri activities and provide financial aid.

In the 1990s, controversy arose over social recognition of machizukuri activities. Learning from experience garnered from the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995, the importance of volunteer activities and participation of residents in the community became nationwide topics of which machizukuri was typical.

### (2) Reality of local cities

Restoration of central areas in local cities is now actively discussed as the new frontier of city development in Japan. This was caused by the centralization of urban functions in Tokyo which became definitive during booming economic times, the steep rise and fall of the price of commercial land nationwide caused by speculation, the shifting of population to suburbs, and the ageing of society.

The reality of lower birthrates and motorization destroyed the vision of a future rosy with population increases and economic growth caused by suburban development. More and more cities will not be able to sustain the central areas which embody their history and culture.

As a result, deterioration of the dwelling environment, such as uncertain business conditions and an

increased amount of land that is rarely, if ever, used, is in progress in these old city areas.

Conventional Japanese administrations used to emphasize ways to implement pre-planned development projects rather than creating new projects based on regional historical context and residents' suggestions. Moreover, participation of residents in the process of forming agreements remained only formal.

However, as activities for restoring cities by utilizing historic resources and establishing machizukuri companies by residents themselves succeeded in some regions, the government has proposed a new assistance scheme based on the central area activation law approved and enacted in 1998 as a step to restoring central areas of cities.

However, this approach is accompanied by the following three fundamental problems.

- \* Lack of human resources with experience in implementing projects.
- \* Opportunities for participation and responsibility of residents are not clear.
- \* Mainly focuses on implementation of public works rather than realization of residents' requests.

These problems have arisen because the importance of government and residents coming together to make plans on an equal basis from the start, and utilizing the ability of individual residents with ideas in order to realize independent participation of residents, have not been fully understood.

## 2. Cases - National Land Agency "Research for Realization of Competition for Urban Development Ideas"

As mentioned earlier, there are various approaches to machizukuri and a very large number of cases have been already implemented. In this paper, I would like to report an experience I had while participating in a project conducted by the research institution to which I belong. It is an experimental project entitled "Research for realization of competition for urban development ideas" in which residents and government grapple with machizukuri together based on ideas from residents. This is basically an attempt to take a fresh approach toward new development projects.

### (1) Scheme of the Project

The National Land Agency, which is involved with revitalizing cities and towns, awards commendations to winning ideas submitted to machizukuri contests held by local authorities. This survey is being conducted as a feasibility study into ways to realize the best ideas from these contests. The project started in 1988 and this was the tenth commendation. The National Land Agency entrusted the Research Institute for Regional Planning and Development to be in charge of the research.

For this survey, the following fundamental policies emphasize collaboration during the examination process.

- \* To examine future policies according to residents' awareness of issues.
- \* To discuss freely issues regardless of attributes such as administrative body or residents.
- \* Not to aim to implement a specific administrative project.

The survey was conducted from November 1998 to March 1999 for the Ushikubo region of

Toyokawa-city in Aichi Prefecture, Japan. One of the papers that received a commendation from the National Land Agency in 1997 was chosen as the topic of discussion. The paper was submitted by a housewife living in Toyokawa City and proposed increasing tourism by accentuating neighborhoods with charming historic architecture and by publicizing the region's traditional and industrial culture.

## (2) Characteristics of the Region

Toyokawa City, Aichi Prefecture is located in the center of Japan on the Pacific coast and has a population of 114,380 (according to the 1995 national census). The majestic Toyo River flows through the eastern part of the city of which 25% is located at the foot of a mountain, 50% is diluvial upland, and 25% is alluvial plain. It is an industrial city boasting an industrial shipping amount of 815.95 billion yen.

The Ushikubo region has a population of approximately 7,717 and traces its history back to the Medieval Period when it was first built on the river terrace close to the river's mouth (the 1995 national census also includes surrounding areas). It was constructed as a castle town integrating old shrines in the era when warring generals defended their territories in Japan in the 16th century. Later, in the feudal age, the castle disappeared, but the city continued to prosper as a center of goods distribution for peripheral agricultural villages along the highway.

In more modern times, it thrived through the growth of silkworm raising, furniture manufacturing, and construction of the railroad. However, against the backdrop of WWII, it was forcefully integrated into Toyokawa City by the military for operation of naval arsenals.

After the war, it suffered from a decline in life-related industries caused by motorization. Its low development potential eliminated it as a candidate for machizukuri, many stores left the city or closed, and the region practically lost its centrality. Even today, population decreases and aging are currently in progress and its commercial functions are dramatically declining.

Ruins of the castle, a number of temples and shrines, traditional Japanese houses, and modern architecture in the region attest to its history. Moreover, traditional festivals and resident organizations have continued to exist since the castle was first built.

The administration has often come out with restoration measures to cope with the decline of the region and people who are engaged in local business also made recovery plans by themselves while being subsidized. Plans to update the region by widening roads to cope with motorization and to restore the commercial district by developing commercial facilities intensively have been examined. However, such plans were not realized because landowners did not agree to them and future prospects remain poor.

The people who are engaged in local business operate voluntary events. However, it is doubtful whether they will continue or not in the future due to the ageing of the leaders.

## (3) Development of the Survey

The survey was conducted mainly by the examination committee. The proposer, local business people, administrators from Toyokawa City, Aichi Prefecture, and the National Land Agency, and

planners (members of the Research Institute for Regional Planning and Development) attended three committee meetings. The National Land Agency selected members of the committee initially; however, it was operated as an open examination committee where residents could freely attend for the second meeting and later.

For the first meeting, a survey was made of the Ushikubo region during a meeting held in the city hall with the two-fold aim of promoting exchange between members and promoting understanding of the proposal. Thereafter, local businesspeople administered questionnaires inquiring as to residents' development requests. As a result, it became clear that residents hoped to improve traffic safety and convenience in their daily lives, which have been considered pending problems, rather than to strengthen development and sightseeing elements, although they do wish for recovery of the region's prosperity. A hearing was conducted with a group of ten housewives from both inside and outside the region where development problems and activation projects were re-examined. As a result, several concrete ideas were given for urban area recovery, such as to begin recycling old Kimonos (Japanese traditional dress) due to the many Kimono shops in the region, to paint store shutters, and to utilize the vacant post office building as a headquarters for machizukuri activities.

The second examination committee meeting was held at a civic facility where results of the questionnaire were reported and problems of the region and feasibility of the proposal were examined. However, local businesspeople pointed out that it would be very difficult to realize the initial proposal because they themselves had made efforts for recovery and suffered a setback. Then, three concrete machizukuri projects from neighboring regions were studied in order to review the feasibility of the project. The proposer and people who attended the group hearing did a case study of one of these projects.

The third examination committee meeting was held at a shrine which is a symbol of the region. The proposer and residents interested in the research initially reported the results of the case study and opinions were exchanged to make the proposal concrete. In this meeting, it was discussed to hold a new event that had been studied during the group hearing and by observation. Based on the original proposal and with the added feature of utilizing local resources, the event would promote the use of Kimono in modern life. Members then visited a machizukuri partnership project in a neighboring city run by a corporation funded by the administration and citizens.

This six-month activity forged new connections between people consisting mainly of proposers and those who are fans of the region, but not only the local residents or their relatives.

#### (4) Voluntary Implementation of Event

The official research activity accomplished its initial purpose and ended in March as one of the National Land Agency's projects. On the other hand, the proposer and citizens who participated in the survey implemented town creation activities themselves, aiming to hold events in order to embody the proposal.

A committee of event promoters consisting of Kimono designers, advertisement collectors, and the like was formed thanks to the efforts of the proposer. Furthermore, the proposer asked for

cooperation from regional organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Japan Junior Chamber, shopping district promotion association, and local women's groups. These organizations did not assist them under their original name, but as a new assisting organization consisting of their volunteers and local residents.

The plan of the event was devised blending the ideas of participants based on the image of the proposer in a short period of time with "Recycle old Kimonos" as its theme.

The event was held in May. The shrine that was the venue for the examination committee meeting was selected as the event site. Designers exhibited their works, collectors displayed their collections, lessons on Kimono design were given, and a Kimono market, Koto performance, and tea ceremony were held. Many visitors consisting mainly of regional residents attended the event.

### 3. Analysis of Factors for Success

The proposal which had been just a dream of a housewife half a year before succeeded this time because the proposer and volunteers made efforts and regional people who warmly watched over this challenge had understanding of the proposal. The following five points can be considered as the factors which led everyone's efforts to be successful.

#### (1) Formation of Assistance Organization by Regional Residents

The proposer was initially planning to implement the event by a group consisting of people living outside of the region with the proposer as the leader. However, the organization voluntarily assisting the event was formed when the plans for the event were released in the region by requesting cooperation from regional groups and the plan of the event was materialized while the opinion of the organization was being integrated. The people who attended the event assisting organization were the middle-aged generation living in the region that had a sense of impending crisis in the decline of the region, but could not find the concrete aim of the action.

#### (2) Sympathy with Free Idea Proposed Mainly by a Housewife

With regard to machizukuri, the local government focused on regions other than Ushikubo. The region was being bolstered based on the central area activation law. On the other hand, the road widening project was actually abandoned in the Ushikubo region and residents were unable to see the town grow into a city. In this situation, many sympathized with the idea to hold the event for residents in order to utilize resources of the region proposed by a woman without any support.

#### (3) Continuation of Tension Because of Short Preparation Period

The aim could be accomplished in a very short period of time because the period was almost the limit to sustain tension when looking at it from the reverse direction. The proposer struggled under various pressures. Moreover, local residents who did not have enough time to deliberate on various things could cooperate with the proposer to their full extent to realize the event.

#### (4) Utilization of Communication Tools

There were not any opportunities for persons concerned to meet and examine various things at the stage of preparation due to time limitations until immediately before the event. The group consisting of the proposer and event promoters and the group consisting of supporters of local residents had to make concrete adjustments separately. In order to supplement communication, information exchange was successfully conducted via the Internet.

#### (5) Abundant Regional Resources and Timely Theme Selection

The theme focusing on living culture which had not been taken up largely in the recovery plan so far was selected by the proposer. Japan also has a tradition of making quilts from old Kimonos known as "Kofu (old cloth)" which attracts many women today. Moreover, residents have higher interest in recycling. The possibility of the region to be a source of Kofu culture was generated because there are many Kimono shops in the region and artists were involved.

#### 4. Problems

The case was described from my own range of experience as a planner. I experienced the following three problems in proceeding with machizukuri activities.

##### (1) Can a proposal made outside of the region be settled in the region?

In conventional machizukuri, people who are intensely interested in the development of the region, in other words, people who live or operate businesses there, often play important roles. That is because emotional attachment to a region is an important motivational factor for machizukuri.

In this case, the proposer was a citizen of Toyokawa, but lived outside the region. The process of enhancing machizukuri activities by realizing feasible projects proposed by a person who does not live in the region, but is a mere "fan of the region", may differ from that performed only by residents of the region because an outsider who does not have a direct interest in the region can freely offer his or her opinion or proposal and take action. However, that kind of freedom may lead to instability.

There are many cases in which the administration, Chamber of Commerce, and shopping district association make up for this drawback. An interesting subject is how an activity which does not receive organizational support will form an independent organization to develop it.

##### (2) Can they start to deal with the life-related problems of the residents?

According to the data in 1995, the proportion of people aged 65 years and older in Toyokawa City is 12.5%, which is a steady increase from 10.5% in 1990. It is clear that the population is ageing. Moreover, as for the population increase rate from 1990 to 1995, taking the population in 1990 as 100 points, a 6 point decrease was indicated for the Ushikubo region whereas it indicated a 13 point increase for the entire city, showing the declining trend in the region.

Requests of residents identified from the questionnaire concentrate on life-related problems such as improvement of convenience in shopping, creation of a town that is comfortable for elderly people, and the like.

Among requests of residents, those for creation of encouraging topics and respect of opinions of middle-aged people and women were satisfied to a certain degree by the event this time. From now on, the residents' awareness of the problem will be in question on the point of whether this event will provide an opportunity for residents to independently conduct basic improvement of life.

(3) Can the activity be independently conducted without public assistance?

In this case, the fundamental research was conducted by the administration and the event was planned and prepared with the cooperation of volunteers and the good will of residents. Moreover, the regional shrine, which is a public space, was used as the event site. In other words, in this project, there is no conflict of economic interests in principle and all the people could accept the result affirmatively.

However, there is no security that the will of the proposer will be continued, which was the start of the future of this project. As in this case, it is necessary to create a system for sustaining organizational activities such as forming a consensus, promotion of projects, evaluation of activities, and the like in processes where machizukuri developed by an outside individual becomes the independent activity of the residents.

To be concrete, machizukuri activity in the community must be recognized, sustain the activity in the initial stage, and create a public assistance system to support development. I hear that this case plans to be followed by a second event.

## 5. Towards Machizukuri in the 21st Century

Challenges for machizukuri by people who were ordinary citizens until yesterday will be more active in the future. Society is seeking settlement of a new rule to embody an individual's will via an organizational activity as a condition for residents to actively participate in machizukuri.

### (1) Recognition and Growth of NGO Sector

Conventionally in Japan, there have been few options for groups which are incorporated and conduct machizukuri as corporate projects in the public non-governmental sector such as a public corporation, public trust system, shopping district association, and the like.

Voluntary activities conducted by individuals are usually restricted if the individual is not a corporation because it is difficult to obtain funds for renting the activity base, loans for activities, sustain employment, and make organizational decisions.

The certain public non-profit activity promotion law was enacted in 1998 and NPO corporations were added to it. Recognition of NPO organizations as corporations is favorably evaluated by the public as a way to solve the legal recognition problem of citizen's activities.

In the system, the civic organization wishing to be an NPO corporation needs to obtain the approval of Japan's administrative divisions (the Economic Planning Agency if the organization extends over multiple divisions). Twelve activity fields such as environment, welfare, culture, international exchange, and the like are defined and "activity to promote machizukuri" is positioned among them. This means that the system for recognizing "machizukuri", which is a citizen's voluntary social

activity, was stipulated and a large step was made to promote autonomy by residents in Japan.

## (2) Forming a Partnership

With the maturity of our economic society, traditional towns and living skills possessed by elderly people are being reevaluated as a resource to generate not only values as cultural assets, but also economic profits. This kind of resource has the characteristic of being both public and individual assets. Therefore, some local governments began to assist active conservation measures, thereby receiving high social evaluation marks.

As for this kind of asset; it is important to create a cycle for not only the owner, but also local government, and many regional residents should be actively involved in conservation and enjoy its benefits through partnership.

This is not an abstract argument consisting of opposing ends of conservation and development which has been conventionally repeated, but one which required discussion and action based on a concrete and individual theme such as what an individual can do for the region.

Moreover, I would like to introduce "community business" as an example of machizukuri through partnership. One example of a community business was started in Hyogo Prefecture in 1999 to promote restoration in Kobe after the Great Hanshin Earthquake. Public assistance projects such as this one attempt to secure business chances and employment and promote a region while utilizing the market economy for development and providing detailed regional services funded by public small-scale capital.

## 6. Conclusion

I believe that the agenda for our country whose economy has grown to riches from poverty is to preserve and pass our unique culture onto the next generation while actively exchanging ideas with citizens of the world as a member of the democratic society. This kind of civic awareness becomes a backdrop for development to nationwide machizukuri beyond differences of generation or sex, while coinciding with the movement to seek the Japanese identity.

It is the nation's great responsibility to contribute to the community not only as an employee of the corporation, but also as an individual, and to voluntarily shoulder the role to create a comfortable region, and to convey our culture to the next generation and the world. Machizukuri will be a social activity which will develop from now on as a measure to perform these duties.

(End)