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The Role of Local Institutions in Promoting Residents' Interest in Urban Planning - Comparative Study of Denmark and Japan -

Key Words:

Decentralization, Intra-city Decentralization, Consolidation, Public Participation, Local Institution, Urban Planning

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Abstract

In the interest of promoting public participation in urban planning in effort to move toward decentralized society, various participants of municipal government, civil groups, and other local organizations are redefining their respective roles.

Despite differences, there are symmetries urban planning of Danish and Japanese society. Denmark is the most advanced decentralized society in the world with mature democracy. On the other hand, decentralization has just begun in 1990s in Japan. In addition, the size of the country and the population of cities are completely different. However, in terms of urban planning program in local level, there are fundamental similarities in terms of role and relationship between a decision maker and residents.

First I summarize the history of consolidation and decentralization in Denmark. Then I take case study of Holmbladsgade Kvarterløft in order to analyze various actors participating in planning process. Second I show Japanese consolidation and decentralization with emphasis on intra-city decentralization.

From the study, I found that various institutions and residents needed to be involved from the early stage of planning process for comprehensive sustainable plan and city. Compatible to Kvaeterløft program of Danmark that utilized local institutions, Japan should utilize its community, neighborhood associations, and NPOs in a city for inception of urban planning for the present.

1. Introduction -Background of This Paper-

The process of decentralization has just begun in Japan, greatly extending powers and responsibilities of local governments. At the same time, consolidations of villages, towns and cities have been encouraged. The process of decentralization is not without problems, however. One of the challenges of decentralization is the fact that the consolidations have made it more difficult for residents to participate in urban planning process due to the expansion of the residential area. The larger local government can have more difficult time connecting with the residents.

On the other hand, in Denmark, one of most advanced decentralized countries in the world, numerous participants are involved in decision making process in local level. Since local government reform during 1970s, the four main concepts of Publicness in Denmark have been democracy from below, governance, public-private partnership and policy network. In Denmark, public and private sectors including local government, voluntary associations, NGOs and residents work together in creation and implementation of a plan. The network of relationships among the various participants of planning process characterizes diversity of Publicness (Nishi, 2004). And after establishing the Urban Committee by 1993, Danish government has been implementing an urban renewal project called Kvarterløft (Neighborhood Lift Up) since 1997. Kvarterløft is a comprehensive plan that affects architecture, housing, traffic, ecology and employment, etc.

By specifically focusing on the implementation of the comprehensive urban renewal, first I would like to stress on the importance of public participations from the beginning of a planning process. The number of locally based institutions as well as private authorities and NGOs involved in planning process in Denmark far exceed that of Japan. For well balanced administration in a large region in Japan that promotes public participation in local level, it is important for planners and public administrators to cooperate with locally based organizations and ordinary people by sharing information with them from an early stage of planning.

2. Purpose of This Paper

The purpose of this paper is to summarize the history of consolidation and decentralization in Denmark and comprehensive urban renewal strategy of Denmark since 1993 and to examine local institutions in its effort to stimulate participation of residents by analyzing a specific Kvarterløft case study in Holmbladsgade in Copenhagen. And at the same time, I show Danish unique democratic idea, User Democracy (Bruger Demokrati), since early 19th century, regarding public participation.

Before examining above, I also want to point out that Denmark is more advanced in dealing with “Policy Network” (Kickert, et al., 1997) than Japan. The concept policy network connects public policies with their strategic and institutionalized context: the network of public, semi-public, and private actors participating in certain policy field (Kickert, et al., 1997: 1). The

concept policy network is used to indicate patterns of relations between interdependent actors, involved in processes of public policy making. Interdependency is the key word in the network approach. Actors in networks are interdependent because they cannot attain their goals by themselves, but need the resources of other actors to do so. Dealing with public problems involves interactions between governmental agencies, quasi-governmental bodies and private organizations. Interdependency is based on the distribution of resources over various actors, the goals they pursue and their perception of their resource dependencies. Information, goals and resources are exchanged in interactions. Because these interactions are frequently repeated, processes of institutionalization occur; shared perceptions, participation patterns and interaction rules develop and are formalized (Kickert, et al., 1997: 6). It is important for active participation in urban planning how various actors connect each other in the early planning stage.

Next, I show the present situation of decentralization and consolidation in Japan briefly and take an example of public participation in urban planning in intra-city decentralization in Setagaya-ward, Tokyo. I analyze the roles of local institutions with respect to public participations in urban planning in this ward. I will focus on network in various kinds of organizations and residents for participation.

I have analyzed the above by doing a literature search and interviewing the project leader Mr. Jørgen Sprogøe Petersen in Holmbladsgade Kvaeterløft program, resident groups, and staffs at Kvarterhuset (Neighborhood House). They were asked about the project concepts, ways of participation, method of cooperation, and the role of local institutions for public participation. And I compared them to Japanese cases and discuss issues and tasks. In all I interviewed a librarian of Sundby Library, Ms. Kirsten Præstegaard, a head of international relations at Kofoeds school, Mr. Ole Meldgaard, a leader of Local center Sundby Nord, Mr. Bo Kristiansen, a voluntary person at network office, Ms. Vibeke Søs Nielsen, and two members of Sundby local council, Mr. Anders Hjorth and Ms. Rigmor Winthrop during September 2003 – January 2004.

3. Consolidation and Decentralization in Denmark and Urban Policy in Local Level

3-1. Consolidation and Decentralization

I will summarize the configuration of municipality in Denmark before 1970s briefly. *Amt*, equivalent to county or prefecture, was made in 1662. Initially twenty *Amt* were settled in 1793 growing to as many as twenty-five. In the latter half of 1800s, Danish municipalities were consisted of 88 *Kommune*, equivalent to city, and 1,300 church towns called *Sognkommune*.

Then the era of consolidation has begun. By 1970 *Amt* had been consolidated into fourteen and *Kommune* had been consolidated into 275. In January of 2003, five cities in Bornholm Island were consolidated into a city, resulting in total of 271 cities Denmark that still remains today. Copenhagen and Frederiksberg are two examples of *Amt*.

Denmark is said that the one of most advanced decentralized countries in the world (Hansen, 1996). Since 1970s, municipal reform such as consolidation and decentralization has been

promoted in Denmark. Denmark is unique among the Scandinavian countries in its self-governance as exemplified by roles of church in public services and active participation of politics even among in 19th century. Danish municipal reform had similar characteristics of Sweden and Norway. However Danish municipal reform had been implemented in a shorter period of time compare to Sweden and Norway. Swedish and Norwegian municipal reform had been implemented in long period of time with an integration model. On the other hand, Denmark pursues its own ways of self-government and communalization by focusing not only on local authorities but also various kinds of public sectors. In chapter eighty-two of the Constitutional Act of Denmark (1953), it is clearly said that the right of municipalities to manage their own affairs independently, under State supervision, shall be laid down by statute.

Decentralization since 1970s in Denmark can be divided into four stages (Table 1): municipal consolidation, decentralization to public sectors including hospitals, schools and kinder nursery schools, regulation user participation, and additional decentralization (Darler-Larsen, P. et al., 2000 and Prahl, A., 1993).

Table 1: four stages of decentralization in Denmark

Era	Main point of decentralization	Contents of decentralization
1970s-	Municipal consolidation	14 counties, 275 local cities (271 local cities in 2003) trifurcated into three tiers, national, county and local level.
1980s-	Decentralization to public sectors	Delegation to public sectors like school, hospital,etc. Promoting privatization. Modernization of public administration. New Public Management.
-early 1990s	Regulate user participation	Regulate that public service user can participate directly. Delegation to authorities in local level.
late 1990s-	Additional decentralization	Delegation to private authorities. Expand public service by private authorities.

3-2. Danish Democracy

Danish society can be characterized by “communalized society”. And this comes from the idea of “Medborgerskab (Fellow Citizen)” in Denmark, which originally came from “Medborgare” which means “citizen” in Sweden. The well known social welfare system of Denmark has been built with the idea of “Medborgerskab” as asserted by Dr. Jens Hoff of Copenhagen University during an interview.

How has Danish society changed since 1970s? Concerning public participation, biggest impact

have been made from growth of “user democracy” that in turn fostered policy reform of decentralization, and advancement of social status of women. Most interesting thing was that these social changes had been implemented together since 1970s.

Among changes in social structure during 1970s, one of the biggest was decentralization. As a result of decentralization local municipalities, rather than central government, implemented many public services including education and social welfare. In addition, women’s social evolution which began during 1960s diversified and increased demands for public services. Before the evolution, public services were limited to helping the poor in national level by monetary means. During the evolution, however, the need for services for caring children and nursing for elderly people and such have been came into awareness. The inadequate services previous to the evolution was a source of dissatisfaction and social problems at local municipal level. Moreover, it was difficult for people to know where they should go and ask for services. The decentralization of governance and financial system in Denmark since 1970s, however, made it possible for each municipality to provide own services suited to its own circumstances. “User democracy” is an idea that emphasizes the need to understand and advocate each individual’s needs. In other words, user democracy is a direct participation by the user of the public service in decision making process. This term “user democracy”, originated from Denmark, is a normative theory of public policy in Danish municipalities. And I shall say that one of key factors of high residents’ interests in Denmark is the original idea of “user democracy”.

Figure 1 shows the idea of user democracy, and Figure 2 indicates the relationship between the idea of user democracy and decentralization. Since 1970s decentralization has been implemented step by step: consolidation and decentralization, decentralization to local institutions, and regulation of user participation. This decentralization not only made it easier for users participate in decision making process, but also improved the services.

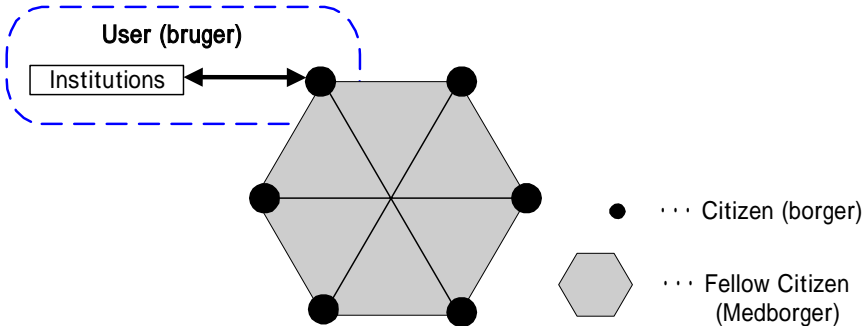


Figure 1: the idea of user democracy

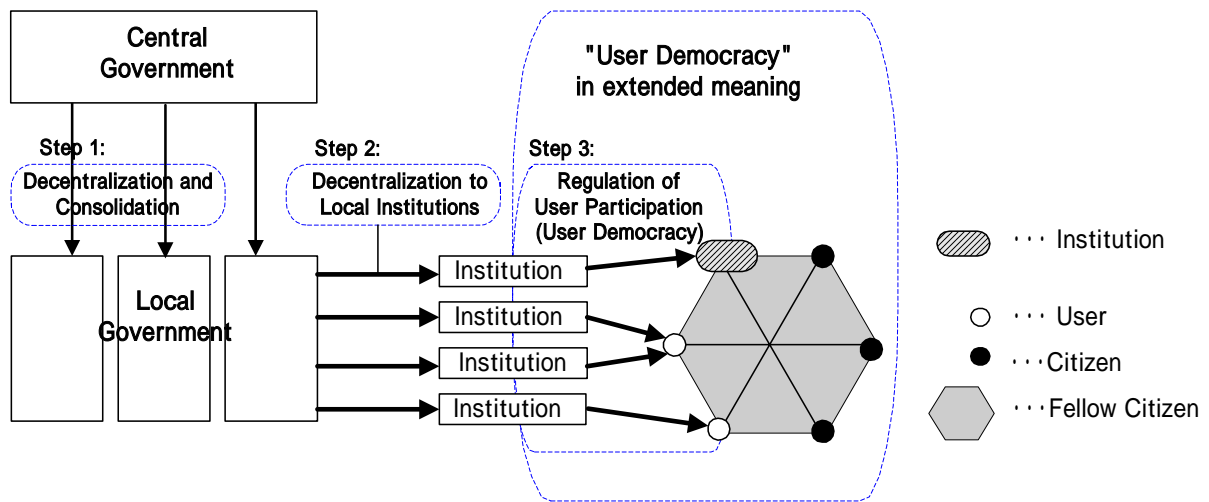


Figure 2: the relationship between the idea of user democracy and decentralization

3-3. Comprehensive Urban Planning, Kvarterløft Program

To address numerous problems faced urban districts of many European countries, there has been much interest in increasing public participation in shaping public services. Starting with the establishment of the Urban Committee in 1993, Danish government has been implementing renewal project called Kvarterløft (Neighborhood Lift Up) as an experiment in public participation by 1997. Kvarterløft is a comprehensive plan that affects architecture, housing, traffic, ecology and employment. Twelve urban areas were selected as experiments in Denmark including five areas in Copenhagen.

As I mentioned in the last section, public participation in Denmark has long history. The comprehensiveness of Kvarterløft program in terms of its public services is various social changes since 1970s regarding public participations.

3-3-1. Background and Purpose of Kvarterløft Program

Urban renewal in Copenhagen had focused on physical measures especially from 1950s to 1970s. There were many large-scale demolitions of dilapidated and densely built-up estates in Copenhagen. Since 1980s, urban planning program in Denmark has been shifted its emphasis from physical measures to preservation characterized by urban renewal. A good example is redevelopment project in Vesterbro area in Copenhagen: densely populated, often characterized by slums during 1980s, and a source of speculation and mounting social problems. After this redevelopment project, many people have learned a lot of deliberation and dialogue.

The purpose of Kvarterløft program is not only to improve the individual residential areas as a whole but also to provide models for urban policy of the future. Seven of the twelve projects started in 1997, and five remain as of 2001.

The main features of the urban regeneration experiment are, 1) the projects concern selected areas and not individual residents or properties, 2) the projects are based on coordinated and integrated action, 3) the projects are aimed at increasing local participation, 4) the projects are part of controlled process, and 5) background of the urban regeneration experiment.

3-3-2. Kvarterløft Program in Holmbladsgade, Copenhagen

Holmbladsgade area is the oldest of the twelve Kvarterløft programs. Many flats in the area were small with only two rooms, needs some repair, and are without toilet and bathroom inside. Furthermore, the living condition was worsened by a lack of recreational areas and considerable traffic. 16,000 inhabitants with more thirty nationalities lived in this area and the unemployment rate was high.

Even though many of the flats in this neighborhood are now occupier or cooperatively owned, most of the dense blocks of flats were originally built as rentals around 1900, taking decades to complete. Many flats had no bathroom; the neighborhood had very few open spaces. Social housings were constructed in the district during the 1940s and 1950s: less dense and mainly in the form of blocks of two-room flats. Large industrial areas were also present in the district.

3-3-3. Networking for Participation in Holmbladsgade Kvarterløft

Urban renewal program was not limited to physical measures; the program also focused on socio-economical renewal and competitive urban growth among urban areas. The comprehensive nature of the residential renewal necessitated many different kinds of institutions to work together. Steering group of the program consisted of consisted of diverse group of people from social, educational, commercial and sports institutions (Table 2). I learned from interviewing Mr. Jørgen Sprogøe Petersen, a project leader that public officers in Copenhagen were included in the steering group to insure transparency and accountability. According to Mr. Petersen, it was a great success that more than 300 residents participated in the first meeting in the October 1997. Residents were interested in the program because information about how much budget for participation and information they had was disclosed at the first stage. Also Holmbladsgade Kvarterløft and Copenhagen city were connected as figure 3. In this structure relation between steering group and city council was clear for general people.

This is another example of long history of participation to local institutions in Denmark facilitates inclusion of each resident's opinion much more so than compared to Japan.

Table 2: member of steering group

<p>Chairman: 1 representative from Sundby Local Council</p> <p>[Resident' group and local institutions, etc]</p> <p>3 residents representatives, 1 from Sundbyerne's Landowners' Association, 2 representatives from Sunddy Local Council, 1 representative from the sports community, 1 from Sundby Trade Association, 1 from Amager Trade Council, 1 from the Council for the Elderly, 1 representative from Kofoeds Skole, 5 residents from network groups,</p> <p>[Public officers]</p> <p>1 representative from the primary and lower secondary schools, 1 representative from Sundby Library, 1 representative from the Healthy City Project, 1 representative from the day care center, 1 from Sundby Nord Local Center, 1 from the Copenhagen Employment Service, 1 from the Building and Construction Administration, 1 from the Energy, Water and Environment Administration, 3 observers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">; 28 representatives in total</p>

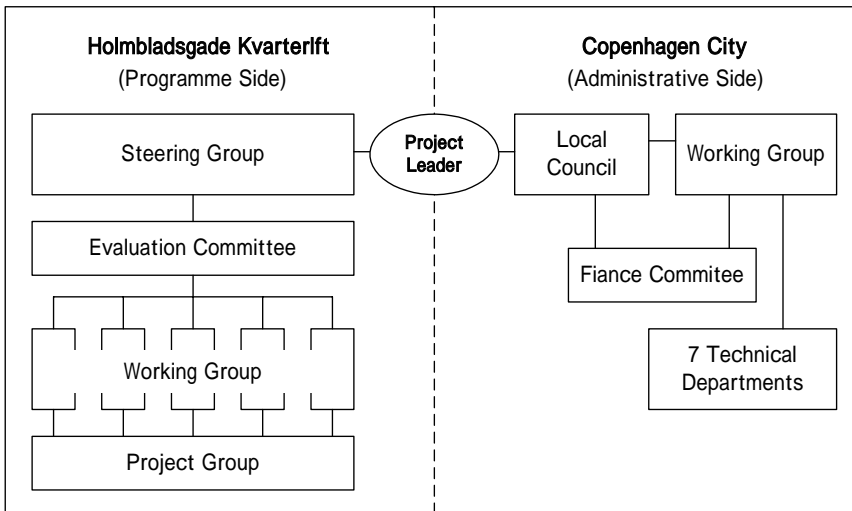


Figure 3: the relationship between Holmbladsgade Kvarterløft and Copenhagen City

3-4. Role of Local Institutions in Holmbladsgade, Copenhagen

Various local institutions in Holmbladsgade worked together in Kvarterløft program. As I mentioned in the previous section, steering group consist of representatives from various kinds of institutions was established from the early stage of planning. Then five working groups, housing environment, neighborhood environment, culture and sports, social environment and employment, were established. After the first meeting in October 1997, working groups completed a preliminary plan by February 1998. In the following May, residents' meetings in five working groups were held all over the area including schools, and industrial factories. The rational behind

comprehensive study was that comprehensive renewal required thorough analysis of problems in the neighborhood from various kinds of perspectives. The other point of view, namely, local institutions should be involved in making planning process continuously, because residents have relationship to local institutions in daily life.

And Kvarterhuset (Neighborhood House) built by Kvarterløft program along with other existing institutions has an important role in providing places for residents to meet people, get information and discuss local issues. Kvarterhuset in essence is a new hybrid community center in this area.

4. Consolidation and Decentralization in Japan and Urban Policy in local level

4-1. Consolidation and Decentralization

The present drive for decentralization in Japan is the third push for reform after Meiji Period during late 19th century and during the post world war period. In 1990s decentralization became one of the most important political issues. At the same time consolidation of villages, towns and cities has been accelerated resulting from government's effort to rehabilitate municipal economy; national government gave generous loans to consolidated municipalities. Because of decentralization and consolidation of villages, towns and cities, the responsibilities of local municipalities have been expanding. By April 2000, there were forty-seven prefectures and 3,229 municipalities. The number of prefectures has remained unchanged since the system was adopted during the Meiji period however there are those today who hold the view that the sizes of the prefectures should be reviewed to match changed in the economic reality brought about by Japan's post world war economic growth (CLAIR, 2000: 3).

The aim of these municipal reforms in Japan is shift the political emphasis from "conformity and concentration" that emphasize National uniformity and equity to "variety and decentralization" that emphasize residents and local views. A sensible local self-governance is required in today's Japan, to tackle many problems in education, social welfare, and employment of local municipalities. It is true that Japanese government recognizes this as shown by reforms based on consolidation of villages, towns and cities; however, it is often criticized that the decision of consolidation is made heedless of inputs from citizen. In addition, the consolidations have made it more difficult for citizen to access to the municipality, central local government office. There is a growing concern that local government is too far removed from residents physically and mentally.

4-2. Present Situation and Strategy of Public Participation in Urban Planning in Local Level

In Japan, it was not until 1970s, when many problems of nature destruction, environmental pollution and urban development appeared, that people started to discuss public participation in urban planning. The discussions lead to implementation of public participation channels in virtually every municipality in Japan.

The drive for decentralization is reborn in Japan. Since 1990s many authorities have been delegated from national level to local level. Especially in the area of urban planning, City Planning Act was amended in 2000 as a part of decentralization drive. Since the amendment, we began to see local municipalities making plans together with residents in their original methods of participation. However, improvements can be made to increase the accessibility of the City Planning Act by clarifying the documents riddled with technical terms. Having sole discretion on implementation of public participation, local municipalities set up system for residents' participation in the city planning often very different from each other. Some municipalities are trying to involve residents to a planning process by holding workshop, designing games, and developing questionnaires for residents from the early stage of planning.

As a consequence of series of amendments to City Planning Act, urban planning authorities have been delegated from national level to provincial level, and eventually to local level. In single decentralization legislation in 1999, "Toshikeikaku shingikai", urban planning committee in local level, was regulated in City Planning Act. Thus, the legislation empowered local governments to implement urban planning.

Especially after Hanshin-Awaji earthquake disaster in January 1995, the number of NPO have been increasing (Figure 4). One among NPO's numerous services is participating in urban planning (Table 3). Since 1998, NPOs can obtain corporate status. There are more than 100,000 NPOs in total including ones without corporate status. I believe NPOs will play more important role in urban planning in the future.

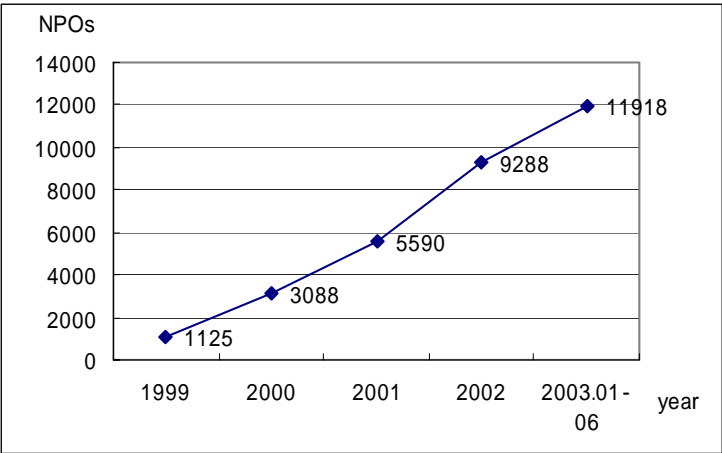


Figure 4: transition of the number of NPOs (Japan NPO Center)

Table3: subject of NPOs (Japan NPO Center)

Subject of NPOs	%
health and medical care and welfare	39.4
environment protection	10.9
culture, art and sports	10.2
children healthy nurturing	10
town and urban planning	9.7
social education	7.1
internaitonal cooperation	4.4
support for NPOs	4.2
human rights and peace	2
gender-free society	0.9
regional security	0.7
disaster relief	0.6

4-3. Intra-City Decentralization in Japan

Because of the expansion of city areas by consolidation in recent years, establishing branch offices as intra-city decentralization has become of the most critical tasks for local municipalities. It seems to be better to zone districts within a city. Allocating branch offices in each zone allows residents to recognize each own residential district, promoting exchange of information and discussion. As made clear in a survey of urban planning in small district (Nishi, 2002), however, about 40 local municipalities have branch offices in divided districts. The survey targeted 109 municipalities with population more than 200,000 and twenty-three special wards in Tokyo. The municipalities studies excluded the twelve designated cities. In forty local governments, a city is zoned small district and there are branch offices there. And in forty-five local governments, public services implement some places in a city. In many municipalities, branch offices give limited public services such as issuing resident registration and certification of personal seal. However there are discussions to increase responsibilities of branch offices recently (Yamasaki, 2003: 205-257).

4-4. Case of Public Participation in Setagaya-ward, Tokyo

4-4-1. Overview of Setagaya-ward and Functions in Small Districts

About 780,000 inhabitants are living in Setagaya-ward in Tokyo. The area is divided into five zones with a branch office in each. The ward has twenty-seven small branch offices. Setagaya-ward is an example of intra-city decentralized in Japan.

Setagaya-ward has been adhering to the policy of decentralization in accordance to National decentralization policy since 1991; it established five branch offices assigning authorities from main government office to the branch offices.

Branch offices provide services in urban development, public services, taxation, tax paying, insurance and pension, social welfare and district planning, etc. In terms of planning, branch

offices introduce land adjustment project and redevelopment project, give the permission to development, maintain narrow roads, supervise illegal buildings and preserve park and green area, etc.

4-4-2. Strategy of Public Participation as Intra-City Decentralization in Setagaya-ward

By local administrative policy in Setagaya-ward, the role of branch offices has been expanded. As a result, many authorities who were in charge of building confirmation, development permission, maintenance of roads and parks and green preservation moved from main government office to branch offices.

There are also twenty-seven small local offices in Setagaya-ward where town promoting consultative meeting by representative take place. The offices support town planning activities, publish news papers for their small districts, and so on. They also make recommendations to main local government office. Composed of fifty members in each small district, they are all volunteers.

Setagaya-ward established own regulation about regarding to planning in order to implement its own planning suited town's features. Based on this regulation, each town is divided into urbanization leading area and urbanization promotion area. Residents in Setagaya-ward can get information about town planning and relative information in branch offices directly from local authorities delegated from main local government office to branch offices. And in chapter two and twenty-seven of the own regulation about town planning, residents' participation and information disclosure are stipulated. This is the strategy of public participation in Setagaya-ward.

4-5. The Role of Local Institutions in Setagaya-ward

As I mentioned the last section, there are towns promoting consultative meeting by less than fifty representatives in each small district in Setagaya-ward. Setagaya-ward is metropolis, therefore, it is necessary to be decentralized in small districts. However the need for decentralization is not limited to metropolises alone but also in another local municipalities due to recent drive for expansion of city areas. The decentralization allows closer relationship between municipalities and communities by creating partnership among actors in prefectural, municipal and community levels (Figure 5).

Twenty-seven small branch offices are still a Japanese institution. Of course some local institutions in small districts are active in expressing their opinions to the main office. However it is more common for residents to participate in town planning as a member of small district or citizen. For example in Setagaya-ward in Taishi-cho district, a monthly consultative meeting on renovation of park and other open spaces had been held.

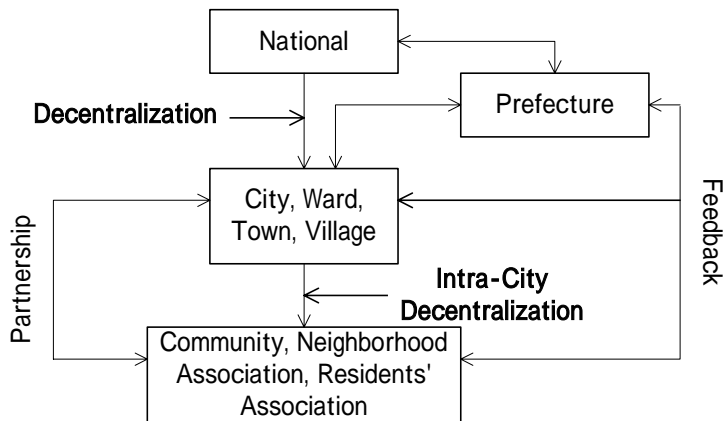


Figure 5: Deployment of Intra-City Decentralization in Japan (Yamasaki, 2003: 222)

5. Conclusion

I summarized the history of consolidation and decentralization in Denmark, comprehensive urban renewal program called Kvarterløft, and examined local institutions in its effort to stimulate participation of residents. Since the start of decentralization in 1970s, the governance structure of Denmark has been evenly trifurcated to national, county, and local levels, delegating many authorities to local municipalities. In Denmark users in local institutions can participate in making policy and decision making process as called as user democracy since early 19th century. It is an important reason in advanced public participation and local institutions have obvious roles in local level because of the idea of user democracy.

In Holmbladsgade Kvarterløft, the network of various kinds of local institutions are formed in steering groups. Actors in the Kvarterløft program are interdependent; they exchange information, goals and resources in making planning process. This is the policy network that is pointed out by Kickert.

Then, I summarized the present situation of decentralization and consolidation in Japan. As decentralization effort in Japan begin to take shape, consolidation of villages, towns and cities has been accelerated for rehabilitation of municipal economy. The decentralization and consolidation is restructuring and expanding responsibilities of local municipalities. For example in Setagaya-ward, Tokyo, the area is divided five branch offices with additional twenty-seven small branch offices. Setagaya-ward is an example of decentralization in an intra-city. Setagaya-ward has been successful in promoting consultative meeting in small districts.

I believe discussion regarding intra-city decentralization rather than roles of local institutions will be dominant among policy makers in the near future in Japan. Although NPOs have important roles in various kinds of municipal functions in recent years, people of Japan are not used to public participation equally that of "user democracy" in Denmark. One of important steps in this direction is to delegate authorities to community, existing neighborhood association and residents'

association to promote residents' interests. In general in many Japanese municipalities some representatives in a city discuss for example a specific town plan with public officers, etc however problem is that the representatives' group is dissolved after making the plan.

As one see from the Kvarterløft program in Denmark, residents' participation in decision making process in local institutions promotes daily concerns of residents. On the other hand, in Japan, intra-city decentralization is a vehicle to promote residents' interests. For Japan, it will be important to grasp and establish relations among local institutions such as NPOs, and residents with various expert knowledge at small district level.

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