

A methodology of community development in large-scale housing development

— Perspective from housing developers and consultancy companies —

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Abstract

Authorized neighborhood associations consist of residents in communities play an important role in enhancing residents to be conscious to their community and living environment and in transferring information regarding community activities such as crime prevention and disaster reduction from municipalities to residents. However, there are difficulties for residents in large-scale housing complex to join the association of their neighbors and they are isolated from information provided by municipalities. This study will develop a model of community development towards establishment of authorized neighborhood association supported by housing developers or consultancy companies. The result from case studies on three housing complex suggest that activities can be categorized into public and private according to residents' need and some activities such as festivals are important training for residents to operate these activities after the support ends. *Keywords: community organization; town development; resident associations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Current situation of housing supply in Japan

Although Japan's population as a whole has started declining, major urban areas are still experiencing population increases. The development of high-rise condominiums and collective housing towns by real estate development companies is often seen in these urban areas as a way of supplying many residences to meet the demand at one time. Inhabitants of these residences amount to around 10% of the total Japanese population, which is about 13 million people. The Tokyo area, the number of high-rise condominiums and collective housing towns has rapidly increased over the last five years, after a decrease in except for year 2009 that followed the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers (Figure 1). Source: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transportation and Tourism.

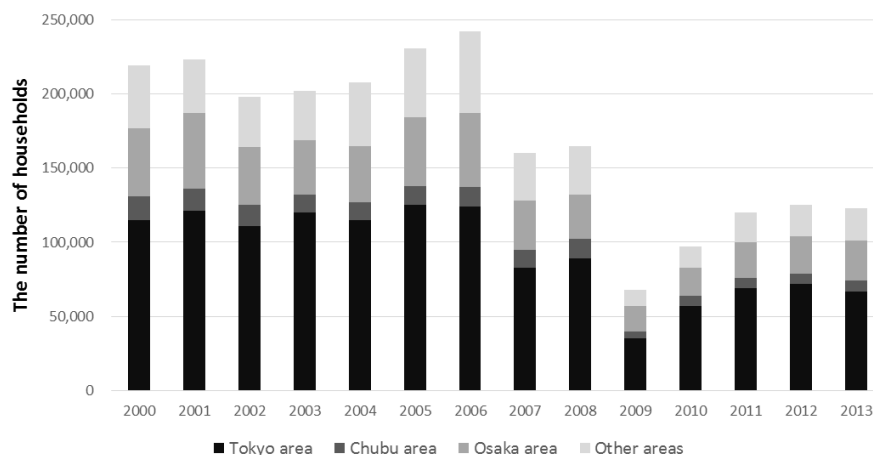


Figure 1. New construction of condominium housings by area

1.2 Authorized neighborhood association as a community organization

Most places in Japan have an authorized neighborhood association include residents living within the same area, called *chonaikai* or *jichikai*, meaning neighborhood association or self-governance association, respectively, in Japanese. Since there are no differences between *chonaikai* and *jichikai* regarding their functions, hereafter we call this organization as authorized neighborhood association. Most of these associations consist of up to 200 households and are run by board members as representatives of the residents. The activities of the association are funded by membership fees collected from households joining the association. These associations are established by residents and authorized by local municipalities with the following procedures. First, residents must define an area and hold a preparatory meeting to share the basic idea and framework of an authorized neighborhood association. Second, residents should fix bylaws, budget, a list of members, activity plans, and so on. Finally, residents hold a kick-off meeting and ask the local municipality government to authorize their association.

These associations play the role of a community organization to enhance residents' awareness of their local community and to encourage them to join community activities. Hereafter, we will call this role as "community development." The associations within adjacent or neighboring areas sometimes cooperate with each other to clean up local towns and prevent disasters and crimes. Yamazaki (2003) has pointed out six important roles of authorized neighborhood associations, as follows: the development of relationships among residents through recreational activity and cultural festivals; resident cooperation on crime prevention and disaster preparedness; cleanup activities on roads or in parks to ensure a good living environment; support for municipalities by distributing city newsletters to residents; playing the role of a major stakeholder or a lobby group on policy-making; and representing resident opinion in the area. Furthermore, some authorized neighborhood associations have organized unions with other adjacent neighborhood associations. These associations are called *rengo-chonaikai* or *rengo-jichikai*, where *rengo* means "union" in Japanese. These organizations play a role in organizing regional- scale activities and supporting cooperation among authorized neighborhood associations joining the union. One important role of the union is to convey information on community activities from the municipality and distribute it to its member associations.

1.3 Importance of an authorized neighborhood association in a large-scale housing complex

In most cases of large-scale housing complexes, residents establish a condominium association under the Section Ownership Law as an organization for building maintenance. These condominium associations rarely play the role of a community organization that develops a community and cooperates with other local communities.

Residents in small-scale housing complexes often join the authorized neighborhood association of the surrounding area. However, residents of large-scale housing complexes with more than 200 households (Figure 2) are seldom invited to join the authorized neighborhood association of the area where the housing complex is located, in part because residents who have been residing there for a long time may be afraid of changes or conflicts caused by the huge number of new residents. As a result residents in large-scale housing complexes often become isolated from the surrounding community. This isolation may disturb the smooth action and operation of coordination with surrounding communities, such as in, for example, the case of disaster, the rescue of victims and distribution of aid supply, because residents in a large-scale housing complex cannot exchange information on rescue or aid. If a community organization in a large-scale housing complex is authorized by a municipality as a neighborhood association, residents in the housing complex will be able to join the activities and operations of a union of authorized neighborhood associations and to cooperate with other authorized neighborhood associations, especially in the fields of crime prevention or disaster reduction. Therefore, it is important to establish authorized neighborhood

associations among residents in large-scale housing complexes in order to cooperate with surrounding communities and get information from the municipality.



Figure 2. Large-scale housing complexes with more than 200 households

Against this backdrop, since the year 2000, Japanese real estate development companies and consultancy companies have begun supporting new residents of high-rise housing complexes and collective housing towns with more than 200 households in community development and the formation of organizations such as neighborhood associations. Sone and Sawada (2012) have suggested that certain preparations by those companies will be a great help for the establishment of self-governed community activities.

1.4 Research objective

This study aims to understand the current situation in community development and discuss what type of preparation by housing development or consultancy companies will be helpful for community development prior to residents moving into a housing complex so that residents in large-scale housing complexes can establish an authorized neighborhood association. The discussion will be based on surveys of Japanese real estate companies and a consultancy company working on community development.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methodology and research subject areas

Interviews were conducted with certain representatives of community organizations and employees of a consultancy company for data collection. In addition, documents such as newsletters and meeting records were collected in order to analyse the relationships between residents and their surrounding communities and the history of housing development. This study focuses on one consultancy company with rich experience in community development. In order to discuss how the method of community development has been improved, we will study 3 cases out of the 48 large-scale housing developments that the consultancy company has supported in community development. The cases were chosen to cover several eras having sufficient documents and materials available. Finally, we conducted an interview with the secretariat of some community organizations introduced by a consultancy company. For all cases that we discuss, the main targets of the housing developments are families with young children.

2.2 Framework of community activity

We will obtain a framework for community activities by comparing the contents of community activities in an area that has established an authorized neighborhood association with those in a large-scale housing complex, in order to understand the characteristics of community activities.

First, Nakata (2003) proposed a framework to categorize community activities, as shown in Figure 2. How residents participate in these activities is plotted on the vertical axis, with obligation style

plotted in the upper half and volunteer style in the lower half. The horizontal axis represents the purpose of the activities, where activities aimed at improvement in the quality of life are on the left-hand side and activities tackling on issues of the area are on the right-hand side. Based on this framework, Nakata (2003) pointed out four functions of community activities, as follows: the solution of common regional issues; the development of relationships among households in obligation-style activities to improve quality of life; provision of opportunities for hobby activities such as sports, music, dance, and so on; and offering volunteer activities to tackle local issues in volunteer-style activities to improve the quality of life (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Framework of community activities in the region (Photo credit: ForC Company)

Second, Sone and Sawada (2012) discussed the progress of community activities in the large-scale housing complex “Citia.” There are two types of community activities, as follows: the first is “group activities” obligations for all households, such as festivals, issuing community newsletters, gardening, the flea market, and so on. The other is “club activities” for interested individuals only, such as sports, dance, painting, and so on. These activities can be plotted in the framework of community activities in the area (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Citia’s activities (Photo credit: ForC Company)

Referring to these earlier studies, this study will categorize community activities into public and private activities. Public activities are obligations and are funded by the membership fees of the authorized neighborhood association, while private activities are club activities funded by the attendance fees paid by those who participate in the activity (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Framework of community activities in this study

3. ACTUAL STATE OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, we first review the actual state of community development by summarizing the community organization system and contents of community activity in chronological order. According to the overview, we define the stages of community development as follows: First, there is a preparatory stage where real estate development companies and consultants plan community organization and community activities. Second, an initial stage takes place wherein the consultancy company supports community development. Third, there is a self-sustaining stage wherein a consultancy company completes its support and residents manage the activities by themselves. In the following sections we closely examine three cases and discuss their community development process within the framework mentioned in chapter 2.

3.1 Case 1: Citia

Citia is a large-scale housing development located in Abiko City, Chiba Prefecture. The 4.3-ha site comprises 851 households and their residences. This apartment has a community organization called “Citia club” as a subdivision of the condominium association.

In the preparatory stage, the contents of public activities such as festivals, gardening, cleanup activities, the issuance of community newsletters, and the market were planned by the real estate development company and the consultancy company. The real estate development company and consultancy company held events and conducted a questionnaire regarding future occupants’ preferences on community activities, for example, what type of club activities the residents wanted to join. In the initial stage, real estate development companies and the consultancy company set up an opportunity for new residents to get to know each other, through holding a *machibiraki* event, which celebrated the completion of the development and the opening of the housing site. Moreover, they supported the launch of new club activities for people wishing to learn and to teach among residents. As a result, several club activities such as cooking and yoga lesson were launched, where residents joined either as students or as instructors. In the self-sustaining stage, some new activities, such as library management, cultural activities, activities for the elderly, activities for children, and pet keeping, were initiated as public activities. Cultural activities here refer to activities to hold cultural festivals or concerts and are different from the club

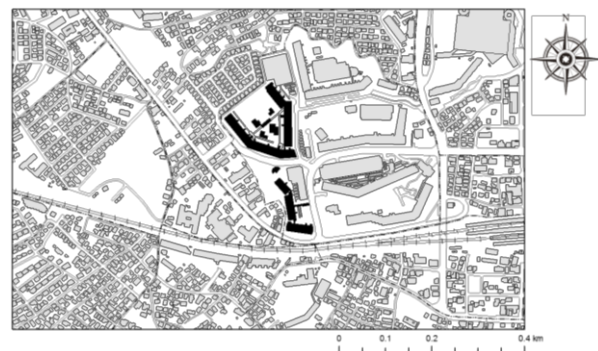


Figure 6. Citia and its neighbors

activities previously mentioned. Residents became aware of the need for cooperation with the surrounding neighborhood associations, when the community in the housing development begins to function well. They held a preparatory meeting and followed the procedure to establish an authorized neighborhood association, as mentioned above. The Citia club was eventually recognized as an authorized neighborhood association, independent from the organization of the condominium association. Some new activities such as crime prevention, disaster reduction, and welfare activities were started as public activities.

3.2 Case 2: Housing complex G

Housing complex G is a large-scale housing development located in Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture. The 8.1-ha site comprises 1,502 households and their residences. This apartment has a community organization called “Club Town Community,” as a subdivision of its condominium association. In the preparatory stage, the contents of public activities such as festivals, gardening, library management, and

issuing community newsletters were planned by the real estate development company and consultancy company. The real estate

development company and consultancy company held events and conducted a questionnaire regarding the future occupants’ preferences on community activities, for example, what type of club activities the residents would like to join. The process of the initial stage was the same as in the case of Citia. However, a new approach was introduced at the following stage. In the self-sustaining stage, residents became aware of the necessity for cooperation with the surrounding neighborhood associations, when the community in the housing complex begins to function well. They held a preparatory meeting and followed the procedure to establish an authorized neighborhood association, as outlined above. Club Town Community was eventually recognized as an authorized neighborhood association, independent from the organization of the condominium association. Some new activities such as crime prevention, disaster reduction, and cleanup activities were initiated as public activities.



Figure 7. Housing complex G and its neighbors

3.3 Case 3: Funabashi Morino City

Funabashi Morino city is a large-scale housing development located in Funabashi City, Chiba Prefecture. The project comprises condominiums for 1,497 household, 42 detached houses, a hospital, and commercial facilities such as a mall, a supermarket, and a bank, all in a 17-ha site. This housing development has two types of community organizations, as follows: the first type is an association for community development called “Morino City Machidukuri Kyogikai,” whose members are

the residents in the development site, and the employees of the hospital and commercial facilities. The second type is a community organization called “Community club” as a subdivision of the condominium association; only condominium residents may join this organization. In the preparatory stage, the contents of public activities in Morino City Machidukuri Kyogikai planned by the real estate development and consultancy company were festivals, gardening, cleanup activities, crime prevention, and disaster reduction. The contents of public activities in Community club planned by the real estate development company and consultancy company were library

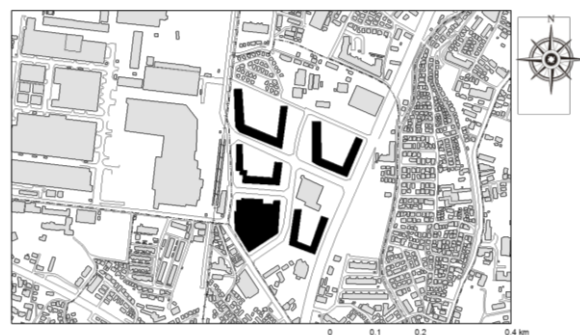


Figure 8. Funabashi Morino City and its neighbors

4.2 Public activities and private activities

The table shows that festivals, gardening, cleaning up local town, disaster reduction, and crime prevention are conducted as basic public activities. We do not categorize library management in the model because a large-scale housing complex does not always have its own library. However, sports and cultural activities are categorized as basic private activities. Focusing on private activities, there are two types of activities. The first type is activities such as sports and cultural activities, where anyone who would like to participate can join. The second type is activities having some limitations on the participants, such as child support programs, which target families with small children.

Numerous sports and cultural activities are held in all three cases. However, the number of activities targeting residents of specific ages, such as children or elderly persons, differ between the cases. For example, private activities for elderly persons are often held in apartment complex G because the proportion of elderly persons is higher than that in the other cases. Activities such as junior futsal and a yoga program for parents and children, are also held on residents' request. The number of those activities depends on the residents' ages and stages of life. There are difficulties in providing child support programs and activities for children or elderly persons as public activities because these activities are only targeted at a limited number of residents. However, especially in a large-scale housing complex with many families raising small children, the funding of child support programs by the community organization through a membership fee started to gain resident acceptance. Hence, they can be considered as public activities. Therefore, activities that should not necessarily be operated as public activities can be operated as private activities, if which type the activities will be categorized cannot be decided by the activity itself but by the residents' stage of life, social agreement at the time, or the strategy of the development company to make the housing complex as attractive to their target consumers as possible.

4.3 Stages of community organization structure

For all the three cases, community organizations have transformed as follows: first, community organizations eventually convert into authorized neighborhood associations (Figure 9). Second, having established authorized neighborhood associations, residents in large-scale housing complexes can come out of their isolation from the surrounding community.

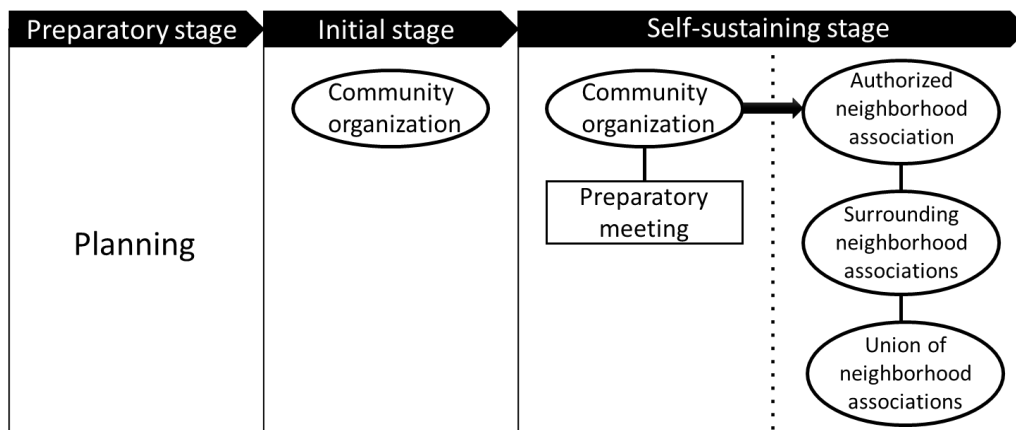


Figure 9. Stages of community organization structure

4.4 A model of community development

We have developed a model of community development by reviewing what type of basic community activities are conducted, how the basic community organization structure has been transformed, how new community activities were launched by the residents, and how residents are interested and involved in those activities (Figure 10).

In the preparatory stage, real estate development companies and consultancy companies planned the establishment of a community organization and the development of community activities on a time scale of one or two years. They encouraged future occupants to participate in community activities through holding events and conducting a questionnaire on their preferences for community activities. In the initial stage, an opportunity for new residents to get to know each other was set up through a *machibiraki* event. Moreover, residents were supported in establishing new club activities through matching what the residents wanted to learn with what other residents wanted to teach. This support by the real estate development companies and consultancy companies played an important role in the development of a community among the new residents who had recently moved into a large-scale housing complex. In the self-sustaining stage, where most of the community activities are run by residents themselves, residents in a large-scale housing complex will become aware that it is important to cooperate or to collaborate with the neighboring community and will start to consider establishing an authorized neighborhood association. After residents in a large-scale housing complex establish an authorized neighborhood association, the community of the housing complex begins to cooperate with the surrounding authorized neighborhood associations.

To operate public activities such as festivals, gardening, cleanups, crime prevention, and disaster reduction in the preparatory stage seems to be good training to operate these activities smoothly and seamlessly after the authorized neighborhood association is established. Moreover, private activities such as sports and cultural club activities play an important role in encouraging as many residents as possible to join the public activities mentioned above.

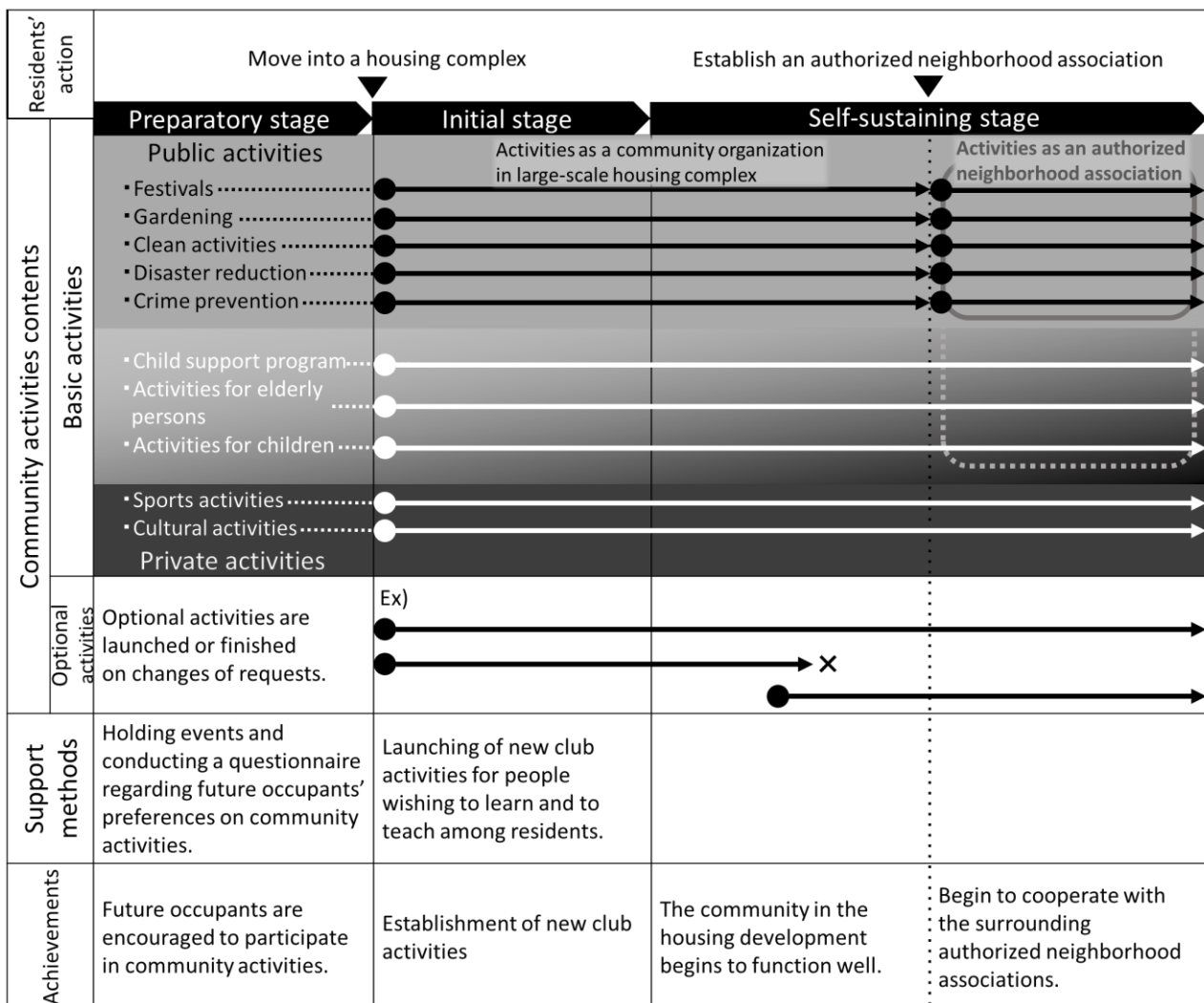


Figure 10. A model of community development

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