

The study on the isolation of the elderly and the deterioration of their living environments in the CBDs of regional cities

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[S Y N O P S I S]

The purpose of this study is to provide an introduction to the issue of isolation of the elderly and the deterioration of their living environments in downtown of regional cities. These areas are called 'Food Deserts' (hereinafter called FD's), these areas of cities where cheap, nutritious food is virtually unobtainable. Car-less residents, unable to reach out-of-town supermarkets, depend on the corner shop where prices are high, products are processed and fresh fruit and vegetable are poor or non-existent. Poor diet is strongly related to poor health. Since the early 1990s, fatal diseases such as breast and lung cancer and stroke have become widespread in the European countries.

The main factors that led to the current food-desert problem are social exclusion and poor access to retail food outlets resulting from a decline in neighborhood shopping streets. Areas with limited access to retail food outlets are also found in Japanese cities. Japan is facing a crisis associated with a rapidly aging population and many of the aged reside in the inner areas of cities. The problem of food deprivation exists for the elderly who live in local centers; however, this problem has passed unnoticed. In the present paper, we provide an introduction to the problem of Japanese food deserts based on a case study of a regional city in the Tokyo Metropolitan Areas. Case study cities are Koga City and Mito City in Ibaraki Prefecture.

First, FDs' areas in Koga and Mito City are clarified using GIS. As a result, the large food deprivation areas were found around the CBDs of both cities. Second, in Koga City, we analyzed the factors which made FDs issues and developed them. With regards to Mito City, the authors practiced the interview and questionnaire surveys to the elderly living in CBDs and asked them about their living environments including their daily diets and access to the fresh foods retailers. As a result, it became cleared that the elderly in CBDs are facing serious food deprivation. Their living environments are quite serious. More academic researches and political approaches are necessary to improve the living environments of isolated elderly in the regional cities.