



The history and future directions of greenways in Japanese New Towns

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Abstract

A number of societal changes such as an ageing population and a lack of economic prosperity mean that Japanese greenway planners will be faced with a number of new challenges in the coming decades. These societal changes will be particularly dramatic in the Japanese New Towns, which were constructed in the late 1950s. Some of these New Towns marked a departure for Japanese planning by including a network of greenways, which were planned to provide pleasant corridors for pedestrians and bikers. Around 30 years have passed since these areas were developed; today the greenways in these New Towns have become corridors with dense and rich greenery. Such matured greenways, which were supposed to provide an amenity for local residents, have increasingly come to be regarded as a cause of fear of crime. To try and mitigate this, trees and shrubs along the greenways are now closely trimmed or even removed.

However, such mature vegetation along the greenways may be regarded as a feature that maintains the history of the town. Such vegetation is also expected to provide ecological corridors that accommodate wildlife species which were abundant in the rural areas surrounding these New Towns. Within the context of proposing an optimum management scheme for Japanese greenways, the following study aims to explain and discuss how the fear of crime on greenways can be prevented whilst maintaining their ecological and historical functions.

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1. Introduction

For the last 30 years, Japanese planning has been undergoing a shift in emphasis towards preserving the environment and more recently, towards involving people in the decision-making process. These shifts have run parallel to a continued interest in greenway plan-

ning. In addition, recent changes in Japanese society mean that the planners of such greenways are faced with a number of growing concerns.

The following study aims to examine a growing concern for greenspace planners in Japan. This is achieving a balance between security, i.e. the fear of crime, and the needs of the environment. In the following we trace the historical development of greenspace planning in two case study areas, describing the context and the reasons behind the planning of the greenspaces. We show

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how this context determined how these greenspaces were planned and that planning for the fear of crime was not a concern at the time. We then describe the results of a study that show the factors that affect the fear of crime in present-day greenways. We discuss these results arguing that the future of greenway planning in Japan is to achieve a balance between fear of crime and the environment by encouraging public participation.

2. Greenways in Japanese New Towns: history, present situation and problem

Based on current estimates, Japan's population of 130 million people is likely to begin declining from 2007 and by 2015 as many as 25% of the population will be over 65. Japan's economy is unlikely to benefit from the exceptional years of growth that it enjoyed during the 1960s and 1980s and will continue to rely on imported resources. In the near future, Japanese planners will have to plan for a society affected by an ageing population and a deteriorating economy.

Such changes in society will be particularly strongly felt in Japanese New Towns. These New Towns were originally designed as bedroom communities to accommodate young couples with their children. Such areas, and the greenways and greenspaces they contain, were designed during growth years that were assumed to be permanent. They were designed for a steadily growing and coherent society. Now that this society is declining, greenways and greenspaces will have to be designed and managed differently. This includes designing and managing these areas to mitigate the fear of crime in these areas.

In addition, the important ecological and environmental role of greenways and greenspaces must also be considered. These roles include, conserving biodiversity, reducing summer heat and providing recreational space for outdoor activities (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport Government of Japan, 2002).

Unawareness of the necessary balance between the needs of fear of crime and the environment can be seen in the current management practices of greenways in New Towns. Here greenways can often be found without any "green". Local authorities tend to simply trim and cut down trees so as to make the interior of the greenways as visible as possible from the surrounding neighborhood (Amemiya and Yokohari, 2004). Given the declining situation in Japanese

New Towns, planners should consider how the fear of crime in greenspaces can be mitigated whilst maintaining their ecological function.

2.1. New Town developments in Japan

Rapid and immense post-war industrialization in Japan from the late 1950s to the early 1970s resulted in a successful economy with the second highest gross national product (GNP) in the world. However, the costs of this successful economy were changes to Japan's society and to its environment. Already in 1965 more than 63% of Japan's total population was living in cities, while almost one-third of outlying municipalities, 1100 out of 3300, were depopulated. This enormous migration of people from the countryside to major cities, which resulted in over-crowded cities and a depopulated countryside, can be seen as among the most serious social and environmental problems brought on by economic growth (Yokohari et al., 2000).

To accommodate people who moved into major cities such as Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya, the Japan Housing Corporation, now called the Urban Renaissance Agency, was established in 1955 with the objective of providing inexpensive apartment flats to the newcomers as quickly as possible. Housing complexes, in many cases known as 'New Towns', were a part of Japan's welfare system (Fig. 1) and were regarded as a symbol of the strength of Japan's post-war economic revitalization. More than 1.5 million apartments in 300 complexes were provided by the corporation from the late 1950s. By the late 1970s, 11 New Towns had been completed in the Tokyo area alone (Kiuchi and Inouchi, 1976).



Fig. 1. A typical housing complex developed in the suburbs of major cities in Japan.

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