

Gentrification and Spatial Polarization in Eastern Inner-City Tokyo: The Restructuring of the Kyojima Area in Sumida Ward

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Abstract

This study focuses on the Kyojima area in Sumida Ward, Tokyo, a typical inner-city Tokyo neighborhood, which serves as an exemplar of redevelopment and gentrification in a Japanese context. It explores the attributes of gentrifiers, an urban middle-class social group new to Japan and with notable characteristics. Although previous studies on Tokyo have focused on its three central wards, few have examined its wider inner-city dynamics. This study examines a redevelopment that is changing the face of the *Shitamachi*, the working class neighborhoods located in the low land areas of Tokyo, which survived World War II bombings and where micro, small and medium-sized local manufacturing industries remain concentrated. Similar to other large cities such as London, Paris, and New York, Tokyo has experienced changes in its socio-economic structure since the 1960s, associated with population growth following the redevelopment of its inner urban areas. This study determines some of the characteristics of Japanese gentrification; it is informed by the 2015 population census, as well as interview data collected since 2012. Drawing upon empirical case study data, the general sociological discourse of the local as “defensive response to the increasing general power of globalising forces” (Savage, 2005:200) is critically evaluated in light of this particular Japanese example of gentrification.

Introduction

This article focuses on the Kyojima area in Sumida Ward, (256 thousand

population whilst Tokyo Metropolitan Area of 9,273 thousand population), an exemplar of inner-city Tokyo neighborhoods,¹ to analyse the phenomenon of gentrification and establish the profile of Tokyo gentrifiers.

Inner-city redevelopment and changes in socio-economic structures were first identified in London in the 1960s, New York in the 1970s and Tokyo in the 1980s. Population growth in urban centers and neighboring inner-city areas plunged them into the so-called “re-urbanization” stage² described in the urban development model of Klaassen, et al., (1981). According to national censuses conducted in 2010 and 2015, Tokyo metropolitan areas experienced the country’s highest population growth rates, at 4.6% and 2.7% respectively. Population growth rates in some wards for those years reached as high as 5.4% and 3.5%, respectively. This phenomenon has been called a “back-to-the-city movement”, but since the focus here is on a social stratum that has never previously lived in the inner city, such a blanket term is not appropriate.

In terms of population growth and the change in socio-economic structure, if gentrification³ is equated with a reinvestment of capital targeting urban centers and inner-city areas, it is also recognized as having a close relationship to demographics and land value. Smith, (1996) viewed gentrification as an effect produced by the return of capital, and keenly pointed out the negative aspects of private investment. He stressed that gentrification is caused when maximum profit is gained through a rent gap generated between potential land rent and capitalized land rent. At the same time, a focus on newcomers shows that potential gentrifiers, considered a new urban middle class, are notable for their new attributes and lifestyles that include being predominantly young, well-educated “DINKs” (double income no kids) or single, urban-minded professionals and technicians who focus on their private lives. It has been noted that their presence is a necessary condition of gentrification (Rose, 1984, Beauregard, 1988; Hamnett, 1991).

Recently, gentrification has become a focus of research in Japan. In particular, studies on Tokyo have tended towards an analysis of urban centers⁴. Of the three urban wards in the city core, redevelopment rapidly progressed, from the latter half of the 1980s in Tsukuda 1-chome and Tsukishima 1-chome/3-chome (‘chome’ is an urban block) in Chuo Ward, blazing a trail for the redevelopment of their urban centers. In Okawabata River City 21, where construction commenced in 1986, some 2,500 residences were built in a seven-building complex of high-rise apartments constructed by Tokyo

Metropolitan Government, Tokyo Metropolitan Housing Supply Corporation, the Urban Renaissance Agency and a private company, —Mitsui Fudosan. A resident population of 7,500 was planned. Later, neighborhood associations were established in high-rise apartments in the Mitsui area at the unit level. Residents in these buildings built active neighborhood relationships that came to be expressed as *tatenagaya* [a stacked, traditional, wooden-terraced house], rather than “the lifestyle akin to living in a hotel”, anticipated by Mitsui Fudosan⁵ in its promotional literature. Originally, not all high-rise developments in River City 21 established neighborhood associations. In most cases, high-rise households joined the neighbourhood association on an individual basis. Neighborhood associations formed within the same high-rise apartment building also fell within the purview of the Tsukuda 2-chome block council. Such high-rise households therefore belonged to two neighborhood associations at the same time, an unusual government arrangement (as normally there is a single neighborhood association in an urban block).

The hosting of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo is driving redevelopment in the city’s three central urban wards. Residential areas are being transformed into commercial districts and accommodating national urban functions in the form of “National Strategic Special Zones”. But the inner-city gentrification phenomenon in Tokyo differs from what is happening in the three urban wards in terms of their historical social background. This article focuses on the Kyojima area in Sumida Ward to examine as a case study of the kind of redevelopment arising in Tokyo currently and exposes the implications for future Japanese gentrification.

1. Phases of Inner-city Change in Tokyo, and a Profile of the Targeted Districts

Starting in the late 1980s, the polarization of Tokyo as a “World City” (Freedman, 1986) was accelerated by re-urbanization. Although subject to criticisms that claim no inner-city problems existed in Tokyo, Takahashi (1992) showed, through empirical research, that overdevelopment in Tokyo simultaneously involved both urban growth and urban decline, and that the resident population continued to decrease, notably in Joto (Taito, Sumida, Arakawa wards) and Jonan communities (Shinagawa, Ota Ward). In many cases this involved the clearance and transformation of modern *shitamachi*,

working class neighborhoods located in geographically lowland areas which had previously housed self-employed urbanites from rural regions seeking upward social mobility. A key factor in the success or failure of inner city regeneration in major cities has been the extent of proactive urban development endeavors by successors to these self-employed residents (business owners and family workers with no employees). It is impossible to ignore the existence of self-employed workers as the agents of urban development in these wards, as research undertaken by the present author since 2012 shows.⁶

In contrast to the transformation of commercial and business districts that garnered attention as a growth strategy in Tokyo, and even as structural change was evident in the decline of local manufacturing in inner city areas, a significant time lag arose between policy-making and project delivery. In 1982, the Multi-Core City Initiative that appeared in the 1st Tokyo Long-Term Plan specified the seven sub-centers of Shinjuku, Ikebukuro, Shibuya, Ueno/Asakusa, Kinshicho/Kameido and Osaki, and even named the inner-city Joto area in the Tokyo growth strategy. Later, the Metropolitan Government promoted urban development in the Ueno/Asakusa vicinity of Tokyo as an area to attract tourists. However, after the economic bubble collapsed in the early 1990s, the country's Economic Strategy Council advocated "mobilization/effective utilization of real estate", "redevelopment projects to promote redevelopment business" and "facilitation/expedition of bidding procedures". Urban policies became a means to escape the lengthy recession. Indeed, the *Special Measures Concerning Urban Reconstruction Act* enacted in 2002 and the *Designated Urban Areas Requiring Urgent Reconstruction Act* enacted in 2011 were implemented in the context of loan defaults, and financial deregulation. The 1994 Metropolitan Government switched from the Multi-Core City Initiative previously advocated to the Ringed Megalopolis Initiative. The new policy aimed to focus investment in the inner area of the Central Circular Route, considered the central core, and the nucleus of Japanese government, economics, and culture (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2000). Thus, the stimulation of housing demand in commercial and business districts through urban redevelopment was promoted as "a policy in which a city that survives global competition brings in people viewed as 'desirable' actors for that purpose". Meanwhile, "residuary housing for people who are 'undesirable,' such as the economically weak and needy", was not provided for the households displaced by the redevelopment process (Takagi, 2015:58–68). According to the Tokyo Basic Ordinance on Housing, the objective is

“securing housing sufficient for all city residents to receive ample manner of housing”.⁷ In actuality, “in the urban vision pointing to success in economic competition, housing policies based on urban reconstruction policies promote a course of housing development to discriminatingly gather suitable residents to these urban centers on the one hand, while decreasing housing for ‘unsuitable people,’ such as those who possess the qualifications to live in municipal housing” (Takagi, 2016:71–72). The aforementioned displacement obviously differs from the situation in which residents of Kasumigaoka Municipal Apartments had to be displaced to rebuild the National Stadium in Meiji Jingu Gaien (Inaba, 2015), but it seems social policy has contributed to the negative costs of gentrification in inner city areas that have a relatively large amount of municipal housing.

There was also the impact of the Urban Renaissance initiative by the vitality of private sector that was incorporated into 1983 comprehensive economic measures. In Sumida Ward, under Multi-Core New Urban Development program presented in the My Town Tokyo Concept, the Kinshicho Station North Exit Area Redevelopment Project was promoted from 1997 within the Tokyo Long-Term Plan. In 1980, the Kinshicho Vicinity Basic Plan, which depicted a future vision of the sub-center, was publicized in the Sumida Ward Basic Concept, and the establishment of a large base for commercial facilities was realized. Elements that promoted redevelopment were identified; in the northern area of Kinshicho there was neighboring private land, municipal land, ward land, and approximately 3.5 ha of land once utilized for, among other things, housing exhibitions and storage for the former Japanese National Railways. Around 4.0 ha of land were established by a three-party council of the former Japanese National Railways, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Sumida Ward. However, there was pushback from residents over environmental consequences due to redevelopment, such as the blockage of sunlight in homes, wind damage, disaster prevention, and transportation. This is because residents were afraid that redevelopments could break neighborhood ties, mutual aid and local knowledge, which had developed over the years. In addition, rocketing land prices brought on by an economic bubble led to greater twists and turns in consensus-building among local residents. A gap existed between appraised land value and actual market value in the ward. That is, major corporations purchased and subdivided private land within the development area.⁸ The sale price significantly exceeded the ward’s appraised land value, and landowners were understandably dissatisfied with

this mismatch. The transfer of ownership did not go smoothly. Many of the landowners were self-employed businesses that handled convenience goods, such as sweets and soft drinks, and wholesalers and sellers of millet, and they were very concerned about whether their businesses could endure redevelopment after moving into high-rise buildings. Moreover, redevelopment was in danger of being halted in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake due to factors ranging from the withdrawal of major department stores and insurance companies which were the biggest investors in the project. Notwithstanding these challenges, by 1997 project completion was in sight.

Meanwhile, in the northern area, urban infrastructure was not yet well-developed and, rather than the aforementioned kind of site development project, issues such as disaster prevention, vitalization of local industry, and improving the housing environment were viewed as problematic. As a result, the redevelopment policies, plans and delivery programs of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Sumida Ward were not aligned. Full-scale redevelopment in the area began in the 2000s as manufacturing industry shrank and urban corporatization progressed due to investment in real estate and land, namely the “built environment”.⁹ According to Machimura, who analyzed the Tokyo Metropolitan Government’s *Annual Report of Building Statistics*, the “total floor space of buildings under construction in the 2000s indicates the phenomenon of decline”. The gap between the considerable changes to the city and superficial impressions was explained as follows. “Since the latter half of the 1990s, the degree of urban corporatization in Tokyo has rapidly increased in terms of urban space production. In construction, changes in the balance between individual landowners, corporations and local government, especially the prominence of the corporate sector, have led to conspicuousness of numerical figures and spatial transformations”.¹⁰ A situation unfolded in which space that could survive under the strategy of “selection and concentration” was being replaced by space built according to the very same strategy.

Sumida Ward is generally considered as a southern area where roads were constructed that fall under the former Honjo ward, where alleys that were once narrow farm roads included in the former Mukojima ward, or as an area that can trace its history back to being a *sangyochi* entertainment district (licensed only for restaurants, tea houses, places for couples to meet secretly, and *geisha* houses). The district began being used as a residential



Photo 1 A neighborhood exuding nostalgia
Taken by the author on 19 May 2012



Photo 2 A streetscape retaining *shitamachi* alleys
Taken by the author on 10 September 2016

area after the Kanto earthquake of 1923. Disaster victims from the northern area of the district built lots and settled in this marshy area—site of a key transportation canal for food supply in old Edo (former capital of Tokyo)—however the associated urban infrastructure was not developed at the same pace. Having been lucky enough to escape aerial attacks during World War II, the area became crowded with displaced people from elsewhere (the population density exceeded 500 people per hectare). The media characterised the streetscape of homes built between the late Taisho era and early Showa era as creating a unique *shitamachi* kind of nostalgia. (See photos 1, 2.)

Meanwhile, the Basic Plan announced by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Housing in 1971 proposed to “demolish and rebuild”, providing high-rise housing to replace neighborhoods lacking in disaster prevention and amenities, rather than preserving the heritage of the Showa-era construction and the *shitamachi* social relations.

The Kyojima area in Sumida Ward (Kyojima 1-chome to 3-chome) was identified as being at extremely high risk of natural disaster in the 1993 Tokyo Metropolitan Government *Report on Risk Assessment Survey*. Even with a boost from the *Act on Promotion of Improvement of Disaster Control Districts in Populated Urban Districts* (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 1997), the development program has not proceeded as planned. The district in question is a densely built-up area of deteriorating wooden homes

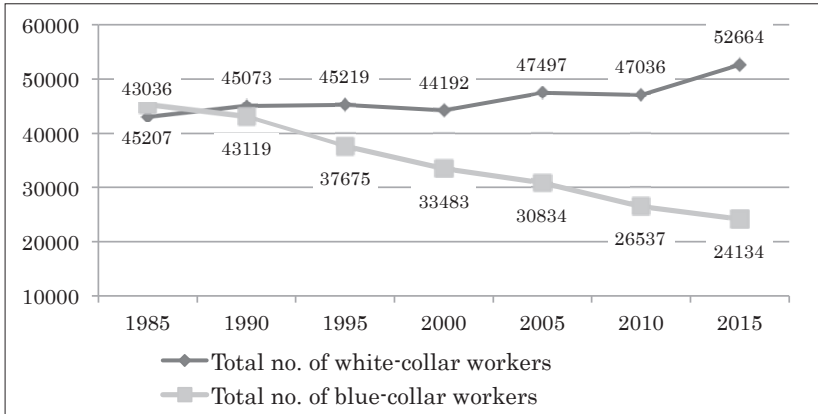


Fig.1 Shifts in the composition of Sumida Ward by occupation 1985–2015

extending over an area of approximately 25 hectares. Furthermore, rather than simply accommodating a single “work status” category (self-employed workers and family workers), self-employed residents that lead neighborhood associations like those in other inner-city areas constitute “a social stratum possessing a distinctive cohesiveness and presence self-formed through participation in neighborhood associations” (Takenaka, et al., 1988:47). From the perspective of social mobility, the transformation of the local economy made surviving in self-employment an extremely difficult challenge. Figure 1 shows that up until 1985, blue-collar workers exceeded white-collar workers, but declined considerably in the 1990s and beyond.

In 2008, Sumida Ward accommodated six community areas in the Basic Plan (based on guidelines for urban development in which local residents take a role), and established area divisions for area-specific initiatives. Of the six areas, the Mukojima, Kyojima, and Oshiage areas identified the following as major area issues: (1) improving safety in densely built-up areas of wooden homes; (2) creating a living environment enabling continued residence through appropriate guidance for high-rise apartments; (3) improving convenience of parks and waterfronts; (4) forming landscapes that utilize landscape resources with scenic focal points and area characteristics; and (5) urban development that takes coexistence with local industry into account

(Sumida Ward, 2008: 108–109).

Moreover, in 1978 the Urban Renaissance Agency (an independent administrative corporation) introduced the ‘Living Environment Development Model’ project as a community-based disaster preparedness planning scheme in the Kyojima area, and accordingly the Kyojima Urban Development Council was established in 1980 to foster resident participation. Densely populated areas of traditional one-storey single-unit dwellings were reprovided in the form of low-rise, multiple-dwelling complexes. New “community residences” became permanent homes for residents who lost their homes when land and buildings were sold to the ward, and for residents of dilapidated homes and those that were displaced by road-widening projects.

As for the communicative aspects of urban development, since 1986 the Kyojima Urban Development Council has issued the *Kyojima Area Urban Development News*, and the Kyojima Cultural Festival has been held since 1988. Community-based disaster preparedness planning in the same area garnered attention from the viewpoints of public administration, urban sociology, urban planning and architecture as a new trend in urban planning featuring participation by residents. However, from 1990 the budget for these activities was scaled back, and subsidies for urban development projects from the national government dropped from around 1.45 billion yen in 1993 to 3.9 million yen in 2001. As a result, continuing disaster preparedness programs based on collaboration between national government, Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Sumida Ward became impossible, and the strength of the urban development initiatives waned. In 1988, the Kyojima Urban Development Council, members of the Hitokotokai Group in the Ichiderakototoi area, residents, professional groups and others explored the possibility for new urban development and, in 2002, established the Association of Mukojima Studies, a non-profit organization (NPO).

To elaborate, the revitalization of groups in *shitamachi*-type local communities sought new opportunities through collaborative initiatives for urban development bringing together professional groups specialized in public administration, urban planning, small and medium-sized business policy, and self-employed residents. The Kyojima Urban Development Council was formed in 1981, and in the following year the objectives of the Kyojima Area General Urban Planning Framework were announced: (a) creating a good residential environment; (b) maintaining close proximity between work and home that integrates dwellings, commerce and industry; (c) improving safety

to withstand earthquakes/fires; and (d) establishing a population over 10,000. The General Framework covered a number of topics: (1) community road planning; (2) building and development delivery planning (public/private division of roles); and (3) community facilities planning. The framework was oriented toward refurbishment and improvement rather than clearance and reconstruction. It was valued for its cooperative urban development approach featuring resident participation and public-private partnerships. After drawing up the General Framework, the activities of the Council stalled, and it is now regarded as primarily communicating government intentions rather than delivering them (Sumida Ward, 1996). While efforts were made to encourage fireproofing in densely built-up wooden housing areas over the 30 years since 1981, there was a questionable level of stakeholder engagement stakeholders with the Urban Development Council and city development projects. Whilst the public sector should in principle with residents, consult on the course of urban development, and involve them in the detailed design of specific proposals, in actuality urban development easily defaults to leadership by the government or the public-private sector without obtaining consensus among residents, due to factors such as the complexity of land ownership and public apprehensions regarding redevelopment. Ultimately, urban planning endeavors became tied to informal activities attempted by NPOs (non-profit organizations).

2. The Path towards Gentrification in Kyojima 1-chome

Strategic-level plans have been formulated by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Sumida Ward for the vicinity of Hikifune Station (Higashi-Mukojima 2-chome, Oshiage 2-chome, and Kyojima 1-chome) in Sumida Ward.¹¹ In the Kyojima area, there is a high percentage of both low-rise residential buildings of one- to three-storeys and land for industrial use, in addition to land in mixed use. However, in terms of population, Kyojima 1-chome shows distinctive characteristics. In Sumida Ward population growth soared in the year 2000 (Fig. 2). But in Kyojima 1-chome a rapid and sustained increase occurred in 2005 (Fig. 3), with a rise in white-collar workers¹² the same year (Fig. 4), indicating a time lag with respect to overall population growth in the ward corresponding to the knock-on effect of redevelopment in areas around major stations. Urban development projects in this

part of the city had initially been focussed on large-scale redevelopment in and around the station in 1-chome subsequently a small-scale maintenance/expansion project was planned in 2-chome and 3-chome. In the same period work also commenced on a crossover project and numerous railroad crossings were phased out in order to promote the integration of urban areas, such as Keisei Oshiage Line as an urban development project by Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

The ‘rent gap’ theory helps explain the rise of gentrification. ‘Rent gap’ refers to the disparity between actual land rent prior to redevelopment and potential land rent after redevelopment. The question of whether an increase occurred in the relevant areas due to potential land rent is answered by looking at shifts in publicly assessed land values in Sumida Ward as a whole, the Tokyo Skytree vicinity, the Hikifune vicinity (including the Kyojima area), and the Oshiage vicinity (see Fig.5). Results indicate that, in general, rising prices peaked in 2008 and have levelled off since 2010. Remarkably, the only area that can be judged to have experienced a rise in land prices is the vicinity around Tokyo Skytree. Then again, in the Hikifune vicinity, the 2008 peak is low compared to other areas and cannot be said to reflect the potential land rent. In 2016, a downward trend is evident compared to 10 years earlier. It can be surmised that the high-rise multiple-dwelling complexes in the Hikifune area, which did not fully experience the economic mechanism involving real estate, were a response to the popularity of high-rise tower apartments when regulations were eased following the *2002 Act on Special Measures Concerning Urban Reconstruction*. These apartments were comparatively easy for young families and professional singles to afford. Though the development of business districts is not regulated in the same way as residential areas in accordance with the *Building Standards Act*, residential high-rise buildings can be constructed in business districts. Therefore, if land rent for housing created by high-rise apartments as a whole exceeds commercial land rent, it easily leads to the development of residential high-rises.

The fact that gentrification is usually accompanied by the displacement of former residents is considered a problem. Housing maps and interview data were used to determine whether displacement had taken place. Table 1 shows the extent of displacement caused by building renovations prior to and after redevelopment.¹³ In lot numbers 1 and 2 of Kyojima 1-chome, there were medium-and-large size manufacturers, restaurants, retailers, and residential areas in 2000, but in 2015 the lots had become large high-rise housing

and large retail stores. It is methodologically difficult to determine where the former residents relocated. In cases where continuing a family business in a small shop is difficult or there is no choice but to move, conflicting interests in the change of freeholds, leasehold and tenancy rights can tear human relationships apart and residents are reluctant to talk about it.¹⁴

The richness of life histories embedded in place prior to redevelopment, where several rightful claimants maintained and used a building in a unified manner, exceeds any reductive categorization as ‘cooperation’. Population continued to relocate from that area through the 1990s, and abandoned homes and vacant lots became noticeable. Meanwhile, in 2006 the decision was made to construct Tokyo Skytree as an attraction. Turning the area into a series of tourist attractions is one of the ward’s key strategies, and the redevelopment of Oshiage Station and Hikifune Station vicinity gained momentum. Private developers acquired dilapidated homes and land, and the construction of ready-built housing, parking lots, studio and family apartments accelerated. Redevelopment and infrastructure projects intensified in 2003. Furthermore, shifts in land usage—namely, changes in urban functions, retail, manufacturing and residential areas, brought with it high-rise multiple-dwelling complexes and large supermarkets. This is confirmed by superimposing housing maps from 2015 on housing maps from 2000. In Table 1, the existence of super high-rise apartments (buildings of 20 stories or higher) in 2015 is conspicuous. For instance, East Core Hikifune Niban-kan, which was completed in 2008, has 41 aboveground stories and 557 dwellings. All but one are skyscrapers. From the perspective of local people and long-time residents, the neighborhood landscape has been totally transformed. The split in attitudes over redevelopment between those who approve and those with negative sentiments is correlated with the aforementioned issues such as land interests, involvement in one’s own business and the location of one’s home. Self-employed workers native to the area, who now run businesses in the vicinity of Hikifune Station commented on rapid redevelopment in major station areas.

“Redevelopment was inevitable. The neighborhood has become brighter and interaction among people has blossomed, so I’ve never felt that the arrival of high-rise apartments is bad”.¹⁵

“In the Mukojima area, the small single-unit dwellings are deteriorating. So I’d like for redevelopment to move forward in that area, too”.¹⁶

On the other hand, the self-employed natives to the area that run businesses



Photo 3 A tower similar to the Panopticon
Taken by the author on 20 May 2012



Photo 4 Redevelopment area in Kyojima 1-chome
Taken by the author on 10 September 2016

in places distant from a station reported negative effects:

“The sunshine is blocked and the wind has changed”.¹⁷ “There are fewer people I recognize and whose names I know. Neighborhood relations and the flow of people have changed”.¹⁸

There are aspects of administrative and government power that are hidden in urban development. Also, there are likely incontrovertible counterpoints that could be cited in response to residents’ desire for “brightness”, including the new look that contrasts negative aspects, such as deterioration, high density, and vulnerability to disaster. It has been pointed out that awareness of urban development enables the broad classification of residents into three types: (1) the traditional “commerce and industry/humanity” type; (2) the “housing/humanity” type (majority) in which only the ideology of “*shitamachi* humanity” is separated from the foundation of commerce and industry/society; and (3) the “housing/individuality” type that is the polar opposite to the long-established pattern. A response that is in line with residents’ social strata is also considered necessary to the orientation of urban development (Takenaka, & Takahashi, 1990: 111–112).

The next section clarifies elements such as newcomer attributes, social relationships and attitudes toward permanent residents concerning redevelopment in Kyojima 1-chome, an area where redevelopment is furthest

progressed. Thereafter, profiles are drawn of Japanese gentrifiers based on interviews with participants from the new middle urban class that moved to the northern area (broadly classified as “housing/humanity” types or “housing/individuality” types).

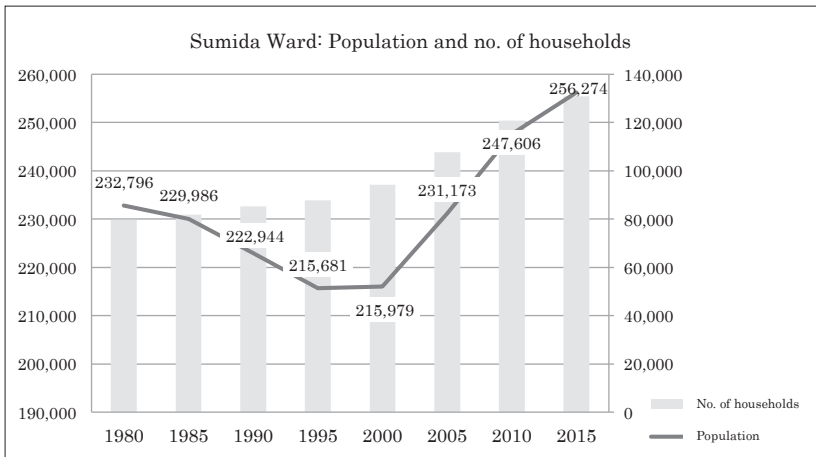


Fig.2 Shifts in population and no. of households in Sumida Ward
 Source: created by author based on the national census in each year

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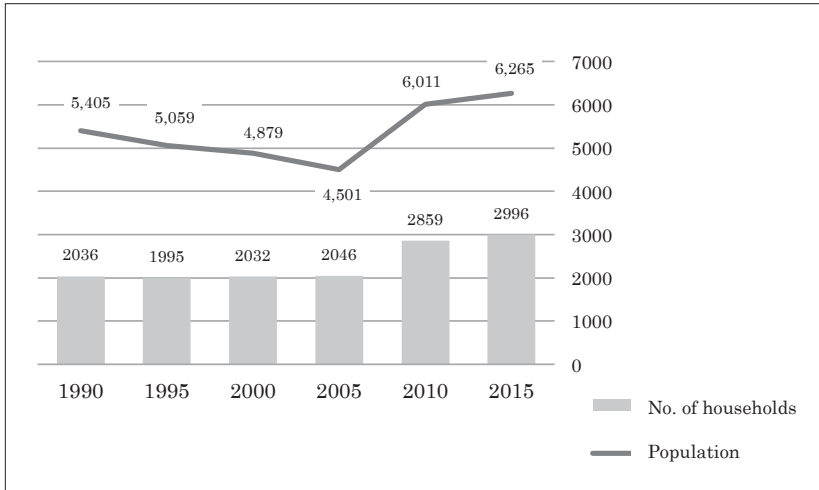


Fig.3 Shifts in population and no. of households in Kyojima 1-chome
Source: created by author based on the national census in each year

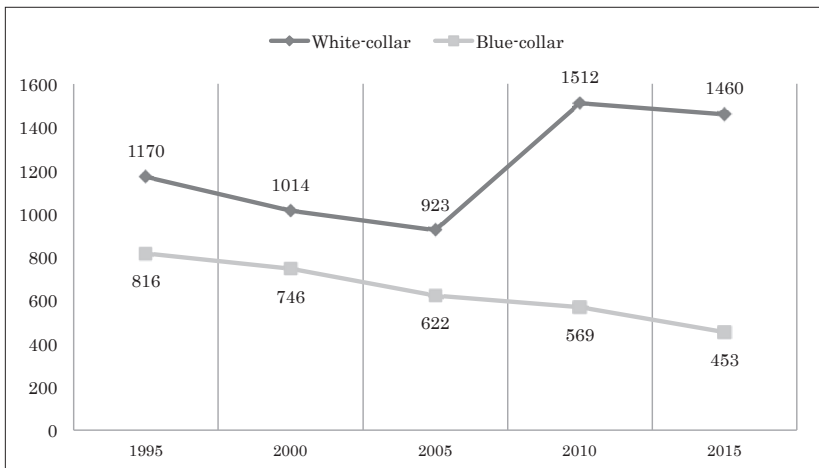


Fig.4 Shifts in white-collar and blue-collar workers in Kyojima 1-chome
Source: created by author based on the national census in each year

Table 1—Changes in urban functions in residential area maps

Targeted areas	2000 housing map	2015 housing map
Kyojima 1-chome 1	Nagayanagi Co, Ltd. Tahara Koyu Co., Ltd. Tahara Koyu Co., Ltd. Residences	East Core Hikifune Ichiban-kan/ Niban-kan
Kyojima 1-chome 2	Restaurants Retail Shiseido Co., Ltd.	East Core Hikifune Sanban-kan/ Ito-Yokado Hikifune
Kyojima 1-chome 36	Manufacturing Residences	Mark Front Tower Hikifune/ Mark Zero One Hikifune Tower
Kyojima 1-chome 8	Residential area	Atlas Tower Hikifune
Kyojima 1-chome 27	Parking Rora Kyoshima Kanekubo Amimono Co., Ltd.	Mark Zero One Hikifune Residence HORIZON

(Source: created by the author based on *Tokyo Housing Series: Hai Map Sumida Ward Housing Map*, 2000, Seiko-sha; *Zenrin Housing Maps Sumida Ward, Tokyo*, 2015, Zenrin)

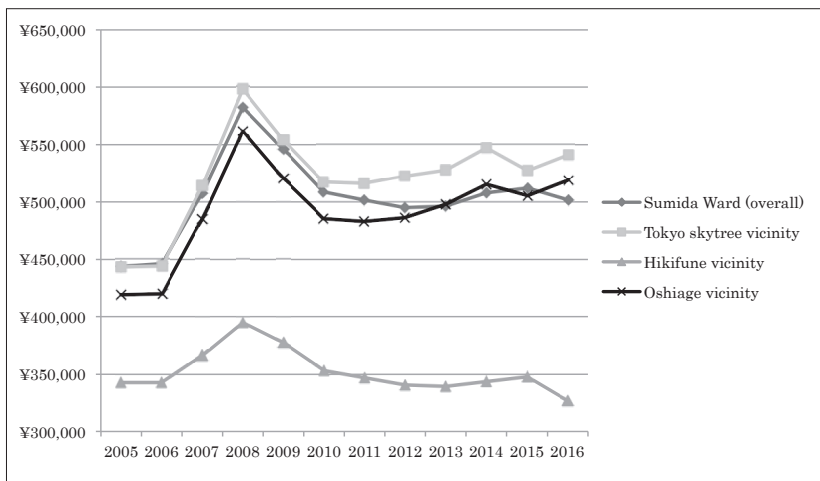


Fig.5 Shifts in publicly assessed land values in various areas of Sumida Ward (Source: created based on the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism “Land General Information System” for each year.)

3. Gentrifiers in Kyojima 1-chome and Higashi-Mukojima 2-chome, Sumida Ward

Generally, gentrifiers in Japan are referred to as *tawaman jumin* (residents of high-rise apartments) and have been shown to have distinctive characteristics. “Tower mansion” high-rise apartments are tower-type super high-rise apartments exceeding 60 meters (approximately 20 stories), as defined by the *Building Standards Act*. Analysis has shown that tower residents are characterized by transportation convenience (location), enhanced common facilities, and large household numbers, but a lack of desire for community ties or residential relationships. High-rise apartments in the Tsukishima area of Chuo Ward in Tokyo and the Musashi-Kosugi area in Nakahara Ward in Kawasaki have been noted as typical examples (AERA, 2013: 61–65).

This article presents results of interviews and a survey in 2012 to first clarify the attributes, social relationships and attitudes toward permanent residence of the “new urban middle class” tower residents who fall under the aforementioned “housing/individuality” type.

(1) Attributes of gentrifiers

As shown in Table 2¹⁹, gentrifiers are primarily in their 30s and notable for being highly educated, with 67% having graduated from university or graduate school. In many cases their birthplace was not Sumida Ward. Instead, 93% hail from other wards or prefectures, hence they can be overwhelmingly considered as newcomers. The data shows that they lived elsewhere in the 23 wards of metropolitan Tokyo prior to moving to Sumida Ward. It was thought that providing the residents with precise occupational classifications would be confusing. Therefore, only their employment status is shown. Results indicate that 75% are full-time managers and employees, while 25% are unemployed or retired. The fact that there were no self-employed or family workers confirms the presence of newcomers. Family composition includes married couples, residents who live alone, and nuclear families, in that order. There were no three-generation households. As for household income, rent is typically around 30%, and income is estimated to be between 6 million and 10 million yen for residents living alone, and 10 million yen or more for dual-income households.

The main reasons for choosing these apartments were good access to

transportation (convenient access to both Narita and Haneda airports), good scenery (rooms with a view of Tokyo Skytree, fireworks) and well-equipped facilities (including security). Other reasons included reasonable rent and finding Hikifune appealing.

(2) Social relationships

In the same high-rise apartment the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake prompted the formation of neighborhood associations that did not exist at the time construction was completed. Leaseholders who established the neighborhood associations stated “Even if for a short time, we want to create connections among residents in the same apartment building” (Yoshihara, & Chikamori, 2013: 104). In 2012, the participation rate was 25%. However a website was also created by a private organization consisting of residents of neighboring apartment buildings and employees of large retail shops, somewhat differently neighborhood associations whose participation is semi-compulsory.

In a 2012 survey, for 86% of residents, neighborhood relations remain at the level of “exchanging greetings” and “bowing to an acquaintance”. The website of East Core Hikifune Neighborhood Association sets out the difference between the homeowners’ association and neighborhood associations: “It is safe to say that the homeowners’ association is a group that considers the building in terms of unit owners, while neighborhood associations are groups that considers services for and communication between people (on a voluntary basis)”. Those residents have difficulty finding common interests in an organization that hinges on community ties, but some 60% of residents are interested in information on neighborhood associations shared via electronic community notices. It cannot be simply said that residents seek superficial neighborhood relations.

(3) Attitudes towards permanent residents

According to the questionnaire in a survey 2012

- 37% answered “I’d like to continue living in the apartment building” ;
- 22% stated, “I’d like to continue living in Sumida Ward” ; and
- 41% stated, “I don’t know” . .

Given that “don’t know” was the most common answer, it can be remarked that this reflects a characteristic of rental tenants, but if commuting access or the view were to change, or they were to feel anxious about security, it is conceivable that the possibility of moving home would arise. Eighty percent of residents rated redevelopment in the Hikifune Station vicinity as desirable. It can be surmised that some of them also responded “don’t know”, considering the possibilities of decline in the property value and landscape change caused by further redevelopment. It is presumed that people who responded “don’t know” would be likely to move out of the area depending on the circumstances around them.

Residents who participated in the interview were predominately highly educated, occupied professional/management positions and lived in either single or dual income households (for instance, an international married DINKs couple with jobs in civil service management and IT technology). If employed full time in a job with frequent business travel, rather than use traditional shopping areas that carry convenience goods, they conventionally prefer to use *Solamachi* and a large supermarket connected to the apartment site, home delivery from a co-op, online shopping, and urban department stores. Gentrifiers create their own social networks through personal communication, and are not reliant on local relationships. Their lifestyles can be constructed from points that go beyond locality. However, they cannot be defined as completely disinterested in community relationships. There are possibilities for loose ties—through the website for example—if common interests are identified, and their motivations correspond most closely to the “housing/individuality” type.

Though somewhat distant from the high-rise apartments in front of Hikifune Station, a married couple living in an apartment located five minutes walking distance from Hikifune Station was interviewed. The 13-story high-rise apartment completed in 2000 has 47 units, and there are alleys and gardens planted with shrubbery in the vicinity. It is clearly different than other redeveloped, orderly areas. Based on this interview²⁰ a gentrifier profile distinct from the above type became clear—the “housing/humanity” type.

Prior to moving into the apartment the couple lived for three years in a somewhat small rented unit near Hikifune Station, which had two rooms and a dining/kitchen area. They then purchased their current three-room apartment unit with a living room and dining/kitchen (75 m²), and intend to

continue living there. Residents of this apartment building are primarily aged in their 40s and comprise a relatively large number of young married couples.

The family of four consists of a wife and husband in their mid-30s, a daughter (aged 6) and a son (aged 3) who both go to nursery school. Both wife and husband work full-time at the same company in the city center. The 30-minute commute made the apartment attractive. The husband grew up in Kokubunji, Tokyo, and the wife in Shibamata in Katsushika Ward, Tokyo. The wife's lifestyle desires were strongly reflected in the choice of neighborhood and the purchase of the apartment. After some consideration they preferred to relocate near Hikifune Station, rather than to a secluded environment where the sound of trains at Oshiage Station cannot be heard, or Yahiro with its tanneries. They also looked at a high-rise apartment near Hikifune Station, but were put off by what they viewed as excessive layers of security.

In the interview, the wife stated:

“My parents' place is in Shibamata, so my younger brother and father went to Sumidagawa High School. We'd go and watch plays at Hikifune Culture Center, and spend our days in the area around Hikifune Station”. “...I chose Hikifune Station because it's good, but the above-ground station is busier than Oshiage Station on the subway. If you go one stop further to Yahiro, there are lots of factories including those that tan old animal hides. I was told the smell drifts as far as the station. Oshiage doesn't have anything, there aren't any train sounds, and the atmosphere of the streets at night isn't very good, so we decided against it.”

Wife: “The high-rise apartment security was too heavy. We went to a viewing, but there were two security procedures to push even one elevator button. The elevator only goes up to the floor you select. It seemed like there'd be even less and less interaction with other people, plus the unit was small, so I didn't think it was quite right. I appreciate having automatic locks, but I don't need the elevator to be locked. New apartments have such heavy security—it feels so impersonal. I thought getting packages delivered would also be a hassle. You'd have to take the elevator down and look for it. I don't think it's necessary to go that far”.

The above comments make it apparent that there is an overlap between the area they live in and the *shitamachi* environment in which she grew up, and

that she felt homes with heavy security were impersonal and would easily lead to limited interaction with others. Furthermore, she provided several points of commonality with the community of Shibamata where she grew up, that contributed to the appeal of Sumida Ward.

Wife: “I like *shitamachi*. In summer, you can hear festival music there. I want to take my kids to festivals or other events like that. That was a positive for moving here”. “...Every year I take the kids to around three events—festivals, rice cake pounding events and disaster prevention drills.”

According to her husband:

“This neighborhood doesn’t have a tense feel. It’s calm. When I walk with the kids I’m not on alert. It’s the kind of place you can walk along without thinking about anything. Minato Ward, where I work, has a tense feeling. It’s an area of offices, but *shitamachi* is slow-paced and you can relax. It’s got a pleasant atmosphere”.

When it comes to parks for children, there are unspoken rules about what ages should play at what time. “Local knowledge” about letting children play is also typical of *shitamachi* and learned by residents.

The wife said:

“In the mornings, kids about my son’s age play, but in the mid-afternoon, kids around my daughter’s age are there. After 4:00 pm., elementary and junior high school kids play tag aggressively, so I don’t take them then. If I take them, I think morning is best for kids about this age.”

The couple has social relationships centering on acquaintances of the same generation they have come to know through nursery school, company colleagues and friends from their school days. The apartment residents’ association is restricted to discussing maintenance and repairs. As for *chonaikai* (neighborhood association), there are no invitations to apartment residents to participate in events, but invitations are extended to the apartment next door. Interaction differs by neighborhood association. Since the couple has registered with Sumida Ward to obtain the necessary information, they feel

no particular need to join the neighborhood association.

A characteristic distinct from the aforementioned “housing/individuality” type, embedded in the bedrock of their lifestyle is compatibility with *shitamachi*-type human relations. These are expressed as “environmental development in residential areas and an ‘unpretentious, warmhearted neighborhood’ where advice can be sought out” (Takenaka, & Takahashi, 1990: 113). In other words, perhaps it can be called the “*shitamachi*/humanity” type.

Finally, this article will consider socio-cultural contexts of the residential area’s history and how this may impact on how both types of gentrifiers choose where to live.

A twenty-something woman responsible for art project activities²¹ in the same area said; “In terms of local character, it’s not a rich neighborhood. Art is enjoyed by people with some time and money, so the question is how to fill the gap. When asked what art can do for the elderly, homeless and poor, I have to have some kind of answer. That’s the problem”.²²

Through an interview held with a pawnbroker that has been in business for three generations, it was learned that even when residents know about each other’s setbacks in life, hardships of living and difficulties of work, they have learned the art of being indifferent and not getting involved.²³ The films *Shitamachi no Taiyo* (The Sunshine Girl, 1963) and *Sumida-ku Kyojima 3-chome* (Kyojima 3rd Street, Sumida City, 2011) depict a neighborhood of factories that people want to escape but are unable to, along with remnants of the stigma of a *sangyochi* with a history as a red-light district. The former *Tamanoi* area was a place of employment for women from the Tohoku region pre-war, and from the Kanto region post-war (Hibi, 2010: 242–246).

Since housing/individuality- type residents give primary attention to their own living areas, past history means little. In contrast, the housing/humanity-type conducted some research before purchasing an apartment. “I saw on TV that there are lots of older homes. There are factories, and it’s sandwiched between rivers, so it also had a negative image. But after living here I find it’s not true” (Husband).

There was no awareness of the past red-light district or that young artists were living there carrying out renovations. The interpretation can be made that the young married couple had a positive image of *shitamachi* and no hang-ups about its earlier history.

Conclusion

This article first addressed the gentrification of Tokyo's city center that began in the 1980s. It also pointed to the spatial polarization that emerged in the 1990s due to redevelopment that followed wider urban policy trends in Tokyo. Aspects of social policy were considered in the context of urban redevelopment in inner city areas and the negative cost of gentrification.

An examination of the Kyojima area in Sumida Ward confirmed the following points:

1. During the redevelopment of densely populated urban districts in the 1980s, in anticipation of voluntary compliance with municipal guidelines, reconstruction-type urban development produced the Kyojima Urban Development Council, and for over 30 years the Council made efforts to promote fireproofing. After establishing the General Framework for Urban Development, a consensus between the residents' interests and other stakeholders could not be reached. Activities stagnated and urban planning came to be led by government or through public-private partnerships.
2. Though decline in the industrial economy was one likely factor in the appearance of the macro-FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate) stratum, on a micro level, infrastructure development and redevelopment were congruous with the housing preferences of the new urban middle class. In an environment where many high-rise apartments were built even in social strata classified as traditional commerce and industry/humanity-type or *shitamachi*/humanity-type, when it comes for a desire for "brightness", there are two factions: one with a tendency to positively assess gentrification, and one that only passively approves.
3. In Kyojima 1-chome where infrastructure development and redevelopment projects were rapidly advanced from 2000, there was a remarkable increase in white-collar residents from 2005 and onwards. A comparison of housing maps clearly shows that residents were displaced. In addition, the area where the rent gap theory is applicable was limited to the Tokyo Skytree vicinity.
4. Gentrifiers are generally divided into the housing/individuality-type, who have come to be called "mansion dwellers" and the housing/humanity-type. The former are newcomers from parts of Tokyo outside Sumida Ward and can be described as having moved around the city, rather than falling under the heading of the so-called "back-to-the-city" "movement.

The latter at their core, have a *shitamachi*-type identity which fits with their current lifestyle,²⁴ and they choose to live in apartments. They can reasonably be considered to fall into the category of a back-to-the-city movement.

5. In the micro area of Kyojima, particularly in Kyojima 1-chome, spatial polarization arose together with socio-economic polarization, starting in 2005. In the area, newcomer gentrifiers on the whole felt positive about further reconstruction. Attention should be paid to the fact that the desire to seek an even better living environment sometimes tends to eliminate heterogeneity. When the intentions of the housing supplier and the residents match, the presence of gated communities becomes more prominent. They employ gated enclosures, surveillance cameras and 24-hour security guard patrols to ensure residents' safety and security. As a result, relationships of mutual trust weaken.

6. In a context where gentrifiers do not express "an attitude of revanchism" of the kind identified in Europe and the United States, there is also an element of publicly excluding people considered undesirable. This is pointed out in enforcement regulations by the Government and *chonaikai* (neighborhood associations) prohibiting the collection of aluminum tins and old paper, which are a source of subsistence for the poor and homeless. As an unintended outcome, recycling activities by Sumida Ward Office and neighborhood associations in the area drove the homeless away to the margins of society. Though indirect, this policy inevitably took away a source of subsistence. Moreover, it should be pointed out that art projects with a retro- aesthetic appreciation for the dilapidated former red-light districts and cafés led to raising of area standards and the advanced the interests of gentrifiers.

7. An additional analysis of the background showed that gentrifiers do not demonstrate a particular devotion to their residential areas. To date, in the field of sociology, locality has been considered a defensive response to the increasing general power of globalizing forces (Bauman, 1998; Beck, 2000; Castells, 1998). Thus it "reinstates the authenticity of the local as a means of challenging the claims of global to bypass place". However, "most residents talk about their local belonging in terms of connections which it allows with other places and its convenience for their everyday life". (Savage, et al., 2005: 204). Naturally, there are variations depending on whether culture in the relevant area is rooted in a part of the residents'

identities.

This study has shed light on the characteristics of Japanese gentrification and gentrifiers in the micro example of the Kyojima area in Sumida Ward, a place deemed an inner-city area of Tokyo's Joto district.

Notes

1. This article revises the discussion published in *Bulleting of the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, Ritssho University* (2017, No. 33, 15–42) and draws on fiscal 2015 national census data.
2. In the model, the urban development stage is regulated by economic structure, but within the city there is a division between the central city (urban core and inner-city) and the vicinity (suburbs). As an indicator of population decline in the two areas and city as a whole, the model is established as: (1) urbanization (2) suburbanization; (3) desurbanization; and (4) reurbanization. Many aspects are thought to conform to the development stages in large cities in the Europe, the United States, and Japan (Van den Berg, L., Klaassen, L. H., et al., 1982, p. 25–45).
3. For information on the concept of gentrification and historic aspects of London that set the stage for gentrification, refer to 2012 and 2015 manuscripts by the present author.
4. Research includes Ajisaka (2014, 2015), Fujitsuka (2014, 2017) and Yabe (2003).
5. Refer to Takagi (2012: 125–137) for an analysis of neighborhood relationships in River City 21.
6. Parts of the survey appeared in a record by Kohama (Department of Sociology, Faculty of Letters, Ritssho University), the 2012 *Report on Social Research* and 2013 *Report on Social Research*.
7. This is according to the objective of housing policies in the Tokyo Basic Ordinance on Housing (2006, revised) (see website of the Bureau of Urban Development, Tokyo Metropolitan Government).
8. Behind land purchases by developers was the aim of receiving a construction order for a large-scale development project thought to be worth 100 billion yen. Obtaining the land and becoming the landowner would enable participation in the redevelopment preparation association, and there was an expectation that it would be easier to participate in the construction (Sumida Ward, 2006: 121–122).
9. Harvey, 2012.
10. Takashi Machimura identified three peaks in Tokyo's built environment

production. The first was around 1970, the second around 1990, and the third around 2005. Since the 2000s, over 60% of the built environment developments have been done by companies and/or organization. At times, developments by large companies and/or organizations have accounted for up to two-thirds of the total developments (Machimura, 2015: 63–64).

11. The urban development objectives of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's urban redevelopment policy, Redevelopment Promotion Districts, the disaster prevention urban planning promotion scheme, Priority Development Areas, the Sumida Ward Basic Plan and Sumida Ward Urban Planning Master Plan include large area hubs (concentration of commerce/business, functions etc.), composite hub regions (development of safe, comfortable residential environments that are disaster-resistant), inducing a ripple effect from the new tower, and improving densely populated urban districts (reassessing projects to promote fireproofing).
12. The term "white-collar workers" in this article refers to the narrow definition of specialized/technical professionals occupations, managerial occupations and clerical occupations. "Blue-collar workers" refers to skilled craftsmen, production processing/laborers, transportation/machinery operators, construction/mining workers and transport/cleaning/packaging workers. All are based on numerical values recounted from national censuses in each year.
13. This is considered an instance when the home's exchange value is considered superior to the utility value. The definition of displacement is cited as, "displacement from a supportive, long-term environment to an alien area where substantially higher costs are involved for a more crowded, inferior dwelling" (Hartman, 1980: 196).
14. This is based on interviews with residents native to the area living in large multiple-dwelling complexes due to an exchange of rights (September 10, 2014), and self-employed workers living in the area who are familiar with the circumstances of former residents whose shops were moved (September 10, 2014). Displacement research has "often suffered from a lack of information about where people end up. For some, it was a case of wherever was cheapest, often renting with others or going to family and friends if they live in London" (Atkinson, 2000: 319).
15. Interview with native resident "A," male, aged over 80, Kyojima 1-chome, self-employed, neighborhood association officer, 10 August 2012.
16. Interview with native resident "B," male, aged over 70, Higashi-Mukojima 2-chome, self-employed, neighborhood association officer, 10 August 2012.
17. Interview with native resident "C," male, aged over 70, Higashi-Mukojima 2-chome, self-employed, 14 August 2013.
18. Interview with native resident "D," male, aged over 70, Oshiage 1-chome, self-employed, 14 August 2013.
19. In 2012, a questionnaire was posted to residents of East Core Hikifune Niban-kan rental units on floors 6–38 (41 aboveground stories, 1 underground floor,

557 units, 31 landowner units, 490 UR rental units, 36 Sumida Ward municipal housing units). The sample size was approximately 100 households (rentals), and the response rate was 28%. The sample size was determined by talking with the neighborhood association president about a number feasible to implement. To increase reliability about residents' attributes, the presidents of neighborhood associations and residents' associations were interviewed. The questionnaire also asked whether respondents were willing to be interviewed, and two single residents and two couples were interviewed in November 2012.

Table 2—Attributes of gentrifiers living in high-rise apartments

Age	aged over 30s 39%	aged over 40s 14%	aged over 50s 11%	aged over 60s 25%	
Highest level of education	University 53%	Graduate school 14%	Junior college/ technical college 14%	High school 18%	Junior high school 4%
Birthplace	Sumida Ward 7%	Other ward/ prefecture 93%			
Previous place of residence	Within the 23 wards 63%	Within Tokyo 15%	Kanagawa/ Chiba/ Saitama 15%	Other 7%	
Occupational status	Owner-manager 7%	Full-time employee 64%	Full-time civil servant 4%	Self-employed(no employees) Family worker/ temporary employee, etc. 0%	Unemployed and retired 25%
Household composition	Husband and wife 44%	Nuclear family 22%	One-person household 30%	Single parent and unmarried child 4%	3-generation household/ other 0%
Neighborhood relations with residents of the same apartment	Exchange greetings 47%	Bowing to an acquaintance 39%	Chatting over tea 7%	None 7%	
Neighborhood relations with area residents	None 71%	Chatting over tea 14%	Exchange greetings 11%	Chatting without sitting down 4%	Bowing to an acquaintance 0%

20. An interview was held with a married couple residing in an apartment in Higashi-Mukojima 2-chome on 10 September 2016.
21. For research on the art project in Sumida Ward, refer to Kim (2012).
22. The interviewee was a female resident of the Kyojima area involved in the art project as a volunteer. The interview was held on 6 September 2012 and 30

October 2012.

23. Topics that are purposely ignored and not discussed include families that have returned after living apart due to divorce, disappearance, etc., and stealing shrine offerings to help with living expenses. For information on the pawnbroker, see Kohama (2000).
24. The facts called current lifestyle in this article are as follows. The married couple met at the workplace and both work full time (household income is around 10 million yen). Their children go to a nursery school near the station; they utilize convenient transportation for their 30-minute work commute. In their leisure time, they use the neighborhood library and community center, and enjoy shopping. Seasonally, they enjoy barbecues, snowboarding and hot spring trips, making the most of their time off. They get necessary information online, and their social relationships stem from university ties, company ties and nursery school relationships.

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