

Public Participation in Planning and Preservation of Alleyways in Japan

Yu Yoshii

Public participation in making of the city is always a challenging task. For the past several decades, public participation in planning has been subject of academic concern in the field of architecture, urban planning and design (Culot and Krier 1978, Till 1998). The Japanese planning has been employing top-down planning system until in 1970s, when the power gradually shifted from the central government to the local one. Furthermore, District Planning system was introduced in 1980 through the amendment of the City Planning Act, which allowed the local residents to raise suggestions for the future of the city, and decisions are made through discussion and consensus. However, degree of involvement of the citizen in decision-making process is still minimal until today. In historical cities, traditional townhouses of historical value are often found along the alleyway, and therefore the local governments are faced with the need to preserve them. However, the alleyway is a peculiar case in which residents' active participation becomes essential. This is due to the fact that the alleyway, despite being publicly accessible, often belongs to private parties or individuals. Any special legal agreement would require consent from the land and building owners.

This paper utilizes the case study in Kyoto to illustrate the involvement of residents in planning and preservation process of the alleyway. In doing so, it will address the problem of the communication gap between the local government and the residents' group, as well as the disciplinary gap between planning and architecture professions. These gaps are inherent in the current Japanese system, and are the problems that need to be addressed for a better planning of Japanese cities. The case study points us to the possible ways in which these gaps can be bridged in order for the concerning parties to find the middle ground.

Keywords: public participation, street design, historical cities

References

- Culot, M. and Krier, L., 1978. The only path for architecture. *Oppositions*, 14, pp.39-14.
- Till, J., 1998. Architecture of the impure community. *Occupying Architecture*, New York: Routledge, pp.62-75.