

A Thesis for the Degree of Ph.D. in Engineering

Large-scale urban redevelopment in Tokyo's neighborhoods:
Socio-economic change and public contestation in
Musashi-Koyama, Tsukishima, and Shimokitazawa

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Graduate School of Science and Technology
Keio University

Jessica Kumwimba Ilunga

Thesis Abstract

Registration Number	☐ "KOU" ☐ "OTSU" No. *Office use only	Name	No.
		ILUNGA, Jessica Kumwimba	
Thesis Title Large-scale urban redevelopment in Tokyo's neighborhoods: Socio-economic change and public contestation in Musashi-Koyama, Tsukishima, and Shimokitazawa			
Thesis Summary Tokyo's postwar neighborhoods were shaped by loose zoning and incremental development, resulting in a fine-grained urban fabric containing small-scale commercial amenities. This morphology, supported by local train stations, sustained a remarkably egalitarian distribution of services and employment across neighborhoods. Since the 1980s, however, deregulations of Japan's urban planning has transformed these neighborhoods, culminating in a wave of large-scale redevelopments since the 2000s. Though often justified on the grounds of economic revitalization and disaster preparedness, these redevelopments face growing public opposition for accelerating spatial disparities, revealing key limitations in Japan's planning process. This thesis examines the uneven effects of post-1980 urban transformation, including recent redevelopments, across three mixed-use Tokyo neighborhoods—Musashi-Koyama, Tsukishima, and Shimokitazawa. Chapter 1 introduces the research background, aim, and relevance, situating Tokyo's urban redevelopment in the context of global trends and national planning reforms. Chapter 2 outlines key demographic and commercial trends since the 1980s in Tokyo's 23 wards through statistical analysis of census data. Chapter 3 compares the three case studies through census data and historical mapping to clarify transformations since the 1980s. It shows the decline in commercial amenities, which increasingly became larger and less diverse. The extent of this decline depends on whether recent large-scale redevelopment adapts to the preexisting neighborhood structure (Musashi-Koyama), or whether it erases it (Tsukishima), or preserves it (Shimokitazawa). Chapter 4 compares the three case studies to examine public engagement in recent redevelopment projects, using ward assembly meeting minutes. Musashi-Koyama authorities dismissed calls for broader public input by residents, Tsukishima authorities limited input to rights-holders, while Shimokitazawa authorities shifted from top-down planning to community-led engagement. Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the findings. The observed decline of small-scale commercial amenities is a broader trend in the 23 wards, with large-scale redevelopments accelerating it by concentrating amenities. Growing criticism of these redevelopments reflects public demand for more transparent, participatory planning to counterbalance the negative externalities of market-driven change and restore local authorities' role as neutral arbiters between citizens and developers to preserve quality of life in these neighborhoods.			