

Municipal Policy Planners

by Akira Tamura

No.167 (reference of Akira Tamura bibliography)

A. Tamura: Jichitai no Seisaku Planner, Jurist Zokan No.22, Chiho no Jidai to Komuin, Yuhikaku, pp.203-209, April 1981. (original in Japanese)

A. Tamura: Municipal Policy Planners, Jurist special edition No.22, Era of regionalism and local government officials, Yuhikaku, pp.203-209, April 1981.

I. Introduction: Challenges for Local Governments in the 1980s

After World War II, local autonomy was positively approved in the New Constitution, and in the more than 30 years since then, local autonomy has been making progress, albeit gradually, despite various twists and turns. The excessive centralization of power has led to uniformity and bureaucratic administration, and it has become desirable for each region to conduct autonomous and comprehensive regional management based on residents.

This trend can also be seen at the central government level in the "Settlement Area Concept" of the *Sanzenso* (the Third National Comprehensive Development Plan 1950) and the report of the "Seventeenth Regional System Study Group. The advocacy of an "era of local regions" from the local side has reinforced this trend and is aimed at further enhancement of local autonomy.

The postwar period can be roughly and graphically divided into the following periods from the perspective of local autonomy.

In the 1950s, the system of local self-government had just been established and had undergone several changes, while the establishment of a financial foundation for local governments, as recommended by the Shoup Mission 1949, was necessary but not sufficient. This was a period of institutional development and consolidation of local self-government. There was still little movement toward substantive autonomy.

The second era of the 1960s was the shift from government-controlled autonomy to citizen autonomy, as represented by the "10,000 Citizens' Assembly" and the advocacy of "direct democracy" following the election of Yokohama Mayor Ichio Asukata in 1963 and the "Dialogue Assembly" by Tokyo Governor Minobe in 1967. This issue, which was initially presented as a conflict between conservatives and reformists, was widely acknowledged by the public. This was also a period of numerous citizen movements, which became uncontrollable by the central government and led to the development of unique policies by reformist local governments. This period could be called the period when the issue of citizen autonomy was raised.

The third period was the 1970s. The limits of excessive centralization were clearly visible, and citizen participation and citizen autonomy became a matter of course, at least in terms. This led to a reflection on whether it was acceptable to continue to allow regions and cities that had become standardized and lacking in individuality to remain as they were. Local governments now need to develop policies for "*Machizukuri* (town making)" and "community development" in the broadest sense of the word. The oil crisis of 1973 was particularly decisive in this trend. This period could be called the era of town making.

Then, what will the current 1980s be like? Although there are some examples of self-governance, pollution, and environmental problems in the 1960s, and town making in the 1970s, all of these were times of experimentation and problem-solving. The 1980s, on the other hand, was an era in which municipalities were asked whether they, as actual municipalities, were possessed of continuous policy formulation ability implementing these issues in a more comprehensive and concrete manner. This is an era in which these issues are not limited to a few leading municipalities, but are universally recognized as problems for each municipality. Therefore, the issue for local governments in the 1980s will be whether they can become policy makers in their local communities. In this context, the ability and system of local officials as policy planners will be questioned.

Policy-making capacity of local governments to date

Regardless of the challenges facing local governments in the 1980s, until recently local governments and local public officials have been said to lack policy formulation capacity. It is true that many people did not have the image of city halls and town halls as anything more than offices that take copies of documents such as family registers and deliver resident registrations.

There are three reasons why local governments did not have policy-making capacity. First, they had a relationship with the central government that did not allow them to demonstrate their abilities. Second, local officials themselves had problems, and third, local governments themselves had internal problems.

The first reason is that the prewar relationship between local and national civil servants was deeply rooted in the relationship between the central government and the local government. Policy decisions were always made by central ministries and agencies and then passed down to local governments in the form of laws, regulations, directives, subsidies, etc., with local governments positioned as the frontline enforcers. Local governments were organized into bureaus and departments corresponding to the ministries and departments of the central government, and local governments often used the term "home ministry" to refer to their division of the central government. Municipalities are not separately an agency of the central government. The term "home ministry" should be used instead of "particular ministry," but the use of such a term indicates the reality of municipalities that were divided and governed by the central ministries and agencies in pieces.

The administrative skills required of civil servants at the ministries are the skills of policy makers, or policy planners in the broad sense of the term. The central government does not define a clerical officer as someone who handles paperwork, but rather as a policy planner. Thus, since joining the ministry, so-called career workers have undergone thorough training to become policy planners, both in terms of awareness and knowledge. In addition, they are given a variety of personnel experiences, and are given high posts and positions as policy makers. If they still cannot become policy planners, they must be very crazy. The rest are technicians, assistants, and field workers.

In contrast, local public officers do not receive special training and are not specially promoted like the career group. In such municipalities, the path to promotion to senior executive positions has been filled by career officials seconded from the ministries and has been blocked for local officials, and it is impossible to expect local public officials to have policy-making abilities.

Even in municipalities that have not reached this level in terms of human resources, if they are so locked into the laws and standards established by the central government that they cannot deviate from them, they will be discouraged from formulating their own policies, and in the end, the easiest way is to follow the instructions of the central government and ask the central government if there are problems. The administrative staff in a municipality is limited to administrative procedures in the narrow sense of the word, and new policies are not necessary. Only those in charge of general affairs and accounting are considered competent, but this may be partly because there is no other place where administrative staff can fully demonstrate their abilities. Compared to this, the technical staff has clear goals and specific problems, and each region is different. The reason is that the laws, regulations, standards, and notices from the central government are still too strong. In doing their work, they often made it the business of others, saying that this was decided by the "central government," and used the method of suppressing opposition from the residents. This is not the way to create independent policy planners.

One of the reasons why local officials could not act as policy planners was that there were external conditions that prevented them from doing so. However, we cannot blame external conditions for everything. It is true that civil servants themselves lacked a strong orientation as policy planners.

The most common reasons given by those who wish to become local public servants are that the work is easy to do, is not subject to economic fluctuations, and does not require transfers.

This may naturally lead to the "three-nots" principle of "no rest, no delay, and no work. With exception of a few engineers, majority of workers were more interested in stability and a little happiness rather than finding positive meaning in the content of their work. There may be a negative notion to deny private practices as an entity only making money. Some of them have a complex because they could not become national public servants, rather than for the positive reason of serving society and the public interest as a municipal administrator.

If people who have entered the workforce with such a complex from the start, even if some highly conscious people enter the workforce, they will be dragged down by the surrounding atmosphere, and if they are motivated, they will find that there is nothing to support them. Failure to do so can affect subsequent promotions, but success is not particularly recognized, and failure is questioned. In such an environment, people tend to take the attitude of "just get through the day without a hitch," "do as the bosses and influential people say," "follow precedent," and "do as you are told.

In such places, a reverse territoriality is activated, where people are reluctant to take on new work if it arises, and this leads to the imposition of work on other departments and people. This is exactly the opposite of the central government, where everything is the domain of the ministry. Most of the newly created jobs are either passive and uninitiated jobs that come from the central government ministries and agencies, or difficult jobs such as dealing with residents. There is no reward for doing such difficult work, and in some ways it is inevitable for them not to do it. However, as they continue to do so, they will develop an attitude of refusing to do the work that is truly necessary, and in some cases, even work that would inspire them to take the initiative, and will force others to do it for them. In the case of central government offices, it is natural for career workers to be motivated because they can increase their authority, develop their business more aggressively, and spread their ideas to local regions and industries by incorporating them into their territory, and they have been trained in this way. However, if they are passive at the end of the line and are forced to work only on the difficult side or do simple menial tasks, they will not be motivated to do so. The fact that the central and local governments have the opposite sense of territoriality is a natural consequence of the lack of autonomous decision-making authority in the local regions.

Third, the reason why local government officials are not being trained as policy planners is also a problem for the heads and managers of local governments and the system. It is true that the heads of local governments are directly elected by the residents, and their attitude has changed to one that is more community-oriented and has greatly transformed the local government system. On the other hand, heads are busy over communication with voters to win the next election. The rest of the time, the focus is on how to avoid making a mess of things for the time being. Few leaders have the courage to tell their staff, "Do it without fear of failure, and I will take responsibility for it. Instead of motivating them, they simply tell them to "do it well without providing necessary information or discussions." This leads to temporary measures and prevents full-fledged policy making. If there was even the slightest flaw in the measures taken, they would be reprimanded, and this made it difficult for them to make policy.

In addition, many senior managers happened to have joined the municipality at a time when the sense of autonomy had not yet been fully developed, and because they relied only on their experience and lacked broad learning, there were few people who could discuss issues with younger people and take a leadership role in developing policy planners. Thus far, there has been very little support for the development of policy planners in the local officials themselves, and the local governmental system.

Necessity and inevitability of municipal policy planners

As mentioned above, up to now, local governments have been merely a daily administrative agency, and if they were considered as a subcontracting agency of the national government, there would have been no policy planner in the local government, and no organization or system for this activity. However, as mentioned earlier, the situation is clearly changing, and local governments are now

expected to be the policy actors of their regions. In this context, there is a need and necessity to create policy planners as a new image of local public officials.

There are three possible reasons for this.

First, more than 30 years have passed since the end of World War II, and people's awareness of self-government and residents has been growing. Although not yet sufficient, residents who were unable to speak out in the prewar government-ruled local system are now not willing to back down under the authority of the "superiors. In addition, changes in social conditions have brought about some demands on the residents. Publicly elected leaders cannot remain subcontractors to the central government, but must respond to the demands of their constituents. However, the demands of the residents take many forms, and cannot be satisfied by laws and ordinances alone. In addition, there are many mutually contradictory demands, and the conventional administration of local governments is insufficient to meet all of them. Therefore, it is necessary for local governments to take these demands into account while transforming them into comprehensive and independent policy makers. There are some municipalities that are still only dealing with individual demands, but this will only lead to more contradictions. As more and more people become interested in deeper civic autonomy beyond the demands of local residents, ad hoc solutions will not be enough. Local governments themselves must become the policy actors.

Secondly, the national government's system of "vertically divided administration" has reached its limits in terms of physical boundaries. Although regions are limited, they are complex and intertwined with all kinds of factors. New "town making" cannot be achieved within the framework of a fragmented, vertically divided administration. A comprehensive regional policy is necessary. In terms of the relationship with residents, which I have already pointed out as the first point, national ministries and agencies are too far away from the actual site to make realistic policies. In terms of regional comprehensiveness, it is no longer possible for national ministries and agencies to conduct such activities.

Third, each region, which had been standardized and lacked individuality, is now in a period of reflection, and is required to create a new quality and individuality as a region. The uniform national standards of the centralized government have resulted in the loss of the individuality of each town and the loss of human warmth. For investments to bear fruit, they must be adapted to the climate and conditions of each region, and not only from the standpoint of efficiency, but also from a human perspective, and not only from the standpoint of quantity but also quality. Only the local government can make policy plans suited to each region.

It is not possible to create and manage civic, comprehensive, and flavorful regions if policy is monopolized by the central government alone, as has been the case in the past. This is not only unfortunate for the regions and residents, it is also unfortunate from the perspective of making the most effective use of the limited resources of Japan's national land. Therefore, it is essential that local governments become policy makers, and that many new types of policy planners develop and function within their ranks.

Moreover, local governments are gradually attracting more and more conscious individuals. Compared to 20 to 30 years ago, the quality of civil servants has improved dramatically, and especially in the past 10 years, the wave of the times has led to the accumulation of human resources within local governments.

The first of these was the enactment of the Local Public Service Law in 1961, which led to the establishment of the Personnel Affairs Commission and the adoption of an examination system for local public officers. By 1960, prefectural governments and designated cities were conducting recruitment examinations, and people with an awareness of local public officers began to enter the workforce, gradually spreading to other cities as well. In the 1960s, awareness of the problems of citizen autonomy increased, and young employees with an interest in local autonomy rather than

becoming civil servants began to enter the workforce. In the 1970s, people with an awareness of new issues that would be required of local governments in the future, such as "town making" in the broadest sense, began to aim for local public service.

Although this is a characteristic trend, the increase in the number of educated people, the trend of the times in local areas, and economic fluctuations throughout Japan have brought in a new group of people with a new awareness of issues, and each of them has begun to develop their own awareness of problems, which has nurtured the budding of policy planners in local governments.

Emergence of Municipal Policy Planners and Their Role

It is clear from the above that the career policy planners who have been nurtured at the central government level are not the same as the policy planners who should be nurtured in local governments. This does not mean, of course, that they are sub-subcontractors of central government planners, nor does it mean that they take over the role of central government planners and relieve the local governments of their governmental authority. Rather, it is to develop a new role that cannot be fulfilled by the central planners.

It was around 1960 that local government policy planners barely began to appear, when planning departments began to take root in local governments. They had not been professionally trained as policy planners, but they took the first step toward autonomous policy making. Much of my work there has been in long-term comprehensive planning and regional development planning.

However, the long-term comprehensive plans were mostly a collection of project plans of various departments or abstract visions, but the necessity of planning gradually has been recognized. Until now, the term "planning" has been used only in the context of urban planning, which is primarily the responsibility of civil engineering departments. The term "urban planning" in this context was limited to the administrative procedures of the City Planning Law and arterial projects, as evidenced by the nature of the Department of Public Works, rather than to comprehensive urban planning. In contrast, the long-term comprehensive plans of the Planning Department were at least covering broader range. In general, the Planning Department was staffed by administrative staff, while the Public Works Department was staffed by technical staff. The Planning Department's plans, while comprehensive at first glance, were not very specific and were merely a collection of assorted projects, while the Public Works Department's plans were confined to a narrow range of projects. For policy planners to emerge, there needed to be a broader, more integrated forum.

Regional development plans were a bit more concrete in this respect, and were meant to serve as a point of contact for various policies. However, local governments did not have the people who could formulate such plans, so they initially sought the cooperation of university laboratories, and from the 1970s onward new expertise of planning consultants emerged, and they were asked to work exclusively with these planners. Municipalities began to request these consultants to formulate plans.

It was not until the 1960s that local government policy planners began to play an active role in environmental protection issues, particularly pollution problems, rather than in comprehensive planning and development planning. Pollution was a limited and defensive issue, and was focused on the prevention and elimination of problems. At that time, such problems were serious in many areas, but were not so much discussed in the central government, including Minamata Disease.

This led to a new approach in which advanced local governments took a proactive approach to pollution problems and voluntarily concluded anti-pollution agreements by factory companies, rather than passively dealing with the problems under the existing legal system. In October 1964, the first such agreement was concluded between the City of Yokohama and the Power Development Company of Japan, electric power plant, and it quickly spread to other municipalities throughout Japan. The pollution policy, which had been a blind spot away from the central government, was developed mainly by local governments, and finally, in 1970, the so-called Special National Parliament Session

on Pollution was held, and 14 pollution-related bills were passed, giving birth to a new Environment Agency. The policy pattern was completely opposite to the conventional one, in which local governments first pioneered a new field of pollution policy, which was then taken up by the national government on a nationwide basis.

In addition, in the early 1970s, local governments began to establish guidelines to control residential land development. These guidelines were a policy to correct and reinforce deficiencies in the government's legal framework concerned with rapid residential development policy which also spread nationwide. It also gave birth to other policies unique to each municipality, generally referred to as "administrative guidelines," and various guidelines have been formulated and implemented independently by each municipality.

As described above, pollution and residential land control policies are urgent and important measures for local governments, which are in direct contact with residents, but the central government has not been able to create policies that adequately address these issues. These two examples show that the central government has already lost the ability to make timely and appropriate policies for new local problems that require comprehensive policies. Therefore, local government policy must be creative and different from the central government's policies.

Policies formulated by the central government and local governments are equal and are not in a position superior or inferior. The central government should provide basic policies that can be applied nationwide in general, while local governments should formulate policies for their own regions and make concrete use of the central government policies. The central government ministries and agencies are, so to speak, in charge of creating ingredients, and the local governments are like cooks who use these ingredients to supplement their own ingredients and create dishes suited to their region.

Perspectives of Municipal Policy Planners

The following five perspectives are the main characteristics required of policy planners in a municipality. The first is citizenship. Policies based on citizen autonomy, in which the planner is in direct contact with citizens and converts their interests into the interests of all citizens, can only be made in a municipality. When considering the interests of all citizens, it is necessary to know the specific demands of the residents.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the interests of the citizens will be served immediately. Demands are mutually contradictory and conflict with each other. Also, the long-term interests of the citizens will not emerge from the direct demands of the residents. It is necessary to take a viewpoint of citizenship that includes these factors.

The second is comprehensiveness. Regional policies are complex and intertwined with various elements, therefore, comprehensive policies are inevitably necessary. Comprehensiveness in this context does not simply mean the aggregation of the plans of various ministries and agencies. Comprehensiveness is a way of weaving together the fabric of the region by weaving a horizontal thread through the vertical lines of central ministries' policies, and this is also a policy that cannot be implemented by central ministries with their limited roles. It is not a question of whether they have legal authority. First, it is necessary to formulate a comprehensive policy based on citizenship. After that, it is necessary to consider the use of existing laws and regulations to realize this policy, as well as the means of reinforcing those aspects that are lacking. Laws and regulations are a means, not an end.

Third is regional characteristics. Policies must take the history and climate of each region into account. It is not enough to remain closed to the region, but it is also necessary to look broadly at national and international issues, and from a broader perspective, to discover the unique characteristics of each region. This kind of regional perspective is also difficult to obtain from a central government policy that looks at the entire nation.

The fourth is concrete practicality. Regional policies must be implemented in concrete terms, not just at an abstract level. Moreover, they must be put into practice by the local government itself. In the case of local governments, policies have a direct concreteness, i.e., they are put into practice, which is why they react quickly. Unlike central ministries and agencies, where only policies tend to be implemented, feedback in local governments is immediate, and there are many obstacles and resistances. This is why municipal policies require more concrete practicality.

Fifth is humanity. In abstract discussions like those held at the central government, flesh-and-blood humanity tends to be forgotten, and efficiency and mechanical uniformity are rampant. Municipal policies should and can include beauty and fun based on real human beings.

In addition to these five elements, policies need to be rational, scientific, and futuristic, as well as international and cultural. Local government policy planners must have these perspectives, but they can make even better policies by having the five perspectives mentioned above, which are difficult for central government ministries and agencies to do. If local government policy planners have these perspectives, they will be able to take the central government's policies seriously enough to make them effective. Local officials will then be able to confidently achieve self-realization and explore new fields, rather than being content to end up do nothing.

System to foster policy planners

Municipal policy planners equipped with this perspective do not emerge suddenly. They emerge from a variety of experiences, a constant inquiring mind, and the raising of issues. Policy planners do not need to be categorized in the conventional, narrow, hierarchical manner as clerical or technical planners. They need to be able to take a broader, horizontal perspective. Some policy planners specialize in narrowly defined fields, such as town planning, transportation, environment, and welfare, depending on their specialty. However, they also need to be able to discuss and enhance their expertise with other specialists from a broad perspective. In addition, planners will be needed to comprehensively produce the overall policy and to promote its implementation.

In any case, municipal policy planners are born in practice, and if a municipality or its chief executive needs such planners, he or she should consider how to create and utilize a system to create policy planners.

For creating policy planners, municipalities must first and foremost have a comprehensive planning and coordination department. This department must have new values from the standpoint of the local government and create new regional policies from the standpoint of the horizontal thread, as opposed to the traditional vertical organization. It must be a system that is not merely a composition of conventional comprehensive plans and long-term plans, but one that has a civic, comprehensive, regional, practical, and human nature, as mentioned earlier. Practicality is most required.

However, planning departments often end up with abstract plans and are not able to practically handle the conventional warp and woof, or they share the warp and woof with other departments. If they remain at this stage, they will not be able to develop new expertise and confidence that only the central government can provide, and they will end up reverting to the traditional centrally-controlled, fragmented measures. The planning and coordination department must not conduct projects on its own, but must instead devote itself to being a policy planner of a horizontal thread that cannot be done by the central ministries and agencies. It must always work in tandem with other departments. Policy planners do not exist only in the planning department, nor can they only be born there. Along with a competent planning department, other departments must also produce more concrete policy planners. These planners will belong to each department and will play the role of developing and promoting specific policies in conjunction with the planning and coordination departments. As long as policy planners are limited to a narrowly defined planning department, it becomes easy for policies to float in the air, and it is difficult to put them into good practice. The meaning of policy is often confused

with the narrower meaning of campaign promises or election policies. Elections need to include some policy statements. However, at present, such statements tend to be election-centered propaganda. These are essentially the work of the political private office and the electoral machine.

Management of local government is a long and continuous process. It takes more than five years to formulate a policy, have it understood by the public, lobby in various fields, and put it into practice. Ten years is the minimum, and some policies usually take 20 or 30 years to implement. If we think of policy only in terms of the small political dimension of elections, it will not be a real regional policy, and it will make the residents unhappy.

Local policies require strong leadership from the chief executive, bringing together and at times eliminating many power relations. This is politics, but it must be politics in the larger sense of the destiny of the entire region, not just short-term small politics with an electoral dimension. If the policies are solid, they should be able to transcend the narrow boundaries of party politics and gain the sympathy of the citizens. There are no policies that everyone agrees with, and there is always opposition, but it is often not party politics but rather the result of conflicting interests and positions in the local community. This is because municipal policy is often dealing with a matter of practical local issues rather than official stance.

The key question is how policy planners can continue to make policy on an ongoing, steady basis. People who are poisoned by small-scale politics and are busy with responding to the politics do not understand the need for and the meaning of full-fledged policies. It is necessary to improve the quality of politicians and the electorate to elect people who can at least understand and implement serious policies. In West Germany, for example, there is a system in which these policy planners are given a guarantee of six or twelve years to continue their policies for a long period of time. Furthermore, there is a consensus that regional development is a continuous process. There is strong resistance, including from citizens' movements, to the idea that it is up to a small politician to change things, thus eliminating the pressure of individual influential people. Policy planners are constantly exposed to citizens and at the same time need a joint front with them. There is already a necessity for policy planners within local governments, and the conditions are ripening to take advantage of this. The institutions and systems will need to change. But above all, policy planners need to break free of the complacent civil servant mentality and take up the challenge. They will encounter many obstacles and difficulties on their own initiative. At that time, they need to be tenacious people with "high ideals, strong will, flexible to reality, and low attitude."