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The Urban Core in Japanese Planning (1930s-1950s): Evolving Perceptions on the Spatial and Social Form of the Metropolitan Center on the Mainland and in the Colonies

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ABSTRACT

The urban core was a key topic in postwar modernist architectural discussions and in urban planning debates internationally. The proposal by Tange Kenzo for a new urban center for atom-bombed Hiroshima was an iconic reference in the CIAM 8 debates at Hoddesdon, England, on the aesthetic and functional design of a community center. But these debates focused on modernism and on a select group of Japanese designers at the expense of questions about the core of the traditional Japanese city and about the works of Japanese urbanists and planners. In contrast to the CIAM modernists, a number of Japanese planners discussed the question of the core in debates on urban, regional, and national structures and in discussions on deconcentrating or decentralizing urban form. This article connects all of these conversations, first briefly investigating traditional Japanese urban form and the role of the core therein. It then considers three pre-war and war-time bodies of work on urban cores that are largely unknown outside Japan but that influenced postwar rebuilding: respectively, proposals for new cities in Manchuria and for the rebuilding of the capital Tokyo, and reflections on the urban core by planner and theoretician Nishiyama Uzō. These proposals take a range of approaches to the urban core, parallel to Tange's internationally recognized postwar designs and the modernist visions of the CIAM group. In conclusion, the article explores continuities and discontinuities in Japanese planning through the lens of the urban core and their relevance for the writing of global urban histories.

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KEYWORDS

Urban Core, Japanese Planning, Tange Kenzo, Nishiyama Uzō, Ishikawa Hideaki

Introduction

In 1951, the CIAM 8 meeting in Hoddesdon brought together designers from around the world to focus on the form and function of the nucleus of the city - the “core” - in its role as a social center, the meeting place for people in conurbations at different scales, from villages to small towns, neighborhoods, and cities.¹ Though the main core was usually near the geographical center, a city might have a network of community centers, they argued, effectively tying their architectural projects to larger debates on the overall form of the city. The projects displayed at the meeting, and included in the proceedings published a year later, all had the secondary aim of popularizing contemporary forms of architecture. Defined by the Spanish architect-planner Josep Luís Sert, who had emigrated to the United States in 1939, as “Centres for Community Life,” or “place[s] where people may gather for leisurely intercourse and contemplation,” these cores, they proposed, were an essential feature of any true city.² The urban core was a standard feature of the traditional European city, and a theme that pre-war CIAM debates had sidelined in their focus on the functional city and its key functions (living, working, recreation and transport); now, as the book’s subtitle explained, the CIAM attendees believed that the core furthered the “humanisation of urban life.” Contributors at CIAM 8 agreed with historian Siegfried Giedion that a well-defined structure of society was key to the design of the core.³ Their projects differed in size, historical background, and geographic location, including the village center of Nagele, Holland; the Chandigarh government center in India; Stevenage New Town, England; and – from the Japanese architect Tange Kenzo⁴ – the rebuilding of the atom-bombed center of Hiroshima. Together these projects covered a broad range of architectural expressions for core functions—administrative, economic, commercial, cultural, leisure, and community oriented, each adding new aspects to the overall debate.

Tange’s project for Hiroshima was a striking addition to the mostly European/North and South American projects presented at the conference. Contemporary professional architects and planners, as well as later scholars, celebrated the Hiroshima project as an iconic modernist statement on the form and function of the urban core and the heart of the city.⁵ [Fig. 1 and 2] It was also part of the larger urban project, the city of Hiroshima as a Peace Center, which included multiple centers for the entire city. The site of the project, close to the historic center of the city, was chosen due to its position under the epicenter of the bomb explosion. Tange’s project for the Hiroshima Peace Park can be read as interpreted as drawing on the architectural language of the French modernist architect Le Corbusier, in line with Western modernist debates. The realized project includes *pilotis*, or piers, supporting three buildings connected by aerial passageways parallel to the Peace Boulevard. The project can also be interpreted as being inspired by Japanese Shinto architecture, where visitors enter through the Torii gate, symbolizing the transition from the

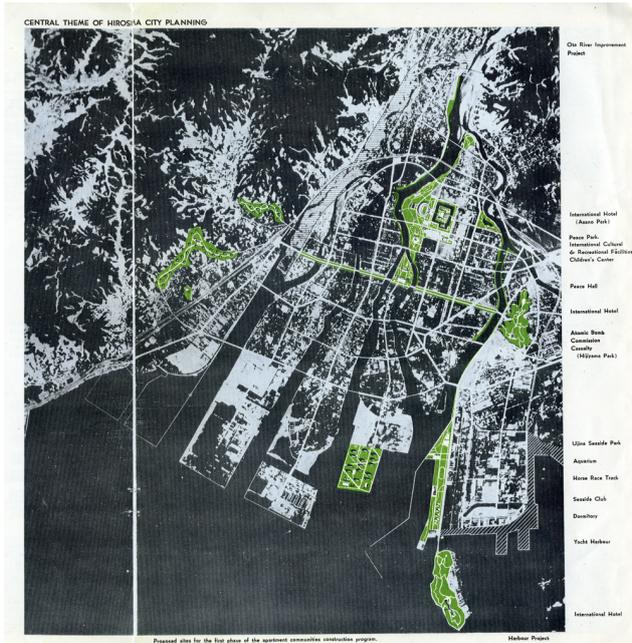
1. Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Josep Lluís Sert, and Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, eds., *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life (CIAM 8)* (New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1952).

2. Josep Lluís Sert, “Centers of Community Life,” in: *Ibid.*, p. 3-16, 3, and “A Short Outline of the Core,” in: *Ibid.*, p. 164-168, 165.

3. Siegfried Giedion, “Historical Background to the Core,” in: *Ibid.*, 17-29.

4. In keeping with Japanese custom, Japanese proper names appear in this paper with surname followed by the given or first name. Long vowels are indicated by macrons, but well-known place names, such as Tokyo, are written without macrons as is conventional in English.

5. For example: Tange Kenzo and Udo Kultermann, *Kenzo Tange, 1946-1969. Architecture and Urban Design* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970); Seng Kuan and Yukio Lippit (eds.), *Kenzo Tange. Architecture for the World* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2012); Zhongjie Lin, *Kenzo Tange and the Metabolist Movement: Urban Utopias of Modern Japan* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010); Paolo Riani, *Kenzo Tange* (London, New York: Hamlyn, 1970); Kenzō Tange, *A Plan for Tokyo, 1960: Toward a Structural Reorganization* (Tokyo: Shikenchikusha, 1961). Carola Hein, “Tange Kenzo’s Proposal for Rebuilding Hiroshima,” in *Cartographic Japan: A History in Maps*, ed. Kären Wigen, Sugimoto Fumiko, and Cary Karacas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Norioki Ishimaru, “Reconstructing Hiroshima and Preserving the Reconstructed City,” in *Rebuilding Urban Japan after 1945*, ed. Carola Hein, Jeffrey Diefendorf, and Yorifusa Ishida (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces. Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California, 1999).



FIGS. 1 - 2 The Hiroshima project presented by Tange Kenzo at the Hoddesdon 1951 conference, in "Peace Park Project," by Tange Kenzo. 丹下健三, in *Peace City Hiroshima*, undated.

physical to the spiritual world, before proceeding to a second gate, which is for prayers. The view beyond this gate is obscured and the visitor is not allowed to proceed to the inner precinct.⁶ Tange's Peace Memorial Museum serves as the gateway to the inner precinct while the cenotaph functions as the place for prayers. Beyond, shaded by the trees of Peace Park and separated by the river, is the sacred space, the A-Bomb Dome, a brick-and-steel building close to the center of the explosion. It is a surviving remnant of the former Hiroshima Industry Promotion Hall. The similarity to shrines goes further: the *pilotis* can be seen as deriving from traditional Japanese granaries with raised floors.

In 1951, a few scholars were also already considering Tange's proposal as an innovation in Japan's distinctive urban form and social organization. The Japanese architect Maekawa (spelled Mayekawa at the time) Kunio, older than Tange and also present at the CIAM meeting in Hoddesdon, pointed to the challenges of postwar reconstruction and noted that the building of a core as a center for community life now required new societal concepts.

"When one thinks of the Core in Japan one tends to think of a closed guild or society. Yet today the Core must be built for the open community. The business centre is not a Core, nor can the amusement centre satisfy our image of a human being. The Core must have open space and serve the citizens for recreational and cultural activities. Japan has no such Cores at present, but in the Hiroshima Peace Project one is being built."⁷

6. Carola Hein, "Hiroshima. The Atomic Bomb and Kenzo Tange's Hiroshima Peace Center," in *Out of Ground Zero. Case Studies in Urban Reinvention*, ed. Joan Ockman (New York, München: Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture Columbia University, Prestel, 2002).

7. Rogers, Sert, Tyrwhitt, *The Heart of the City*, 40.

This statement deepens when one knows something of the distinctive traditional urban form in which modern Japanese architecture and planning emerged. Pre-modern cities in Japan did not have a core, in the sense of an assembly place such as the Greek agora, but generally consisted of a cluster of small neighborhoods with an inaccessible center. In Edo (today's Tokyo), the core was reserved for the palace of the shogun. Around it were *machi*, a term used for multifunctional neighborhoods and small towns, each with their own center, adding up to a deconcentrated urban structure. As the American historian Henri D. Smith II has argued, traditional Japanese urban form does not embody European concepts of the city, whether as a visualization of political power, as a formal expression of utopian thought, or as an autonomous political entity like the medieval city.⁸ Because of the prevalence of *machi*, urban change traditionally happened when individuals made small, local interventions. The concept also captures Japanese urban population density and neighborhood multifunctionality.⁹

It is difficult for outsiders to study a country with a very different language plus a long-standing and long-isolated culture. The historiography of traditional urban form and modern planning in Japan is vast, including many different strands of interpretation: among them are urban or architectural history, planning as a discipline, and urban design. According to the interests and motivations of practitioners and scholars, these different types of studies vary in object of study (physical structures, written documents, drawings, plans), topics of research, sources, and methodologies. Given the difficulty of the Japanese language for outsiders, representations have become a major methodological tool, creating a body of literature that tells a story, often, but not solely for practicing architects and planners and their quest for inspiration. Foreign architects (notably since the 1980s) considered the form of Japanese cities to be exemplary, even ideal.¹⁰ The Japanese architect Ashihara Yoshinobu described the Japanese city as a model of the 21st century.¹¹

There is a risk in focusing only on architects such as Tange and his group, modernists whose works have been extensively published in English. Ignoring the broader spectrum of debates on Japanese planning can distort (ideological) historical writing. Similarly, relying on a single and non-native language source can shape the debate, obscuring our understanding of local contexts and parallel developments that have not been presented outside the country. These preferences can also preclude an engagement with other relevant debates inside and outside Japan: on the spatial and social role of the urban center in Japan generally; the contributions made by other Japanese planners on the topic of the urban core; on the role of the core in deconcentration within or the place of the core in decentralization on a regional or national scale;¹² and on the roots

8. Henry D. Smith II, "Tokyo as an Idea: An Exploration of Japanese Urban Thought until 1945," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 4, no. 1 (1978).

9. Carola Hein, "Machi: Neighborhood and Small Town—the Foundation for Urban Transformation in Japan," *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 1 (2008); André Sorensen, *The Making of Urban Japan. Cities and Planning from Edo to the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2002).

10. Barrie Shelton, *Learning from the Japanese City. West Meets East in Urban Design* (London, New York: E and FN Spon, 1999).

11. Yoshinobu Ashihara, *The Hidden Order: Tokyo through the Twentieth Century* (Tokyo, New York: Kodansha International, 1989).

12. See also: Itsuki Nakabayashi "Concentration and Deconcentration in the Context of the Tokyo Capital Region Plan and Recent Cross-Border Networking Concepts," in Carola Hein and Philippe Pelletier, *Cities. Autonomy and Decentralization in Japan*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2009).

of modernist projects' in prewar debates on urban form.

To remedy these lacunae, and going beyond the attention to Tange and his project at the CIAM conference 1951 as a historical moment of global exchange, this article proposes a closer investigation into two of these dynamics: the Japanese debates on the urban core that preceded the work of Tange, and the interests of Japanese postwar architects who worked in parallel with Tange.¹³ This article asks: How did (other) Japanese planners conceptualize and design the urban core in the prewar period, and how did these debates influence postwar design? How did their discussions link to those of their Western peers? Reading Tange's work for Hiroshima and later for Tokyo Bay as part of the history of Japanese planning, we can see the professional architects and planners who framed Tange's education, work, and publication in Japan - a whole community of planners rarely recognized in non-Japanese literature. Exploring the Japanese discussion about planning the core, we can also glean information on Japan-specific continuities and discontinuities in pre- and post-war debates and add to the complex study of transnational urban history.

Following a brief introduction to Japanese planning history, this article explores the shifting debates on the urban core before, during and after World War II. It uses the lens of select works of three leading Japanese planners whose life and work spanned from the pre- to the post-war era. The oldest among them was Uchida Shōzō (also read Yoshikazu) (1885-1972), a 1907 graduate of the Architecture Department of Tokyo Imperial University. His proposal for Datong in Manchuria is explored here as an example of an urban core inspired by European urban design. Furthermore, the plans by Ishikawa Hideaki (1893-1955) for the Japanese capital Tokyo, established between from 1933 to 1955, are examined as an example of Japanese awareness of European planning debates on the role of the core and on urban decentralization. Finally, select writings on urban, regional, and national form by Nishiyama Uzō (1911-1994), a graduate of Kyoto Imperial University and a key figure in Japanese planning debates in the 20th century, further exemplify the debate over the urban core. Together the projects and writings of these three planners illuminate the shifting debates on the core and its urban, regional and national role(s), showing as the larger context of Tange's architectural and urban-scale approaches to the heart of the city.

Planning in Modern Japan and the Role of the Core

Modern Japanese planning emerged in the mid-19th century, as the nation as a whole began to engage with the rest of the world. Japanese architects and planners now carefully examined foreign practices, and they developed planning approaches and tools addressing the needs of a rapidly industrializing country; they took interest in European cities and their urban cores, notably the streets, places and monuments of Paris

13. Carola Hein, "Idioms of Japanese Planning Historiography," in *Planning History Handbook*, ed. Carola Hein (New York, London: Routledge, 2017).

and London. At the same time, they also took into account the particularities of their traditional cities and the specifics of Japanese spatial development. Following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the new Japanese government was able to reconstruct the very heart of the new capital, Tokyo, because the provincial lords who reigned in the Edo period had departed, abandoning their residences outside the shogunal palace. Here was unprecedented open space for a new government center, business district, a central train station, and other public buildings. Foreign architects Wilhelm Böckmann and Hermann Ende provided plans for this core in 1887.¹⁴ The new Meiji-time government did not realize this or any comprehensive project, however, instead developing the area in smaller parcels that added up to a multi-functional urban core like that of Western capitals. [Fig. 3]

This development of the Tokyo urban core as a political and economic capital—a place of control, not a gathering place for the people—was only a small part of the larger urban development steered by the Tōkyō Shiku Kaisei Jōrei [Tokyo Urban Improvement Ordinance] of 1888, aimed at transforming Tokyo into an imperial capital. Comprehensive planning (which was at the root of North American and European planning) was not a dynamic of that change. Rather, Japanese planning focused on urban infrastructure, particularly streets, as the foundation for urban change. The 1889 First Plan for Urban Improvement of Tokyo recommended building or widening 317 streets, and creating markets, a central station, 49 parks, and rivers and canals. This made planning the domain of the engineer rather than the politician. As many authors have emphasized, the City Planning Act of 1919, often called the Old Act, gave Japanese planning its distinct flavour, as it established the main practice of Japanese planning: *kukakuseiri* [land readjustment]—a technique that created continuous land parcels for development while sharing the project costs among landowners. Land readjustment also became a tool in rebuilding, such as after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake. Scholars have come to call land readjustment the mother of Japanese planning.¹⁵ As a tool, land readjustment focuses on infrastructural needs rather than the aesthetic or social dynamics that are implied in the theme of the urban core.

Modern Japanese planners thus briefly nodded to the urban and architectural design of the urban core that was the hallmark of 19th century

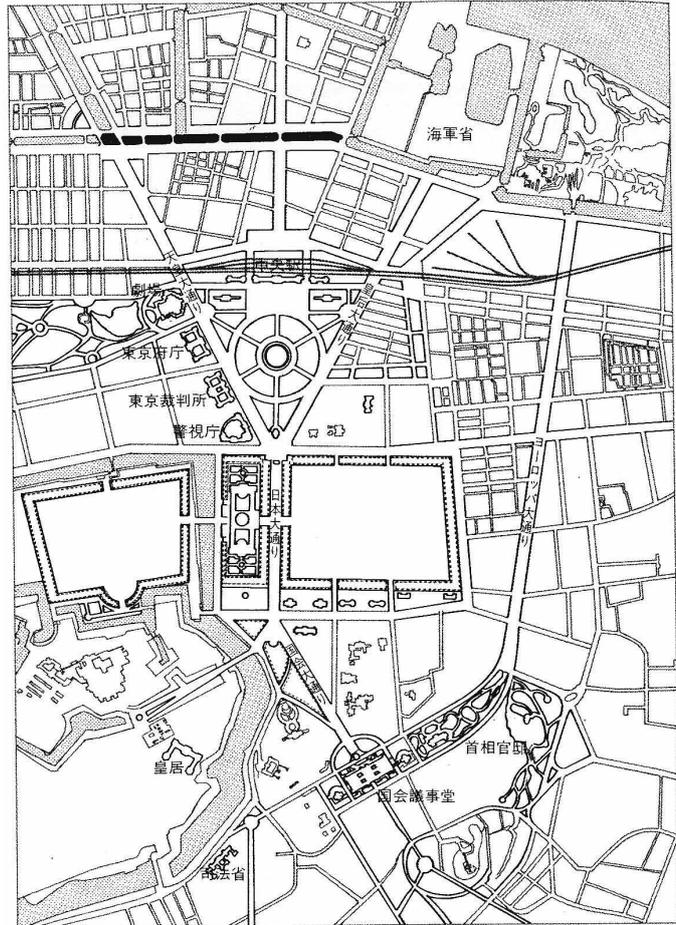


図 1-1 「官庁集中計画」ベックマン案
ベックマンの計画(図中の濃い部分)を当時の地図に重ねたもの。図の上が東。

17 欧化政策の夢のあと

FIG. 3

The project by Wilhelm Böckmann and Hermann Ende for a new monumental center of Tokyo, with room for the Parliament, ministries, and a central train station, 1887, in Ishida, Yorifusa. *Mikan No Tōkyō Keikaku (Unvollendete Pläne Für Tokyo)*. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo (1992).

14. Carola Hein and Yorifusa Ishida, "Japanische Stadtplanung und ihre deutschen Wurzeln," *Die Alte Stadt* 25, no. 3 (1998).

15. Yasuo Nishiyama, *Japanese Town Planning in a Comparative Perspective: Land Readjustment Is the Mother of Town Planning in Japan* (Nagoya: Nagoya Institute of Technology, 1988); Shun'ichi Watanabe, *Toshikeikaku no tanjo: kokusai hikaku kara mita Nihon kindai toshi keikaku [The Birth of Urban Planning: Japan's Urban Planning in International Comparison]* (Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobo, 1993).

European practices and aesthetic concepts, but they did not then see the core as a (democratic) meeting place. Mostly, they saw urban planning as a pragmatic instrument for organizing the city-space, focusing on infrastructure and land readjustment.

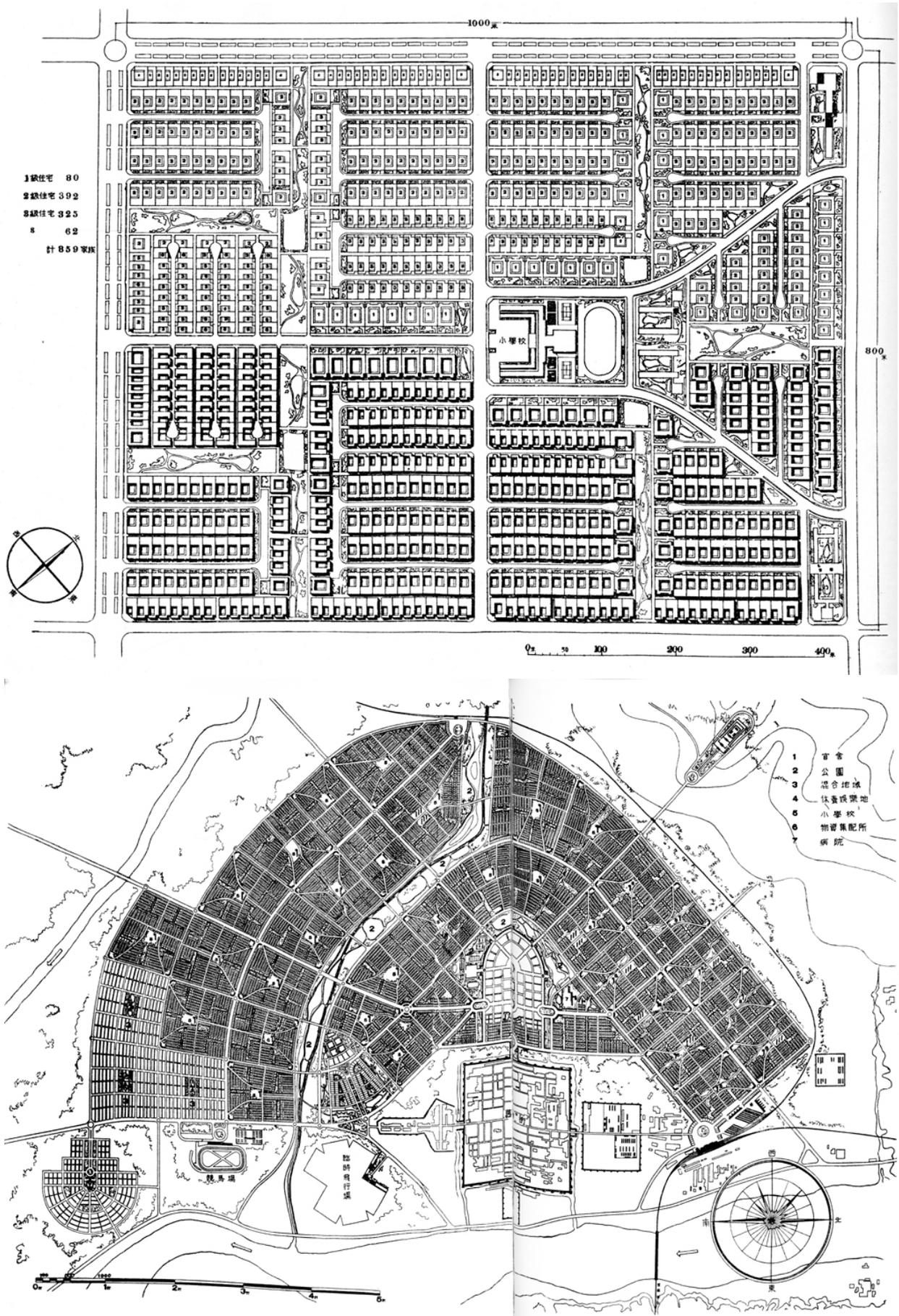
Planning for the colonies and postwar rebuilding offers some insight into the evolving Japanese perception of the form and function of an urban core, one that responded to both Japanese and foreign concepts and to shifting notions of the function of the core.

Designing the Core of a Colonial City: Datong

Japanese planners in the later 19th century had the chance to plan entire cities on the supposedly empty terrain of the colonies, and they used this relative freedom to draw up large-scale plans incorporating both foreign and Japanese practices. Even if they never built them, the opportunity also gave planners occasion to comment on the role of the urban center. Plans for cities in Manchuria by a group of architects including Uchida Shōzō, and for changes to Shanghai by Ishikawa Hideaki, stand as examples of attempts by Japanese planners to design new cities or to transform existing ones. In Manchuria, the architects also had unique opportunities to learn from foreign specialists who had built in the existing cities before the arrival of the Japanese. More importantly, in the colonies, planners could try out new planning concepts they had sampled in the West: in neighborhoods modelled on Radburn—a widely celebrated English project that featured advanced planning concepts—green belts and zoning became central design ideas, sometimes combined with modernist architecture. If European projects for colonies often aimed to express the occupiers' culture, Japanese proposals mixed Western concepts with local traditions and added only limited touches of Japanese culture. Military power in the colonies allowed officials to create urban plans impossible to imagine in Japan itself. The proposal for Datong is particularly interesting in this regard, although it was never realized.¹⁶ In 1938, the puppet Northern Shanxi Autonomous Government invited Uchida, then professor at Tokyo University, to prepare a plan for an urban extension of 180,000 people of a colony comprising the Manchurian city of Datong plus two satellite towns. Among Uchida's companions was Takayama Eika (1910-99), who would go on to found the Department of Urban Engineering at the University of Tokyo in 1962.

For Datong, the planners suggested a double core, preserving the historic walled city center west of the Yuhe River and adding a European-inspired new town center further west, with administrative buildings embedded in greenery; it was surrounded by a new half-moon-shaped cluster of neighborhood units, each with its own local core. Along the waterfront, green spaces would host large structures, including (from north to south) a railway station, an airport, and a sports arena. [Figs. 4 and 5] These concepts might well have influenced post-war planning. Uchida published

16. Carola Hein, "The Transformation of Planning Ideas in Japan and Its Colonies," in *Urbanism – Imported or Exported? Foreign Plans and Native Aspirations*, ed. Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait (Chichester: Wiley, 2003); Carola Hein, "Imperial Visions and City Planning: Visions for Datong in the 1930s," in *Cartographic Japan: A History in Maps*, ed. Kären Wigen, Sugimoto Fumiko, and Cary Karacas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).



FIGS. 4 - 5 Regional and urban plan for Datong by the group of Japanese planners around Uchida Yoshikazu, in "Regional Plan for Datong, 1938" [Daido. no toshi kenkakuin 1938 大同の都市計画], from Uchida 内田祥三, "Daido. no toshi kenkakuin ni tsuite 1," *Kenchiku zasshi* 53 (1939): 1292. And figure 41.2 "Citywide Plan for Datong, 1938," from Uchida Yoshikazu, "Daido. no toshi kenkakuin ni tsuite 1," *Kenchiku zasshi* 53 (1939): 1290-91.

the Datong project in the *Journal of Architecture* in 1939; Nishiyama discussed it in 1942 and included it in his 1968 collective writings.¹⁷ We can also see echoes of the Datong project in the central part of Tange's Hiroshima project. Part of his larger strategy to reimagine Hiroshima, this central part is captured in both the 1946 land use plan and his competition entry for the Peace Park. In these plans, Tange suggested freeing up the riverfronts, which had traditionally been built over; locating international facilities in an open green space; and rebuilding the historic castle that had been damaged in the war. At the 1951 CIAM meeting, he displayed this project for the urban core, together with the larger metropolitan project, which located central governmental, cultural, and commercial functions in several clusters in the center of the city as well as in various peripheral locations.

Planning the City and Core of the Japanese Capital: Tokyo

By 1923, when the great Kanto earthquake struck, Tokyo had already taken on a modern form. The devastation of the bombing during World War II would provide yet another opportunity for a complete restructuring of the capital. Personal and professional continuity from the 1930s to 1951 provided an opportunity for conceptual continuity in reflection on urban cores. Ishikawa Hideaki (1893-1955) served as the head of Tokyo planning during these years.¹⁸ An engineer trained at Tokyo University, Ishikawa had also studied European planning; he thought that land readjustment would not create a well-balanced city. Instead, he aimed to emphasize the cultural, humanist, and aesthetic aspects of urban design. He was convinced of the need to allow for leisure in urban spaces and his proposals for amusement districts may be considered a contribution to the larger theme of the urban core.

Ishikawa translated these ideas into the Tokyo's War Damage Rehabilitation plan of 1946. He had very specific ideas for the city, suggesting decentralization and deconcentration of the urban population. In doing so, he followed pre-war concepts, including the German idea of *Stadtlandschaft* [urban landscape], developed since the 19th century in conjunction with Anglo-American ideas that sought to transform existing cities by creating smaller neighborhoods separated by green areas. *Stadtlandschaft* seems to have resonated with Japanese planners, who had few legal tools to implement large-scale plans and who faced widespread opposition to any attempts at comprehensive planning. For all of these reasons, their preference was for small-scale, *machi*-like patterns. The works of Walter Christaller (partly discredited later because of the use of his ideas by the Nazis) echoed the desire of the Japanese planners to make regional, metropolitan, and urban plans. First introduced in Japan in the 1930s, Christaller's writings analysed urban services in regional context and pointed to a regularity in the distribution of specific functions

17. Yoshizō (Yoshikazu/Shōzō) Uchida, "Daidō no toshi kenkakuan ni ysuite 1," *Kenchiku zasshi* 53, no. 656 (1939); "Daidō no toshi kenkakuan ni tsuite 2," *Kenchiku zasshi* 53, no. 657 (1939); Uzō Nishiyama, *Chiiki Kūkan Ron* [Reflections on Urban, Regional and National Space], 4 vols., vol. 3 (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1968).

18. Carola Hein, "Shaping Tokyo: Land Development and Planning Practice in the Early Modern Japanese Metropolis," *Journal of Urban History* 36, no. 4 (2010); Hideaki Ishikawa, "100 nengo no toshi [The City in 100 Years]," in *Toshi no seitai* (Shunjūsha, 1943); Nihon Toshikeikaku Gakkai/The City Planning Institute of Japan, "The Centennial Issue of the Birth of Dr. Hideaki Ishikawa," *Toshikeikaku/City Planning Review* (special issue), no. 182 (1993).

that could be used in the location and planning of new cities.

Ishikawa started to develop the 1946 plan in October 1944, building on earlier plans for a ring infrastructure with deconcentrated cores by the Japanese planner Fukuda Shigeyoshi. He also took up British examples, notably the Greater London Plan of 1944 by Patrick Abercrombie, and specifically recommended the creation of new specialized centers around the city, which would function as a regional network reminiscent of Christaller's central place theory.¹⁹ With his first textbook on urban and regional planning, in 1941, Ishikawa had proposed his own regional planning ideas and had laid them out more extensively in a section on planning for defence in his 1942 book *War and City*.²⁰ His scheme had divided the city into multiple small units according to daily, weekly, and monthly needs and strongly influenced his proposal for the postwar reconstruction of Tokyo. A sketch from 1946 for the Kanto region highlights the specific connections he envisioned between Tokyo and satellite cities such as Ōta, Utsunomiya, or Mito.

Ishikawa envisioned a ward population of around three and a half million people and with new satellite and outer towns all over the Kantō plains to accommodate the growth of population and industry. Ishikawa planned mono-functional towns containing 200,000 to 300,000 people, set apart by greenbelts (an inheritance from air defence planning during the war, not from Western garden cities) and structured by a ring- and radial-shaped road network connecting them. Political and economic functions were to be decentralized to other cities within 40 kilometres of Tokyo, while "culture" was to be concentrated in cities at a radius of one hundred kilometres. All of these cities would work together in a network. Meanwhile, each of these other cities or small towns would itself become a center of 100,000 to 200,000 inhabitants, reducing the Tokyo population from 6.5 million (its population before the war) to a maximum of 3.5 million.²¹ [Fig. 6]

19. Jun-ichiro Asano, "A Study on Hideaki Ishikawa's Early Thought About City Planning and Practice in Small and Middle Scale Cities —from 'Kyodo-Toshi No Hanashi Ni Narumade' and City Plan of Toyohashi, Okazaki, Ichinomiya," *Journal of Architecture and Planning* (Transactions of AIJ) 74, no. 642 (2009).

20. Ishikawa Hideaki, *Sensoo to Toshi* [War and City] (Tokyo: Nihon Denpo Tsushinsha Shuppanbu, 1942).

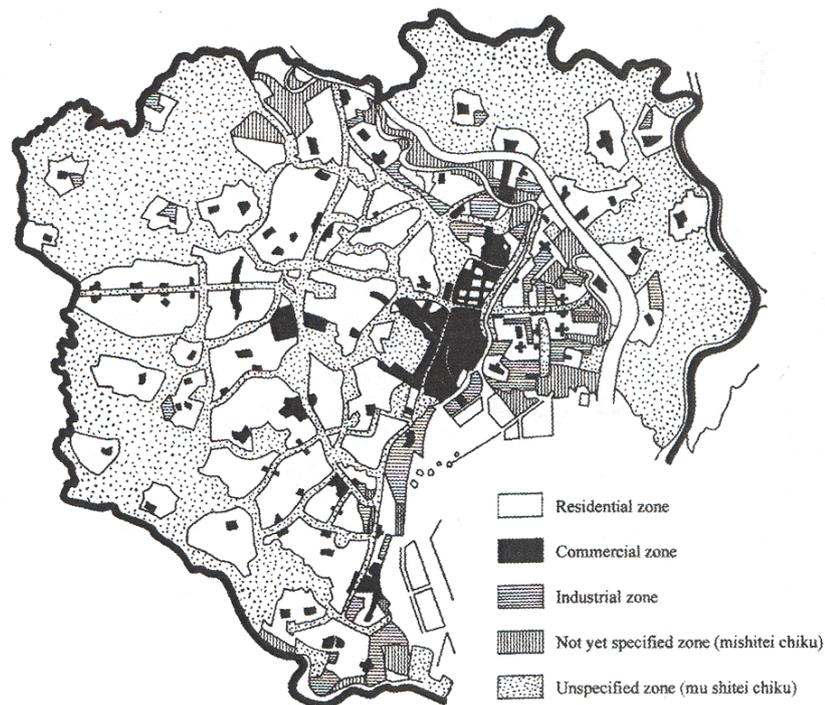


Figure 3.3 Land-use plan as part of the Reconstruction Plan for Tokyo (1946). Source: Ishida (1987: 224). Just after the air bombings of Tokyo in 1946, land use was unclear in many districts, which thus were designated "not yet specified" zones (*mishitei chiku*). Land use in "unspecified zones" (*mu shitei chiku*) was not specified in order to reserve land for the future.

FIG. 6 Tokyo War Damage Rehabilitation Plan of 1946 issued by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, in Ishikawa's plan advocated deconcentration and lower population numbers than before the war. in: Ishida Yorifusa, *Nihon kindai toshi keikaku no hyakunen* (1987, p. 224).

21. Ishikawa Hideaki, *Kōkoku toshi no kensetsu: Daitoshi sosan monad* [Constructing the City for the Empire] (Tokyo: Tokiwa Shobō, 1944).

Tokyo proper was to be reconstructed following a strict zoning concept, with industrial functions close to the harbour and the Sumida river. Instead of a single core, Ishikawa continued to promote a multiplicity of cores, notably along the Yamanote loop line, at Ikebukuro, Shibuya, Gotanda, and Omori. He assigned major amusement and commercial functions to different cores—Ginza was the international center, Shinjuku was the amusement area for white-collar workers, and Asakusa was now the old downtown. Big commercial centers would provide mainly specialized goods, while shopping areas for daily use would be close to the transit stations in the middle of neighborhood units. Waseda, Hongo, Mita, Kanda Surugadai, and Ookayama were to become culture and education zones with libraries, museums, research institutions, and housing. Ishikawa's original plan projected land readjustment on about fifty thousand acres, exceeding the burned-out area. But the nation's financial difficulties and the "Fundamental Policy for the Reconsideration of Reconstruction Planning" of 1949, which—based on the American-imposed so-called Dodge line²²—forced reconstruction projects to be scaled down or abandoned, and curtailed Ishikawa's idealistic concepts. Yet many of these centers in this decentralized form suggested by Ishikawa—and before him by Fukuda on a ring further out—have come into being.

Debates on the form and function of the urban core were thus prominent in Japanese planning discourse before and during the war. Ishikawa publicized his reconstruction plan with a film presented in 1938.²³ Moreover, he initiated urban planning competitions and consultations to launch these multiple cores. Working on these projects, Japanese planners further developed the concepts for cores and cities they had first considered for the colonies. In two of Ishikawa's competitions for Tokyo sub-centers, Uchida Yoshifumi, a member of the Datong planning group, won first prize. Tange's project matches Ishikawa's architectural proposals for centers in Tokyo. But whereas Tokyo's head planner created multiple centers for a range of functions, Tange's proposal is unique as a single symbolic core and festival place. No memorial sites were built here in the center of Tokyo, the capital where the war had started. Instead, a memorial project is at the heart of Hiroshima, where Japan was the victim.²⁴

Theorizing and Planning the Core as a Function of Urban Regional and National Space

The planner who perhaps thought the most about the core as part of Japanese cities is Nishiyama Uzō, a theorist and planner who was active from the 1930s to the 1980s. His reflections on urban, regional, and national space were originally published in the 1940s in professional magazines, shaping Japanese planning in the second half of the 20th century. In these publications, Nishiyama was carefully studying foreign

22. The so-called Dodge line was an austerity budget devised by Lt. Dodge and imposed by the GHQ, which targeted national budget allocations for public works projects and especially for the war-damage reconstruction projects.

23. Kari Shepherdson-Scott, "Toward an 'Unburnable City' Reimagining the Urban Landscape in 1930s Japanese Media," *Journal of Urban History* 42, no. 3 (2016).

24. James J. Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

planning debates, including the works of Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier and Nikolay Alexandrovich Miljutin, and discussing his findings.²⁵

Nishiyama was interested in ideas of the urban core as both an organizational unit and a social one. In 1942, he entered the competition for a monument for the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere (the Japanese imperial area of control), without concerning himself about the policies behind it. His approach to this topic differed from that of the other competitors. In contrast to Tange, whose competition proposal for a location close to Mount Fuji is better known, Nishiyama situated his proposal in Asuka, in Nara Prefecture. Instead of creating an isolated monument, he envisioned an entirely new city closely connected with the existing village. It would be a kind of permanent Olympic village, a meeting and festival capital offering cultural and sports facilities for all the different people who had come under Japanese authority. The design combines monumental and modern elements, proposing a compact infrastructure connected by green routes.²⁶

Nishiyama was also one of the rare planners to reflect on the social dimension and human values of planning. He did not criticize the big city itself. In contrast to Ishikawa, he objected to decentralization and was convinced that further density was better. He specifically tried to maintain multifunctionality in big cities and to make them more liveable, proposing decentralized, self-governed neighborhoods, which he called life spheres, each with its own core. Like Ishikawa, he cited Christaller and Feder as inspirations. As in later CIAM discussions, Nishiyama reserved the city center for commercial and public administrative functions; he located a network of small monofunctional urban units - industrial, cultural, and harbor facilities - along major lines of transportation (principally railway lines), separating them from other urban areas with green strips.

Nishiyama's proposals for post-war rebuilding were largely ignored by Japanese officials, and in response, with his students he launched the concept of *Kōsō Keikaku* [Image Planning].²⁷ His 1965 urban design project for Kyoto, featuring a high-rise axis through the center of the ancient city, can also be seen as a response to Tange's project for Tokyo Bay, published in 1958, and probably to the megastructure proposals coming from the group of metabolists based in Tokyo.²⁸ Nishiyama's goal in his visionary proposals was to show the contradictions in the urban living space, including potentially negative features that he termed "inferno."²⁹ [Fig. 7] Nishiyama's complex relationship to the changing and modernizing post-war city is evident in his approach to the car. He critiqued the negative effects of car traffic, noise, and air pollution, the need for parking spaces, and similar problems that overwhelmed roads in the traditional city, where streets were a place for community activities, and a room to play and to meet, effectively an extension of the home. He proposed "Iepolis" [Home City], a city limited to pedestrian traffic and mechanized public

25. Carola Hein, "Nishiyama Uzō: Leading Japanese Planner and Theorist" in Uzō Nishiyama, *Reflections on Urban, Regional and National Space: Three Essays, with an Introduction by Carola Hein* (New York, London: Routledge, 2017).

26. Uzō Nishiyama, "Seikatsu No Kōzō to Seikatsu Kichi [The Structure of Life Units and the Base of Life]," *Kenchikugaku kenkyū* (later included in his book *Chiikikūkanron*, Tokyo, Keisō shobō, 1968), no. 110+111 (1942).

27. The World Design Conference Organization, *World Design Conference 1960 in Tokyo* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 1961).

28. Uzō Nishiyama, "A Plan for Kyoto," *Japan Architect* 105, (February 1965).

29. Andrea Yuri Flores Urushima, "Everyday Unavoidable Modernization and the Image of Hell: Visual Planning in the Writings of Nishiyama Uzō," in *Alternative Visions of Postwar Reconstruction: Creating the Modern Townscape*, ed. John Pendlebury, Erdem Erten, and Peter Larkham (London: Routledge, 2014).

transportation.³⁰ The car had to stay on the outskirts; just as the Japanese practice of inhabitants and visitors removing their shoes on entering from outside, cars shouldn't be allowed into the urban center. Nishiyama thus met modern needs (and the concepts of the CIAM leaders) while maintaining housing traditions.

His plan for Kyoto also divides the land into autonomous units and a central plaza, as he had proposed in the 1940s.³¹ He suggested a skyscraper axis in the ancient city - strangely echoing Le Corbusier's proposal for a city of 3 million inhabitants, the Cité Voisin, to be built over the center

of Paris - destroying a central North-South area of the existing urban structure. As such, it surprisingly contrasted with Nishiyama's earlier negative assessment of Le Corbusier's work and other aspects of his own writings, while also incorporating his notion of displaying "inferno" to the masses.³²

Nishiyama continued to focus on urban centers, the topic that also led to Tange's post-war fame. In the 1960s, Japan campaigned to bring international events to its cities, which created opportunities for large scale planning. The Tokyo Olympics brought the country a lot of attention, and also public funding for the capital. The Osaka area, a long-time second in receiving funding, campaigned for the next big event, the Expo. Osaka '70 was a unique opportunity for intellectuals from the Kansai area to engage the public sector and to counter the prominence of the Tokyo group. As Andrea Urushima has shown, Nishiyama proposed to make the Osaka site a model city core, and suggested erecting buildings that could be the heart of a new city area after the event.³³ This was a unique opportunity to invest public money into urban construction as Nishiyama had been advocating, and the ultimate confirmation of the ideas he had elaborated in the 1940s. Nonetheless, the final exhibition project was designed by Tange.

In the post-war period, instead of Nishiyama's organized construction, the country saw haphazard urban sprawl, a number of large-scale visionary projects by metabolist architects, and a few architecturally designed buildings—such as the Kurashiki Townhall— that continued Tange's idea of the core and furthered architectural debates on the urban core rather than urban planning ones.³⁴



FIG. 7 Nishiyama with members from his research group discussing a model of the Kyoto axis plan, in Uzō Nishiyama Memorial Library

30. Uzō Nishiyama, Hiroshi Mimura, and Toshihide Katayose, "Home City," *Kindai Kenchiku* 14 (1960).

31. Nishiyama, "A Plan for Kyoto."

32. Shinya Katagata, "Ch. 3: Kōsōkeikaku: kūkan no ronri to yosoku," in *Nishiyama Uzō no Jūtaku, Toshiron: Sono Gendaiteki Kenshō*, ed. Shōji Sumita and Nishiyama Uzō Kinen Sumai Machizukuri Bunko (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, 2008).

33. Andrea Yuri Flores Urushima, "Genesis and Culmination of Uzō Nishiyama's Proposal of a 'Model Core of a Future City' for the Expo 70 Site (1960-73)," *Planning Perspectives* 22, no. 4 (2007).

34. Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Zhong-Jie Lin, "From Megastructure to Megalopolis: Formation and Transformation of Mega-Projects in Tokyo Bay," *Journal of Urban Design* 12, no. 1 (2007).

Conclusion: Continuities with the Traditional City and its Decentralized Structure of Multiple Cores

Planning for the urban core in Japan has a long and complex history. The neighborhood units proposed for Datong by Uchida's group, the plans for Tokyo by Ishikawa, the analytical proposals for Japanese cities by Nishiyama, and the city-wide plan for Hiroshima proposed by Tange, all built upon the traditionally deconcentrated city and its multiple cores as well as on foreign concepts of deconcentration and decentralization. Ishikawa's plans for Tokyo failed, as the population of the capital rose quickly. Projects that appear to reflect strong European influences often turn out to be less of a break with traditional Japanese ways of organizing urban space and more of an integration with those traditions. Thus, to focus on Tange's Hiroshima center as only a modernist innovation contributing to CIAM debates on the core is to ignore his larger project for the city, and to miss the traditional aspects of his work; by the same token, widening our focus beyond Tange, we can see that planning in Japan had since before the war considered decentralization and the organization of the urban core. Existing centers may have facilitated the emergence of multiple decentralized centers as proposed by foreign planners.

Nishiyama's intervention in favour of the neighborhood, *machi*, was not a direct reaction to wartime destruction; it transcended this period and had a strong influence on *machizukuri*, the 1960s movement for neighborhood or community planning. As Nishiyama had pointed out earlier, there is a special quality to the traditional neighborhood or *machi*, its social and functional diversity, and its distinctive meaning for the Japanese; local participation in decision-making and small-scale urban amelioration programs was a first step towards a more humanized planning, a vision that also drove the planners of CIAM in Hoddesdon. An architectural intervention or an urban design project that is not tied into broader urban, regional, and national structures, however, does not replace Nishiyama's central project: a comprehensive vision based not only on economic concepts, but on a set of social and political ideas for a balanced society.

The recent emergence of architectural, urban, and planning history on Asia (as well as other continents) helps balance and even provincialize the often dominant European/American/Australian narrative. These new global perspectives on what makes a city, what concepts and tools dominate, and how they tie to architectural projects, also help us to reassess the various disciplines, their relation, and the writing of history. In light of the powers of global differences in political and economic planning and in economic forces, we may have to reassess the definition of architectural design as expression of political preferences. Here, the desire to create the core as a site for communal gathering can be seen as modernist and Western, and distinctively of the post-war period. Placing these histories in their local context may help reassess our understanding of global (urban) histories.