The relocation of residences in the suburbs is often likened to a “residence sugoroku” which metaphorically describes changes in residences at different stages of life, from a wooden apartment to a public apartment and a condominium and finally to a suburban detached house with a garden. This is unique in that it likens the typical pattern of changing residences at different stages of life to a sugoroku game by comparing the pattern to the process of moving up the ladder of society.

While keeping this “residence sugoroku” in mind and referring to the transdisciplinary results of population movement studies, this paper examines the dynamic changes in residence options, mainly in the suburbs. First, this paper overviews the trends of theoretical interest of population movement studies, including the urban dynamics theory of the Chicago School, the theoretical framework to explain the phenomenon of population mobility from the economic point of view, and the urban cycle hypothesis to model the process of suburbanization. Then, this paper examines the trends of suburban studies, which have thrived recently, along with an increasing focus of urban sociology and geography on suburban issues. These analyses reveal that the focus of theoretical interest has shifted from the spatial structure theory, a macro analysis of the dynamics of urbanization and suburbanization, to the decision-making theory, a micro analysis focusing on the relocation of residences as the household is going through different life cycle stages.

Next, this paper examines the case of Tama New Town to analyze the behavior of selecting and relocating residences, as focused on by the decision-making theory. The results of the examination uncover that the ratio of owner-occupied detached houses and owner-occupied condominiums among the residences considered to be ideal for healthy elderly people is balanced, which indicates that a “suburban detached house with a garden” is not necessarily the goal of the “residence sugoroku,” or a permanent home that everyone wants. The examination also discovers that elderly households want to move to barrier-free houses for nursing care because it takes much effort and cost to maintain suburban detached houses with gardens. Thus, it is predicted that even though the “residence sugoroku” that simply describes the relocation of residences as moving up the ladder has been convincing since the end of World War II, this theory will be criticized and differentiated into regionally specialized residence sugoroku in the near future to describe the actual situations of respective regions.

Key words: suburb, New Town, population movement/mobility, residence option, residence sugoroku