Tokyo Public Space Networks at the Intersection of the Commercial and the Domestic Realms  
(Part III)  
Study on Transit Urban Centers

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Abstract

The domestic qualities that Tokyo offers to accommodate urban nomadism are found not only at the interior and building scales (addressed in Part I and II, respectively) but also at the district scale. This paper examines this scale through the study of specific Tokyo districts, referred to here as Transit Urban Centers, by comparing and highlighting its differences with an urban configuration emerging in Tokyo through redevelopment projects. By means of this comparison, relevant conclusions for architectural and urban planning can be extracted in order to construct an alternative to gentrifying urbanism. This alternative relies upon the amplification of the concept of domesticity as a spatial quality at the interior, architectural and urban scales.

Keywords: public space; dividual space; zakkyo building; transit urban centers; corporate urban centers

1. Introduction

This study builds on two previous papers that take Tokyo as a source of study cases to formulate a new type of public space, which can be conceptualized as existing at the intersection of the commercial and the domestic realms of human activity.

Part I (Almazán and Tsukamoto, 2006 b) addresses the interior scale, conducting study cases from which the category of dividual space can be induced. Part II (Idem 2007) focuses on the building scale by addressing the zakkyo building type and the urban spaces created by their aggregation. This final Part III concentrates on the urban scale and concludes the three-part investigation, showing that specific urban configurations support the domesticity1 of public space in Tokyo.

Together, these three studies –interior, building, district– aim to build an overall framework in order to re-appreciate specific qualities of public space in Tokyo, which differ clearly from those established by the Western-European body of thought.

2. Object of Study

This paper examines train-station commercial districts, such as Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ikebukuro, which constitute not only main transportation hubs but also central areas of public space (see Fig.1.). These areas will be coined here as Transit Urban Centers or TUC. In order to expand towards the urban scale the investigation of public space at the 'intersection of the domestic and commercial realms', these centers have been chosen according to two criteria. On one hand, TUCs are geographically located at the intersection of the domestic and the commercial realms, since the main streams of commuters going to and coming from the suburban residential areas stop or transfer at these stations and multiple commercial establishments gather

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around them. On the other hand, the cases studied in the previous papers – dividual space and zakkyo buildings, even though they also appear in other different locations – are mostly concentrated around the above-mentioned districts.

3. Methodology: Comparative Study

In this paper TUCs will be evaluated by means of a comparison with another type of urban space, according to the following considerations:

1) For the study of cities or urban areas comparative studies are often employed due to the complexity and multitude of factors affecting the object of study. By using a comparative method between two objects which are similar in some respects, analysis can be simplified by focusing on their differences.

2) Especially in the case of the study of public space, there is a clear model in architectural theory based on the Western-European city. Against this well established model, other types of non-European public spaces are often compared in order to clarify their distinct character. This methodology has been employed for instance by Venturi's influential analysis of Las Vegas (1972) through a comparison with Rome.

In this paper instead of any European city, comparison will be established with a new type of urban configuration that has appeared recently in Tokyo as part of a process of inner-city redevelopment. This configuration, coined here as Corporate Urban Center or CUC (see Fig.2.) has been chosen as the object of comparison for the following reasons:

1) CUCs constitute a new focus of urban centrality, sharing the same basic functions as TUCs: commercial, recreational and entertainment activities.

2) CUCs represent a conscious attempt to create a model of public space in Tokyo, inspired by the European model and are completely different from the vernacular TUCs, as will be explained in this paper.

3) Both TUCs and CUCs are economically feasible urban models and main attractors of commercial and cultural activities.

The comparative analysis will highlight the differences between both types and those aspects of the Transit Urban Centers that are omitted in the Corporate Urban Centers.

4. Previous Studies

The method of representation for urban centers used in this paper is based on geographer Roman Cybriwsky's studies on the commonalities between different train-station commercial districts in Tokyo (1989). His model (Fig.3.) shows that what could seem at first to be a different type of space due to the different street patterns has in fact a consistent structure that can be found in several areas. Also Tiry (2002) develops a comparative study between Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ikebukuro, showing their commonalities with abstract graphic models.

The theory supporting the appreciation of urban developments based on public transportation has been found in the concept of "transit-oriented development" (TOD), as a trend in urban planning to create residential or commercial areas designed to maximize access to public transport and to overcome the problems related to "auto-oriented" cities (Dittmar et al. 2004:5).

As for corporate urbanism, the idea of an emerging model of corporate urban centers is based on plans by the company Mori Building shown in their "Mid-Tokyo Maps" (Mori Building 2001). A first investigation of the possible alternatives has been realized by the authors of this paper in a previous article (Almazán and Tsukamoto 2006 a).

The present paper establishes new relationships between the above-mentioned research lines by means of a specific comparison between train-station commercial districts and large-scale inner-city corporate redevelopments, as different paradigms of public space.

5. Transit Urban Center (TUC)

5.1 Origin and development of TUCs

In modern Tokyo the Transit Urban Centers or train-station commercial districts have become the main urban-scale public space. Anthropologically their origin

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Fig.3. Model of Typical Train-station Commercial District. The Boxes A, B and C Near the Station Represent Department Stores (based on Cybriwsky 1991, p.166)

Fig.4. Tokyo Metropolitan Government's 2001 Land Use Map (TMG 2001) for the Area Around Shibuya Station
Linhart (1986:232) cites three possible types of public spaces of the Edo period as the possible origin of modern sakariba. The first were hirokōji (“broad roads”) or kawara (“riverbanks”): open spaces used as places for refuge in case of fire, also used by various people to offer attractions that drew the masses (famous examples in Edo are Ryôkoku, Asakusa Okuyama and Ueno Hirokoji). The second possible origin is in the monzenmachi (literally: the town in front of the temple gate): amusement quarters next to religious centers in the temple towns (like Asakusa, Tokyo's pre-war main sakariba, built around the Kannon temple). The third origin is in the yūkaku, officially licensed red-light districts (like Yoshiwara).

As for the Meiji period, minor local sakariba within each urban neighbourhood (chônai sakariba) emerged associated with local commercial establishments and recreational facilities (Okui 1975:406-7 cited Linhart 1986:233). In modern Tokyo sakariba have been constantly moving location and changing in style, from Asakusa to Ginza, to Shinjuku, Shibuya, etc. With the development of railways, previously prospering inner-city sakariba lost a great deal of their former importance, as they shifted toward most of the Yamanote line stations. Around these stations, small sakariba emerged (Yoshimi 1987:16-17). Compared to Tokyo's two pre-war main amusement areas of Ginza and Asakusa, the new centers had only local importance, but after the war, they gained more visitors due to the increasing distance between living and working place (Isomura 1955, cited Yoshimi 1987:82-87). All contemporary ‘sakariba’ are connected with major train stations, like the three study cases of this paper (Shinjuku, Shibuya, Ikebukuro), major hubs of transportation and connection between the urban areas with thriving commercial and recreational activities. Their character is defined as a ‘crowded place’ or, literally, a ‘bustling place’ (Traganou 2003:293).
residential suburbia and the inner-city subway network.

Not only the location, but also the users of sakariba have changed over time. As Linhart describes it, the sakariba is predominantly a place for middle-class men's night leisure (drinking, gambling, buying sex). For these visitors, the sakariba is a place for "evaporation" (Linhart 1988) or a space of liminality, as discussed in Part II.

However, the contemporary 'sakariba', as it appears in train-station commercial districts such as Shinjuku, Shibuya or Ikebukuro, does offer a much wider scope of activities, due to the demand of new types of visitors, such as working women and younger people with increased purchasing power. Now activities go beyond male leisure to cover all types of service including shopping (department stores, fashion shops), amusement (cinemas, theaters), and temporary residence (hotels).

5.2 Cases of TUC: Shinjuku, Shibuya, Ikebukuro

Cybriwsky’s model has been tested for three real cases: the areas revolving around the stations of Shinjuku, Shibuya and Ikebukuro. In order to do so, as a first step, all non-commercial uses from the 2001 Land Use Map (TMG 2001) (see Fig.4.) have been deleted, so that even though the boundaries are fuzzy, an approximate shape of the commercial area can be found (represented in gray) corresponding with the miscellany area mentioned in Part II.

The second step has been to locate on each map all the elements contained in the original model: yokochō (areas of cheap bars), entertainment, love hotel and office areas, and large-scale buildings (those with ground floor occupation of 2000m² or more and/or 70m high or more). After completing these two steps, we can see in Fig.5. the specific configuration of TUCs and their real scale. This figure shows that the TUC can be considered as a topology centered around the station, where elements change their location but maintain their relative positions.

5.3 Spatial characteristics of TUCs

The characteristics identified in Fig.5. can be formulated as abstract principles of design or "patterns" in the sense used by Alexander (1977). By doing this, the analysis becomes more meaningful regarding design theory. The principles observed in the three cases are the following:

1) Centrality as intersection of flows. The geometric center becomes the hub of transportation, coupling the flows of commuters and consumers. From this center, the commercial area expands radially along the main roads.

2) Intricate space with open access. Complex street patterns and their many intersections create multiple possibilities of pedestrian movement and an open access from every location surrounding the area.

3) Fuzzy boundaries. There is no clear physical boundary or radical change in urban scenery but a fuzzy gradation and densification of commercial use towards the center.
4) Dispersion of large-scale buildings. Though not a result of regulation, the fact is that large-scale buildings appear scattered in the area, so that the overall area keeps its medium-rise character.

5) Hidden public space. Certain areas have a strong liminal quality, like love hotel and yokochô areas and act as a hidden retreat from the bustling streets.

6) Inclusive order. Each area shows a great concentration of few uses, but the short walking distances that connect them engender an inclusive urban atmosphere, in which there is no dominant functional or spatial character. The amusement and office quarters are separated, typically on opposite sides of the railroad. Behind the amusement quarters and on the fringe of the miscellany area the love hotels appear. The entire area lies within a 500m walking distance from the station. Very different types of uses have found a niche within the area: from zones of fashionable shops inside the entertainment quarters to the yokochô liminal atmosphere.

6. Object of comparison: Corporate Urban Centers
The Transit Urban Centers will be compared with a new type of urban redevelopment that is creating other points of attraction and centrality in Tokyo.

Recently multiple redevelopments have been built by large corporations in the 23 inner-city wards. All of them make extensive use of high-rise building typologies. In order to clarify the specific type addressed here, a basic classification must be drawn. Three types can be distinguished (see Fig.7.). The first group is composed of plot-sized rebuilding projects, i.e. specific plots within a preexisting central urban location (e.g. the Akihabara Crossfield project). The second group is composed of redevelopments on block-sized plots, where several residential and office buildings gather, creating a new urban area (e.g. Shinagawa Intercity or Shiodome Site). The third group differentiates itself from the second, by adding entertainment programs and public spaces, with the aim of becoming a focus of urban amusement (e.g.
Yebisu Garden Place, Roppongi Hills). This third group is what this paper calls Corporate Urban Centers (CUC).

6.1 Development of CUCs

Corporate Urban Centers are a recent urban typology initiated by the Ark Hills project in 1986 (see a full genealogy of CUCs in Table 1). Even if today CUCs are scattered in a series of isolated interventions, they show a clear governmental policy that reinforces deregulation and privatization of urban development. This policy represents a new paradigm of production of urban space that gives prominence to large land-development corporations. Among them, the company Mori Building has openly stated that they conceive their projects not as isolated interventions but as a part of a whole operation to transform Tokyo into a "vertical green city", with wide open public spaces, different from the typical intricate street pattern of Tokyo (Mori Building 2001).

Ark Hills established the first model in Tokyo of a corporate complex combining amusement, shopping, offices and housing. Targeted at international diplomats and businessmen with high income, the development was enabled by the deregulation of urban development, and answered to the new position of Tokyo as a global city that had to accommodate international corporations and their workers. This early model already shows the basic characteristics of the CUC, although it did not aim to create a new urban focus of entertainment for the whole city, since the location of Ark Hills is not closely related to any other preexisting urban center or amusement quarter. Yebisu Garden Place, in contrast, does create a bipolar situation within the area around Yebisu station, and therefore can be considered as the first fully developed Corporate Urban Center. Compared with Ark Hills, it is clearly aimed at providing entertainment, including a much larger central, semi-covered plaza. Finally, around the popular night-life amusement area of Roppongi two corporate centers have emerged: Roppongi Hills and Tokyo Midtown, with the intention of attracting both locals and tourists.

6.2 Cases of CUC: Ark Hills, Yebisu Garden Place, Roppongi Hills and Tokyo Midtown

The same method of representation and scale employed in Figs.5. and 6. is applied in this chapter to study three real cases of CUCs: Ark Hills, Yebisu Garden Place, and two redevelopments in the Roppongi area: Roppongi Hills and Tokyo Midtown (see Figs.8. and 9.). These maps show that there is a series of common elements and basic topology repeated in every case, which allows us to conceive the CUC as a 'model'.

6.3 Spatial characteristics of CUCs

The model of the Corporate Urban Center shows spatial characteristics that can be formulated as design principles or patterns, so that a comparison can be established with those identified in TUCs.

1) Centrality as static space, commonly a European-inspired 'piazza' or central stage. Buildings and their entrances are articulated revolving around this central space.

2) Open space with controlled access. Access to the central piazza or other open spaces is realized through bottleneck-like narrow spaces that enable the controlling of visitors.

3) Island character, due to clearly delimited boundaries, controlled access and different architectural character from the surroundings, both in size and expression.

4) Concentration of large buildings in a single area, linked with shopping and entertainment basements. Towers are used for offices, hotels and residences, the two latter being located in a separated area.

5) High visibility of public space. Articulation around a center, control and flamboyant urban designs represent a conscious attempt to create an environment that reinforces the self-presentation of visitors, a place to see and be seen.

6) Exclusive order. CUCs are conceived as unitary urban districts, where design is coordinated and integrated. The resulting atmosphere of sophistication excludes other types of areas which would disturb the scenic unity.

7. Concluding Comparison between TUC and CUC

This paper sets the goal of examining the characteristics of the Transit Urban Center as a clear example of an urban-scale spatial arrangement closely connected with the domestic and commercial realms of urban life. By identifying urban characteristics that appear in the Transit Urban Centers but do not appear in the Corporate Urban Centers, meaningful differences regarding urban design have been distinguished (summarized in Table 2.).

Common aspects of TUCs and CUCs result from social and economic forces, rather than the direct application of architectural theory. They share similar functions: consumption (department stores, shopping centers), amusement (cinemas, theaters, galleries), living function (restaurants, temporary residence (hotels and other accommodation facilities). Unlike other types of urban center, e.g. European old city centers with historical and symbolic value, or important institutions and monuments, the urban centers of Tokyo studied in this paper are fully oriented toward commercial activity.

TUCs and CUCs have different size, character and origin. TUCs are vernacular and emergent, CUCs respond to a global model of business and entertainment center, and have been centrally planned by developers and government institutions. However, they can be compared as two different directions in the mode of production of urban public space.

Table 1. Genealogy of Corporate Urban Centers in Tokyo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Center</th>
<th>Developer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Ark Hills</td>
<td>Mori Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Yebisu Garden Place</td>
<td>Yebisu Garden Place Co. (Subsidiary company within the Sapporo Holdings group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Osaki Gate City</td>
<td>Mitsui Fudosan Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Izumi Garden</td>
<td>Sumitomo Realty &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Roppongi Hills</td>
<td>Mori Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Tokyo Midtown</td>
<td>Mitsui Fudosan Co.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historical development shows a clear difference: TUCs stem from the sakariba, places of informal public space that changed location over time. As opposed to the European city centers which maintained constant locations over the centuries, Tokyo vernacular centers had a changing, mobile nature. The flamboyant and monumental design of CUCs can be considered an attempt to recreate permanent centrality by imitation of the European city.

In CUCs the whole urban composition has a central climax space in a European-inspired piazza, around which, all the uses are accommodated in large-scale building types such as high-rise towers and shopping centers. Entrances to these buildings are organized facing the central piazza, creating an environment of high visibility. On the contrary, in the TUCs the central space is occupied by a station, around which open spaces unfold (eki-mae hiroba). These spaces are continuously traversed by masses moving to and from the central station.

In CUCs there are clearly delimited boundaries. This is due to the fact that their plots were differed from those of their surroundings before the redevelopment, as in Yebisu Garden Place, built on land of the Sapporo Beer factory; or Tokyo Midtown, built on the site of the former Defense Agency Headquarters). But the clear delimitation also results from the CUCs design: the size and typology of the buildings differs from those of their surroundings. Additionally, instead of promoting permeability, the building mass and type limit accessibility. On the contrary, TUC boundaries are fuzzy and ever changing, as commercial uses move or expand and the intricate street pattern with many intersections creates an environment of openness and freedom of movement. The island character of CUCs is also created by the concentration of large-scale buildings in one block, while in TUCs, due to the highly subdivided land property and the difficulty in unifying land plots, they appear scattered within a broader area.

CUCs have a character of sophistication that excludes other types of programs or atmospheres that do not correspond to the image of luxury and branding. In TUCs a vernacular form of visual stimulation is generated through the profuse display of goods and advertisements (see zakkyo buildings in Part II), very close in character with the atmosphere of markets found in other Asian countries.

In TUCs within a radius of 500 m occur areas with different urban atmospheres (cheap bars, love hotels and amusement quarters). These areas follow a clear pattern. Amusement quarters and office areas locate close to the station. Cheap bar areas occupy a back semi-hidden location. Love hotel areas appear at the fringe, further from the station and the amusement places, but still within walkable distance. Each area offers a different, though recognizable atmosphere, providing the possibility of choice among a variety of urban spaces and socialization modes. The cheap bar area has an old atmosphere and permit socialization in small groups. The amusement quarter offers a continuous festival-like atmosphere. The department stores offer a mood of luxury. The love hotel area provides a space where couples can temporarily hide from the public. This diversity of urban atmospheres concentrated in one single district in TUCs, facilitates an inherently inclusive character and provides a highly 'customizable' urban experience.

8. Final Considerations on the Overall Research

The three studies of the series entitled Tokyo Public Space Networks at the Intersection of the Commercial and the Domestic Realms followed the same methodology of first conducting study cases and then inducing from their commonalities some theoretical concepts formulated as design principles.

At the interior scale (Part I) a series of commercial venues that offer domestic-like settings were studied, and the concept of dividual space was induced. At the building scale (Part II) a series of commercial buildings were analysed, defined as zakkyo buildings, and from the attractiveness of the areas created by their aggregation, the concept of content space was induced. At the urban scale (addressed in this paper) train-station commercial districts are analysed and the concept of Transit Urban Center is induced.

This multi-scale research is composed as an overall framework of concepts aiming to re-appreciate and learn from vernacular, spontaneous urban phenomena in Tokyo which share an attribute of domesticity. In any case, the concepts developed represent an attempt to conceive reality, not necessarily to represent reality itself. This method is well known in sociology, coined as "ideal types" and systematized by Max Weber. Ideal types are concepts to understand reality, categories that have been deliberately perfected or purified for intellectual purposes. No real phenomenon corresponds exactly with the ideal type, but ideal types help to set aside the indistinctness and ambiguity of real phenomena and establish a classification according to proximity to the ideal type.

As ideal types, the concepts developed in this research are not meant to be true or false, but relevant or irrelevant in the further investigation of urban phenomena. In this case, the concepts of Dividual Space, Content Space and Transit Urban Centers are expected to have a changing, mobile character.

Table 2. Characteristics of the Transit Urban Centers, in Comparison with the Corporate Urban Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate Urban Center</th>
<th>Transit Urban Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centrality as static space</td>
<td>Centrality as intersection of flows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space with controlled access</td>
<td>Intricate streets with open access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island character</td>
<td>Fuzzy boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration of large buildings in one single block</td>
<td>Dispersion of large buildings within a low-rise district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High visibility of public space and exclusive order</td>
<td>Hidden public space and inclusive order</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to be relevant to the design and reappraisal of some urban spaces neglected by contemporary urban policies.

Urban planning – and subsequently also the management and production of architecture – has been deregulated and privatized, leaving the market logic as the main driving force in its definition. Accordingly, the city has become a commodity that needs to find ways to increase its value in the market. This is mostly done through a process of gentrification or sophistication of urban space. Any commodity in the market, as theorized by Pine and Gilmore (1998:98), can increase its value by being differentiated from its competitors. Pine and Gilmore show that this can be done by offering extraordinary experiences and charging a higher price to the customer (see Fig.10.). This theory, translated to urban space, means gentrified (more luxurious and exclusive) districts that provide unique and extraordinary scenery.

According to the ideas developed in this research, the Pine and Gilmore's graphic could be expanded, creating two axes of opposition (Fig.11.). Urban space could also find a competitive position by differentiating itself from other spaces through the facilitation of everyday or 'domestic' activities (as opposed to extraordinary ones) for a cheaper price (as opposed to premium prices). This would draw an opposite trend to urban sophistication, a force toward urban "domestication". The study cases shown in this research, such as manga kissa, zakkyo buildings or the areas of Shinjuku, Shibuya or Ikebukuro substantiate this force, and prove its feasibility within the general background of urban space commodification.

The concept of urban domestication and the principles formulated in this research are expected to contribute to reframing the way in which public space is evaluated, beyond the Western-European body of thought. Such evaluations often overlook the qualities of vernacular Japanese and, by extension, Asian urban phenomena. This reframing could even become a theoretical tool to imagine alternatives to the process of urban gentrification, and find ways to recover the authenticity of urban life.

References

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Notes

1. 'Domesticity' as defined in Part II: the attribute of a space that provides privacy and intimacy, comfort, convenience and efficiency.
2. High-rise typologies are built with the premise of counterbalancing their increased floor area ratio with new public space at the ground level.
3. "An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct" (Weber 1904:90)

Fig.10. Progression of Economic Value, based on Pine and Gilmore (1998:98)

Fig.11. Progression of Urban Value towards Domestication