

A stylized illustration of an urban landscape in shades of brown and orange. It features various buildings, a dome, and a wind turbine under a light sky.

# City, Public Value, and Capitalism

New Urban Visions and Public Strategies

Edited by Hiroyuki Mori, Tomohiko Yoshida, and Ari-Veikko Anttiroiko

A stylized illustration of an industrial cityscape in shades of teal and grey. It features various buildings, chimneys, and a tall spire under a light sky.



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# Citizen-Centric Urban Governance

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## **CURRENT CAPITALISM AND CITY**

Due to the market economy that has emerged under capitalism, the city has continuously developed as a space that forms the core of modern civilization. State-of-the-art technology has been developed and implemented through urban socio-economics, and has consistently had a major impact on people's behavior and minds.

Modern cities have expanded through the ever-increasing power of capital, which strengthens the infrastructure and services of the public

sector that underpins it while damaging the natural environment and ecosystems in the name of social development. Due to increasing fiscal stress on the public sector and a growing awareness of the need for environmental protection, the conventional urbanization model is no longer considered valid. Moreover, even within cities, the extreme widening of income inequality has caused serious discrimination based on spatial, cultural, and psychological distinctions between people. In response to the powerlessness of citizens in today's cities, this book discusses from various angles methods that might place control in the hands of the citizens.

As society and the environment fall into crisis, discussions based on the premises of low-growth and degrowth economies are flourishing. This shows that regaining various public values that can supersede the singular value of economic growth is of crucial importance to our future development. A response to this issue is urgently required in the economic center of the "city" where diverse people and industries are gathered.

## **TOWARDS CITIZEN-CENTRIC URBAN GOVERNANCE**

In this book, we propose that both the community or civil society should play an important role in future city development, and the functions of the public sector must also respond accordingly. At this time, it is important to introduce changes to those municipalities that directly control the cities. Consequently, the policies of regional and central governments must adapt to these new criteria. This is also in line with the principle of subsidiarity advocated by the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which was adopted in 1985 (Councils of Europe, 1985). This has become a more significant reform direction now that municipalities are under fiscal stress.

The fundamental difference between the public sector (ie., national, regional, and local governments) and the private sector (which includes communities and businesses) is that the former has political and administrative power. Widely disseminated terms like public-private

partnership or public-private co-production only superficially describe the public and private sectors as just different actors. However, the public sector has the power to subdue the private sector, and it is a mistake to discuss both on the same level. This means that, even if we say how important it is to revitalize the community and local businesses, we may end up with nothing if we do not also commit to reforming the public sector. So how should the public sector, especially municipalities, change in the future?

First, if the political administration takes a pride in their city, they should consider how it should be developed and discuss their plans with the public. Part II of this book discussed the typical types of city, and each administration must correctly determine their vision for the city as described in these chapters.

Second, the universally accepted principles for the implementation of these strategies focus on laying the foundations for strengthening the community through utilizing smart technology. This can be the most important weapon to mitigate the harmful effects of the capitalist economy under which current cities exist.

Third, municipalities must promote self-reform geared toward adopting these urban policies. Until now, municipalities have been dominated by paternalistic welfare policies based on power. Public assistance for vulnerable groups is a typical example: it was a matter of course within the constraints of the times, and it is necessary to continue this policy in the future. However, such urban policies do not create community awareness. In order to strengthen the inclusiveness of the community, cities in the future will need to make major changes in urban policy from both soft and hard perspectives, as mentioned in Part III.

Fourth, the establishment of deliberative democracy can appropriately check and correct the power of municipalities. One important function of democracy is to collect a wide range of valuable information. To that end, abuse of municipal power should be constantly monitored and restrained. Otherwise, opportunities to gather information from the public so as to allow for the flow of information and the disclosure of the necessary municipal messaging would be missed. In order for the power of the municipality to function properly, it is essential to promote checks

and balances through parliamentary and public participation in the development of the municipality and the city. "Power corrupts" is a truth about human society that transcends time and society, but today this fact needs to be strongly recognized by municipalities: it is the key to innovation in the future of municipalities and the city itself.

Fifth, we must ensure constant civic learning to develop deliberative democracy in cities. As British politician James Bryce said, we need to seriously reaffirm that the best school of democracy, and the best guarantee for its success, is the practice of local self-government (Bryce 1921). Arguments throughout this book take this claim seriously. The more familiar we are with things that directly impact our lives, the harder we can work on them ourselves, and the easier it will be to exert the energy to do it. The management and consolidation of neighboring schools is of greater daily concern for individuals than the issues of the national school system. In this sense, the axiom that "all politics is local" is true, and such a stage presents the best opportunity to strengthen deliberation by the citizens. Municipal governments must actively provide such a place for citizens' learning and involvement.

It is no exaggeration to say that the future of humankind will be shaped by promoting the correct vision of the city through these new urban governance systems. When truly self-sustaining cities are realized, the era of urbanization driven by the unsustainable, exploitative, and alienating capitalist economy will be over, and a new society will begin.

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