

A Basic Study on Next-generation Networking to Promote Participatory Machi-Zukuri

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[SYNOPSIS]

The last decade has witnessed an important paradigm shift in the field of urban planning and regional development in Japan. This paradigm shift has included the now familiar reversals from top-down to bottom-up, from the centralized standardization to local diversity and uniqueness. In particular, participation and partnerships are widely advocated as concepts and practices. One practical approach through participation or partnerships, which has evolved, integrated and spread in the early 1990s, is known as “Machi-Zukuri”. Machi-Zukuri is considered to be “the overall activities mainly by residents and/or community-based organizations in partnership with governments, experts, various kinds of intermediary sectors, and the private sectors to enhance and improve the living environment and community environment”. Through discussion and reflection among many actors, a more favourable and comfortable urban environment as well as governance/institutions can be built. Additionally through this process, people’s awareness and confidence can be enhanced and their capacity/capability will also be improved. The people will become empowered.

The key concept to promote Machi-Zukuri is “(Entrepreneurial) Networking”. Networking is a combination of activities: (a) to link group of people as a network, (b) to share and exchange information, knowledge, and experiences, and (c) generate new ideas through emergent activities. This networking is expected to be effective to overcome the difficult situations and to establish a new framework different from a conventional one.

In this paper, we analyzed the current situation of “Networking” in Japan. Through a experiment of disseminating “Weekly Machi-Zukuri” using ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), we could draw some insights and key elements of next-generation networking to generate new ideas and promote Machi-Zukuri activities.