

論文内容の要旨

論文題目

An Investigation of Suburbia and the Compact City in Japan:
Based on a Case Study in Fuchu-Machi

日本の郊外とコンパクトシティに関する研究
— 婦中町を事例として —

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Abstract

The Compact City theory first appeared in North America and in Europe as a reaction to a host of environmental and social problems associated with urban sprawl. At its core, it is a theory grounded in opposition to suburbia. The Japanese version of the Compact City, as imported from the West, includes that same opposition to suburbia in spite of an entirely different context. A context where the suburbs allow mixed land-use, has fewer issues with socio-economic segregation, and where rail use is often possible. Which begs the question, if the Compact City was created as an antidote to suburbia and urban sprawl in the West, what is its purpose in Japan, and what role should suburbia play?

So far the Compact City is largely viewed in Japan as a tool for urban revitalization, which is to say that the tendency is to apply it to city centers and minimize the role of suburbia in the process. But the center does not exist in isolation from the rest of the city and to the extent that suburbs are responsible for some of the problems found in traditional urban cores in Japan, it seems remiss that they are not included in a more proactive manner. More to the point, the Compact City concept was devised to resolve problems with urban forms on the fringe, and as such should by definition take those forms into account.

To do so requires a clear understanding of the character of those forms and how they are used by their inhabitants. In the literature on Japanese suburbs the tendency is to view suburbia in a negative light, particularly with work that is couched in the context of the Compact City. Common themes include concerns about quality of life for elderly residents, as well as more orthodox worries such as the economic costs of urban sprawl and energy use in a car-based society. Without denying the compelling evidence of these critiques, it is possible that focusing on the failures of suburban form is obscuring their capacity to be used towards resolving those problems and indeed their possible role in forming the future cities of Japan. In that light, this research questions the accepted view of suburbia, and re-considers its potential role in the context of the Compact City as it is being theorized and implemented in Japan.

Using a suburb in the 2nd-tier city of Toyama as a case study area the research relies on a combination of morphological analysis, a questionnaire, and interviews to test the degree to which the suburb meets, or works against, the goals of the Compact City. Looking at a period from 1974 to 2007 it was found that the suburb does exhibit many of the characteristics of urban sprawl, including patterns of leapfrog development and a reliance on the automobile. However, it was also found that patterns normally used to describe the Compact City were common, including complicated patterns of land-use, and relatively high levels of accessibility. More, the manner in which residents used the city at large was found to be complex. So much so that the very idea of limiting daily activities to a small compact sphere may prove difficult to achieve without a major cultural transformation. That is to say, altering urban form may not be enough. In this manner the research suggests the suburban typology that inspired the creation of the Compact City concept in North America and Europe exists in Japan only in part. This does not negate the value of the concept in Japan, but does suggest that it be carefully modified to accommodate the reality of the cities it is intended to improve. In the example of the case study suburb it seems a broader view of the city would be more appropriate, one that included suburbia not as an opposing element but as a partner. In addition it was found that a process of constant change within the suburb has been present throughout the 33 year study period, and it is suggested that it may be used as a tool towards encouraging the development of more livable suburbs in Japan.

Further, because the Compact City concept emerged in the West it is possible to consider the lessons from the Japanese suburb for that context. To that end some observations are offered, focusing in particular on the effect of relaxed zoning laws to improve accessibility in suburban communities.