

**Papers on the Local Governance System and its Implementation  
in Selected Fields in Japan No.15**

## **Local Government Planning in Japan**

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## Foreword

The Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) and the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) have been working since FY 2005 on a “Project on the overseas dissemination of information on the local governance system of Japan and its operation”. On the basis of the recognition that the dissemination to overseas countries of information on the Japanese local governance system and its operation was insufficient, the objective of this project was defined as the pursuit of comparative studies on local governance by means of compiling in foreign languages materials on the Japanese local governance system and its implementation as well as by accumulating literature and reference materials on local governance in Japan and foreign countries.

In FY 2009, we continued to compile “Statistics on Local Governance (Japanese/English)”, “Up-to-date Documents on Local Autonomy in Japan”, “Papers on the Local Governance System and its Implementation in Selected Fields in Japan” and “Historical Development of Japanese Local Governance”. We also continued to conduct a search for literature and reference materials concerned with local governance in Japan and overseas to be stored in the Institute for Comparative Studies in Local Governance (COSLOG).

If you have any comments, suggestions or inquiries regarding our project, please feel free to contact the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) or the Institute for Comparative Studies in Local Governance (COSLOG) of the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS).

March 2010

Michihiro Kayama  
Chairman of the Board of Directors  
Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR)  
Tatsuo Hatta  
President  
National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies



## Preface

This booklet is one of the results of research activities conducted by the Institute for Comparative Studies in Local Governance (COSLOG) as one part of a project that started in FY 2005 entitled “Project on the overseas dissemination of information on the local governance system of Japan and its operation”, in cooperation with the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). For the purpose of implementing this project, a “Research committee for the project on the overseas dissemination of information on the local governance system of Japan and its operation” has been set up, and a chief and deputy chiefs with responsibility for the project have been designated from among the members concerned with each research subject.

“Papers on the Local Governance System and its Implementation in Selected Fields in Japan” (FY2009, Volumes 15-18) were written under the responsibility of the following four members. (Title of members as of January 2010)

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Yoshinori Ishikawa, Executive Director, JKA

Kenji Shimazaki, Professor, The National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

Hiraki Tanaka, Associate Professor, Faculty of Cultural Policy & Management, Shizuoka University of Art and Culture

This booklet, the 15th volume in the series, is about local government planning in Japan, and was written by Professor Ohsugi.

This booklet explains the characteristics of plans actively utilized in local government administration in Japan from the standpoint of systemicity and comprehensiveness, based on the history of local government planning administration. It also gives an explanation of how planning administration provides important opportunities in the context of the development of citizen participation, and of new trends such as the changes brought about in planning administration by the dissemination of manifesto-based elections.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Ohsugi, and also to other members of the research committee for their expert opinions and advice. Furthermore, I would like to thank Mr. Maurice Jenkins for his English translation.

March 2010

Hiroshi Ikawa

Chairperson

Research committee for the project on the overseas dissemination of information  
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# Local Government Planning in Japan

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Points of emphasis in local government management and planning administration

In the course of their administrative management, local governments in Japan formulate many different kinds of plans, which provide a framework or guidelines for activities to be executed. With a view to achieving the objectives set out by the plans, they may also include a wide variety of administrative procedures, ranging from regulatory measures with binding force to guidance that encourages society to move in a particular direction.

One of the most important factors in particular in the fresh emphasis that has come to be put on the significance of "planning" is the promotion of NPM-type local government management reform, especially the rising importance of administrative management based on PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Action) cycles.

It is a fact that there are many local governments that are devoting tremendous amounts of energy to formulating plans. New plans to be formulated are added one after the other, while existing plans in various departments have to be revised on a regular basis, resulting in the current situation in which the total amount of plans that local government has an obligation to settle is steadily increasing and the total amount of personnel and budgetary resources invested in formulating and revising plans is truly enormous.

Focusing particularly on procedural and methodological aspects of planning formulation, we can say that measures that have already been adopted include consultation and coordination adjustment by the use of the conference system within the administration, involvement of interested parties, and the introduction of outside specialist knowledge through the council system, taking such forms as advisory panels, , and democratic control by such means as local assembly resolutions. In addition to these measures, with the particular aim of encouraging a wider range of citizen participation in the process of planning formulation, many different methods of participation by local residents have now been put into practice, demonstrating the development of a form of planning administration that puts emphasis on the autonomy of residents. The participation of residents has thus become a key focal point in the local government planning formulation process, and it has been pointed out that the increased awareness of participation by residents has played a part in reconfirming the importance and significance of local government planning and planning administration.

A more recent development is the gradual rise in the number of cases in which the elected chief of a local government has ensured that the content of a manifesto that was advocated during the

election period, is reflected in the practice of local government management, and it is possible to identify in this point a new development in democratic control over local government planning.

In general, therefore, it is probably no exaggeration to say that planning administration constitutes a special characteristic of Japanese local government management.

## **1.2 The history of local government planning administration in Japan**

The history of planning administration in Japan is marked by a string of city planning measures starting with the Tokyo City and Ward Development Bylaw in 1888, followed by the City Planning Law of 1920 and its complete reform in 1968. Other plans that can be seen as nationally representative are the series of national land development plans, primarily the national comprehensive development plans based on the National Comprehensive Land Development Law (1950), also comprehensive development plans, subordinate to the national plans and pertaining to regions, prefectures and designated areas respectively, as well as various other regional development plans making up the hierarchy of national land development plans as a whole (Note: The Comprehensive National Land Development Law has now been revised as the National Land Formation Planning Law (2005).) In addition to these, other plans have been formulated as the occasion demanded, such as various mobilization plans during wartime, the Imperial Capital Reconstruction Plan after the Great Kanto Earthquake, and the Postwar Recovery Plan after World War II. It has been pointed out that all of these plans originated at the national level, that the full-scale functioning of planning administration in the 1950s marked a distinctive period in Japan reflecting the transition from a period of post-war reconstruction to one of high economic growth; and that within the context of the development of full-scale planning administration at national level, it is also possible to identify during the high economic growth period (late 1950s to the 1960s) the ways in which local governments seriously started to tackle the issues of planning administration.

Specifically, it was following the postwar recovery years that national land development and, based on that, development in designated areas, was taken forward. Further, turning to economic plans, central government took cognizance of the income-doubling plan, and factors propelling this concept forward can be identified as the policy of dispersing industrial plans throughout the country and in response to this, the competition among local governments to invite industries to their area. A central focus was also put on regional development planning by the prefectural plans that were formulated in the era of high economic growth. The points set out here are illustrated by the fact that nearly 60 percent of prefectural governments in Japan had formulated their comprehensive plans before 1970 (Japan Center for Cities, 2002).

On the other hand, looking at metropolitan Tokyo, we can find plans put into operation under the leadership of central government, such as the Capital City Construction Plan of 1951 based on the Capital City Construction Law and the Capital Region Fundamental Plan of 1958 based on the

Capital Region Improvement Law, while in 1963, a year before the Olympic Games, the Tokyo metropolitan government formulated its first long-term plan. However, the high economic growth rate and the uni-polar concentration on the capital city resulted in nothing but socio-economic distortions of growing severity. Following the birth of the reformist administration under governor Minobe Ryokichi, a "mid-term plan" was formulated in 1968 with the aim of realizing the "civil minimum", a coined phrase to describe the minimum level necessary for urban daily life, more specifically, the level of physical infrastructure and facilities that large cities of today are required to provide for residents as a matter of course. The "mid-term plan" referred to above was developed as an epoch-making device in local government planning administration, being used in such ways as a lever to help to achieve scientific and planned government of the capital, as a means of reviewing and investigating the relationship between plans, budgets and evaluation, and as a way of introducing the "rolling approach".

Looking next at municipalities, the most basic units of local government, under the Municipality Merger Promotion Law (1953) and the New Municipality Creation Promotion Law (1956), it was made obligatory for merged municipalities to formulate construction plans. The revision of the Local Autonomy Law (1969) imposed an obligation on municipalities to operate their administration in accordance with the fundamental initiative authorized through a resolution of the local assembly. This revision of the law triggered a rapid increase in the number of municipalities formulating a comprehensive plan in the 1970s. By 1980, the number rose to just under 90 percent, and today, it includes almost all municipalities.

It was in the ways described here that local governments in Japan started to get grips with planning administration, which has continued to develop up to the present day. The objects of plans are not restricted only to projects or businesses concerned with local developments, or to physical facilities and infrastructure. It is rather the case that plans cover a wide area, including many individual administrative fields, and are designed to respond to new emerging issues, either on the basis of national legislation or on independent recognition of the need for such plans by local governments. Planning administration is now an indispensable tool in local government management in Japan, reinforcing all the areas of local administration.

### **1.3 The diversity of local governmental plans**

Even if we use the term "local government plans", which are formulated and implemented on the initiative of local governments, they can assume a variety of forms.

Taking, for example, the formal aspect, plans can be thought of as being drawn up in a wide variety of different areas, depending on how to delineate the duration or the target area of the plan concerned.

Or if we think of the underlying basis for the formulation of a plan, in a significant number of

cases, this derives from national legislation. For example, there are cases where plans take national laws as their basis and are aimed at guaranteeing the effectiveness of such laws, including regulations applicable to ordinary individual and/or corporate entities, i.e. not national or local public bodies. In other cases, national legislation may serve as the nationwide standard basis of plans from the perspective of the requirement for such legislation to be reflected in the local government guidelines for an important policy sector. Furthermore, plan formulation can have many different aspects; it can be made legally obligatory, non-obligatory but expected, or voluntary. Needless to say, there are completely different cases where the formulation of plans depends on bylaws passed by local governments independently without any involvement on the part of national legislation.

Leading on from the above, even when we say that a local government takes the initiative and acts independently in the formulation of a plan, it is still necessary to take the relationship with central government into consideration. Very closely connected to possible points of dispute is the question necessity of being able to assign responsibility for plan formulation to central government or local government, and the consequent requirement for a lack of ambiguity concerning this point.

Focusing our attention next on plan content, the amount of detail in a plan may also vary considerably. Specifically, discussions may arise as to whether a local government plan should constitute a structural framework for administrative operations or be nothing more than guidelines or whether it should regulate executive activities, specifying such concrete details as a clearly defined goal or year, methods and criteria of execution, budgets, the magnitude of a project, and so on.

The comprehensiveness of a plan's target may also vary greatly quality depending on the plan's target. When discussing local governmental plans, serious consideration needs to be given to the question of whether the administrative unit responsible for formulating, having jurisdiction over, and operating plans, or whether the policy sector at which a plan is targeted is assigned to a particular and distinctive section, or policy, or whether the plan broadly encompasses multiple divisions and policy fields.

In short, local governmental plans may exist in a wide variety of forms, and as described above, may exhibit a range of different characteristics, and be susceptible to being classified from a number of different angles. On the basis of consideration of the degree to which local government planning in Japan can be described as either systematic or comprehensive, this paper will examine the current issues encountered by local government plans in the changing environment of local government management.

## **2 The systemicity of local governmental plans**

### **2.1 The planning system and the policy system**

Multiply interconnected plans may be hierarchically aligned and constructed so as to form a planning system, which is typically recognized as having a three-tier structure: fundamental

initiative, master plan(s) and implementation plans.

This three-tier planning system is often regarded as corresponding to a policy system consisting of policies – projects – administrative operations. The planning policy dimension of a fundamental initiative is highly abstract and consists of a general framework and guidelines. A typical example is the fundamental initiative of a municipality (city, town or village); the objective of formulating such an initiative is defined in the Local Autonomy Act (Article 2, 4) as being "to accomplish the comprehensive and planned administration within their areas". This policy planning dimension can fairly be described as aspiring to integrate administrative activities which are prone to segmentation and sectionalism and to form a unified vision of local government management. It is therefore located at the highest level of local governmental plans, and stands at the summit of what may be termed comprehensive plans, long-term plans and so on. In practice, it may refer to the fundamental initiative of a municipality as defined in the Local Autonomy Act referred to above, or to a correspondingly distinctive formulation at prefectural level.

In contrast, master plans can be found at the dimension at which the policies expressed in fundamental initiatives are broken down into projects. More specifically, the master plans denote policy objectives and projects aimed at realizing such objectives. Finally, there is the dimension represented in planning terms by implementation plans, where all these projects are re-arranged and brought together, setting out the specific administrative operations that have to be executed, and including the necessary administrative resources that will have to be invested (sources of revenue, personnel, organizations, and so on) as well as project duration, concrete numerical targets, etc.

Thus in theoretical terms, a planning system can be thought of as being structured as a counterpart to the policy system. However, when we look at the reality of plan formulation in individual local governments, we find that, for instance, the fundamental initiative dimension and the basic plan dimension may not necessarily be hierarchically arranged in terms of a superordinate-subordinate relationship. The result may be a lack of consistency between local governments or a situation whereby, in the same local government, different plans called "master plan" or "implementation plan" may not be consistent in terms of the level of specificity or detail corresponding to their respective label.

The circumstances that need to be taken into consideration are that it is only recently that the systemicity of a plan has been defined as being in accordance with a policy system and that conscious efforts have been made to get to grips with this, in response to the development of the NPM-type of government management reform which controls the progress of plans by linking them to administrative evaluation.

## **2.2 The local government plan system and the intergovernmental relationship**

### **(1) The intergovernmental relationship**

The system of local governmental plans is not necessarily self-contained within individual local governments, and there are many cases in which a system of plans is established on the premise that there is an intergovernmental relationship that links central government, prefectures and municipalities.

The land use plan, for example, based on the National Land Use Planning Law, it is stipulated in Article 4 of the said law that in addition to a national plan formulated by the national government, prefectural plans and municipal plans may be formulated by prefectures and municipalities, respectively.

Or if we take the example of the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society, it is stipulated as an obligation (Article 14) that after taking consideration of a National Plan for a Gender-Equal Society, a prefectural Plan for a Gender-Equal Society must be formulated, and further down the scale, a municipal plan that takes consideration both of the national plan and the prefectural plan, must also be formulated.

A further example is that of the disaster countermeasures basic plan. It is stipulated in the said law (Article 40) that prefectures should formulate disaster countermeasures plans for prefectural regions based on the national one, and further, that such plans should not conflict with disaster countermeasures project plans formulated by institutions designated by the state (i.e. national government ministries). Similarly, it is stipulated in the said law (Article 42) that municipalities too should produce municipal regional disaster countermeasure plans based on the national plan, and that the contents of the municipal plans should not conflict with the plans produced by nationally designated institutions (central government ministries) or with prefectural plans.

The examples described above in the areas of land use, gender equality and disaster prevention differ from each other in terms of the detailed hierarchical structure based on a particular law, but each example consists of a system of plans which are structured in an intergovernmental manner.

### **(2) Reference to the national plan**

There are cases in which the relationship between a national plan and local government plans is not necessarily defined in terms of a superordinate-subordinate hierarchical structure. For example, it is stipulated in the Landscape Law (Article 8, 4 and 8, 5) that prefectures, designated cities and core cities must, as the bodies administering landscapes, formulate their landscape plans in coordination with various national plans such as national and regional land use plans, as well as national plans regarding roads, rivers, railroads, airports, harbors, etc., and the Basic Environmental Plan. In other words, the stipulations of the Landscape Law which concern landscape planning do constitute a restriction on local government plans in that they make it obligatory for local governments, at the

time when they are formulating their own landscape plans, to refer to and carry out coordination with various national plans even though these plans are not in a superior position in a strict sense.

It should also be noted that although national laws do not directly regulate the formulation of subordinate plans, it is still customary practice, particularly in the area of local public enterprises, for local governments to continue to formulate their plans in accordance with national plans. As pointed out above, it was national land development plans that prompted local governments to get to grips with planning, and it is true to say that even today, plans concerned with the development of social capital, such as local public enterprises, still occupy a large percentage of local government planning administration.

If we look at road development operations, formerly, the Five-Year Plan for Road Construction was repeatedly formulated in accordance with the Law on Emergency Measures concerning Road Construction and Improvement. However, following complaints about expenditure on public works, since 2003, the plan has been formulated as the Priority Plan for the Development of Social Capital on the basis of the Law concerning the Priority Plan for the Development of Social Capital, accompanying other plans concerned with traffic safety facilities, airports, harbors, urban parks, etc. Although the Law concerning the Priority Plan for the Development of Social Capital does not make an explicit stipulation, the national priority plan mentioned above is regarded at prefectural and municipal level as being in effect the supreme plan, so that examples can still be found where road construction plans continue to be formulated as five-year plans, and their contents integrated into a comprehensive plan.

### **(3) International treaties and local governmental planning**

As an example of the way in which the system of plans is related to international treaties and not restricted to national laws, we can look at the example of biodiversity. Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity stipulates that "each contracting party shall, in accordance with its particular conditions and capabilities, develop national strategies, plans or programs for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity" etc., and Japan has formulated its national strategies three times since 1993 when it signed the convention. In 2008, Japan enacted the Basic Biodiversity Law, Article 13 of which stipulates that it is desirable for local governments (prefectures and municipalities) to formulate, at the master plan level, a regional biodiversity strategy based on the national strategy. Chiba Prefecture was among the first to respond, and in the same year, formulated the "First Prefectural Biodiversity Strategy of Chiba". This example clearly shows the systematic structure of international treaties – national law and national plans – local government plans.

Similarly, in response to the "Convention Regarding Children's Rights", which took effect in 1990 and was ratified by Japan in 1994, we can find examples of plans regarding children's rights having been formulated including, as a leading case of its kind, the "Comprehensive Plan for Children"

drawn up by Abiko City in 2004. However, it should be noted that technically, the plans which are described as a "Comprehensive Plan for Children", and which have either been formulated or are under consideration, are positioned, in legal terms, in the action plan section of the plan system. The Law for Measures to Support the Development of the Next Generation stipulates that the national government should formulate an action plan in accordance with this law, and Articles 8 and 9 of the said law make it obligatory for local governments (prefectures and municipalities) to formulate their action plans on the basis of the national plan. The use of the term "comprehensive" in the description of plans reflects the fact that additional regulations concerned with safeguarding children's rights were added to the original action plans concerned with measures to support the development of the next generation, as specified in the above-mentioned law.

### **2.3 Plan duration and administrative activities**

The differences between the plans that make up the plan system described above may depend on the duration set for each plan. The fundamental initiative is regarded as a long-term plan, the duration of which is set for ten years or more. On the other hand, master plans fall into the category of mid-term plans because even though they may be set for the same duration of time as the fundamental initiative, they are usually revised after five years. Implementation plans are customarily "rolled" in a planning cycle of approximately three years, thus they are characterized as short-term plans.

There are also cases where master plans and implementation plans may incorporate annual plans. Particularly in the case of implementation plans, it is common practice for these to be closely combined with annual budgets, the establishing of set numbers of staff, and organizational assessment.

Because master plans and implementation plans are set for a comparatively shorter period of time than the fundamental initiative, these plans are relatively unaffected by changes in social conditions or by administrative and financial shifts. When you also consider that it is easier to get an oversight of such plans, it is clear why, from the point of view of the section having jurisdiction over enterprises or projects, they provide a basis of demand for budgets, fixed numbers of staff and organizational resources necessary to carry out administrative tasks. In contrast, a fundamental initiative does nothing more than suggest a general framework or guidelines at a highly abstract level, making it difficult for local government staff to recognize a linkage between it and the tasks that have to be executed. Because fundamental initiatives do not in many cases receive sufficient attention in the context of activities to be carried out, there is often a tendency for them to be criticized as mere formality.

### **3 The comprehensiveness of local governmental planning**

#### **3.1 Local government comprehensive plans**

The plans which cover the whole of the administrative sector of local government and deal with policy in an inclusive and integrated manner, crossing sectional and departmental boundaries, are here termed comprehensive plans, while in contrast, plans concerned with particular policy areas that are formulated, administered and operated by a particular administrative sector will be referred to as individual plans.

In the case of many local governments, the term “comprehensive plan” usually denotes what for the local government concerned are core plans, comprising the fundamental initiative at the highest level and beneath it, master plans and implementation plans. However, the terminology may vary among local governments, including, for example, the terms long-term plan, long-term comprehensive plan, comprehensive development plan, etc.

The discussion will begin with the comprehensive plan, which is the core plan for local governments, with an emphasis on how its comprehensiveness is ensured.

#### **(1) The encyclopedic character of comprehensive plans and links with policy evaluation**

Japanese local government plans that are termed “comprehensive” are characterized by the all-inclusive nature of the plan content as a result of having been formulated within the plan system comprising fundamental initiative – master plans – implementation plans. In other words, local governments are recognized as showing a tendency toward an exhaustive and overall enumeration of their policies, projects and administrative operations. A frequent criticism of comprehensive plans is that they are too exhaustive to be effective and lack focus, while on the other hand, they do have merits in being able to be used as a compendium of local government activities.

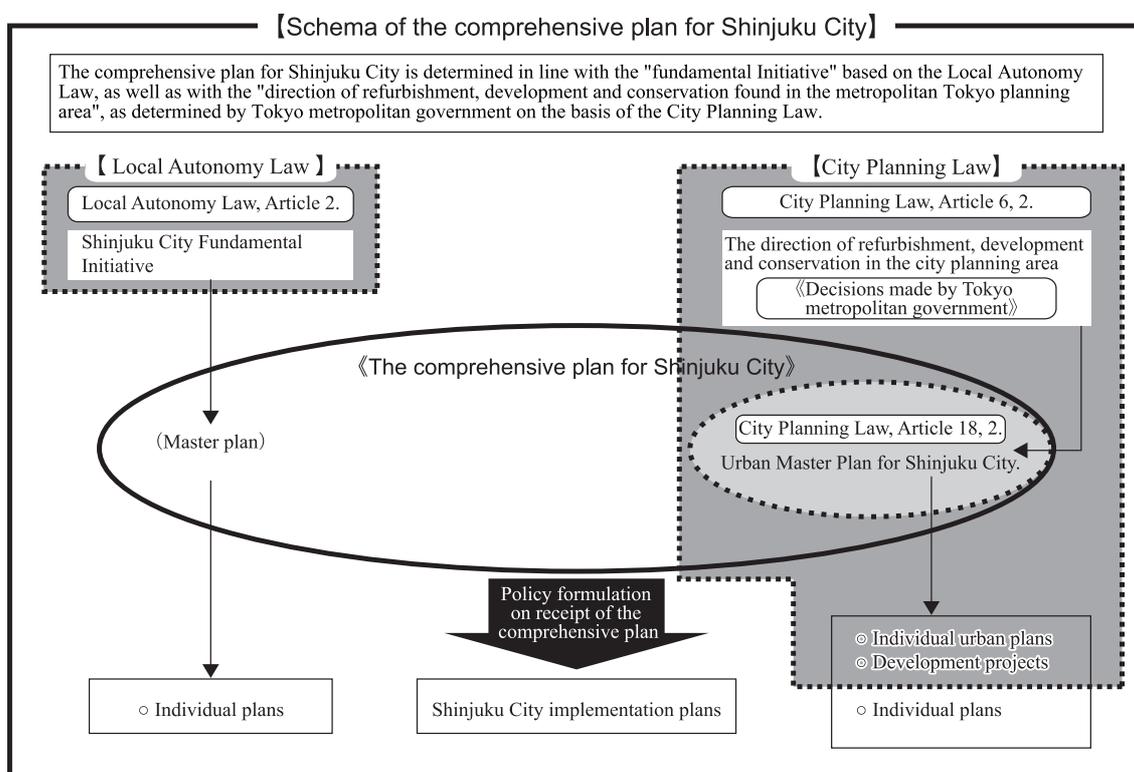
A further aspect of this merit of comprehensive plans may be the way in which it facilitates the construction of policy evaluation systems when it is linked to administrative evaluation devices. This may be the factor behind the recent and rapid establishment of policy evaluation among local governments. Specifically, the plan system is at the same time a policy system, and can easily be constructed as an evaluation system by matching the evaluation of policies, projects and administrative operations to the dimensions of the fundamental initiative, master plans and implementation plans respectively. Only a small number of local governments adopt administrative evaluation in all three dimensions, but there are many cases where local governments have introduced one or more of these evaluation levels, particularly evaluation of administrative operations, at the time when comprehensive plans are being newly formulated or revised.

However, comprehensiveness in local governmental planning is not sufficiently guaranteed simply as a result of this exhaustive, compendium-like character of comprehensive plans, and attention has been drawn to the following discussion points.

## (2) Lack of a regulatory character

The first point to which attention has been drawn is that if we take city planning as the base of traditional planning administration, we find a lack of general coordination of urban space focused on land-use allocation. The cause of this can be thought of as deriving from the centralized nature of city planning administration in Japan. It has been pointed out that city planning administration in Japan has been conceived of as the planning of cities by central government, and that the main focus has been on "city planning operations" against the background of financial support from the national treasury, thus closing off from the start any possibility of the development of comprehensive plans by municipal governments (Nishio, 1990).

**Diagram 1. Schema of the comprehensive plan for Shinjuku City**



Source: "Shinjuku City Fundamental Initiative - Shinjuku City Comprehensive Plan" (Dec. , 2007), p. 3.

It follows from the above that most of the local government comprehensive plans do no more than suggest a very abstract image of the city at the level of the fundamental initiative. "Shinjuku City Comprehensive Plan" (as the city plan is termed), formulated in 2007, is a rare exception of a plan (see Diagram 1) that was integrated, as a comprehensive coordinating mechanism, into the local government's fundamental comprehensive plan in the form of what could be termed a city master plan, based on the City Planning Law (Article 18-2), as well as a land use plan. It is more typical for

city plans to be independent of local government comprehensive plans. It is also possible to quote many examples of comprehensive plans, in which specific development projects, which cannot necessarily be said to have comprehensive significance despite the fact that they represent large-scale enterprises, may be located as master plans, while individual operations such as the improvement of facilities may be enumerated in implementation plans.

Furthermore, city planning elements such as land use regulation, or indeed, any aspect of private regulation, can only be found very rarely, if at all, in Japanese local government comprehensive plans, thus justifying the comment that such plans are an enumeration of administrative activities focusing primarily on individual operations. Also, as described above, a link can very easily be established with post-project administrative evaluation, and at the national level, it is mandatory to conduct a regulatory impact analysis of plans formulated on the basis of national legislation, but at the level of prefectures and municipalities, such regulatory measures are totally neglected in respect of any kind of plans including comprehensive plans.

### **(3) Insufficient linkage with budgets**

The argument put forward here is that there is insufficient overall coordination of budgets, taking the financial plan as a basis, and focusing primarily on revenue distribution. It is frequently pointed out that there is no linkage between local governmental comprehensive plans and financial resources, and only a limited number of local governments actively engage in coordination of the two. Typically, coordination through the annual process of budget-making, effectively unrelated to plans, is regarded as more important meaningful. Furthermore, financial reconsideration may sometimes be attempted or suggested at the level of the fundamental initiatives or master plans, though in most cases, such reconsideration goes no further than an automatic estimation premised on past trends and the current situation. Such estimation is too inaccurate to be the basis of plan coordination, so the reality is that a financial oversight has yet to serve as a means to discipline the contents of a plan.

### **(4) Lack of prioritization**

Lastly, it is frequently pointed out that there is a lack of comprehensive coordination at a management strategy level focused on setting up a prioritization of administrative activities on the basis of political decision-making. This is the reason why local governmental comprehensive plans are frequently criticized as being no more than across-the-board plans which have no connection with the magnitude and degree of administrative demand, and which overflow with an excess of detailed content that is entirely disorganized.

In this situation, comprehensiveness may be ensured by strategies that in addition to the conventional, sector-specific vertical division of plans, form connections between related projects, and propose priority projects or leading projects in a cross-sectional way. It is also possible at the

same time, in this context, to give a clear indication of important policies, without necessarily prioritizing administrative activities.

There are also, as previously mentioned, an increasing number of cases prioritizing administrative activities based on democratic decision-making, where the post-election formulation or revision of plans is made to reflect promises made in the election manifesto.

### **3.2 The relationship between individual plans and the comprehensive plan**

#### **(1) The comprehensiveness of individual plans**

Individual plans are defined and referred to as such by contrast with the fundamental comprehensive plan discussed above. Local governments in Japan formulate an enormous number of individual plans.

That said, there is a wide variation in individual plans in terms of the degree of particularity and generality. On the one hand, you can take a typical individual plan such as a road improvement plan which deals with a highly specific area of administration, while on the other hand, there are plans which, even though they belong to a specific field within master plans that concern a particular policy, yet have a character of comprehensiveness or generality in that they deal with a series of policies in an inclusive, comprehensive, and cross-sectional manner. If we adopt this kind of perspective, the question of whether a plan is comprehensive or individual becomes a distinction in terms of the relative comprehensiveness of the scope of the object of planning.

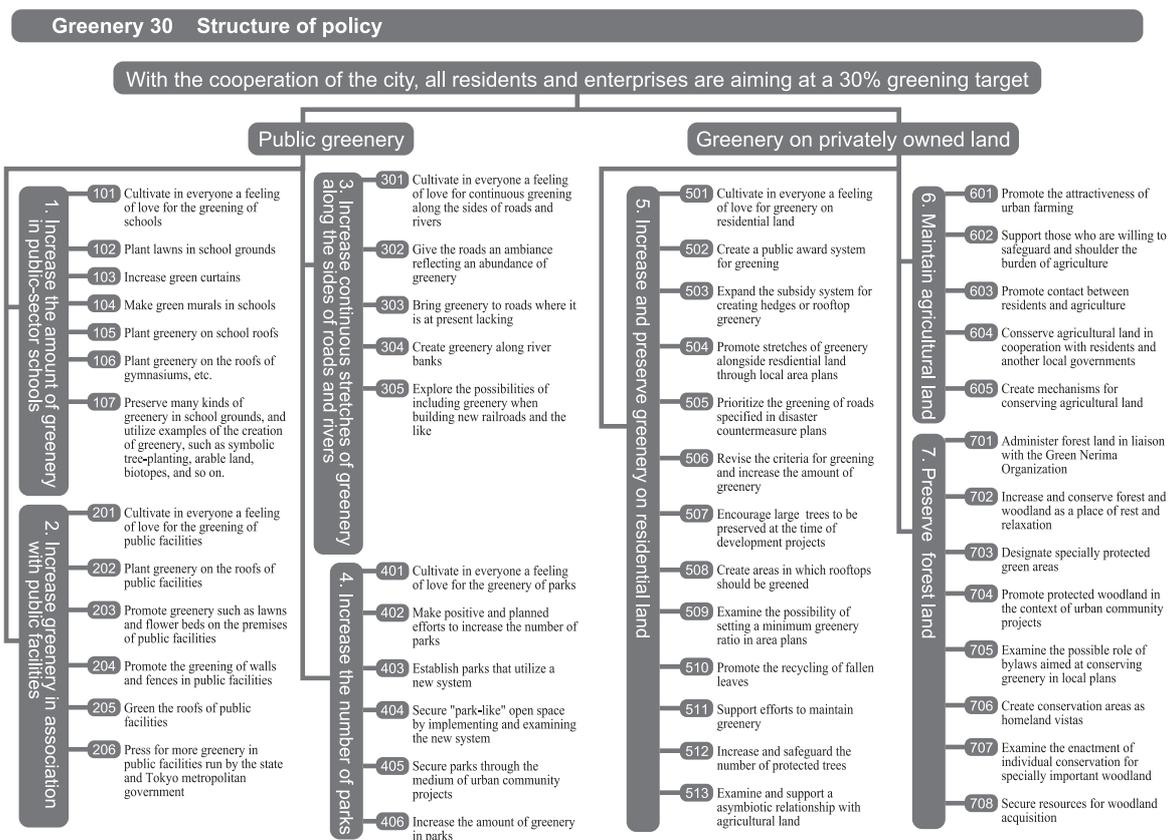
Taking, for example, the area of plans concerned with administrative reform, there are cases where local governments formulate administrative reform plans at their respective level on their own initiative, but there are also cases where local governments are in effect compelled to formulate Concentrated Reform Plans under the supervision of central government (i.e., the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication). The Concentrated Reform Plans referred to here are plans based on the "New guidelines for the promotion of local administrative reform in local bodies", published in 2005 by MIC, concerning: 1) the reorganization and rearrangement, abolition and integration of administrative work and projects, 2) the promotion of contracting out to the private sector, etc., 3) the rationalization of staff management, 4) the rationalization of salaries, 5) the transfer of authority to municipalities, 6) reexamination of branch offices, 7) reexamination of the third sector, 8) financial effect achieved through such means as reducing expenses, and 9) others. The administrative reform plans outlined here have been formulated by almost every local government across the nation and made public in a form that enables a comparison to be made with the plans issued by other local governments. From the point of view of belonging to the particular area of administrative reform, the plans have an individual character, but they can also be classified as being comprehensive from the perspective that sees the points in the plans as being deeply connected with local government management in general including operations, organization and

personnel.

Even a plan with limited scope relating to a particular area of policy, may take on a strongly comprehensive character in circumstances in which the concentrated nature of the plan causes it to extend over the boundaries of conventional jurisdictions or the lines drawn by existing plans.

For example, the "Greenery 30 Promotion Plan" formulated in 2006 by Nerima City is such an example (see Diagram 2). Nerima City is situated in a suburban area of central Tokyo. Characterized in the past by verdant agricultural land and woodland, the City formulated in 1977 a "Bylaw to Conserve and Recover Greenery". However, greenery subsequently continued to diminish, and in these circumstances, the City formulated the "Greenery 30" five-year project plan (at the implementation plan level), aiming at recovering around 30 percent of greenery in about 30 years. The distinctive character of the "Greenery 30 Promotion Plan" can be seen in its aim of adopting an aggregative and comprehensive approach, involving policies and projects which have customarily been regulated separately and are distributed among sectional individual plans corresponding to such disparate areas, normally fenced off by vertical administrative boundaries, as local public enterprises, city planning, industry and the economy, and the environment.

**Diagram 2. Policy diagram of promotion plans for the greening of Nerima City by 30% in 30 years**



Source: based on the "Greenery Promotion Overview" for Nerima City.

## (2) The coordination of individual plans with the comprehensive plan

Each and every local government formulates a great number of individual plans at the same time as the comprehensive plan constituting the planning core. Consequently, the two major points of argument are whether the comprehensive plan and the individual plans are susceptible to mutual adjustment; and whether the comprehensive plan fulfills its role of providing a framework for individual plans.

**Table 1. Example of an individual local government plan (Tachikawa City, as of fiscal 2006)**

Field	Name of the plan	Duration of the plan
Extension of health and welfare	Tachikawa City local welfare plan ※	2005 ~ 2009
	The third Tachikawa City plan for the welfare of the handicapped ※	2005 ~ 2009
	The third Tachikawa City area health and medical care plan ※	2005 ~ 2014
	The third Tachikawa City health, welfare and nursing care plan for aged persons ※	2006 ~ 2008
	Nurture your dreams: the 21st century Tachikawa children's plan ※	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City nursery care administration plan	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City second master plan for living space ※	2001 ~ 2010
Forming the daily life environment	Tachikawa City basic plan for the environment	2000 ~ 2014
	Tachikawa City second environmental administration plan ※	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City basic greening plan ※	2000 ~ 2020
Promotion of education and culture	Tachikawa City third lifelong learning promotion plan	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City second sports promotion plan	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City culture promotion plan	1994 ~ 2010
	Tachikawa City multicultural coexistence promotion plan	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City 4th gender-equal society promotion plan for Tachikawa ※	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City children's reading activity promotion plan ※	2005 ~ 2009
Making a city	Tachikawa City city master plan ※	2000 ~ 2020
	Tachikawa City road infrastructure basic plan	2000 ~ 2020
	Tachikawa City comprehensive bicycle plan ※	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City disaster countemeasures plan ※	1999 ~
Promotion of industry	Tachikawa City industry vision	1998 ~ 2015
	Basic plan to invigorate Tachikawa City core area ※	2000 ~ 2014
	Tachikawa City second agricultural promotion plan	2005 ~ 2009
Toward the promotion of the basic plan	Tachikawa city management improvement plan	2005 ~ 2009
	Tachikawa City second e-government promotion plan	2005 ~ 2009

Source: based on Tachikawa City documents. Asterisked items were formulated on the basis of national laws and regulations.

In Tachikawa City, for example, at the time when the new long-term comprehensive plan was formulated, an inspection of the condition of individual plans revealed (see Table 1) that 25

individual plans had been formulated, 14 of which were formulated on the basis of national legislation. It is recognized that a similar situation exists in other local governments in Japan.

In general terms, fears have been raised that the comprehensiveness of the planning system may be in jeopardy and that the planning system itself may have become unduly complicated. Specific issues referred to as being found in many local governments include the following: overlap of the content of the comprehensive plan and individual plans; variations in planning periods according to individual plans, leading to difficulties in setting definite objectives and evaluation indicators (in the case of Tachikawa City, as shown in Table 1, efforts are made to match planning periods to one another as closely as possible); a tendency in practice on the part of the administrative offices involved in the formulation of individual plans to prioritize those plans over the comprehensive plan, which is formulated on the initiative of the planning division; duplication and redundancy in terms of citizen participation at the time of plan formulation, and in addition, a lack of standardization of the methods and eligibility of citizen participation, resulting in inconsistencies in the plan content, all of which leads to questioning of the significance of citizens' involvement.

### **3.3 Area-specificity of plans**

#### **(1) The significance of area-specific planning**

Closely related to the comprehensiveness of local governmental planning is the issue of the "area-specificity" of a plan, i.e., whether the plan is intended to apply to a distinct and specific area within a prefecture or a municipality. The question of what significance there is in the allocation of area-specificity to a plan needs to be considered in relation to each and every plan.

A city plan is a plan which lays down guidelines for the provision of refurbishment, development and conservation within the jurisdictional area of the plan. The area covered by the plan can be divided into urbanization areas and urbanization-restricted areas. Zones, blocks and districts can also be designated (e.g. in addition to general use and special-use districts, various kinds of districts can be designated under individual laws, such as urban regeneration special districts on the basis of the Special Measures Law concerning Urban Regeneration, landscape districts on the basis of the Landscape Law, or special greenery conservation districts on the basis of the City Greenery Law, and so on). The intention of the kind of differentiation indicated here is not to separate individual districts from each other, but to serve as measure to promote the comprehensive provision of refurbishment, development and conservation within the city as a whole.

In contrast, area-specific development projects or local public enterprises should be devised in the form of individually specified projects or enterprises. Even if such policies or enterprises are incorporated into the comprehensive plan, they should be given the status of prioritized policy or enterprise.

## **(2) Area-specific planning and decentralization within cities**

Another way of thinking about the area-specificity of plans considers the diversity of characteristics that make up the area of the plan of a prefecture or a municipality; on the basis of this way of thinking, each sub-division may produce its own plan, and these plans put together will collectively comprise the overall area plan of the local government concerned.

For instance, in the case of the comprehensive plan for Shinjuku City referred to above, in the city planning master plan which is incorporated into the comprehensive plan, the entire city area is divided into 10 districts, in each of which guidelines for urban community development appropriate to the particular district are set out.

To give another example, the master plan for Minato City comprises district plan reports in addition to plans for subject-area sectors. The district plan reports are formulated at five district ward offices with the help of suggestions from the respective district resident participation organizations. One distinctive feature that characterizes these district plans is that each separate district plan contains a vision of the future of the district as well as proposals for projects and operations set out in a style similar to the comprehensive plan.

Summing up the above points, we have the case of Shinjuku City where in each of the 10 branch offices a district board serving as a base for the participation of city residents, and the case of Minato City, in which resident participation is promoted in a similar way in each of the comprehensive branch offices. Features common to each of these 2 examples are that local governments which are proactive about decentralizing within the municipality concerned and emphasize public involvement have introduced area-specific planning.

## **(3) Wide-area plans**

Local government plans sometimes straddle the boundaries of a single local government jurisdictional area and take the form of a wide-area plan.

Plans of the kind referred to here, which straddle individual local government boundaries and are formulated by a number of local governments, previously took the form of wide-area administrative zone plans, differentiated by wide-area administrative zone and having as the formulating body a wide-area union, a partial-affairs association or a conference consisting of a plurality of municipalities (cities, towns and villages). This pattern was abolished in 2009 with the development of mergers within the framework of the great Heisei consolidation.

In its place, the national government proposed the autonomous settlement zone concept for wide-area administration. The central city within each autonomous settlement zone is given the task of formulating an autonomous settlement zone symbiotic vision, which provides a description of the names of the zone itself and its constituent municipalities, a vision of the future, specific mechanisms for the achievement of the vision, and so on. The vision also serves as the basis for

national government support. In the course of formulating and revising the autonomous settlement zone symbiotic vision, it will be examined in conferences and round-table meetings (the autonomous settlement zone symbiotic vision discussion sessions) organized by the central city, with members drawn from the private sector and locally interested parties. Specifically, the discussions will cover matters of concern to the municipalities comprising the zone and surrounding municipalities. It should also be noted that each of the constituent municipalities of the zone will separately sign an agreement with the central city, but unlike a wide-area administrative zone, the central city will provide a higher level of leadership in terms of the formulation of the plan (vision).

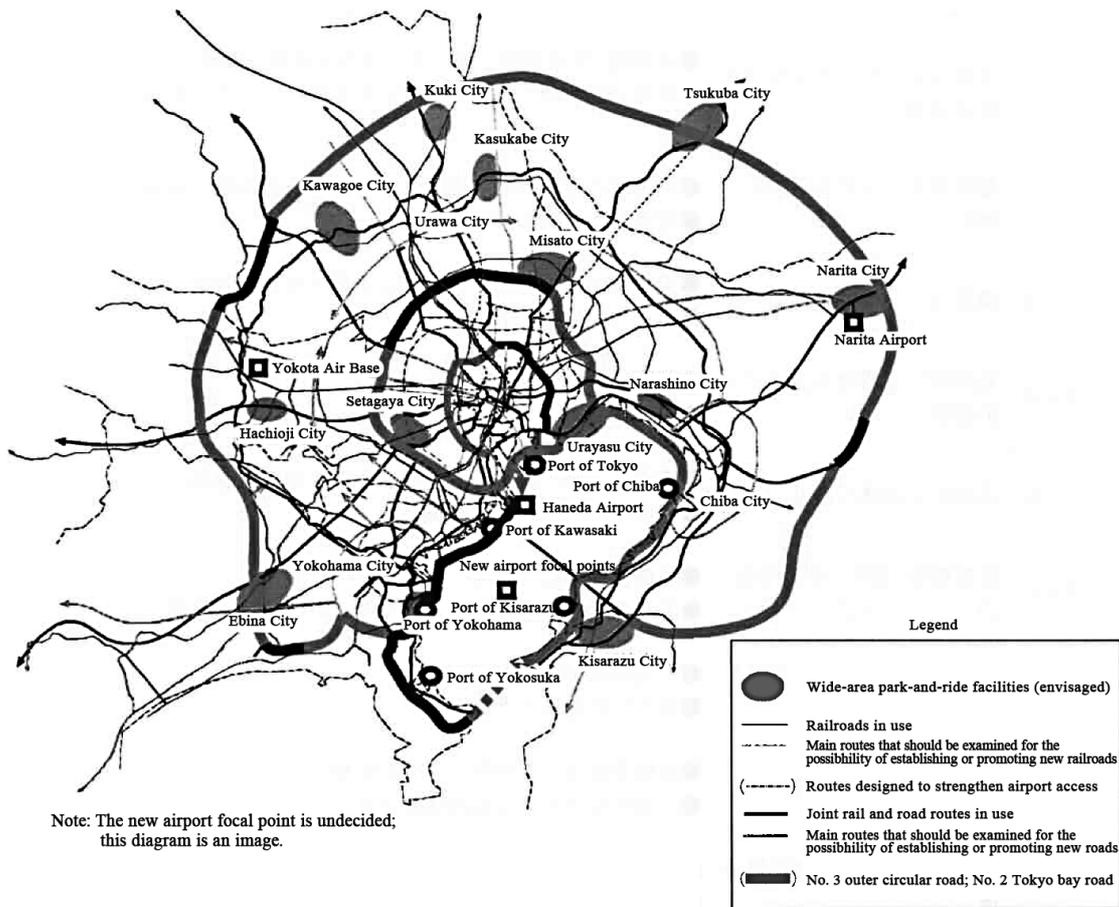
As another example of a wide-area plan based on an individual policy, one can quote the case of a city plan which is formulated so as to encompass multiple municipalities within its planning area. A more unique case of the collaborative formulation of plan involving a number of local governments is that of two cities separated by the Kanmon Straits, namely Shimonoseki City in Yamaguchi Prefecture and Kita-Kyushu City in Fukuoka Prefecture. With the joint objective of heightening still more the scenic attractiveness of the Kanmon Straits, the two cities enacted what was termed a “common bylaw” with the title of the Kanmon Landscape Bylaw, with an identical name and identical text for both the bylaws enacted by the cities concerned. The Articles of these "common bylaws" provide the basis for designating the Kanmon landscape formation area, determining the Kammon landscape formation guidelines and regulating construction activities.

On the other hand, an example of a single local government formulating a plan which integrates into the plan a larger area than that comprised within its own boundaries, is a series of plans formulated by the Tokyo metropolitan government. In its “Tokyo Plan 2000”, issued in the year 2000, the Tokyo metropolitan government proposed the concept of a “metropolitan megalopolis”, the first plan of its kind to cover an area extending beyond the administrative boundaries of Tokyo. The metropolitan megalopolis concept refers to a large integrated urban area consisting of metropolitan Tokyo and the three surrounding prefectures generally encircled by metropolitan central access roads and sharing the functions of the capital. The metropolitan megalopolis area was the main planning target in a report “the Metropolitan Megalopolis Initiative” in 2001, which set out a number of wide-area inter-linked policies in such areas as transport, airport functions, ports and harbors, wide-range distribution, wide-area disaster prevention, environmental measures, industrial policy and so on, aiming for close collaboration among related municipalities (Diagram 3). The term "metropolitan megalopolis" subsequently went out of use, but the concept of greater Tokyo area is still applied in the metropolitan government's latest long-term plan, “Tokyo's Big Change: The 10-Year Plan” (2006).

In the past, in metropolitan area improvement plans formulated by the central government, the metropolitan area has been regarded as the unit for wide-area plans, whereas plans formulated by the metropolitan government of Tokyo itself covered only the area within its own boundaries. However,

based on the fact that large numbers of policies and projects, of which ground transportation networks are a prime example, necessitate collaboration between the central government and local governments, the successive actions taken by Tokyo metropolitan government can be viewed as issue-raising examples of plan formulation insofar as they aim to focus attention on the deliberate inclusion of areas outside the authority of the local government concerned.

**Diagram 3. The metropolitan area megalopolis concept (example of connecting routes)**



Source: Tokyo metropolis, "The megalopolis conception for Tokyo metropolis", (Apr. 2001), p. 5.

#### 4 The new situational context of local government planning administration

##### 4.1 The development of resident participation and the "new public"

Participation by residents is one of the major themes for local government management today. This is not only true within the framework of local governmental planning administration; it can also be said that the very concept of planning administration provides a key opportunity for resident participation. It is no longer the case that the formulation of draft plans is restricted, as used to be the case, on the one hand to organizations within municipal government offices, for example, various

kinds of committees set up for the purpose of formulating plans, or project teams composed of administrative staff members, or on the other hand, to committees and advisory bodies such as parties with vested interests selected through organizational recommendations, or persons with expert knowledge such as university academics. Today, a wide variety of examples can be found showing how efforts are made to guarantee participation by residents and ensure that the opinions of community residents are reflected in the formulation of draft plans (Ohsugi, 2007).

Previously, participation by residents has tended to be regarded as something restricted to a very few "progressive" local governments. One such example, which can be termed a first in citizen participation, is that of the so-called "Musashino Method" devised by Musashino City, consisting of the formulation of a long-term comprehensive plan by a citizens' conference with additional citizen representatives. Following the promulgation of the Omnibus Decentralization Law in 2000, however, participation by residents in governmental planning processes suddenly became a much more common feature. Throughout Japan, local governments are devising all kinds of participation by residents, for example, including citizen commissioners selected through a public application process in parts of advisory committees or other advisory bodies responsible for the formulation of draft plans, or creating a citizen-driven conference of about a hundred (occasionally several hundred) people consisting mainly of citizen commissioners selected via a public application process; or employing in the planning formulation process the method of a citizens' deliberative conference (*Planungszelle*), which is primarily a group of commissioners who are selected at random from the Local Basic Resident Register and who engage in the formation of opinions on local government planning. With a view to ensuring that these various kinds of participation by local residents are utilized effectively and efficiently and that the opinions of such residents are reflected in the plans that are formulated, there has also been active development of movements aimed at enacting basic local autonomy bylaws or citizen participation bylaws to provide a legal guarantee of participation by local residents.

The kinds of mechanisms outlined here for the encouragement of participation by local residents should not be looked at simply from the point of view of putting emphasis on citizen autonomy or strengthening democratic control by local residents. It is important that a central focus is put on seeking greater collaboration between the local government administration and residents in the local community.

A number of developments have been pointed out in the context of widening collaboration between the local community and local government administration. These include the active involvement of organizations working on specific themes or policy fields, such as community groups and residents' associations, as well as NPOs and volunteer groups. On the other hand, attention has also been drawn to the fact that on the side of the administration, local governments have been stimulated by a critical financial situation or by the results of management reforms to take a fresh

look at the ideal pattern of their administrative services, and in this context, outsourcing, primarily to the private sector, has been taken forward. The thinking that underlies the concept of the "new public" is that the various local bodies should contribute their respective capabilities and resources in such a form as to increase happiness and prosperity among the members of the local community. With this concept as a basis, a collaborative relationship between residents and the local government can be promoted, resulting, as a matter of course, in changes in the character and contents of local government plans. Specifically, the scope for independent actions by local governments has shrunk, relatively speaking, compared to the past, while the range of implementation activities that need to be premised on collaboration with local residents if the desired objectives are to be achieved, has expanded. It follows from this that the need for the contents of local government plans that need to be formulated on the premise of collaboration with residents has also become much more pressing. It is fair to say that the former "administrative" plans, which comprised the management of internal affairs and the control of external society, are evolving into the current "public" plans which will guide local community development with a much wider involvement of local communities.

#### **4.2 New developments in local governance**

The local government system in Japan operates on the basis of a dual representative system. It is therefore appropriate to note here recent developments in terms of control over planning administration by both local assemblies and heads of local governments.

##### **(1) The practices of local government assemblies**

In the first place, local assemblies may exercise control over planning administration in the following ways.

- 1) The basic principle of the formulation of planning policy can be determined by the enactment of bylaws (including the enactment of bylaws, as local government legislation, which redefine planning policies that are based on national laws and regulations).
- 2) planning formulation procedures can be stipulated in bylaws. As pointed out above, the number of local governments in Japan which have defined citizen participation procedures and methods by enacting basic autonomy bylaws or citizen participation bylaws is increasing.
- 3) There may be a stipulation for plans that are already formulated to be approved by an assembly resolution. It is already the case under the Local Autonomy Law that the fundamental initiative of a municipality is required to be approved by a resolution of the local assembly, but it is also possible for other plans to be subsequently submitted to an assembly vote. There has been a noticeable increase in recent years, especially among prefectural assemblies, in the number of cases where master plans, the basis of comprehensive plans, are put to the vote. At the municipal level too, there are examples, as in the case of Shinjuku City, of a stipulation in the bylaw that not only the fundamental initiative but also the comprehensive plan must collectively be put to the vote of the

local assembly. Another kind of case that has attracted attention is where a discrete plan has been made subject to a approval by an assembly resolution, as in the case of Miyagi Prefecture where it was stipulated in a bylaw that the approval of the prefectural assembly was obligatory for the Water Circulation Conservation Master Plan. In a succession of the kinds of practices noted here, the primary focus is put on enhancing the monitoring functions of an assembly in contrast to the fact that administrative plans in effect confer broad discretionary powers on the administrative authority which has the right to formulate such plans.

Another device that can be thought of as control by local assemblies over planning administration may be participation by local assemblies in the planning formulation process. Taking the example of Kuriyama Town, which set up a Basic Assembly Bylaw, the town assembly at first disagreed the draft plan formulated by the comprehensive plan deliberation council appointed by the administration, and produced an amendment through discussion with the administration, finally resulting in the formulation of the plan. Despite the fact that a dual representative system is operated in Japan, it frequently happens that assembly members are involved in planning formulation as a result of being asked by the administration to serve as members of the deliberation council set up by the administration, but for the local assembly as an organ to take an active part in planning formulation is a very unique case. Recently, there is a tendency for local governments, in accordance with the spirit of the dual representative system, to cease asking assembly members to serve on deliberative councils (except for prefectural and municipal city planning deliberative councils, on which is stipulated by cabinet order that members of the assembly must serve).

## **(2) Manifestos and comprehensive plans**

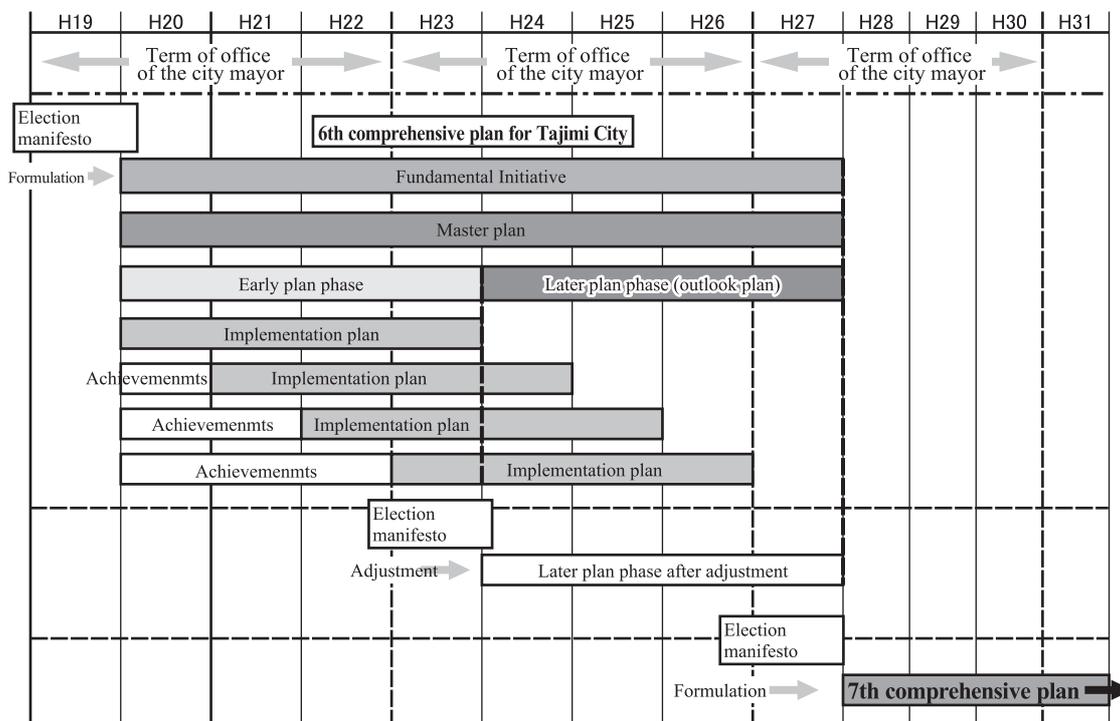
The exercise of leadership by the person at the head of a local government is an important element in the achievement of comprehensiveness in local governmental planning. Since the unified local elections in 2003, there has been an increase in the number of candidates who have used a manifesto in the election campaign and have been elected as the chief of a local government. Policies that are set out as a public promise in a manifesto are as detailed as possible, including numerical goals, deadlines for the achievement of such goals, financial resources, flow charts, etc., with the aim of making a strong appeal to the voters. A further aim is also for policies publicly stated in a manifesto to gain significant priority over other issues so that they can be addressed with the will of the people as a driving force once the election is won.

The utilization of manifestos is relatively new in Japan, and the point has been made that manifestos have not necessarily been reflected in comprehensive plans (Ito, 2009). What is certain is that coordination of comprehensive plans with the manifesto of the local government chief is now a major issue for the planning administration of local governments. Issues that have been raised and which need with increasing urgency to be examined include questions as to whether manifestos

should encompass the entire area of policy and projects of a local government administration or only a part of it, and whether items in a manifesto, when compared to existing planning items, should have a higher priority, should be modified, or should be added as fresh items. The actual responses of local governments include such instances as that of Saga Prefecture, which integrated the manifesto into their existing comprehensive plan, Kanagawa Prefecture, which formulated a new comprehensive plan reflecting the manifesto, and Saitama City, which promotes and manages the manifesto and its comprehensive plan separately (Yoshida, 2009).

The spread of electoral manifestos in Japan is bringing about a change in the meaning of planning administration including comprehensive plans, which have previously been established on the assumption that administrative operations would remain stable in the medium to long term. One local government provides a good example of this change by showing how comprehensive plans can be regarded as a democratic tool to respond to the people’s wishes. Tajimi City has formulated its comprehensive plan covering a four-year planning period so as to match the term of office of the chief of the local government.

**Diagram 4. Establishment of the duration of plans to match the terms of office of the chief (example of the comprehensive plan for Tajimi City)**



Source: Tajimi City, "Fundamental Initiative of the 6th comprehensive plan", 2008, p. 11.

### **4.3 Reconsideration of obligatory planning formulation in the context of decentralization reform**

Accompanying the promotion of decentralization reform, the character of planning formulation by local governments has become a matter for discussion. Within this context, as an integral part of decentralization reform, the question of whether the imposition through national legislation of an obligation on local governments to formulate plans should be reconsidered has now become an important issue.

In their third recommendation made in October 2009, the Decentralization Reform Committee reviews the compulsory imposition through national legislation of planning formulation and frameworks. As an integral part of the expansion of the power of local governments to enact bylaws, the Committee recommends that, in principle, excluding matters which serve as the basis of administrative enforcement concerned with the rights and obligations of private individuals, the imposition of an obligation on local governments to formulate plans, policies, guidelines and initiatives, as well as to record the contents in a prescribed format, should be abolished. The Committee also suggests that the obligatory procedures relating to consultation before and after the formulation of plans should be reviewed. It is expected that as a result of the recommendations, the regulations of the Local Autonomy Law, which stipulate, for example, the need for fundamental concepts to be formulated by municipalities will also be the subject of reconsideration.

## **5 Conclusion**

If decentralization reform continues to move steadily forward, there is likely to be further reconsideration of the imposition of obligations and frameworks as referred to above, as well as an increase in the discretionary powers of local governments and an expansion of their administrative authority. The role of local government planning will gain much more importance in terms of realizing policy-oriented local government management based on the needs of local residents. That said, local governmental planning should not be monopolized as a mere administrative tool; rather, its public nature should be strengthened in line with the advancement of community involvement and collaboration. I would like to conclude by pointing out that we are seeing the beginnings of a new phase of local government planning administration in Japan, based on local governance which takes the form of democratic control by the assembly and the local government chief.

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