Review

An experiment in urban regeneration using culture and art in Senba, Osaka's historic urban center, with a focus on the regeneration of urban space

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ABSTRACT

Urban regeneration through the use of culture and art is attracting the attention of many cities throughout the world. In this article, the author, through his specialty of urban planning, considers the potential for utilizing culture and art from the perspective of investigating new directions in urban regeneration. A case study has been conducted regarding Senba, the historic urban center of Osaka, Japan that has basically maintained its district structure and, as the heart of Osaka, assumed its place as an economic center for over 400 years, its experiment in urban regeneration through culture and art, and its development and process. The results of this experiment clearly show that along with attempting to expand the sharing of the meaning and value of resources lying dormant in the historic urban center through the medium of the arts, there has also been a substantive advance in the kind of urban regeneration known as area management, in which there has been a revitalization and diversification of activities geared toward urban regeneration as well as an increase in participants. Furthermore, through such means, the article shows prospects on the future form of urban regeneration in the historic center.

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Introduction

Currently, urban regeneration through the use of culture and art is attracting the attention of many cities throughout the world (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993; Boyer, 1988; Harvey, 1989; Zukin, 1982). For example, local revitalization through artists' residences and the concentration of artist studios; revitalization through the renovation of historic buildings and the renovation and conversion of historic neighborhoods; and setting up urban spaces as if they were theaters or museums and using them as spaces for artistic expression, are all known as representative efforts (Civic Pride Research Association, 2008; Osaka City University Urban Research Plaza, 2008; Sasaki & Mizuuchi, 2009; The University of Tokyo cSUR-SSD Working Group, 2008).

Such approaches are often discussed as experiments in opening up new horizons aimed at the invigoration of culture and arts policies or as a means used in city branding and tourism policies that provide topics of popular interest, without being limited by the domain of existing policies.

However, from the standpoint of the author, who mainly studies urban planning, what merits attention in the approaches towards urban regeneration through culture and the arts (Griffiths, 1995; Sharp, Pollock & Paddison, 2005) is that, in order to bring about regeneration in cities facing the issues of stagnation and decline, culture and arts policies do not stand separate from urban planning but are developed mutually and are linked in a complex manner. This article will focus on undertakings in Senba, Osaka, the center of activity for the author, and will introduce a case of cooperative action by the university and the citizens as an example of urban regeneration through culture and the arts.

Structure of the article

The article is structured as follows:
Section 3 gives an overview of Creative City theories as urban policies focused on culture and the arts and Section 4 touches on the problems harbored by urban planning in matured cities. Section 5 is the case study noted in this article about Senba, Osaka, one of the representative historic urban centers of Japan; after presenting the issues towards its regeneration, Sections 6–8 introduces the example of

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the Senba Art Café, a main agent of urban regeneration put in practice by the university focusing on culture and the arts, its chronologically developing program, and its process. Based on this, Section 9 touches on the meaning of regenerating the city through art and Section 10 gives a conclusion.

The Creative City theory as an urban policy that focuses on culture and the arts

First of all, the Creative City was put forward by people such as Peter Hall, Charles Landry, Richard Florida, and Masayuki Sasaki (Florida, 2004; Hall, 1998; Landry, 2000).

There is recently an increasing trend towards illustrating urban strategies based on this Creative City Theory (Cameron, 2003; Monclús, 2003; Plaza, 1999; Vicario & Monje, 2003). Some representative examples are Bologna, Montreal, Bilbao, Newcastle-Gateshead, and Berlin. In Japan as well, cities such as Yokohama, Kobe and Kanazawa profess to be Creative Cities, and a number of cities make it a centerpiece of their policies. Osaka is also one of them. But, first of all, what is a Creative City? According to Sasaki's definition, it is a city whose culture and industry are rich in creativity, are based on the free expression of people's creative activities, and at the same time, are supplied with a progressive and flexible urban economic system that has moved away from mass production (Sasaki, 2001).

Masayuki Sasaki cites Jane Jacobs and Charles Landry as important individuals in the lineage that led to the emergence of the concept of the Creative City. Jacobs (1961, 1984), in her book *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life*, emphasizes that, in order to achieve a creative urban economy, the existence of creative people and groups of enterprises — skilled in innovation and able to make flexible use of technology — as well as networks between them, are important, and it is necessary to achieve an urban milieu that accommodates the existence of such people and enterprises. Another of her representative works, known as a bestseller, is *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. In this book, she adopts a fundamental position of criticism against modern urban planning and offers alternatives for creating diversity in the city. For example, she cites the necessity for mixed zoning as opposed to single-use zoning in urban planning.

Charles Landry (Landry, 2000; Landry & Woods, 2008), on the other hand, in his book *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, highlights the importance of a creative milieu from the standpoint of solving urban problems. In seeking new directions in the development of exhausted and decaying cities, he focuses on experiments that utilize the creative power of culture and the arts to bring out dormant energy. And in his book, *The Intercultural City: Planning for Diversity Advantage*, co-authored with Phil Woods, he discusses the importance of maintaining the diversity of a city and proposes a dialog with the past as an urban policy for the co-existence of multiple cultures and for cementing the identity of a city. At the same time, founded in these ideas, he writes on the directionality that the sustainable city should aim towards.

While both were interested in the how a city ought to be in the commonly held concept of the Creative City, it is no coincidence that both make note of fields that are closely intertwined with urban planning — urban space and area management. In other words, behind the Creative City Theory is shown the implicit possibility that urban planning may be an effective tool, from the perspective of urban regeneration through culture and the arts.

Issues faced by urban planning in mature cities

Next, I would like to consider the issues currently faced by urban planning. In those regions that were the first in the world to accomplish modernization, the city that had theretofore been the epitome of prosperity is now exhausted and coming face-to-face with the reality of decay (Couch, Fraser, & Percy, 2003). A representative urban strategy for such exhausted and decayed districts in which urban activity has dulled was commonly the redevelopment method called "scrap and build."

However, it has already come to be understood that this method also involves many problems. Due to such problems as the uniformity of the established city, the eviction of existing residents through gentrification, and the increase in business risk of rebuilding a city from scratch, the application of only the "scrap and build" method in response to exhausted and decaying districts has already become difficult (Minohara, 2003).

Under such circumstances, it has become necessary for urban planning to rethink its basic attitudes established in the modern age, as represented by the uniformity of land use, the functionality of urban space, and the guarantee of safety. It is now the age for urban planning to finally shift its focus from quantity to quality, while working out revitalization strategies that make full use of even all nonspatial factors such as the people and community that live in the city, or the city's industry, economy and culture. Such trends will come to show its expansion in attempts at the enrichment of regulations aimed toward the improvement of urban landscapes or the qualitative progress of design (Japan Architectural Association, 2009; Nishimura & Machinami Research Association, 2000, 2009).

At the same time the perspective of utilizing existing things, instead of creating new things from scratch, is now coming to be demanded. And in response to this method of regenerating the city through repair and partial renovation, or using the city's inner strengths, which can perhaps be termed its self-healing powers, as opposed to resetting it completely, there is now a need to face the issue of how urban planning will respond (Frieden & Sagalyn, 1989). Thus the adoption of area management (Kobayashi, Uchiumi, Muraki, Ishikawa, & Lee, 2005; Lloyd, Mccarthy, Mcgreal, & Berry, 2003; Morcol, Hoyt, Meek, & Zimmerman, 2002; Symes & Steel, 2003) as typified by main street programs or BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) is proceeding in various places, and proactive efforts are underway for rediscovering the particular charm of localities and initiating *machizukuri* (community development) that uses local resources in order to repair and rebuild communities (Hayden, 1997).

Furthermore, amidst the increasing severity of environmental problems on a global scale and the problem of resource depletion, it has become necessary for cities to deal with the issue of sustainability, and various proposals have been made towards the realization of environmental