Urban planning culture of Japan

Développement Territorial et Urbanisme II: Villes d’Asie
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JAPAN URBANISM

Influences

• Meiji-period

• Economic development

• The dominance of Central Government

• Religious/Philosophical spirit: buddhism, shintoism & tea ceremony

• Calamities: natural disasters & wars (civil-war, world-war I & II)

• Technology
• West: Solve ‘urban problems’

• Japan: defy the Western domination
Japan and the West

- 200 years of isolation: 1853 Matthew Perry
- Unequal commercial treaties
- Colonisation
- Meiji: ‘fukoku kyōhei’ (Enrich the country, strengthen the military)’ to preserve national security, and ‘bunmei kaika’ (Civilisation and enlightenment)’ to revise the unequal treaties.
Remodelling and modernisation

- Objectives of city planning:
  - building industrial infrastructures
  - making well-designed city centres

- Learn Western-style architecture & civil engineering
  → materialise Western-style cities & wealth
The first railway line opened between Tokyo (Shinbashi) and Yokohama in 1872.
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Meiji-Period

The Ginza Brick Quarter (1872-1877): a commercial and residential area
1,400 two-story Western-style brick buildings
Mitsubishi Company also planned *Mitsubishi Red-Brick Street*, known as *First Street, London* (today’s Marunouchi business area) in 1890.

Early Modern Japan: *Marunouchi London Street*  
Tokyo 1920
Through these experiences, constructing new blocks of town and infrastructures became synonymous to urban planning in Japan.

Obstacle:
- Upper class vs. urban poor
- Fire in 1881, *The Ginza Brick Quarter*
- Remodelling of Tokyo’s city centre: dedicated to the upper class
• Rapid industrialisation
• Urban growth: suburban population: 183% (1897-1920)

→ Development of public transportation: Electrical trains, streetcars

TCIO (Tokyo City-Ward Improvement Ordinance)

• First formal planning initiative to provide public goods in Meiji
• During the period of fast urbanisation
  • Housing shortage
  • Major Railway companies: large scale housing development

• New suburb communities
• Middle & upper class
• Garden Suburbs in England
• Context:
  • Strong urban growth
  • A will to build a nation
  • Great Kanto earthquake in 1923

• 5 main parts:
  • Land Use Zoning  (residential, commercial & industrial)
  • Urban Buildings Law  (height, material etc.)
  • Public Facilities designation  (Improve accessibility)
  • Building Line system  (Build only along “roads” >2,7 m)
  • Land readjustment system  (Part of private land as public space)
Planning system of 1919

Results:

- Strong centralisation of power
- Weak civil society
- Urban planning in the west: A democratic movement
- Urban planning in Japan: A system applied from above
Post-War period  1945 - 1968

Changes in Post-War period gives the character of Japan nowadays

What are the changes and what influenced in urban-plan of Japan in this period?

• Democracy

• Ishida report ⇒ Local government has freedom for city planning. In reality Central government has still the power.

• Economical growth - Because of this period Japan has become the world’s second largest economic power

• Industrial goal
Post War period

Industrial goal: a lot of money went to developing the infrastructure

Planes of New Industrial Cities 1955

Advantage: Economical growth
Disadvantage: Long-term quality of Life Problems in cities and the growing environmental crisis

Sony factory in post war period

Tokyo nowadays with Post war character
Transportation

**Context**

- From mainly travelling by foot to one of the world's most developed transportation systems in 100 years.
- Lowest car usage in the G8
- High usage of railway transport
- Tokyo Shinjuku – the world's busiest underground station (~3.6 Million passengers per day)
Transport Infrastructure

Development during post war period 1955 - 1968

Goal:
Improve transport infrastructure to facilitate industrial development and economic growth

Measures taken:
Increased grants for infrastructure

Results:
New airport, railways, increased public transport, more and better roads & highways

Nihonbashi bridge 1928

Nihonbashi and the Metropolitan Expressway, 2000's
Transport infrastructure in post-war Japan

- Tama Monorail, Tokyo
- Metropolitan highway, Tokyo
- Shinkansen highspeed train
Example: Public transport in Tokyo

Tokyo Toden (Street car system) 1920’s
Example: Public Transport in Tokyo

Tokyo underground, 2000’s
• What part is Western influence and what is typically Japanese in the urban planning?

• How has the Japanese way of thinking influenced urban planning and thus the urban landscape in Japan today?
Urban structures

Kyoto - Western way of structure

*Checkerboard system* (109 m x 109 m)

Tokyo - Japanese way of structure

*Organic Form*
Differences between Japanese- and Western urban-structure

Japan example Tokyo

• No clear centre
• Orientation point = empty plaza
• Inside the city: employment
  Outside the city: residence

Western countries example Paris

• Cities are structured around a centre
• Orientation point = building
• Employment & residence mixed
  inside and outside the city

Pre war
• Hygiene not an issue
• Hygiene a pressing issue
Differences between Japanese- and Western urban-structure

The main difference between Japanese and Western urban structure

“European cities reflect the contrast with nature. Nature and city are two opposite concepts”
⇒ Urban structure

“Japanese cities are like villages that have grown naturally from the power of nature”
⇒ No Urban structure = Body of organism

Arata Isozaki
Nature’s influence

Importance of nature - Body of Organism

- The city structure follows the natural landscape
- Greenery in the city, like parks and gardens

Tokyo Green Space Plan of 1939
Importance of nature - Body of Organism

Why are organic form & nature important in Japan?

The spirit of the Japanese:

*Humanity & Nature are 1 thing*

Traditional religious- & philosophical influences

• Buddhism - Fear of irreversible loss of identity

• Shintoism - Attention towards the cyclical aspect of nature

• Zen - Nothingness, the concept of emptiness and contrast between full & empty
Cultural influence

Two different urban environments

Traditional

Modern
Cultural influence

Address structure reflecting the importance of the village

“Reversed” order
1. Prefecture (to/dō/fu)
2. City (shi)
3. Ward (ku)
4. District (chōme)
5. Block (banchi)
6. House Number (gō)
Cultural influence

Noise in public space

• Different view on noise pollution compared to the west

• Quietness related to the countryside and therefore retrogressive

• Noise sometimes added in department stores, parks etc.
Garbage truck in Osaka
Thank you for your attention.

Questions?

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