

## Experience of River Designing by Residents

-Case of Inner City River in Tawaramachi, Fukui, Japan -

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### 1. Introduction

There are not yet many participatory planning experiences regarding river design in Japan. I'll introduce a case of a citizen organization to challenge designing, and I'll introduce how residents had difficult time designing the river, and the relation with resident and the local government who is the authority for the project.

### 2. Outline of district

Tawaramachi is in about 2km in the radius range from the center part of Fukui city, and it has Tawaramachi Station that is a knot of traffic Fukui railway and Echizen railway as well as bus routs. There are education facilities from elementary school to the university, and cultural facilities such as city library and prefecture museum. Moreover, there are various facilities such as shopping streets that is indispensable for life for the resident. We can call Tawaramachi, "The town easy to live". There are about 2000 families in Tawaramachi now.) However, this town also has the problem similar to other districts. Shopping street is less active because people now prefer to go big shopping centers located in fringes of the city. There are more new houses built in outskirts of the existing city and less young families live in the central area such as Tawaramachi. Fukui is now a typical and automotive society according to declining birthrate and a growing proportion of elderly people, and

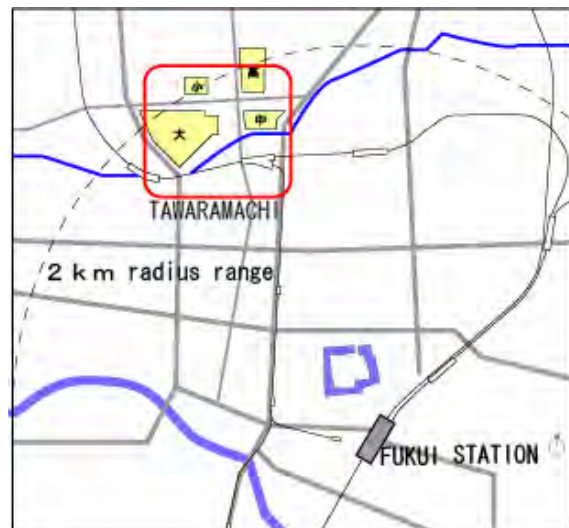


Fig 1 MAP OF WIDE AREA

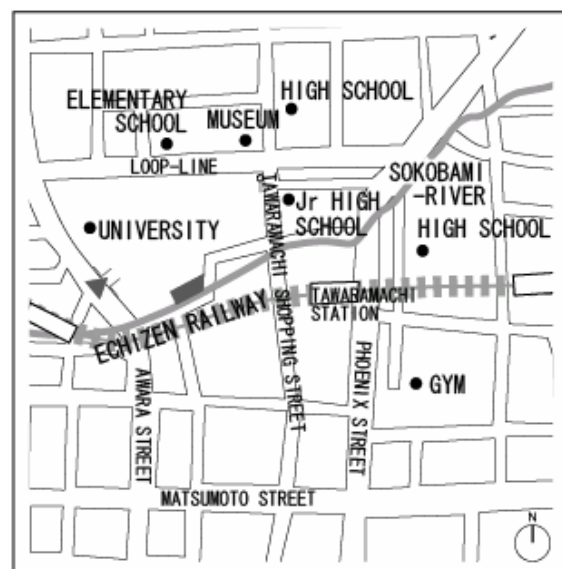


Fig 2 MAP OF DISTRICT

declining community etc.

There is Sokobami-river (It means “devourer the bottom”) that flows from east to west at the center of the district. Fukui city encountered earthquake and war damage in around 1945, and it became burnt ruins in a lot of districts. The scenery of Sokobami-river ----that has wooded area that weathered through two disasters---- is a valuable space where we can feel four seasons in the city area. Moreover, there are left the place where people washed, and it is understood that people were daily fond of the river. The river widening construction by the prefecture is done from the downstream from about ten years ago because it is frequently flooded (more than once a year) in the upstream. The construction has started from the lower part of rivers and approached the just below the Tawaramachi district, and the tendency of "It is our order at last" was rising for the resident in Tawaramachi in around 2000.

Moreover the road widening construction of the shopping street by city is advanced putting the long tract of years and there are some cleanout and the rebuilding construction of the house in the district, it is impressions of noisiness last few years.

### 3. River Design workshop organized by the local government

The charge section in the prefecture did the effort to collect resident's opinions for river widening construction that had started from the downstream too. Existing Sokobami-river has a very charming atmosphere with many trees on the bank and flowers blooming in each season. The water is very close from the streets along the river (see fig 3). Fig 4 shows the result of river widening of Sokobami-river, neighboring to Tawaramachi. It is very wide and, the atmosphere is not humane, before because all respects covered by concretes, the surface of a river is far from streets along. People of Tawaramachi thought that they did not want their river to be like the downstream (fig 4), because there are less and less green in Tawaramachi area. Precisely, they even had doubt whether it was really necessary to widen so much.

While residents were worrying about the future of the river, but doing nothing, local government office hold design workshop of the river space of this. However, most of the participants were the students of the architectural construction engineering department of the university who had interested in the design, and there was little participation of the local populace.



Fig 3 Current Sokobami-river



Fig 4 The downstream that have been repaired

Table 1 THE CONTENT OF THE WORKSHOP BY GOVERNMENT

matter	purpose	content	participan
Workshop 1 Knows the nature of town.	understand the current state and the basal condition	They walked in actual river space with the specialist of the plant, then they larned about the explanation of the construction of Sokobami-river and the river repair case with the whole country , and after that they talked about the value of nature in the region was .	21
Workshop 2 Think about the town with water and green.	District spectacle design plan	Based on the last result, they larned city environment case where make the best use of nature such as river, forest and hydrophilicity space in nationwide and the technique of maintenance and restration of the natural environment that seem to be taken with Sokobami-river actually, and after that they thought about the living and the spectacle design with river and forest of Tawaramachi , then they divise the zoning, and set up the space use policy around the river green tract of	17
Workshop 3 Design water and green	Making of river green tract of land spectacle	Based on the introduction of the trees that suit with the climate in the region, the technique that were able to be achieved and was curren, and the result of a workshop, they wrote a concrete design in the white map.	20
Workshop 4 Summary	Report of results and opinion exchange	Introduction of the plan chart that the participant drew by the three times workshop, project plan that governnemt and consaltant had brought together, and after that the participants talked about the opinion, impression, how to use it, to maintain,	20

Workshops were held 4 times. Each of the contents is shown in the Table 1. The workshop was announced to each family of the town by posting a letter of invitation. The local government posted 2000 families, but there appeared only a few people as shown in table 1.

There were not so many participants though the above-mentioned. The following are thought as the cause.

- It was not announced rightly to public.
- The resident are not interested in the outside their own house so much in general, even in case of resident is, he doesn't go out to public discussion place without invitation of the person who knows.
- The result of a usual workshop was not published well in the resident who had not participated.



Fig 5 Image of new Sokobami-river: RESULT OF THE WORKSHOP

#### 4. Workshop organized by resident Activity of city planning organization

##### 1) Establishment of Resident group

Many of resident who participated in the workshop thought that "This is not resident's voice, we have to collect opinions of people more." "We want the great number of people to have the interest more of the show of the town that we live in".

While the local government was trying to design the river image of the future, there started a new movement in the town. Japanese Cabinet Office started a "Social experiment for the regional community reproduction by the university, the resident, the shopping street, and the civic group", and some people gathered

##### PROSPECTUS

We aim to Tawaramachi area that everyone thinks to be "I feel good to live here, want to keep living for a long time, and want to bring up a child here, wanting the living" according to the person one who live in this town or gather readily participate, get the bottom of neighborhood. We aim our town to become the one including everyone's desire in cooperation with the government.

We talk about to meet difficulties or fear and search for the solution method, separate happiness all each other to lead a full life every day.

##### OUTLINE of ORGANIZATION

Inauguration: May, 2005

Member: About 80 people(regular member, student member, child member, and supporting member)

Fee: Unit 1000 yen(regular member and supporting member)

in Tawaramachi and applied for this program. Residents, shopkeeper, university professor and others gathered and promoted some events such as “Christmas tree adopting project”, “candle light up of a street”, “cooking lesson for better life, taught by a chef of Japanese restaurant in the town” and so on. The objectives of these activities were to do something new for the town, and find out some steering members for the new movement of the town. At the end of these events, members held a “Tawaramachi Design Forum” in May 2005. All members are composed of the local populace, and the consultant and the specialist of the city planning system of the university are participating as adviser. It is an arbitrary group that differs quite from the town association etc.

## 2) Activities of Tawaramachi Design Forum

The main activities the members of this new association started are below.

Below are what “Flower green committee” did.

- a) Each resident decorate their front door by plant, the street become beautiful.
- b) They want people to be interested in spectacle of town according to know the identification to see the beautiful street.

“Road and River committee” hold workshop by themselves. The purpose is that the resident to say their opinion to their own town according to participate the design workshop.

By participation both “Flower green committee” and “Road and River committee”, resident can understand the relationship between “familiar approach that they can do by themselves” and “Big Change without permission in the town”. In the long run, the resident came to be interested in city planning.

## 3) Designing of River

The member of Tawaramach Design Forum have to advance the project at a considerable speed to express our opinions to actual river works to be going to approach in several years. The core member held the preparation meeting on the night of the weekday after each work had ended, and planned the workshops. They discussed “how to gather more participants” “how to get enough opinions from participants” until midnight at time. I think that their zeal is wonderful. Table 2 shows the content of workshops

Table 2 THE CONTENT OF THE WORKSHOP BY CITIZEN

matter	purpose	content	participan
Study meeting of river and town 1	Start ceremony	They decided to advance workshop to the proposal by the resident subject as a result of the workshop of the prefecture hosted.	60
Study meeting of river and town 2	Walk while observing the vegetation of Sokobami-river	They went down to the side of the river by the guide of the specialist of the plant, and examined what kind of plant are while strolling, measured with a string, and actually felt how many width of a rivers extended. Moreover, they studied some advanced case etc.	31
Study meeting of river and town 3	Make treasure map	They divided into three groups, and walked in the riverside, and written in map that wanted to be left after the river had been repaired.	35
Study meeting of river and town 4	Think about the usage of the river space, and image the design	They imaged concretely and share "what kind of person, when,how" use the riverside, for instance, it need outdoor lamp to walking, according to the result until last time.	28
Study meeting of river and town 5	Let's materialize the river space design.	They discussed in group the detailed concrete idea from the result to the 4th times to the point of the improvement of the river space image.	25

##### 5. Discussion with local government

The result of this series of workshop was assumed to be "Proposal to the river and town", the publication to the local populace was held in March 2006, and after that it submitted to prefecture and city government. After that the prefecture worker made an actual plan drawing in consideration of the proposal with their plan previous. And Prefecture announced the new actual plan. However there are some members who have the impression that their opinions were not picked up well in Tawaramachi design Forum because the actual plan has no information about surface of the bridge and kind of plant that they are particular. So it keeps discussing with prefecture and city and Tawaramachi Design Forum now about once three months.

## 6. Evaluating designing of the river by Tawaramachi Design Forum

### 1) Successful points

A good point in the case with the Tawaramachi Design Meeting is the following three points.

- a) Residents were able to be interested in the spectacle by having done the activity decorating with the plant at the door in the front of their houses.
- b) Residents were able to sit at the same table with prefecture and the city.
- c) It has been decided that the shore protection of this district is covered with the soil.

Designing river and the town takes very long time, but decorating front of each house does not take time to see results. In this way, more people especially ladies find easy to take part in community designing. This activity draws attention of people who used to think that the designing of river is too difficult to discuss for residents. This collected more people to designing workshop held by residents. Big change that the river bank shall be made by soil not by concrete, is brought by residents' effort to bring more people to the workshop for proposing their original plan.

### 2) Issues for the future

Oppositely, the reflection point is the following two points.

- a) Resident did not succeed though they challenged the design.  
For instance, it was the detail of the design of not only the shore protection but also the bridge, the tile, and the plant that the resident expected.
- b) The number of participants has not increased so much.

It is possible to think about the following points as a cause where the above issue is generated.

- a) The point to think to be important is different.  
The important point for the resident was a superficial design against for the prefecture is securing a basic role of the river like strength etc.  
The location of the plan of river and the bridge is different. The resident thinks, "We want government to achieve it because we did our best" while the city thinks that they should think about the design of the bridge in the design of the entire town.
- b) The time that had been spent in design was too short.  
They have designed so that the specialist in the bridge etc. should not join the discussion.
- c) There was no coordinator from whom the discussion was brought well.

From the above-mentioned it was understood that the print match of the opinion with the government was necessary when the citizens participated in the design of a big,

public space like the river. Moreover, resident's expertise and the lead ability should be educated.

### 3) Findings

However, the resident participates easily to decorate the flower and green at the door ahead though it is a seemingly insignificant change. It is a spectacle in the town that the resident can change, and then the number of those who have the concern has increased steadily in not interested resident in the river improvement. The accumulation of such a small approach might be helped to change the future in the river.

Designing river is somehow a very difficult matter. Residents need to be supported in technical knowledge. We now have various experiences for designing buildings or small parks but rivers seem to be a very different in necessary knowledge. It consists of stream of water, bank, and bridges including maintenance roads along the river. We may need several professionals to support. We need to bring more professionals to be able to support these matters.

At the same time, it is very important to be able to coordinate different section of the public authority regarding river construction and residents. Tawaramachi Design Forum tried to set the meeting of various different sector can gather, but coordinating is very difficult for ordinary citizen to conduct. It may function better if there is a certain authority or professional to be able to coordinate different sector to discuss.

Anyway, designing a river is a big challenge for ordinary residents and they may not have a second chance to do it. There certainly will be a change if people can discuss, and these activities brought residents to think more about the town.



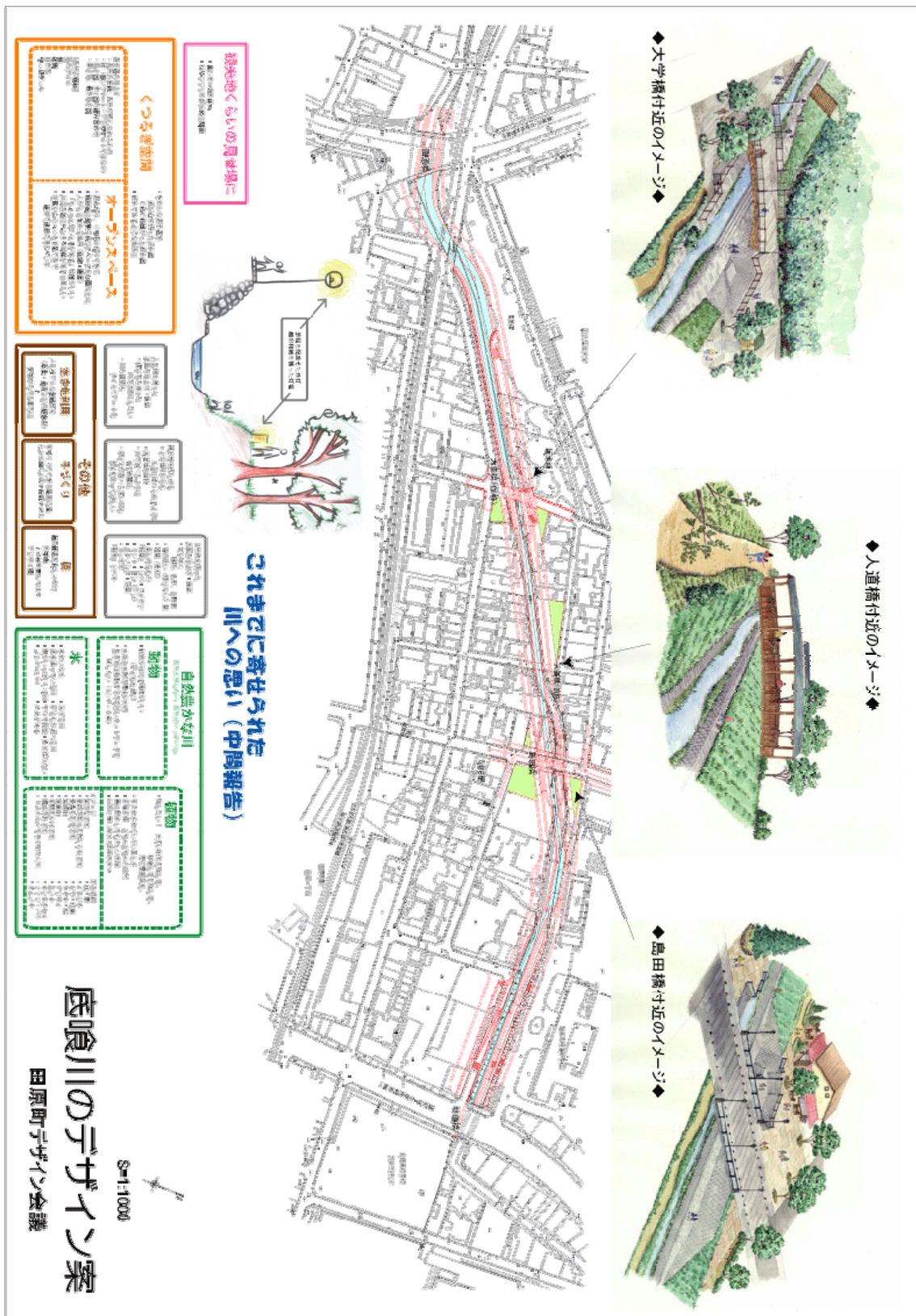


Fig 6 Image of new Sokobami-river: RESULT OF THE WORKSHOP BY CITIZEN