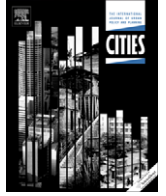




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## The new mode of urban renewal for the former outcaste minority people and areas in Japan

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### ABSTRACT

Urban renewal in Japan has mainly consisted of redevelopment by private capital redevelopment of commercial areas and, in some case, by the public sector. Redevelopment of residential districts has lagged behind due to the predominance of private ownership and complicated development rights relationships. In the midst of this, the redevelopment of low-standard housing environments in the *Buraku* districts, where the formerly discriminated-against minority, the *Burakumin*, live is an extremely rare example of housing renewal. The *Buraku* liberation movement was able to exercise great political power, and large amounts of national funds were invested over a 27-year period in the *Buraku* as *Dowa* assimilation projects. Their living environments were remarkably improved, but unfortunately at present apartment building slums, carrying social overtones of ghetto, are reappearing and these are becoming areas where a new class of the poor are gathering to live. Because of splits within the *Buraku* liberation movement and political opposition, assessment of the value of *Dowa* assimilation projects is divided, and society tends to evade the issue. Against that background, in recent years creative and self-reliant means of community development that do not depend on national government funds have emerged from within the *Dowa* districts. In this article we draw attention to these undertakings as indispensable for the evolution of a high-level advanced capitalistic society into a sustainable society, and introduce them as progressive examples of Japanese *Machizukuri* (urban rejuvenation).

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### Introduction: urban renewal and government policy towards *Buraku* people in Japan

Urban renewal in Japan has consisted mainly of redevelopment through land use conversion around train stations and commercial districts, or improvement of sub-standard housing districts utilizing the Low-Standard Housing District Renewal Law of 1960, although there have been relatively fewer cases of the latter. In ordinary residential districts, most of the cases of renovation have occurred spontaneously through piecemeal rebuilding or new building construction at individual sites financed by private real estate capital operating in an active market. However, in the inner ring of large cities or the sprawl zone of metropolitan areas there are many locales where not much private capital has been invested and building renovation has not been active, so in many instances either the housing environment has not been improved or else improvements have been made only piecemeal within the existing crowded conditions. Because land ownership is fragmented into many small private holdings, bold and large-scale redevelopment

by the public sector is difficult. Inevitably, such kinds of large-scale urban neighborhood redevelopment must occur in certain particular types of locations (ZSSK, 1991).

These 'particular type of locations' implies the discriminated-against *Buraku* communities. Under the feudalistic social system of the Edo Period, the outcaste people at the lowest level of the social hierarchy were called '*Burakumin*' and in general they could not own land, could only follow specific occupations, and were herded together to live in specified locations. After the abolition of this legal status system by the Meiji Government, the living conditions of these minority communities of *Burakumin* were still poor due to continued unfair treatment as before during the Edo Period, and they were in effect deprived of their legally guaranteed privilege of holding many occupations. Capitalistic development in Japan pushed rural *Burakumin* into urban areas and led to the expansion of their urban living spaces. Their communities were often called slums or poor people's enclave like ghetto, which were stigmatized as the typical residential spaces for the urban and rural poor.

As Meerman (2005) pointed that 5–10% of the world's population consist of the socially excluded, herein defined as minorities with a recent history of trauma (enslavement, conquest, outcaste status), stigmatization, economic discrimination, and slow economic progress. He used in his analysis four representative

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minorities, including Japanese Burakumin. Needless to say, there are many other comparable problems and policies, such as Indian Dalits, Native and Aboriginal people, and affirmative action in the US. Even in the recent contributions of this Journal, [Cardinal \(2006\)](#) or [Nijman \(2008\)](#) dealt with the minority or socially excluded people's issue. Among them, we want to stress the uniqueness and political strength of the Burakumin's liberation movement, assimilation policy and urban regeneration related to slum housing improvement in Japan between comparable problems and policies in the world. Regret to say, the history and formation of Burakumin's policy had been scarcely described in the English literature, and it is worthy to introduce this unique historical development of policies toward outcaste people in the advanced capitalist nation of Japan.

The large number of housing improvement projects that have been carried out in these *Buraku* communities is quite remarkable. National government funds were invested over a 27-year period from 1969 to 1997. That special national funding was invested for revitalization of these particular *Buraku* areas was due to the fact that the *Buraku* liberation movement was extremely strong for a minority movement. As a domestic social movement, originating with the National Levelers' Association (*Zenkoku Suiheisha*) in 1923, from the pre-war period on it had a certain amount of power which it exerted in domestic politics and was able to secure a government program called the Assimilation Project Plan (*Yuwa Jigyō Keikaku*) ([McLauchlan, 2003](#)). Then, after the Pacific War, from the late 1950s on, the movement came to have close connections not only with local governments but with the central government and the labor union movement as well, and through that, from the late 1960s onward, succeeded in having a national program adopted for the improvement of *Buraku* environments. That a minority movement could achieve so much, securing such great political power and succeeding in the physical renewal of the *Buraku*, is quite remarkable even on a world scale.

At the same time, the *Buraku* liberation movement which promoted the renewal of the *Buraku* communities was extremely sensitive to domestic politics. In 1969, one reason they were able to secure the national program was because based on their 1955-era political order, various segments of the *Buraku* liberation movement had forged linkages with both the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the main opposition parties, the Socialists and the Communists. During the 1960s the most powerful group was the *Buraku* Liberation League (BLL) which had ties to the Japan Socialist Party, and poised against it was the All Japan *Dowa* Association (*Zen Nihon Dowakai*), aligned with the Liberal Democratic Party, which had been formed in 1960. When the 1970s began, the opposition parties splintered, opposition within the BLL between the supporters of the Japan Socialist Party, the Japan Communist Party, and the labor unions intensified over how the *Buraku* liberation movement should proceed. In 1970 the *Buraku* Liberation League experienced a crisis of factional splitting, and in 1976 the Japan Federation of *Buraku* Liberation (JFBL) came into being with support from the Japan Communist Party.

This factional hostility was even more extreme in politics at the local level. Local government civil service workers' unions and teachers' unions that supported the Socialist Party, and those that supported the Communist Party, inevitably became involved in the parties' feuds over the *Buraku* liberation movement. Fights occurred frequently over which faction should exert leadership in how to proceed with *Dowa* projects, and during local election campaigns or in public places like the town hall or in the schools, there were many small scale confrontations.

With the adoption of the national program, large amounts of money were moved around and profitable interests arose, leading at times to confusion and corruption within the *Buraku* liberation movement itself. While the BLL strongly promoted a policy of

condemning discrimination, the mass media became tired of the somewhat one-sided insistence that the *Buraku* liberation movement was one for 'Justice' and the party factions' single mindedness over 'progressive' and covert censorship began to creep into reporting on the movement. It also gave rise among the general public to fears of getting involved in the movement, avoidance of the *Buraku* problem, viewing it as a taboo subject, or a sense of reverse discrimination. Rather than society having conquered discrimination, the situation became one of concealed discrimination ([Suginohara, 2002](#)).

In promoting *Dowa* projects, there was also unfortunately opposition over which of the movement's organizations would exert leadership. It is a fact that many *Dowa* projects were seen in a negative light due to this ideological antagonism. Evaluation of the *Dowa* projects is split down the middle. The current authors, on the other hand, take the position of recognizing that a more positive evaluation is appropriate. Through the *Dowa* projects, many of the *Buraku* residents succeeded in upgrading their living and educational environments. Inevitably, those people who received benefits from the *Dowa* projects and achieved more comfortable living circumstances tended to leave the *Dowa* districts, and those who could not were left behind. Also, a tendency has intensified for people who are not *Burakumin*, but have poor or insecure housing conditions, to move into *Dowa* districts or adjoining areas. Certainly the worst slum-like elements of the *Buraku* have been overcome physically and living standards and education standards have been improved to a certain extent. Recognizing these achievements, the law was allowed to expire in 1997, and work on all remaining projects of the national program came to a complete end at the end of March, 2002 ([Kanai, 1991](#)). However, it does not logically follow that *Dowa* policies should end just because *Dowa* assimilation projects have been halted. What is important is the question of whether the '*Buraku* problem', which was the object of *Dowa* project and policies, has really been solved or not.

It is true that the *Dowa* assimilation projects up to now have resulted in many improvements in the environment of the districts. Also, in contrast to improvement projects in ordinary (non-*Dowa*) districts, they did not stop at only physical improvements in the environment and infrastructure, but took into account 'soft' aspects such as the residents' employment opportunities, health, and welfare. This deserves attention for being a progressive and innovative development in such projects. In these areas, the results should not be limited to only the *Dowa* assimilation projects, but there are many things which should be adopted as models in living environment improvement projects for ordinary districts.

In the following section, we will point out some achievements and remaining issues of living environment improvement projects in *Dowa* districts, and ascertain what meaning and impact progressive and innovative projects have.

### **Dowa project characteristics and *Buraku* transformation from a physical perspective**

Concerning the discriminated-against *Buraku* that were targeted by *Dowa* projects, as can be seen in [Fig. 1](#), they are rather concentrated in Western Japan in the Kinki, Chugoku, Shikoku, and Kyushu regions; there are fewer in Chubu and the Kanto, and there are none to be found in Tohoku, Hokkaido, or Okinawa. The largest numbers of *Burakumin* live in the Kansai area in Hyogo, Osaka, and Kyoto Prefectures, and in Fukuoka Prefecture in Kyushu. Their locations are quite varied, the function and form of their settlements varies from urban types to agricultural and fishing villages, and their scale also varies from just a few households to several thousand households ([Miwa, 1986](#)) Their economic bases

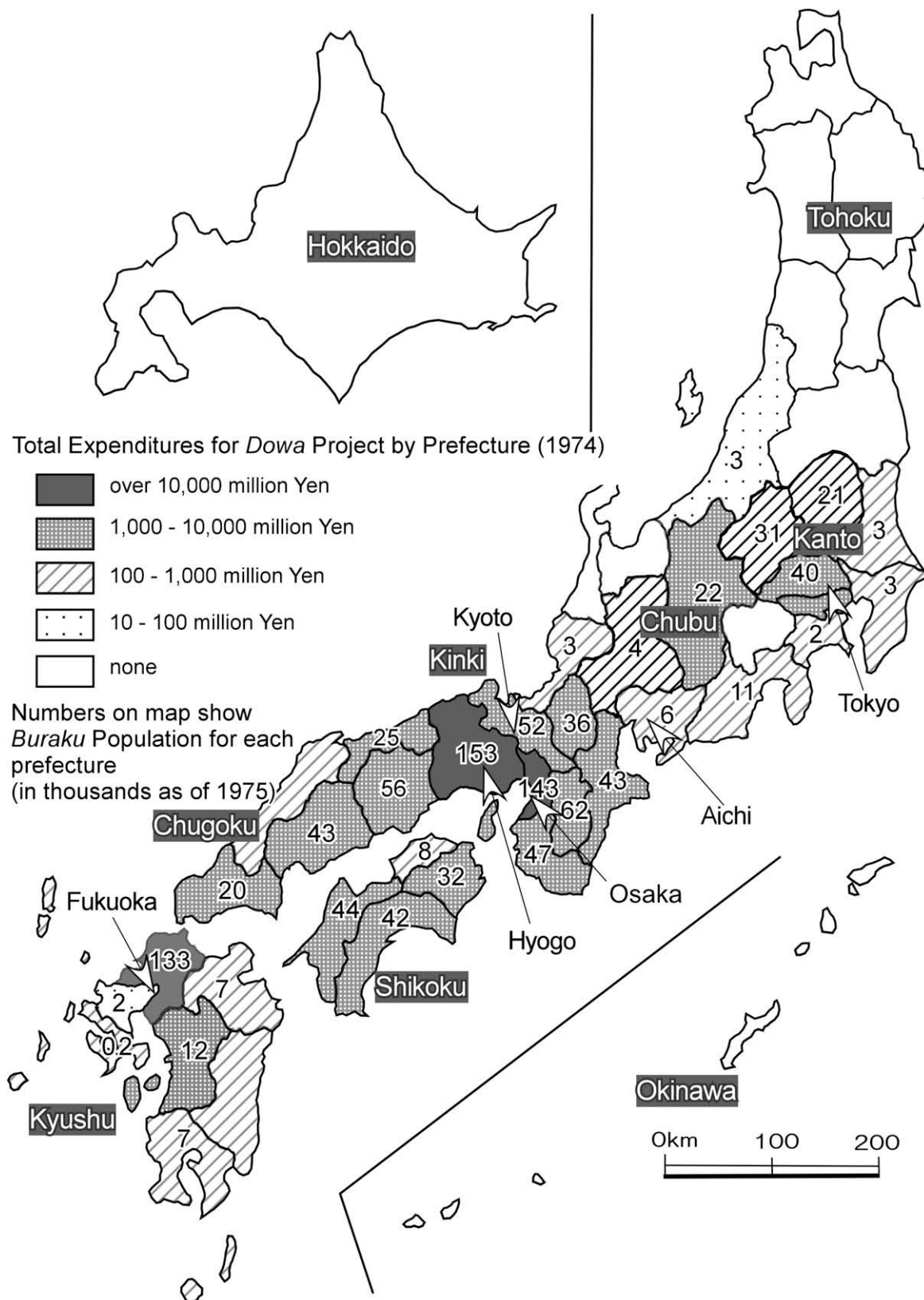


Fig. 1. Distribution of expenditures for *Dowa* projects and number of *Buraku* people by prefecture.

also vary, from the so-called '*Buraku* occupations' such as meat butchering, leather work, recycling of discarded materials, and drum manufacturing, to day labor and miscellaneous jobs.

In this paper we will not take up the local differences on a micro scale, but we want to clarify as a general trend how renewal has

progressed in large part in Japanese urban-type *Buraku* and the processes involved.

A temporal special measures law with a period of 10 years was implemented from 1969 to 1981 (with a 3-year extension), and it was followed by a 5-year term new law called the 'Special

Measures for Area Improvement Projects Law', which was in force from 1982 to 1986. A minor change in the law's title followed in 1987, and this renamed 'Law for Special Fiscal Measures for Area Improvement Projects', initially enacted for 5 years, was once again extended by another 5 years to 1996. As of March 31, 1997, if the ongoing *Dowa* projects were not completed, at most another 5 years of financial support was guaranteed. Otherwise, many incentives, including a high rate of investment subsidies, and a preferential tax system, were ended. If they were still needed, they had to be carried out according to ordinary laws pertaining to project implementation.

During this 27-year period of *Dowa* special laws, twelve ministries and agencies operated *Dowa* projects, among whom the Ministry of Construction played the biggest role in providing the built environment such as housing (see Fig. 2). Special task forces in many local governments exclusively dealing with *Dowa* issues also energetically carried out such projects. In total, thirteen trillion yen was invested into these projects, of which nearly 60% was spent for

physical projects such as housing improvements (see Table 1). A total of 840 *Buraku* were selected as targets for these projects. 65,000 public housing units were rebuilt after the demolition of houses in physically deteriorated condition, and 60,000 public housing units were newly provided for *Buraku* people. There were 72,000 cases of loan extensions for newly-purchased houses, and 98,000 cases of loan extensions for the repair of houses. To sum up all the cases, 295,000 households were newly provided or rehabilitated, nearly equal to the total number of *Buraku* people in Japan. Among the remaining problems, there still exist *Buraku* which refused or were not permitted to have *Dowa* projects, large-scale urban *Buraku* where many projects are still ongoing and need more time to be completed, and *Buraku* which were too small and could not apply for *Dowa* projects (Mizuuchi, 1998).

In positively evaluating them, *Dowa* projects should be praised for their volume and the quantities of housing renewals they provided, and the major transformation of former slums, in comparison with the fact that most existing built-up areas in Japan have

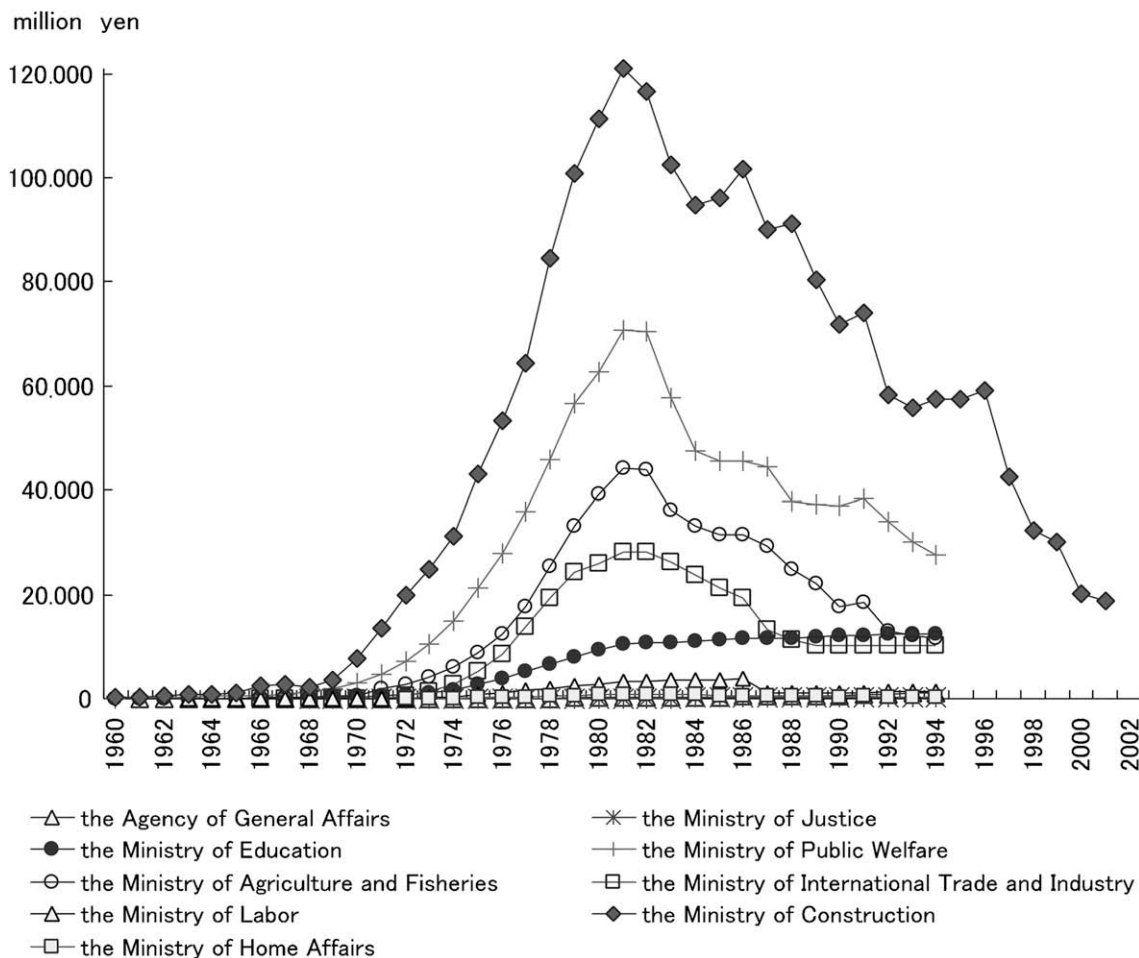


Fig. 2. Trend of budgets for *Dowa* projects by ministry.

Table 1  
Budgets for *Dowa* projects in municipalities and prefectures.

From 1969 to 1993	Municipalities reported number	Total expenditures spent for the projects concerned in billions of yen	Share of physical projects (%)	Share of non-physical projects (%)	National funds (%)	Prefectural funds (%)	Municipal funds (%)	Total expenditures by municipalities in billions of yen	Share of expenditure spent for these projects (%)
Municipalities	1094	10,318	58.4	41.6	22.6	10.8	66.6	255,523	4.0
Prefectures	36	3562	37.0	63.0	21.5	78.5		409,500	0.9



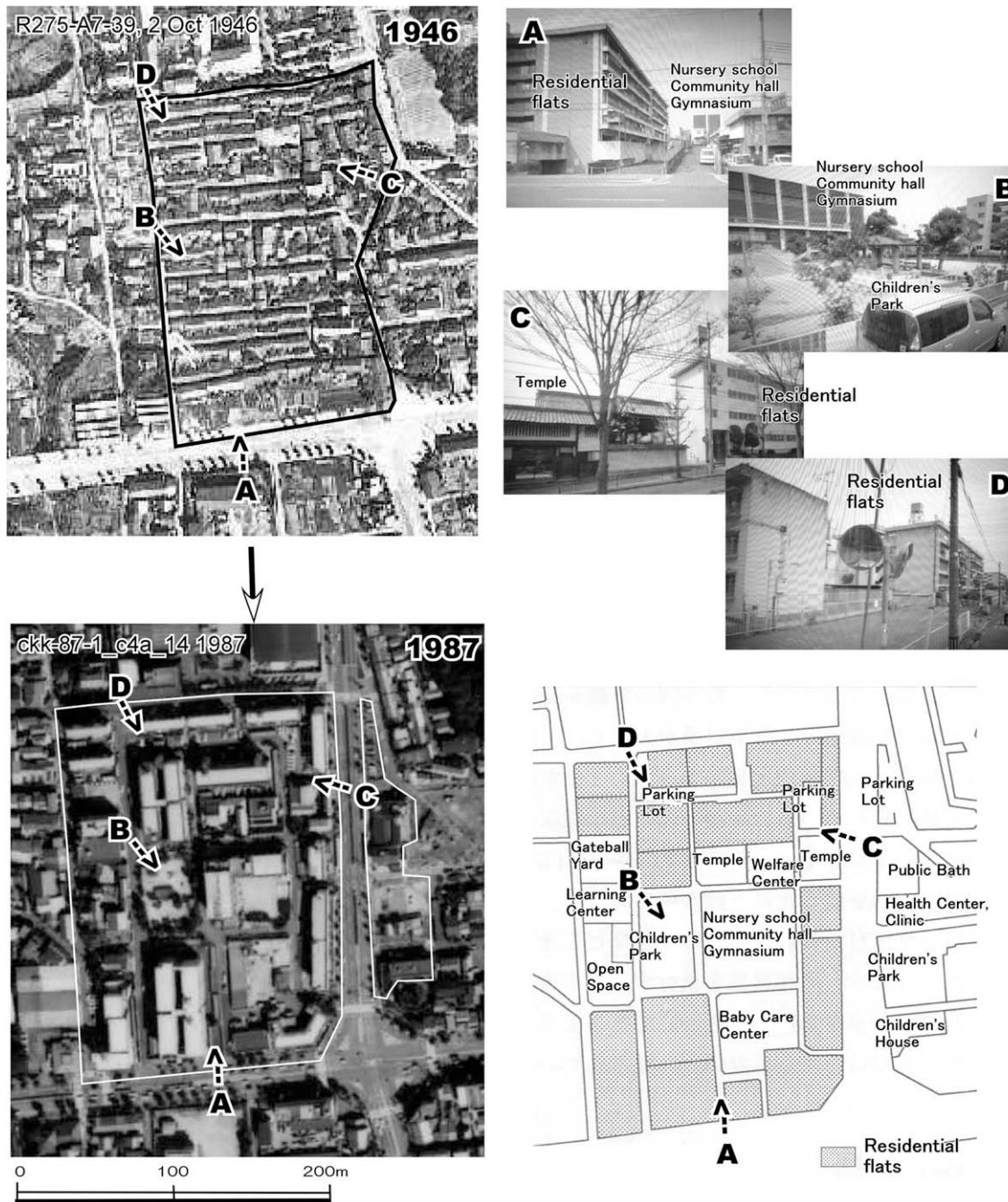


Fig. 3. Transformation of one *Buraku* area.

been untouched by these kinds of improvement programs, except for the redevelopment of prosperous quarters near railway stations or major traffic intersections. From a physical standpoint, *Buraku*, formerly discriminated against as special districts, have been completely renewed and are now indistinguishable from ordinary non-*Buraku* districts.

Fig. 3 shows the transformation of a *Buraku* area by a *Dowa* project. In *Dowa* districts, various measures, beginning with housing at the top of the list, and including environmental infrastructure such as roads and sewers, public facility buildings, and investments in public welfare, livelihood improvement, school education and social education were put into place as a concentrated set. The figure shows the transformation of an actual district seen from an aerial photograph, and one can easily see how a completely different

neighborhood was created by redevelopment through clearance of crowded and dilapidated wooden housing.

#### ***Dowa* project issues and the beginning of a new type of *Machizukuri* (urban rejuvenation)**

However, it cannot be denied that in a few *Dowa* districts, ghettoized enclave have once again arisen, now in the shape of reinforced concrete apartment buildings (Uchida, 1993). Many problems can still be pointed out. In the renewed *Buraku*, the share of public housing is extraordinarily high, and their rents are also incredibly low, from one sixth to one twentieth of the average public housing rent. Vacant public housing has seldom been open to

non-*Buraku* people, and the selection process of housing tenants is not managed in a proper way. These problems are very serious at the moment, since the fundamental revision of the Public Housing Law in 1996 declared the future abolition of preferential treatment for *Dowa* public housing under the new principles of provision of public housing in line with privatization, open to housing market mechanisms, and severely limiting subsidized provision of housing to only the very poor, the handicapped, or the aged.

Judging just the physical environment, during the early stages of *Dowa* projects in the 1970s, the design of housing construction and the schemes of housing estates were in most cases done in a tentative, ad hoc manner, so that the physical environments with deserted asphalt streets and concrete block boxes of housing were not fit for a sound and humane residential life. High-rise blocks, which were thought to be the best solution for the density problem, were not suited to aged people's living needs. Lack of a sophisticated sense of physical space management in the housing estates also damaged the *Buraku* industries. As a result, open spaces in the housing estate became workshop spaces for industrial use, or the industries themselves disappeared. The hollowing out of industries in the *Buraku* was underway, and the younger generation and highly educated or professionally people could not help but leave the *Buraku*, partly due to the ongoing progress of such *Dowa* projects. The management and control of the facilities for everyday public services in the *Buraku* became too bureaucratic to be handled flexibly. In fact, a concentration of aged people and low income residents caused once again the reproduction of *Buraku* enclave, since little consideration was paid to permanent residents.

Moreover, the national programs ended, and preferential treatment for the *Dowa* districts practically ceased. New problems arose that were not only those of the poverty of the minority *Buraku* people, as both long-term resident ethnic Koreans and poor people from among the majority Japanese who were living in and around the *Dowa* districts started moving in. The conditions that *Dowa* districts are now confronted with do not allow for optimism.

The *Dowa* project, as an implementation of policy aimed at a minority, are a rare example, even on the world stage, of local renewal being carried out by dealing skillfully with mainstream party politics and the bureaucracy. Although we have already pointed out the political opposition and the ambiguous view of *Buraku* discrimination in civil society, within the context of local renewal, or what in Japan is called *Machizukuri*, that is urban rejuvenation, the *Dowa* projects have provided us with abundant material by their example. The way the term *Machizukuri* is used in Japan usually means development or renewal that depends on the 'construction state' mentality of the central government or local governments, so it is usually associated with building 'things' or 'structures', mainly by the public sector. On the other hand, there have also been cases called *Machizukuri* in Japan that were experiments where the private sector was included, where the residents have also been involved, and local renewal was carried out over time in a restorative manner. Most examples of this latter type have been in dealing with limited local areas in cities where affluent people live (Sorensen and Funck, 2007). In this sense, the *Machizukuri* in the *Buraku* is an exceptional case in Japan of *Machizukuri* by people who are not affluent.

Seen from yet another perspective, we call attention to the fact that the *Buraku* liberation movement organizations can be seen as NPOs that are local mediating organizations, something which otherwise hardly exists in Japan. When *Buraku* improvement was taken up as a movement for *Machizukuri*, it was something that moved forward self-reliantly under NPO leadership, while maintaining a public-private partnership. Seen from this perspective, this movement is an unusual and pioneering example.

This movement is something that has arisen in some *Dowa* districts since the mid 1990s when it became clear that the *Dowa* pro-

ject would end. It is an experiment in which a social movement is transformed into a social enterprise, and this enterprise and NPOs together promote community development without depending on public funds. It is a very interesting experiment in that it draws on the social movement tradition of the *Buraku* liberation movement, recasting it as a network, and resurrecting its members as people who will promote community business, in order to prevent the *Dowa* district from turning back into a slum-like ghetto (Uchida, 2006).

In the following sections, we would like to shed some light on a few interesting experiments in community development of *Machizukuri*, whose methods differ from those used up till now, that are being carried out in *Dowa* districts which one again are facing extremely difficult circumstances. We will introduce the circumstances in which skills accumulated in social movements and the power of networks are beginning to be mobilized against Japan's chronic homeless problem, and the problems of people recently evicted from their housing or with insecure employment, as creative and self-reliant ways of dealing with the present's new forms of poverty.

### The evolution from *Dowa* project to a locally shared creative *Machizukuri* movement

In this section, we want to elucidate the process of development and the characteristics of the progressive *Machizukuri* activities which up till now have stood in the center of the *Dowa* district *Machizukuri* movement, both the development of their innovative activities within the movement demanding improvements for their districts, as well as their *Machizukuri* activities aimed at solving the increasingly difficult issues mentioned above, now that the special project are no longer in effect, by acting on their already accumulated lessons in a variety of abundantly creative projects unique to certain locations. We pick up the representative model cases through our interview survey and collection of materials which are gathered and published in each district. These districts and associations, whose transformation and activities might fit our research theme, are well-known and fairly well-researched in the academy and related societies in Japan.

#### *The evolution of movements demanding district improvements*

Here we will elucidate the evolutionary process of a 'demand-type' movement aimed at district improvements during the early period of the *Machizukuri* movement of a *Dowa* district in the city of Osaka. Also, while district improvement became an actuality together with promotion of the *Dowa* assimilation projects, we want to clarify how the work of the local community and grassroots *Machizukuri* was moved forward.

#### *District A: from a 'landlocked island' to a 'human neighborhood'*

District A was formerly known as a 'landlocked island' in a geographic sense. That is to say it was surrounded by a large river to the south, a university campus on the west, a large bridge to the east, and a subway car depot on the north. The greatest obstacle to people's interaction however was discrimination. In regards to the subway car depot, a major dispute opposing its construction broke out when the plans surfaced in 1957, but residents were not able to overcome the many differences in interests and positions to present a united front, and only partially came together in the fight. Then, 8 years later in 1965, when the District A branch of the *Buraku* Liberation League (which had formerly been the District A Housing-Demand Union) was formed, a movement that had begun in the struggle over housing began shifting towards a struggle over environmental improvements for the dilapidated area

(BA, 2006). Thereafter, in 1976 under the watchword of 'environmental improvement', a 'District A Comprehensive Plan Execution Committee' was formed which aimed to unite everyone in the district. In June of that same year, after an 18 h all night negotiating session with the Osaka City government, they won approval of their demands as the framework for future development: the removal of 200 houses that were jammed together along the river bank, the renovation of groups of dilapidated housing units inside the neighborhood, and the removal of the subway car depot. Thereafter, concrete results were steadily realized. An 'Association for Promoting *Machizukuri* Using the Former Subway Depot Grounds' was formed in 1988 in the wake of the subway car depot removal, and it played the lead role in forging the guidelines for *Machizukuri*, not only in District A, but also the eastern portion of District S. The basic concepts of *Machizukuri* set forth in their 'Four Principles of *Machizukuri*' were 'human neighborhoods', 'neighborhoods of self-governance by residents', 'neighborhoods with water and greenery', and 'neighborhoods with education and culture.' By 1994 the neighborhood had been reborn with the completion of the AOTS (Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship) Kansai Training Center, the District A Middle School, a special-care old people's home, and the District S Housing Service Center. With the opening of Central Park in 1998 and the completion of a sports center in 2000, *Machizukuri* using the former subway depot grounds was essentially finished (Yamamoto, 2000, 2002, 2006; BAS, 1979).

#### District N

District N is the largest *Dowa* district in Osaka City, and a district that saw the development of numerous demand-type and opposition movements after the war, and has obtained results through a variety of means. The 'Order Prohibiting Street Vendors' immediately after the war was a matter of life or death for the roughly 4000 shoe repair workers from discriminated-against *Buraku* who constituted half of the street vendors. Including their families, this directly affected almost 20,000 people. In opposition to this order, in response to appeals from the *Buraku* Liberation Committee's Osaka Prefecture Alliance (formed in 1946), an 'Street Vendor Prohibition Opposition League' was formed and began a campaign that managed to have the prohibition order withdrawn. In 1951, in order to help shoemakers and shoe repairers who were having trouble raising capital in the bad economic conditions of the post war period, and to restore the livelihood of people in the *Buraku* who had become slaves to debts at a high rate of interest, the 'District N Business Start-up Association' was created and it developed into a movement demanding rehabilitation aid funding in negotiations with Osaka City. In a way that is a precursor to what is today called 'micro credit', a 'five person group system' of shared debt guarantee was established, and they succeeded in obtaining rehabilitation funding. Building on an accumulation of such activities, in 1953 the '*Buraku* Liberation All Japan Committee District N Branch' was formed. Thereafter, a movement for construction of a public bath was begun, and in 1955 a public bath spring was opened with subsidies from the prefecture and city governments and contributions collected from the local residents. In 1956, in accordance with plans for building two new national highways and new construction on the Osaka Loop train line, Osaka City tried to forcibly evict *Buraku* people who were living in barrack-style housing on vacant land under the charge of illegal occupancy. The following year a residents' movement arose in opposition to the evictions. This movement later developed into the Housing Demands Attainment League, which exerted pressure as far as the Ministry of Construction and managed to obtain funding. As a result, in 1959, 80 units of city-managed public housing were constructed. Thereafter, the people who moved into public housing joined the *Buraku* Liberation League District N Branch,

which from a beginning of only seven members expanded to 96. Subsequently, up until 1965 another 202 units of public housing were constructed, but after that the city of Osaka attempted to end construction of housing under *Dowa* project, and so the Housing Demands Attainment League was reconstituted in District N and it once again threw itself into the struggle for more housing. And this time not only for housing, but adding demands for combination housing with commercial space attached, meeting halls, housing with work spaces, a children's hall, and an infant day-care center. In 1967 and again in 1970 parts of this were realized and people were able to occupy the buildings. In this way, District N was able to lead the nation in accomplishing the large scale transformation of a neighborhood of which half had been burned down during the war, building a total of 1500 housing units, constructing a youth hall and low-cost old people's home, three rest and recreation facilities for the elderly, and infrastructure improvements in the living environment (BN ed., 1993; BN, 1998).

#### *Transition to ordinary measures and development of creative Machizukuri activities*

Up to this point, the various *Dowa* districts had developed demand-type and opposition movements, brought pressure to bear on the *Dowa* administration, and succeeded in district improvements while overcoming many difficulties. However, with the expiration of the Special Measures Law in March 2002, they would thereafter have to move towards their own *Machizukuri* using the ordinary project. As stated in an earlier section, the ending of *Dowa* policy measures did not mean that the *Buraku* problem had been solved. The various issues that are confronting the *Dowa* districts at present are *Dowa* problems that have not yet been solved. However, at this point it is difficult to depend on solutions to these problems through specifically *Dowa* policy measures, as they are challenges that are facing the entire community. In the following part we will explain the characteristics of some representative past and present *Machizukuri* activities aimed at dealing with these issues, which have been developed skillfully utilizing unique local creativity. Moreover, this type of *Machizukuri* need not be limited to the individual locales, but can be opened up to the wider society as types of *Machizukuri* that can be shared and contribute to the social fabric. In this we can verify the very best mechanisms of *Dowa* district *Machizukuri* under the general measures which were not headlined under the previous *Dowa* policy measures that relied upon the government.

#### *Towards creation of a shared community through socially contributing community businesses*

##### *Asaka Personal Relations (ASP): District A*

ASP's activities began as a way of securing their own capital for their projects and not just relying on the income from association dues from their branches. This had its beginning in the early 1980s with the problem of river bank supervision that arose after the completion of river bank improvement construction along the Y River. As a result of carrying on discussions with what was at that time the Ministry of Construction, the ministry delegated maintenance to the River Association, and the association entered into a contract with the BLL's A Branch. However, members of the movement felt uneasy about being involved with a business contract, and so they moved in the direction of creating their own company. As a result, the company was set up in April of 1989, and it took over supervision of the river banks on the Y River as well as supervision of the former grounds of the subway car depot which was being moved. At the time of its establishment its name was the A Environmental Supervision Office, Ltd. (this was changed in 1997 to Asaka Personal Relations, Ltd.), and it started out by employing



four people who were residents in the district (BORMU, 2000). Thereafter it was proactive in employing people who normally had difficulty finding employment, such as the handicapped, the homeless, and single mothers with children. Its management area has also expanded from the former grounds of the subway car depot to places in Osaka, Toyonaka, and Yao Cities. Its work not only includes building maintenance, but it has expanded its territory, while professing to be a 'people-friendly company', and has branched out into managing pharmacies, selling groceries, and the manufacture and sale of paint. At present it employs 120 people. In October 2004, its status was recognized under ISO 14001, and as the company's name indicates, it has provided jobs for people within and outside the community with the motto of 'treating people as important' (Yamamoto, 2006).

*Community Development Corporation NICE, Ltd. (Nishinari Inner City Enterprise): District N*

In 1997, as an experiment in *Machizukuri* in District N, a new type of social enterprise was established to assist residents' participation in *Machizukuri*. The acronym for this enterprise's name is NICE, Nishinari Inner City Enterprise. The name is meant to imply the idea of contributing through *Machizukuri* activities to solving the various local issues that the inner city district of N is facing. NICE places the idea of assisting *Machizukuri* with the residents' participation at the center, but more specifically establishes the themes of 'people-building' and 'job-creating', and it mainly develops various projects in the areas of living environment, welfare, and employment. In addition, NICE has operated a 'Reform Center' which assists home building so that anyone, especially the elderly and the handicapped, can live comfortably; a *Charenjido* ('Challenge Hall') that sells or rents welfare-related equipment; and the N Ceramic Works that makes tiles using the ground beef bones produced by the local industry. Also, under the theme of 'food' it has set up a restaurant in the district, and carries out assistance with meals for the elderly who live alone. Additionally, NICE participates in the national homeless survey, operates the *Kurashi Ouenshitsu* ('Livelihood Assistance Office') that gives rehabilitation and livelihood assistance to street sleepers, and in other ways continues to be involved with trying to solve various social problems (BN, 2008).

*Progress towards establishing a Machizukuri corporation beginning from the experiments of a community fund and the community restaurant 'Otakaraya'*

The *Kitashiba* Community Fund was set up by the residents of District K to promote the building of a thriving community with no discrimination. It is a micro fund created to help the residents overcome difficulties in their lives through mutual assistance and trust among themselves. This fund consists of three sub funds, of which the *Otagaisama* ('reciprocity') Fund, meant to advance loans for living expenses, is one. The second is the *Yume* ('dream') fund for helping people who are aiming at self-realization, such as in acquiring technical skills that they need for work. The third is the *Machizukuri* Fund, which provides aid for infrastructure improvements in the local living environment and 'livable community' development projects so that people can continue living in District K. Activities of this kind, based on the business model originating in District K, have additionally begun working in various forms such as a welcoming and send-off service, a community restaurant, and a vegetable market, and they are aiming at creating more such projects in the future. They are planning to set up a 'Machizukuri Corporation' to further develop projects that make use of the character, human resources, and social resources of District K, and utilize the wealth of the locality in effective ways (see Fig. 4).

*Building a community where people can live permanently through a multiple mode system of residency*

*Provision of multiple types of housing in accordance with local residents' needs not limited to public housing*

In District N, in order to alleviate the conditions of this crowded urban neighborhood, cooperative rebuilding was considered beginning in 1995, and in 2002 the rebuilding of the MASUMI Apartments was completed. This was a project that had been considered by a cooperative body of experts and the District N *Machizukuri* Committee, making use of the Osaka City Private Housing Rebuilding Assistance Project. In 2004 District N's NICE, Ltd., mentioned above, drew on the experience of the *Masumi* Apartments, and in partnership with a company operated by people from the district, purchased some dilapidated rental housing, and completed the rebuilding of the 'Brincourt' rental condominium, making use of the same Private Housing Rebuilding Assistance Project. This was specifically targeted at young people and newly married couples in order to lure younger people back to the neighborhood, as a response to the trend towards fewer children and aging residents. A French restaurant, highly unusual for District N, and a dental clinic moved in on the ground floor of the apartment building. Additionally, in order to make effective use of publicly owned vacant land in the district, in 1998 they leased land on a fixed-term lease basis from Osaka City and started working on the construction of cooperative housing. In 2001, Harmony Village was completed (Kawai, 2006).

In District H as well, using land leased under a fixed term, they built and made available cooperative housing (see Fig. 5), intended to be part of a varied and attractive supply of housing in order to promote permanent settling in the district. They experimented with a process of participation by the residents in workshops in this construction, creating linkages with the community, moving the project forward while building face-to-face relationships with the participants.

*Promoting 'welfare community development' where everyone can go on living comfortably*

In District K, in addition to the welfare services that have already been set up such as the Street Corner Day House, a meal delivery service, a welcoming and sending-off service, and the 'Fulfilled Workers', they have newly embarked on creating 'substitute shoppers' and 'wellness activities' for the elderly, and are trying to put into place a 'one-stop service' for the elderly by tying all these various welfare services together in a network.

In District N, they have set up the district's own 'Housing and Welfare Contact Person System', and in combination with the national Silver Housing Project, they are responding to the welfare needs of the residents, and building a new system for supervising publicly managed housing, a system which is expected to be effective along a variety of fronts. Additionally, now that the handing out of bathhouse tickets, which was part of the old Dowa project, has been abolished, instead of the bath tickets which had been given by the government under the former system, with the cooperation of the local bathhouses, they have made a system where the elderly over the age of 60 can receive discounts by joining the 'Bathing Club' of the *Kurashi* (Livelihood) Association.

This *Kurashi* Association, a creative community welfare system managed by the district through innovative means rather than depending on the government, has now enrolled about 4000 members. Since 2008 the *Pokapoka* Mutual Aid Society, aimed at the elderly over the age of 60 in the district, has also been started. This was created to provide mutual help for living expenses, pooling together the association dues of the elderly in the district. The *Pokapoka* Mutual Aid Society has set up two assistance menus aimed at individuals, one for ordinary households based around





Fig. 4. Community based action program in district K.



Fig. 5. 'Gendai Nagaya TEN', a contemporary tenement house (cooperative housing). Source: CASE-Japan [http://www.case-jp.com/\\_english/e\\_architectural/e\\_architectural\\_ten.html](http://www.case-jp.com/_english/e_architectural/e_architectural_ten.html).

discounts for the personal payment portion of the in-house care service fees, and one aimed at households receiving welfare payments based around subsidies for their water bills. In addition, as an aid menu for groups, they have added distribution of funds for celebrations such as weddings (BN, 2008).

## Conclusion

Japan's basic communities, the *oaza*, mainly have their origins in the feudal villages of the Edo Period. The roughly 70,000 of these communities, since the Meiji Restoration, have through numerous consolidations evolved to constitute approximately 3600 cities, towns, and villages as of 2000. As urbanization has progressed, there are *oaza* whose population has increased dramatically, as well as urbanized communities (*cho*) that have newly appeared in the agricultural field inside *oaza*, but the basic *oaza* have continued to consist of several hundred to several thousand people. These *cho* and *oaza* associations (*chonaikai*) have existed at the level of the *oaza* unit, and they are still the basis of community life in

Japanese society. Many of the discriminated-against *Buraku* have also existed exactly in the same way as *oaza*. In Osaka Prefecture, which has the largest scale *Buraku*, they consist on average of 842 households or 2606 people total (as of 1975), a scale that is no different from *oaza* in ordinary districts, if one leaves out the branch villages (*edamura*) where part of an *oaza* became a *Buraku*.

The great majority of *oaza* in Japan, having rather inactive community associations (*chonaikai*), has shown little in the way of self-initiated activity from a community renewal perspective, but has for a long time been in the position of relying directly on local assembly members and the local government. In the midst of this the *Buraku* however have mostly had branch offices under the control of national level movement organizations, and have had activity organization within the *oaza*. Most of the people who have been leading these movement activities have come from the local *oaza*. The authors assert the whole body of these activities as local mediating organizations, but they have existed for more than half a century as extremely self-reliant organizations with a strong mission of *Buraku* liberation, unlike the community associations (*chonaikai*).

Compared with the *chonaikai* of ordinary *oaza*, the *Buraku* movements have an impressive legacy. The substance of this legacy, the fact that they had a network that used great political power to set in motion national programs, the fact that they had channels for direct negotiations with local governments, and the fact that in many cases the people who formed the core of these movements were a brainy group who had much experience and knowledge, meant that it had the power to push forward progressive community development in Japan, as related in The evolution from Dowa project to a locally shared creative *Machizukuri* movement. The *Buraku* themselves have abilities for articulation and planning that are rarely seen at the *oaza* level. They are networks for the compilation of *Buraku* history and documents, the proposal of comprehensive plans, and linkages with international minorities, with a wealth of workshop experience. Against the movement towards smaller government and the retreat from the social safety net by the public sector under neo-liberalist doctrines, these mediating organizations hold the power to use their legacy up till now in social enterprises and begin to deal in creative ways with self-reliant undertakings.

The majority of NPOs in Japan are made up of individuals who are from many different locales, but the *Buraku* liberation movements were NPOs that were composed of people with local identities and attachments. As to whether the movements should continue to operate firmly embedded in their districts, or whether their legacy should be conveyed to ordinary districts beyond the *Buraku*, even within the movement there are differing opinions. That being said, within Japanese society, where people have depended too much on the government, large companies, and families, these new developments within the *Buraku* must continue to hold our attention in the future as undertakings indispensable for the evolution of a high-level advanced capitalistic society into a sustainable society.

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