

The UK's and Japan's vacant house management policy and implications

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Summary

1. Vacant houses pose an important issue not only in Korea but also internationally. Aggressive policy interventions are being made.

2. As affordable houses for low-income and middle classes became increasingly scarce following housing price rises, the UK government has pursued a range of measures to provide affordable houses using vacant houses, including legally authorizing local governments, revamping tax policies, state funding and urban planning regulations, and building partnerships with social enterprises.

- Local governments make use of the council tax to collect information and monitor the presence of vacant houses, encourage the spontaneous re-use of vacant houses by owners and exert legal force to resolve the vacant house issue.

3. When the prevalence of vacant houses reached the record-high of 13.5% in 2013, the Japanese government enacted the Act on Special Measures on Vacant Houses and took a comprehensive approach to the vacant house issue ranging from planning to state funding.

- Subsidies are provided to identify the owners of vacant houses and carry out fact-finding surveys to build a database of vacant houses.

- The Ministry of Land and Transport streamlined the use and demolition of vacant uses through vacant house regeneration projects, vacant house management system reinforcing projects, and comprehensive support programs for vacant houses.

- To attract migrants, local governments offered vacant house bank, vacant house remodelling subsidy, vacant house trade commissions, and vacant house test-out programs (e.g., Arita, Saga Prefecture).



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Policy proposals

1. (Define authority and responsibility for vacant house management and its scope) Clarify that owners take the primary responsibility for vacant house management and encourage them to spontaneously re-use vacant houses; and clearly define the roles of local governments and the scope of authority.
2. (Role sharing and cooperation between central and local governments and the private sector) The central government establishes legal grounds, budgets and guidelines; municipalities manage vacant house databases and monitor them; the private sector take part in projects to make use of vacant houses.
3. (Provide funding for vacant house database development and survey) The central government develops a benchmark index, has municipalities carry out surveys, and provides subsidies to help find the owners of vacant houses.
4. (Link with other plans) Take advantage of vacant houses in urban regeneration, living environment improvement, rental housing supply, and urban-to-rural migrant support programs.