

Evaluation of The Preservation Policy for Historical Housing Area in the case of Imai Town

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1. THESIS TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE

The preservation policy for historical housing area has been adopted when the Japanese heritage law had been reviewed in 1975. The policy aims to provide the framework for which the heritage (the old houses) can be protected against the urban development for a certain area. In 2008, 83 areas in Japan are being preserved under this policy. However the reality is that many of the areas under protection are experiencing the population loss, aging of the population and the increase of the houses abandoned. The case of the Imai Town, Kashihara City, Nara prefecture is not the exception.

The thesis objective is to evaluate the preservation policy for the Imai Town and to reveal the problems of the policy. 13 residents in the Imai area have been interviewed in order to reveal the problems of the preservation policy. The residents experienced the restoration of their own houses under the policy which strict restrictions are in place.

2. THE FINDINGS FORM THE INTERVIEWS

The interviews have revealed the problems of the preservation policy. The problems can be divided into four categories. The first is the problems that occurred as the results of preservation policy, such as inconveniences caused by restrict regulation on restoration.. The second is the problems arise during the policy administration stage. Without the specific or concrete regulations, the regulations can be unfair or not understandable for some residents. As the result the consensus for the restoration can fade away. The third includes the problems as the result of lack of support system for the restoration. Without the support system in certain cases, the restoration can be a real burden for residents. These problems include not knowing the exact costs for the restoration or the amount of subsidies.

3. CONCLUSION

The preservation policy for Historical Town has been evaluated. Many of the research done previously have focused on how to sustain the historical housing area under the existing framework. Considering the reality facing the Imai Town this thesis has tried to answer the question “is the existing preservation policy really suitable for sustain the historical housing area?”. The findings from the interviews include that too strict regulation forces the residents to abandon the houses for high restoration costs and some inconveniences from the old houses. It is also found that the administration of the preservation policy in Imai Town causes a lot of troubles including that some of the restrictions are not specifically written or visualised so as to inform the residents what the houses should look like in the times of the restoration. Another findings include that the Council`s services have not been appropriate such as not providing the exact costs of the restoration or the amount of subsidies. This thesis has not provided with “how to fix those problems but located where the problems are and provided some suggestions for where to look for the answers for the problems.