

## AJ Forum 8

# Compact Cities: Around Small Cities in Asia and Europe

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I would like to talk about my research on Compact City, relating with Public Spheres, the main theme of Asia-Japan Research Center.

At first, I would explain the reason why I chose Compact City for my research theme among various urban studies. From historical point of view, the principal cities in Europe, such as Paris and London, had began installing urban planning and largely reconstructed as modern cities in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. After turning into 20<sup>th</sup> century, through development of media technology or transportation system, cities had expanded greatly. That the world-wide urbanization progresses and cities had grown and such stream became a trend. Responses and researches on these situations and urban problems are developed. One of the representative models is the urban plan presented by Le Corbigier from 1920s to 30s. However, in consideration of future urban models, it was talked to be problem to only work with principle cities and became global subject in 1980s and 90s. As the concept “Sustainability” gradually became popular topic in the latter half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, people at the cities where problems and crisis to sustain urban activities exist, became very much aware of constructing the future urban models. In such trend, Compact City had become one of the explicit issues mainly at European cities. The researches on major cities precedence cases; cities with 100000 populations, is not studied so well. However, most of the cities in the world are within this size. Thus, I decided to promote researches on the possibilities of applying the concept of European born Compact Cities onto smaller cities in Asia.

With this precedence, I would like to talk about Compact City and introduce some slides.

The present world-population exceeds 6 billion, and about half, 30 billion people, reside in urban areas. It can be said that almost half of the population carries lives in urban areas. In the present, the number of major cities, with population more than 10,000,000 is about 10, and cities with population more than 1,000,000 are 300 to 400, and cities with more than 100,000 are about 40,000. Population is widely distributed, especially in Europe, and this creates the foundation of Compact City. In Asia, both the population and its growth rate are high. Then, I have considered that researching Compact Cities in Asia could have meaning to the future.

At first, I would like to introduce a case of urban research in Thailand. In Thailand, Bangkok holds the overwhelming number of population and the other cities hold about 200,000 population. The gap is considerably big. This is one of the characteristics in developing nations. When talking on the trend in urban population, this characteristic is called “primate pattern.” There are other examples such as “rank-size rule” or “polynary pattern”; polynary pattern is, as so in Sydney and

Melbourne in Australia, that there is no much difference between the first populated city and the others; in other word, the center is obscured. These three patterns describes the major trends of urban population in the world.

In Thailand, I had visited Nakhorn Pathom, a city with population of 120,000, and it locates in north. The city is stretched east to west, and has simple urban structure centered around a temple; together with a canal, it stands as a landmark of the city. It is explicit in this example that the entire design can be seized if a subject is small-populated city. The city can be the subject of not only research material but also administrating designs. If a new city were to be established in Japan, or the relocation of the capital was brought up, the target population-size would possibly be about 100,000. In short, a city with that size is an adequate target of the research, regarding the possibilities to capture the integrity of the city and to analyze the composition model. In Nakhorn Pathom, people come and gather, enjoy teas and chat on the both shores of the canal. It is the Asian public space, in which people feel comfortable. It is not the official public space in an urban plan, but blended with commercial or social purposes. In cities, I consider that such ambiguous spaces means greatly.

There are three points when considering Compact City. The first is high-density, the second is mixed-use, that is, living spaces and commercial spaces co-exist, and urban functions are integrated. The last one is the re-construction of a public transportation systems, with reinstall of tram system, conveniently connected with bicycle or bus, use of car in urban district could be avoided. This is the definition transmitted from Europe, and lots could be good reference; Asia, especially small cities, could have, however, different systems.

Next, I would like to introduce Udon Thani, Thai city with a population of 220,000. This city has Bus-rotary to the center. In city center, refrain from use of car became common, in Europe, but there are motor vehicles in cities in Asia. This, however, could not easily be thrown away; there are examples, that several means, including rickshaw and bus, support each other to establish the transportation system. Also, many market in Asia become a place for people to spontaneously gather and communicate each other, even if the place is not designed as a plaza.

Then, I would like to introduce projects related to small cities. I had once conducted a project “500 cubic meter”, with Prof. Hiroshi Hara, an architect and a professor at the University of Tokyo. This project was a magnificent conceptual experiment of highly densed city with population of 100,000. The plan includes hospital, school, public institutions or transportation system, and realized technically possible to implement our project in comperison with actual city.

In the extent of these research projects, I had summarized ideas for a Competition, which had theme in Compact City. It is to realize an idea for renovation of an area in front of Osaka Station. Here, by integrating the points of Compact City, the three elements, “resident, commercial, public facilities,” were mixed together to actualize the images and formed an urban model.

At last, I would like to introduce European Compact City, and comparing with those of Asia’s. Montpellier is a South French city and it is famous for its tram system. Connection between the tram, bus and public transportation is well working; it is called seamless-ness. One of the merits of

tram is on-time operation; the transportation system is renovated with buses, which could go into narrower spaces. Mutual compatibility, such as carrying bicycle in tram and ride again on the road, works well; several transportation systems are flexibly associated each other. The city center is constructed with small city plazas and small streets, which are nearly pedestrian path. In Europe and in general, very few new building is built in a city center; there is explicit boundary between areas with historical buildings and others. For the city's strategy in tourism, the central area is often registered for the world heritages. Then a city, even with population size of 100,000, could sustain buildings and utilize them for tourism resources. From such viewpoint, small French cities can be referred as good examples of Compact City. In Japan, many municipalities had implemented community buses, which go around within the region; and concept of park-and-ride is experimented. Musashino-shi, Tokyo, could be a fine example.

Next example is Lyon. The city is located almost the center of France, and it is famous for good-designed tram. The city is trying to regain hustle and bustle of a city. Lyon is also known for its well-equipped public facilities. France assesses "design" importantly and recognizes its value as its cultural background. The city has various aspects, not only sustaining heritages but also, at a critical chance, counsel with a forefront architect and build modern architecture, then utilize the new building as a tourist resource. The tram in Lyon has cute design and incorporated within the city well. On the rail path, grass ward is carpeted, and tram runs just as extension of a park. Such could contribute landscape of cities.

As examples of Compact city, these cities could be good reference for the future in various forms. However, these examples of small cities would not be applied to all the places or regions universally. The idea of Compact city is now being a topic in many municipalities; any concrete model is not constructed yet at the present. Then, considering the future of cities of Asian style or Japanese style, it can be referred to the examples of precedence cities, but may need to think out as well as to implement unique models for each regions. Such could be required for researches of Compact city hereafter.