

124 Akira Tamura: Urban Planning and Environmental Quality

1. sterility of urban planning

It is often said that, compared to Europe and the United States, "Japan is not inferior in terms of individual architectural technology and design. In terms of individual architectural technology and design, Japan is not inferior. And in fact, one of the top countries in the world. However, when it comes to urban planning, Japan is not as good as the rest of the world. It is true that there are many wonderful architectural works when we look at a single building, but why is it that when we look at the city as a whole, it has become so confused and chaotic, inconsistent and diffuse, chaotic and disorganized? One of the reasons for this is that architecture is an important element of the city and should be an architecture within the boundaries of the city, but we have focused our efforts on competing with each other in individual technology and design to stand out from the rest or to be cheap. I think this is on architects and construction engineers. And secondly, there is a lack of urban planning. It is true that the term "urban planning" has existed, but except for a few exceptional pioneers, the true meaning of urban planning has not been understood, nor has there been any effort to put it into practice.

This is not to say that in the past, our country did not have its fair share of urban development. There were quite a few cities that possessed compositional richness and beauty. However, when Western civilization was rapidly introduced after the Meiji period (1868-1912), for some reason, only individual technologies were introduced, and comprehensive methods such as urban planning were not adopted.

There are various reasons for this. The degree of urbanization of Japanese cities was only manageable despite the unevenness of many of them, military objectives took precedence and there was little interest in cities except for specific purposes such as displaying the dignity of the imperial capital, and civil society was immature and citizens had little interest in urban development. In addition, the city was not yet matured and citizens were not interested in urban development.

In the rush to modernize, the issues of citizens, localities, and self-government were neglected. The centralization of power is, in a sense, a form of centralization. Centralization implies, in a sense, a hierarchical control of the central ministries. However, it has been the most unsuitable path for environmental issues and urban planning, which must be integrated in accordance with the characteristics of each region.

2. what is urban planning?

Under these circumstances, "urban planning" has become just a word, far from realizing the

comprehensive value of the city. At best, it could only mean the creation of individual streets and parks. In general, cities were given no legal power or authority in "urban" planning, but only the position of executor of a predetermined plan.

Therefore, in actual town development, many government agencies, public corporations, public states, or private companies and individuals built roads, bridges, and buildings according to their own logic, and there was no one who was responsible for the entire city, had oversight, and could control and guide the city as necessary.

The city governments, which should have been the closest to the citizens, based on a single region, and engaged in comprehensive planning and projects, and guided the city to its ideal state from a holistic perspective, were in fact broken up into separate, fragmented, and fragmented administrations, and could not become proactive and comprehensive planning entities.

After the war, a new constitution was enacted, local autonomy was confirmed, and a new era of self-governance began, but it took time for this to be realized. However, most of these plans were limited to a narrow range of projects undertaken by local governments, and other important projects were left out, and the practical aspects of the projects were still disparate. It was not possible to comprehensively understand and add overall value to these projects.

Even if they are public organizations, roads have their own logic, ports have their own logic, and rivers have their own logic. It is a one-sided business logic, with little consideration of what it means to the urban community. For example, the logic of roads is that they should be fast, inexpensive, and allow cars to drive smoothly, but from the perspective of the city as a whole, roads are necessary, but they must also be comfortable for pedestrians, beautiful in addition to having ordinary functions, and how they can coexist and compromise with other projects when they conflict with each other. How can they coexist and compromise with each other when competing with other plans? Even in the case of architecture, the focus has been on the beauty and prominence of a single building, and not on how it should look in the context of the urban environment.

Although it is inevitable that urban development will be carried out by various entities in the current situation, it is necessary to check not only from the perspective of values, but also from the perspective of the values of the city as a whole, looking ahead to the future.

Urban planning is not only about abstract comprehensiveness and ideals, but it is also about the effort to put each concrete project in a single direction. This approach is passively carried out through environmental assessment, which only aims to minimize the negative effects as much as possible. Urban planning involves a more proactive approach to introducing new values and creating a new environment. This is to bring new value to the city. Value from the perspective of individual projects tends to be limited to efficiency principles and technical

aspects. In order for a city to truly belong to human beings, it must be created as a whole human environment, not only in quantity but also in quality.

3. Yokohama Main Street Park

On September 9 of last year, a 1.2-kilometer long, narrow boulevard park was opened in the center of Yokohama. The process of its realization and the way of thinking about it exemplify the necessity of such positive environmental creation in practice.

Yokohama is a new port town born in 1876, and although the area has expanded to include suburban areas unrelated to the port, the birthplace of Yokohama was not near the current Yokohama Station, but in the narrow area between the three stations of Sakuragi-cho, Kannai, and Ishikawacho, according to the National Railway. The Yokoha area is made up of low hills and many valleys between them, and this area is also the delta of the Ooka River. In the middle of the delta, there used to be a drainage channel for developing new rice paddies, and later a small branch river called Yoshida River was used to fill barges for the port. However, the barges were no longer used, and the drainage channel became a sewage ditch, and the water overflowed into the surrounding area at high tide due to land subsidence.

After the recovery from the Great Kanto Earthquake, the city of Yokohama was again devastated by the Great War, and the central part of the city was confiscated by the U.S. military, making postwar urban planning and reconstruction impossible. In addition, the town was subjected to a wave of rapid urbanization and population growth in the 1950s. In order to cope with these changes, a number of measures were necessary, including the redevelopment and strengthening of the city center area, including the redevelopment of the waterfront area, and the construction of a motorway (called "Koran Road", but actually it is a motorway within a large city, unlike the Tomei and Meishin roads) to replace the subway and the streets that had fallen behind. The construction of a new road (called a "high-connection road" but actually an automobile road within a large city, unlike the Tomei and Meishin roads) was proposed.

The ditch river that runs through the center of the delta was to be reclaimed and connected to the subway, while a green axis was envisioned to run through the center of the delta, starting from the waterfront park called Yamashita Park. The green axis is to be made up of Japan Avenue with its beautiful gingko trees, Yokohama Park, the oldest Western-style park in Japan, and the Odori Park, which will be built from the Kusunoki Plaza in front of City Hall to the long, narrow reclaimed land above the subway line. Although the Odori Park is only about 60 meters wide, it will transform the entire area, which used to be a back street along the Dobu River, into a beautiful urban center, and will also serve as an emergency evacuation route and barrier zone, and provide citizens with greenery and a place of relaxation. It will also serve as

a disaster prevention evacuation route and a barrier zone in case of emergency, and provide a green and pleasant place for the citizens. On the other hand, where to put the road for exclusive use of automobiles was a big problem. The central part of Yokohama is only a narrow area separated by a hill, and the way the road is constructed will decisively change the form and the penetration of the city in the future. However, only from the road side, the value criterion is how quickly and inexpensively it can be constructed. Therefore, it was planned to build an elevated road through the long and narrow area where the Boulevard Park is planned, and a part of it was even decided as an urban planning project.

However, this would completely divide the narrow downtown area. Of course roads are necessary, but the boulevard park is also indispensable. The idea was to make the streets partially underground. Underground construction is very expensive and involves many technical difficulties. After more than a year of long and difficult discussions and negotiations, it was finally decided that the road would be partially underground and partially semi-underground (the upper part of the road would be ventilated by a ventilation system). The road was finally decided to be partially underground and partially semi-underground (with the upper part ventilated), so that it would not run over the Boulevard Park. This change of plan, based on a consideration of the entire urban environment, was epoch-making at the time. Thus, the Boulevard Park structure based on the green axis concept was not just a concept, but became a real plan from the beginning.

The boulevard park, with a meditation on Rodin's Gates of Hell at the entrance, a small circular stage, a staircase, and a wide front stage, creates a variety of elevations on this flat reclaimed site. The lower part of the stage serves as a latrine and storage area. A larger stone plaza can be used for gatherings and events. This leads to the water plaza. The water plaza, which tells the story of the life of water as it flows from the mountains to the ocean through streams, is a place for families and young people to relax and talk. The Sunken Garden, with its waterfalls on both sides and Henry Moore's "Objects in Three Parts," is a natural walkway that leads up to the subway station and through the wide streets. The rest is a long green forest with trees, lawns, and children's playgrounds.

4. The Process of Creating Main Street Park

Once completed, it may appear to be nothing more than a park project. However, considering the many difficulties and difficulties encountered by the various parties involved in the planning and negotiation of this long and narrow park, the visible park that has been created is really just the tip of the iceberg. The visible park is really just the tip of the iceberg.

Who would have thought that the finished park would be right under the elevated road or its major interchange? That is fine. But town planning is a passion for such invisible work.

It took about 10 years from the time this plan was finalized to the completion of Main Street Park. It took even longer from the conceptual stage.

It may have seemed somewhat unusual at the time, when we were studying the project until late at night, day after day, with an extraordinary obsession to keep the expressway underground and create a boulevard park. In fact, the elevated highway would function well as a road, and many people probably could not have imagined the Main Street Park and the urban space that would appear there, given its appearance at the time alongside the sloppy Dopu River. I was once told by an old subordinate, "Now I understand why you were so obsessed with this project back then," after it was almost completed.

Urban planning is about reading, thinking, imagining, planning, and betting on the future, which we do not know. Ten years is just a blink of an eye in urban planning. It is possible to envision what the city will look like 10 years from now, and that is why we have realized the undergrounding of roads through a lot of seemingly unnecessary labor. However, the people who are working on each project are quite capable of envisioning how much traffic will be handled after the road is built, and how to handle the flow of cars that will be concentrated at the expressway onramp, as well as the geological conditions and the relationship with other structures when these works are carried out. However, the veterans of the past projects have only their own perspective of the project, and they have a surprisingly limited picture of the overall urban environment, much less the urban space that will be created by the project. There was no training or teaching of such things anywhere, and knowledge and skills were limited to the planning of individual projects and the elimination of obstacles and barriers to their realization. Thus, if individual projects are not valued more than just doing business from that perspective, there is no way that urban planning can be accomplished.

The creation of urban space, including Odori Park, is an important milestone in the effort to make Yokohama an attractive, pleasant, and unique city in the future, and is not something that can be derived from the logic of individual projects alone. Therefore, there was no strong request from the park side in the process of realization of this project. The park was subordinate to the road in the logic of the Ministry of Construction, and the park did not appreciate such a long, narrow, and strange park, and preferred a normal park of equal area. Therefore, it is not usual for a city municipality to plan and create a boulevard park before the creation of a park that the citizens would be happy to see. The city planning department in a municipality does not have a strong overall conceptual power, and its role is limited to making decisions based on power relationships and the legally prescribed procedures of city planning. In this case, the logic of building roads quickly and inexpensively was the strongest at the time, and the real city planning was to follow this logic.

Real urban planning, however, is not based on the logic of individual entities, but on

comprehensive consideration of the overall function and spatial organization of the city as a whole, and the future impact of specific plans on the city as a whole. However, without such evaluations and studies from the standpoint of urban planning, only the individual logic of the moment will be given priority, and the accumulation of such logic will only result in the accumulation of projects that have been carried out and the amount of investment that has been made, but will not contribute to the qualitative accumulation of the entire urban environment. However, the qualitative accumulation of the urban environment as a whole will be poor.

5. Main Street Park and Related Plans

The introduction of Boulevard Park and the undergrounding of roads is an attempt to select and introduce urban values that go beyond simple functions and cost efficiency, but to do so, a great variety of issues must be dealt with. Nowadays, roads are seen as a bad thing, and there are arguments against roads and for undergrounding roads. However, it is not possible to underground only a part of a road, so it is necessary to study a long section of the road before undergrounding it. This will naturally incur additional costs. In this case, it was a toll road, so it was possible to shift the burden to the users, but this is not likely to be the case in general. Also, this road is for automobiles only, so there was no need to consider the use of the roadside area.

Even so, the plan would not have been feasible if any part of the long section was obstructed, the underground is not so simple with various structures, and in the case of automobiles, there is also the major problem of exhaust gas. It is too complicated to list all of them here, but it is necessary to consider not only ideas and concepts but also social, economic, and technical aspects of the project from various perspectives and to compile them into a concrete plan.

Furthermore, even if the major problems for the plan are the undergrounding of the road and the finalization of the Boulevard Park project, the various problems in the surrounding area must be taken into consideration and measures taken to deal with them, or else the idea may not be fully utilized.

When the road was underground, we planned to create an underground pedestrian plaza at the intersection between the road and the surface of the road, and also considered the shape of the old Yoshida Bridge, the first iron bridge in Japan, to be used as a railing on the surface, with the financial cooperation of the local community. The land that happened to be acquired by the city transportation bureau for a subway substation at the corner of Odori Park is an important point at the entrance to Odori Park, and was designed by Kunio Maekawa as an educational and cultural center that will play a leading role in the construction of this area. We also decided to set back the wall line of the private land around the Main Street Park. The

JNR is now discussing a plan to renovate Kannai Station, which is the most conspicuous station from the Odori Park area. For now, the side of the platform is being painted. This is another example of the work being done by Odori Park.

6. Introduction of New Value

I have already mentioned the progress of the Main Street Park and many of the problems in the surrounding area rather than just the park itself. There are still many problems that have not been mentioned yet, but urban planning is not a single park project, but a multifaceted strategy.

Even so, the planning and design of the Boulevard Park is also extremely important, since the public will first have a sense of the Boulevard Park itself when it is completed. Therefore, a committee was set up from the basic concept stage to conduct various studies. The main part of the park was designed by Ren Shinrai, who had many discussions with the urban design team of the City of Yokohama and the people in charge of the park, and I believe that he did a very good job in putting together a unique design.

Odori Park is only the first step, not the completion, of a strategic urban planning project. It will take 20 to 30 years to make qualitative improvements to the surrounding area. In this context, Boulevard Park must become more and more valuable.

For this reason, in the planning and design of the Boulevard Park, I have tried to introduce and realize some values that have been lacking in urban planning. Let me list some of them.

(1) Open space with a human scale

The open space in the center of the city, which was obtained by converting the elevated highways into underground, has a blue sky and a comfortable spaciousness in the cramped center of the city. The open sky alone is a forgotten value. However, a mere plaza is usually just a big empty space. It is also necessary that the given space be designed on a scale appropriate for human beings, so that the open space does not become a dry desert. The entrance turn, the small circle-shaped plaza, the staircase, the sunken garden, etc., have been carefully designed, and the green plaza has a narrow, soft sidewalk about 1 meter wide with exposed soil, in addition to the hard path of untouched cars, which should make people feel human scale. In addition, benches and stone steps for people to sit on are provided around the water plaza and throughout the park, so that people can naturally feel the relationship with humans, and no handrails or fences are placed around the pond. The key point of this plan is the jabu-jabu pond, where water and children can interact with each other, which is difficult to achieve in park planning.

(2) The ability to dynamically respond to the activities of the city with a multi-purpose event hall.

It is good that there is a growing demand for a plaza in the city. However, a square in the sense of a Greek agora or a Roman forum must have a corresponding society. The plazas in Europe and the U.S., where music is played and everyone dances together, are based on the premise that there is a certain social life. If we simply create a plaza without regard to this, it will end up being nothing more than an empty lot, and the various principles of management will lean more toward the aspect of regulation rather than utilization.

It is impossible to suddenly change the social structure, but here, first of all, two stages, one large and one small, are created on the back and front sides of the plaza as a hard device to make various events possible, and by using anchors embedded in the grid, temporary tents can be easily set up in the plaza to create a fun, temporary community. The grid is anchored to the square. Of course, if removed, the tent can also be used for large gatherings. In addition to the hardware that can respond to various events that occur in a dynamic city, the park has also been used as a soft device for various events, including an international bazaar to commemorate the opening of the park. The stage can also be combined with the gallery and hall of the Education and Culture Center located in front of the stage.

It is not enough to simply build a plaza, but it is necessary to have the necessary hardware and devices, as well as a gentle and warm atmosphere to support them, and also to interact with the surrounding area.

(3) Bringing a high level of quality and beauty as the value of urban planning

In public administration, it is easy to be influenced by the efficiency principle that cheap is good. It is true that taxpayers' money should not be used for wasteful purposes. However, it is not good to be cheap or to be bad, or to have a clutter of cheap goods.

The public space of a city is an important stock for its citizens to be passed on to the future, and its quality will create a standard and stimulate the city to improve its quality. Even though it is difficult for Yokohama as a whole to achieve such a high level of quality, it is a good idea to show something of high quality first, as this will make the citizens proud of their city and inspire a sense of attachment to take good care of it.

It is a well-known fact that modern urban planning began with the so-called "City Beautiful" movement, but in our country, various urban problems have arisen in the chaotic urbanization, and issues such as "beauty" may be misunderstood as a mere personal hobby. Instead, we are told to put our money where our mouth is. However, in addition to basic infrastructure, a livable city must also have elements of beauty, comfort, and enjoyment that appeal to people's minds and sensibilities.

If people do not recognize the value of such things, even if they are poor, they will simply work and sleep, and they will not become attached to their town.

The design of the Boulevard Park should not be extravagant, but it should be beautiful and enjoyable. I thought of putting a good sculpture there in 1970-6, when we did not yet have such an idea. We were not willing to use taxpayers' money for this purpose, so we happened to allocate a donation from a company for this purpose. After much deliberation, we settled on Rodin as the founder of modern sculpture and Henry Moore as the elder statesman of modern sculpture. There are many more possibilities. But I am trying to put the best that anyone can understand, and thereby ensure a quality. Instead of being a jumbled mess, the two sculptures are only two sculptures, but they speak of quality and beauty that is quite compelling.

(4) Influence on the surrounding urban development

As I have said many times, this is not just a park plan, but an urban planning strategy to influence the urban development of the surrounding area. This has already stimulated the revitalization of the shopping streets of Bashamichi and Isezakicho, which are located a bit far away from the park. The area around this park used to be warehouses and the like on the backside of the city, but this is sure to be a stimulus for the creation of a new town in 20 to 30 years. If the area is somehow qualitatively influenced, and if it is considered to be of a higher quality and in harmony with the main street park, a town with individuality will be born. It is good that urban development projects are not completed in a single project, but that those that are meaningful are transmitted and rotated one after another.

7. Prototype of the idea

We cannot find any similar samples to these plans. This is because this is one particular solution to the problem of how to introduce new values into the barren areas of urban planning in Japanese society, and how to sustain the strategic influence of these new values and lead to the next urban development. However, I believe that the special solution, which is the best answer under specific conditions and at the very last minute, will lead to the discovery of universal values for urban planning in Japan, which have been lacking.

For example, Odori Park in Sapporo is the prototype of Odori Park. It is a wonderful park with a width of 105 meters. It is hard to imagine how much significance Odori Park, which was maintained by the authority of the Kaitakushi (Hokkaido Development Commissioner), had in Sapporo over 100 years or even more in the future, even though the cost of land was free in those days.

However, Yokohama's park is not so neat and tidy. It is not a legacy of the era of low land

prices, and its width is narrow. Instead, it is somehow more human-like and has warmth in its narrowness.

The pedestrian-oriented malls of various cities are of course prototypes of this kind. However, there does not seem to be much of a concept of an axis line to stimulate the city by reorganizing from such a backstreet.

However, in the very early days when I was thinking about a boulevard park, I visited Barcelona, Spain. It is famous for Gaudi's architecture and is probably the city with the best sense of design in Spain. In the center of the city, the one-kilometer-long Lampasas Street, starting at Catalonia Square and ending at the Colomps monument on the beach, is the prototype of the image I have of the city. The metro line has just come through and there is a station, a kiosk with flower shops and bookstores, people sipping coffee, resting on rental chairs, lovers strolling, and beautiful plane tree-lined streets. The street is not too pretentious, not too wide, and somehow pleasant. As a result, the boulevard park is usually more static, but when there is a bazaar or an event going on, it has a bit of a lampas street atmosphere. This prototype is utilized by the parallel shopping malls in Isezakicho and Odori Park.

8. Conclusion

What exactly have we done here?

First of all, we have tried to demonstrate the feasibility of urban planning from a comprehensive viewpoint in practice, rather than in conception or in critique. Introducing a long-term comprehensive perspective is one thing, but it is not enough. If we compare urban planning to a play, the first thing to do is to establish a long-term plot and create a script, but many people will be on stage, and depending on the situation, it may be necessary to play the role of a producer who brings in actors. The actors must be directed and brought together to form a single stage. The current situation is that there is no direction, not even a script, and many famous actors and actresses are on the stage together and performing as they please. - This is not the way to make a good film, no matter how good the actors are.

The city planning is a long, long play that goes on indefinitely, so the script has not yet been written for the acts far in advance, and even the plot is not clear at some points beyond that. On the other hand, I have tried to create a dynamic and practical urban planning process by creating the plot, adding the missing scripts, producing and directing, and putting them together into an ensemble.

Second, we tried to include the concept of quality, not only quantity, in the city. It is a concept of quality that includes not only efficiency but also human and spiritual richness. For this reason, we formed an Urban Design Team, which had been completely lacking in Japanese municipalities, and aimed to improve quality along with planning.

Thirdly, we tried to make one project a milestone for the future, and to make a suggestion that will spill over to the next town development project. The influence of the concept of quality, the human perspective, and enjoyment does not always come from the immediate neighborhood. Sometimes they fly a little, but the wave returns and creates a new wave, which works on the entire city in motion.

Fourthly, I have taken a step further into the essence of city planning, which is that city planning is carried out by many entities, including citizens with many different opinions, and that the municipality is not only a business entity, but also a body that brings together the power of these citizens and cooperates with each other to develop the city.