LORC は2015年１月６日、海外研究員 Rovert Beauregard 氏を招聘し、アメリカ諸都市の大都市化と人口減少に関する研究会を開催した。Rovert 氏の報告では、アメリカ諸都市の中心部から郊外に人口が移動し、その結果、都市の中心部の人口が減少している問題について、背景を整理し、解決策を提示した。

LORC 活動報告①

Metropolitanization and the Shrinkage of U. S. Cities[1)]

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Although "shrinking cities" are found in a number of countries, and many of these shrinking cities seem similar —— for example, in being former manufacturing centers —— the causes and consequences of shrinkage vary from one country to the next. For the United States, most distinctive is mass suburbanization. In the decades after World War II and continuing to this day, the urbanization process in the United States has been dominated by the de-concentration not the concentration of the population in large cities. Low-density metropolitanization, in fact, was the initial trigger for population and job loss that, for many cities, has continued to this day. A similar claim cannot be made about the cities of the former East Germany or Poland. Neither is it the case for Japan. Consequently, while many of the country's older cities have lost population or are growing quite slowly, metropolitan areas, for the most part, continue to expand in both population and land area.

Urban Population Change

The United States is a growing country and has been doing so since its founding in the late 18th century. Between 1950 and 2013, the resident population more than doubled and is now at 320 million people. According to the U. S. Census, by 1920 more than half of the country's population resided in urban areas; that is, communities of over 2,500 people. And, by 1950 the majority of the population was living either in central cities or near-by in the suburbs. In fact, if one equates the urban population to the population in metropolitan areas, by 2010 it was 84% of the country's total residents.

Within the overall population growth, then, the United States in the 20th century experienced a shift of population from central cities to the peripheries — the suburbs — of metropolitan areas. The suburbs grew rapidly and the central city population stagnated. The percentage of the population living in central cities peaked in 1950 and has declined ever since. Beginning in the late 1950s, many large cities — two-thirds between 1970 and 1980 — lost residents and ten of them cast off residents for each decade from 1950 to 2000. This shrinkage, moreover, has not been a condition just of the largest cities. Whether small cities of between 50,000 and 100,000 people, medium-size cities between one-half million and one million, or cities over 1 million people, since the 1950s between one-third and two-thirds have shrunk in one of these decades.

These shrinking cities are not spread across the country but rather located primarily in the northeast and the upper Midwest regions. This is to be expected.

The country essentially grew from east to west and the major manufacturing centers were concentrated in these regions until just after World War II. These were the older cities and more vulnerable to obsolescence. Moreover, because almost all of them were manufacturing cities and many of them had ports dependent on manufacturing activity, they were also vulnerable to the decentralization and out-sourcing of goods-production that occurred in the latter decades of the century.

While these once-central cities were shedding residents, the suburbs were growing. In fact, they were growing so rapidly that hardly any metropolitan areas lost population, even when their central cities were shrinking. Compared to the one-third to two-third range for cities, an average of 8% of metropolitan areas lost population in any decade prior to 1970. After 1970, the percentage rose only to 9.4%. In addition, these population losses have been relatively small — usually less than 7% — whereas central city population losses ranged as high as 50 to 60 percent. Of further note is that unlike central city population declines, metropolitan loss rarely persists. The shrinking metropolitan areas, however, are in the same regions as the shrinking cities — the northeast and upper Midwest.

What is most important in this story, then, is that metropolitan population loss is mainly due to central city decline, not to the decline of the suburbs. Shrinkage is a city not a suburban phenomenon. The suburban periphery continues to be prosperous and more and more people continue to live there. Only one-half of the metropolitan areas that lost population also experienced suburban decline. Yet the metropolitan areas that had suburban population losses also had central city population losses.

In effect, and as regards metropolitanization, what we see in the United States is that metropolitan areas are doing comparatively well. Metropolitan shrinkage is an anomaly and it is mainly driven by central city decline. Moreover, in many instances where the central cities themselves have floundered and lost residents, suburban growth has compensated for these losses and the metropolitan areas have grown. This is why the United States should be considered a suburban and not an urban nation.

Metropolitanization

The effect of the metropolis on shrinking cities is more than simply demographic ; that is, involving where people live. A number of other conditions reinforce the in fluence of the metropolis. Underlying them are two critical qualities of the country's urbanization : a cultural inclination to localism and a commitment to unfettered capital mobility.

Americans strongly value local forms of government and prefer them over provincial and national governmental arrangements. Unlike countries like Finland, Sweden or France, Americans have shied away from a strong national (and welfare) state and, particularly in today's political climate, are skeptical of the government's ability to deliver public services. As a result, governance arrangements, for the most part, favor local governments. This has a number of implications.

First, localism has contributed to legal and political barriers that block the formation of metropolitan governments that might oversee the whole urban region and thus be able to take resources from prosperous places and use them to address the problems of shrinking cities.

Second, localism has contributed to legal

constraints on the ability of city governments to capture growth on their peripheries and thus remain prosperous. For the most part, cities are unable to annex adjacent territory. Such laws contain and constraint the central cities while protecting suburban municipalities from encroachment.

Third, localism is behind the reluctance of municipal governments to engage in tax-base sharing, a policy that would enable shrinking cities to better address their problems. Rather, they are encouraged to protect their tax bases and hoard their tax revenues. This has the effect of depriving shrinking central cities of resources.

Fourth, housing markets in the United States are local with people inclined to protect their neighborhoods from unwanted groups. In U. S. metropolitan areas, this form of localism contributes a great deal to the racial residential segregation that confines racial minorities to the central cities or only to certain suburbs.

Fifth, public education is primarily a local matter. Americans are big supporters of community- and neighborhood-based schools and averse to intervention by the state or federal government. Elementary and high schools are meant to be local and are mainly funded by local tax revenues. The consequence is that public schools in shrinking cities, cities with weak tax bases, tend to be poor schools with high drop-out rates and students who perform poorly on standardized tests. This exacerbates the problems of shrinking cities.

All of these factors are associated with, reinforce, or are reinforced by metropolitanization. This suggests that a form of metropolitan governance that would integrate housing and labor markets and allow for tax-base sharing and metropolitan-wide service provision would contribute to reversing the prospects of shrinking cities.

Along with localism, shrinking cities are also harmed by a relatively unrestricted, geographical mobility of capital. The country's prevailing ideology privileges the prerogatives of capital. That capital should be able to abandon areas where profits are lower than they could be elsewhere is unchallenged. As a result, municipal and state governments are forced to compete to attract capital investment; they extend numerous subsidies to capital even when they make no sense. These ideological predispositions, when combined with the large size of the country and its many cities and metropolitan areas, mean that capital gravitates to growing areas and leaves behind those that are faltering.

The solutions to the problem of shrinking cities, then, only partially rest on metropolitanization. Changing the laws to enable novel forms of metropolitan governance, tax-base sharing, annexation, and educational funding would help. However, as long as the country's extant form of fiscal federalism remains intact, localism prevails, and capital mobility is relatively unregulated, shrinking cities will persist.

REFERENCES

1) Synopsis of talk given January 6, 2015 at Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan.