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Urban Regeneration in the Central area of Japan

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FROM EDITOR: Two Tales of Regeneration in the Central area of Japan

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How to regenerate provincial cities has become a matter of urgency. The hollowing out of downtown areas in provincial cities seems to provide evidence in support of the necessity for regeneration. However, merely inviting mega stores with a view to making the cities more lively is not enough to achieve regeneration. For various reasons, provincial cities have been losing their significance, and changes in society and the economy now demand new qualities in cities. These changes include a demographic shift caused by a declining birthrate and an aging population; the maturing of society; the globalization of the economy; changes in local industrial structure; a rising awareness of environmental issues; and so on. The regeneration of provincial cities can only be accomplished by recovering diminishing urban functions utilizing existing local resources, and recreating a city that can adapt to changes in the social and economic situation.

One of the diminishing functions of provincial cities is the ability to create a lifestyle that is rooted in a particular local culture and environment. The consequence is the loss of each city's distinctive identity, in other words, the loss of its uniqueness, which is also the source of its wealth. The expansion of corporate capital through retail chains and services all over Japan and the decline of local socioeconomic space are the main causes of the regression of locally centered functions. Besides, modern functionalistic city planning is also responsible for creating this situation. Finally, in a mature society, values and lifestyles diversify in a context of stability and wealth. And the diversification is oriented in a certain direction: More emphasis is put on "activities" than on "materials;" there is a greater aspiration for genuine activities, for amenities, and for a better environment. Urban functions

and urban spaces are required to cope with this kind of diversity. The attractiveness of a city is created by a variety of entities who wish to express or realize their dreams within a framework of local culture and an urban environment. Functions and spaces to foster and support their wishes are required in cities.



Two articles in this issue look at the regeneration of two downtown areas in the central area of Japan. One is in Nagoya, a major city with a population of 2.18 million. The other is in Nanao, a small town with less than 50,000 residents. The former aims to break away from its image as a modern functionally-planned industrial city. The latter aims to recreate a traditional humans-shops-town relationship, and to create an axis of liveliness. The two stories differ in their context and their goals, but they have in common attempts to regenerate a unique urban culture and environment. Also, "environment" and "participation" are two keywords in the regeneration of provincial cities. The article about Nanao describes how the challenge to regenerate shops, the river and the downtown community is being met by Misogigawa Co. Ltd., a community development company established by local business persons. For a deeper understanding of regeneration in provincial areas, please refer to the article on the regeneration attempt in Kanazawa City in CPIJ Newsletter No.17.

1. The Dilemma and Regeneration of Nagoya, the Showcase City of Modern City Planning

Tomokazu IZAWA, The Urban Institute SPACIA

1. Introduction

I wonder how many readers of this article are familiar with the name "Nagoya" or know its location in Japan. Compared to Tokyo, Kyoto, or Osaka, Nagoya is still close to nothing.

In an English travel guidebook, Nagoya is introduced as "a commercial and industrial center," but "not a top travel destination." It also says, "There are some lesser attractions, many excellent restaurants, and the city itself is fairly pleasant; it is similar to a scale down, far more relaxed version of Tokyo." (Lonely Planet "JAPAN" 7th edition October 2000). Other guidebooks are more or less similar. "A major transportation hub for the region, Nagoya is a pleasant and convenient, if unexciting base" (Eyewitness Travel Guides "Japan" Dorling Kinderey, 2002 Edition). Nagoya is unattractive and unexciting, but a transportation hub and a convenient city. The former guidebook devotes 80 pages to Tokyo, 58 pages to Kyoto, 18 pages to Osaka, and 11 pages to Nagoya.

Nagoya is a name for both a region and a city. The Nagoya region contains a population of 10 million and is one of the three metropolises of Japan, the other two being Tokyo and Osaka. Of these three metropolises, Nagoya is the most specialized in manufacturing industry. The automobile, machine tool, ceramic, and textile industries are concentrated in the Nagoya region. On the other hand, the city of Nagoya contains 2.18 million people, and is the fourth largest city following Tokyo, Yokohama, and Osaka. This paper focuses on this city, Nagoya, on the dilemma it faces and on its attempt at regeneration.

2. The History of City Planning in Nagoya

(1) A Castle Town, a Temple Town and a Post Station

The history of Nagoya starts with the building of Nagoya Castle and the "Move from Kiyosu" in 1610. As the basic plan for the new town, a grid-pattern plan was adopted. The standard living area for the townspeople is composed of 100 meter by 100 meter square blocks surrounded by 6-meter wide streets.

The term "Move from Kiyosu" refers to the transfer of the entire Kiyosu castle town, which was located 6km northwest of present-day Nagoya. Temples, shrines, and bridges, not to mention Samurai residences and townhouses, were relocated. Blessed with rich crop fields in the surrounding area, the castle town flourished. After a big fire which burned down most of the townspeople's area in 1660, a wide boulevard (Hirokoji), extending from west to east, was built as a fire break.

At around the same time, a temple town was formed around Atsuta Shrine, which is said to have been built in the third century. The temple town developed and expanded after it was designated as an accommodation town for the Tokai post road in 1601. The combination of the castle town and the temple/accommodation town formed the original shape of Nagoya.

(2) City Planning until WWII

As Japan entered the Meiji Era, modernization and industrialization were promoted nationally under the slogan, "catch-up-with-the-West." Since Nagoya had neither a deep harbor nor coal mines to serve as a source of fuel, the textile industry, the local industry at the time, was promoted as a national project. In terms of modern industrialization, Nagoya made a slow start. However, taking an advantage of the city's position as a major distributing center of lumber, a lumber sawing industry developed, along with the manufacture of wall clocks and railcars. In addition, automatic loom was invented for use in the textile industry; the loom later became the original symbol of Toyota Motor Corporation. Noritake, world famous for Old Noritake China, also originated in Nagoya. Then, as armament factories and related industries started to be built in Nagoya, the city came to be associated with the munitions industry.

Being a distribution center, harbors and railroads became important. Nagoya Harbor was first built in 1907, then gradually expanded its functions. As for the railroads, development started around 1900. The Tokaido-Line (linking Tokyo and Kobe), the Chuo-Line (linking Tokyo and Nagoya), and the Kansai-Line (linking Osaka and Nagoya) were opened. The Nakagawa Canal opened in 1930. In the 1930s, the Nagoya station building, which was said to be the largest in the East, and a 45-meter wide road (Sakura-dori) were constructed.

Because of its thriving industries and armament factories, Nagoya was bombed 38 times during WWII, and 3,850 ha of its land was burned. The bombings caused the death of 7,800 people and damaged 135,000 households. More than half of the built-up area, including sites of historical importance such as Nagoya Castle and Atada Shrine, was lost.

In addition to wartime bombing, Nagoya suffered from major earthquakes in 1891 and 1944.



Symbol open space in Nagoya City
Hisaya Odori(Hisaya boulevard)

(3) City Planning after the War

After the war, Nagoya quickly started on the War Rehabilitation Land Readjustment Project, which covered 3,452ha including most of the downtown area. In 1945, the "Greater Chukyo Reconstruction Plan" was announced. The plan centered around building a city with two million residents, equipped with two 100-meter wide boulevards and nine 50-meter wide trunk roads constructed in a grid pattern. The hundred-meter wide boulevards were Hisaya-Odori (extending for 1.74km from north to south), and Wakamiya-Odori (extending for 4.12km from east to west). Center strips were to be built as parks, which would also function as fire breaks. Today, Hisaya-Odori has become a symbol road for Nagoya.



Land scape in Hisaya Odori

Another significant feature of the plan was the moving of cemeteries. There were many temples within the burned-down area, and most of them had cemeteries. However, cemeteries were regarded as an environmentally and aesthetically negative factor, so it was decided that they should be moved to the suburbs. 187,000 graves from 278 temples were moved to a 92-ha park area, which came to be called "the Peace Park."

3. Dilemma of a Showcase City of Modern City Planning

(1) From "a developing city" to "a mature city"

Reconstruction projects were promoted steadily. The basic skeleton of the city was completed in the 1960s; and the city was called "the City of Youth", signifying its high expectations for further development. An industrial area was formed along the waterfront and the automobile industry flourished inland. Infrastructures such as roads and parks were created through land readjustment projects, which had started before the war in downtown and peripheral areas and later expanded into the suburbs. Nagoya overcame war and earthquake disasters and built roads, parks, harbors, and railroad networks. A model of "a modern city," one based on an industrialized society, was constructed.

However, in the 1970s, after the experience of two oil crises, there was heightened criticism of "modernization" that prioritized efficiency and functionality. In the 1990s, with the collapse of the bubble economy, the consequent slowdown of economic growth, and the prospect of population decrease and an aging society, economic and regional revitalization

through "urban regeneration" emerged as a major theme.

By that time, Nagoya, the model city of modern city planning, had lost its historical features as a result of the war, and the grid-patterned road network had exposed attractive "back streets" (alleys and passageways). The result was a city that was clean but unattractive. In other words, Nagoya had turned from a promising "ideal city" or "city of youth" into a "boring" and "monotonous city." The descriptions in the guidebooks mentioned earlier illustrate the turnaround.

So the challenge for Nagoya became one of adding extra values to the high-quality modern urban infrastructure to attract visitors and private investment. Starting in the 1980s, the City of Nagoya placed emphasis on landscape policy. Water fountains and public art projects were introduced, illegal signs were removed, and awards were given to aesthetically superior buildings. In 1984, a city regulation, Codes for Urban Landscape, was passed. As the city's centenary event, the World Design Exposition '89 was held.

(2) The Urban Cores of Nagoya

There are two cores in the city of Nagoya. One is the Nagoya Station District, and the other is Sakae District. The former is an area around Nagoya Station, a transportation hub with a concentration of offices. In the latter, corporate headquarters, shops and offices are concentrated.

In 2000, Japan Railway Central Towers (approx. 42ha floor area, 245m high) projected an image of dignity in front of Nagoya Station. The building of Toyota-Mainichi Building (19ha, 246m) and a redevelopment plan for the Ushijima-Minami District (14ha, 180m) were announced consecutively. Both are due to be completed in 2007. Since Nagoya Station District was designated as "an urban regeneration promotion district," in which deregulation and tax exemption are permitted so as to induce private investment, major movement is anticipated in the Nagoya Metropolitan Area.

Let's look at Sakae District, the other core. Although there is no major redevelopment plan as in Nagoya Station District, large-scale commercial enhancement is under way. A new department store and an enlargement of an existing department store are being planned. When these are completed, 10 department stores and boutiques will form a line on one street, and will comprise a mega shopping zone with 50ha of floor area. Further on the east side of the zone is the 100-meter wide Hisaya-Odori, the 70-meter wide center-strip park of the boulevard will act as an event space that may attract many visitors. Along the street are the Art and Cultural Center and information-emitting facilities such as a broadcast station. Sakae Park has just reopened with a new floating water tank (Oasis 21). On the west side of the zone is the 30-meter wide Otsu-Dori, on which high-class boutiques have started to appear lately.

Nagoya must be one of the world's leading areas in terms of such huge commercial concentration within a high-quality urban environment. We must utilize this

concentration and public space to enhance liveliness in the downtown area.

(3) Growing out into a More Attractive City

Utilizing the environment that our forefathers left us is a responsibility imposed on those who live now. "Urban regeneration", considering what is to be conserved and what rejuvenated, is a restructuring of urban space from this point of view.

For example, consider public spaces and open cafes. Until now, public spaces have been built and managed by central or local government,. This made for greater efficiency. However, people's needs diversified, and open spaces are not used as efficiently as they might be to create attractiveness in a city. Open cafes on sidewalks are daily sights in Europe and American cities; but in Japan, the law prohibits them. The authorities say that sidewalks are built to facilitate movement and not to use for resting and talking. However, these functions are necessary in a rich and enjoyable outdoor life. As the elderly population increases, cafes will be a valuable resting place. Nagoya's many wide streets are tailor made for open cafes and street performances. If people's eyes are turned to outside spaces as a result, enclosed architectural spaces may turn into more open areas. Right now, a social experiment on open cafes is underway in Hisaya-Odori.

For another example, consider using industries as a tourist resource. Nagoya is looking for more visitors to help foster its tourist industry. It wants more people to visit the city and lodge rather than just changing trains. One possibility is industrial tourism. Of course, there is a 400-year history of samurai culture. But there is also a deeprooted industrial culture. Ceramics,



JR Central Towers at Nagoya Station

textiles, woodwork, food (e.g., sake, vinegar, miso paste, soy sauce), cold steel and automobiles can all be found. So visitors can enjoy not only Nagoya's industrial heritage and industrial museums, but may be able to experience a real job site. On a venue only five minutes from Nagoya Station are the Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology and "Noritake Square" (an exhibition, workshops, and commercial complex).

In 2005, the World Exposition will be held near Nagoya; the building of the new Chubu International Airport is in progress. Please take this chance and visit a renewed and increasingly attractive Nagoya.

2. A Challenge of Misogigawa Co. Ltd., A Private Community Development Company

- Community development through rejuvenating local shops, culture and environments in Nanao-

Nami MORIYAMA, Chief Manager, Misogigawa Co.Ltd.

1. Introduction -the City of Nanao and Misogigawa-

Nanao, a city located at the base of the Noto Peninsula, flourished from the Manyo Era (about 1,300 years ago) onward as a major port town; and, today, it is a central city in the Noto Region. Misogigawa, or Misogi River, runs through the city's downtown area from south to north.

The river has always been very close to the life of the people of Nanao. On the occasion of Aogashiwa Festival, the largest festival in the Noto Region, a number of parade floats line up alongside the river. However, flattening of the riverbed due to subsidence, a decrease in the river flow due to the construction of discharge channels, and an influx of domestic wastewater resulted in water pollution. With methane gas being produced from sludge on the riverbed, the river has turned into "a smelly ditch."

2. Looking back on the History of Community Development in Downtown Nanao

(1) As Counteraction to a Crisis

Twenty years ago, Nanao, with a population of

48,000, was losing its vitality. It missed out on the wave of motorization. The market area shrunk rapidly and large projects like the redevelopment around the station area were struggling. Most of all, the citizens of Nanao were suffering from a feeling of weariness.

Then the young members of the Nanao Junior Chamber decided to change the situation. During a six-class course in the Citizens' University, they discussed the way forward for Nanao and settled on a key phrase: "regeneration of the port district." Nanao Port, formerly called "Kashimazu", had flourished as a good natural harbor for a long time. Focusing on the port as a resource to regenerate the city, they drafted "the Nanao Marine City Plan" and established the Nanao Marine City Promotion Council to promote the plan.

One high-priority project was the construction of a fishermen's wharf. With funds from both public and private sectors, Kashimazu Corporation was established. In 1991, "the Noto Food Festival Market," a fishermen's wharf, was opened. The long forgotten ferry pier became a center that attracts 900,000 people every year.

(2) From the Port to Downtown

The success of the Noto Food Festival Market injected new life into the stagnant station area redevelopment, and Patria, the first redevelopment building, opened in 1995, providing the city with its second nucleus. A plan was drawn up to connect the nuclei by a symbol road, pulling in visitors into the existing downtown shopping area. However, next to the site for the symbol road was Misogigawa, so polluted that it gave off a stench in the summer. In creating an axis, the restoration of Misogigawa was indispensable. The interested local business people established Misogigawa Corporation Limited for that purpose.



Aogashiwa Festival

(3) Misogigawa Co. Ltd., a Community Development Company

In June 1999, Misogigawa Co. Ltd. was established as a private company with a capital fund of 50-million yen. (Later the fund was increased to 68 million.) All of the eight investors were local people who had worked for the Nanao Marine City Movement from the very beginning. The company now has 6 board members and 3 staff members. As a private company, it promotes shops alongside the river, offers consultations on business plans, conducts researches on the state of the river water, and supports river-related non-profit organizations.

3. Community Development through Rejuvenating Shops

(1) The Relationship Between Shops and the Downtown Community

Misogigawa Co. Ltd. aims to bring back the relationship between people, shops, and the downtown community. In order to bring back a sense of liveliness to the banks of Misogigawa, emphasis is put first on the relationship between shops and the community.

In the case of an existing shop, the company starts by questioning the significance of the shop in Nanao, asking whether or not the shop is necessary for the city. Especially in the case of a small family business, it is clear that the shop is supported by the town's culture. In Nanao, shops benefit from the existence of Misogigawa, Nanao Port, the Hatakeyama Culture which thrived 500 years ago, and the castle town built by Maeda Toshiie, a feudal lord. Therefore, the revitalization of the main street will not occur unless Misogigawa, which fostered the culture of Nanao, is restored. This explains why the local business people became involved in the regeneration of the community

and its culture. The culture of the community is a direct resource for a shop'. Thus, business entrepreneurs invest in the town's culture, and in reverse, shops needed for the town are a part of the town's culture. Our theme, "Community development through rejuvenating shops" clearly articulates that the culture of local entrepreneurs is supported by the town's cultural context.

(2) Community Development through Rejuvenating Shops

Through the attempts to create and recreate shops, one thing was felt strongly. That is, "careful design of shops which clearly articulate given town contexts is one of the most important elements in downtown community development." Some shop owners may decide to sacrifice their businesses for philanthropic activities. But if each shop endeavors to enhance its attractiveness, a greater contribution to the regeneration may be possible.

Interactions that take place in locations called shops rejuvenate the downtown area. Creating such shops is the most effective regeneration activity that business entrepreneurs can undertake.



The first shop, Yoriaidokoro-Misogikan, produced by Misogigawa Co. Ltd. becomes a land mark along the riverside

(3) A Downtown that Fosters Diversified Values

People gather in and bring liveliness to shops that clearly have a relationship with the downtown community. In such places, exchanges and interactions between people and things, people and people, information and culture begin. Also, the people who gather there begin to commit themselves to the town. Regenerating such relationships is one of the missions of the community development company.

Why do we place emphasis on "the relationship between people, shops, and the community?" Because we aim to create a downtown community that could foster diversified values. The allure of a city depends on its ability to create diversified values. Inspired by new people, things, information, and culture, a process of integration and creation will take place. The regeneration attempt of Misogigawa Co. Ltd. is a great experiment in how we can create diverse values through regenerating the relationship between people, shops, and the town.

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