



## Governance and the Creation of “Ba” (Space) for Civic Action: Towards the Next Generation of Machi-zukuri in Japan

Sustainability of Asian Cities

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, master plans and urban spatial planning, key approaches of the conventional urban planning practices came under sever critiques on many fronts. It has typically been regarded as old-fashioned, technocratic, and bureaucratic, stifling development by wrapping it up with red tape [1]. Everywhere, there is an expectation for a revival in urban planning. It was explored in a discussion during the networking event on “Urban Planning Revisited”, organized by the UN-Habitat, as part of the Second World Urban forum in Barcelona. Diverse perspectives on planning in Asia, Africa, Europe and Transition countries were debated [2]. New planning practices around the world wholeheartedly embrace participatory approaches, seeking ways of bringing civil society into the decision-making processes to ensuring positive outcomes for citizens in the development of urban space [3]. This fits with the paradigm shift from the government to the governance concept, which promotes a participation and collaboration of diverse array of actors in urban place management [4].

This new emphasis on the importance of civil society participation in city planning has been evident for some times in Japan. Reacting to the various negative social and environmental externalities yielded from the top-down conventional planning practices, there was a rise of citizen’s movement, particularly in 1960s and the 70s, to voice out their claims for civic space management. Those movements eventually led to the amendment of urban planning policy. The new City Planning Law of 1968 was enacted as a sign of shift towards decentralized collaborative planning which is sensitive to quality of living environment at neighborhood levels [5].

In the meantime, a variety of processes for citizen engagement in local place management spread rapidly throughout the Japan in the name of Machi-zukuri. As Sorensen and Funck argue the Japanese term Machi-zukuri can be translated as either “community development”, “neighborhood building”, or “town making” and is used to describe an extraordinarily wide variety of activities, from economic development initiatives to traditional top-down city planning or urban renewal projects and voluntary social welfare projects [6]. In this paper, we use the term Machi-zukuri as a process in which community members organize themselves in attempts to gain a degree of influence in managing urban changes in their local neighborhoods. Central to many of these efforts has been the creation of new types of spaces for civic actions at the neighborhood level.

Douglass defines civic space as “those spaces in which people of different origins and walks of life can co-mingle without overt control by government, commercial or other private interests, or de facto dominance by one group over another” [7]. According to his definition, the key characteristics of civic spaces are a sense of shared bonds, a comfortable physical, social, and cultural setting, a social

network, engaging debate and dialogue, a participatory environment, and a potential for forming larger public networks and vision. Similarly, Putnam defines a civic space as “the spaces for the production and reproduction of practices of social cooperation, problem solving, and social capital formation” [8]. Douglass’s further argument that civic space is an important pre-requisite for the development of stronger civil societies and communities is appealing, and intuitively make sense [9]. Civil society surely needs both physical and conceptual spaces to gather and engage to claim citizenship and affect governance processes at both the small-scale places where people daily live and the larger-scale urban regions of which they are a part [10].

Considering the way they were created, and with whose interests and what terms of engagement, Cornwall suggests two distinct kinds of arenas [11]. First one has come to call “invited spaces”, which serves to convey the origin of many intermediary institutions as government-provided, whether in response to popular demand, donor pressure or shifts in policy. A second set of spaces is “popular spaces”, arenas in which people come together at their own instigation – whether to protest against government policies or the interventions of foreign powers, to produce their own services or for solidarity and mutual aid. Cornwall further argues that invited spaces offer the potential for reconfiguring relations of rule, extending the practice of democracy beyond the sporadic use of the ballot box. But how this potential is translated into actual changes in governance is contingent on a range of factors, such as the locus of their creation, the existing governance landscape in any particular context, and related, factors lie in the particularities of context [12].

In the Japanese case, even though the development of new approaches to the creation and management of civic spaces and the strengthening of civil society is undergoing a period of change, where the state is relatively strong, a fear of letting go of control, high levels of bureaucratization and embedded aspects of political culture provide potent obstacles to the civil society participation in city planning [13]. The spaces for participation is provided by the state, backed in some settings by legal or constitutional guarantees and regarded by state actors as their space into which citizens and their representatives are invited [14]. Some are fleeting, one-off consultative events; others are regularized institutions with a more durable presence on the governance landscape. Perhaps more decisive will be the question of how Machi-zukuri develops from here, and what its role will be in relation to neighborhood planning and management in the future.

The purpose of this paper is therefore, to discuss the directions and the visions for the enabling policy environment and the citizen participation systems towards realizing the next generation of Machi-zukuri in Japan. The outline of the paper consists of three main parts. The first section discusses the concept and evolution of Machi-zukuri in Japan as a new kind of space for civic actions at the neighborhood level. Next section presents in detail the case study analysis examine the Machi-zukuri projects as a community involved civic space planning, and linking them to policy tools that helped community actors to create their own civic space. Further, the usefulness of civic space, which can be appreciated by civil society through the process of creating their space in cooperation with local government, will be discussed. Finally, a brief concluding section explores the emerging relationship between civic space and civil society in Japan.

### 2.0 EVALUATION OF MACHI-ZUKURI IN JAPAN

It is widely acknowledged that the recent spread of the citizen-participation in neighborhood planning and management represents the most hopeful development in Japanese city planning system in many years [15]. Thousands of neighborhood groups have organized throughout the country in attempts to improve their communities, both by promoting desired changes and by preventing unwanted developments. A wide variety of such practices are grouped together under the common name of Machi-zukuri. The term Machi-zukuri is formed by combining the noun “Machi” which means town, neighborhood, quarter or community, with the verb “Zukuri” which means to make or build, is generally translated as “community building”, or “town making”, but can also be rendered as “community planning” or “community development” [16].

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A dictionary of town planning terminology defines it as, *a variety of activities where local residents, working together or in cooperation with the local government, make the place where they live and conduct their day to day business into one that is attractive, pleasant to live in, and appropriate for the area* [17]. Confusingly, the term is used in Japanese literature to describe an extraordinarily wide range of quite varied activities, from economic development initiatives to traditional top-down city planning or urban renewal projects and also for voluntary social welfare projects.

As Ishida argues, the development of the Machi-zukuri was a result of two main factors; first, the intensification of city problems and chaotic land use caused by high economic growth policy, and second, the upsurge of citizens' movements and progressive local governments [18]. The Japanese urban planning and land use policy long put top priority on economic growth and industrial development over environment and urban quality of life. The low priority on residential environments is clearly seen in spending pattern of the government, as little resources available for providing community infrastructure, housing or even planning and regulation of privately developed residential areas. Instead vast sums were spent for the state built infrastructure essential for industrial development, such as an industrial water supply, ports and railways, highways, electrical generating capacity, and large scale low-cost public housing projects [19].

After the World War II, the main priority of the Japanese government was rapid economic growth and rebuilding the country based on the strategy of industrial development. Because there was such a clear necessity to recover from the destruction wrought by the conflict, the alliance of central government bureaucrats, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and the big business were given a free rein to pursue the country's development strategy. Samuels has called the period from the end of the war to the middle of the 1960s, as a "*conservative's paradise*" in which there was an "*unassailable consensus*" on economic reconstruction and rapid growth [20]. During this period, the Japanese government spent very little on social overheads, instead devoting all available resources for facilitating rapid industrial growth.

This pattern of urban growth, combined with very weak development and pollution control laws greatly contributed to the environmental crisis of the 1960s, as toxic pollution was concentrated near residential areas. Tanaka Kakuei, the Prime Minister of Japan (1972-1974), nicely summarized what had become the conventional wisdom in Japan regarding these twin problems of congestion in the metropolitan regions and decline on the periphery in his book *Building a New Japan*; "*The rapid economic growth of postwar Japan, particularly since the mid-1950s, has spurred industrialization and urbanization throughout the nation. The result has been the excessive concentration of both population and industry in the Tokyo-Nagoya-Osaka belt along the Pacific coast, forming a hyper-dense community the likes of which is not be found elsewhere in the world. All of the major industrial nations of the world are today faced with the common agonies of inflation, urban deterioration, environmental pollution, stagnant agriculture, and spiritual frustration amidst material affluence. This is specially so in Japan*" [21].

At the same time, a highly centralized urban planning system clearly contributed to poor urban environments and low levels of urban infrastructure and civic space. As Ishida argues until the major reforms of 1999, urban planning was still considered a national government matter, not one for local government [22]. The 1919 City Planning Law, a first ever modern city planning law in Japan established a thoroughly top-down city planning system in Japan in which virtually every plan required approval from the Home Ministry, and most planning was carried out by City Planning Committee that was established for each urban area by the central government with appointing delegates from affected municipalities, prefectures, and Home Ministry staff. The national government monopoly of legal authority in urban planning, land development, and infrastructure spending was maintained through the "*agency delegated functions*" system and national city planning legislation, and attempts by local governments to gain greater planning autonomy or legal leverage over the development industry were repeatedly rolled back by central government [23]. Local governments were effectively unable to link the process of development for more lucrative development.

The growing environmental crisis is important here, because of its effect on changing patterns of citizen protest and the development of new political movement in Japan, which was the major factor behind the development of the 1968 City Planning Law. As Iijima notes that pollution, occupational hazards, and consumer health problems caused by flawed or poison products have been more effective in inducing citizen-based mass movements than any other type of social disaster since the beginning of Japan's period of modernization [24]. Whereas until this point local neighborhood organizations served primarily as a means of communicating information and demands downwards from local government to the people, during the 1960s many of them especially newly formed neighborhood organizations like *chokai*, *chonaikai*, or *jichikai* in new urban housing areas started to mobilize the people to make demands on local governments [25].

At the same time, there was a huge wave of local opposition movements transformed Japanese politics, especially at the local level, and led to an electoral crisis for the ruling LDP government in the late 1960s [26]. It is widely agreed that it was in response to these pressures that the ruling LDP passed a new city planning legislation in 1968. Calder notes that it was just before the July 1968 Upper House elections that the LDP announced an Urban Policy Outline and passed the New City Planning Law [27]. He further argued that though the law had been in preparation for many years, it was finally passed as a result of the fear by LDP legislators that the increasing political opposition represented by the citizens' movements would have electoral impacts at the national level [28].

As Sorensen argues a development of Machi-zukuri begins with the passage of the 1968 City Planning Law, with its partial decentralization of planning powers to local authorities, and its introduction of the development permit system [29]. Based on their power to issue development permits for large-scale development projects, many local governments started to pass their own development manuals (*kaihatsu shido yoko*), which codified and made explicit local government standards for developer contributions to local infrastructure in compensation for the extra burdens the proposed development would impose. They were thus, not legally enforceable, but were based on a system of "*advice*", and "*persuasion*", a variation of the famous Japanese practice of "*administrative guidance*" or extra-legal bureaucratic arm-twisting and back-scratching [30]. However, there were many weaknesses with this system, such as, no development permits were required outside the recognized city planning areas, most small-scale local governments didn't have responsibility for development permits approvals as prefectures musically controlled the development, difficult to apply single standard uniformly to the whole municipal area, and was found necessary to pass regulations and guidance systems in the form of Machi-zukuri Ordinances in order to improve the development control powers at neighborhood levels to prevent unwanted development [31]. At the same time, it was found that in order to make local detailed planning work, it was essential to gain the cooperation and participation of local people. The creation of development control ordinances with the active participation of affected residents became a major tool for mobilizing public support [32].

It is clear that Japan is now experiencing a "*Machi-zukuri Boom*" [33]. A diverse range of urban residents in cities through out the country have become involved in an extraordinary number and variety of different Machi-zukuri planning projects. The greater involvement of local residents in setting goals and priorities in their own neighborhoods also promises to contribute to greater public support for planning and development control measures that enhanced local quality of life. Decentralization of planning powers further to local governments with the introduction of the new urban planning law of 1992, also seems likely to promote planning approaches that are more sensitive to the demands of urban residents than in the old system which was dominated so completely by the central government. The most important result was that the creation of the Municipal Master Plan System, which municipal governments must prepared a new basic urban policy, that reflects the opinions of citizens, and to which later plans and policies must confirm [34].

Another recent change has been the ending of the agency delegated functions system with the passage of the Omnibus Act for the decentralization of powers in 1999. This changed city planning from a delegated function controlled ultimately by central ministry bureaucrats to a local government functions [35]. City planning has finally become a local duty (*jichi jimui*), rather than a function

delegated by central government to local executives (*ikan inin jimu*) [36]. The establishment of the Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) Law of 1998, and the series of access to information ordinances and laws, at the local level, and the national government level seem having long-term effects on spreading the Machi-zukuri activities and the role of civil society actors in planning. The new NPO law has also permitted the emergence of intermediary organizations created to support those directly involved in Machi-zukuri with professional services and experts [37]

This process of decentralization is ongoing, but it is already having some impacts, as the huge expansion in numbers and diversity of Machi-zukuri processes designed to engage citizens in the governance of shared space. They do not have great power or resources, but they are free of the former bureaucrats, and fully autonomous. Perhaps, the biggest challenge for Machi-zukuri in today is how to shift from here to creating and managing shared space in the neighborhoods in order to enhance the legitimacy of civic actions.

### 3.0 CREATING "BA" FOR CIVIC ACTIONS – MACHI-ZUKURI IN PRACTICE

This section discusses two case studies of Machi-zukuri processes in the Fukaya city, north of Tokyo, and in the Cultural Path Area of Nagoya as examples, wherein civic actions around issues of shared spaces was central to the Machi-zukuri process. The discussion is based on the author's own experiences and on informal interviews carried out with key participants in constructing these accounts.

#### 3.1 Case Study One: Machi-zukuri Activities in Fukaya City

Fukaya city is a small local center in Tokyo region with around 104,000 inhabitants. The city is located in the northern part of the Saitama prefecture, about 75 km northwest of Tokyo. During the feudal era, the city was prosperous post-town on the historic Nakasendo highway through the mountains from Edo (now a days Tokyo) to Kyoto. In the nineteenth century, Fukaya prospered as a center of the silk industry of the north Kanto plain and was a major shipping center, with river transport along the Tone River and a major railway line south to Tokyo. Though in the early post war period the population declined as people migrated to Tokyo looking jobs, from the mid 1960s, Fukaya started to grow again with the urban-industrial growth of the Tokyo region spread. The city population almost doubled from 1965 to 2000, but that growth took the form of decentralization into lower-density suburbs, accompanied by a halving of the population of the downtown area. With a major expansion of car-oriented suburban shopping, the downtown area saw a decline of vitality, and today there are many vacant stores and vacant sites currently used for parking lots [38].

Aiming to revitalize the central business area of the city, municipal government came up with two land readjustment (LR) projects for comprehensive urban renewal. The projects were proposed to create a new grid of much wider roads, new parks, and consolidated land holding, and financed by subsidies from municipal, prefecture, and national government and by land contributions from all participating land owners. For the successful implementation, it required the demolition and/ or relocation of most existing structures, as roads and property boundaries are rearranged, so they usually result in the obliteration of the historic urban landscape [39].

The municipality commenced the first project, in the area around Fukaya's railway station, during the period of 1971 to 1997. The area was transformed from one with many narrow roads to one with wide roads and large blocks, and a new station front plaza with a turnaround for buses and taxis was created. The second project was planned during the 1980s to extend the process of urban renewal from the station area to the traditional shopping area along the old Nakasendo highway. A new grid of wider streets was to replace the traditional pattern; the Nakasendo would be greatly widened, as would the street leading to the station. However, the plan was put on hold after the crash of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, and it is still government policy, having been approved by the municipal, prefecture, and national governments [40].

As a next step, in the late 1990s, the Fukaya city started to prepare a master plan, as a mandate of the 1992 revision of the national city planning law, which required all municipal governments to create a

new master plan for their cities with inputs from citizens, with which all future plans and projects had to conform. There were three interest groups who were cordially worked in organizing the planning process. First, a planning committee, Officials from various city departments and university professors, who were in charge of developing and finalizing the plan based on the citizens' proposals. Second, a citizen planning group, volunteer citizens (100 at peak) responsible in preparing citizens' proposals to Planning Committee. Third, a staff, officials of municipal planning department, private consultants and university research unit members. The drafting a master plan was started in 2001 with establishing a seven sub groups covering wide range of concern areas in city planning, and gave responsibilities to come up with some broader proposals in their own subject areas, such as, conservation and creation of natural environment and agricultural land, residential environment and urban landscape, universal design and urban safety, conservation and creation of historic environment, downtown revitalization, transportation system, citizen participation and progress monitoring [41].

The Downtown Revitalization Group (DRG) was one of the active sub groups in the master planning process which was responsible for the preparation of revitalization plan to the downtown area included the earlier two LR projects proposed by the city government. The group included of nine volunteer citizens self interested in downtown revitalization, one city official from Land Readjustment Section and three staff members with experiences in participatory planning and community development. During April to July 2001, DRG made efforts to identify the shares issues related to down town revitalization. As a first steps, a workshop was organized in April, 2001 including 30 people and walked around downtown area in three groups, and recorded on large maps the places of their favorites and interests as well as the places to be improved and shared information. Later, in the Citizen Planning Group (CPG) meeting which was held in May, 2001 more than 120 comments from the walking workshop were categorized and presented to all members of CPG. In addition, DRG made a visual map showing existing condition of downtown (surface parking lots, historic buildings, public facilities, greenery and major streets) and panels explaining downtown issues, existing plans and DRG activities. These maps were then, presented to the citizens during Tanabata Festival in early July.

Following the above consultations, in the end of 2001, the committee proposed an alternative plan to the existing Chuo Land Readjustment Project Plan that would destroy many of the historic resources proposed by the City's Land Readjustment Section, that focused on preserving the many historical buildings in the downtown area, such as traditional merchant shop-house (*machiya*), and traditional storehouses (*kura*), which are timber-frame structures with mud tile walls and roofs and heavy shutters to protect valuable goods during fires. The subcommittee did an inventory of historical assets in the down town area, which were concentrated along the feudal-era highway. They proposed that instead of expensive urban renewal projects that would destroy virtually all the old buildings in order to create a grid of wide roads, down town revitalization should focus on the careful restoration of the historic townscape, focusing on expanding pedestrian space and preservation of historic buildings. This approach brought the subcommittee into direct conflict with the municipal administration, and especially the planning department, which was committed to the urban renewal project [42].

This conflict led to the creation of a Machi-zukuri NPO called Fukaya Nigiwai Kobo (FNK) in 2002, to the revitalization of down town Fukaya through preserving and utilizing historical buildings and creating more attractive townscape. Most of the founding members of the FNK were participants in the planning process of Fukaya Master Plan, particularly members of the DRG, who wanted to continue their activities after the completion of the master plan preparation work. The FNK has appealed to the residents and the landowners in the down town area for the enhancement and utilization of the historical assets as public space and has been active in promoting their vision of revitalization through historical preservation.

Among other activities, they conducted tours of a local sake brewery whose production facility is housed in a beautiful cluster of historic buildings and whose owner supports the group. FNK invited professional artists and held concerts inside the sake maker's historic warehouse. They also created a community space by renovating an unused brick warehouse loaned by a member of the group into a meeting space and art center, where they have held numerous art events and shows. They conducted a

design competition for the renewal of the warehouse and now rent it as a community-meeting place, and conduct a community school for historical preservation of traditional buildings. This space has since become a center of the group's activities and an active community space for events and meetings. Members of the groups see the creation of this space as a major accomplishment of the organization that has served as a launching pad for further activities.

In 2004, FNK received a prestigious grant of around 6 million yen (around 56,000 US\$) from the Prime minister's Office for their project named Surveys and Experimental uses of Historical Buildings by Citizens for Downtown Regeneration, and was intended to conduct a thorough survey of historic structures and propose innovative new uses for them. As important result of this grant was that the group gained significant support for their approach of revitalization of the down town area by preserving and utilizing historical buildings [43].

### 3.2 Case Study Two: Machi-zukuri Activities in the Cultural Path Area, Nagoya City

With a population of 2.2 million, Nagoya, the capital of Aichi Prefecture, is the core city of Japan's fourth-largest metropolitan area. As commerce and industry prospered, and culture flourished in the Edo Period, Nagoya grew into a thriving metropolis. Nagoya has continued to grow since Ieyasu Tokugawa, founder of the Tokugawa Shogun Government, built Nagoya Castle in 1612. A culture and tradition of manufacturing blossomed during the Meiji Period and is still evolving today. The district between Nagoya Castle and Tokugawa-en is an area rich in preserved historical buildings and is well known locally as the Bunka no Michi - "the cultural path". In the Edo Period (1603-1867), the area was where middle and lower-class samurai lived. From the Meiji through the early Showa Periods (1868 -1930), the area was home to entrepreneurs, missionaries, journalists, and artists. The area is located about a 10-15 minutes walk from the city center. Because of its cultural, historic and scenic importance, the area was designated as a historical preservation districts by the municipal government in 1985.

As similar to other parts of the city, the cultural path area has been undergoing rapid spatial changes. Traditional residential areas and buildings have been rapidly disappearing mostly through replacement with modern condominiums and parking lots. In 2002, a private developer started to construct a new condominium in the area, which was protest by the group of citizens claiming that the construction of building resulted in destroying the historical, cultural, and natural beauty of the area. They went to the court for getting court order to stop the property developer's effort. As a result, In March 2003, the Nagoya District Court gave an epoch-making provisional injunction, on the heels of the kunitachi condominium ruling. The court ordered to ban the construction of the part of the building that was more than 20 meters above ground level acknowledging that a high quality townscape had been created and preserved in the area through years of preservation and maintains efforts by residents and the city government.

This led to the creation of Machi-zukuri NPO called Association for Studying the Living Environment (ASLE) of Shirakabe-Chikara-Shumoku district in 2003. It was established by experts from the Architectural, and Planning fields along with some volunteers in the area aiming to protect and utilization of local resources in the area, such as historical assets, culture, and natural values through on the self-control, community efforts rather than relying on the legal approach [44]. They are involved in conducting community surveys to getting peoples view on the future development in their own neighborhoods, and conducts open lectures about the Machi-zukuri planning. After collecting community views, it has prepared a Machi-zukuri Charter, which gave directions to the future development in the area. Since 2005, they are involved in publishing a regular newsletter, which gave information about the new development happening in the area.

Along with the establishment of ASLE, there have been quite different activities blooming in the area aiming to utilize the shared space for civic actions under the various themes. Yet, all are admired the historical, cultural, and natural heritage and historic buildings in the area and the desire to preserve and

protect them. This provides them with the incentives to do collaborative activities [45]. Some of key activities are;

*A Explore the Cultural Path:* Since 1999, a various events have been organized in the cultural path area in summer period aiming to giving the exposure to the citizens within and outside the area about the historical, cultural and natural importance of the area. Participants have great opportunity to feel and learn about the local life of the present days, as well as quite good chance to immerse the rich memory of the town. During explore the cultural path day, a various types of events were held, such as lectures in near by halls, a walk through the town stamp rally. Even though, the event was initially started as a local government events, gradually it was took over by the citizen group and business community in the area as their community events.

*An Activity Aimed At Nurturing the Shumoku Club (Former Imoto Residence):* The former Imoto residence, which was built in the late Taisho and early Showa period was utilized as a space for citizens gathering. The property is available on Saturdays for citizens group to hold their meetings and events. The caretaker group called Shumoku Club coordinates its utilization. In 2006, shuoku club was established on the basis of steering committee and later certified as a NPO for conducting Machi-zukuri activities using the potential resources of the former Imoto residence.

*Citizens Study Committee on Cultural Path Futaba Museum (Former Residence of Sadyakko Kawakami):* The cultural path Futaba is a residence of the well-known Japanese first modern actress, Sadyakko Kawakami, and later it was occupied by Momosuke Fukuzawa, well known businessman dubbed the "Electricity King" in his day. The building was registered as a monument. The restored building is now used for the collection and supply of information exhibition of local literary materials, and as a lounge and a center facility of the Cultural Path Area. Mainly, it was functioned as a site for promoting Machi-zukuri by bringing the town and citizens together, as well as being a center facility for cultural and citizens' activities.

*A Cultural Path Workshop:* The Cultural Path Workshop is one of the popular Machi-zukuri activities in the area. It was organized once a year as a space for citizens in the area to share their thoughts and experiences and made them aware of rising issues, thus leaving them with a rich collection of ideas and recommendations.

## 4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

During the last few decades, there has been a gradual shift in attitudes towards the management of changes in urban neighborhoods in Japan. Thousands of Machi-zukuri groups have organized in cities around the country in attempts to improve their communities; both by preventing unwanted development and protecting desired changes. The first generation of Machi-zukuri movements mainly served as protest of the conventional planning system. The huge environmental disasters in 1969s and 1970s encouraged the Machi-zukuri movements to challenge the legitimacy of central government. However, since the late 1980s, we can witness the second phase of Machi-zukuri has grown as an alternative to conventional planning system. Various types of constructive partnerships between public, private, and civil society sectors have emerged in the formation of planning at neighborhood levels. The Machi-zukuri approach seems well suited to local environmental improvements and historical preservations and provides a vehicle for mobilizing the energy of local people for successful implementation of the projects.

At the same time, there are some positive changes taken place in the urban planning governance. The establishment of the 1992 Urban Planning Law, ending of the agency-delegated-functions system with the passage of the Omnibus Act for the decentralization of powers in 1999, and the establishment of the Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) Law of 1998, clearly has some positive impacts in managing shared space at local level. Within this context, we can witness a new generation of Machi-zukuri movements are emerging to creating new community spaces and gaining greater voice in the management of change in the existing spaces at the neighborhood level.

As case studies clearly points out, these new generations of Machi-zukuri groups are involved in improving their neighborhoods creating new political, public and civic spaces for local actions. They are not merely reactive, but are actively involved in proposing alternative plans, projects, and understanding of their own neighborhoods. They are involved in creating both physical and conceptual civic spaces. These new civic spaces not only brings together new groupings of civic activists and the articulation of a vision of an alternative project that enhance life space and protects the qualities of the place for current and future generations. But also creating new civic spaces of community self-governance by challenging existing arrangements for the regulation of development and for claiming a legitimate role for citizens in shaping their own vision for of a livable community.

By creating new rules, new participants in shared property rights, new criteria for evaluating urban changes, and new images of a viable community space, they are redefining public space in their neighborhoods. Perhaps most importantly, they are actively transforming urban space into civic space by declaring a common interest in their community as space and place and demanding a voice in planning processes. Therefore, it can be concluded that the creation of new forms of civic space is thus a top priority of the next generation of Machi-zukuri in Japan, and has indeed been a key issues in Japanese civil society development.

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