Local Urbanization

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This paper attempted to grasp the significance of local urbanization taking three material cases: Kunitachi, a housing city in the suburbs of Tokyo; Kawagoe, called “Little Edo”, which has a long tradition and is situated also in the suburbs of Tokyo and Minamata, the company town of chemical industry in Kyushu, which is notorious for its “Minamata Disease”.

In this paper we tried to analyze the significance and problems arising of the urbanization of these three regions through examination of the history of their formation, namely the evolution of regional physical or social transfiguration.

If we dare summarize linearly our conclusion; The development of Kawagoe is no other process than losing little by little its own identity as “Little Edo”,

That of Kunitachi is the process of the decline of the regional agriculture; and

In Minamata, the development is a process to lose its subjectivity all through the environmental destruction by the chemical factories.

We should however understand at the same time that:

In Kunitachi, the citizens’ actions for inhabitable town have been developed in combining the maintenance of agriculture with the protection of natural environment. These citizens’ actions include today even the contended self-supply of foods.

In Kawagoe City, the citizens’ actions have been backboned by the alleged reconstruction of its identity as “Little Edo” which has been guided by the local movement and administrative policy toward maintenance and/or renaissance of the lines of classic style of traditional Japanese warehouses.

In Minamata, on the other hand, citizens’ actions laying major emphasis on the environment, education and welfare have been developed in coping with the existence of the “Minamata Disease” which is no other than the extreme actualization of so-called environmental destruction. The movement has succeeded in relativizing the significance of its existence as a company town.
We have thus elucidated the fact that the issues of urbanization to be grasped negatively at a first glance is in reality a positive trend toward further development in the next generation.