

“Urban Redevelopment in Osaka: The More Gentrified, the Less Crafted?”

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I. Introduction

Until now I have approached to my partially ethnographic case study of the change of a neighborhood in southern Osaka after the collapse of the economic bubble based on the concepts of post-industrial society, neoliberal urbanism, and gentrification. Nevertheless, none of these concepts suffice to explain what I have found in Nishi Ward, Horie¹ as my field. As I continue to do interviews with the inhabitants of Horie, including residents, shop-owners, and employees, I have started to think area's change in terms of a replacement of a "craftsmanship" culture by a more homogenized consumer culture. The furniture shops that had once given the area its identity decreased to about one-third², while the number of other service businesses, and particularly apparel shops, increased so substantially as to change Horie's image to a fashionable town of youth. In this sense, the change in the material culture i.e. area businesses based on their products, is a good place to look at to understand to some extent the urban change after the bubble economy.

In this paper, I will represent how area businesses related to wood have experienced and are interpreting this neighborhood change with a focus on the constraints upon family businesses and craftsmanship culture by analyzing the interviews that I made with eleven shops in Horie in a wood-related business in August-September, 2014 and March, 2015 (See Appendix, A).

II. Conceptual Framework

Craft is defined as, "skill and experience, especially in relation to

making objects; a job or activity that needs skill and experience, or something produced using skill and experience”³. Less technically, craftsmanship refers to “an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake” (Sennett, p. 9). In the binary of art vs. craft, although both involve the creation of aesthetic objects, art does it in an “unusual” way that leads to some “emotional response”, whereas “functionality” matters for craft⁴. Furthermore, they separate in terms of agency, time, and autonomy (Sennett, p. 73). On the other hand, a good is defined as “something manufactured or produced for sale”⁵.

Sennett (2008) praised craftsmanship and developing an understanding of it as a means to “achieve a more humane material life” (p. 8) and argued that the craftsman, who is “proud of his work (...), is the most dignified person we can become” (p. 296). On the other hand, Zukin (2004) looked into consumption as the realm of dreaming of “a perfect society... and about a perfect self” (p. 10) in our search for “value that we no longer get from religion, work or politics” (p. 8). What makes craftsmanship or shopping central to understanding oneself and thus, providing the consciousness as a catalyst for an enhanced living? Both works emphasize the significance of material culture in providing meaning to the human life, but from different perspectives by emphasizing production or consumption.

“It’s certainly possible to get by in life without dedication” (Sennett, p. 20), and yet, there are emotionally rewarding qualities to craftsmanship as becoming “engaged in the work in and for itself” (Ibid, p. 27). Against the common perception that craftsmanship corresponds to

repetitive and mindless work, Sennett was writing about “thinking like a craftsman” (p. 44), which was a “relational thinking” (p. 51) based on embodied or tacit knowledge; this way of thinking allowed for a “domain shift” (p. 127) and “intuitive leaps” (p. 209) that occurred by recognizing possibilities from limits. The craftsman’s workshop, which also used to be his home in the past, provided a social space, where that tacit knowledge was created collectively, not without a “conflict between autonomy and authority” (p. 80), and through “the thousand little everyday moves that add up in sum to a practice” (p. 77). The variations, flows, irregularities of handwork as indicators of “character” (p. 104, 134), as opposed to the “industrialized simulacrum” (p. 144), were regarded as part of this knowledge creation by teaching modesty based on an awareness of one’s limits or imperfection. However, such awareness didn’t diminish from the pleasures of craftsmanship as “a quiet, steady satisfaction in material things well composed, well contrived” (p. 94) likened to marital sex and not an affair by Diderot. Slowness of craft time for skills to evolve also added to these pleasures.

The wisdom of embodied practice reflected into the craft as a “repertoire of learned gestures” (Sennett, p. 178) by hand in the form of minimum force or lack of aggression similar to the ethics of letting go in Buddhism. Craftsman gained this “tranquil spirit” (p. 168) as he became committed to his ritualized duty by the rhythm of routine. Therefore, craftsmanship was more about self-control with ease than an uncivilized spontaneity. This attitude also embraced resistance and ambiguity in work, space or human relationships during the creation process as

opportunities for learning to improvise and adaptation, because “working with resistance is the key to survival” (p. 226). For Sennett, craftsmanship provided people with a meaning in their life through a sense of vocation, something that added up as our lives, and everyone was capable of becoming a craftsman regardless of the socially-produced inequalities.

Zukin (2004) turned her attention to the market in its various forms throughout history, and claimed that “you will only understand what the public has become if you examine the branded stores, boutiques, discount chains, and websites where we shop” (p. 10). It’s because the new social space and habits of shopping reflect social change. For instance, according to the author, most of the street-level revitalization since the 1980s could be read as an individualization of products and stores by name in parallel to standardization by type. Unlike the impersonality of craftsmanship, shopping is “about the self”, even though she considered it also as a “public realm” (p. 33) that provided “freedom from work and politics, a form of democracy open to all, and an exercise of skill to get the cheapest and the best” (p. 34). Instead of the civilization that died with department stores of the past, people resort to designer’s names “in the chaotic world of new products and lifestyles” (Zukin, p. 142), where “markets, not communities, define us” (p. 266). Shopping was thus, suggested as a means to the ideals of pleasure, a sharpened sense of value, and a public space.

While shopping is the common essence of humanity for Zukin, it is the ability to work for Sennett, and likewise, equality lies in consumerism or

labor as a means of governing ourselves and connecting to others respectively. Hence, the authors' vision of human and social ideals separates inevitably. I think that a comparison of these two viewpoints of social change can enlighten us in a search for the ideal urban change or ideal city. For evaluating a case of urban redevelopment, we can start by asking: Which source of commonality and equality was promoted by a particular urban change? With such an understanding, it might be possible to identify the problems and develop criticism for the better.

III. Background of Area Businesses

A. Long-established Family Businesses

The three interviewees, who were born into families that have been doing furniture business for long in Horie, assumed their work identity so strongly that it also became their personal identity. The female furniture shop-owner on Tachibana Street, which used to be a shopping street of furniture and Buddhist altar shops until 2000s, expressed her work by saying that "I have been doing a furniture store (business) since I was born" and "because I belong to this household, not as a bride, but I was born here as a furniture store, and I am a furniture store (owner)". She doesn't make, but just sells furniture, unlike the carpenter, who owns a wooden-toy shop at a place apart from the shopping street. Both the female furniture shop-owner and the carpenter are continuing with their family businesses at the same, single location that date back to their grandparents' era before the Second World War, when Horie as most of Osaka was burnt⁶. Moreover, both don't have any successors as the fourth

generation to hand in their work. Therefore, their family businesses will have to end after themselves. The female furniture shop-owner seemed to be troubled more with the thought of this "unfortunate" matter that "can't be helped", although she also said in local dialect humorously: "You can't do your business afterlife, can you?". For her, the right way to put it was, "not want to think about it"; she adopted a wise manner of "leaving to chance" ('nariyukimakase') or to the course of events. The same situation applies to the fanlight craftsman, who has been continuing his father's work for about sixty years, but whose son chose another profession.

The third interviewee, who was again born into a family that owns furniture stores in Horie, belongs to the second generation of his family, and hence, is relatively young. It is a family business that has been continuing for almost hundred years at the same place. As reflected in the shop's name, it is a furniture shop, which originally specialized in closets as an indispensable part of "marriage furniture" ('konrei kagu'), but then diversified its products at some point, after growing into three neighboring shops depending on the market circumstances at the time. My interviewee is the son of the youngest of three brothers, who collectively own the business, and responsible for one of the shops, whose land was bought fifteen years ago from a family⁷ with his return to Osaka after gaining some experience at a furniture maker in Chiba Prefecture. 8 employees including 4 from the family are currently working at 3 shops that sell marriage furniture, beds, shelves and tables made of "natural materials". Perhaps because 4 people from the family are occupied with

the business at the moment, and my interviewee is still 40 years old, he didn't mention about any future business closure or the matter of succession.

B. Personal Career Trajectories

Considering the work trajectories of the other interviewees, who were not born into a family business, there is the curious point that almost all had some kind of residential or commercial connection to Horie earlier. Except for the newly graduate of a designer's school that immediately started to work for a Hiroshima-based, young furniture maker's (owning 7 shops in Kansai and Kanto regions) recently opened Horie shop (having 6 employees including the store manager), all the interviewees had other previous work experiences. One of the entrepreneurs worked in advertising as a university student and then, in 1987 converted his storehouse in Horie to a furniture shop, which deals Scandinavian furniture brands. He also manages an accessory shop at Daimaru department store in Kobe⁸ and a furniture wholesaling company in Osaka, hence, a total workforce of fifty people (shops with 3 personnel each). The other entrepreneur firstly, had had an apparel shop again in Horie, before opening his interior shop (having 3 employees including himself), which also has 2 branches in Tokyo. Therefore, he has been doing business in Horie for about thirteen years, only having shifted from apparel as his hobby to interior design as his profession. Following somehow a similar path with the entrepreneur, female accessory shop-owner had worked at apparel design and pattern-making in Horie for about fifteen years, before she opened her first accessory shop at a

commercial facility in the nearby commercial area of Shinsaibashi⁹. She lived in Horie at that time. Then, in 2000, she moved her business to a street-level shop in Kita Horie, and at the same time, her residence to the neighboring Naniwa Ward. She is working alone aside from getting help from 2 part-time employees.

The opposite trajectory of shifting from professional employment to hobby as work or pastime, we observe at the owner of the wooden-toy shop, located close to Yotsubashi-suji, an arterial road on the North-South axis¹⁰. He opened his shop about twenty years ago after retiring from his work as a salary man at a company located in Horie as well, because he "likes such things (i.e. making wooden things) himself" and had a "basic thing (or feeling) that wood is very warm (thing)". If "volunteer would be an overstatement, it is a thing (motivation) like wanting to touch wooden things even for a little". He is working alone at the moment.

Finally, from the two, male salespeople, the elderly one, who was born and raised in Horie, and then moved out, diverted to selling furniture instead of making furniture, once he had realized that he "likes talking with people more". He has been in the furniture sector for fifty years, and selling furniture for a well-established furniture dealer in Horie with one big shop (having 3 employees from family and 7 from outside) for the last thirty years. The younger salesperson has been working at another well-known furniture store of Tachibana Street for 8 years since he left his salary-man job at a company in Osaka. The furniture store, where he is working now, has 3 more stores, but only Horie is a street-level shop (having about fifteen employees including owners vs. fifteen in the other

shops).

IV. Area and Business Downturns: Factors and Effects

The furniture shops in Horie all experienced some kind of change in their businesses to adapt to and survive in the changing business environment after the end of the golden years in wood-related businesses between the end of the war and the collapse of the economic bubble in the early 1990s^{1 1} (See Appendix, B). The shops, which changed the least, were those that owned their own land, building, storehouse, and truck, and therefore, were not so much affected by market volatility for covering their overhead costs such as the female furniture shop-owner on Tachibana Street. Nonetheless, even for her business, "sales decreased enormously, because of not being able to sell marriage furniture" as her main product before, along with the collapse of "one nice Japanese culture" of betrothal gifts. According to this marriage tradition, the bride would go to the groom's house with trucks, loaded with marriage furniture and ornamented with white and red. Nowadays, the younger generations increasingly buy furniture of their own taste without listening to their parents' advice to buy at a certain store, and thus, diminish the repeat business that such old furniture stores highly depended on. Moreover, the recent mansion lifestyle, replacing the single-family houses, neither necessitates nor provides the area for traditional, solid furniture. Furthermore, big earthquakes in Kansai area like Kobe earthquake seem to have decreased the demand for large closets, but, increased the demand for bed. The second example to the not-so-much-changed

furniture store is, where the older salesperson originally from Horie, is working. In this case, high sales volumes with cheap prices made possible by low overhead costs seem to be the key to business continuity. The salesperson emphasized their distinction as selling real furniture and answering special requests because of owning the technique unlike the large, suburban stores that sell ready-to-assemble furniture or "use and throw-away furniture", which is for him, "accessory" rather than furniture. He also mentioned about the effect of earthquakes on furniture demand and how the form of furniture like closets changed accordingly.



Figure 1 Japanese Marriage Furniture Tradition of the Past (Source: Interviewee)

The furniture store originally specialized in closets or chests as a critical element of marriage furniture diversified the products of its three stores in the 2000s as classical furniture, bed, and modern tables and

shelves crafted with natural materials to cope with the change in demand. The manager of the most recent shop from the second generation of the family articulated the more specific reasons that necessitated such a business change as follows: 1) Customers used to visit three stores with similar products only to buy from one of them -duplication 2) People were deterred by the word "closet" in the main shop's name, if they didn't actually seek for a closet -beside the main shop's expensive display ('shikii ga takai') 3) Traditional furniture didn't appeal to younger segments of the market. In other words, there was a generation gap in people's furniture taste that he explained as:

Mother and father like "X" closet shop, but the daughter finds it old, unnecessary, out of date ('furukusai'), even only by hearing the name of "closet shop", yes. Ah, that feeling, I understand very well, too, yes. Even if so, many parents still do their best to bring along. However, if there are only products that the daughter says "no need, no need", we can't proceed after all.

Only diversifying the products was not enough remedy, as the customers continued to ask for higher quality for cheaper price, and furniture makers, who couldn't make profits in such circumstances, were rapidly closing down, downsizing, and asking for higher margins from the retailer for special customer demands. The closet shop's solution was to agree with small family businesses to make such special furniture not so expensively in exchange for constant orders. Moreover, the furniture shop-owner would make small adjustments himself, without asking it

from the maker. Despite such business changes, this furniture shop continued to gain about seventy percent of its sales from repeat business without any advertising or online sales, but only by keeping their relationships with the frequenters, for example, through season's greetings cards. These relationships also served as their safety nets against market changes, similar to the female furniture shop-owner.

Another, ninety years-old furniture shop on Tachibana Street was renewed in 2012 at an environment of decreasing sales. The young, male salesperson, who has been working there for 8 years, explained the decrease in sales with several factors. One factor was the decrease in the number of furniture shops on Tachibana Street. For that matter, he argued that *"if we can't make people convinced that there are many furniture shops there (in Horie), they don't come, I think. Assuming that they do, if it finishes with even less than 10 shops, it is like, not enough."* This creates kind of a barrier especially for the furniture shops beyond Naniwa-suji, a wide road on the North-South axis that separates the lively 1st district of Horie, close to the subway, from the rest of Horie towards the West. A second factor was the decrease in demand for furniture, as people became unable to afford furniture. The third factor was the appearance of large home fashion stores that sold a total product, including furniture, accessory, utensils, and home textile at a single place for cheaper than the dispersed shops of Horie. As a fourth and related factor, people preferred to go to department stores at suburbs or the city center, where they could meet their various needs from leisure and recreation to shopping. Under these circumstances, the ninety-years old

furniture shop "had to become a bit fashionable", and started to display some accessories, in addition to "the main (item of) furniture, that's to say, things that are necessary for life", only to enhance the shop's atmosphere, since they're "furniture shop for ninety years, not an accessory shop". And yet, this cosmetic change increased their business partners for about twenty more producers.

V. Horie's Revitalization: Focusing on Area Businesses

A. Process

1. Product and Service Changes over Generations

All interviewees, except for the accessory shop-owner, who sells and exhibits goods made by artists in her gallery at the second-floor, deal with wood. The carpenter took over his work from his father, who had taken it over from his own father, too. His grandfather used to make wooden boxes for stores that sold bowls and vases. The carpenter had been exposed to the business since childhood in the family house and workshop that accommodated the family and four other craftsmen. Their products and services evolved together with changes in the society and demand from: wooden boxes for bowls to large oblong chest for Japanese-style bedding ('Nagamochi') and finally, to wooden toys, store display, plus antique furniture renovation. The previous products correspond to the traditional Japanese lifestyle with tea bowls and more spacious, single-family houses with Japanese-style rooms, where people used to sleep on Japanese-style bedding on 'tatami' mat. Therefore, people had to put the bedding in a chest during the day. The carpenter had made

these chests with his father for the furniture shops on Tachibana Street, and his mother had painted on them by hand, customer's family crest. After the demand for such chests had decreased along with other marriage furniture, and Horie had developed towards a commerce of other products, and mainly, apparel, the carpenter, similar to some other former-furniture shop-owners, at first, rented his large shop for a while to various tenants, including: a foreign apparel brand, an accessory maker, and finally, as stage for a late-evening teen comedy-drama for the regional TV company, before using it himself again. During the rental period, he had his wooden toy business at his small garage next to his shop.

Likewise, product of the fanlight craftsman changed in time from fanlight to wooden, engraved signboards for shops, as he could hardly sell one or two fanlights a year any more, that is "not enough to eat", because of the wider change in Japanese architecture.

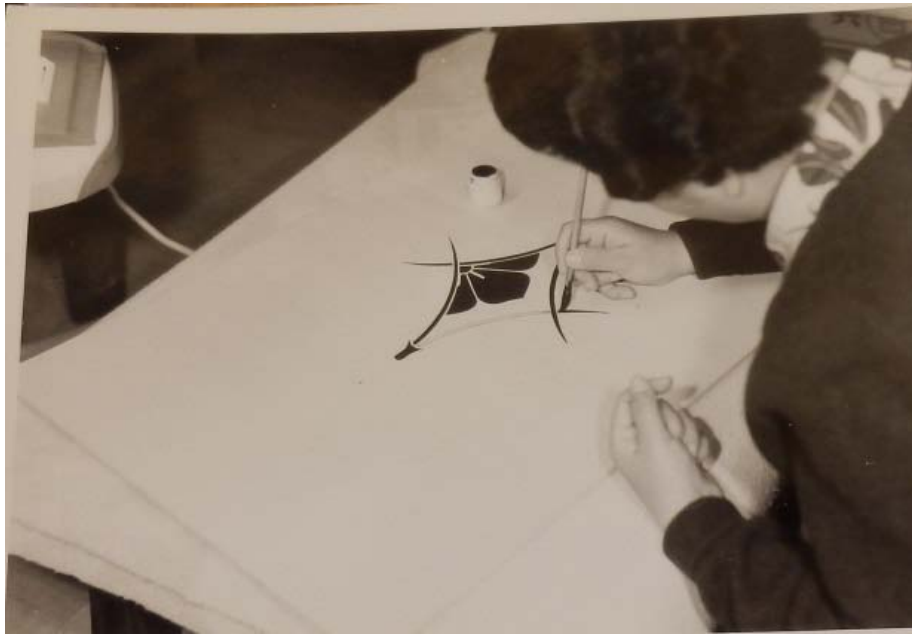


Figure 2 Hand Painting of Design for a Chest (Source: Interviewee)

2. Business Renewals

For furniture shops, which have been established during the last thirty years, and present themselves as "interior shop" more than "furniture shop", change was not so much drastic as in the form of minor renewals. Two entrepreneurs positioned themselves in relation to designer furniture market, even though one of them sells reproductions of designer furniture without trademark, called "generic furniture", besides "original furniture". Such positioning didn't seem to be enough to cover his large, street-level store's rent on Tachibana Street in Horie's 1st district, however old his store might be, with a leaky roof. His smaller branches in Tokyo seem to be gaining better, because of: orders by phone via the Internet and many rich people living in Tokyo (whereas Osaka people asking for cheaper all the time). He didn't have much repeat business (about ten percent). For his target of increasing sales, he

changed the shop's floor into flooring to make it "easier to enter" for the customers, and dissolved individual sales quotas to work more as a team. The other entrepreneur has had his interior shop in Horie's 3rd district for longer, and changed from selling fashionable and expensive furniture for hotels and restaurants during the economic bubble to more affordable, Japanese and Scandinavian furniture for "everyone". Despite his disadvantageous location in Horie, his business seems to be going well, also considering his furniture wholesaling company and accessory shop at a department store in Kobe. The third and most recent interior shop among my interviews was a young company from Hiroshima, which specialized in sofa, and targeted at young families with its own, affordable products from China. For them, the issue in the short-term was not so much change as growth and developing publicity through online sales -therefore, it's difficult even to find their postal address in the Internet.

B. Outcomes

1. Positive Effects

When inquired about Tachibana Street's and Horie's revitalization, from old furniture shops to new interior and other shops, most of the interviewees acknowledged that there was an increase in visitor density, thanks to the revitalization since the 1990s. For example, the young, male salesperson of the recently renewed furniture store, remarked:

I think that there is not any bad effect, yes. Good effect, I think that customers, people started to gather together after all, yes. However,

because people are going away now again, I think that we have to do such a thing once more. (...) But, it's difficult to do it only by this shop; I find it difficult, unless we do it altogether.

The female accessory shop-owner pointed out the booms and busts of Horie, which "somehow changes too much. But, even if (some brands) leave, it's surprising that other large stores come next. (...) I suppose, it is still charming from the viewpoint of Tokyo." Therefore, the ongoing entry of large stores such as *Biotop* (in the place of Shimizu furniture and A.P.C. respectively) adds to her optimism about the area's future. Another positive comment about Horie's revitalization came from one of the entrepreneurs, who has been doing business in the area since the late 1980s. He commented that "It feels like doing it (business) and existing somehow thanks to that revitalization of Horie" through which "Horie became Osaka's one of the already decided areas of youth". Yet, he also underlined a difference in benefits from revitalization based on a shop's location on Tachibana Street. His shop being closest to the West didn't have so much increase in sales unlike some shops closer to Yotsubashi-suji in the 1st district that also contained a particular furniture shop as the most successful example. This difference that caused "the good effect not coming to here (2nd and 3rd districts) at present, even if we do events together" in the words of the young, male salesperson, was tackled by separate revitalization efforts for the West of the carpenter with three neighboring shops since six years ago. This small group of shop-owners on the West, supported by their district's neighborhood association,

businesses, and finally, various offices of the city administration, has started to make some town-making activities, including illumination, map-making, sumo convention for the children, and a marathon event. Even though the carpenter remarked modestly, "When I say events, we can't make big things though", their reference to the area's cultural history at their events, and accomplishment of bottom-up change at their neighborhood through "direct consultation" with public administration, made possible by "doing this kind of (community) role", are remarkable.

2. People and Mansions Increased, Furniture Shops Decreased

From the perspective of long-established furniture stores, area's revitalization was neither dismissed as totally negative nor considered as a great step-up on their side. The female furniture shop-owner summarized her feelings about the revitalization as: "To the degree of crowded or so, entertaining, you know (...) but, it is like entertaining, because young people pass". Nevertheless, her shop's style was different from shops for young people, and therefore, "it's hard a little". For her, Horie has been a relatively "refined area" from the past until about twenty years ago -roughly corresponding to the period of area's revitalization; area having a "latitude" ('yoyu') that could be observed in the wide lands, owned. Yet, with "the coming of these young people, the quality decreased, if not coarse (...), unlike Amerikamura^{1 2}". For example, she regretted that crime prevention with cameras has become "natural" ('atarimae') nowadays.

The fanlight craftsman commented frankly that "it was better in the past". Similar to the young, male salesperson of the long-established

furniture shop, the fanlight craftsman problematized the rapid mansionization of the area as part of the reason for vanishing of old shops. He considered mansions as "not living" ('Biru jitai wa nanimo ippachini ikitenai') places that led to empty areas ('machi ga karappo ni naru'), where people "returned at night, slept, and went out in the morning". For him, with mansions, "only people increase, but it's different from an area's development". In terms of the increase in visitors, although the fanlight craftsman used to get some orders from parents coming to Horie with their daughters to buy marriage furniture before, he didn't see the same interest from "only young couples now". The same applied to the furniture shop, specialized in closets, where the effect was limited to passerby "using its toilet".

The second generation member of the closet shop argued that the evaluation of the effects of revitalization actually depended on one's viewpoint. Even though from the viewpoint of furniture shops, it was no good ('dame'), among the furniture shops, which changed into real estate business, there were "people, who are happy for renting for higher than the profits, which they could not make as furniture shop". Moreover, there was also the good, economic outcome for the area, as it became busy ('kakki ga dete') and crowded with people coming, although it feels like decreasing a little at the moment with Horie's going out-of-date against even newer city places. That's also because "popular shops go to other places"^{1 3} for the more recent entrepreneur.

VI. The Current Situation

A. Good and Bad Points according to the Area Businesses

About development areas for Horie as a whole and future business plans, the newer interior shops, which were not connected to the area so much, whether they participated to the shopping street association as a formality or not, had a more self-enclosed approach. The entrepreneur, who deals reproductions of designer furniture, pointed at the problems of high shop rents, vehicle traffic on Tachibana Street, and few customers on rainy days in Horie -hence, he suggested a portable roof over Tachibana half-jokingly. Therefore, he would like to move to a place with cheaper rent and preferably, a roof. The newly graduate salesperson of the furniture producer from Hiroshima articulated more good points of Horie than bad points, such as: public order, many rich people and families with children, close to the station, easy to live, except for the easy entry and exit of various people that made it hard to distinguish who's who. This shop's future plan was for the moment, limited to increasing its sales for growing, but they would like to participate in area events, if any opportunity arose.

Of the three shops without successors, the wooden toy shop-owner, who is doing this business as a retirement hobby or pastime, refrained from any criticism -except for graffiti- or recommendation for the area by saying that there was everything needed for daily life in Horie -agreed by the fanlight craftsman, who also appraised the whole area's tranquil spirit. For the wooden toy shop-owner, "to say anything more than this is luxury". He wouldn't rent his shop to a stranger to receive income for the same reason: "Moderately, moderately, yes" ('Hodohodo, hodohodo toiu,

un.'). On the other hand, area's convenience -closeness to downtown ('hankagai') - brought about concerns related to a decrease in area's quality for the female furniture shop-owner.

B. Place Matters

1. Selling Accessories and Furniture at a Store vs. in the Internet

The dilemma of selling through a physical store or online was also mentioned by some interviewees, and particularly, the female accessory shop-owner. She expressed her past choice by saying: "At one point, there was a great period for the Internet, when I thought that a shop isn't really necessary though. (...) whether there is any meaning to have a shop." In the end, she decided to keep the shop, although she is still selling her goods on her webpage, too. In this way, she could personally speak to the customers, who could visit her gallery at any time, and join her various handcraft workshops beside English conversation. She considered workshops as an opportunity to meet and communicate with other people, while having fun, and creating one's original item at the end. Her participants were not so much from Horie as far away places. She guessed its reason to be related to getting so accustomed to one's own neighborhood that one gets almost blind to her-his close environment by always taking the same routes. It is a kind of path-dependency. In this sense, the Internet was useful, because people, who were interested in her "unique" goods and workshops, could find her at first, online. On the other hand, when she had set up her business, she had to create her own artists' network not through the Internet, but by directly visiting artists' places.

The more recent interior shops seem to sell online either through their own website or some popular online shopping sites more than the long-established furniture shops. The latter were kind of skeptical about online sales of furniture. The elderly salesperson, who insisted on the difference between furniture and ready-to-assemble furniture strongly, argued that "about buying in the Internet, in case of furniture, there are so many imitations, fake products that many customers want to buy after seeing. (...) They/one can't understand furniture without touching."

2. Other Spatial Binaries Concerning the Area Businesses

In terms of place of business, apart from the distinction of a physical shop vs. virtual shop, some other binaries also emerged during the interviews: a department store shop vs. street-level shop, Kita Horie vs. Minami Horie, and Minami Horie 1st district vs. Minami Horie 2nd and 3rd districts.

In Horie, there are mainly large, street-level shops with expensive rents, compared to (suburban) shopping malls with cheaper rents, but strict sales performance targets. Still, interviewees admitted the attractiveness of central, all in one place, and newly-built department stores in Osaka for people to spend a whole day, without any need to go out. According to the female accessory shop-owner, there was a gap of visitor intensity between northern and southern Osaka that has been influencing the Shinsaibashi area near Horie negatively. Shinsaibashi sagged a little with the closure of Sogo department store^{1 4}, leaving only Daimaru department store behind, against all the more prospering Kita and Abeno wards^{1 5}.

Such a gap reflected on Horie as a division between districts, located on the East vs. West of Naniwa-suji Street, the former with higher visitor density. In the young, male salesperson's words, "people not getting to ('tadoritsuku') there" was a common issue for the furniture shops on Tachibana Street at 2nd and 3rd districts, a fact that didn't change so easily, despite their efforts to cooperate with the shopping street association or other attempts such as increased publicity via webpage, social media, and brochures.

On the other hand, Kita vs. Minami Horie binary was related to the size and cost of stores, and hence, tenants' level of: institutionalization -ranging from famous Tokyo brands to the small shops of individual entrepreneurs from Osaka, and cooperation -ranging from a shared concern for the shopping street's and area's improvement to no connection with the neighbors, as underlined by the female accessory shop-owner.

C. Pricing Strategies: Not for Bargain

A store's pricing strategy derives from its costs and market positioning. Interestingly, those stores, which identified themselves more as an interior shop and promoted their products through brand names, seem to sell more affordably. On the other hand, long-established furniture stores didn't consider price discounts so much. The female furniture shop-owner sells for "a little higher than mid-range", and "not things that a flashy young person comes in, takes in hand a 1000-2000Yen thing, and says, 'hey, this is good, let's buy!' ". She claimed that price reduction didn't have much attraction for the customers either. The fanlight craftsman

distinguished between his price and that of Taiwanese and Chinese products by saying that "It is expensive though, when we (8 members of *Ranma Industrial Cooperative Association?*) make it" and he would rather buy and sell fanlight than make it himself, if he were to make a discount.

A third, long-established furniture store also resisted to "cheap", despite its seasonal sales, also in relation to Horie shops, "having many products that sell for good value" based on factors such as quality and place of production. This shop's young, male salesperson speculated that area's former furniture stores might have closed down, because of "selling too cheaply", too. Another long-established furniture shop, which is continuing at present to sell cheaply, or "the cheapest", sometimes received claims (complaints) about its low prices from outside. According to its elderly salesperson, their prices ranged "from cheap rates to middle-ranking" differently from "the opposite shop that is dealing products of middle to high-ranking" (the closet shop). The second generation member of the closet shop showed the increased cost of materials due to devaluation and an increase in consumption tax as an excuse for not being faithful to his "starting point of putting out good things by pressing down prices as much as possible". Yet, he emphasized the sincerity of that starting point.

Likewise, the carpenter pointed to the rising costs for an increase in the prices of his wooden toys. The carpenter and the wooden-toy shop-owner are both currently selling wooden toys, which they make and buy from wooden toy wholesalers that import from abroad such as the US, Germany, England, and the Czech Republic. Even though they are the only

wooden toy shops in the vicinity, their sales seem to be not so good, firstly because wooden toy is not something "to sell rapidly" or "that is so sellable". The carpenter sells wooden toys mostly for occasions such as a newly born baby gift or children's birthday of mother friends ('mamatomo'). His selling point, which I have also heard several times at his shop, is that unpainted, natural material is safe for small children, even if they put the toy to their mouth, while playing. Both interviewees acknowledged that such a health consciousness has been arising among mothers recently; and yet, according to the wooden toy shop-owner, speech and act come out differently, because "an expensive image is attached to wood after all". It seems to be true based on my impression from the carpenter's shop, where walk-in customers repeatedly mumble "cute" all the time, but leave the shop without buying a single thing.

Once having accompanied a potential buyer in Horie, it is hard to say, whether such a high value strategy is reciprocated by customers (or gets its just rewards), who seem to have already caught the modern disease of bargain.

VII. Suggestions from the Field

A. Filtering Out the Business Entrants

The interviewees made some recommendations regarding the type of shops that they would like to see more in Horie. For furniture shops, this was clearly new furniture shops or "interior related" shops such as carpet or curtain specialists. The young, male salesperson of a long-established furniture shop claimed, "interior shops, furniture shops should be

restored or increase" that would enable them to "help each other" among next door neighbors for various home design products. Otherwise, customers wouldn't bother to come to the area without the confirmation of many furniture shops, existing there.

The elderly salesperson of another furniture store thought the same, and expected that at least 10 such shops should have remained for people to come, but added, "These shops don't exist anymore". For him, part of the problem was the disappearance of "craftsmen, who owned the technique", leaving the field clear for salespeople only. Hence, the furniture shop's vanishing could not be helped. He returned my question on things to develop in Horie with a question: "Is developing beyond this (total) disappearance of furniture shops? (Or) An increase in furniture shops? I don't know, but it is good as it is, since there is nothing that we're in need of."

The entrepreneur, who is also doing furniture wholesale business, praised the enthusiastic residents of Horie, who "love the town of Horie" and somehow regulate businesses through feedback. His problem was the type of shops, which opened on the West of the area, and for him, didn't match well with the area's image, because of their positioning in relation to price. He hoped for "a bit better things (shops) done there" and gave the example of a book, video, and music store chain. The female accessory shop-owner's recommendation for preventing such shops that "somehow have a different image" was a filtering by real estate agents, while agreeing with new tenants for the vacant shops, instead of "having only one's own profits and letting into (the shops)". This would also enable

the provision of a total offer to the area visitors, who could then spend a whole day there without the need of going out. In addition, she argued that if shops cooperated better, they would also last longer. On the other hand, whether "totally different shops" would "last long" was more suspicious for her.

B. Turning the Wind in One's Favor

The second generation member of the closet shop also emphasized the necessity for an increase in furniture shops, even if new. He explained it as a dilemma of intensified rivalry vs. furniture shops having trouble due to a lack of customers, who can't associate Tachibana Street with furniture anymore. He preferred rivalry in the long-run. Despite his wish for an increase in furniture shops, he was against any control mechanism against businesses entering the area by renting shops. He gave examples of such discussions at the shopping street association regarding the entry of unapproved businesses in the past. He disagreed with such a prohibitive approach considering that it is a free market economy, and recommended instead, an inclusive and adaptive approach by saying, "one can't proceed by protesting the change in the surrounding condition, unless one thinks how to relate with (the entrant) and change it (the situation) towards a good direction for oneself." The same, wise approach was reflected to his plan or vision for his business, which was more about "being of service" to customers with special requests by "thinking together and making" than growing. To the extent that his solutions "fit (the demand), it's happy and interesting". He wanted to "enjoy himself", while "being of service".

C. Fostering Horie's Official Face ('Omotemuki') with Community

The female furniture shop-owner, who was concerned about a future deterioration in the Horie's quality, expected area businesses, and especially the new entrants, to follow the rules of the shopping street association (Horie Union and Tachibana Interior Association), because at least "officially" ('omotemuki'), Horie "is not downtown". The carpenter also underlined the importance of collective behavior against individual for the residential community by referring to the "fact that we have to expand the area community more", otherwise "it feels like a close-knit association, which is hard to enter". Enlarging the community beyond the neighborhood association, which is absolutely "an organization of public stance and therefore, refuses to get involved with anything for profit", would also help to improve business in his opinion.

Area in the past	Urban decay in the area	Horie's revitalization	The current situation	Suggestions from the field
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy • Long-established • Family businesses • Production and commerce of Marriage furniture, fanlight, etc. • Image • Refined • Products of high quality and price • Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors • Economic downturn • Decreased purchasing power • Increased product and price competition • Mansionization • Big regional earthquakes • Changing preferences in furniture of post-baby boomers • Effects • Decreased demand for area products • Closure of area businesses with high overhead costs • Closure of furniture suppliers to the area • Increased cost of Japanese products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process • Entry of brand shops • Events for area's promotion • Business renewals • Structural changes • Changes in the marketing mix • New place branding for Horie • Outcomes • Increased visitor density • Diversified area businesses • Decreased traditional businesses • Changed profile of area visitors • Horie brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers lured away by new department stores in other areas • Bargain culture with increased imported products • Increased costs with devaluation and consumption tax-hike • Physical barrier against accessibility • Decreased furniture town identity • Weakened solidarity with less participation and high business turnover • Businesses too diversified to match the area's image • Famous brands that came with revitalization leaving • Petty crime incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing furniture-related businesses • Balancing the residential and commercial growth • Developing strategies to adapt the new businesses • Reinforcing collective action • Enlarging community with participation • Enhancing cooperation among businesses by provision of complementary products • Building on area's culture and a craftsman approach • Aiming at sustainability of area businesses

Figure 3 Horie's Post-Bubble Change from the Perspective of Area Businesses

VIII. Conclusion

We could evaluate the case of Nishi Ward, Horie and the story of revitalization of its shopping street, Tachibana Street in terms of the

arguments that Sennett (2008) and Zukin (2004) made regarding the significance of material culture in providing meaning to human life. In this case, the change in the area since the 1990s along with the wider socio-economic changes in the Japanese society corresponds to a change in the main product of area shops from classical, marriage furniture sets, which used to be brought to the groom's house with ornamented trucks as part of the past marriage tradition, to interior design products, accessories, and apparel.

Although there are some dimensions of change that are specific to the Japanese society, such a story of post-1980s change also contains many hints at a more global, political-economic and socio-cultural transformation. Sennett, for instance, dealt earlier with the work dimension of this change in "an economy based on the principle of 'no long term' "¹⁶ under the title of *The Corrosion of Character* (1998). He studied the influences of the new world of work with its flexibility and short-term focus on the personal character of the workers, who had to recreate themselves more rapidly. Accordingly, the present context is defined by an increasingly unreliable world, where self-identities shift quickly based on the heightened volatilities of countries-nations, work, human relationships, and the related values. The fact that people can't credit the permanence of their work or relationships -religion, work or politics for Zukin (2004)- as their sources of identity, make them turn to other ways such as consumption.

The changes in the material culture, place and personal identities make parts of a mental shift or change in values. The value, which gets

disassociated from the social group or organization including the smallest unit of family, is placed on the individual. To the extent that people become alienated to the ever-changing society, they fall in love with themselves -as in advertising copies that goes as "I love me!"- and indulge themselves with products. Eventually, such a shift in place of value triggers an economic process as a result of which people carry value on themselves in the form of branded products rather than for example, investing in high-quality furniture for their family houses. Or at least, such social investment gets delayed all the time, as people postpone getting married¹⁷.

Consequently, in this individualized, commercialized, and high-risk society that is boxed in a vertical living style, the market for durable furniture shrinks, giving the long-established furniture shops in Horie a hard time. The substitute for durable furniture, which people used to buy once to suffice throughout their lives with repair, of the capitalist economy with a continuous over-accumulation crisis is cheaper, ready-to-assemble furniture and accessories i.e. 'cute stuff', in addition to generic and designer furniture. In other words, people are promoted to believe in the value of a mass-produced, cheap, but low-quality 'cuteness' -embodied on Tachibana Street by a huge store for 'creative' and humorous items that actually equal to 'nothing'- or images and labels rather than the product itself. Hence, the carpenter had to change business from making and selling a large oblong chest -'nagamochi' in Japanese, whose literal translation would be "long-lasting"- to a smaller, more affordable product of wooden toys, however, still more expensive

than plastic toys.

What I found out through these small-scale shop interviews is that for the long-established furniture shops in Horie, it was first, a matter of staying in business or closing down, and for example, renting their places to apparel brands or other businesses. The furniture shops, which decided to stay at that time thus, took a big challenge to adapt to the changing conditions and continue in doing business, reminiscent of Sennett's (2008) "working with resistance" as "the key to survival" (p. 226). The furniture shops, which had once given the area its identity, but were almost discarded with the renewed identity, could somehow adapt to the worsening business conditions through various strategies related to product and business diversification, supply chain, pricing, sales channel, and expanding the target customers. Moreover, the degree of their flexibility and openness to change depended on their needs for profits. The lower fixed costs they had, the more robust they could stand against outside change like the female furniture shop-owner without a successor.

The central finding of this paper is that the options of the furniture shops were not limited to either closing down and renting or shrinking without change, which feels like a slow death. Several other interviewees also referred to having the technique or a craftsman's mentality, but the second generation member of the closet shop provided the best example, when he said that he wanted to "enjoy himself" while "being of service" to his customers with special needs. This approach comes closest to how Sennett (2008) described craftsmanship as the desire to do a job well for its own sake that would provide a quiet, steady satisfaction in the well

composed things. Unlike the satisfactions achieved by mostly rootless boasting of the egoist, narcissist individual consumer of our times or a short-lived affair with inconstant brand shops coming in and going out of an area, we could add.

This doesn't mean that urban change is avoidable or unwelcome; rather, it is a question of what kind of change is at stake. Any urban change that denies an area's historical identity, and tries to duplicate what has worked for elsewhere for the sake of more ground rents for a particular group like real estate agents, is doomed in the long-run just like cheap furniture.



Figure 4 a Fanlight Example

IX. References

Sennett, R. (2008) *The Craftsman*. Penguin Books, England.

Zukin, S. (2004) *Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture*. Routledge, New York.

X. Appendix

A. Personal Backgrounds

Among my 11 interviewees, there are roughly 4 groups of people in terms of their relation to wood and accessories: People born into a family

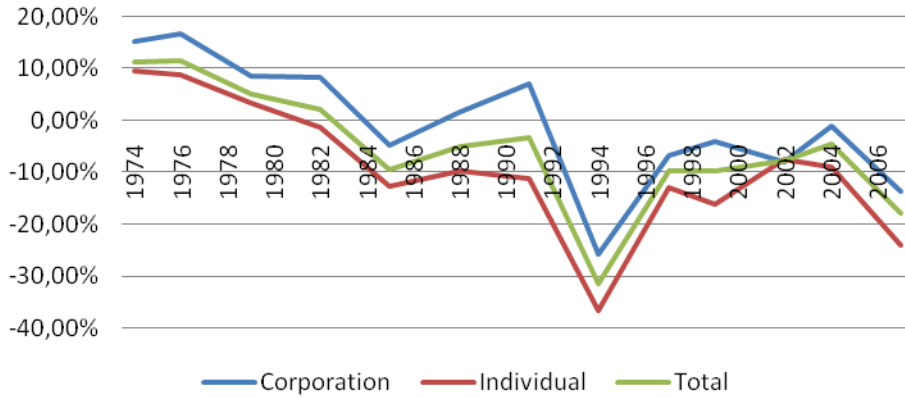
that makes or deals furniture and fanlight (1 female, 3 males); entrepreneurs (2 males); salespeople who have worked for various durations (1 female, 2 males); wooden toy and accessory shop-owners after retiring from other jobs (1 female, 1 male). The profile of the interviewees is provided below.

#	Gender	Age (2015)	Education level	Work	Place of Origin	Place of Residence
1	Female	25	Vocational	Sales	Osaka Pref.	Osaka City
2	Female	61	Vocational	Accessory shop & gallery	Nara Pref.	Osaka City
3	Female	65	College	Furniture	Wakayama Pref.	Osaka City (Horie)
4	Male	34	University	Sales	Hyogo Pref.	Amagasaki City
5	Male	39	Vocational	Interior	Osaka Pref.	Osaka City
6	Male	41	University	Furniture	Osaka Pref.	Osaka City
7	Male	58	University	Carpenter	Osaka Pref. (Horie)	Osaka City (Horie)
8	Male	59	University	Interior & furniture wholesale	Osaka Pref.	Osaka City (Horie) & Kyoto
9	Male	66	Senior high	Sales	Osaka Pref. (Horie)	Yao City
10	Male	78	Unknown	Wooden toy	Osaka Pref.	Osaka City (Horie)
11	Male	79	Junior high	Fanlight & signboard	Yamaguchi Pref.	Osaka City (Horie)

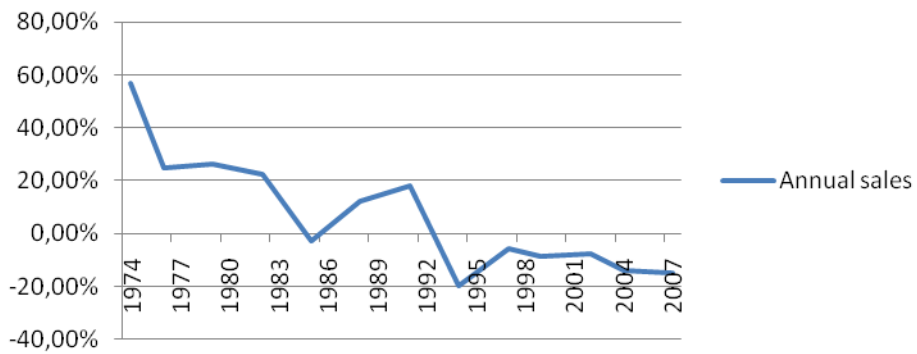
Figure 5 Profiles of the Shop Interviewees

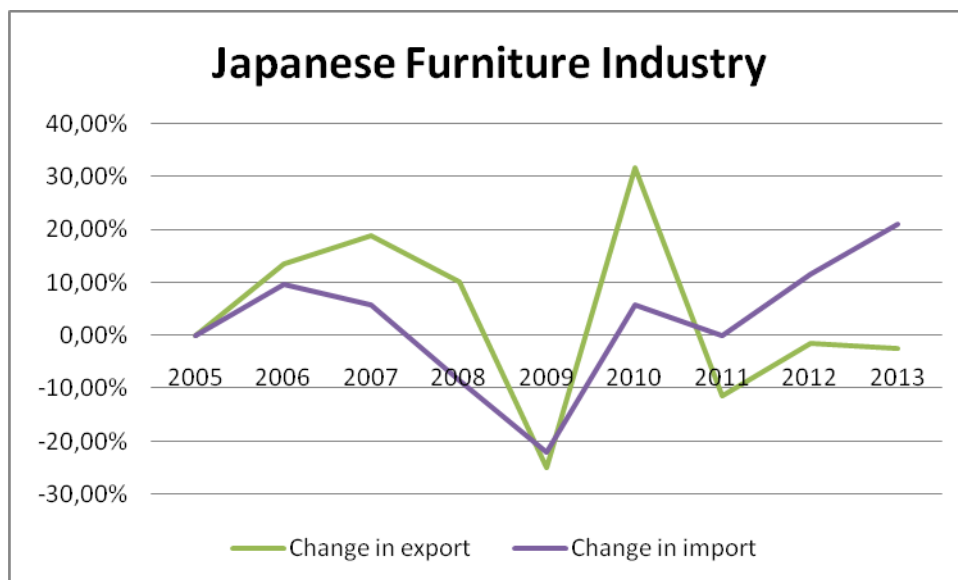
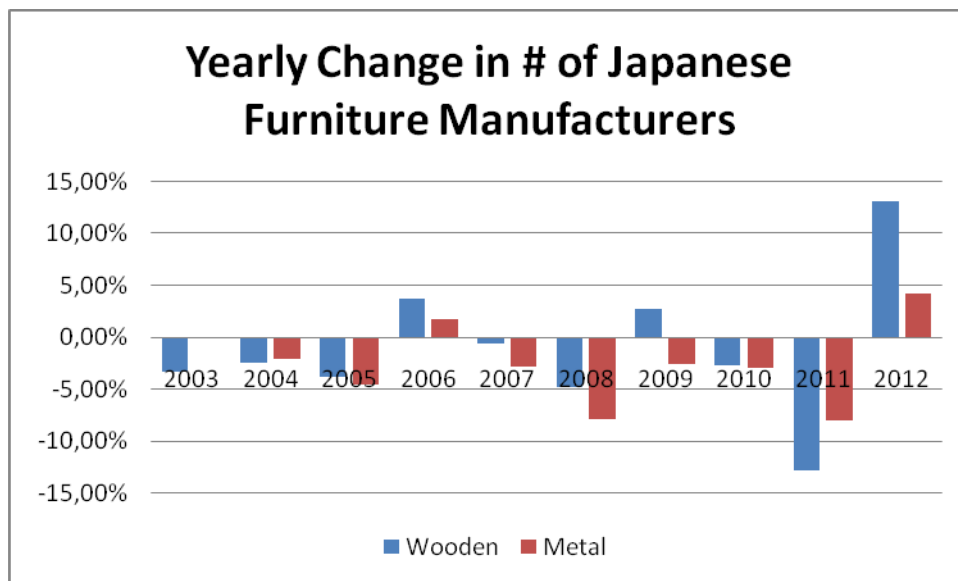
B. Japanese Furniture Industry

Change in # of Japanese Furniture Retail Establishments



Change in Amount of Annual Product Sales (Million Yens) in Japanese Furniture Retail Industry





XI. Notes

¹ Nishi Ward, Osaka, Osaka Prefecture. Google Maps. [WWW document]. URL <https://www.google.co.jp/maps/place/Nishi+Ward,+Osaka,+Osaka+Prefecture/@34.6798393,135.4800434,14z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x6000e6519918ff3f:0xdb3f631c5e236022> (accessed 15 June 2015).

Minamihorie, Nishi Ward, Osaka, Osaka Prefecture. Google Maps. [WWW document]. URL <https://www.google.co.jp/maps/place/Minamihorie,+Nishi+Ward,+Osaka,+Osaka+Prefecture+550-0015/@34.6706639,135.4885782,16z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x6000e707951>

5b797:0x8b003cdc4e143b50 (accessed 15 June 2015).

² According to Nishi Ward's residential maps, there were approximately fifty one furniture, Buddhist altar, and fanlight shops (including the branches of the same company) on and around Tachibana Street in 1988. The name of the street is written as "Furniture and Buddhist Altar Wholesaler District" ('Kagu Butsudan Tonya Gai') for the 1st district and "Tachibana Street Furniture Street" ('Tachibana Dori Kagu Gai') for the 2nd and 3rd districts. At the 1st district there was still a marketplace at the time. The number of such shops decreased to forty seven in 1994, forty one in 2000, and nineteen in 2014, as various, furniture, closet, and Buddhist altar shop names have disappeared from the map. There used to be one more fanlight craftsman in addition to my interviewee in this paper, but seems to have closed down.

³ Craft. Cambridge Dictionaries Online. [WWW document]. URL <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/craft> (accessed 11 April 2015).

⁴ Fine art versus craft: is there a difference? Quora. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.quora.com/Fine-art-versus-craft-is-there-a-difference> (accessed 11 April 2015).

⁵ Good. Merriam-Webster. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/good> (accessed 18 May 2015).

⁶ For a map of burnt areas of Osaka City (including Nishi Ward at the center) at Second World War, see: Kindai • gendai no ōsaka. Osaka Municipal Library. [WWW document]. URL http://www.oml.city.osaka.lg.jp/?action=common_download_main&upload_id=2891 (accessed 15 June 2015).

⁷ The private house in place of the last shop can still be seen on for example, 1988's residential map for the area.

⁸ Daimaru Kobe. Daimaru. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.daimaru.co.jp.e.md.hp.transer.com/kobe/index.html> (accessed 15 June 2015).

⁹ Shinsaibashi Station. Google Maps. [WWW document]. URL <https://www.google.co.jp/maps/place/Shinsaibashi+Station/@34.6750851,135.4997492,15z/data=!4m5!1m2!2m1!1sOsaka+City,+Shinsaibashi+Shotengai!3m1!1s0x6000e71a7502e511:0xf52ebb1984ed4516> (accessed 15 June 2015).

¹⁰ For a map of the large roads surrounding Horie area, see: Access. Horie Tachibana Dori Union. [WWW document]. URL http://horieunion.com/?page_id=26 (accessed 15 June 2015).

¹¹ In 1991, the amount of annual product sales in the Japanese furniture retail industry was the highest as 2,740,728 Million Yen since 1972. After that it started to decrease; it

was 1,306,581 Million Yen in 2007. The total number of furniture retail establishments dropped from 22,688 to less than half (10,111), and the number of employees from 111,768 to 63,383 people from 1972 to 2007.

There was also a decrease in the number of furniture manufacturing establishments, employees in the manufacturing industry, and amount of manufacture shipments from 2002 to 2012. In 2009, the amount of manufacture shipments dropped the most by 17% for wooden and 21% for metal furniture compared to the previous year.

For the Japanese import and export of furniture, apart from a sharp decrease for both figures in 2009, and a recovery the following year, imports have been increasing, whereas exports have been decreasing even if less than before since 2011. (Statistical Data. Japan Furniture Industry Development Association. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.jfa-kagu.jp/statistics.html> (accessed 8 June 2015).)

^{1 2} Amerikamura is the Eastern neighbor of Horie. Developed in the 1970s, it has many apparel and food-entertainment businesses targeting at youth. (About Osaka Amerikamura. America Mura. [WWW document]. URL <http://americamura.jp/en/> (accessed 15 June 2015).)

^{1 3} From the 9 apparel brands, which opened stores in Horie between 1998 and 2001, and were mentioned in academic publishing on Horie's revitalization, 4 moved out, 2 stayed for sure, and the other 3 appear on Google Map, but need to be checked on site.

During my own field research since 2013, I have directly observed closures of: 1 apparel and accessory shop, 1 children's clothing shop designed as a mushroom at a corner looking at Horie Park, 1 patisserie and cafe, and 1 shoe-seller, and openings of: 1 bag shop, 1 bicycle and coffee shop, 1 nail salon, and several other bakery and cafes.

A combination of goods and services at one shop like bicycle and coffee (Giracha Coffee), apparel, coffee, flowers (Biotop), old books and coffee (Colombo Corner shop) seems to be the new trend in Osaka as acknowledged by a real estate agent in Horie.

^{1 4} Sogo Shinsaibashi Store was bought by Daimaru in 2009. (Notice Regarding Transfer of Non-Current Assets by Subsidiary. [WWW document]. URL https://www.7andi.com/dbps_data/_template/_user/_SITE_/localhost/_res/en/company/news/pdf/2009/2009-0226-1253.pdf (accessed 15 June 2015).)

^{1 5} A map of Osaka's Wards. Wikipedia: Osaka. [WWW document]. URL https://en.wikipedia.org/?title=Osaka#/media/File:Osaka_Wards.png (accessed 15 June 2015).

^{1 6} The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism. Richard Sennett. [WWW document]. URL <http://www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general.aspx?pageid=40&cc=gb>

(accessed 28 May 2015).

¹⁷ According to a national survey in 2014 by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan, the average age of getting married was 29.4 for women and 31.1 for men (26.1 and 28.4 respectively in 1993).

2014 General Condition of Annual Vital Statistics Monthly Report (Round Numbers): Result Summary. Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. [WWW document]. URL

<http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/jinkou/geppo/nengai14/dl/gaikyou26.pdf>

(accessed 6 June 2015).