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SPECIAL REPORT

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CAROLA HEIN

Urban Form in Japan from the
Meiji Era to Modern Times

PAGE 5

RONALD K. VOGEL

Rescaling the Japanese City:
Urbanization and Governance

PAGE 17

MERRY I. WHITE,

Coffeehouse Democracy:
Learning and Creating
Urbanity in Japan

PAGE 24

THEODORE J. GILMAN

No Miracles Here: Urban
Redevelopment in One
Struggling Japanese City

PAGE 33

More Than A Concrete Jungle: Urbanization In Japan

EDITED BY MARK MOHR

ABSTRACT This Special Report examines the development of cities in Japan from both historical and contemporary viewpoints. **Carola Hein** of Bryn Mawr College comments that one hundred years ago, visiting Europeans were critical of the way Japan was “modernizing” its cities, yet today many contemporary observers view Japanese cities as a model for the future and an inspiration for urban planning. **Ronald K. Vogel** of the University of Louisville observes that Japan, especially over the last 20 years, has been trying to reform, decentralize and rescale its local governance, but opinions differ on whether the reforms will succeed. **Merry I. White** of Boston University discusses the growth and popularity of coffee houses in Japan’s urban areas, noting the café’s contribution to democracy, modernity and urbanity, in addition to “third space” freedom. **Theodore J. Gilman** of Harvard University seeks to temper the prevailing robust image of the Japanese city by presenting a case study of a rust belt urban area where, despite well-intentioned efforts, economic revitalization plans have failed.

INTRODUCTION

MARK MOHR

Japan is one of the most highly urbanized societies in the world. Tokyo’s suburbs seem to stretch on forever. Of Japan’s 47 prefectures, only seven have a population of under one million. Ten cities have a population of over one million. Some regard the former distinct metropolises of Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe as having fused into a single Japanese megapolis of more than 78 million people, containing more than two-thirds of the Japanese population.

To examine the ramifications of urbanization in Japan, the Wilson Center’s Asia Program, together with its Comparative Urban Studies Program, hosted a seminar on January 24, 2007. Among the subjects discussed were the evolution

of urban planning, reforms aimed at making Japanese cities more governable and adaptable in the age of globalization, the role of coffee houses in making urban space more civilized and enjoyable, and a case study where, in a country standing as the second largest economic power in the world, a rust belt city lost its major industry and adopted a new economic plan—but the plan failed.

In the first essay, **Carola Hein**, associate professor at Bryn Mawr College in the Growth and Structure of Cities Program, notes that visitors from Europe and America, beginning from the late 19th century, were critical of Japanese contemporary cityscapes, deploring their lack of a clear structure and regretting the absence of a visual relation between the infrastructure and the buildings. It was the time of the Meiji era (1868-1912), when

Japan was concentrating its efforts on modernizing, in an attempt to catch up to the West. Urban planners studied the Parisian model, but an 1887 plan for Tokyo, featuring large boulevards connecting major institutions, was not adopted. Japan did not have a history of monumental urban design, and subsequent attempts at large-scale comprehensive urban transformation also failed. In the following years, public and private forces inserted the governmental and business functions and infrastructures that were part of an 1889 plan piecemeal into the existing city, without integrating urban and architectural form.

Hein states that land readjustment was the major tool used in urban planning, systematized in the 1919 urban planning laws. Additionally, the huge damage of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 made Japanese planners turn to land readjustment as their main instrument of urban planning. (Land readjustment is the technique whereby the layout of the land is changed, and lots are reconfigured and sometimes reduced in size while largely maintaining the original ownership. For example, if a street needs to be widened or straightened, or if a public park or other facility needs to be built, the owner of the land stands to lose that portion of his property needed, and his lot may be reshaped. Depending on the size of the land he loses, he would be compensated for the loss.) Land readjustment thus generally allowed people to stay on the sites they had formerly occupied and was therefore appealing.

In a similar way, the planners reconstructing Japanese cities after the Second World War focused primarily on creating new streets, and their favorite technique was also land readjustment. There were discussions on the comprehensive design of cities, concerning low-density areas, green belts, wide public spaces and avenues, but few of these ideas

were realized. Hein concludes her essay by observing that, in contrast to initial European criticism of Japanese urban planning, many contemporary observers have viewed Japanese cities and particularly constantly changing Tokyo as a model for the future and an inspiration for urban planning. According to one well-known Japanese architect, contemporary Japanese cities are characterized by their content and by undefined forms that provide them with an unrivaled potential for evolution.

In the second essay, **Ronald K. Vogel**, professor of political science and urban and public affairs at the University of Louisville, comments on the manner in which territory and politics are being rescaled within nations, with a shift from national to regional and metropolitan levels. A main factor for this shift is the pressure to compete economically in an increasingly globalized world. In Japan, this process has been occurring over the past two decades. In the 1990s, for example, Japan passed several decentralization laws aimed at abolishing agency delegation and eliminating the presence of central ministry officials in local government. Prior to the reforms, 80 percent of local government activity occurred under central agency delegation. In recent years, these reforms have had far-reaching effects on local government, although opinion differs on whether the reforms will actually result in greater local autonomy.

In the case of Tokyo, the city and prefecture amalgamated to form Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) in 1943 to serve Japan's wartime needs for centralization. Until recent reforms, there were 23 administrative units (Special Wards) in central Tokyo housing about 8 million of Tokyo's 12 million people. In 1998, a report approved by the central government led to transformation of the


THE ASIA PROGRAM

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discussion of Asia in the nation's capital. In seminars, workshops, briefings, and conferences, prominent scholars of Asia interact with one another and with policy practitioners to further understanding of the peoples, traditions, and behaviors of the world's most populous continent.



wards into ordinary public authorities intended to function as fully autonomous municipalities. The expectation was that ward mayors would be more responsive to citizen demands for improving the quality of life of residents. This would lead to more balanced development policies, which take into account the needs of neighborhoods and residents.

In conclusion, Vogel states that having divested itself of municipal services, TMG can now focus more attention on regional issues. Even so, Japanese city-regions are seen as inadequate for the needs of regional-scale decision making. City-regions are exploring alternative structures. For example, TMG is aiming to have the national government and its neighboring partners embrace a more coherent plan for economic development with Tokyo as Japan's leading global city.

Merry I. White, professor of anthropology at Boston University, observes in the third essay that public social spaces have in Japan as elsewhere been arenas for interaction, commerce, and above all, education in the urban and civil. She believes that by looking at café culture, one can observe the development of new urbanities in Japan, in both the city as assemblage of communities and as connected free spaces acting as sources of anonymity and freedom.

It was not until the Meiji period, White notes, that coffee became a generally available social beverage, its consumption a sign of urbanity. Coffee houses appeared at the same time as mass communication and transport, and this brought the outside world and its news and cultural forms to the rapidly modernizing city. Cafés arrived at a time when new rural populations entered city life. They were places where the provincial newcomers gathered for mutual support and information. In addition, they served to introduce Western goods and ideas to Japan. The first entry of western foods to a mass audience, for example, was in the café—where dishes like spaghetti and melted cheese toast appeared.


During the Taisho period (1912–1926), the increasing influence of democracy in the body politic encouraged the public demonstration of new thinking and creativity. Organizers and proponents would hold meetings in cafés where the social formlessness of the space admitted all. Feminist discussion and the creation of a significant feminist movement in this period relied on cafés as

semi-public arenas of permissiveness. Writers and activists would also meet in cafés.

Japan is now the world's third largest coffee importing country, and the consumption of coffee leads all social drinks, outselling beer or tea. Japan is a “café society” in full view. There are two or three coffeehouses on any city block, and most are well-patronized throughout the day and evening. Changing demographic realities have also had an influence on the uses of these café spaces. For the increasing numbers of elderly in Japan, cafés are meeting points for checking in with neighbors, for marking the passage of time and creating a new community when residential isolation is painful. For others, such as the white-collar worker, the café is an off-duty, not-work not-home “third space” where the demands of other competing locations in one's life do not need to enter. There are also rising rates of *furiitaa*, freelance or part-time workers, who use cafés as offices or work spaces.

In the final essay, **Theodore J. Gilman**, associate director of the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard University, seeks to temper the prevailing robust image of the Japanese city by relating the story of a Japanese rust belt city. As background, Gilman explains that in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, large-scale manufacturing enterprises located in the major urban centers were already attracting young people to life in the big city. At the same time, the Japanese government was helping to phase out domestic heavy industry through an active plan of rationalization. In the postwar era, coal, shipbuilding, steel, and other basic industries had been slowly pushed into decline through their inability to compete internationally and the government's unwillingness to support them.

Omuta, a port city on the southern island of Kyushu, experienced a 100-year heyday as the largest coal mining center in Japan. But as Japan's ability to compete with other coal producing nations declined, demand for Omuta's coal also declined. For Omuta residents, the key issue was, and still is, jobs. The mine and other coal production facilities provided almost 29,000 jobs for Omuta area residents in 1960. By 1991, that number had dropped to around 4,500. To create new jobs, Omuta sought to attract tourists to new facilities, lure firms and jobs



to new industrial parks, and revitalize retail areas to bring customers back to the old shopping districts.

To attract tourists, Omuta built an amusement park, GeoBio World. It opened in 1995 and cost \$100 million to build. It never came close to attendance projections, and went bankrupt. The city also built three new industrial parks, but failed to lure enough companies into them. A plan to revitalize the downtown shopping area was implemented, but while the area looked much nicer after the extensive revitalization, it did not experience a significant increase in consumer traffic or retail sales. As a result, Omuta continues to experience population and job decline. The composition of the remaining population has also changed, and as the current population continues to age, with no influx of new, younger working families to offset the trend, the number of people per family drops at about the same rate at which the population ages.

In conclusion, the four essays that follow present various strands in the city life of Japan, both

past and present. Taken together, these strands offer insights into the fabric of the urbanization process in Japan. There are some striking similarities to city life in the United States. For example, the ever-present coffee shop appears “indigenous” to both, although the Japanese fascination with coffee houses seems to outdate its U.S. Starbucks counterpart by nearly a century. Rust belt cities in both countries, not surprisingly, are also finding it difficult to cope. The search for good governance at the metropolitan level, especially in response to the challenges presented by globalization, is a common theme between the two countries, as the Japanese too struggle to find a successful balance between size and efficiency. In terms of architecture and urban form, we learn that Japan has always done it the “Japanese way,” eschewing the European model of wide boulevards and large monuments, in favor of an incremental, adaptive approach which has created an aesthetic that many believe has much to offer the rest of the world.

URBAN FORM IN JAPAN FROM THE MEIJI ERA TO MODERN TIMES

CAROLA HEIN



Visitors from Europe or America have lauded traditional Japanese architecture and urban form and criticized Japanese contemporary cityscapes since the late 19th century. They deplored their lack of a clear structure

and regretted the absence of a visual relation between the infrastructure and the buildings. They could discern no unified appearance of the streets and objected to the variety of functions and forms, materials and styles displayed in the façades. They also criticized the so-called “pencil buildings” (multi-story buildings on tiny sites), the narrow gaps between buildings which they found more rural than urban, the apparent lack of building control, and the spread of billboards.

The German architect Bruno Taut, like other European and American planners before and after him, tried to change the appearance of Japanese cities through projects and publications to make it more orderly and similar to European cities. The Japanese elite similarly attempted to devise new planning concepts since the mid-19th century, the early years of modern Japan, as the country experienced huge changes in its political and economic as well as urban systems. Following an initial period of intense study—and sometimes application—of traditional and foreign planning concepts and applications, however, Japanese planners rapidly developed a planning system based on the country’s own history and structure, adopting selected Western techniques to traditional Japanese forms and local needs. This essay posits that urban Japan’s contemporary distinctive patterns result from the traditional overall organization and development of cities, from specific techniques of urban planning and practices of land ownership, and that


these techniques helped Japanese cities, and notably Tokyo, adapt to the needs of a modern city as quickly as it did.

This essay first examines the urban transformation of Edo to Tokyo in the early Meiji period (1868–1912), a particularly fertile time and place because of ongoing major political and economic changes that led to and allowed for large-scale and comprehensive spatial and functional urban restructuring, and explains how Japanese planners, businessmen and politicians devised planning methods through trial and error in the late 19th century. It then discusses the establishment of specific Japanese planning techniques and preferences and their local and foreign roots after the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake, examining specifically ordinances, zone expropriation, and building lines and land readjustment. Finally, it looks at themes of current urban design in Japan. In conclusion this essay argues that Japanese planners developed a practice that may be different in appearance from European design principles, but one that is appropriate for Japanese needs and that may even offer lessons to foreign cities.

FROM THE SHOGUN’S CAPITAL EDO TO THE JAPANESE METROPOLIS TOKYO

From the early 1600s on, Japan cut itself off from outside contact for more than 200 years. During this period, the shogun, the hereditary military ruler of the country, established a centralized feudal system, governed from Edo (today’s Tokyo), while the Emperor, the official but mostly symbolic head of the country, remained in Kyoto. The shogunal system used innovative structures to ensure obedience among the provincial lords over which it ruled, notably the system of alternate attendance (*sankin kôtai*) that forced the provincial leaders to

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regularly travel to Edo and have part of their family live there permanently.

Due to the shogunal system, Edo's population, land use and land ownership structures demonstrate numerous particularities. Provincial rulers had to maintain large domains in the capital city. The land they occupied made up more than two thirds of the urban area.¹ Edo maps show them as white patches without specifications about buildings or subdivisions, or the number of people living there, making it difficult to study them. The provincial lords governed these domains, but they did not actually own this land. It was the property of the Shogun, who was free to withdraw or re-attribute it. The remainder of the land was held by Buddhist and Shintoist temples, and townsmen. In contrast to the land ruled by the samurai, the townsmen actually had

Due to the shogunal system, Edo's population, land use and land ownership structures demonstrate numerous particularities.


some kind of land ownership, certified by title deeds (*koken*).² The lots were named and subdivided and could be bought and sold to a certain extent. Renting land for construction was common. Thus, the owner of the land, the building and its user(s) were often different persons.

It was generally difficult to revoke the contracts of the people who had built on the site and thus, even if several neighboring sites belonged to the same owner, they had different usage rights attached to them and were therefore difficult to unify. This practice made it possible for residents to reverse traditional plot orientations in response to changes in traffic patterns without changing land ownership. Thus, even if maps show long and narrow plots in one direction, tenants may have built buildings in another direction, making it very difficult to gain precise knowledge of the city through maps.

In 1868, the end of the shogunate and the restoration of imperial power to the Meiji Emperor, the so-called Meiji Restoration, brought about

major political, economic and social changes and a new modern democratic government. Under the leadership of the provincial lords and their supporters, Emperor Meiji established himself in Tokyo. The new leaders established a government with a parliament and modern ministries. Most members of the new government came from the military caste, which was much too powerful to be abolished entirely.³ The Meiji Restoration also spurred numerous structural and functional urban transformations. It notably required the return of the domain lands, the lands attributed by the shogun to members of the military caste, to the central government, with the exception of one main residence. With the end of the shogunal government, the regional aristocrats no longer had to be present in Tokyo, and many of them abandoned their estates inside the city, returning to the provinces together with their families and personnel, causing the population to fall significantly and creating vast abandoned spaces in the center of the capital.⁴ The new Meiji government overturned the prohibition of land transaction, thus making all land a tradeable and most importantly taxable good. Landowners became more and more powerful, and land taxes became a means of financing the national government. Most members of the new government were landowners themselves, and the new Meiji policies favored them. Private landownership developed into a major factor in shaping Japanese urban planning, often preventing large-scale expropriation or other transformation.

With all the major political and economic changes of the early years of the Meiji period, and the rapidly occurring industrialization and urbanization, the new government wanted to catch up with the then leading countries and gain their respect as an equal partner in all regards. In order to fulfill the new government's desire, the Japanese elite had to study and understand European and U.S. political and socio-economic as well as urban and architectural structures and forms and adapt them to their own needs and background. For these transformations to materialize the government had to provide the open land to erect the buildings and infrastructures needed as part of the overall modernization process, and the capital city Tokyo had to present itself as a political and economic center,



capable of functioning in an international context. The new government had to erect buildings for the Diet (Japan's parliament) and the ministries, as well as other governmental functions including the military, postal and educational services, and infrastructures. Meanwhile the private sector translated the challenges of the new political and economic environment into new industries and services to be housed in new building types, such as factories, banks and department stores.


At this time the conditions for large-scale transformation appeared ideal in Japan. Firstly, the recurring destruction of Japanese cities by natural forces, fires and earthquakes allowed for large-scale rebuilding of Japan's cities at a time of general change. Secondly, the major political and economic transformations of the early Meiji period provided the new land and lot forms that the new forces needed. They could have contributed to unifying and rebuilding urban areas according to the new needs even more extensively than they did.⁵ Thirdly, the land left empty after the departure of the provincial lords was located centrally as well as scattered throughout the city and ideally suited to house the central institutions of a capital, as well as new economic functions (such as factories). Cleared of existing buildings and sub-divisions, the government used these sites for military purposes, such as exercise grounds, ammunition factories, military schools, or for public functions such as ministries, foreign representations, or new political authorities.⁶ The urban transformation of Japanese cities and notably Tokyo raises multiple questions, such as: Why did the political and business elite not implement comprehensive monumental plans following European examples as suggested by foreign and Japanese planners in the early years after the Meiji restoration? Why did planners, despite seemingly ideal conditions for coherent, large-scale modernization, adopt piecemeal solutions? Why in some rare cases, when small comprehensive planning attempts were tried out, did these transformations not last, some of them being remodeled a second time returning the land to its original form?

This continuity of traditional Japanese forms is certainly not the result of ignorance, as leading politicians and planners examined the ongoing government-led modernization of European metropolises

Why did the political and business elite not implement comprehensive monumental plans following European examples as suggested by foreign and Japanese planners in the early years after the Meiji restoration?

and the tools used in their transformation closely.⁷ Since the opening of Japan, knowledge about European urban planning came to Japan through several channels. Western architects, engineers, builders and surveyors traveled to Japan and built there.⁸ The Japanese government also did its own investigations. Already from 1871 to 1873, the Iwakura mission (*Iwakura Shisetsudan*), named after its leader Iwakura Tomomi and which included several high-ranking officials, left Japan to examine Western technology and culture in Europe and the United States. Furthermore, the Japanese government systematically sent promising students to various places in Europe (and the United States) to collect information on numerous topics, including architecture and planning. Many of these students later shaped Japanese legislation and urban form.⁹ Furthermore, the Japanese government actively sought to integrate Western planning concepts, inviting numerous foreigners to teach and build, but slowly rejecting their advice for more appropriate ways.¹⁰

Despite the elite's admiration for the Parisian transformation, similar plans for Tokyo failed. On the invitation of Inoue Kaoru, Minister of the Exterior, the Berlin office of Wilhelm Böckmann and Hermann Ende designed a government district in Hibiya in 1887. Inspired by Parisian axis and symmetry, the project featured large boulevards connecting major institutions and ministries, monumental public places surrounded by large awe-inspiring buildings, and a new central train station. However, the government dropped the project by Böckmann and Ende in favor of the "First Plan for Urban Area Improvement of Tokyo" (*Tokyo shiku kaisei kyu keikaku*) of 1889. The government's main concern in the First Plan, a rare



example of a large-scale concept in Tokyo planning, was the improvement of Tokyo roads and parks, rather than the creation of urban beauty through monumental buildings lining majestic boulevards, ending this first phase of “grand design” in Japan in favor of a more pragmatic approach towards urban transformation. The monumental order proposed in the Böckmann and Ende plan and the inherent Haussmann-like approach revealed itself to be not viable in the Japanese context, as the country did not have a history of monumental urban design and the use of architecture to highlight and complement urban form, and did not attempt to transform existing land ownership structures. In the following years, public and private forces inserted the governmental and business functions and infrastructures that were part of the Böckmann and Ende plan piecemeal into the existing city and without integrating urban and architectural form. Simultaneously, these forces created business districts and housing areas, transforming Tokyo into a modern metropolis and capital city.

IN SEARCH OF NEW PLANNING TOOLS

The following examples show concretely how the new forces and needs of the Meiji era affected urban change and how land readjustment—a technique of creating infrastructures and replotting land which includes the reduction of individual building sites—emerged as the main Japanese planning instrument. The Ginza example stands for urban transformation after destruction through fire, followed by a return towards earlier form inspired by land ownership. The Marunouchi area case reflects the opportunities that arose from Tokyo’s traditional structure and that facilitated the modernization of the capital in one of the most prominent urban areas under the leadership of a private company, Mitsubishi.

Ginza—Natural Destruction, Political Transformation And Early Attempts At Westernization

The Ginza, a traditional “shitamachi” (downtown)-townsman area outside of the castle, had been built on a grid layout with views of Mount Fuji and the castle on land reclaimed from the sea. Through the center of the area ran one of the most important Japanese highways, the Tokaido, connecting the west of the country with the North. A moat separated the

Ginza from the group of daimyo residences east of the fortress. The destruction by fire of 3000 houses in the Ginza area in 1872 could have provided the occasion for a reconstruction on a new urban plan and with a new building style, but the government’s early attempt to transform the city and to create a unified streetscape in the early 1870s, reflecting Western forms, was not realized and only piecemeal attempts at transforming the urban form occurred.

Under the leadership of the British engineer Thomas J. Waters, the city rebuilt the area after the fire as a brick district, with a new major thoroughfare lined with sidewalks, gaslights, and two story buildings with arcades.¹¹ (See image, next page.) However, only in a few cases did the government actually create new roads, combine blocks, or change the directions of streets.

The transformers of the Ginza confronted small lots and numerous people who had quasi-landownership. This small-scale structure could not host the new institutions of a growing metropolis, such as government buildings or department stores. Many European cities opted to demolish their medieval centers to make place for new government buildings and infrastructures, or opted to establish new large-scale structures such as train stations on the outskirts of the existing city. In Japan, recurring destruction as in the case of the Ginza could have been taken as an incentive for land consolidation and the creation of large lots. This did not happen, however, and the department stores that came into existence in the Ginza area in later years rose on land that had been individually purchased and had not been rearranged by the government for large-scale buildings.

The Marunouchi Area—The Demise of the Shogunal System and the Creation of a Government and Business District

For the temple and townsman areas, the Meiji restoration did not bring major changes. Varied new functions, however, were introduced for the land formerly used by the military caste. The Marunouchi area, just outside the castle gates and surrounded by an extended system of moats and canals for the protection of the shogun, was a central element in the transformation of Tokyo, providing space outside densely built and privately owned townsman areas for all the elements



THE CREATION OF THE GINZA STREET BY THOMAS J. WATERS AFTER A FIRE DESTROYED SOME 3000 HOUSES IN 1872.

Böckmann and Ende had proposed in this area: a political center, a major park, a business district, a central train station and other infrastructure. Instead of the monumental structures suggested by the foreign visitors, the Japanese elite took a more pragmatic approach. The new government initially transformed the single properties in the Marunouchi area, clearing them of buildings and using them for military and government purposes, erecting new buildings including a prison while using some Daimyo residences for official purposes as the plan of 1868–88 shows. Overall the government maintained the existing street outlay and left attempts at unifying streetscapes to individual initiatives on single properties.¹²

The government laid out its overall ideas for the area in the 1889 “First Plan for Urban Area Improvement of Tokyo.” For the Marunouchi area the Plan preserved the existing outlay but suggested the insertion of new urban functions. It stipulated various regulations for the purchase of land and buildings required for urban improvement projects, and particularly prescribed the layout of the new railway line connecting two existing railway headstations, Shinbashi and Ueno, on opposing sides of the outskirts of the Marunouchi area. Railway companies in Tokyo and other Japanese cities had built most of their early lines on agricultural land, but the connection of the head stations through the heart of the city had to be made within built-up areas. Tokyo was nonetheless in a singularly good position: Nearly half of the land necessary was in the hand of the government and much of it had already been cleared of buildings. European cities, such as Brussels or Berlin, created similar connections between head-terminals at major costs and much later.

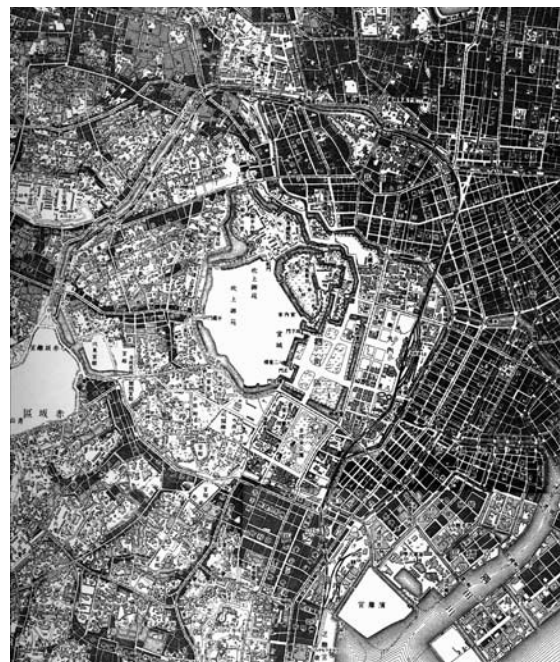
In 1890, once the decision for the future Tokyo station was made, the fate of the area changed when the government offered 27.9 hectares of the former daimyo area for sale, keeping only the railroad and station sites as well as the eastern part for public use. Inspired by the London Central Business District, the Mitsubishi company’s leadership was keen on buying the area. Development, however, proceeded very slowly. Construction started in 1890, but almost twenty years later, by 1909—that is before the railway opening—only a few buildings (including Mitsubishi 1 and 2) came into being. The first buildings, which imitated London brick building architecture, became known as London ichome and the area later developed into the Marunouchi business district. The Mitsubishi company had made an excellent site selection and until today owns much of what is today Tokyo’s central business district. But, like the original Ginza project, the architectural forms did not have a long life-span.

The transformation of the Marunouchi district in the immediate vicinity of the castle is a special case in regard to the functions and scale of the buildings introduced, the financing available and the people involved. The transformation of each former daimyo area was in some sense a special case. Indeed, most of the time, the development was not so straightforward as in the Marunouchi case. (See images, next page.)

After the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake that destroyed large parts of Tokyo and Yokohama, the former Tokyo mayor Gotô Shinpei, then home minister and president of the Imperial City Restoration Department, established large-scale plans for an overall rebuilding and replotting of the damaged area. These plans did not gain support. Instead, land readjustment became the principal means for the reconstruction of the area.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PLANNING TOOLS

The examples discussed above illustrate urban development in Tokyo at a time when land ownership and urban planning were still in flux and which lasted until the 1923 reconstruction after the Great Kanto Earthquake. They show that planners tested new planning tools to adapt the city to the new modern needs through the creation of streets



THESE IMAGES SHOW THE IMPERIAL PALACE AND THE SURROUNDING AREA IN 1880 AND 1916. NOTE HOW THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN FORM AND CONSTRUCTION TO THE EAST OF THE PALACE HAVE CHANGED.


and large buildings. Traditional building laws did not provide the necessary tools. The earliest building laws from the mid-19th century concerned mainly safety issues such as fire and earthquake proofing and were not sufficient to guide the developing metropolis. In this section, this essay will turn to look at different planning techniques and how Japanese planners adopted, transformed, or rejected them in the early Meiji period. This analysis shows that Japanese politicians and planners rejected monumental forms, while adopting foreign techniques aimed at creating a more functional layout of the land as long as they allowed for small-scale piecemeal interventions, notably land readjustment.

The Japanese Adoption of Building Ordinances, Zone Expropriation, and Building Lines

Planners in European cities, in particular, had developed various instruments to control the appearance of the streetscape and to harmonize the buildings by imposing continuous streetlines, building heights, or building materials and expropriating land when deemed necessary to improve the form and function of the city. The European tools to harmonize the streetscape included building ordinances (especially in Paris), building lines that delineate the location of buildings

on a lot and regulate the distances between buildings and therewith contribute to creating continuous street frontages as well as regulating distances between buildings (especially in Germany), and most importantly zone expropriation, a technique to expropriate land beyond the area needed for street widening and create new (larger) lots alongside the street (again in Paris).

Japanese regulators did not adopt building ordinances at the time of the First Plan for Urban Improvement of Tokyo (1889). This was at least partially due to the influence of the architects who considered that they were capable of designing and did not need strong control. Planners knew about the use of building lines to unify building frontages and introduced the concept in the building law of 1919.¹³ They nonetheless deployed it in ways very different from its framers' original intent: As the planner and planning historian Ishida Yorifusa has shown, they used it after the 1923 earthquake to maintain high population density. By drawing building lines in the interior of blocks, planners created virtual access routes to lots at the interior of deep blocks, thus providing a means to continuously use these areas and maintain density. Often enough these lines existed only on paper, but that was enough to allow construction in the block



interior. Japanese planners thus transformed a planning instrument designed to unify urban landscapes and made it into a tool to preserve a particular Japanese status quo instead of transforming it.

Another important instrument for the creation of identical streetscapes on both sides of the street and of creating appropriate plot for new usages is zone expropriation. This technique had been used in Paris to combine land alongside streets in order to make it ready for new building types that need large lots, such as the apartment house and the department store. Zone expropriation existed in Japan in a simple form since 1888 and the 1919 laws reaffirmed it. Yet, planners used this tool during the more than 30 years of its existence only a few times.

Major figures of Japanese planning supported zone expropriation and tried to implement it, but without success. In 1919, even the minister of the interior Gotô Shinpei and his director of urban planning Ikeda Hiroshi (later appointed respectively mayor and vice-mayor of Tokyo), failed to convince the metropolitan government or the land-owners of their ideas.¹⁴

Among the few successful examples of zone expropriation in Japan, there was only one where the sale of building sites financed the construction of streets and other public spaces at market price: the Shinjuku station plaza in the 1930s. The 1923 earthquake had boosted the development of Shinjuku. To accommodate the growing traffic needs, public and private forces built new roads and railways as well as new plazas in front of major stations.¹⁵ While detailed urban plans existed for several station plazas (Shinjuku in 1934, Shibuya, Ikebukuro, Otsuka in 1939), only the Shinjuku station plaza materialized in its urban form before the war. To Western eyes, the resulting irregular plaza in front of the station does not look like a carefully designed project. In regard to Japanese planning history, however, it is of major importance, as overall planning applied to the entire station plaza, restrictions were imposed in regard to further sale or division, and construction within three years and architectural conditions were imposed at a time when only four examples of height control existed in Japan.¹⁶ It is also the only example in Japan where planners used “excess condemnation” in its complete sense—that is when the construction costs were


brought in by the sale of the redesigned land. This realization was possible only because large areas of land were owned publicly or by railway companies, both of which were interested in the rebuilding and the creation of a plaza. Yet their desire for representation, and all of these new regulations, still did not lead to the creation of an architecturally unified streetscape.

The Shinjuku transformation is a rare example of urban design in Japan. In most cases, new infrastructure construction made no attempt to regulate the adjoining lots or the architectural design. For example, after the widening of the Nihonbashi odorï street, three- or four-story houses occupied the same small building sites as their wooden two-story predecessors. While the earlier buildings were more or less uniform in their height, style and building materials, the new constructions displayed a great variety of styles, forms and heights.¹⁷ A mixture of Western and traditional forms characterized the relationship between the building and the land, as old land divisions retrained the new constructions that featured Western architectural forms and materials.

Land Readjustment, the Mother of Japanese Urban Planning

Thus all attempts to redesign the lot structure through European-style interventions, such as large-scale expropriation, failed. Land readjustment was the only instrument successful in transforming the existing urban area since the Ginza transformation.

The 1919 urban planning laws systematized land readjustment, notably for use in rural areas. Expansive fires that swept through urban areas made clear the need for such an instrument in urban areas (Waseda Tsurumaki cho, 1920; Shinjuku 3 chome, 1921, etc.). The huge damage of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 made Japanese planners turn to land readjustment as their main instrument of urban planning. The comprehensive plans for consolidating large areas that needed longer periods of intervention failed as people wanted, and needed, to rapidly rebuild their homes and businesses. Land readjustment that let people stay on the sites they had formerly occupied and introduced only minor changes to the site layout for the construction of streets without the reorganization of the bordering zone appealed to them, even though one result



was numerous irregular sites. Planners at this time deployed land readjustment to create infrastructure, not building space. While creating new thoroughfares, the reconstruction left the city largely with the old land division.

In a similar way, the planners reconstructing Japanese cities after the Second World War focused primarily on creating new streets. In doing so, they reduced the scale of the building sites. Planners and engineers dominated the reconstruction period after 1945, establishing continuity from the prewar period. Their favorite technique was land readjustment. It was used for pragmatic street widening as well as for the careful urban design of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Postwar proposals for low-density cities with green belts, public spaces, wide avenues, and high-rise buildings reflected larger international discussion, but their authors never specified how these projects could be realized within the existing framework of landownership and planning laws. Few architects inquired what the tools of the reconstruction were, and how they could be used to produce the schemes they envisioned.

Japanese land owners still cling to their land and will use even areas that Westerners consider unbuildable; their tiny parcels won't disappear in the near future. Some examples of such minimum lots, such as the Tower House by Azuma Takamitsu, have even become highlights of Japanese urban architecture and particularly of Tokyo.

Although land ownership is clearly established in Japan today, one of the most important obstacles to assembling several building sites for large-scale new construction are the numerous rights attached to one site. This situation has historic roots going back to the Meiji period when land was often lent for construction, which then was rented out for further use. Thus, the owner of the land, the building and its user(s) were often different persons, a practice that continues today. It was (and is) generally difficult to revoke the contracts of the people who had built on the site and thus, even if several neighboring sites belong to the same owner, they often have different usage rights attached to them and are therefore difficult to unify. The technique of “*saikaihatsu*” (land redevelopment) introduced in the 1960s creates in fact an even more intricate

network of small-scale ownership, as it introduces a three-dimensional reorganization in which planners pool together small parcels and build a common multi-story building where each of the former owners gets space in the new construction and maintains a partial ownership of a part of the soil.

The examination of some early attempts at urban planning in Japan shows that all attempts at unifying or designing the streetscape failed because of these concerns. Even implemented designs such as the Ginza or the Marunouchi “London” areas quickly reversed to a more diversified streetscape: more than public planning, private enterprise and individual concerns “designed” the city, a practice that allowed for rapid modernization and left room for individual initiatives. The only planning technique that planners accepted was land readjustment as a means to bring together a group of owners in order to ameliorate the urban situation through minor, pragmatic changes. It worked because it was based on the concept of changing the pattern of the land while maintaining the ownership. (This practice is contrary to the European forms of land readjustment that are based on the idea of expropriation and re-attribution of the land.)

Preserving the land ownership and the right to use this land have been central concerns for Japanese landowners, while they did not display any interest in monumental representation. The relatively recent establishment of personal land ownership may be one reason for the Japanese desire to have full control over their land. Another may be that large landowners have long dominated the government. The late establishment of the urban planning profession and its early rift from architects further emphasized the separate treatment of buildings and urban space. Practices that had equivalents in Japan, such as land readjustment, became pillars of the Japanese planning system; others failed, such as monumental representation that did not have any roots in Japanese tradition. Meanwhile, social space—and not built space—dominates the cities and urban planning therewith becomes a pragmatic instrument for adapting the cities to new functions, techniques, materials and uses.

As we have seen, the particularities of Japanese urban planning and planner's preference for a pragmatic small-scale approach to functional changes

were already taking shape in the 1920s. Japanese planners rejected the direct and often arrogant criticism uttered by Westerners with arguments about the Japanese need for rapid modernization.¹⁸ Ironically, today, Western planners are rediscovering the Japanese city as a model for a highly adaptable city, a city illustrating, for example, chaos theory.

RECONSTRUCTION AND THE CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE CITY

In the wake of Jane Jacobs and other critics of modernist planning in the 1960s, and in contrast to European criticism of Japanese urban planning in the 1920s, many contemporary observers have viewed Japanese cities and particularly constantly changing Tokyo as a model for the future and an inspiration for urban planning.¹⁹ The most famous portrayal of this city of the future comes from the well-known Japanese architect Ashihara Yoshinobu, whose translated work is often referenced outside Japan and who has described Tokyo's "hidden order."²⁰ For Ashihara, Japanese cities are characterized by their contents and by undefined forms that provide them with an unrivaled potential for evolution. The form of the Japanese city may even be said to be specifically Asian—according to the contemporary architect and theorist Maki Fumihiko—in its lack of visual order, which allows for the coexistence of many different elements. This results in an extreme adaptability and tolerance on the one hand and obvious confusion on the other.²¹

The vitality of Japanese cities, their "complexity and contradiction," and the richness of their patterns also has inspired the American architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, to whom Tokyo serves as a sequel to their study of Las Vegas in relation to vernacular urban form.²² Art historian Kaori Kitao has spoken of the "shrouded character of meaning," which she links to the evolving character of Japanese cities and the idea of incremental planning, or "bricolage."²³

These views convey a very positive image of contemporary Japanese cities, yet the elements admired—vitality, the mixture of functions, and adaptability—have not been implemented through planning. On the contrary, they often exist in areas



THE CHAOTIC URBAN LANDSCAPE IN JAPAN: A PENCIL BUILDING CREATED AS A RESULT OF STREET WIDENING NEAR MEIDAIMAE STATION IN TOKYO.

that have been "spared" redevelopment. The conclusion to be drawn is that postwar planning, in its focus on specific parts of the city, rearranging landownership to provide building sites, and widening streets to reduce the risk of fire, destroyed the historic cityscapes. This assessment, however, is not quite accurate. Wartime destruction and reconstruction per se did not shape contemporary urban form. Kyoto is a case in point. One of the few major cities that was not bombed during the Second World War, it nevertheless generally resembles the chaotic cityscapes of other metropolises that had been devastated in the bombings.

The historic buildings for which Kyoto is famed are today embedded in a modern city. In fact, Japanese cities as a whole might not look any different than they do today had they not been subject to wartime bombings. Some historic monuments might have been preserved unchanged, but economic development and modernization, the introduction of new functions, new building materials, new laws, and new actors on the urban-planning scene since the 1960s might have brought about similar changes. The destruction of the "old" city thus is

not primarily a result of the use of specific planning tools or design options (such as land readjustment), but rather of economic development and the choices made by political or business leaders.²⁴ Just as architects in the early postwar period did not specify the methods to realize their schemes, the fascination with and praise of these contemporary Japanese cities as models for the twenty-first century rarely involves an exploration of the roots of contemporary cities and the inherent reasons for their particular urban form, nor does it clearly lay out tools that may be used to enhance it.

Praise for unplanned areas often goes together with criticism of land readjustment for failing to create a livable and beautiful urban form. Such criticism is misdirected. Land readjustment can be used to create any form, as the Hiroshima Peace Center demonstrates. The form achieved through land readjustment depends on those who use the technique. As long as technocrats, bureaucrats, and engineers are in control of these methods, the image of Japan's cities and specifically of the areas "improved," will not change. Specialists in the urban environment, including architects, must join together to define goals for the contemporary Japanese city—adapting existing planning techniques or devising new ones in order to realize them.

Recent attempts to incorporate citizen participation into land readjustment practices exemplify the possibility of transforming a tool of centralized planning into an instrument of consensus-based community building.²⁵ Other initiatives involving the public have been more innovative.²⁶ Kobe's Noda Hokubu neighborhood, which was partly destroyed in the 1995 earthquake, offers an example of a recent attempt at district planning with citizen participation, the District Plan for the Guidance of the Appearance of the Townscape (*Machinami-yûdogata Chiku Keikaku*), as a first in Japan.

Based on collaborative measures, this plan combines the widening of streets with the rebuilding of physical structures and the creation of a convenient and comfortable neighborhood. One of the main aims of the district plan is to enlarge the roadside space physically and visually to improve both the fire resistance and the quality of life for residents. While property owners are not allowed to erect fences, gates, or walls in the setback area, they may

use this zone for planting trees and bushes that can be seen from the street. The creation of such "semi-private" zones, an important feature of traditional Japan, contributes to and reflects neighborliness. The establishment of regulations similar to those described here in the context of district planning could complement reformed land readjustment. Even though they may not be ideal solutions for the future—district planning in Noda Hokubu, for example, is based on a deregulation of land use control, which may lead to further densification—they indicate at least a direction into which to move. New regulations could also include attempts at three-dimensional planning, without necessarily prescribing concrete architectural form.

While these issues cannot be resolved in these pages, it is clear that developing an approach to urban rebuilding—one that considers the lessons of history—is an urgent concern for Japan, but also a lesson for others. Japanese cities are very vulnerable to disasters; the threat of a devastating earthquake is constant. In order to avoid central government control over reconstruction and domination by technocrats and engineers, politicians, planners, and urban designers, together with citizens, must develop in advance the appropriate planning methods and procedures, including citizen participation, for rebuilding after a disaster. The formulation of future-oriented concepts requires the development of planning tools that integrate urban and architectural viewpoints and are oriented toward future needs. Continuity and change observed in the reconstruction period continue to shape Japanese cities and urban planning; the knowledge about these particularities should be consciously put to use in the design of the future city.

ENDNOTES

1. The numbers given by different authors vary, but it is clear that the land used by warriors was over 60 percent of the urban land, while townsmen used less than 30 percent. See: Akira Naito, "Edo to Edo-jo" {Edo and Edo Castle} (Tokyo: Kashima Shuppamlao, 1966); Masao Suzuki, "Meiji umare no machin, Kanda Misaki-cho" {Kanda Misaki-cho, a neighborhood at the beginning of Meiji} (Tokyo: Seiobo, 1978).
2. On Edo land ownership see interview with Tamai Tetsuo and Tetsuo Tamai, *Edo, ushinawareta toshikûkan*

- wo yomu* {*Reading the lost urban space of Edo*} (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1986).
3. See also Edwin O. Reischauer and Albert M. Craig, *Japan: Tradition and Transformation*, Revised edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989).
 4. See also Roman Cybriwsky, *Tokyo, The Shogun's City at the Twenty-first Century* (Chichester, New York, Weinheim, Brisbane, Singapore, Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 1998).
 5. See Carola Hein, "Resilient Tokyo: Disaster and Transformation in the Japanese City," in *The Resilient City*, ed. Lawrence Vale and Thomas Campanella (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
 6. Many of these large estates were ultimately redeveloped for new large building complexes—including the 1964 Olympic buildings by Tange Kenzo—or transformed into parks and opened for the public, such as Ueno or Hamarikyu kôen.
 7. Jinnai Hidenobu, in particular, has shown how Tokyo adopted the basic patterns from Edo. See Hidenobu Jinnai, *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995).
 8. See also David B. Stewart, *The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture, 1868 to the Present* (Tokyo and New York: Kondansha International, 1987).
 9. Mori Ougai went to Germany from 1884 or 1885 to 1889, where he studied issues of hygiene and topics such as zoning, building lines and green spaces. As Ishida Yorifusa has shown, the knowledge that Mori gained in Europe has become part of his proposals for a Japanese building law Yorifusa Ishida, "Mori Ougai no 'okusei shingi' to tōkyō shi kenchiku jōrei {Mori Ougai's 'New Discussion on Building Law,' and the Tokyo Building Law} in *Tōkyō: seichō to keikaku 1868 - 1988*, ed. H. Ichizuka and Yorifusa Ishida (Tokyo: Tōkyō toritsu daigaku toshikenkyū senta, 1988).
 10. See also Carola Hein and Yorifusa Ishida, "Japanische Stadtplanung und ihre deutschen Wurzeln," {Japanese Urban Planning and its German Roots} *Die Alte Stadt* Vol. 25, No. 3 (1998).
 11. Hiromichi Ishizuka and Yorifusa Ishida, *Tokyo: Urban Growth and Planning* (Tokyo: Center for Urban Studies, Tokyo Metropolitan University, 1988). Terunobu Fujimori, "Meiji no Tōkyō keikaku" {Plans for Tokyo in the Meiji Era} (Tokyo: Iwanami shōten, 1982).
 12. Choices in land attribution made at that time, however, had long-lasting impact. The awkwardly shaped site of the current Tokyo International Forum built by Rafael Vinoly on a lot neighboring the Yamanote ring line goes back to the establishment of the Tokyo government prefectural offices (completed in 1893; arch: Tsumaki, Yorinaka). Cut in half by the construction of the railway line towards Tokyo station, the remaining land became the place of the Tokyo Municipal Government (TMG), until the administration left for Shinjuku, freeing up the site for the Tokyo International Forum (Tokyo's convention and art center) today.
 13. Hein and Ishida, "Japanische Stadtplanung," Ibid.
 14. See Ibid, E. Suzuki, Senzen ni okeru kenchiku shikichi sōsei tochi kukaku seiri no jittai to sono kōsatsu {The Land Readjustment of Building Plots Alongside Newly Created Streets and Squares in the Pre-War Era}, *Tōshikeikaku*, Vol. 151 (1988).
 15. See also Akira Koshizawa, *Tōkyō no toshi-keikaku* {*The Urban Planning of Tokyo*} (Tokyo: Iwanami-shinsho, 1991); Akira Koshizawa, *Tōkyō toshi keikaku monogatari* [*Stories of Urban Planning Projects in Tokyo*] (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 1991).
 16. For example, the height of the buildings was imposed: 17 meters on the outside, 11 meters on the inside and on the station side.
 17. See also Mitsuo Okawa et al., *Kindai kenchiku no keifu* [*A Genealogy of Modern Architecture*] (Tokyo: Shōkokusha, 1997).
 18. See also Carola Hein, "Nishiyama Uzō and the Spread of Western Concepts in Japan," *10+1*, no. 20 (2000), Hideaki Ishikawa, "100 nengo no toshi {The City in 100 Years}," in *toshi no seitai* (Shinjū-sha, 1943), Bruno Taut, *Die Auflösung der Städte* oder "Die Erde eine gute Wohnung" oder auch "Der Weg zur Alpenin Architektur", { "The Dissolution of the City" or "The Earth A Good Housing" or also "The Way Towards an Alpine Architecture" } (Essen: Folkwang Publishers, 1920).
 19. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1961, and Barrie Shelton, *Learning from the Japanese City. West Meets East in Urban Design* (London and New York: E and FN Spon, 1999).
 20. See Ashihara Yoshinobu, *The Hidden Order: Tokyo Through the Twentieth Century*, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1989).
 21. Maki Fumihiko, 'La Construction des Lieux,' {The Construction of Spaces} in Augustin Berque (ed.) *La Qualité de la Ville, Urbanité française, urbanité nippone. {The Quality of the City, French Urbanity, Japanese Urbanity}* (Tōkyō: Publications de la Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1987), 112-113.
 22. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, remarks made as discussants at the conference "Rebuilding Japan's Bombed Cities" held at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, October 28-29, 2001; Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, "Two Naïfs in Japan," in Robert Venturi, *Iconography and electronics on a generic architecture: a view from the drafting room* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986), 109-118.
 23. Kaori Kitao, remarks made as a discussant at the conference "Rebuilding Japan's Bombed Cities" held at Bryn Mawr College, October 28-29, 2001.
 24. The same observation is true for Europe and the United States, where cities have endured destruction through modernization and historical reinvention throughout the postwar period. Many buildings and urban structures that survived the extensive bombing of Berlin, for example, have been destroyed since World War II. The demolition of the Hohenzollern palace under the East German government is one such case; the reinterpretation of the remains

of the Reichstag through the destruction of its Wilhelminian ornamentation another. But even cities that were not bombed have been largely transformed. Following its reinvention as capital of the European Union, Brussels has been largely rebuilt and many of its buildings and urban features destroyed. Although World War II did not touch the soil of the continental United States, the scale and scope of American urban renewal in the 1950s and 60s equals that of rebuilding activities in Europe. In fact, the theme of postwar reconstruction meant economic as much as physical rebuilding.

25. The importance of the neighborhood has been recognized in Japan in recent years, and community building, (*machizukuri*), a bottom-up approach to urban design, based on citizen participation and social organization, has become a central theme of Japanese planning since the 1960s. In fact, it often stands in opposition to the top-down approach of

urban planning, (*toshikeikaku*) as a comprehensive, encompassing approach to the overall city, strongly focused on the physical structure and the techniques shaping it. Recent attempts at urban planning in cooperation with citizen groups are a positive result of this type of planning approach and highlight the changing role of planning and planners since the postwar reconstruction era. See Uta Hohn, *Stadtplanung in Japan. Geschichte—Recht—Praxis—Theorie* {*Urban Planning in Japan. History-Law-Praxis-Theory*} (Dortmund: Dortmunder Vertrieb für Bau-und Planungsliteratur, 2000); and Watanabe Shun'ichi, ed., *Shimin sanku no machizukuri* [Community building with citizen participation] (Kyôto: Gakuseishuppansha, 1999).

26. See Carola Hein, "Toshikeikaku and Machizukuri in Japanese Urban Planning: The Reconstruction of Inner City Neighborhoods in Kobe," in *Jahrbuch des DIJ* (*Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien*), Vol. 13, 2001, 221–222.

RESCALING THE JAPANESE CITY: URBANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

RONALD K. VOGEL



Territory and politics are being rescaled within nations with evidence of a shift from national to regional and metropolitan levels.¹ There is also a rescaling process within metropolitan cities to create or strengthen metropolitan decision making capacity and to shift downwards more local or neighborhood services to new or reinvigorated lower units.² At the local and regional levels, this urban restructuring is leading to new governance arrangements for metropolitan areas.³ City regions, not central cities or nation-states are the relevant boundaries and jurisdictions for competing in a world economy.⁴ Policy makers at the national and local/regional levels have struggled to adapt to these new realities. In Japan, we see evidence of rescaling processes as officials in central and local/regional governments seek to reorganize boundaries and functions of local government. At the national level, this is apparent in political decentralization policies. It can also be observed in efforts to reorganize metropolitan governance in Tokyo and other metropolises.

URBANIZATION IN JAPAN

P. Karan identifies four stages of urbanization in modern Japan.⁵ During the Meiji era (1868–1912), urbanization was associated with industrialization and a decline in agricultural production. In the second stage (1930–1950), agriculture continued to decline. About one third of the population resided in cities with the population of Tokyo,

Osaka, Kyoto, and Nagoya growing to more than one million people each. During World War II, urban population declined significantly with only about one-fourth of the population remaining in cities. Tokyo and Osaka lost more than one million residents at this time. In the third stage (1950–1970), there was rapid urbanization and economic expansion. By 1970, about three quarters of the population lived in urban areas. Six cities had more than one million people—Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Yokohama, and Kobe. Population also spread throughout the metropolis beyond these core cities. There was significant population loss in the rural areas with some 30 million people relocating to the cities and suburbs.

In Japan, we see evidence of rescaling processes as officials in central and local/regional governments seek to reorganize boundaries and functions of local government.

In the fourth stage of urbanization (1970 and beyond), there was even greater metropolitan expansion (see Table 1, next page), and the number of workers engaged in agriculture fell to about 10 percent of the population. Another four cities—Kitakyushu, Sapporo, Kawasaki, and Fukuoka—joined the million person threshold. (See Figure 1, page 19.)

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Table 1: Local Authority Population (2004)

POPULATION	PREFECTURES	POPULATION	CITIES	SPECIAL WARDS	POPULATION	TOWNS AND VILLAGES
10 MILLION AND ABOVE	1	1 MILLION AND ABOVE	10		40,000 AND ABOVE	30
5 MILLION AND ABOVE	8	500,000 AND ABOVE	13	7	30,000 AND ABOVE	83
3 MILLION AND ABOVE	1	300,000 AND ABOVE	41	4	20,000 AND ABOVE	195
2 MILLION AND ABOVE	10	100,000 AND ABOVE	120	5	10,000 AND ABOVE	633
1 MILLION AND ABOVE	20	100,000 AND ABOVE	120	5	5,000 AND ABOVE	779
LESS THAN 1 MILLION	7	50,000 AND ABOVE	230	1	1,000 AND ABOVE	635
		30,000 AND ABOVE	166	1	LESS THAN 1,000	50
		LESS THAN 30,000	76			
TOTAL	47	TOTAL	776	23	TOTAL	2,405

Reproduced from: Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, *Local Government in Japan* (2004), p. 3

The former distinct metropolises of Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe fused into a single Japanese megalopolis of more than 78 million people with more than two-thirds of the Japanese population. In part, this is due to the geography of Japan, which provides only a narrow band between the coast and mountains for development. However, the high degree of government centralization in Tokyo also leads to overconcentration as corporations find it necessary to locate close to government ministries in the capital.

FORCES LEADING TO RESCALING CITIES

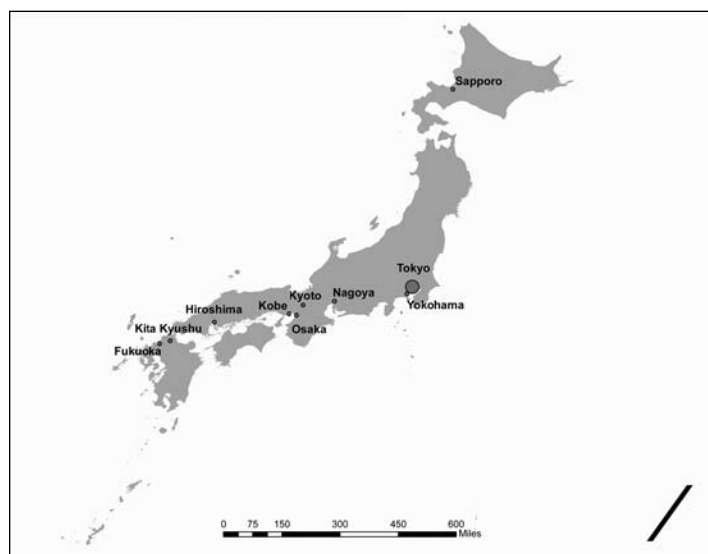
The rescaling of cities is driven by four interrelated factors.⁶ First, globalization of the economy is associated with the rise of global or world cities. The primary unit in the world economy is now city-regions, not nation states. Second, political decentralization and devolution advantage city-regions that are more autonomous by providing greater flexibility to adjust to changing conditions

in this rapidly changing world.⁷ Local officials and businesses are in a better position to identify potential opportunities and determine whether public services and infrastructure are adequate.

The economic and fiscal crisis in the past two decades in Japan led the central government to promote administrative reform and decentralization policies beginning in the 1980s.

Third, there is a contraction of the scale and scope of modern state welfare policies in developed countries. This is associated with the emergence of new political culture emphasizing lower

Figure 1: Large Cities in Japan (1,000,000 and Above)



taxes and greater reliance on market processes to promote economic development and ensure efficient public services.⁸ This is closely related to political decentralization and privatization. Fourth, rapid suburbanization has occurred in cities throughout the world.⁹ People are shifting to the periphery of existing urban cores seeking better and more affordable housing not available in the central city. However, the suburbs frequently lack infrastructure and the richness of culture available in the urban core.

CHANGES IN LOCAL/REGIONAL GOVERNANCE IN JAPAN

The economic and fiscal crisis in the past two decades in Japan led the central government to promote administrative reform and decentralization policies beginning in the 1980s. However, the central ministries have been slow to reform. Moreover, national scandals involving bureaucrats in central ministries have undermined legitimacy of national institutions. Most significant with respect to the system of local government has been the effort to reform central/local-regional government relations.

The modern system of local government was established in Japan under American occupation following World War II. Initially, local government was viewed as a counterweight to fascist and militaristic tendencies that led to the war. Strong

and vital local government would ensure Japan developed democratically. However, American views changed with the new Soviet threat and concerns that the United States needed a strong ally in combating the spread of communism. Thus, the degree of local government autonomy and decentralization was a promise that was not fulfilled in the post-war Constitution.¹⁰

In the 1990s, increasing economic globalization and pressure from trading partners revealed Japan was no longer immune to the economic restructuring processes that already occurred in the United States and Europe. The economic crisis gripping Japan since the bubble burst in the 1980s eroded

the covenant between employers and employees to provide jobs for life. Citizens sought greater attention to quality of life issues and local officials sought more flexibility in responding to urban problems ranging from inadequate infrastructure in the rapidly growing suburbs to the need for urban renewal and economic development in the aging industrial centers and urban core. Political scandals and the fiscal crisis at the national level also meant that Japan Inc. could no longer afford to govern entirely from the center and continue its open-ended support for declining rural communities with national development programs and subsidies.

To fundamentally alter the system of local government, the national government passed the Decentralization Promotion Law in 1995 and adopted the Decentralization Promotion Program in 1998 to implement the law. In 2000, the government moved to fully implement the program with the Omnibus Decentralization Act. These are designed to strengthen local governments to better meet citizen aspirations and to reduce the power of central ministries in local affairs. The main aspects of decentralization policy were abolishing agency delegation and eliminating posting of central ministry officials in local government. In recent years, these reforms have had far-reaching affects on local government, although opinion differs on whether the reforms will actually result in greater local autonomy.

Prior to the reforms, 80 percent of local government activity occurred under *agency delegation*; under agency delegation, the central government ministries delegate a function to a municipal mayor or prefecture governor. In these cases, the executive acts directly under national authority and operates independently of the council or assembly. Prior to the reforms, there were 561 separate agency delegations to local government. Agency delegation has now been replaced by *legally commissioned* activities, which function as grants. Presumably, local governments can opt to participate or in other cases it may even eschew providing the service altogether.

To prepare cities for decentralization, the central government also promoted consolidation and reclassification of the system of cities nationally. Following the passage of the Local Autonomy Law in 1994 and subsequent amendments, 35 medium sized cities with a minimum population of 300,000 took advantage of the opportunity to become “Core Cities,” giving them authority similar to other large cities.¹¹ For example, these cities were given the authority to supervise nursing homes, inspect sewer facilities, and approve redevelopment policies. In addition, the central government created the “Wide Area Union System” as a way to provide services over larger regions that cross jurisdictional boundaries. There are at least 79 wide area unions in place.¹² The unions can receive services from higher or lower level governments. Finally, the central government promoted amalgamations of cities as a way to create greater administrative capacity. However, only a select few amalgamations have occurred.

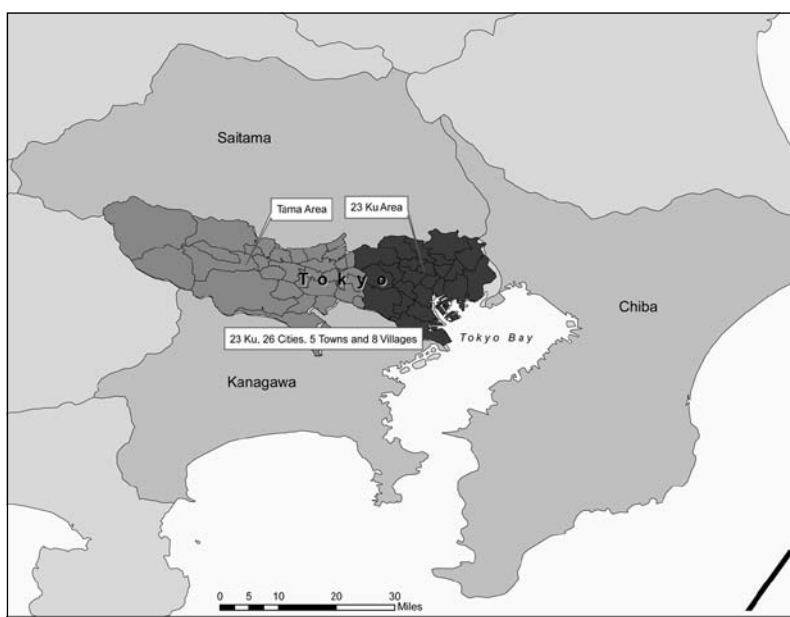
Concerns remain that decentralization is in name only. Transformation of local government under the reforms provides cover for the central government’s withdrawal of financial support for a number of activities. The fear among local governments is that the


reforms disguise program cuts as devolution.¹³ The central government collects about 60 percent of the revenue nationally but spends only 35 percent with the rest sent down to local government.¹⁴ Without fiscal decentralization, few believe the central government is serious about reform. The current reforms known as Trinity Reform (FY 2004–2006) call for “reduction of earmarked grants, compensation for this by an increase in the taxing power of local authorities and a review of the system of unconditional revenue sharing.”¹⁵ Although fiscal reform is underway, many doubt that sufficient resources will be transferred to local governments, especially smaller governments. Moreover, there is continuing concern that corruption at the local level can derail reforms. (Of course, these concerns also apply to the national government).¹⁶

THE CASE OF TOKYO

The city and prefecture of Tokyo amalgamated to form Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) in 1943 to serve Japan’s wartime needs for centralization. Until recent reforms, there were 23 *administrative* units—Special Wards (*ku*)—in central Tokyo housing about 8 million of Tokyo’s 12 million

Figure 2: Tokyo Metropolis





people. The wards were considered subordinate to TMG. In the Tama district in the western part of TMG, the system of local government corresponded to that found in the rest of Japan with a number of independent cities and villages.¹⁷

In the past, the wards had a special relationship with TMG, which provided municipal type services in the wards (e.g., fire protection, water supply, sewers, sanitation). TMG and the wards also had a unique financial arrangement with revenues normally collected by cities being collected by TMG in the ward areas and redistributed through a financial adjustment scheme. In 1974, a series of reforms were put in place to enhance the wards' powers. First, the wards were provided with direct election of mayors. Second, certain functions were transferred to the wards from TMG (health services and building controls). Third, the system of posting TMG officials in the wards was abolished.

Tokyo's rise as a global city has led to overconcentration of development in the downtown. This has forced population to locate one or two hours outside of Tokyo to obtain affordable housing as business development crowded out residential housing. TMG sought to decentralize population and activity by designating new development poles outside of the central wards and in suburban centers. Thus, TMG built a new city hall in Shinjuku Ward to take some pressure off the central business district. The national government also sought to move industry out of Tokyo.

Efforts to deconcentrate Tokyo have largely failed and contributed to further outward expansion.

Efforts to deconcentrate Tokyo have largely failed and contributed to further outward expansion. Not only has the Tama district swelled in the last few decades, the metropolis has expanded greatly outside the boundaries of TMG. The immediate Tokyo metropolitan area now includes more than 20 million persons in Tokyo and its three neighboring

prefectures of Saitama, Kanagawa, and Chiba. The Tokyo Region covering eight prefectures has over 33 million persons.

Citizens have long felt economic and development policies have overshadowed quality of life issues. In the last several decades, especially since the 1970s, there has been pressure for more balanced development policy and for greater citizen voice at the local level. The 1974 reforms in TMG were a response to this. The move to have ward mayors directly elected led to demands for greater ward autonomy. There was also concern that TMG was too involved in municipal services in the core and not sufficiently attentive to larger metropolitan issues within its borders as well as those crossing prefecture boundaries.

In the 1990s, in response to a request by TMG and the ward offices, the central government established the 22nd Local System Research Council. The council recommended that the wards be given greater authority and independence. TMG and the wards set up a Metropolis-Ward Council in 1992 to make specific recommendations for reform. A final report was submitted and approved by the cabinet and Diet (Japan's legislature) in 1998, leading to transformation of the wards into ordinary public authorities intended to function as fully autonomous municipalities. The expectation is that ward mayors will be more responsive to citizen demands for improving the quality of life of residents. This would lead to more balanced development policies, which take into account the needs of neighborhoods and residents. The effect of turning wards into municipalities also makes TMG function more as a two-tier metropolitan government. (In the Tama district, TMG already is the upper tier government).

Reforms did not address the need for regionalism across prefecture boundaries. The only existing mechanism for coordinating services or cooperating in regional planning and infrastructure is the annual Metropolitan Summit between TMG and its neighboring three prefectures.¹⁸ The governors rotate the secretariat of the summit and each may strike issues from the agenda that they do not wish to address. To date, the regional summit has not been an effective forum to foster regionalism. It has failed to play an important role in any significant decision or issue. The central government effort to

relocate the capital out of Tokyo in the 1990s did lead to greater ties between the governors. The proposal was adopted by the Diet as a way to reduce Tokyo's primacy and to stimulate the economy. However, the government lacked the resources to pursue the plan, which has died. Still, at the time the governors of the four prefectures had to take the proposal seriously. The central government has recently placed a proposal for blocks of regional governments to overlay the prefectures including in the Tokyo region so there is recognition of the need to develop a larger regional framework.

CONCLUSION

There is certainly evidence of rescaling local and regional governance in the form of reterritorialization processes and institutional reform. In Japan, the system of local government has been dramatically restructured. There is no doubt that “‘centralized’ no longer accurately” describes the system of local government in Japan, especially with regard to larger communities.¹⁹ Within specific metropolitan regions, such as Tokyo, we also see clear evidence of institutional reform of city government. In Tokyo, ward governments, subordinate administrative units of Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG), were transformed into full-fledged municipalities. Having divested itself of municipal services, TMG can now focus more attention on regional issues. Even so, Japanese city-regions are seen as inadequate for the needs of regional scale decision making. City-regions are exploring alternative structures. Tokyo and its neighboring prefectures are experimenting with strengthening the regional summit. The national government is embarking on a plan for consolidating prefectures. TMG is also aiming to have the national government and its neighboring partners embrace a more coherent plan for economic development with Tokyo as Japan's leading global city upon which the nation's economic health and prosperity depend.²⁰

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COFFEEHOUSE DEMOCRACY: LEARNING AND CREATING URBANITY IN JAPAN

MERRY I. WHITE



Public social spaces have in Japan as elsewhere been arenas for interaction, commerce, and above all education in the urban and civil. Such places as temple grounds, roads, parks, shopping streets, department stores, museum and hotel lobbies provide participation, exchange of ideas and learning in city life. I have been conducting research on the nature of “urbanity” as it has developed in urban social spaces, most particularly in the coffeehouse or café (*koohii hausu* or *kissaten*). By “urbanity” I mean not the sophisticated glamor or doubtful morals of the *flaneur* (a man-about-town) or boulevardier in a transient, placeless culture, but an interaction between people and places, where new roles, or an absence of the strictures of roles in the establishment institutions of family, school and workplace, allow change, experimentation and choices in a modernizing society. By looking at café culture, we can observe the development of new urbanities in Japan, in both the city as assemblage of communities and as connected free spaces acting as sources of anonymity and freedom. The coffeehouse, as Elise Tipton notes, was seen as THE symbol of the modern. According to one writer, the café was more significant than the Diet (Japan’s legislature) as it was the locus of expression of a popular will.¹ In any case, as a marked location for fluid interactions and alternative communities, the café was a location for new engagements with other people, other ideas and choices.

We often hear that cities like Tokyo are collections of villages—contiguous small communities which resemble rural villages where “society” was stable and non-transient. We also hear that Tokyo is a feudal city in origin whose

segmented and interdependent solidarity was defined by fixed social classes. In either reading, contrasted with the cities of the first wave of industrialization, such as London, Tokyo is seen as less imbued with the anomie Durkheim and others saw in the rapid urbanization of the west. This is taken to mean that Japanese city dwellers experience less freedom than their Western counterparts, as individualism is traded for the consensual constraints of a close-knit social unit. The history of café culture, however, demonstrates both possibilities in urban social spaces: cafes may be normative communities or sites for the expression of individuality and choice.

By the Meiji period in the mid-19th century, Tokyo had become a modern imperial city in a rapidly accelerating development of industry, housing and transport. The rural to urban population shift in the Meiji period was managed without critical wrenching as a ready pool of industrial labor was available. Marion Levy has noted that the rural stem family structure, in which only one son stayed on to inherit, produced mobile labor in the younger sons for whom leaving home was a

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PARISIAN STYLE ARTISTS' CAFÉ FROM THE EARLY 1930S, KYOTO

necessity.² The shift from 20 percent urban to 80 percent urban occurred over a short period of time, with kin-linked migration into new jobs and dwellings.³ The old feudal class system faded away and merchants, formerly at the bottom of the ladder, now gained status through economic power. Tokyo at this period began to see the melting of classes into an urban mass—which, while never homogeneously blended or thoroughly “democratized”—moved towards wealth rather than birth as a principle of status. But only in the latter half of the 20th century did Tokyo begin to develop class-based residential enclaves, so entrenched was the older urban form of mixed residency.

MAKING MODERN SPACES

Missions to Europe and America helped to create a modernizing elite. Returning officials from France had admired the grand Haussmann-created geometries of Paris but its monumental spaces could not easily be borrowed. One European idea was “Bricktown”—the Ginza construction of European-style brick buildings for commercial and business purposes where in the earliest years of the 20th century beer halls and cafés flourished.

However, building density and lack of planning made impossible European-style open spaces, parks and plazas that might have been useful to create gathering spaces or a sense of powerful nationhood (the Meiji Shrine served that function) and to control the ever present risk of fire in such closely packed areas. There were few recreational areas, few places where a forum in the sense of a free flow of people and culture could be performed. After the Great Earthquake of 1923, rebuilding Tokyo meant some wider thoroughfares for vehicular traffic, new streets and trolley-car tracks. The city planner Tokue Shibata tells of roads changing from sites of social communication and mutual aid to places made dangerous by traffic and inhospitable for social intercourse and protection. The larger roads constructed for commerce and transport created spaces between them where older neighborhoods laced with pedestrian lanes survived in jumbles of homes and shops. There, Shibata notes, homes constructed on an open and noise-and sight-porous plan allowed neighbors access and visibility from the lanes so that people could alert each other if there were a risk of fire, or other danger. In addition, such roads were places where older people might bring small tasks to work on companionably and young children might safely play. When motor vehicles arrived, roads became dangerous, noisy and smelly. People began to build walls and avoid the spaces formerly given to communication. Casual communication went indoors, to cafés and bars.⁴

Those with much to protect with walls were set apart from those with less, but in some cases neighborhoods did not overall express a class identity. Some western observers, such as Saskia Sassen, say that Tokyo’s social geography shows “far less differentiation” by class than that of London or New York, but I think this is mistaking residential contiguity for fluid inter-class relationships.⁵ Tokyo’s older neighborhoods appear to be heterogeneous in population, with homes of the wealthy only a few doors from tenement-like dwellings, in addition to shopkeeper living quarters above shops, all sharing transport and shopping areas. The newer neighborhoods, to the west of the center, seem more homogeneous. They are markedly “new middle class” with commuters to white collar work dominating.

A new kind of urbanity was created in which the classes mixed but did not socialize. Taking a seat in

a café did not automatically introduce a visitor into a new community, though it might open his or her eyes to some possibilities for communication. Side-by-side rather than face-to-face engagement began to characterize the behavior of persons of different backgrounds and interests using the same café. People who came to Tokyo from the hinterlands for residence or a visit would observe what they might emulate, but they would scarcely strike up a conversation with those obviously from other cultural niches.

Today, neighborhoods—at any rate those which are not merely bed-towns—remain deeply cohesive. The streets of some neighborhoods in Tokyo, the shitamachi (downtown) areas, retain some of the qualities of what Shibata described as “extensions” of the home. While public transport offers possibilities for work, play and consumption away from the home area, the community is still intrinsically village-like in the fixity and longevity of residence and relationships. And its cafés rarely attract outsiders, making them synonymous with the existing community. Everyone knows your name. Yanaka, for example, in north-east Tokyo, has recently experienced a surge in “neighborhoodly” consciousness. Families have lived there for six or more generations with very little desire to leave the area even for “uptown” entertainment or shopping. Yanaka is currently being “branded” as a destination for the “way we used to be” in a touristic campaign promoting its old ways in crafts, foods and life style.

In such an area, it is said that you can find all your daily needs within 300 yards of your door—of course in the intensity of local relationships your shopkeepers know a lot about you, as will everyone else in turn. Whatever nostalgia is attached to the good old days of the “village” neighborhoods, Yanaka aside, many urban Japanese now find the flexibility and free choice of “new urban” settings, “communities of choice,” more attractive.

The imagined—reconstructed—village is also given its space in some of the larger apartment complexes, as in the case of the developer Minoru Mori’s Roppongi Hills. There are many interesting constructions of new and old urbanity created here. Mori himself invokes “village” as a nostalgic referent in his design of the 54-floor tower and apartment complex in the Hills. His vision is of a “vertical

community.” The residents of his skyscraper can find “community” at every fifth floor: there he has created a “village” space where residents can meet by chance or for planned social gatherings, as they would in the village piazza (he invokes European antecedents). In his script for the buildings, he says, “Here where so many different people meet, live and work together, a very special community is born, a wellspring of new ideas, new forms of art and culture. You meet, you mingle, you interact. New thoughts, new opportunities appear.”⁶ He planned monthly barbecues on the roof for networking residents. And on the roof he has placed a rice paddy, a symbol both of the rural and of the nation. Mori has a mission to create a new city person—he calls them Ropponjin. Having a modern urban lifestyle in a traditional Japanese community is not enough. These Ropponjin are to be new urbanites, global as well as local, members of a transient yet secured population—responsible, creative flaneurs, not merely witnessing but also creating urbanity in the form of networks. They are secured not by a village identity but by portable knowledge and credentials, very different from village knowledge, that places them in the “floating world” of cosmopolitans. Ropponjin of course have their own cafes, but of a global, faceless nature: Starbucks is a prominent renter of spaces in the facility.

CAFÉS AND A NEW URBANITY

Since their first appearance in Japan in the 1880s, cafés have been places where people have gathered to be both together and alone, for social recreation



MOGA AND MOBO, “A MODERN GIRL AND MODERN BOY” COUPLES SITTING IN A CAFÉ, WHERE WITH RELATIVE IMPUNITY WOMEN MIGHT GO OUT IN PUBLIC, AND EXHIBITING FASHIONABLE “FLAPPER” AND “LOUNGE LIZARD” ATTIRE OF THE TIME.

or protected time for being private in public. They may come with or without the identities of home, school and work. Learning a new urbanity is the particular project in which people become modern and democratic, learning to be citizens, adopting a set of ideas, behaviors, structures and laws. At the same time, they learn to be “urbane” as individuals, acquiring the capacity for free choice-making activities. This “new urbanity,” part street wisdom, part cultural and political awareness and part what Norbert Elias calls a “moral character,”⁷ the proprieties and the values that support or insist on them, is the product of the contacts, movements and settlements of people in the places of exchange.

The study of urban public spaces in Japan provides a challenge to the model of a unique “Japanese” mode of development. It will also complicate the supposition of the universalizing tendencies of globalization. These processes are based neither in the dominance of Japanese culture nor in its disappearance. Here I will only begin to demonstrate the complicated relationship between a new urbanity, modernity and globalization through an examination of the urban café in Japan.

Japan is a “café society” in full view. There are two or three coffeehouses on any city block and most are well-patronized throughout the day and evening. Most people have a “local” favorite, local either to work or home neighborhood. But many regularly visit several: perhaps one in the morning on the way between train and office, one for the afternoon, another on the way home from work. There may be one for reading the paper, one for conversations with workmates, one for neighborhood conviviality on the weekend. For entertainment, community engagement or solace, the café is always available. The relatively high price of a cup of coffee in Japan—the range is about 250 yen (lower in some chains) to 1500 yen (approximately \$13.00) for a fabulous handcrafted cup—pays for the rental of a valuable piece of real estate: the seat in which you talk, read, write, or muse.

The café-as-village itself might appear to represent a cohesive community, a complete if miniature “civil society.” In this it represents sometimes a leisure-time version of the established social unit. However, the not-home-not-work “third place” could be more flexible: either more or less constraining


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of behavior, more or less invested in predictability. In certain settings however, performances of public discussion and the reinforcement of new social and political alliances have been as important as the silent solace of being alone. Extolling the latter, one café supply company advertises: “In the sunshine and in the breeze, to have a drink and have a chance to talk to yourself.... No life better than this, drinking a cup of coffee made in our wares.”⁸

Cafés do not provide the intensely interwoven community one has left behind but they are not quite impersonal either. Cafés are places where people might have partial engagements, temporary relationships, and not-quite-communities—at least as compared with those of a permanent and enclosed society. Cafés support the daily sequence of events and obligations by providing respite, places for social and private engagement. But they also permit creative flexibility—uncharted behavior—and diversity of points of view and choices. The demands for performance and identity in these spaces differ considerably from those of home, work and other role-conferring environments. The presenting experience, having a cup of coffee, becomes the iconic frame for these meanings.

COFFEE AS A JAPANESE SOCIAL BEVERAGE

Coffee is one of the first global commodities, now trading second only to oil. In this, Japan was first an imitator of Europe or America, but later an expanding international developer—with its own links to sources of beans from the beginning. Mizuno Ryo, Japan’s first coffee baron, was a Japanese-Brazilian of the first wave of emigrants. He returned from Brazil at the turn of the 20th century to create a new wave of cafés, and to cater to and create the expanding taste for the drink. Coffee had been known in port



cities such as Nagasaki, where in the 17th century, at about the same time that it became popular in Europe, Portuguese missionaries and traders, as well as the Dutch, introduced coffee to their Japanese counterparts. It was first used medicinally, as the German botanist and doctor who visited Japan in the 1830s von Sieboldt noted, and it was served as a stimulant among the prostitutes of Nagasaki. If one was overstimulated, according to von Sieboldt, one might eat an umeboshi (Japanese plum) as antidote. But not until the Meiji Period did it become a generally available social beverage, its consumption a sign of urbanity. Where one sipped coffee became as important as the drink itself. Cafés (variously known as kissaten, koohiihausu, cafés and cabarets) quickly became places for different kinds of engagement and enjoyment as the different terms came to signify.

Coffee was a new drink for new places. By the

Japan is now the world's third largest coffee importing country, and the consumption of coffee leads all social drinks, outselling beer or tea.

late Taisho era (1912-1926), people rarely considered tea as the accompaniment to these “urban” interactions. Tea was a drink for home, or to end a meal, coffee the drink for relaxation and entertainment outside the home. Nihoncha, Japanese tea, was “like the air” as Ishige Naomichi says,⁹ something that arrives unbidden when you visit a home or an inn, not something to pay for or sit over. One exception to the rule that green tea and coffee are non-overlapping is seen in a retro-style kissaten in Tokyo where a small cup of green tea is brought to your table as you peruse the coffee menu, a demonstration of tea’s function as a hospitable greeting, even in a specialty coffee shop.

Coffee consumption in Japan has increased steadily since the end of the second World War. It has been the driving engine of these modern urban social spaces. The café was not simply the teahouse of the past serving a different beverage;

people began to see coffee-drinking as the epitome of modernity, an experience one did not have at home. Japan is now the world’s third largest coffee importing country, and the consumption of coffee leads all social drinks, outselling beer or tea (though there is a new emerging market for specialty non-Japanese teas). Coffee is now drunk at home too and at offices, but often in the form of an instant, not brewed drink.

The first café of note was created by the son of a Chinese translator for the Foreign Ministry, one Tei Ei Kei, as he is known in Japanese.¹⁰ The story is a curiosity for Americans as his coffee history begins and ends in America. He was born in Nagasaki, but his father, ambitious for his son, sent him to Yale University—considering that as an “international” youth he might do better with English and a foreign degree. In New Haven in the 1870s, however, he developed a taste for coffeehouse life. He appears not to have done well in school at all—as one historian notes, because he was sickly, and as another relates, because he was having rather too good a time. Having left without a degree, he took a slow route home to Japan by way of England and the Continent, and much impressed with the London version of the coffeehouse, he returned to establish his own in Tokyo’s Nihonbashi. This place, the Kaahikan, was an instant success when it opened in 1886. A very masculine club-like place, filled with stuffed leather furniture, writing desks, the newspapers of the day on racks, billiard tables, resting rooms and bathing facilities, it gave the middle class man and the recently de-classed samurai a milieu for new identities. But these amenities were soon exploited as men stayed the day for the meager cost of a cup of coffee. Keeping up the premises broke Tei Ei Kei, who eventually had to close the house. He moved to Seattle, where the trail runs thin, but there is some evidence that he had a mercantile establishment where he sold coffee there, until his death. His gravestone is there. Cafés, however, went on to prosper in Japan.

Cities had different personalities and their cafés attracted different clienteles. Kyoto in the Taisho era attracted intellectuals, writers and aesthetes, while Tokyo was seen as the center of a Western-leaning literary and political avant-garde. Kyoto did not experience the earthquake of 1923, nor was it significantly damaged in the second World War, and



CAFÉ TSUKIJI, KYOTO, A VIENNESE STYLE CAFÉ FROM THE 1920S, A FAVORITE OF NOVELIST JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI

thus the city remains a nostalgic repository of older forms of cafés as well as a home to newer styles. The former include the Café Tsukiji which was a gathering place in the early Showa Period (1926–1989) for artists and writers, of quintessentially “European” decor and menu—but European of the 1920s, now deliberately preserved but nonetheless providing continuing education. This was where Junichiro Tanizaki’s coterie met, sitting on the padded red velvet seats, not so much enjoying a European milieu as what was fast becoming a generic modern, or “mukokuseki” (no-country) style. Newer communities of café taste are still being formed, exemplified by the Café Sagan, on the eastern side of the Kamo River, where writers and artists, local housewives, local businessmen and office clerks begin their days and end their afternoons. Everyone chats with the “master” whose collection of French glass lamps sets a vaguely Euro-Japanese tone. In some places clienteles are age-homogeneous. A six-seater café (two tables, two seats at the bar) tucked into a corner of the old streets of Nishijin in Kyoto is a quiet place. There is verbal community if the older men and women choose it but there is also be a silent, contemplative sharing of space. And Shinshindo, a student-faculty café to the north of Kyoto University resonates with lively intellectual discussion at the bare wooden benches.

CAFÉS AS ENGINES OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The tendency towards monocentrism in power in Japan gives Tokyo a strong draw. It is the seat of political culture providing social and economic

resources for those who “ascend” to Tokyo, as the expression goes. In the Taisho era, Tokyo’s cafés were the first stop for visiting artists, political thinkers and writers, and the launching pad for those internationalizing Japanese headed for the Asian mainland or Europe. Kyoto, however, maintains its image as the aesthetic and spiritual capital of Japan, and its cafés sometimes have a rarified gentility.

Because of the fluidity of the space of a café, it offers the visitor ears, eyes and voice with which to adopt, consume and create new ideas, tastes, and goods, often but not always imported from other parts of the world—now from what in the past were considered “ethnic” de-classé parts of the world, such as Thailand, sub-saharan Africa and Latin America. Some are galleries and sell art and merchandise as well. Above all, the café/coffeehouse became a clearinghouse for new social and political ideas—from the emerging “new” middle class as well as the old “downtown/shitamachi” class, women as well as men, the old and new artistic and intellectual “classes” and the newly sword-less educated samurai. In the Japanese café, there was a meeting of domestic and foreign, personal and social expression, conventions and subversions.

Jurgen Habermas described the 18th century

In the Japanese café, there was a meeting of domestic and foreign, personal and social expression, conventions and subversions.

English coffeehouse, Tei Eikei’s Kahiikan model, as a place where rational critical conversation and experience created a background for the formation of a new society and a new public will.¹¹ The coffeehouses of Europe, beginning in the mid 17th century, acted as traders’ and bankers’ centers, disseminating points for vital shipping and financial news and of course critical gossip. Lloyd’s of London insurance brokers began as a coffeehouse in the late 17th century, a point of emanation for news, where pamphlets and broadsheets, the antecedents

of modern newspapers, were created. Even today, Lloyd's insurance company calls its porters “waiters” in reference to its origin.¹²

In Japan, coffee houses appeared in the late 19th century, at the same time as mass communication and transport, and with these brought the outside world and its news and cultural forms to the rapidly modernizing city. These cafés arrived at a time when new rural populations entered city life and there were cafés where the provincial newcomers gathered for mutual support and information. In addition, they served to introduce Western goods and ideas to Japan. They presented a menu of modern cultural forms from which the Japanese client could choose.

By the end of the Meiji period and the beginning of the Taisho, cafes took on many styles, from the English style Kahiikan to the lavish Brazilian Café Paulista (from Sao Paulo), which welcomed a new Ginza demimonde in 1909. The branching of coffee houses from this period led to the cabaret on the one hand, serving alcohol and boasting elegant, trend-setting, eroticized, scandal-focusing *jokyu* (waitresses), and on the

other hand the *junkissa*, the pure café where no music, booze or women distracted writers (like Nagai Kafu) from their intellectual engagement and counter-establishment politics—the home indeed of “coffee house democracy” and a rarified form of the “new urbanity.”

The cafés of this period were globalizers as well, as Donald Richie calls them, “windows on the world.” *Jokyu* were in their own way revolutionaries. Underpaid and exploited, they were expected to represent the avant-garde in fashion, and had to spend heavily on the new fashions, with Western hair styles and creative new styles of Japanese kimono.¹³ The first entry of western foods to a mass audience was in the café—where dishes like gratin, spaghetti,

The first entry of western foods to a mass audience was in the café—where dishes like gratin, spaghetti, melted cheese toast and pilaf appeared.



EARLY 1920S CARTOON: MAN HOPING TO CATCH ATTENTION OF OBJECT OF HIS AFFECTIONS, A *JOKYU* (WAITRESS) WHO IS PATENTLY IGNORING HIM AS HE ORDERS NERVEWRACKING NUMBERS OF CUPS OF COFFEE

melted cheese toast and pilaf appeared.¹⁴ The *meikyokukissa* were places where, before most middle class people had record players, classical music was—and still is—reverentially played. Jazz cafes were also extremely popular. One coffee historian in Japan argues that jazz, which he calls an intellectual music, was listened to best with coffee, a beverage leading to “dry inebriation,” while blues and other popular music might permit the “wet inebriation” of alcohol. Cafés also were the first places where unescorted young men and women (*mobo* and *moga*) could meet socially with relative impunity.

The café or coffeehouse became useful to city dwellers in various ways as the off-campus study hall or meeting point for students, the off-office respite time venue for workers, the away-from-home refuge for the housewife, the place to learn city ways for those arriving from the countryside. And for the artists, writers, musicians and bohemians, the café was a place where communal creativity and competition spurred aesthetic, philosophic and political production.



AN ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE SHOWING FAMOUS JOKYU, CAFÉ WAITRESSES, WITH MODERN WESTERN COIFFURES AND CUTTING EDGE FASHION KIMONO, AND SHOWING TEETH IN SMILE, UNHEARD OF IN POLITE SOCIETY

POLITICS IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

The height of this use of the café was the Taisho period, when “demokurashi” encouraged the public demonstration of new thinking and creativity. Organizers and proponents would hold meetings in cafes where the social formlessness of the space admitted all. Feminist discussion and the creation of a significant feminist movement in this period relied on cafés as semi-public arenas of permissiveness. Writers and activists would meet in cafés. These activities did not quite end with the passage of the Peace Preservation Law in 1926. This law explicitly targetted activist groups and forbade meeting in groups greater than six people. Undaunted, women organized simultaneous multi-sited meetings in several cafés near to each other, where two or three women would meet for apparently “genteel” discussion. One would act as runner between designated cafés to maintain a communicative, if awkward, group meeting. Marxists, Trotskyites and home-grown political movements had homes in certain cafés, but they would move to others just in time to avoid the watchful police. In the late 1960s and early 1970s some student coffeehouses had become staging areas

for political change as well as para-medical stations between encounters with the police. The cafés near Tokyo University in Hongo, for example, became headquarters for the student take-over of a building in 1969 and nowadays, veterans of the student movement return to the cafés for nostalgic reunions.

Cafés were and are places that reinforce and disseminate as well as create the zeitgeist. Some of the more outré aspects of the Taisho period cafés were revived in those of the postwar period, exhibiting a new set of international cultural influences. In 1963, I was taken at night to a café in Tokyo where willing customers disrobed completely and were painted with a broad brush, their bodies then rolled across the walls hung with sheets. I knew something of Yves Klein, the French artist, and his similar events, but I did not realize until a visit to the Centre Pompidou only recently that what I was seeing in 1963 was a deliberate evocation of the Kleinian “Anthropometrie”—in which naked female models painted themselves with Klein’s signature blue paint and pressed themselves against blank sheets of paper. The café in Tokyo, in 1963 on the first year anniversary of Klein’s death, was performing an act of homage to a man who, ten years before, had electrified the Tokyo art scene in person. I don’t remember how the coffee tasted.

In such circles, travel between nodes of cultural creativity was common. Artists such as Foujita Tsuguharu and writers such as Yokomitsu Riichi¹⁵ moved between the seats of cafés in Tokyo, Shanghai, Berlin and Paris before the war, and after the war, New York was added to the list of cosmopolitanizing locations. For such people, the world was indeed becoming a “global Greenwich Village,” but for Japanese of all persuasions the café was a sufficient destination.

CAFÉS AND THE “GLOBAL MODERN”

To return to the themes of this essay, cafés give context, physical space and noteworthiness to events, people and communities. In Japan they also may be locations of subversion—political, cultural and social—and further, places where new projects of citizenship may begin. The Japanese saying “when you are away from home you know no shame” refers to people away from their “villages”—away from places where everyone

knows your name and family, and has a stake or an interest in your reputation.

Arguments that Japanese cities are zones of globalizing modernity meet storylines of collections of parochial villages in the contexts of cafés. For some habitués cafés do indeed provide a “village,” Rosa-beth Moss Kanter’s “intentional community.”¹⁶ And changing demographic realities have an influence on the uses of these spaces. For the increasing numbers of elderly in Japan, cafés are meeting points for checking in with neighbors, for marking passage of time and creating a new community when residential isolation is painful. For others, such as the white-collar worker, the café is an off-duty, “third space” time-out-of-time village where the demands of other competing locations in one’s life do not need to enter. What happens in the café stays in the café. For other denizens of the coffeehouse world, for other cafes at other times, the space is not a “village substitute” fighting urban anomie but a multifunctional area of freedom for private and public expressions actively distinct from those expressed in other private and public environments. And notably, at key moments in Japan’s recent history, these expressions have changed society. What key changes in social and economic realms will produce new uses for the café? As I suggested, I see the elderly finding new creative functions for these social spaces, and women, as housewives, find community there. I also note the rising rates of *furiitaa*, freelance or part-time workers who use cafés as offices or work spaces, and continuing use by “artists in residence” as in the early Taisho period.

Formation of a public will, an opportunity for choice in a democratic setting, seems to some to have left these social spaces and moved to the offices of lobbyists, media and officials close to the creation and centers of power, while the café, some suggest, as a Starbucksian space of personal limbo or occasional social engagement, has become more passive or anonymous. The new media, with isolated personal engagements on a small screen, may have taken this movement further, usurping the public plaza, the physical space of the market square and café as points of origin and communicators of thought

and culture. But people still occupy physical spaces, still crave society or solitude, and cafés provide both “havens in a heartless world” and loci for making it less heartless. Even as democracy becomes privatized and etherized, the café persists in Japan as a place where change is created and displayed, where alternative societies are formed, and where new ways of being urban are still learned.

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NO MIRACLES HERE: URBAN REDEVELOPMENT IN ONE STRUGGLING JAPANESE CITY

THEODORE J. GILMAN



Baltimore. Bethlehem. Pittsburgh. Weirton. Flint. The images of rust belt cities and declining company towns are not often associated with the impressive growth and modernization of Japanese cities. Tokyo, Osaka, and other major Japanese

metropolises are more frequently noted for being engines of national growth and magnets for younger segments of the Japanese population.

This essay seeks to temper the prevailing robust image of the Japanese city by telling the story of a Japanese rust belt city. The city of Omuta, on the southern island of Kyushu, has more in common with an American rust belt city than with a vibrant Japanese municipality. The city's efforts to promote tourism, lure jobs, and improve the quality of life have not staunched the steady population decline of the past three decades.

SUNSET INDUSTRIES AND CITIES IN JAPAN

Since the early 1960s, a steady economic restructuring process has occurred in numerous Japanese cities.¹ Given Japan's remarkable growth in the postwar period, one might not think that economic decline and urban decay would be a problem. In fact, if one only looks at national economic statistics, claims of depression and decline seem hard to believe. After all, Japan did triple its real per capita income in the 1960s, and growth in the 1970s averaged 3 to 5 percent per year. Though the prolonged post-bubble recession of the 1990s focused international attention and awareness on Japan's economic problems, two decades before that recession Japanese industrial cities started facing the same problems confronting cities in

other industrialized nations. Nationally during this era of high growth, population movement from the hinterland to the cities—especially to the Tokaido region (the area in central Japan running from Tokyo to Osaka)—drained much of the younger population from smaller industrial cities. These regional cities have struggled with economic decline for decades.

The transformation in the Japanese economy from heavy to high technology industries caused the decline of numerous small cities. In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, large-scale manufacturing enterprises located in the major urban centers were already attracting young people to life in the big city. At the same time, the Japanese government was helping to phase out domestic heavy industry through an active plan of rationalization. In the postwar era, coal, shipbuilding, steel, and other basic

This essay seeks to temper the prevailing robust image of the Japanese city by telling the story of a Japanese rust belt city.

industries have been slowly pushed into decline through their inability to compete internationally and the government's unwillingness to support them. This rationalization process propelled more of the rural and small-city population toward life and jobs in the metropolis, crippling the economies of numerous small cities throughout Japan.

Simultaneously, the industries around which these regional cities were built lost their international competitive edge. The resulting combination of population drain and economic “hollowing

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out” in Japan is similar to what has happened in the American Rust Belt.

DECLINE IN O MUTA

Omuta is a Japanese city battling the effects of macroeconomic restructuring. A port city on the Ariake Sea in southern Fukuoka prefecture on the island of Kyushu, Omuta experienced a 100-year heyday as the largest coal mining center in Japan, and during that time produced much of the energy that drove Japan’s rapid 20th century industrial growth.² The Mitsui Miike (pronounced mee-keh) mine was the largest coal mine in Japan, and was the center of an extensive industrial complex that included metal smelting and processing, chemical production from coal, electricity generation, and coal mining for industrial use throughout the country. But as Japan’s ability to compete with other coal producing nations declined, demand for Miike coal declined too.

Omuta is a victim of a postwar economic double-whammy: international price competition plus a global switch from coal to petroleum energy sources. As domestically produced coal either became more expensive or held its production price per ton constant, the price per ton of imported coal fell dramatically.³ For Japanese coal

Omuta is a victim of a postwar economic double-whammy: international price competition plus a global switch from coal to petroleum energy sources.

consumers—mainly heavy industry and electric power producers—it made little sense to purchase domestic coal. As a result, the domestic coal mining industry entered a period of rationalization—encouraged and supported by the then Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI)—that continues to this day.⁴

For Omuta residents, the key issue was, and still is, jobs. The Miike mine was the center of a huge


industrial complex—the Japanese have borrowed the Russian word “*combinat*”—that was built around the mine. As Miike went, so went the community. The Mitsui group *combinat* is made up of 10 major companies, nine of which are still in existence in Omuta. All but two have experienced serious job cuts in the past thirty years.

The mine and other Mitsui production facilities provided almost 29,000 jobs for Omuta area residents in 1960. By 1991 that number had dropped to around 4,500. The impact of such a steep drop in the job base was catastrophic from the city’s point of view.

In addition to the steep drop in the number of jobs, the composition of jobs in Omuta changed as well. In the 1960s the majority of jobs were in secondary, or manufacturing, industries. This was largely due to Mitsui’s presence in the city. But as coal rationalization took hold and the *combinat* started to decline, tertiary industry jobs came to outnumber manufacturing, even as the total number of employment opportunities declined over time.⁵

In 1960, the percentages of manufacturing and service sector jobs were almost equal, at 46 and 44 percent respectively. By 1970, 36 percent of the jobs in Omuta were in secondary industries and 56 percent were in the service sector. This trend continued through the 1970s and into the 1980s. By 1985, manufacturing jobs dropped to 31 percent and service sector jobs swelled to 64 percent. One possible explanation is that public sector employment picked up as manufacturing employment declined. The City of Omuta is the second largest employer in the city, after Mitsui. Another explanation is that the number of small businesses and offices has mushroomed. City statistics suggest there are more workers working in smaller offices than there were during the height of Mitsui’s productive output, though it is unclear from these numbers what these workers are doing in their jobs.⁶

Naturally, when jobs dry up in a city, people move elsewhere to find work to support their families. And this has certainly happened in Omuta. The population declined from a high of almost 209,000 in 1959 to the current level, slightly over 132,000 as of 2006. The largest drop occurred between 1960 and 1970, when the city lost 34,000 residents. There was a steady, though



more gradual, decline from 175,000 residents in 1970 to 150,000 in 1990.

As families have moved out of the city and the population has declined, the composition of the remaining population has changed. Those that can move out of town do so, and those that cannot move remain. Increasingly, the population of Omuta is made up of older citizens with no children. And as the current population continues to age, with no influx of new, younger working families to offset the trend, the number of people per family drops at about the same rate at which the population ages. This trend has not changed substantially since the major job cuts at Mitsui in the late 1960s, and the lack of change in the trend indicates two things. First, the population is getting steadily older. In 1965, 10 percent of the population was age 65 years or older. By 1990, that number had increased to 18 percent. These numbers are well above the national averages: In 1965, 6.3 percent of the Japanese population was age 65 years or older, while by 1990 that number had increased to 12.1 percent.⁷ Second, efforts to create jobs and attract new workers have not yet succeeded. I will explain these efforts in detail below.

Another indication of the severity of Omuta's situation appears in the city's birth and death statistics. Nationally, given present trends, the number of deaths is not expected to exceed the number of births until sometime in the next 20 years. Omuta passed that threshold in 1988, and the trend shows no signs of reversing. Many nations are trying to halt population growth, but for Japan as a nation such a tendency is troublesome. Moreover, for a particular locality, the effects are readily visible and devastating.

The population continues to age, with no indications of a more productive population developing in the near future. Omuta, like all of Japan, is concerned that there will not be enough younger citizens of working age to generate economic growth and support the aging population through the pension and welfare systems.

OMUTA'S REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

Omuta's responses to economic decline have been late in coming, relative to the timing of the

city's economic decline. While things were clearly going downhill in the early and mid-1970s, real efforts at redevelopment and revitalization did not start until the mid-1980s. The focus of policy responses in the 1970s and early 1980s was on compensation for displaced workers, rather than on new sources of jobs and economic growth. The policy focus from the mid-1980s into the 1990s was a mixture of quality of life improvement issues for city residents, and attempted innovations in economic redevelopment to create jobs and attract people to the city. The shift in local focus was clearly due in part to changes in the national policy landscape. And the quality of life efforts were more successful than the job creation and economic growth measures: Omuta is a nicer place to live—it is cleaner, has more park space,

Omuta is a nicer place to live—it is cleaner, has more park space, and new civic facilities—than it was before the mid-1980s, but few new jobs have been created and the economy continues to sputter along.

and new civic facilities—than it was before the mid-1980s, but few new jobs have been created and the economy continues to sputter along.

How does one rebuild a small city like Omuta? Functionally speaking, there are two types of policy used to revive slumping cities. The first type is designed to improve the quality of life in the city. One Omuta official pointed out that company towns—especially industrial centers like Omuta—are often severely lacking in infrastructure and public lifestyle amenities like parks, pleasant roads and waterways, extensive sewer systems, and nice city centers.⁸

The second type of redevelopment policy is designed to attract people and job-creating firms to the city. A type of local level industrial promotion policy, these efforts target industries and

even individual firms and try to entice them with “soft” projects such as participation in government projects, tax breaks, investment credits and other industry promotion incentives, and “hard” projects such as industrial parks and transport network improvements. These projects are more ambitious, and take time to show success or failure. While they too require construction, they also demand salesmanship and other elusive skills that contribute to a city’s changing image.

Omuta sought to employ both these strategies by attracting tourists to new facilities, luring firms (and jobs) to new industrial parks in the city, and revitalizing retail areas to bring customers back to the old shopping districts.

A FAILED AMUSEMENT PARK

When one thinks of urban redevelopment in a coal town, amusement parks do not automatically come to mind. Omuta’s park dream went through several design iterations and had trouble securing funding. The design and financing process took six years. Tokyo Disneyland provided inspiration for GeoBio World planners, just as it inspired park planners throughout Japan as well.

GeoBio World finally opened in July of 1995 after 18 months of construction. It cost just over \$100 million to build, and expected attendance was 600,000 per year. Featured attractions included a simulation theater showing a 4-minute film entitled “The Ultimate Roller Coaster,” a coal industry science museum, an aquarium, and a botanical garden. The 12-acre park (with a 15-acre parking lot) never came close to attendance projections, and it went bankrupt and closed less than two years after it opened. GeoBio World left Omuta with a per capita debt of \$160, to be paid down over the years. Sadly, Omuta’s amusement park developers discovered that successful attractions require more than just cute fantasy characters.

DOWNTOWN RETAIL RENEWAL

Luring shoppers to the downtown area was a central part of the revitalization strategies in Omuta. Once-thriving commercial districts had fallen into decline and disuse, and merchants had abandoned



STUDENTS ENTERING THE Omuta ZOOLOGICAL PARK, PART OF THE CITY’S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE TOURISM.

their stores in the downtown areas. The city sought to reverse this trend, breathing new life into the downtown retail and entertainment sectors. Such projects aimed to create jobs in the declining areas, and to improve the quality of life by sprucing up the retail zones through significant capital improvements. Though Omuta made concerted efforts in this direction, it was not particularly successful in stimulating the sort of revitalization for which planners hoped.

Omuta’s shopping areas were organized into eight shopping street (*shotengai*) associations, each of which used the same procedure to plan and implement its revitalization plan. *Shotengai* are an integral part of every community in Japan, and virtually every neighborhood in every city has such an agglomeration of small shops running through it. *Shotengai* merchants sell anything one might need on a daily basis including clothes, fresh and processed foods, household goods and appliances, etc. These stores are usually small “mom and pop” operations, though a larger store may sometimes anchor one end of a *shotengai*.

The plan generated to address Omuta’s retail area problems was loaded with capital-intensive projects. The plan called for streets to be repaved, widened, and in some cases closed to vehicular traffic. It called for street lights to be replaced with brighter and more stylish fixtures, covered shopping promenades with motorized roof sections to be constructed, trees to be planted, and bridges to be rebuilt and strengthened. It also called for more parking facilities and for more



AN OLD Omuta SHOPPING STREET (SHOTENGAI). NOTE THE NARROW PEDESTRIAN SPACE AND LACK OF SUNLIGHT AND GREENERY



A NEWLY RENOVATED Omuta SHOPPING STREET. NOTE THE AUTOMOBILE ACCESS AND GREEN SPACE.

open public space to be created. Certain private sector improvements were required to better the image of Omuta's retail district, such as new store facades.

While the *shotengai* looked much nicer after the extensive revitalization, they did not experience a significant increase in consumer traffic or retail sales. The dwindling population enjoyed a nicer shopping environment, but the renewal of retail districts did not help to revitalize Omuta's economy.

JOB CREATION EFFORTS

Omuta needed to create jobs to spark economic revitalization. To lure new firms, the city sought to provide attractive facilities in which such firms might locate. Omuta built three new industrial parks: the Omuta Product Distribution Center (*Omuta Butsuryū Senta*), the Omuta Central Industrial Park (*Omuta Chūō Kōgyō Danchi*), and the Omuta Technopark Inland Industrial Park (*Omuta Teknopāku Nairiku Kōgyō Danchi*).

The city ran seminars in Tokyo and Osaka to tell companies there of the benefits available in Omuta. Few firms seized the opportunities offered. None of the industrial parks were particularly innovative, and all competed directly with other parks in the region. Incentives for firms to move in were fairly standard, as were the facilities provided and the types of firms that opted to rent space. Moreover, there was a national surplus of available industrial park space when these facilities

opened. The flat national economic growth of the 1990s and beyond further hindered efforts to bring jobs to Omuta.

WHY DID Omuta'S REVITALIZATION EFFORTS FAIL?

Copy-cat policymaking norms and institutional incentives provide a partial explanation for Omuta's behavior. The city opted to pursue strategies that had proved successful in other Japanese cities. By doing so, Omuta tried to compete directly with larger, wealthier, cleaner metropolises. These policy choices made sense because they were easy: the national government had incentive programs to encourage cities in these directions. Unfortunately for Omuta, it arrived late to the trough of public funding. Adding yet another theme park and several more industrial parks to a Japan already saturated with these facilities was a recipe for failure.

Emulating a good education policy or social welfare program may prove successful because every community has schools and needy segments of the populace. Japanese localities excel at such adopting the best practices of others. There is far less demand for amusement parks, so the normal policy-making approach comes up short when applied to urban revitalization.

Inexorable national trends also explain part of Omuta's failed redevelopment. The move toward Osaka and Tokyo was stronger than most small Japanese cities could withstand. Omuta—like many other cities in northern, western, and southern

Japan—lost jobs and population to the central region of the country. The national government chose not to fight this economic shift. Instead, the government chose to ease the decline of these cities by providing welfare payments to residents and firms left behind. The “soft landing” for which policymakers hoped never really materialized, as the stresses of decline could be felt and seen throughout Japan. However, the decision to allow Omuta (and other cities) to decline was a by-product of the administrative guidance provided by Tokyo’s vaunted industrial policy.

Global economic forces provide the final explanation for Omuta’s continued struggle to redevelop. Coal imported from other countries (especially Australia and other Asian nations) is cheaper and burns cleaner than Japanese coal. Oil is a cleaner energy source and is also available from a diverse list of suppliers. Omuta had a strong 100-year run as an engine of Japanese economic growth. That time has passed, and now the city—and others like it—must come to terms with the decline. Perhaps they will find new, innovative ways to spark their local economy as Japan’s national economy regains strength in the coming decade.

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1. Economic restructuring refers to the largely market-driven process by which certain industries lose their comparative advantage and thus are forced to close or relocate. Although new industries may simultaneously be emerging in other parts of the nation, the effects on the localities that suffer the loss of one or more primary employers is devastating. Population exodus, loss of tax base, and the general breakdown of the local socioeconomic system are common results of economic restructuring. This process of decline is commonly known as “hollowing out” in the local economy.
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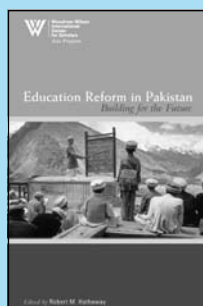
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