

POPULATION INCREASE AND “NEW-BUILD GENTRIFICATION” IN CENTRAL TŌKYŌ

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With 7 figures

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Summary: Since the second half of the 1990s, population figures started to recover in the central wards of Tōkyō. The suburban hinterland, by contrast, is marked by overall stagnation. This study focuses on the question of how this process is affecting the social composition of the city center, illustrated by the case of Minato ward. It can be demonstrated that Tōkyō is certainly not a “revanchist city” in the sense defined by NEIL SMITH in his study on New York (1996), nor is it appropriate to interpret the re-urbanization process as a mere return of middle-mass suburbanites, a view that is popular in Japan. Instead, by developing high-rise housing clusters on centrally located brownfield land or newly reclaimed waterfront sites, a gradual and place-selective replacement of the preexisting, socially rather mixed population of central Tōkyō by in-movers who are mainly composed of singles and childless couples (and only in some areas including a larger share of nuclear families) is taking place. Based on the idea of a multi-functional and neatly designed city landscape which can prevail in the competition with other global cities, this process is actively promoted by state authorities as key actors. It is therefore concluded that re-urbanization of central Tōkyō can be put in the context of “new-build gentrification” as defined by DAVIDSON and LEES (2005).

Zusammenfassung: Seit der zweiten Hälfte der 1990er Jahre verzeichnen die inneren Stadtbezirke von Tōkyō wieder deutliche Bevölkerungsgewinne, während das suburbane Umland insgesamt stagniert. Die Hauptfragestellung dieses Beitrags berührt die soziale Dimension dieses Prozesses, dargestellt am Beispiel des Stadtbezirks Minato. Dabei wird deutlich, dass Tōkyō sicher keine *revanchist city* in der von NEIL SMITH am Beispiel von New York (1996) dargelegten Weise darstellt, man aber ebenso wenig von einer einseitigen (Wieder-)Aneignung des Stadtzentrums durch ehemalige Suburbaniten der breiten Mittelschicht sprechen kann, wie dies in Japan häufig getan wird. Vielmehr findet vor allem über die Neubebauung aufgelassener Areale im binnenwärtigen Stadtgebiet sowie neu aufgeschütteter Flächen an der *waterfront* eine graduelle und räumlich punktuelle Minorisierung der altansässigen, sozial durchaus gemischten Bevölkerung zentraler Stadtteile durch eine Klientel statt, die mehrheitlich aus Ledigen bzw. Kinderlosen und nur in einigen Fällen auch stärker aus Familien mit Kindern besteht. Basierend auf der Leitvorstellung einer multifunktionalen und morphologisch geordneten Stadt, die auch in Zukunft im *global city*-Wettbewerb bestehen kann, wird der Prozess vom Zentralstaat und den betroffenen lokalen Gebietskörperschaften ausdrücklich gefördert. Damit lässt sich der Reurbanisierungsprozess im Zentrum der japanischen Hauptstadt in den Kontext der von DAVIDSON und LEES (2005) beschriebenen *new-build gentrification* einordnen.

Keywords: Tōkyō, Japan, gentrification, re-urbanization, global city, high-rise housing development

1 Re-urbanization Japanese-style: unique or a special case of gentrification?

In the 1960s, the city center of Tōkyō had started to suffer from continued population losses. By contrast, the suburban area grew larger and larger, eventually resulting in the early 1990s in average commuting times of 90 minutes or more one-way. The main reasons for this huge suburbanization process were enormous in-migration figures on the one hand, and an equally huge outward expansion of the central business district on the other hand, which resulted in an overheated real estate market and as-

tronomical land prices. Under these circumstances, even the upper-middle class could no longer afford to settle down in central Tōkyō. Since the mid-1990s, however, the picture has reversed completely. Today, population figures in the central wards are on the rise again, whereas the suburban hinterland shows an overall trend of stagnation. Who are these new urbanites? Which central areas are being redeveloped and how? What are the political strategies and concepts used to promote these urban redevelopment projects? Finally, does the re-urbanization of Tōkyō fit into the picture of urban revitalization seen worldwide, or do Japanese peculiarities prevail?

Net migration gains and physical restructuring of central urban areas are global phenomena. In the West, they are usually put in the wider context of residential gentrification, i.e. the physical and social upgrading of run-down neighborhoods. Prominent urban researchers such as SASKIA SASSEN (2001², 260–261) and PETER MARCUSE (1989; 1993) regard gentrification as a key element in the process of growing social fragmentation of metropolises, since they contend that it is supported by high-income professionals, managers and other groups whose numbers have risen due to increasing economic globalization. In his book *The New Urban Frontier* (1996), NEIL SMITH goes one step further and even denounces the U.S. urban gentrification of the 1980s as a “revanchist” displacement strategy. He argues that this strategy was deliberately pursued by private capital interest groups and an entrepreneurial urban policy against ethnic minorities and other socially disadvantaged groups in order to recreate an urban center that would be acceptable for high-income residents and business investors. Regarding the physical aspects of neighborhood upgrading, it has recently been observed that gentrification no longer manifests itself in small-scale old housing restoration carried out by individuals only, but that it increasingly appears in the form of comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment projects, projects that are pursued by large corporate developers and actively supported by public actors (HACKWORTH and SMITH 2001, 467–468). According to another – slightly older – line of argumentation, which focuses more on the demand side of the real estate market, gentrification is interpreted as a result of societal pluralization and emancipation. Thus, young, single professionals (female singles in particular) or younger couples without children flee or stay away from the suburbs, which are dominated by nuclear families and their fixed gender roles, in order to live in attractive city center locations devoid of social control and close to places of work and consumption (CAULFIELD 1989; WARDE 1991; ALISCH 1993). It has to be admitted, though, that this interpretation, which has also become known by the catchword of the “emancipatory city”, includes a displacement of former residents too – at least implicitly.

In Japan, the discourse on recent re-urbanization trends has, until now, been much less dominated by references to gentrification. Instead, mass media in particular convey the picture of a return (*toshin kaiki*) of the suburban general middle classes into the city center, a return that would thus revitalize the city center to the satisfaction of everyone (cf. SHIMIZU 2004). Furthermore, it has been stressed

that Japanese re-urbanization is largely based on new high-rise building complexes constructed mainly on abandoned industrial or railway sites. This has been attributed to the fact that, since in Japan property rights on land are highly fragmented and hard to buy off or expropriate, redevelopment projects in preexisting residential districts usually take many years or even decades to complete (SONOBE 2001, 209–211). For this reason, and also because many local governments have so far followed a strategy of including at least some housing for low-income groups in new redevelopment projects (HOHN 2000, 331–352), the existence of Western-style gentrification in Japanese cities – and with it the displacement of poorer population segments – has been largely denied.

In a paper published in 2005, however, DAVIDSON and LEES have convincingly shown that the upgrading of central urban districts by new, stylish housing complexes on abandoned sites, a trend that has become widespread throughout the industrialized world since the 1990s, can very well be regarded as a special case of gentrification. They argue that the urbane new middle classes support such a *new-build* gentrification just as much as the classic form of old housing restoration, and that the process is usually pushed forward by an actor coalition of corporate developers, local governments and architects. To be sure, DAVIDSON and LEES admit that new-build gentrification can cause displacement of lower-income groups as well – albeit indirectly and in the long run – either by stimulating an increase in real estate prices of the surrounding areas or by altering the socio-cultural ambience of the neighborhood. And although abandoned industrial sites are the main locus of new-build gentrification, it can also be found in preexisting residential districts (DAVIDSON and LEES 2005, 1168–1170; LEES et al. 2007, 139–141).

From the latter perspective, recent Japanese re-urbanization trends might after all fit into the general, worldwide discourse on gentrification. The following remarks will explore this in greater detail.

2 Re-urbanization of Tōkyō: the general picture

The Tōkyō Metropolitan Region, by and large, covers the four prefectures of Tōkyō, Kanagawa, Saitama and Chiba, and has about 34 million inhabitants; i.e., more than one quarter of the total Japanese population. The suburban part of the agglomeration is formed by the western part of Tōkyō prefecture (the so-called Tama region) plus the other three pre-

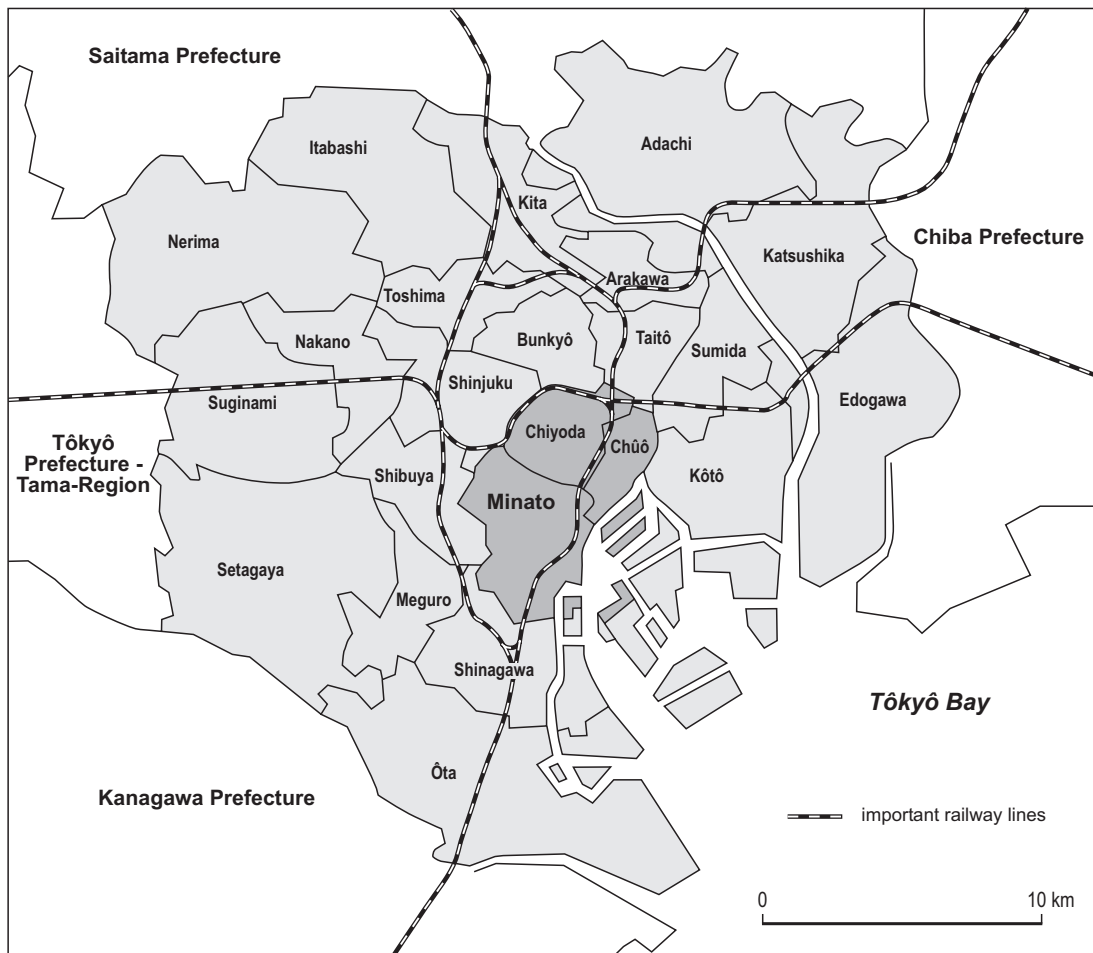


Fig. 1: Orientation map of the Tōkyō core city area

fectures, while the area covering the 23 autonomous “special wards” (*tokubetsu kubu*) can be considered as the *de facto* core city of Tōkyō with about 8.5 million inhabitants (Fig. 1). The term “city center area” (*toshin*), however, is not clearly defined: according to some recent publications (e.g., Nikkei Sangyō Shōhi Kenkyūsho 1999), it relates to the entire ward area, while conventionally only the three central wards of Chiyoda, Chūō and Minato are regarded as *toshin*.¹⁾ The urban ecology of the city is characterized by a complex circular-sectoral pattern with professional workers and upper-level employees living predominantly in the central and outer western wards, whereas production workers and small-scale entrepreneurs are concentrated in the industrial northern and eastern wards (LÜTZELER 2008). Thus, contrary to the situation in most U.S. agglomerations and some

¹⁾ In this paper, I follow this latter definition. The special ward area, by contrast, is referred to as “core city”.

European metropolises, the central residential districts of Tōkyō in general can hardly be called run-down.

The out-migration of residential population from central Tōkyō commenced in the 1960s and accelerated during the late 1980s as a direct consequence of an extremely high demand for office space and an associated jump in land prices up to the equivalent of approx. 250,000 euro per m² in the most attractive locations (FLÜCHTER and WIJERS 1990, 196–197). Between 1985 and 1995, the number of residents living in the ward area fell from about 8.4 to 7.9 million. The inner wards were particularly affected, whereas the northwestern and eastern fringe could still attract new residents due to new housing developments on remaining greenfield sites.

A sudden reversal of this pattern occurred in 1996. Partly at the expense of the surrounding suburban prefectures, the core city recorded a recovery of population figures to 8.5 million people (as of

2005). The inner wards, which had suffered from the biggest losses during the former period, attracted the largest number of residents, but there were also many in-movers to the ward of Kōtō, which is situated in the Tōkyō Bay waterfront area (Fig. 2). The industrial north and northeast of Tōkyō, on the other hand, did not record significant increases in the number of residents.

It is generally accepted that the main reason for this U-turn in development was the drastic slump in land prices, which followed the start of the recession in the early 1990s. Now, at least the upper-middle classes could again afford to rent or even buy apartments in central locations. Short distances to the workplace and a choice supply of shopping and leisure facilities in the neighborhood are generally said to attract singles and childless couples in particular (MARUKO 2001, 17; SONOBE 2001, 206–209). On the supply side, the continued devaluation of real estate assets eventually forced many highly indebted business companies to no longer withhold the centrally located lots they had bought up prior to the recession in expectation of high speculative profits, and instead to either develop these sites themselves or sell them on the market. For similar reasons, the

state sold many sites as well, sites that had become redundant due to the railway privatization of the late 1980s and the relocation of public agencies. As a result, this sudden increase in the supply of large premium-location sites led to a construction boom that seemed to contradict the very realities of the economic recession at that time. High-rise building clusters hosting a mixture of condominiums, rental apartments, offices, shops and recreational facilities became the predominant form of urban renewal projects in central Tōkyō (KANAMITSU 2001; FUJII 2002). Both the central government and the Tōkyō prefectural administration have been promoting these redevelopment schemes in order to create an appealing and internationally competitive city center (SAITO and THORNLEY 2003, 676–677). In addition, population increase was further triggered by a multitude of small-scale developments such as narrow single-family houses on tiny lots, which were created by site partitioning (HOHN 2002, 5).

An analysis of existing surveys on the characteristics of central Tōkyō's new residential class reveals quite varying results, depending on the specific area where the survey was taken. It is nonetheless possible to identify general trends. Regarding the 'former



Fig. 2: Population change (%) by wards, Tōkyō core city area, 1996–2005
(Source: Own calculations based on Tōkyō-to Tōkei Kyōkai [2007, 26–29])

place of residence’, for instance, most surveys disclose that about 80% of all new inhabitants moved in from other core city areas (see Nikkei Sangyō Shōhi Kenkyūsho 1999, 10; Kokudo Kōtsūshō 2001, cited from Tōkyō-to Toshi Keikaku-kyoku Toshi-zukuri Seisaku-bu Kōiki Chōsei-ka 2002, 80; SONOBE 2001, 206, 208; YABE 2003, 287). In districts directly located at the waterfront, by contrast, it is a good third of all new inhabitants – and thus a substantial proportion – that moved in from suburbia, as a study by the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism shows (Kokudo Kōtsūshō 2003, 27). Referring to the ‘age of the in-movers’, a relative majority are 30 to 39 years of age, directly followed by people in their forties. Thus, the re-urbanization of Tōkyō’s central wards is mainly supported by younger and middle-aged adults.

Turning to ‘household types’, it becomes clear that single households and childless-couple households (both with “heads” under 65 years of age) dominate among purchasers of condominiums located close to the CBD area (YABE 2003, 285; Kokudo Kōtsūshō 2003, 26). In waterfront districts, by contrast, nuclear families with children up to the age of twelve are much more prevalent than couple-households, let alone single households, which are almost absent here (SONOBE 2001, 206–209; Kokudo Kōtsūshō 2003, 26). The presence of apartments that are cheaper and, at the same time, more spacious than in the central area is undoubtedly the major reason why family households prefer the waterfront area. With profit expectations comparatively low (due to a somewhat less favorable image and accessibility of this area), and most of the land state-owned, the waterfront has so far been a domain of public housing corporations that target middle-income households, rather than private developers (cf. also HOHN 2002, 8–9). Differences in the composition of residents between privately- and publicly-developed housing estates also appear with regard to social status characteristics, as is revealed by SONOBE (2001, 206–209) and YABE (2003, 285–286).

Based on the existing literature, it is difficult to gauge to what extent the preference for residing in central Tōkyō is also a reflection of a specific way of living. At least it appears that unmarried persons, female singles in particular, choose places of residence in rather anonymous central areas because they are inclined to avoid supervision by parents, relatives, or neighbors (Nikkei Sangyō Shōhi Kenkyūsho 1999, 17, 19; WAKABAYASHI et al. 2002, 103; YABE 2003, 289). Related to all residents of newly constructed apartments in the city center area, reasons for in-moving

that point to an urbane mentality – reasons such as a good panoramic view from a high-rise apartment building (mentioned as “very important” by 36% of all respondents), an attractive design of the surrounding estate area (16%), the existence of many restaurants in the vicinity (7%), and living among people with similar attitudes (2%) – were much less given than practical reasons such as reduction of the commuting distance (71%), convenient (spacious) layout of the apartment (59%), or efficiency of the building management (43%) (Kokudo Kōtsūshō 2003, 27). Due to differences in the respective environment, less pragmatic reasons for in-moving, such as the social and aesthetic attractiveness of the surrounding area, were indicated somewhat more often by new city center residents than by respondents who had settled down in neighborhoods along the waterfront (Tōkyō-to Toshi Keikaku-kyoku Toshi-zukuri Seisaku-bu Kōiki Chōsei-ka 2002, 83–84).

When trying to answer the question of who are the new urbanites, it is therefore necessary to distinguish between the waterfront area, which is slightly less centrally located, and the central area proper. More or less, the disparity is associated with spatial differences in the ratio of condominiums brought to market by large private developers to apartments provided by public or state-owned developers.

3 Re-urbanization at the ward level: the case of Minato

Minato ward is located in the southern part of central Tōkyō. Most of its neighborhoods have always ranked among the more exclusive residential areas of the Japanese capital. During the early-modern Tokugawa period (1603–1868), much of the land had been occupied by large residences of feudal lords, and the establishment of the new government district just north of the ward boundary in the late 19th century further boosted the prestige of the area. On closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that at least the waterfront districts of Minato were far from being high-class neighborhoods. Until recently, this land, for the most part reclaimed from the sea and owned by the state, was better known for its bleak mixture of dock worker dormitories, monotonous public housing estates, public utilities, and warehouses.

In 1961, the population of Minato ward peaked at around 260,000. Subsequently, the number of registered residents dropped more or less steadily to 150,000 until 1996, only to rise again to 170,000

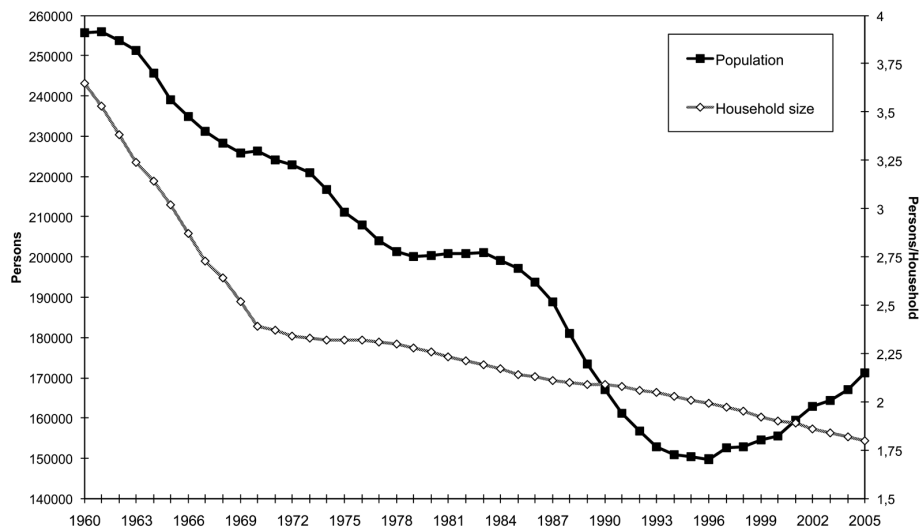


Fig. 3: Population and household size change in Minato ward, 1960–2005

(Source: Own calculations based on *Minato-ku*, <http://www.city.minato.tokyo.jp/joho/jinko/sojinko.html> [downloaded 02.04.2006])

in 2005 (Fig. 3). The population losses during the 1960s were associated with selective out-migration of nuclear families into the suburban area, as is suggested by the simultaneous decrease in the average household size. Surprisingly, the recent population recovery trend is also paralleled by a decrease in household size, a development that lends support to the assumption that most of the in-movers live in one- or two-person households. The changes in the number of newly constructed condominiums were also roughly along the lines of the population trend (Fig. 4).

The following figure 5 shows changes in the size of specific age cohorts. By subtracting, for instance, the number of residents aged 10 to 14 years

in 1995 from the number of those aged 20 to 24 years in 2005, the volume of net migration by age can be roughly estimated (the impact of mortality becoming a major distorting factor in higher age groups). It becomes apparent that the recent recovery in population figures is almost completely due to a high migration surplus of (in particular female) persons aged 20 to 49 years. Since the size of child-age cohorts has only marginally increased between 1995 and 2005, one can hypothesize that most of the 20 to 49-year-old in-movers were childless. Other data taken from the 2005 population census give further support to this assessment. That is, between 1995 and 2005, the combined proportion of one-person and childless-couple households whose “heads” were between 30

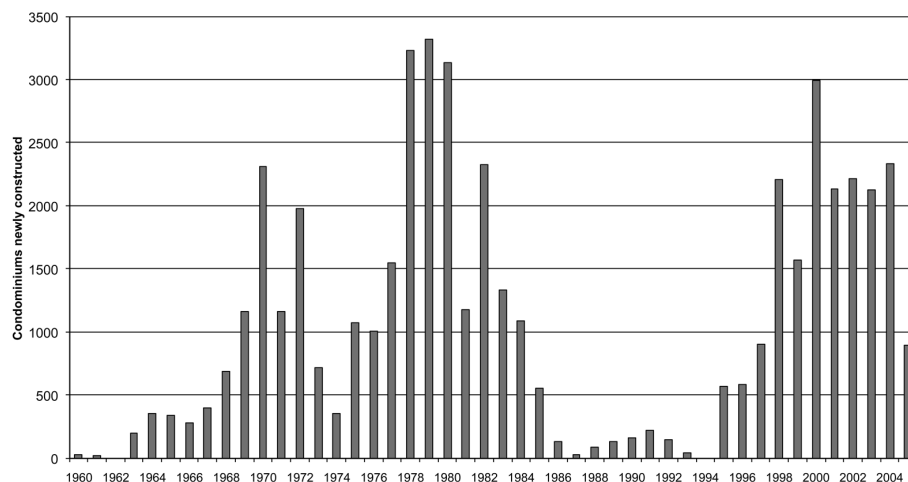


Fig. 4: Annual number of newly constructed condominiums in Minato ward, 1960–2005
(Source: Minato-ku Machizukuri Suishin-bu Kaihatsu Shidô-ka [2006, 146])

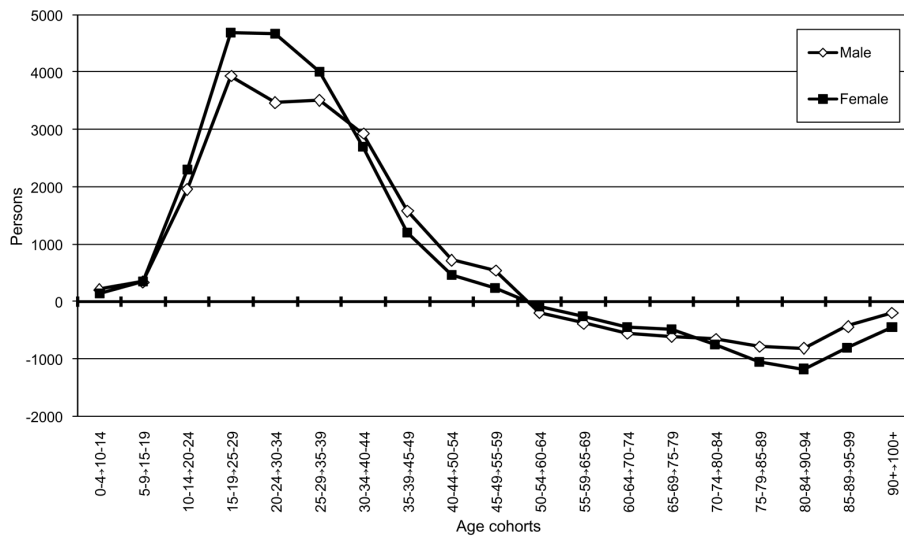


Fig. 5: Change in age cohort size, Minato ward, 1995–2005 (Source: Own calculations based on Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku, Kokusei chōsa hōkoku [1995; 2005])

and 49 years of age rose markedly from 17.6 to 29.5% of all households in Minato, while there was only a minor increase from 16.3 to 20.1% in the entire 23-ward area. Furthermore, the share of persons employed in professional occupations, often used as an indicator of residential upgrading, showed an above-average increase from 16.5 to 20.4% (23-ward area: 14.2 to 16.5%).

Turning to the ‘former place of residence’, Japanese census statistics include data covering the period from 1995 to 2000. Accordingly, about a quarter of all new residents in 2000 had moved from the suburban area to Minato, but no less than 44% had their previous residence in other wards of the core city. Since many embassies and other foreign institutions are located in Minato, it is not surprising that another 12.4% had immigrated from outside Japan (own calculations based on Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku 2000). Taken as a whole, these numbers show that the recent re-urbanization of Minato ward is less the result of suburbanites returning to Minato than of persons moving in from other – presumably less attractive – districts of the core city.

During the period of 1985–1995, residential numbers declined in all census districts of Minato, but losses were most dramatic – in some places even exceeding 30% – in northern districts just south of the CBD area, thus showing the impact of the massive expansion of office developments into surrounding residential neighborhoods back then. Population trends during the following period of 1995–2005, by contrast, reveal an entirely different pattern (Fig. 6). It becomes obvious that the recovery in population

figures is far from being limited to districts where large high-rise housing redevelopment projects were completed. There are also other areas of increase, including those in the vicinity of newly opened subway stations as well as the districts surrounding Shinagawa station, which in October 2003 was enlarged into a stop for Shinkansen bullet trains bound for Nagoya, Ōsaka, and other cities further west.

It is almost certain that by the end of the current period of 2005–2010, population figures will have soared again, since by then an even greater number of large housing developments will have been completed (Fig. 7). Apart from several waterfront districts, many redevelopment sites are concentrated in the north of Minato, a fact that is directly linked to recent political strategies aimed at revitalizing the city center of Tōkyō and other Japanese metropolises. This will be considered in the next paragraph.

4 Concepts and political measures of state actors in Minato ward

In direct response to the increasing international competition among metropolises to attract global finance and business functions, and inspired by the British urban renaissance strategy, the Japanese national diet passed a “Law on Special Measures for Urban Renaissance” (*Toshi saisei tokubetsu sochi-bō*) that became effective in April 2002. This law enables the designation of special urban redevelopment districts in which exemptions from building regulations such as total floor area limits, as well as

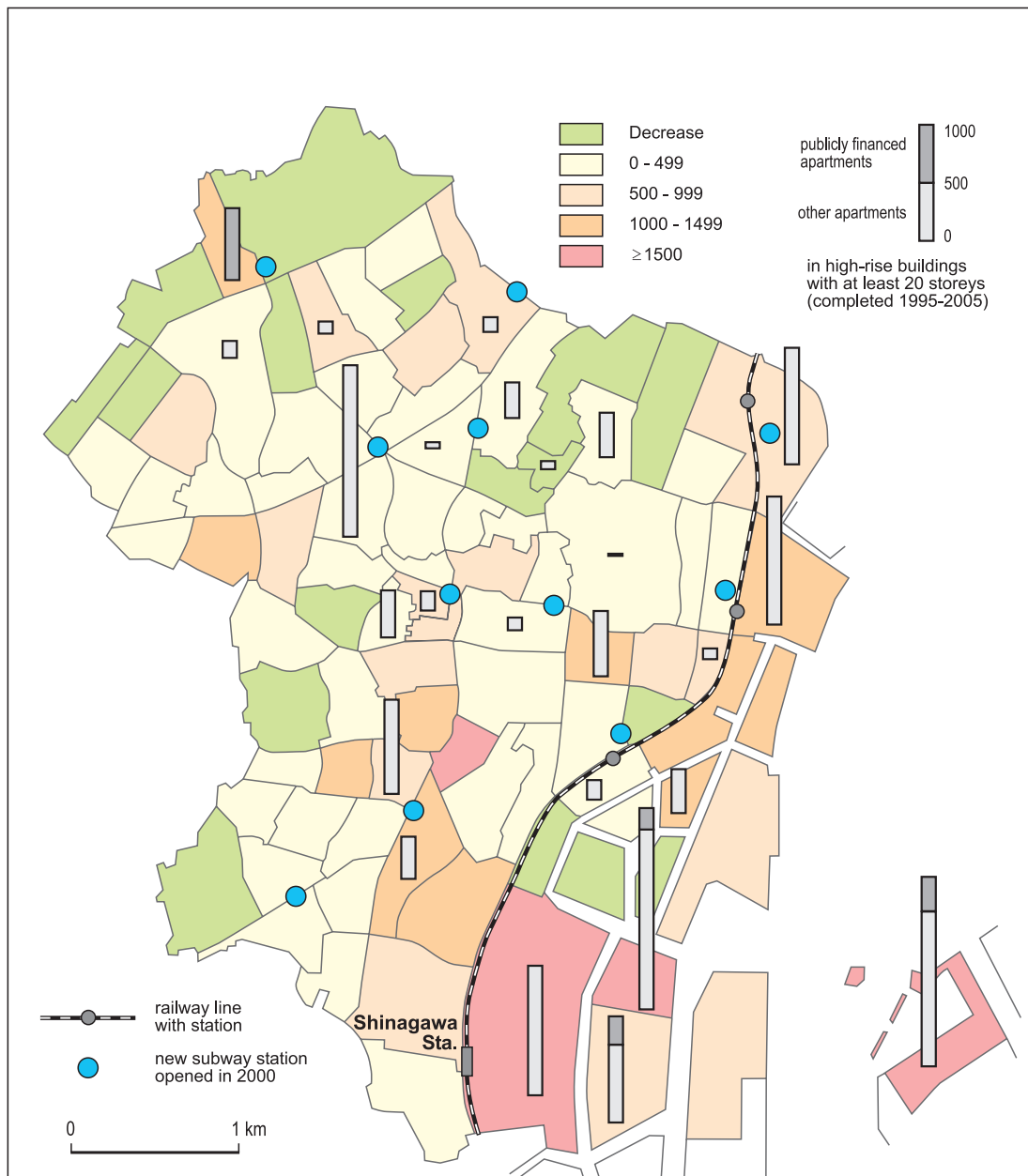


Fig. 6: Population change (absolute figures) and high-rise housing developments by district, Minato ward, 1995–2005 (Source: Own calculations based on Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku, Kokusei chōsa hōkoku 1995; 2005; and sources cited in footnote 3)

abridged permit procedures or state-secured interest-free loans and guarantees may be implemented. Attention has further been given to the fact that the law in effect allows the prime minister's office to bypass local administrations (WALEY 2007, 1478–1479). In the case of Tōkyō, it is intended to both support the repopulation of the city center and increase the international competitiveness of the city by creating a multi-functional, neatly designed and aesthetically attractive vertical city landscape where

even western expatriates may feel at home (SAITO and THORNLEY 2003, 676–677). The entire northern part of Minato has been designated as such a special redevelopment district, a circumstance that explains the large number of new major housing projects there.

Probably the most efficient and successful political measure left to the ward administration to promote the return of residents to Minato is a U.S.-style housing linkage program that was set up in

1985 and further enlarged in 1991. According to this program, all development projects reaching or exceeding a building area of 500 m² or a floor area of 3,000 m² have to be authorized. In order to get the permit, the developer is obliged to assign 10 to 30% of the total floor area for housing and, if the intended floor area exceeds 5,000 m², even pay a fee to the ward. The exact amount of the fee depends on the scale of the project, and the money is used by the ward for other measures to promote housing in Minato (Minato-ku Machizukuri Suishin-bu 2002, 63). Overall, from the enactment of the program in

1985 until the end of 2003 (more recent data were not available), the construction of about 24,000 apartments – or about 22% of the entire housing stock that existed in Minato in 2003 – was promoted in this way (Tōkyō-to Jūtaku-kyoku Sōmu-bu Jūtaku Seisaku-shitsu 2004, 110).

It is evident that the housing linkage program played an important role first in mitigating the population decrease during the late 1980s and then, after 1996, in intensifying the population recovery. This program, however, was not intended – nor is it suited – to promote the creation of a socially mixed

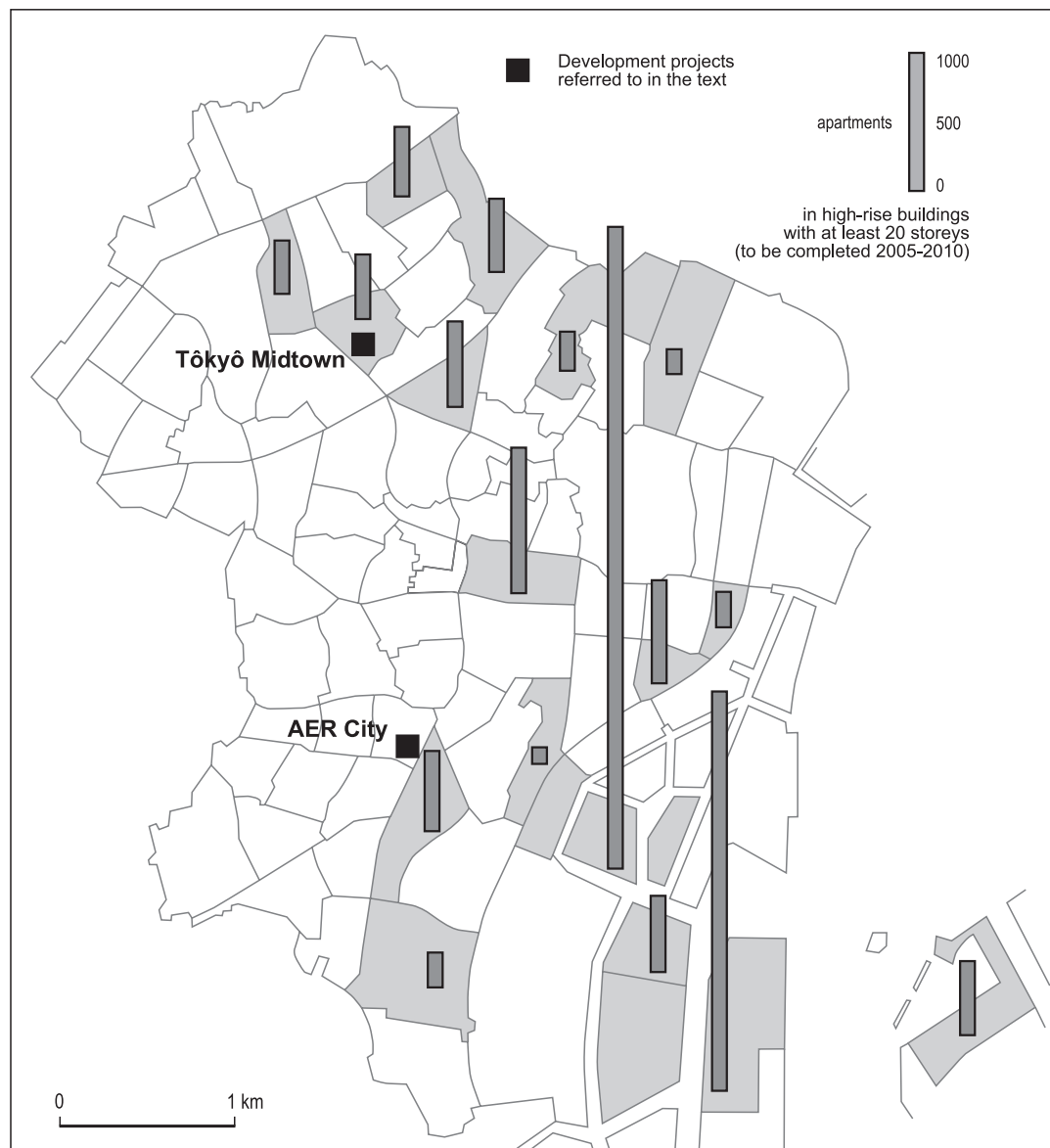


Fig. 7: High-rise housing developments to be completed during the period 2005–2010 and location of case study areas by district, Minato ward
(Source: Own calculations based on the sources cited in footnote 3)

population. Instead, it favors the social upgrading of neighborhoods, since most developers choose to build upscale condominium apartments, not least to compensate for the costs incurred in following the regulations of this program (HIBATA 1990, 48; KAMIYAMA 1994, 99). Furthermore, a ward-managed rent subsidy program was cancelled in March 2003, thus limiting the applicability of the fee money for supporting low-income households. Apparently, socio-political motives such as the preservation of inexpensive housing are not the driving forces behind housing policies in Minato ward. It is rather the supply of apartments for people who are likely to become permanent residents, that is, for those who intend to actually live in the apartment they purchased or rented and to take part in the daily affairs of their neighborhood.²⁾ This alone is an important objective, since due to the attractive location in the midst of Tōkyō not a few apartments in Minato are used as uninhabited property assets or secondary residences only. To contain this problem, the ward administration has introduced further regulations into its linkage program. These regulations determine (1) that every authorized apartment must have a floor space of at least 50 m² and (2) that – in the case of huge redevelopment projects reaching an overall floor area of 10,000 m² or more – at least 25% of all apartments have to be awarded to households who are likely to become permanent residents. More than anything else, these regulations have had the effect of controlling the influx of single-person households (Minato-ku Machizukuri Suishin-bu 2002, 63).

There are 14,533 apartments included in housing projects of a size of 100 units or more which have been or are due to be completed in the period 2006–2010. The majority of these, namely 8,074 apartments (55.6%) are earmarked as condominiums, 2,962 apartments (20.4%) will be let for rent, whereas the purpose of the remaining 3,497 units has not yet been determined.³⁾ Details on the size or the intended price/rent level are not available, but the large number of condominiums clearly suggests

that the new housing projects are mainly targeting higher income residents. While public or state-managed housing corporations were still the most important actor in the 1990s development of the waterfront district of Daiba, where about 60% of all units completed were rented as low-cost apartments (SONOBE 2001, 204), they have almost disappeared as housing providers in Minato ward. The former public Urban Development Corporation (known as Japan Housing Corporation until 1981), for instance, has completely withdrawn from all housing construction activities, following its renaming into “Urban Renaissance Agency” in 2004, when it was converted into a corporation for urban infrastructure development. This is in accordance with the new urban renaissance strategy cited above which – not least for fiscal reasons – favors urban development projects directly executed by so-called private finance initiatives (PFI), leaving for public actors the steering tasks of framework planning and indirect administrative guidance only (YABE 2003, 93; WALEY 2007, 1485–1486).

While *socially* mixed neighborhoods do not appear as an important objective in the planning strategy of the Minato ward administration, the target to create *functionally* mixed neighborhoods set by both the central and the prefectural government is duly implemented, something that can just as easily have significant repercussions on the social composition in a district. To illustrate this, the “AER-City” urban renewal project completed in October 2005 at the southeastern edge of the Shirokane 1-chōme district is a good case in point (see location in Fig. 7). By promoting this project, which had entered the concrete planning stages already in 1992, the ward administration aimed to meet the high demand for office and housing space, a demand that was anticipated due to the opening of a new subway line in 2000, and harmonize it with the preexisting nature of the neighborhood as a location for small-scale printing and metal working businesses (TAKIGAWA 2001, 64–65; Minato-ku Machizukuri Suishin-bu 2002, 47–48). Thus, alongside an office tower, a small line of shops and restaurants, and a 42-storied residential tower including 580 upscale condominiums and rental apartments, a complex of buildings called “Technosquare” was built, hosting not only the factory workshops of the old-established businesses, but also the living quarters of the entrepreneurs and their families.⁴⁾

²⁾ This information was obtained in an interview conducted on March 27, 2003, with Mr. Toyomi Takigawa, vice section head of the Urban Development Promotion Section (Machizukuri Suishin-bu) of Minato ward.

³⁾ The figures are own calculations based on data given in *Chōkōsobiru to pasokon no rekishi*, <http://www.eonet.ne.jp/~building-pc/index.htm> (downloaded 07.07.2007), and in *Wonderconstruction*, <http://www004.upp.so-net.ne.jp/wonder/index.html> (downloaded 07.07.2007).

⁴⁾ <http://www.toshiseibi.metro.tokyo.jp/cpproject/field/sirokanegu/saikaihatsu24.html> (downloaded 20.07.2007).

In this way, not only has the mixed spatial pattern of housing alternating with small trade functions typical of Japanese urban industrial districts been preserved, but many social relations too could be sustained, despite the fact that a densely built-up area of 2.9 ha had to be demolished. To get the approval of all property owners involved, the method of rights conversion (*kenri henkan*) was applied, a standard procedure in Japanese urban renewal projects. This procedure implies that all persons holding ownership rights in the district are to be compensated with share property in the new buildings, e.g. an entire apartment, thus enabling many of them to continue living in the neighborhood. The rights of former tenants, on the other hand, are marginal. Usually, they are given the option to buy or rent one of the new apartments or shops, but most of them are unable to pay the new prices and therefore leave the area (cf. HOHN 2000, 205, 213–214). Since in the census year of 2000, about 50% of all households in the entire Shirokane 1-chōme district had lived in rental apartments, it can be assumed that the displacement effect of this project was far from negligible.

A mixing of different functions, albeit of a more urbane nature, is also conspicuous in the Tōkyō Midtown project located on the former site of the Japan Defense Agency (Bōeichō) in the district of Akasaka 9-chōme (see location in Fig. 7). This project, which consists of five high-rise buildings including the highest building in Tōkyō (248 m), was developed by a consortium of corporations under the leadership of Mitsui Real Estate and completed in March 2007. Its floor space totals 566,000 m², 311,000 m² of which is used by offices. Another 97,000 m² are occupied by 410 rental apartments and several attached facilities such as a fitness center, a sauna and a roof garden, while on 21,000 m² the U.S. corporation Oakwood Worldwide operates 107 serviced apartments mainly catering to the needs of global senior managers on business trips. Furthermore, the development complex includes a five star hotel of the Ritz Carlton group with 250 rooms on 44,000 m², up-market retail stores on 71,000 m², and – on the remaining 22,000 m² – the New Suntory Museum of Art and a congress hall.⁵⁾

The planning design was brought forward by the consortium after the relocation of the Defense Agency in April 2000, and approved in March 2003 after the consortium agreed to two requirements advanced by the ward administration. These were, first,

the inclusion of infrastructural projects that would improve the setting of the surrounding area (such as the widening of the roads delimiting the redevelopment area and the expansion of the Hinokimachi park area nearby into a large Japanese-style garden) and, second, the reservation of roughly half of all apartments for households who are likely to become permanent residents (cf. Minato-ku Machizukuri Suishin-bu 2002, 46), a requirement that even surpasses the current housing linkage regulations. The rents, however, do not in the least indicate that "permanent residents" can be equated with "average-income households".⁶⁾ The cheapest apartments, with a floor area of about 50 m², cost no less than 400,000 yen (roughly equivalent to 2,900 euros as of October 2008) per month, while a rent of at least 1,800,000 yen or 13,000 euro has to be paid for king-size apartments of 200 m² or more.⁷⁾

These two case projects, as well as the preceding description of important urban redevelopment measures, reveal that the current re-urbanization of central Tōkyō is a process actively promoted and co-designed by public actors with the intention to strengthen the status of Tōkyō as a leading global city. The prime concept, set by the central state and further shaped by local governments, is to create a multi-functional, attractively designed and vivid city center which is populated by residents willing to stay permanently. While not an aim in itself, it is nevertheless tacitly accepted that this often results in the social upgrading of housing districts. Even though the scale of direct residential displacement is moderate, huge fashionable redevelopment projects such as the Tōkyō Midtown building cluster will without doubt alter both the socio-cultural atmosphere and the real estate price level of the area, thus creating a potential for alienating and eventually displacing many of the established residents from their neighborhoods. As is true for many other cities of the industrialized world, the case of Minato suggests that the supply of subsidized housing for low-income households and the creation of socially mixed districts are no longer central objectives of Japanese urban governance.

⁶⁾ The average annual income of a two-and-more-person household in the Tōkyō ward area with at least one person in the work force amounted to about 7.5 million yen in 2004, corresponding to 625,000 yen per month (Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku 2004, IX, Tab. 1).

⁷⁾ http://www.mitsui-chintai.co.jp/resident/original/tokyo-midtown/rits_outline.html; http://www.mitsui-chintai.co.jp/resident/original/tokyo-midtown/mid_outline.html (both downloaded 18.12.2007).

⁵⁾ <http://www.tokyo-midtown.com/jp/about/index.html> (downloaded 20.07.2007).

5 Conclusions

To sum up the major findings of this paper for further investigation, the following remarks can be made:

First, the current re-urbanization of central Tōkyō is supported mainly by urbane new middle-class households, such as young single women and childless-couple households, who moved there from other parts of the core city. It is the waterfront area only where suburban-type nuclear families are also involved in larger proportions. In both cases, practical and not life-style-related reasons are the more important motives for relocation to the city center. Thus, it would be an overstatement to conclude that central Tōkyō has become an “emancipatory city”.

Second, the Japanese capital is, on the other hand, no “revanchist city” either. Since property rights on land are spatially fragmented and highly protected, most major urban redevelopment projects are located on brownfield sites or newly reclaimed land at the waterfront. There are only a few cases where large-scale renewal projects are associated with the complete demolition of neighborhoods, since lengthy negotiations for compensating all property holders have to be brought to a conclusion first. The re-urbanization of central Tōkyō thus is characterized less by direct and conflict-ridden than by indirect, gradual and spatially isolated forms of residential displacement. This feature in particular indicates that the case of Tōkyō fits well into the worldwide discourse on “new-build gentrification” started by DAVIDSON and LEES (2005).

Third, the Japanese state and local governments are actively involved in this process. In focusing on a multi-functional and attractively designed urban space, as well as on housing for permanent residents, public actors are promoting the preservation or re-creation of a vivid city center. Further social upgrading of central neighborhoods is tolerated as an unavoidable consequence of this policy.

Finally, the development of an attractive city center with affordable housing for the (upper-)middle classes triggers class-selective out-migration from other, less popular parts of Tōkyō, and thus might contribute to higher overall levels of residential segregation in the Japanese capital. There are already signs of an increasing concentration of elderly and low-income households in large public housing estates built during the 1960s and 1970s, most of them located in the less popular northern sector of the core city (Asahi Shinbun “Bunretsu Nippon” Shuzaihan 2007, 12–40). It is likely that this fact,

rather than the displacement of residents from redeveloped districts of the central area, will become the most serious social problem caused by urban development in Tōkyō.

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