

Machizukuri in japan: overview and analysis



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Planning in Japan has existed more than a hundred years ago (Evans, 2010) and Machizukuri is one type of planning in Japan. By the beginning of 1980s, the term 'Machizukuri' has been extensively used (Evans, 201), but its concept is claimed, to be changing from time to time and its term is often ambiguous as it is usually used base on people's own understanding in many different situation (Watanabe, n. d). Therefore, the origins of Machizukuri need to be explored in order to be able to determine how the concept of Machizukuri is shaped and indirectly determining the characteristics of Machizukuri that vary it from the other types of planning in Japan.

Machizukuri is a type of planning which is closely related to people's desire in creating a livable and sustainable city (Evans, 2014). It is a type of planning where the local residents work together or in cooperation with the government by doing variety of activities to make their place attractive and appropriate to live in (Evans, 2014). Machizukuri is a collaboration of two different terms 'Machi' and 'Zukuri' where Machi can be defined as community, but also often means 'small area' rather than large area and Zukuri is defined as making or planning (Watanabe, 2007). In general, Machizukuri can be understood as an attempt to improve or sustain the city with the involvement of the local residents in the planning. The activities of Machizukuri include from meeting, involvement of the resident in policy making and so forth (Watanabe, 2006).

The terms Machizukuri is claimed by many to be vague and ambiguous because many have used it as a catchword. However, it is not until the early of 1960s, this term started to be adopted in the field of urban planning

(Evans, 2010). As an example, the term was used in Kobe's municipal and ward social councils in 1965 as a slogan (Evans, 2010).

However, it is very difficult to determine when and where actually Machizukuri originated, as in the past it was used often as a catchword. Watanabe (n. d) agreed with this and he pointed out that Mr. Kan Hideshima had discovered Dr Naoto Nakajima used the term "Machizukuri" without accompanying the actual activities in 1947, and Dr Naoto can be one example where the term 'Machizukuri' was used as a catchword.

On the contrary, Professor Shiro Masuda had used the term 'Machizukuri' in his journal in 1952 (Watanabe, n. d). This is believed to be the earliest work that had used the term in relation its actually activity. Although he did not describe the term precisely, he used the term in relation to people's movement. The term 'Machizukuri' was used in his journal about Kunitachi, where at that time, was in the middle of people's movement due to the turning of quiet and decent college town into unpleasant place for residents to live in. Some activist called their movement 'Machizukuri'. (Watanabe, n. d) This is believed to be the birth of the term Machizukuri with refers to the activity. However, the concept of Machizukuri itself was ambiguous.

In between 1960s to the end of 1970s, several factors had taken place and indirectly had helped in shaping the concept of Machizukuri (Evans, 2010). These factors are not just favor the establishment of Machizukuri but also help to develop Machizukuri's concept.

The first factor is the influence of the citizens' movement. Citizens' movement shows that the citizens are concerned and conscious about the

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city they lived in. This consciousness may leads to their involvement on the planning of the city, hence, resulted in Machizukuri as citizens' participation is the key factor of Machizukuri (Evans, 2010). To further elaborate, in 1950s to 1960s, Japan was focusing towards the development of its economy and industries which had resulted in a dreadful pollution. This had triggered a wide environmental protest throughout Japan over the 1960s due to house shortages, traffic congestion and environmental arose that threaten residential life of the local citizen (Watanabe, 2006). The environmental movement by the local resident has indirectly led to the popularization in local participation. This movement had given way for the awareness of citizens' right and growth in citizen consciousness.

The second factor is the decentralization of planning powers resulted from the 1968 New City Planning Act. The replacement of 1919 city planning act with 1968 new city planning act can be considered as step towards Machizukuri. This is because the new act did mark an important step for public involvement in the planning process (Ishida cited in Evans, 2010). As stated by Evans (2010) that other important features of the 1968 New City Planning Act include the introduction of public participation. By encouraging public participation, this will provide opportunity for Machizukuri to grow and take place.

Thirdly is the slowing down of urbanization also leads to Machizukuri. This can be seen from the slowdown of urbanization due to the oil crisis in 1973, which resulted in transition of a high-growth to low-growth economy in Japan (Evans, 2010). Many changes happened after the worldwide oil crisis, this caused people to stop migrating to the city, and some went back to where

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they came from. According to Alden and Abe (cited in Evans, 2010), net migration to metropolitan regions of Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya was almost zero during 1975 to 1980. However, the central government introduced urban system where the local areas within a city prepare its own plan (Evans, 2010). By giving the role this give the local to are more involve in the planning of the local area, hence may lead to Machizukuri, as its not only the government will be handling the planning the city but also the locals.

These factors are mostly had given the opportunity for the participation of the citizens and by opening opportunity for citizens' participation in planning, this will give chance for the Machizukuri to take place. Therefore, these kinds of events can be considered to be the main driving forces for the establishment of Machizukuri.

Although Machizukuri is often seen as the involvement of citizens in the planning, it has other distinctive characteristics, which identify the actual Machizukuri. Consequently, these characteristics vary Machizukuri from other types of planning.

The term 'machi' in Japanese term according to Watanabe often opposes the large area. Furthermore, Vogt (n. d.) described Machizukuri to normally restricted to smaller scale projects such as a park, residential neighborhood and so forth. For example in Mano district with population of only 4, 739 people (Evans, 2010). and also Machizukuri in Aneya lane which is a narrow 700m long street in the centre of Kyoto (Hein, 2008). This is unlike other types of planning which usually cover large scale such as Toshi Keikaku where according to Vogt (n. d) it deals with the improvement of city or larger

parts of it. This can be said to be one of Machizukuri's characteristics where it is focusing normally on a small-scale area.

The change resulted from Machizukuri is often claimed to be slow and gradual. This can be demonstrated in a district called Mano. This district suffered from pollution and associated health problems in the 1960s which led to the formation of residents' anti-pollution campaigns. As a result of this Machizukuri school took place in the 1970s where this school consists of lectures and workshops on topics related to residents' campaigns. In addition, Mano's residents had drawn up a machizukuri plan where it is a whole plan for Mano and consists of their vision, and ways to achieve this. Twenty years since, the appearance of Mano changed significantly. (Evans, 2010). This can also be seen on Sanjo Machizukuri, it took over 20 years for the Machizukuri to transform a declining wholesale area to an attractive place for shopping or dining and so forth (Hein, 2008). This is another characteristic of Machizukuri, where the change is rather slow, this is due to revitalizing a local area without uprooting the local population, therefore, it is incremental.

Machizukuri is also seen as a method that focuses on the soft aspects of planning unlike traditional town planning which is more towards the hard aspect such as roads and other physical infrastructure (Evans, 2010).

Machizukuri may include the hard aspect as well but it emphasizes more on the soft aspect such as upgrading an area. This can be seen in Sanjo's Machizukuri, Kyoto, where the centre of its commerce has an unpleasant appearance. Therefore, in this case, it focused on the economic and social renewal of Sanjo Street, and this indirectly had dealt with the environmental problem (Hein, 2008).

In conclusion, Machizukuri is a concept which did not understand very well by many in the previous years. Determining the origins and identifying its characteristics helped in understanding and shaped the actual concept of Machizukuri. Although, it is difficult to really determine the actual origin of Machizukuri, but the term itself has been used since the 1940s and its concept have been shaped by several events between 1960s to 1970s. Furthermore, Machizukuri has its own characteristics, which represent its peculiarities from other planning.

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