

Visions: Future of Our Cities (Japanese Perspective)

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Struggling Cities: from Japanese Urban Projects in the 1960s - Naohiko Hino

Under the broad theme of architecture and the city, this exhibition takes a fresh look at proposals on the city that were put forward by Japanese architects in the 1960s, when Japan saw a flourishing of ideas and activities in that arena. **Kenzo Tange's** "A Plan for Tokyo-1960"; the Metabolist schemes of **Kiyonori Kikutake, Kisho Kurokawa, Masato Ohtaka, Fumihiko Maki,** and **Noboru Kawazoe; Arata Isozaki's** "Cities in the Air"—these were all ambitious ideas addressing various problems engendered by urbanization. Although ostensibly similar in terms of dealing with urban expansion, not to mention being conceived within a short span of time by fairly closely associated architects, in substance these schemes were very different from one another. In those differences can be discerned the difficulties involved in coping with the process of urbanization.

Because of their highly ambitious nature, the emergence of these proposals tended to be regarded as peculiar cases. In fact, however, it can be thought of as only one aspect of a broader quest for a new vision of the city, a quest aimed at moving beyond the era of modern architecture characterized by the worldwide proliferation of buildings that look alike. Although proposals as radical as these from 1960s Japan are rare, comparable plans from around the same time can be found in various parts of the world. From the perspective of urban expansion that accompanied modernization as a phenomenon of world history, it is clear that the Japanese proposals were responses to concerns common to various countries.

Far from becoming a thing of the past, the problem of urbanization has grown more pressing with the passage of time. The United Nations estimates that, of the total world population, the proportion living in urban centers will exceed 50 percent in 2010 (World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database). The need to grapple with the unprecedented problems of rapid urbanization is most definitely still with us. From the perspective of grasping the problems in concrete terms, by looking at them in Tokyo, a city that came up against such issues comparatively early, and these proposals that confronted such problems head-on, we can delineate the challenges and difficulties of the contemporary city as facets of what is in fact a global issue.

Exploring the above mentioned proposals as case studies, the present exhibition is designed to raise key issues that, while centering on Tokyo, the world's most populous urban agglomeration, also apply to the specific realities of each of the various countries where the exhibition will be held.

