



Urban Transformation of Asian's Traditional CBD Areas by the Legal Redevelopment Projects; Case Study of Seoul and Tokyo

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After World War II, Seoul and Tokyo developed modern planning systems to modernize their urban structures. Seoul and Tokyo had very similar planning schemes for redevelopment, which consisted of legal urban redevelopment projects and subsidies under the Urban Redevelopment Law. They also had similar problems as part of their rapid urbanization. The differences in their government operations system and application of development tools caused differences in their urban structures. This article describes each government's efforts and legal systems to illustrate the spatial transform of central areas in Seoul and Tokyo using documentary research and GIS data.

There were many low-level cozy wooden buildings without 4m-wide roads and public spaces in central areas of Seoul and Tokyo. Since WWII, these two cities have tried to develop planning systems for infrastructure by promoting individual redevelopment projects. The establishment of the Urban Redevelopment Law converted traditional central business districts into modern spaces. Seoul designated the Urban Redevelopment Area(URA), which allowed only large- scale development projects based on the legal redevelopment master plan. In fact, the central government wanted to inhibit URA from constructing commercial buildings that would increase the population. A few large-scale projects were allowed based on a deregulatory policy to improve public spaces according to political issues. On the other hand, the government of Tokyo did not have enough power to control individual redevelopment projects because of the strong power of land-owners. Thus, diverse incentive zoning and subsidies were designed to control individual redevelopment projects as to improvement of public spaces.

Seoul and Tokyo have lost many traditional urban structures under legal redevelopment projects which allow a high floor-area ratio. They have constructed skyscrapers under the legal redevelopment projects. There are still low-level cozy buildings along narrow alleys behind of modern high-rised buildings, though. Fortunately, they added new development tools into the legal system in the late 1990s to gradually improve urban structure. Seoul allows small and mid-size redevelopment projects to conserve traditional urban structures. Tokyo also launched additional measures to deregulate traditional central areas, such as relaxation of set-back rules. It is important to change the planning scheme of Seoul and Tokyo by making them aware of how redevelopment projects should make conserve traditional urban structures.

KEY WORDS: Asian traditional urban structure, urban redevelopment law, redevelopment project, contrast of buildings.