

# The Socio-Spatial Context of the Creative Yokohama Project

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## *Abstract*

This paper aims to interpret 'Creative City Yokohama' project from the point of view of the socio-spatial structure.

I describe a profile of Yokohama city and population trends, and I find out three characteristic areas, each with a different population growth trend. Then, I examine the project from the point of view of the socio-spatial structure.

The analysis of population trends reveals that Yokohama has become a satellite city of Tokyo Wards area rather than an independent city and I see that the will of Yokohama City Government embedded in the project is to be differentiated and "independent" from Tokyo.

## **Introduction**

Since 2002, Yokohama has executed a "Creative City Yokohama" project. Yokohama's government states that the plan's purpose is as follows; "1) Realizing a creative environment where artists and creators want to live, 2) Stimulating economy by a cluster of creative industries, 3) Making good use of the attractive resources in the community, and 4) Residents taking the lead to produce the Creative City of Art and Culture". The government has also identified five projects to achieve the plan: "a) National Art Park Plan, b) Formation of Creative Core Areas, c) Image Culture City, d) International Triennale of Contemporary Art Yokohama, and e) Nurturing Future Creator" (Creative City Yokohama HP).

Matsumoto (2011) examined this plan, noted Yokohama's historical context, and described the policy making process and the practice of the Creative Core Areas (calling Creative Core Areas "Creative Neighborhoods").

In this paper, I examine what the plan's socio-spatial context through census data and

focus on population trends.

To examine the socio-spatial context, we should note two characteristics of Yokohama. First, it is Japan's second largest city, with roughly 3.7 million residents, a population size second only to the Tokyo Wards Area. Second, the city is located in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. Therefore, I examine the socio-spatial structure as not only that of a large independent city but also as part of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area.

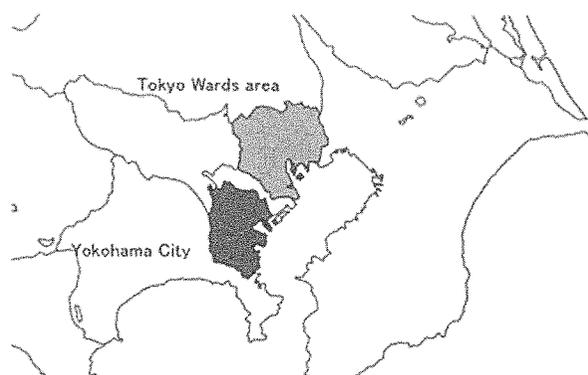
The Tokyo Metropolitan Area has been undergoing reurbanization since the mid-1990s (Takagi, 2012); therefore, we must consider Yokohama's socio-spatial structure today in relation to the Tokyo Metropolitan Area's structural change.

### **A Profile of Yokohama**

Yokohama is situated on the southeast section of the Tokyo Wards area, an approximate 30 minute ride from the Tokyo station to the Yokohama station (Fig. 1).

At the end of the Edo era, Yokohama was only a small fishing village. The port was opened in 1859, and the city of Yokohama was founded in 1889, at which time, the city's area was only 5.4 square kilometers (the Kannai and surrounding areas; it was situated in Naka and Nishi Wards) and had a population of 120,000 people (Takamura, 1996). The city area expanded to accommodate its rapidly growing population. As the city grew, wards were established in 1927, at which time the city was divided into four wards. Yokohama's current boundaries were set in 1939.

After World War II, US military forces condemned many buildings in the central area of the city for many years, delaying the planning of the reconstruction of the area destroyed by bombing. Meanwhile, the Tokyo Metropolitan Area's population grew rapidly during



**Fig.1** Location of Yokohama city and Tokyo Wards area

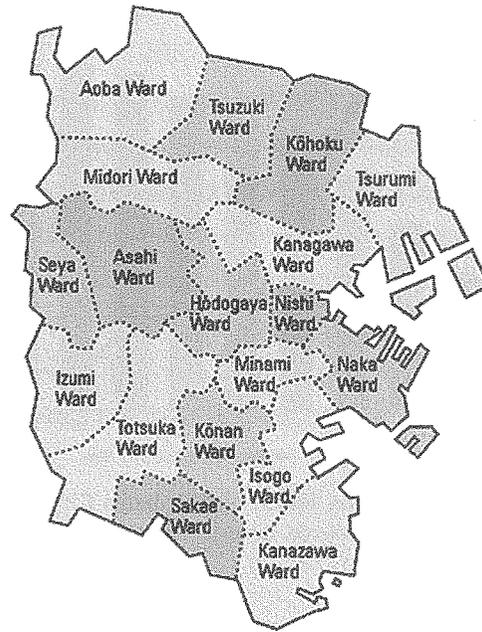


Fig.2 Wards of Yokohama City  
Source: Yokohama City HP

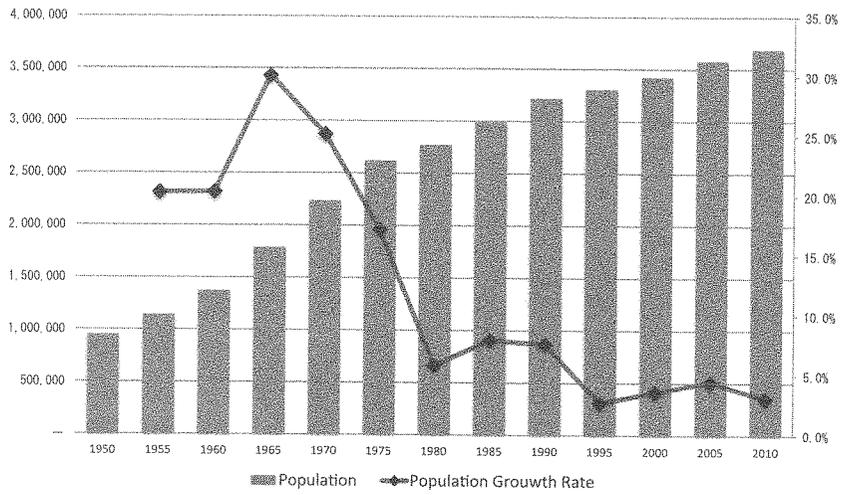
the high economic growth era between the mid-1950s and early 1970s, and the population of Yokohama's outskirts also grew rapidly. To reflect the population growth and development of residential areas, Yokohama's wards were reconfigured several times. Since 1994, Yokohama has divided into 18 wards (Fig. 2).

## Yokohama's Population Trends

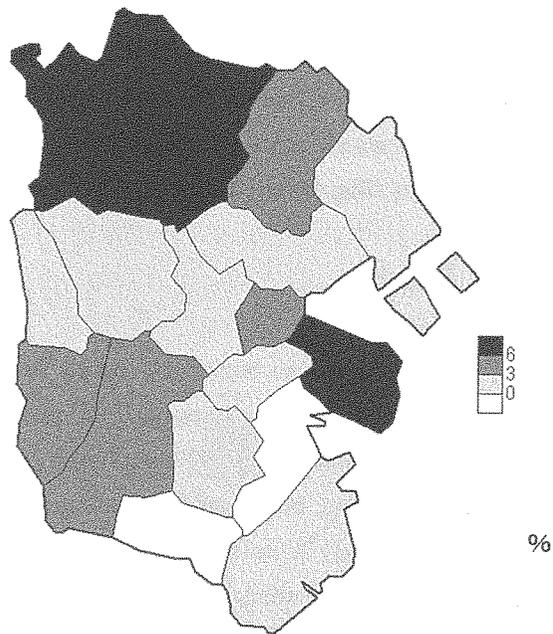
### An overview

For the population trend since 1995, we can begin with simple observation. Fig. 3 shows Yokohama's population increasing consistently between 1950 and 2010. The city had a population of 950,000 in 1950, over 2 million in 1970, and over 3 million in 1990. After 1990, the rate of population growth slows, but never decreases nor even plateaus. In 2010, the city had a population of approximately 3.7million.

Next, we trace the population trend by ward since 1995. Fig. 4 shows the population growth rate between 1995 and 2000. We can identify two high growth rate areas. One is the northwest area, including Kohoku, Tsuzuki, Aoba, and Midori Wards, and the other is Naka Ward in the central area. In contrast, the population of Isogo and Sakae Wards in the south



**Fig.3** The Population Trends of Yokohama City 1950-2010  
Source: Census Data



**Fig.4** The Population Growth Rate 1995-2000  
Source: Census Data

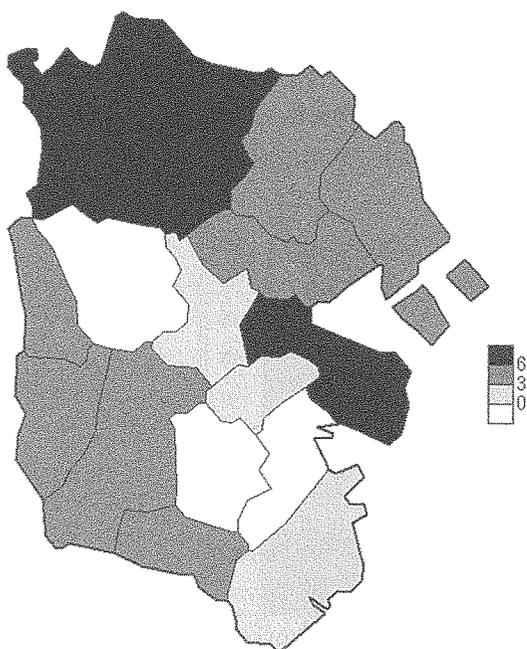
area decreases.

Fig. 5 shows the population growth rate between 2000 and 2005. The northwest area maintains a high population growth rate. In the central area, Naka Ward's rate is high, as is that of Nishi Ward. In the south area, Sakae Ward's population growth rate increased, but that of Isogo Ward decreased. Konan Ward's rate also began to decrease.

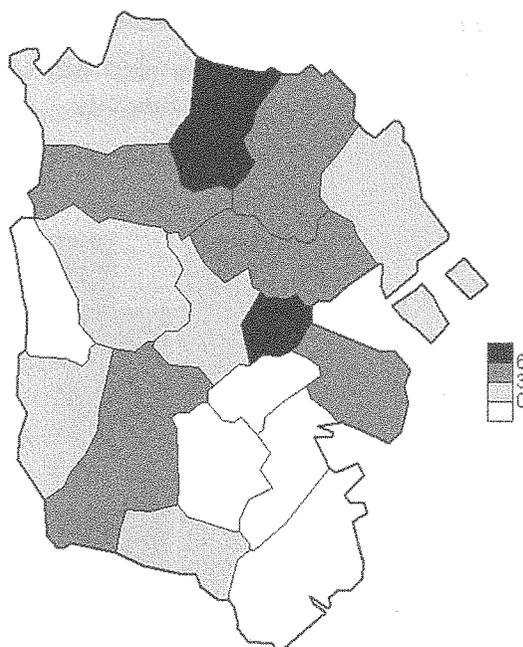
Fig. 6 shows the population growth rate between 2005 and 2010. In the northwest area, only Tsuzuki Ward exhibits the highest population growth rate, and Midori Ward has a somewhat high population growth rate. In the central area, Naka Ward's rate is lower than it was between 2000 and 2005, but it maintains its high growth rate. In the south area, the Isogo and Konan Wards' rates decrease, and the rates of Minami and Kanazawa Wards begin to decrease. Sakae Ward's rate increases, but only by 0.9%.

### Three Distinct Areas

From the preceding analysis, we can identify three distinct areas, each with a different population growth trend.



**Fig.5** The Population Growth Rate Between 2000-2005  
Source: Census Data



**Fig.6** The Population Growth Rate Between 2005-2010  
Source: Census Data

The first area is the central area including Naka and Nishi Wards. This area is the central business district of Yokohama, and many “Creative City Yokohama” activities occur there, especially in Nishi Ward. As previously mentioned, the population grew very slowly here in the 1950s, and after the 1960s, the population decreased until 2000, after which, the population growth rate has been increasing (Fig. 7).

The population trend after 2000 represents reurbanization, but we must also consider residents’ workplaces or school locations. Fig. 8 shows the rate of workplaces or school locations of Nishi Ward’s residents over 15 years old. The rate of commuting to the Tokyo Wards area is 22% in 2000 and 26.6% in 2010. The rate increases with the population

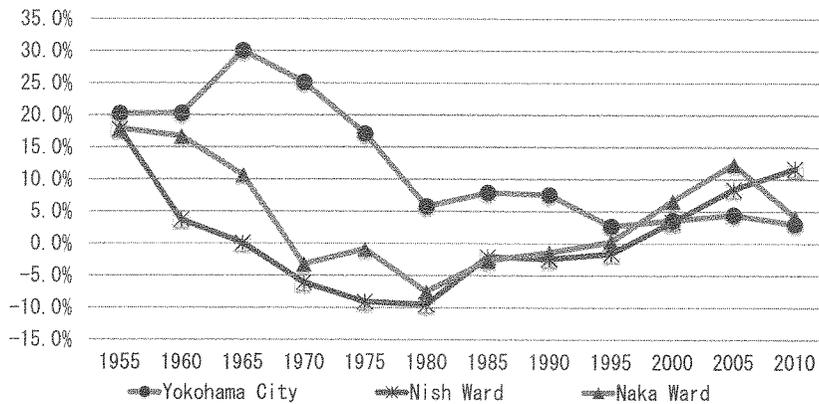


Fig.7 Population Growth Rate in Central Area 1955-2010  
Source: Census Data

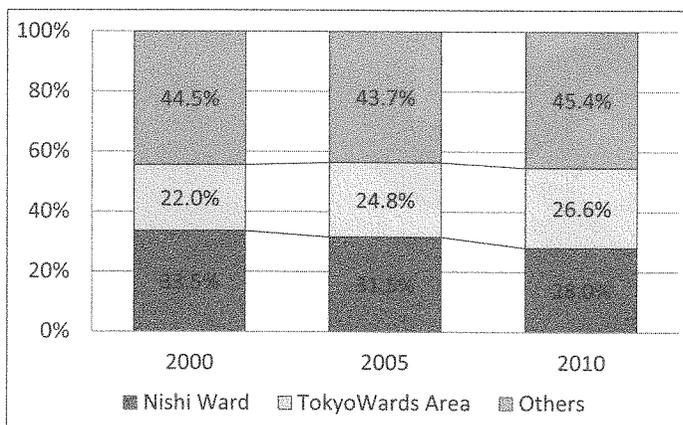


Fig.8 Workplaces or School Location of Nishi Ward Residents(Over 15 Years Old)  
Source: Census Data

growth, and the rate of commuting to the Tokyo Wards area exceeds a quarter of the population and nearly equals the rate of workplaces or school locations in Nishi Ward in 2010.

In general, people who moved to the central city during reurbanization tend to live near their workplace. However, a large proportion of newcomers to central Yokohama commute to the Tokyo Wards area for work or school; therefore, we can hardly consider the population growth as Yokohama's reurbanization.

The second is the northwest area including Kohoku, Tsuzuki, Aoba, and Midori Wards. This area is along *Tokyu Denen-Toshi* railway line linking this area to Shibuya, one of the subcenters of the Tokyo Wards area. Since the 1950s, *Tokyu Corporation* and other developers have built numerous residential districts in this area. In 1965, Yokohama's government also began developing the town named *Kohoku New Town*. This development was one of the "six big projects" planned by Mayor Asukata, and its purpose was to prevent urban sprawl. These developments have led the area's population growth, and their population still continues to increase.

A large proportion of this area's residents commute to the Tokyo Wards area. Fig. 9 illustrates the rate of workplaces or school locations of residents over 15 years old in 2000. Very few people commute to central Yokohama (Naka or Nishi Ward). In contrast, many people commute to the Tokyo Wards area. As for Kohoku Ward, the rate of commuter to Yokohama central area is only 5.2% and the rate of commuter to Tokyo Wards area is a

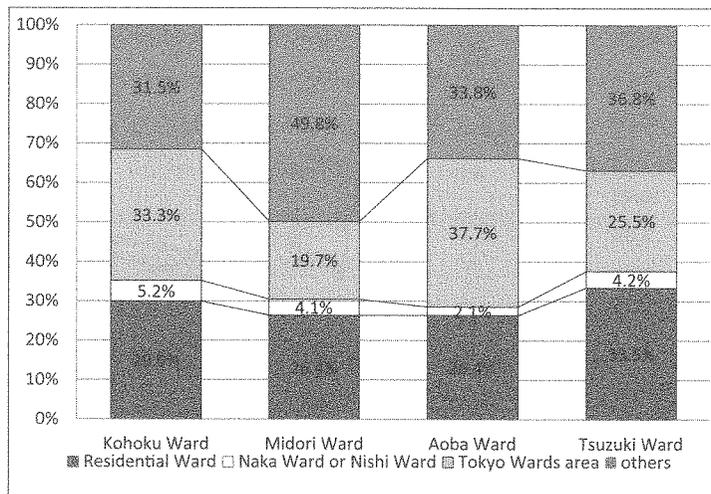


Fig.9 The Rate of Workplaces or School Location of Residents Over 15 Years Old, 2010  
Source: Census Data

third. We can observe that the northwest area suburb links to the Tokyo Wards area, not to central Yokohama.

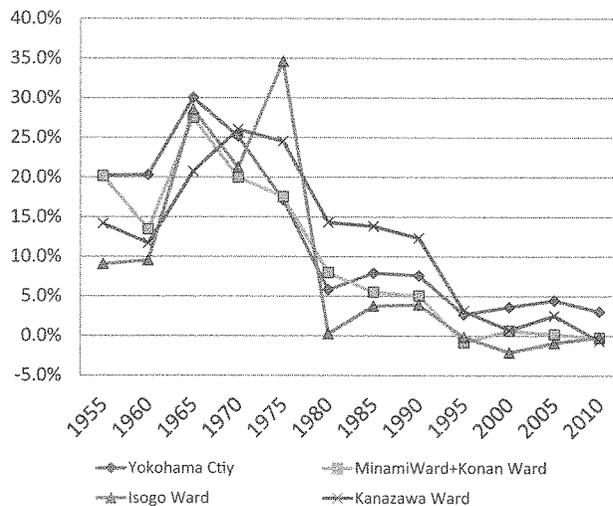
The third is the south area, including Minami, Isogo, Konan, and Kanazawa Wards. Fig. 10 illustrates the population trend of these four wards since 1955. The population growth rate is highest between 1960 and 1975, reflecting the expansion of this area's railway commuting capability to the Tokyo Wards area. Thus, we can observe the area as a suburb linking to the Tokyo Wards area, but its population growth rate has declined since the 1980s, and the rate of each ward's population growth lags behind overall rate after 1995. Note that the area's population-aging rate is higher than those of other areas. Fig. 11 shows that the rate of the south area is higher than north area.

The four wards I have mentioned are population decreasing and high population-ageing rate area, which may serve as an explanatory factor for this trend.

## The Socio-Spatial Structure and the Creative City Project

### Yokohama City as a satellite city of Tokyo Wards area

Two of the three areas examined are suburbs linking to the Tokyo Wards area. Of those two, the northwest area is nearer to the Tokyo Wards area and maintains a good environment, so that its population increases. In contrast, the south area is so far from the Tokyo Wards area that it has begun to decline. Hirayama (2005) remarked that a prolonged



**Fig.10** Population Growth Rate in the Northwest Area 1955-2010

Note: Konan Ward was divided from Minami Ward in 1969. The data of Minami and Konan Wards are combined to trace the population trend.

Source: Census Data

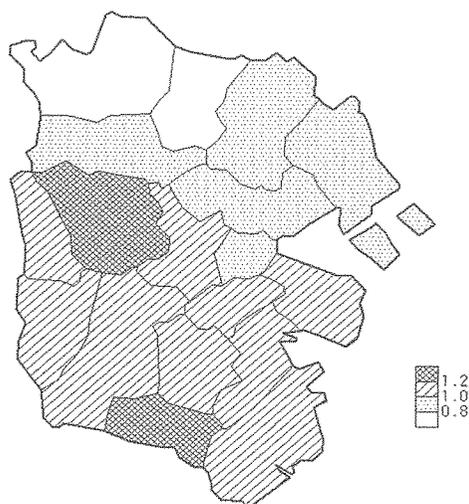


Fig.11 The population-aging rate 2010 (specialization coefficient)  
Source: Census Data

recession after the early-1990s' bubble collapse has divided the urban spaces of Japan's major cities into "hot spots," where housing market activity is increasing, and "cold spots," where the market remains inactive. By Hirayama's definitions, we can consider the northwest area a hot spot and the south area a cold spot. During reurbanization, people prefer to live near the central area, so the distance from the Tokyo Wards area determines whether a suburb is a hot spot or cold spot.

However, we can identify population growth in the central area. We may see this area as a hot spot, but a large proportion of newcomers commute to the Tokyo Wards area; thus, we can currently regard the central area as a commuter zone to the Tokyo Wards area.

Our analysis of population trends reveals that Yokohama has become a satellite city of the Tokyo Wards area rather than an independent city.

### Socio-spatial Structure and "Creative City Yokohama"

In 2002, Yokohama's government explains "Creative City Yokohama" as follows:

In order to achieve independent development as a city while pursuing a high quality of life for its residents, Yokohama decided that the most appropriate course of action was to build a community that produces new value and attractiveness for the city

through leveraging the unique history and cultural resources around the port, which are its greatest asset, and to give free rein to the creativity of art and culture. (Creative City Yokohama HP)

The city government explains the program's background of the action as follows:

In the less than 150 years since the port opened to foreign trade, Yokohama has been transformed to become Japan's second largest city, with a population of 3.6 million and a culture distinct from that of neighboring Tokyo. Its history has left it with a unique and attractive cityscape and variety of local resources that include the historical buildings around the port and the port scenery. These attract large numbers of Yokohama residents and tourists, and have also nurtured diverse arts and cultures. (Creative City Yokohama HP)

These two documents stress Yokohama's unique history and cultural resources. In the first document, the city government states that they use these unique history and cultural resources "in order to achieve independent development as a city." This statement seems to reveal that Yokohama's government recognizes its status as a satellite city of Tokyo Wards area and that they want to change that situation.

In the second document, it is interesting that the government emphasizes its unique culture as "distinct from that of neighboring Tokyo". In this statement, the government contrasts their resources and culture to those of Tokyo Wards area. Matsumoto remarked that, for the formation of a Creative Core, "one driving force of the projects has been a strong will of city hall to preserve the area as the symbolic urban space of the historical town" (Matsumoto, 2011: 27). We can see that the meaning of the government's "will" is that Yokohama be differentiated and "independent" from Tokyo.

It does, however, seem difficult to apply this strategy to areas other than the central area. The city government emphasizes "the historical buildings around the port and the port scenery", resources concentrated in the central area, but it says nothing about the resources of the other areas.

In 2010, *The Committee for the Promotion of Creative City Yokohama* released a paper, "Toward a New Creative City Project: the directionality from 2010" (Souzou Toshi Yokohama Kyougikai, 2010). This paper remarks "hereafter, it is imperative that the creative city plan is expanded not only in the central area but also in the outskirts." Further, it states the importance of forming a base and support for the citizens; however, there is no suggestion

about the resources other than those in the central area.

As we have observed, the areas other than the central area have grown as suburbs of the Tokyo Wards area, and so their history is different from that of the central area. Therefore, if the Yokohama government wants execute the Creative City plan in these areas by leveraging historical resources, it must find such resources within each area, not only in the central area.

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