

Tourism Infrastructure and Urban Transformation: The Impact of
Railway Station Development on the Cityscape of Kokusaidouri, Naha
観光インフラストラクチャーと都市の変容
- 鉄道開発が那覇市国際通りに及ぼすインパクト -

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Abstract

The impact of tourism on the transformation of the city has begun to draw increasing interest from the scholars of urban planning. A fundamental approach adopted by the scholars towards understanding the relationship between tourism and the city focuses on urban redevelopment that features tourism in the context of post-industrialization and postmodernization. A major factor that promotes tourism-oriented urban redevelopment is transportation infrastructure. This case study focuses on railway station development, which the existing literature has not addressed seriously as a tourism infrastructure, and attempts to explore its impacts on urbanscape and critical issues destination planning should address. The subject of the case study is the central area of Naha City, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Japan's Okinawa Prefecture. This is a preliminary study attempted to identify issues that can guide the theoretical integration of urban planning in particular for redevelopment and tourism destination development. Preliminary findings suggest that transportation infrastructure can be a decisive factor in promoting tourist precincts, and therefore, its role in (re)constructing the spatial context of destination redevelopment needs to be seriously considered.

要 旨

都市計画の研究者にとって観光が都市の変容に及ぼすインパクトはより興味深いものとなっている。観光と都市の関係を理解するために研究者たちが採用する基本的なアプローチは、ポスト産業化とポストモダン化を背景として展開される、観光を重視した都市再開発に焦点をあてるというものである。そのような都市再開発を促進するための主要な要素のひとつは交通インフラストラクチャーである。このケーススタディは、既存の観光学の文献が観光インフラストラクチャーとして十分に取り組んで来なかった鉄道駅開発に注目し、都市景観・空間に対するそのインパクトおよび観光都市計画が取り組むべき重要な課題について検討するものである。ケーススタディの対象は、沖縄県内でも最も人気の高い観光地区である那覇市中心部である。本研究は、都市計画（特に再開発のための）と観光地区開発の理論的融合を導くための課題を探るものである。予備的な結果としては、交通インフラストラクチャーは観光地区の発展に決定的な役割を果たし得ること、したがって観光地区再開発における空間的状况を（再）構築するための役割について真剣に検討されるべきであることが明らかになった。

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1. Research Objectives

Recently, urban tourism has begun to draw increasing interest from the scholars of urban planning. In particular, urban redevelopment featuring tourism and its impacts on the transformation of the city have interested some leading planning scholars (Hoffman et al. 2003; Judd 2003; Judd and Fainstein 1999; Smith 2007). Since the nineteenth century, modern cities were formed within the process of industrialization and the major role of urban planning was to balance the growth of industrialization and the quality of life of city dwellers. In the context of post-industrialization and postmodernization, wherein tourism plays an unprecedentedly important role in the redevelopment or regeneration of the city (specifically in so-called advanced economies), it is important for policy makers, planners and academics to understand the mechanism by which tourism growth transforms cities so that they can identify strategic points of intervention and manage change in the quality of any built environment. A major factor that facilitates and supports urban transformation is urban infrastructure. Indeed, during the period of industrialization, such infrastructure as roads, airports, seaports, bridges, telecommunication systems, and electric power plants played a critical role for the development of cities and regions. Urban tourism as an emerging post-industrial sector also needs infrastructure for its growth (Judd 2003). Particularly, a tourism-conscious transportation infrastructure is critical for any city to promote tourism effectively. While existing literature on tourism tends to focus discussion on the operation, function and efficiency of transportation infrastructure and also on accessibility to tourist attractions (e.g. Gunn et al. 2002; Page 2005), the design of transportation-related buildings has not been addressed seriously. Transportation building design is a critical issue to studies of architecture and urban design (e.g. Barnett 1982), but such studies are not interested in urban tourism. Based upon my casual observation of the central area of Naha City, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Japan's Okinawa Prefecture, where urban redevelopment projects strategically connected with newly built monorail stations are aimed at facilitating further urban tourism, I found it imperative to pay stronger attention to the relationship between transportation infrastructure and urban tourism. From a theoretical point of view, this is an issue that brings together urban planning and destination planning. This theoretical amalgamation is a relatively unexplored field, the importance of which has been recognized recently by scholars (eg. Costa 2001). The general objective of this study is to explore issues critical to the relationship between these two types of planning, and one immediate objective is to understand the nature of the impact of the development of transportation infrastructure; i.e. monorail stations, and the built environment of a tourist city center.

2. Scope of Research

This study focuses on Kokusaidouri Street, part of Prefectural Road 39, and its adjacent areas, which I define as the Kokusaidouri Street District specifically for the purpose of this study (Figure 1).

Kokusaidouri Street is a main commercial street not only on the city level but also on the prefectural level. Kokusaidouri stretches for 1.6 km (or one mile) east to west, and was originally used mainly by local residents in their daily living (See Ohama 1998). However, tourists have gradually replaced residents as the growth of tourism continued since the early 1970s and also as the result of suburbanization, where big, car-oriented shopping malls were built. There are four monorail stations (built in 2003) that provide access to the street: from east to west they are Makishi, Miebashi, Kenchoumae, and Asahibashi Stations. Before the monorail and its stations were built by a public private partnership (Okinawa Toshi Monorail Kabushiki Gaisha), Kokusaidouri was accessible only by buses and cars from Naha Airport, a main commercial airport in the prefecture. The monorail is a new tourism infrastructure in Okinawa that aims to facilitate the activities of both local residents and visitors. For example, it runs between the airport and a historical area of Shuri castle, the symbol of the history of the pre-modern kingdom of the Ryukyu Island (today called Okinawa) and one of its most popular destinations, and it also provides a direct access to a large Duty-Free Shop building at Omoromachi Station located in between. One of the four monorail stations, Kenchoumae Station, located at Kokusaidouri's busiest crossing (at the west end of the street) is connected to a commercial building on a redeveloped site that was completed in 1991 (Figure 2). The redeveloped site functions as a major gateway to Kokusaidouri. Asahibashi and Makishi Stations, which are also slated to be connected with redevelopment projects (Figure 3, 4). Beyond this, the Kokusaidouri Street District consists of Kokusaidouri Street and part of Prefectural Road 39, which extends westward for 500 meters from the west end of Kokusaidouri Street until it reaches the Naha Bus Terminal. The latter will also be connected with Asahibashi Station as a part of a redevelopment project. Adjacent areas along the extended Kokusaidouri Street are also included. This spatial definition of the study area is useful for examining the impact of these redevelopment projects because the clustering of tourism activities occurs mainly along central Naha City's Kokusaidouri and its adjacent areas. This area is a type of 'tourism precinct,' which identification in a city is proposed as a fundamental step for the study of urban tourism by Hayllar et al. (2008).

This study focuses on change in the urbanscape of the Kokusaidouri Street District based on the notion that urbanscape itself is a major resource for urban tourism. It draws on the notion of cultural planning, which recognizes the importance of economic development in urban redevelopment, but specifically considers cultural aspects in urban planning (Smith 2003). A major concern in the literature is a mode or degree of standardization or homogenization of the urban image resulting from the process of urban regeneration. This is also an imperative issue for the study of tourism urbanization and urban tourism, considering that urbanscapes worldwide look increasingly alike (a process typically called 'Disneyfication'), while the vernacular urbanscape, an important resource that continues to attract visitors, is being lost. This urban issue is also conceptualized as an increasing threat to vernacular urbanscape or 'sense of place.' The cultural planning approach does not deal

only with issues of aesthetics but also those of social exclusion and inequality of access to social services including amenity and recreation, although this study does not deal with those social issues. Based on the conceptual framework of cultural planning, this study examines the ongoing trend toward the standardization of the Kokusaidouri Street District urbanscape, which is popular among visitors for its vernacular urbanscape, driven by the construction of monorail stations and their related urban redevelopment projects.

3. Case Study

Since Okinawa was reverted to Japan in 1972, tourism has been growing steadily and has become a major industry. While sun, sand and sea represent the image of Okinawa as a resort island, downtown Naha City's Kokusaidouri Street continues to attract a large number of visitors and represents urban tourism in Okinawa. The land use along Kokusaidouri is characterized by a series of small shops selling souvenirs, restaurants, and pubs, some of which are somewhat exotic for visitors from mainland Japan. Because of the sub-tropical climate of Okinawa, those shops have wide-open street walls and provide an inviting atmosphere while displaying relatively inexpensive commodities out front. Approximately 250 buildings, most of which are shops and eateries, stand along the 1.6 kilometer street between Kenchoumae Station and Makishi Station. On average, the buildings along the street are 12.5 meters wide. This concentration of small commercial buildings provides Kokusaidouri's distinctive spatial context, which developed gradually over sixty years after the end of World War II in 1945. The size and shape of each lot and the height of the buildings vary. Recently, tall buildings with more than 10 floors have been built, such as the HOTEL JALCITY NAHA (14 floors) and HOTEL ROCORE NAHA (11 floors), but these remain exceptional. However, it is important to note that these tall buildings provide greater development potential for Kokusaidouri, which is appealing to real estate investors. Overall, the relatively low, uneven and nonuniform skyline makes the Kokusaidouri Street District impressive and defines the city's image. In an overall sense, this nonstandardized, spontaneous, inviting, and human-scale urbanscape creates a lively atmosphere similar to that of a street market. This vernacular urban context is clearly a competitive tourism resource.

This spatial context of the Kokusaidouri Street District is currently being challenged by urban redevelopment projects connected directly with monorail stations; i.e. Makishi Station, Kenchoumae Station, and Asahibashi Station. The total streetfront of these redevelopment sites extends approximately 500 meters. In other words, approximately 25 percent of the extended Kokusaidouri Street (2100 meters) will be redesigned under the new redevelopment schemes. It is conceivable that the magnitude of the redevelopment projects will have sufficient power to affect the spatial context of the District, taking into consideration the preceding redevelopment project at Kenchoumae Station.

The redevelopment of Kenchoumae Station (Kumoji 1-chome Chiku Dai 1-shu Shigaichi Saikaihatsu Jigyou), which features a multistory department store building, was already completed in 1991 before the construction of the station in 2003 (Figure 5). That project was conducted under the Japanese statutory system of urban redevelopment on an area of 1.8 ha. It changed the landscape of the District significantly. Indeed, the project contributed to the modernization of the District by introducing a standardized redevelopment scheme seen commonly in various cities throughout Japan, and thus altered the spatial context of the District.

The redevelopment project of Kenchoumae Station is most distinctively characterized by the provision of open plazas. Given the insufficiency of open public space where visitors can take a rest, and the limited wind passage for ventilating car exhaust from the District, this addition of open plazas is preferable. Indeed, one of the major purposes of the statutory urban redevelopment scheme is to improve the quality, or livability, of urban environments. It should also be noted that Japanese cities are often struck by major earthquakes, therefore reorganizing their dense and disordered sections is necessary to mitigate the impact on city dwellers, as demonstrated by the case of the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995. However, from the view point of urban tourism, which relies on the attractiveness of the vernacular urban landscape, the provision of standardized public plazas is not necessarily preferable if they are accompanied by serious aesthetic deterioration. In fact, two other redevelopment projects are larger than the Kenchoumae Station redevelopment project. The project connected to Asahibashi Station (Monorail Asahibashi-eki Shuhen Chiku Dai 1-shu Shigaichi Saikaihatsu Jigyou) spans an area of 4.5 ha (Figure 6), and the other project connected with Makishi Station (Makishi·Asato Chiku Dai 1-shu Shigaichi Saikaihatsu Jigyou) spans 2.3 ha (Figure 7). The Asahibashi project includes a bus terminal (the redevelopment plan for which has yet to be finalized as of January 2010), parkades, public buildings, office buildings, residential buildings, and hotels. The latter includes a mixed-use commercial building for a hotel, shops, and public facilities such as a library and community center. Both projects plan to provide open plazas as did the Kenchoumae Station project. It is also important to note that these three redevelopment projects function as symbolic gateways to Kokusaidouri Street and aim to become new destinations. As shown in the proposed plans of the new redevelopment projects at Asahibashi and Makishi Stations, it is difficult to avoid the tendency toward the standardization of the urban landscape of the Kokusaidouri Street District. In relatively large cities that are not identified with vernacular urban landscape, improving urban built environments by adding open plazas and the resultant standardization of the urban landscape is not a big issue. However, for tourist cities that are dependent on vernacular urban landscape as a resource for tourism development, standardization is a serious issue affecting competitiveness in the tourism market. It is also likely that the modernization of a strategically important part of the city can be a catalyst for the modernization of land use around redeveloped sites due to the increase of economic value of land adjacent to the project. In reality, the modernization taking place around the redeveloped site of Kenchoumae

Station is most symbolically represented by the construction of the above mentioned HOTEL ROCORE NAHA.

4. Findings

This study is currently ongoing but suggests the following.

- 1) New transportation infrastructures such as monorail stations in a tourist city with a distinctive urbanscape needs to be carefully integrated with the existing context or built in such a way that the infrastructure can contribute to creating a new and more attractive context.
- 2) Urban redevelopment projects under the existing statutory scheme give top priority to the modernization of 'old' and 'inefficient' land use and thus the standardization of redevelopment sites and surrounding areas is unavoidable. Urban tourism is often dependent on seemingly 'old' and 'inefficient' land use, and thus a localized scheme of urban redevelopment is necessary to mitigate the conflict between standardization and outdated land use.
- 3) It is essential to include both residents and visitors in the process of tourism infrastructure planning in a tourist city in order to enhance or maintain its attractiveness and competitiveness in the tourism market.

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Figure 1 Kokusaidouri Street and Monorail Stations



Figure 2 Monorail Station (Kenchoumae)



Figure 3 Monorail Station (Makishi)



Figure 4 Monorail Station (Asahibashi)



Figure 5 The redevelopment of Kenchoumae Station area



Figure 6 The redevelopment of Asahibashi Station area

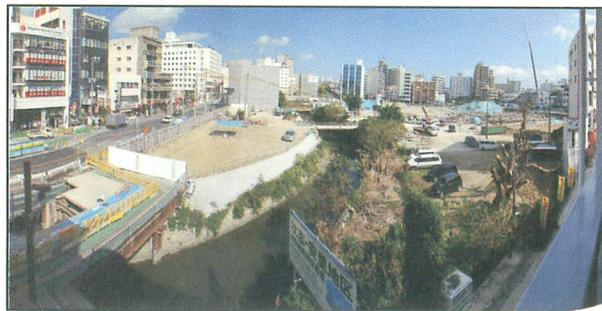


Figure 7 The redevelopment of Makishi Station area