

# Historic "Modus Operandi" in the Revitalization of Ancient Towns: Japanese and Polish Experience

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## ABSTRACT

The comparative study of Japanese small historical towns' (Hagi, Onomichi, Omi Hachiman examples) modern revitalization processes led to the discovery of a presence of their historical "modus operandi" (mode of action): a direct connection between the nature of the main driving force of revitalization and initial historical governing model of each town. In particular, the cities of historical authoritarian governance (feudal castle towns of samurai's ruling) now are characterized by revitalization, activated by local authorities. The cities of historical collective management (trade or ports towns and so) are characterized by revitalization initiated by local communities and individuals. For historical cities of mixed government, they now inherit a mixed model of revitalization initiatives' conductors.

We decided to compare it with European situation. In particular, in Poland, that like Japan is a country with strongly preserved historical memory, the presence of town's historical "modus operandi" was confirmed.

**Keywords:** historical "modus operandi", revitalization, Japan, Hagi, Onomichi, Omi Hachiman, Poland

## I. INTRODUCTION

The question of historic memory preserving of ancient towns has now worldwide significance because of globalization that causes the migration of peoples and resources to the capitals and other big cities leaving small ancient towns partly abandoned. Somewhere this problem is already successfully resolved due to the local authority or local people efforts; somewhere the stagnation is still on. Japan is an example of the country where the revitalization process of small historical towns are going on very successfully and with grate diversification of locally invented methods and creative ideas. That is why we chose Japan like an area being examined for learning the experience of creative town's revitalization. During the research, it was brought to light a dependence between the main modern revitalization driving force of the towns and historical character of this town. The investigation was fulfilled on the examples of Japanese historical towns Hagi, Onomichi and Omi Hachiman.

## II. HAGI

Hagi is a castle town situated at Southern Honshu, Yamaguchi prefecture (estimated 50 thousand

inhabitants). Since the Edo period, it had flourished at the economy, industry, and crafts (Hagi-pottery, etc.) fields under clever and creative rulers of Mori samurai clan who actively developed the domain. Although in 1863, Mori family moved to nearest big Yamaguchi city, searching for new economical source the families of small samurais who remained in Hagi started to plant summer oranges in their own residence and came to live in that business. As a result, they refused to sell or divide their lands so initial planning of castle town preserved with little change. In the Meiji era in Hagi raised strong shipbuilding, steelmaking and other industries involving the town as a significant part of the Meiji Industrial Revolution. In 2015, several Hagi's industrial sites of Meiji era were registered at UNESCO as a part of nationwide "Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining". To manage the heritage there was created "Hagi Meirin Gakusha" museum and tourist information centre set up in the building of the former Meirin Elementary School of Meiji period. This building also housing "Hagi Geopark Promotion Council" carrying out activities of started at 2018 Japanese Hagi Geopark project gathering its academics, cartography and touristic concepts.

The historical memory preservation movement of the town has born since the 1970s with “Hagi o-Aisuru kai” (“Hagi Lovers Association”) formation. But the revitalization activities were mainly performed by the city hall, and the idea of the “Hagi Machuju Hakubutsukan” (“Whole Town Hagi Museum”) was born in the late 1990s with the participation of scholars and communities led by Mayor Koji Nomura [1]. The idea is not only to preserve each building in the town of Hagi, but also to preserve the whole town and its environment as an open-air museum. Currently, City hall and its brunch Hagi Museum manage all activities conducted in preservation of historical streets, giving subsidies for repair of private machiya (old town dwellings), initiating local community events and so. There are also some unique fields of revitalization activity. In particular, it is the detailed diverse map’s production of Hagi’s districts with active participation of local citizens telling the stories about interesting places. Guided tours using Hagi maps from the Edo period organized by city hall are also an interesting example of revitalization creative method of the town.

It is easy to notice that Hagi town historically being led by Mori clan rulers, now showing the same pattern of local authority leading.

### III. ONOMICHI

Onomichi town, which faces the Seto Inland Sea, Hiroshima prefecture (estimated 142 thousand inhabitants), prospered as a shipping logistics center from the early medieval times. Today a 200-300 meters wide sea surface between Onomichi and Mukojima Island (so called Onomichi Channel) is recognized as a Japan Heritage Site.

Onomichi is located in a narrow area between mountains and the sea. The town is built on a hill, it is so called “Saka-no Machi” (the “Hill town”). This special scenery attracted attention as a stage for movies, animation and literature so Onomichi has many tourists. The “Saka-no Machi” area is a district lined with old fine villas of merchants from the Edo and Meiji periods, but due to the difficult steep slopes, abandoned houses have become a problem. In Onomichi, the urban redevelopment initiative is pushing up with the cooperation of various groups, including individuals, community associations, and businesses (NPOs, corporations and so). Some of the most interesting Onomichi’s revitalization groups are Ihatov Onomichi and Onomichi Akiya Saisei Project.

Ihatov Onomichi is the creation of moved from Tokyo artist Shunji Sonoyama who renovated in 1997 an old abandoned private house at Saka-no Machi district and opened it as an Owl’s House café [2]. Since then, activities have been continued to revitalize neighboring old and abandoned houses. Here is so called “Neko-no Hosomichi” (Cat’s narrow road) where

art objects such as Fukuishi cat (small stone painted cats) by Sonoyama are exhibited, creating unique atmosphere of “different reality” and “magical world”. Here Sonoyama also started a project of supporting the abandoned town cats making them the symbol of Onomichi.

Onomichi Akiya Saisei Project (Onomichi Empty Houses Regeneration Project) leading by Masako Toyota regenerates vacant houses of Onomichi searching for their new uses [3]. The Project works with the cooperation of local people and local authorities of the town repairing vacant houses, turning them to cheap rental short-term houses, hostels and other accommodations. Unoccupied houses that are difficult to use for dwellings are also refunction at souvenir shops, studios, galleries, workshop spaces, seminar houses and so. For those who wish to move to Onomichi, the Project manages the consultations, assisting with moving and renovating works. There was also created a database of Onomichi empty houses (Onomichi Akiya Bank).

In Onomichi, City hall passively supports the activities of local civil associations and individuals that is corresponding with Onomichi historical situation of merchant city with no feudal rule.

### IV. OMI HACHIMAN

During the Momoyama period, Omi Hachiman (Shiga prefecture, now approximately 82 thousand inhabitants) was the domain of Toyotomi Hidetsugu. In 1585, he built here a waterway called Hachiman-bori to allow cargo ships to enter the town from Lake Biwa. After Hidetsugu’s suicide in 1595, his castle declined, but the castle town around continuously flourished as Omi merchant town.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Hachiman-bori moat lost its cargo-transportation role and began to decline. In 1972, Omi Hachiman City announced plans to demolish the moat and build a new road at its place. However, local citizen Kawabata Gohei led a civil movement to oppose the project and revived Hachiman-bori by cleaning and restoring it. In 1975, the “Yomigaeru Hachiman-bori-no kai” (Revive Hachiman-bori Association) was founded, and the moat conservation movement gained the interest of all citizens. In 1992, the historical moat and the surrounding cityscape were registered as a preservation area now attracting many tourists. In 1998 Kawabata Gohei was elected as city mayor. In 2004, on Omi Hachiman City Hall’s petition, Japanese Cultural Property Protection Law was amended to introduce a system for protecting important cultural landscapes. So on, in 2006, Hachiman-bori, nearest Chomeiji river and the west lake Biwa area were registered as the first important cultural landscape in Japan as “Omi

Hachiman no Suigo" (Water ways of Omi Hachiman) [4].

Currently, Omi Hachiman City is leading a variety of projects to stimulate the field of townscape preservation and activation of civic life such as creating the system of subsidies for private old machiya (town-dwellings) repairing, coordinating city-events and so. Town development company Masse (Machizukuri-kaisha Masse) was established. In cooperation with City hall, Mase is coordinating surveys and refunction of empty town houses for rent, turning them into small museums, tourist information centres, workshop or civil places, original shops and so [5]. At the same time, Omi Hachiman still has strong local community preserving traditional "Machinai-kai (neighbourhood association) Council" system. The town's youth participate in the traditional town's festivals (as Spring Sagicho Festival of Omi-merchants, Hachiman Fire Festival and so) inheriting the old tradition of the town.

Therefore, we can conclude that corresponding with the historical situation, at Omi Hachiman is working the

model of local citizen's and City Hall's jointed revitalization efforts. Moreover, with the example of Kawabata Gohey mayor it can even be considered that City hall and community of the town are in some meaning merged down.

## V. THE RATIO OF REVITALIZATION STAKEHOLDERS

Here is approximate ratio of revitalization stakeholders (such as national government, local authorities, scholars, foreign partners, local businesses, local artisans, residents' civil associations and individuals) in Hagi, Onomichi and Omi Hachiman ("Fig. 1"). As we can see, in the case of Hagi, the role of local administration is main. In Onomichi, the power of local residents' associations and individuals are dominant. And in the case of Omi Hachiman local administration and the community are working together to revitalize the city.

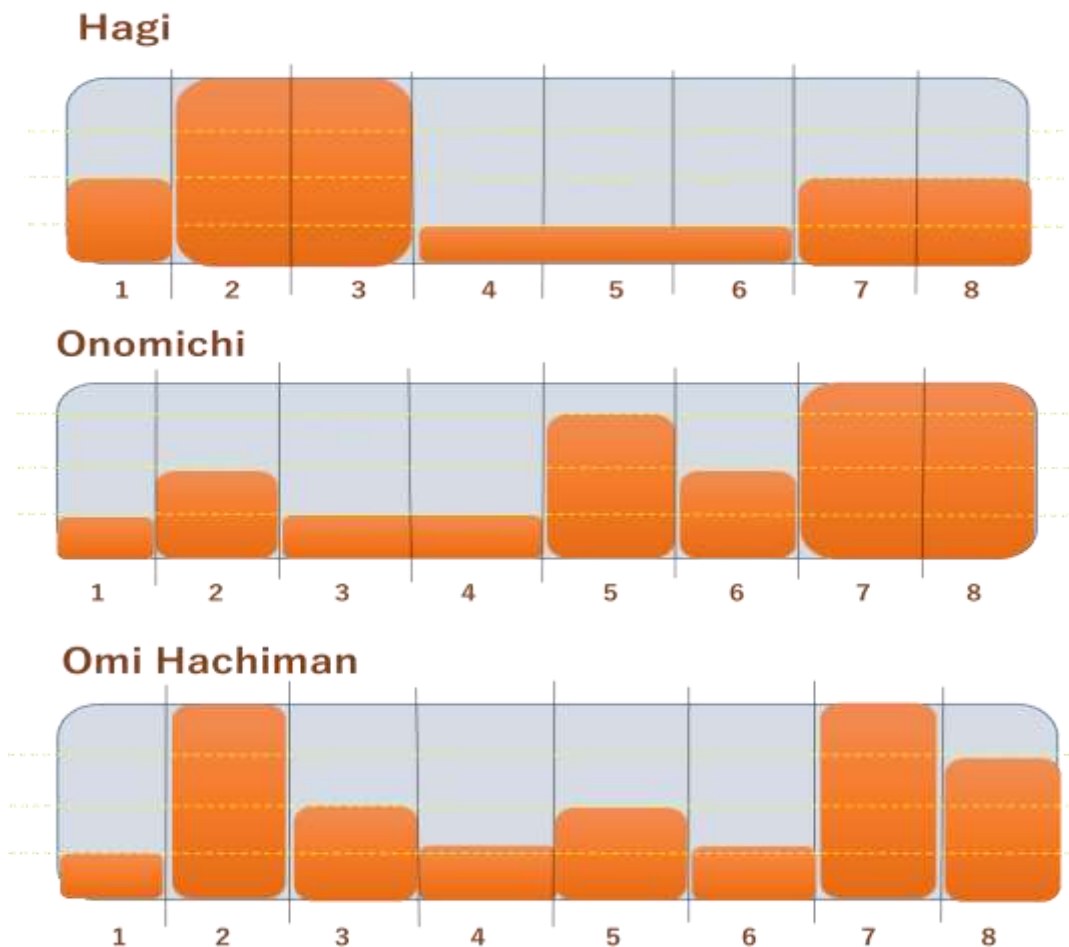


Fig. 1. The ratio of revitalization stakeholders in Hagi, Onomichi and Omi Hachiman.

<sup>a</sup> 1 - National government, 2 - local authorities, 3 - scholars, 4 - foreign partners, 5 - local businesses, 6 - local artisans, 7 - residents' civil associations, 8 - individuals

It is conceivable that the revitalization may be successful no matter who participates, but in Hagi, Onomichi and Omi Hachiman we can notice the existence of historical "modus operandi" (mode of action): the direct dependence between modern revitalization driving force and historic authority model of these towns.

## VI. COMPARISON WITH POLAND

Japan is a country with extremely good historic memory and traditional time connection of generation that giving natural background for historical "modus operandi" preservation. We decided to compare Japanese town's revitalization models with European ones to check historical "modus operandi" hypothesis doing it on the example of Poland where traditional way of the life is also well preserved in the modern society.

Poland is a country where the theme of preserving historical memory has always been important, both at the level of official authorities and at the level of local communities. In the past, this country experienced several divisions and loss of statehood, and later in the twentieth century a revival and formation of a new state took place. Therefore, everything related to the demonstration of a long Polish history is put on the level of a national idea. Polish tradition of careful preservation of the material evidence of the historical process dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A powerful accelerator for the formation of new institutions for the restoration and revitalization of architectural and urban heritage was the need to rebuild Poland after the catastrophic effects of World War II. This led to the consolidation of all patriotic forces to rebuild the country, including public participation in the rebuilding process. The structure of the architectural monuments in Poland is built on two important grounds: governmental administration and public initiatives. The main leaders of this activity are the state authority of the Departament Ochrony Zabytków (Department of Heritage Preserving) and the public organization Towarzystwo Opieki nad Zabytkami (Monument Conservation Society). Today, at the official and unofficial levels, revitalization is identified as one of the most important trends in the modern development of Polish cities.

In general, unlike in Japan, Poland does not show a clear diversity in the historical way of cities' governing. All of them had a more or less unified governance structure built on the authority of the city's aristocrats, often in conjunction with Magdeburg rights-based local governments with the active involvement of urban communities. Below, on the example of the historical cities of Opole and Zamość, let us see how the strategies of revitalization in Poland are being formed today and who is involved in the process.

Opole is a medium-sized town (128 thousand inhabitants), located in the southwest of Poland. The beginnings of the town are connected with the person of Duke Casimir I of Opole, during this time at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> c. Opole obtained the Magdeburg right. From the 15<sup>th</sup> c. Opole was under the rule of the Habsburgs, later ruled by Prussia. After World War II, the lands of Opole again became part of Poland. As the front passed through the town in January 1945, Opole suffered considerable losses (more than 900 buildings were destroyed). The rebuilding began immediately after the war and the revitalization works continue to this day, when individual fragments of urban substance are restored step by step. In particular, one of the most significant achievements of post-war activity was the restoration of the historic market in Opole in harmonizing new buildings with authentic ones [6]. An important event was the restoration and adaptation to the tourist purposes of the Wieża Piastowska Tower, which is crucial for the historical and cultural identification of Opole.

The official organization that defines the strategy of Opole revitalization is the Wojewódzki Urząd Ochrony Zabytków (Provincial Office for the Protection of Monuments), which approved "The Local Revitalization Program of Opole until 2023". Among non-governmental organizations, the most influential is the Monument Conservation Society, a division in Opole. Financially the project is supported with European Union funds, which are complemented with public and private receipts [7].

Zamość is a small town (64 thousand inhabitants), located in the east of Poland. It was founded in 1580 by the crown chancellor of German-Polish origin, Jan Zamoyski, according to the Renaissance image of an ideal city, designed by Italian architect Bernardo Morando. Magdeburg right was gained in 1580. Zamość successfully survived the world wars and has come to our days in almost authentic form. In 1992, the Old Town of Zamość was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The first steps related to the preservation of the architectural and urban complex of Zamość were made in 1951-1957. The next phase was completed in the 1970s. A very large-scale reconstruction took place within the framework of the Council of Ministers' resolution. In 1981, Zamość Branch of the State Enterprise of Monument Conservation Workshop (Zamojski Oddział Państwowego Przedsiębiorstwa Pracowni Konserwacji Zabytków) was established [8].

After Poland's accession to the European Union, new sources of funding have emerged. The Local Revitalization Program (Lokalny Program Rewitalizacji) lasted from 2005 to 2008. Its purpose was not only to recreate the historic buildings, and in particular to comprehensively revitalize the

fortifications, but also to create a variety of cultural, sports and tourist events in the Old Town. As a result, Zamość became one of Poland's most successful tourism projects. Of great importance was the local community, the residents of the city, who supported and assisted with the possible means of project implementation.

Therefore, the current situation in the field of protection of Polish architectural monuments and urban revitalization can be considered as a quintessence of the historical tradition. In general, as in the historical model of Polish towns' management, the leading initiative here belongs to state and local governing bodies, but their decisions are actively supported and implemented by the local community, business and individuals.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In course of this work, in Japan it was found an existence of ancient town's historic "modus operandi": a clear dependence between the main modern revitalization driving force and the historic authority model of this town. In particular, for feudal castle towns being in the past under direct samurai rule, now a top-down revitalization scheme is inherent, where the main initiative belongs to local authorities (such as in Hagi). Port and commercial cities with a historically independent system of government are currently characterized by a bottom-up revitalization scheme, where the main initiative belongs to local communities and individuals (such as in Onomichi). The historical cities of Samurai rule with well-developed trade are characterized by a mixed scheme of revitalization with the mutual initiatives of both local authorities and residents (such as in Omi Hachiman).

In Polish ancient towns' revitalization just as in Japan, the existence of phenomenon of the historical "modus operandi" also can be determined. Although, here it is less emphasized due to less than in Japan historical diversification of urban governance models.

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