THE ISSUE OF TOKYO BAY'S RECLAIMED LANDS AS THE ORIGIN OF URBAN UTOPIAS IN MODERN JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE

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This paper aims to investigate from a broader point of view as in 1958 the theme of development of Tokyo into the sea by reclaiming lands of her coasts became the occasion for the productions on several projects which witnessed the innovative potentials and the talent of a new generation of architects, such as the members of Metabolist Group and Kenzo Tange, who had a great impact on the further development of the modern Japanese architecture. Those proposals were a mirror of their original vision of the modern city, which was mainly inspired by many cultural and socio-economic factors present at the time in Japan, such as the uncontrolled spread of the cities, the radical transformation of Japanese society and the massive alteration of historical urban landscapes due to post-war urbanism and economic growth, as well as the search for a new urban form and design methodology more concerned about the preservation of the natural landscape, and directly linked with the new possibilities offered by ocean engineering and new building technology.

Keywords: Urban Design, Metabolism, Tange Kenzo, Japanese Architecture, Reclaimed Land, Tokyo Bay

Introduction

All around the world, the years between 1950s and 1960s, which saw the ongoing process of reconstruction after the World War II fulfilled, experienced a period of hope, anxiety, chaos driven by economic prosperity. The dawn of the Era of Space Exploration, the development of new sources of energy and the spread of new technologies as consequences of scientific research, created a growing contrast between younger and older generations and promoted new radical changes. Also the architecture was influenced by the atmosphere of those turbulent and optimistic years, and one of the main issues which caught the attention of the architects became the "urban crisis" of the contemporary city, and the search of alternative urban forms.

The weakness of the design principles and urban methodology developed by Modern Movement during the 20s and the 30s and worldwide accepted since the end of WW II, whose failure in the projects of postwar urban renewals appeared clear during the 1950s, stimulated the research and the experimentation of new architectural models able to represent the higher grade of complexity of contemporary metropolis and the bigger scale of the urban phenomena, defined by some scholar as the debate over "the poetic of the new dimension", which principally expressed concern about the "issue of great numbers" and the consequent necessity of reconsidering the means of planning. Most of the urban designers and architects detected two main ways to overcome the urban crisis of the time: some tried to regenerate the historical city and emphasized the human scale of familiar neighborhoods districts; others pointed towards the development of a comprehensive urban image and form, according to the concept of mega-scale and self-contained urban settlement which had its model in the megastructures. In the 1960s the megastructures were studied as potential alternative to old urban and architectural patterns.1

This paper will analyze and deepen the relation between the specific cultural and socioeconomic context of Japan during the late 1950s and early 1960s and the development of the futuristic urban proposals of the architectural movement of Metabolism. This group, which rejected the official planning methodologies and any visual relation with the historical heritage and the preexistent urban context, expressed their works through an aesthetic language inspired by the mechanical world of industry and technology, and drew an unprecedented attention of international audience to modern Japanese architecture,2 promoting to the eyes of other developed countries its young Japanese architects as forerunners of the megastructural trend, as well as the urban projects and research activity of Tange Kenzo and others visionary Japanese architects and planners of the time, who chose Tokyo Bay as a laboratory for the development of new ideas since 1958, aimed at the creation of an innovative urban landscape more responsive to the needs of a modern society and to the natural environment.

Japanese Urban Growth in Postwar Years, and the Plans for Tokyo

At the end of the Pacific War in August 1945 all the main Japanese cities had been severely hit by air bombings, and a large part of the residential areas and the totality of the industrial factories had been damaged or...
destroyed. For several years the occupation of the territory by a foreign army, the total destruction of the prewar industrial system, and the shortage of any kind of materials were the main reasons which paralyzed the moral of the society and the economy of the country. The reconstruction of a national industry proceeded slowly till 1950, when the outbreak of the Korean War and the beginning of the Cold War caused a change of the Japanese economic policy. Since then Japan became the main strategic base of American Army in East Asia and the principal terminal of capitals from Washington, which fostered an impressive process of modernization of Japanese industry and technologies. After 1955 the urban and economic growth of Japan skyrocketed. In this period the GNP reached values of around 9% annual, much superior to that recorded from Western countries, so that the economic growth and the investments into the creation of an efficient net of urban infrastructures and modern and equipped system of enterprises would truly become the engine that supported the growth of Japanese cities. Therefore at the end of the 1950s started a phase of rapid and dramatic transformation of the organization of the economy, represented by the change from a primary industry to secondary-tertiary sectors which determined an abrupt change in the distribution of the population (by emigration) and the working activities on the territory, particularly concerning the industrial factories, which since then would be mainly concentrated in the port-cities of the Tokaido Region.

The necessity for Japan to strengthen the development of a competitive industrial sector oriented toward the export was seen as the basis for the economic survival of the country. Aiming to achieve this important goal, the Japanese government encouraged the concentration of factories and industrial complexes in the Pacific Belt region to foster the efficiency gained from the agglomeration economies and therefore achieve higher exports; as consequence the economic policy of Japanese government led to the concentration of industries and other activities in Nagoya and Osaka Bay, and especially in the area of Tokyo-Yokohama. Indeed, for the sake of efficiency, most public investments in infrastructures, such as roads, ports, railways, and reclamation works were concentrated along the Pacific Belt coasts. In those areas the economic development in some strategic industrial sectors was encouraged, as well as the development of integrated industrial complexes on extensive landfills in tidal bays throughout the Tokaido Region, which provided large sites at low cost for the expanding factories.

The need for a rapid and wide reconstruction of the cities in the postwar years, that was directly linked to the economic growth of the country, led quickly to the development of a chaotic, fragmented, ugly and intricate urban environment that in little time caused many serious problems in the control of urban development. Several were the reasons that produced this situation. Regarding this issue, Kawaezoe Noboru assumed that the fragmented and provisional character of the Japanese city planning strategy was the consequence of a lack of legal means, such as the land expropriation law, as well as the necessity for the city to spend much of their budget for land procurement. He also pointed out that the main causes of the urban problems of Japanese cities derived from a combination of inefficient laws, excessive land fragmentation into small private plots, and the excessive economic power of the big business enterprises. British scholar M. F. Richards during his survey in Japan also detected 3 main factors which, according to him, could have prevented the development of an effective city planning in Japan. He alleged that the random and chaotic aspect of Japanese cities was the direct consequence of the fast and uncontrolled post-war reconstruction which produced urbanization at high pace, further stimulated by the economic growth, accomplished without any effort to improve the lay-out of the already existing cities. Another factor was a political one, and it linked to the specific lack of efficient planning legislation and in particular the laws for expropriation, so that Richards noted that in Japan, after the introduction of democratic principles, there was "...a special reluctance to embark on planning legislation that implied the use of dictatorial powers", and that, although the legislation on compulsory acquisition of property in the public interest existed in Japan since early 1950s, "...these particular powers have not yet been used". A last, but not least major cause of the difficulties of Japanese authorities in the control of urban sprawls and the poor quality of urban environment was the absence of a corpus of professionals specifically trained in this field, as the first official courses of urban design and planning were activated in a Japanese university just after 1962, and before that date the city planning regulations had been administered exclusively by officials who often were without any specific academic preparation.

![First National Capital Region Development Plan 1958](image)

Fig. 1. Tokyo according to the "First Capital Region Plan" and the proposal by Kano Kuro for reclaiming lands in Tokyo Bay in 1958

Concerning the planning of Tokyo, the capital city of the country received a special attention from government and planners as well. Before the Pacific War, Japan lacked of a comprehensive city planning policy for all her major cities, including Tokyo. The year 1940 was scheduled as the year of the Tokyo Olympics and the Tokyo International Exposition, a great occasion to improve the image of the capital and both its infrastructures and general lay-out. A project was proposed to develop the exposition site by reclaiming waterfront lands in some areas between Tokyo and Yokohama, following a process of growth of land surface already started since Edo Epoch. However it proved to be a missed occasion as no major change was carried out. Then, with the Pacific War, most of the urban fabric of...
historical Tokyo was completely destroyed by the fire spread by air raids.

After the War a concrete planning activity aimed to regulate the growth of Tokyo began only in 1956 with the establishment of the National Capital Region Development Law, by means of which a committee was set up to study a strategy to control the development of the whole Kanto Region (all the territory economically and functionally connected with the capital) up to a radius of 100 km from Tokyo Metropolis. The committee studied and prepared the National Capital Region Development Plan which was finally approved in 1958. Its target was to contain the problem of traffic congestion and to prevent, inside the urban territory of the capital, any further concentration of industrial plants and residential settlements by means of a policy of decentralization. The Plan featured the development of a constellation of new towns around the main metropolitan area separated from the central urban core by means of a green belt, this one conceived on the model elaborated by Patrick Abercrombie in 1944 for the “Great London Plan”. However, since the proposed plan received a fierce opposition (and in fact was never implemented), concerns arose on the necessity to give order to the urban structure of the growing capital, so that new and revolutionary plans were put under exam in the same period, especially in relation with a possible development of the city into the shallow waters of the bay.

The Issue of Reclaimed Lands in Tokyo Bay and the Projects for New Tokyo

The issue of the Reclaimed land of the Tokyo Bay was the subject that promoted a lively and extensive debate in Japan on the new principles for town planning, especially concerning the future urban spread of Tokyo. The original idea to develop Tokyo on the water of the Bay originated during the Tokugawa Era, when some works for reclamation of the coast were started to create more soil for the residences of both working class and aristocrats. During the Meiji era (1868-1911) there was the start of a progressive phase of over concentration of functions in Tokyo. Already in 1880 Tokyo Governor Matsuda Michiyuki proposed as urban renewal policy of the capital the development of new Tokyo center in the harbor and produced a rough plan for the construction of a major international port which emphasized the role of Tokyo also as commercial center, a proposal that wasn’t implemented because part of leading members of the government opposed. The industrial development of early XIX century accelerated the exploitation of the natural coasts, a phenomenon which became more evident during the 1950s, when the high speed of economic growth caused a further request for more lands where implant large scale factories and facilities such as central markets, gas plants, sewerage facilities and power plants. Several specific economic factors, especially the cost of natural lands in the urban fabric of the city, the weakness of the expropriation laws, together with the strategic importance of the sites close to the sea, suggested that coastal areas nearby the ports were the most suitable place to locate the new industrial factories, because easily connected to the trade routes for the import by sea of raw materials such as oil and coal, necessary as fuel for the factories, and for the export of finished products. Consequently the reclamation of new lands along the coasts became a central issue in the government economical policy, as all the main port-cities located along the Pacific Coast, and especially the metropolitan areas of Tokyo-Yokohama, Osaka-Kobe and Nagoya, were the economic spine of the nation and centers of all the main industrial and commercial activities.

Towards the end of the decade, beside the need for new room for industrial facilities, such as piers and chemical or cement plants, another important issue was the necessity to contrast the land speculation and the surge of land prices. In the April of 1958 the president of Japan Housing Corporation Kano Kuro (Hisaaki) proposed as pragmatic way to gain more land for building activity the land filling of the north-east side of Tokyo bay by using a system of dams inspired by the Dutch experience. The structure of the plan for “New Tokyo”, whose main intention was the development of a new urban pole on the east side of Tokyo bay, was divided in several sectors destined for residential and industrial use, with docks, electric power plants, an airport, oil tanks and piers for ships (the water of the bay was supposed to be about 20 meters deep and protected by tsunami). Most of the reclaimed land was intended to be used as green area. This project spread much interest as well as criticism, especially due to the drastic action of infilling the bay, and also because many observers regarded with skepticism the possibility that such a massive plan could prevent the same phenomenon of land speculation responsible for the present chaos of Tokyo. Since then, the theme of the reclaimed land as “artificial land” and the plan proposed by Kano were the 2 main factors that attracted the interest of architects and planners, and fostered them in searching of alternative solutions and urban models in the planning for the future development of Tokyo into the bay.

Among the numerous proposals presented to avoid Kano Kuro’s plan (or similar plans based on the uncritical usage of reclamation land to gain squares meters to obtain land for construction, as in the case of governmental “kombinato" complexes) could be carried on, worth of note for the boldness of the schemes and the radical new vision of the forms of modern city were some projects elaborated by young architects belonging to the new generation, and in particular those by Kikutake Kiyonori, Otaka Masato, and Kurokawa Kisho, who were some of the earlier members of a new group called “Metabolism”. Otaka Masato, assistant in the studio of architect
Maekawa Kunio who was engaged at the time an in the project for an high-rise apartment at Harumi reclamation in Minato ward, questioned the validity of the project presented by Kano observing that the necessity to dig the foundations of the new buildings in the new areas made the decision to reclaim land from part of the Tokyo Bay an inappropriate and expensive process, and that the total lack of any planning coordination (as in the case of Kano’s proposal) would lead the new territories to a disorderly urban development like in the mainland city. To achieve the same result and save time, money and the natural environment of the harbor, he presented an alternative plan 1959. This plan envisioned the creation of a system of integrated concrete slabs along the coasts of the Tokyo bay as platforms or floating decks on which he posed the buildings and all the urban facilities (a solution he proposed again since 1963 also for his project for Otemachi and the plan for Sakaide City), creating an urban structure and a natural landscape somewhat similar to a lagoon-city’s environment.

Kikutake studied and illustrated several urban models of floating cities, as well as a prototype of “tower city”, a cylindrical tower as sub structure to which suspended steel capsules as housing units, and introduced many interesting insights such as the theme of artificial environment, the cycles of life of architectural elements, the linkage with industry and the flexibility of the space, posing the base for the ideological theory of Metabolist group. Kurokawa Noriaki’s plan for Tokyo was published by the magazine “Kenchiku Bunka” in September 1959. In his project Kurokawa also stressed the concepts of cycles in the durability of the architectural elements as well as the never-ending process of growth of the basic urban structures, as represented in the schemes for “Tree-type building” and “Bamboo-type building”. His first proposal was followed by other projects, such as those for Tokyo-Ginza and Helix City in 1961, which suggested the development of the new urban dwellings in the shape of tall vertical cylinders as communities in the air, as well as in the water of Tokyo Bay, applying a design process reminiscent of that of industrial production for modular components. This approach was shared with most of the other metabolists, who together with others presented their theories aimed to expand the land for construction as manifesto of Metabolist movement in occasion of the World Design Conference held in Tokyo in 1960. Since then Metabolism’s architectural and urban projects were sensitive to the changeability of space and functions, in opposition to the sense of immobility of fixed forms and functions of conventional modernist design, and severely critical of the principles of Athens’s Chart (statically based on zoning and master plan) as basic tools to control the design of the modern city, and put a fundamental emphasis on the issues of the artificial land, the basic infrastructures (such as for circulations and transport) and the
mass housing solutions, as the main concerns of Japanese city at the time. With few exceptions, the Metabolists extended the principles and the methodology of architectural design and composition to urban design, conceiving the expansion of the city by means of the repetition of industrial elements and the use of modular parts which envisaged apparent organic forms. Indeed the main feature of metabolist approach to urban design was basically the rejection of the traditional form of public urban spaces (squares, streets, neighborhoods) for a totally artificial urban environment.

Trying to express the vitality and the creative spirit of the modern postwar society, the metabolists adopted the newest technological devices available, and conceived a city whose urban architectures was composed by megastructures which denied any visual linkage with the preexisting urban environment and showed indifference to the physical context. Their urban schemes lacked of any recognizable clue of the formal order of the traditional city, either Japanese or Western, and expressed a strong opposition towards the memory of the recent history of Japan, as well as her urban environment, indeed promoting, with a touch of ingenuity and simplistic vision, an extreme and radical departure of city form towards a technological (better and optimistic) future shaped like in the pictures of the fiction science publications, so popular during the 1950s, which praised the achievements and the wonders of the contemporary atomic age.

The futuristic and anti-traditional collection of ideas poured in the works proposed by Otaka, Kikutake and Kurokawa were truly the mirror of a more general interest about the possibilities offered by the new technologies of building construction applicable in the creation of new artificial urban landscapes. The unprecedented extensive exploitation of the natural sites in Japan led to new opportunities of creativity for architects who could cause less damage to the natural sites by using new techniques developed in the field of oceanic engineering and port constructions.

The theme of marine cities was a new exciting subject which gave numberless possibilities of expression to the imagination of the architects because based on new available technology taken from various fields, such as engineering of dam constructions and breakwaters and harbors constructions, trade ports and other marine building equipments. Under many aspects the fast development of coastal engineering in Japan during postwar years was especially fostered by the necessity to face the threat of natural disasters that could hit the reclaimed lands which, as said before, concentrated the factories and the other infrastructure of the major cities, whose protection was object of constant concern for the government.

In Japan the harbor and coastal engineering witnessed a growing interest since 1953, when a powerful typhoon hit the north side of Ise Bay causing many damages and showing the inefficient protection of the coasts and the ports from such unexpected natural disaster. The Japanese government and other local public authorities promoted research activities in the field of coastal engineering to study how to prevent natural dangerous phenomena like typhoons and tsunami from causing destruction to the harbors in the future, so that the coastal disaster prevention became the priority in the coastal works. New construction systems were studied and tested for the protection of the port-cities, and a new law (Sea Coast Act) was issued in 1956, which gave local government direct responsibilities for preserving their coasts and prescribed unified standards for the coastal structures built to protect the coasts. Since the middle of the 50s, the outcomes of the researches in the field of ocean engineering for the protection of coastal fronts were available to both civil engineers and architects, and spread fruitful insights among them by means of the numerous publications and conferences held yearly. Improvement in the engineering studies led to a wider usage of the land reclamation activity, so that Tokyo and the other Japanese port-cities had the main part of their heavy industry and trade complexes built on landfill. Many architectural magazines began to pay attention to this topic. The interest in the new building technology related to the reclaimed land was strongly connected with the theme of "marine cities" as the solution to the urban sprawls of the city, and fostered a deeper research in architecture and city planning. The massive scale of mega-engineering works undertaken by the government to reshape the offshore of Japanese coasts for economic purposes, together with the general impression of an innovative spirit of the contemporary architecture derived in Japan mainly by the lectures and influence of some masters of architectural design such as Kahn and Fuller from America, and Wachsmann, Gropius and the Smithsons (Team X) from Europe, whose recent works were responsive to the modern trend which called for a renovation of architectural language and design approach and principles, in particular regarding the issues of monumentality, symbolism and the need for a larger scale of structural forms, became some of the factors which generally influenced not only the central ideas of metabolist projects but also those of other Japanese architects. In the April 1959 Kokusai-Kenchiku published the project "The proposition of the Tokyo Bay Canal", by 2 young architects, Nonomura Soitsu and Tsukuba Shuichi. This project was very similar to Otaka's proposal published just few months earlier, especially for the general shape of the channel's plan, and emphasized the vision of the new marine city as network of links between the strategic poles of the new city on the artificial land and the urban fabric of mainland coast, solving the two main problems of shortage of land and the frantic hyper-concentration of industrial and residential functions typified by kombinatos. The reclaimed lands was divided in 2 areas: the main outsider side, facing the channel and destined to the industrial factories, and the (quieter) insider side, facing the sea, used for residential quarters, so that the lay-out of the plan was structured especially
to facilitate the international and domestic trade activities of Tokyo by ships and by rails. The same attention due to the strategic position of the Tokyo bay as a fundamental economic terminal was poured also in the "Neo-Tokyo Plan" presented by the Industrial Planning Conference in the July of 1959, a private lobby group established by the Electric Power Central Research Institute. This ambitious urban plan, which put the emphasis on the creation of a system of concentric ring roads and transportation links around the bay, wasn’t implemented for several reasons, but nonetheless it revealed to be influential in the following years, and spread another wave of interest and a large debate among architects, designers and planners.

Fig. 10-11. Plan for the urban reorganization of Tokyo by Tange Kenzo: preliminary draft (1959- left) and the final version (1960)

In the early 1960s a further stimulus for the proposal of large scale projects for Tokyo’s renewal was the designation of city as hosting of the 1964 Summer Olympic Games. When in the in 1959 Tokyo was selected by the international Olympic federation, the choice spread a sense of high national pride among Japanese, symbolizing the formal re-entry of Japan into the community of nations and a great chance for its capital. This event required enormous preparation and the government took this opportunity to foster officials, architects and planners to build new needed urban infrastructures and improve the old ones to reshape the overall image of Tokyo, with special consideration to the problems of mass transportation and traffic congestions. This exciting atmosphere gained the public support for another planning proposal for Tokyo, announced in 1960 and fully released in 1961, by Tange Kenzo, who simultaneously proposed to prepare the city for next Games and resolve all its urban problems. His monumental plan for Tokyo showed many analogies with similar ideas proposed during the same years, especially those presented in the project for “Neo-Tokyo” published in 1959, and in the plans by Otaka and Kikutake published also in the early 1959. However the unquestionable inventive in the design of the details and the futuristic and suggestive new footprint of the plan made the proposal by Tange far most popular and attractive to the audience.

The proposal for the urban reorganization of Tokyo was introduced by Tange at the World Design Conference held in May 1960 under the title: “A Plan for Tokyo, 1960: towards a Structural Reorganization”. The theory of Structuralism, to which Tange referred, had its roots in the works about the science of Linguistics, and following the analogy with the written language, he tried to grasp the basic structure of modern city, which he envisioned as the engine of economic growth and prosperity, as well as the fundamental environment for the human life, in terms of mobility and conceived the communication channels as the main urban structure which connects space units with shorter cycles of life. The main feature of the project developed in 1960 was the rejection of the traditional radial pattern of urban growth, which dated since the foundation of Tokyo and that had been proposed for the post-war reconstruction plan of the city, and the substitution of this centripetal model of expansion with a linear model of development across the Tokyo Bay, inspired by the European tradition of linear city since the end of XIX century, proposing a scheme which aimed to transform Tokyo form following a kind of metabolic evolution form that of an amoeba-shape to that of a vertebra or city axis, creating a new pattern for contemporary city which could achieve a balanced relation between major urban infrastructures and minor architectural clusters. In fact Tange proposed to convert the core of the city from a “civic centre” to a “civic axis”, a scheme which was also used in the French project for the development of the business district of “La Defense” in Paris, whose works started in 1958. In a similar way, Tange also devised to concentrate the new urbanized areas away from the historical nucleus of Tokyo, whose development was too difficult due to land ownerships rights, and stretched the new civic and economic core of the capital in the sea, a proposal which was intended as an alternative pattern of expansion instead of the radial structure based on the system of satellite towns proposed by the government and inspired by foreign experiences.

Many critics of the period quickly recognized Metabolism and Tange’s plans as icons of modern urban utopias developed by megastructural trend in the early 1960s. In spite of the much criticism which also arose due to the often radical approach and the excessive scale of their urban schemes, as well as the superficiality in facing matters related to social and economical themes, those plans definitely exerted a great influence on the imaginary of the future urban form in Japan and worldwide, as they were by far more innovative and original than the almost contemporary projects for new cities of Brasilia (1957) and Chandigarh (1951), which expressed the limits of the Functionalist urban planning approach. Although Tange’s and Metabolists urban schemes weren’t put in act for several reasons, they became definitively the first prototypes for a “megalopolis” in the XX century, influencing the works and the theories of several other designers in homeland and abroad, among the others the Archigram group and Maymont Paul in Europe.

Conclusions
At the end of the 1950s the idea for the urban reorganization of Tokyo by reclaiming land of the bay was a source of many fruitful reflections in Japan and further developments in the field of urban planning and architecture to control the urban sprawls of the modern cities as consequence of the fast growth of the economy which led to the spread of what many critics called the “urban utopias”. The urban utopias as developed in Japan assumed a different meaning from those conceived in the Western world: the latter, following a tradition started with the industrial revolution, were intended as ideal schemes which fused urban form and social order towards a comprehensive reform, but in the Japanese case no tentative of global social
or economic revolution is professed, and they are intended as real mechanical structures following the logic of capitalist order of the Japanese society of the time. However those urban schemes, whose architectures were technically feasible, became certainly utopian when they presumed to extend their design principle from the architectural scale to the urban scale with little or none analysis and concern for the social, cultural and economic consequences. The famous proposals by Tange and Metabolists, which gained the praise of most of international observers, summarized and expanded precedent concepts, experiences and analyses promoted in the previous years by Japanese and foreign bureaucrats, planners, engineers and architects. Many local factors, especially the great pace of urbanization which hit the main urban centers following the surge of Japan as industrial power, and the specific progress of building and coastal engineering and industrial techniques, fostered and influenced directly the projects of many Japanese architects of the time, who envisioned for Tokyo innovative ever-expanding urban prototypes. Those projects come as reaction to lack of effective urban planning measures promoted by government, and as alternative to the current practice to gain more land by filling the offshore of the coasts as preferred sites for the development of industrial areas as key factor of the economic growth. The space obtained was intended as room to allocate, often randomly and according to the formula of a plain zoning, new housing blocks and factories as bottles and glasses on a tray. The Kombinato complexes built on the reclaimed lands caused the abrupt destruction of the natural environment and furthermore didn’t resolve any of the structural problems of concentration, circulation and unbalanced urban growth which threatened the quality of life of the Japanese citizen. Basically Kano’s proposal of 1958 (and later other plans like “Tokyo Channel Plan” and “Neo-Tokyo Plan”) aimed mainly to maximize the use of new artificial lands for new productive and transportation facilities, and in this sense was completely conceived according to the governmental expectations of assuring the “vital” space for industry; indeed it also had the merit to establish the terms of comparison with a series of new proposals that assumed a different approach to gain the same artificial land and promoted a new methodology of urban planning to resolve most of the problems of modern city. Metabolist group and other Japanese architects, accepting the economic model of development of the time but searching for an alternative to the simple but radical (and useless) practice of reclamation, went a step beyond. From a deep analysis of their historical and economic context, and paying attention to the aspiration of the society, they proposed the development of new urban models, such as the marine cities, and searched for new theories and strategies in the field of urban planning, relating themselves to experiences and researches of foreign countries, and implementing new technologies more responsive to the needs of the bigger scale of city’s growth. None of those Metabolists and Tange’s urban project was carried out due to their inflexible urban scheme based on a single and rigid idea, which deprived the city of the variety and diversity which just by the early 1960s came to be regarded as the fundamental quality of a good city, and achievable only through the participation of multiple co-authors in the design process; on the other hand those same projects and the megastructures proposed for Tokyo suggested the important issue on how structuring and which urban form must be given to the contemporary millionaire cities, searching for an architectural language suitable to express the new dimension of urban phenomena of the time. Shifting from the fixed models proposed by CIAM to an “open city planning”, flexible and changeable, these architects anticipated that urban designers should move in their projects from the concept of “metropolis” to that of “megacity”, as consequence of the deep transformation of urban environment and society due to the evident new big scale of social, economical and cultural changes occurred in the contemporary world. Many of the projects showed a critical attitude towards the limits of the utilitarian urban planning’s approach of the time, considered as the main reason of the urban chaos and poor quality of life present in all the Japanese cities and especially evident in case of Tokyo, and their criticism became functional for promoting the importance of the role of urban designer into the Japanese architectural context, stimulating a further attempt to renew the urban form and the architectural language of Japan led by their willingness to proceed over the foreign experiences and to develop an original and independent urban planning methodology based on new building technology and beyond the pure economic concerns.

References
1 Basically the megastructures were conceived as huge multi-functional structural frames, which could contain smaller elements and parts, easily replaceable and supposed to last less than the main frame; as the whole structure could grow from an urban scale to a territorial scale following the process of urban growth, this concept led towards new possibilities into the design and the development of larger and complex urban structures. It is generally accepted that the first definition of the word “megastructure” was proposed by Maki Fumihiko in 1964 in his Investigation in Collective Forms; quoted in: Benham Reynard, Megastructures: Urban Future of the Recent Past, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London 1976), p. 4. See also: Maki Fumihiko, Buildings and Projects, Princeton Architectural Press, NY, 1997, p. 210; Dalibard Justas, Urban Structures for the Future, Praeger Publishing, New York, 1972.
5 (Japan Cultural Society), Tokyo, 1968, p.72.
7 Ibid: Tange Kenzo became one of the chair of the first department of urban studies opened at Tokyo University in 1964 with the name of “Urban Engineering Department”.
8 Hokkaido, Yotsuka, "Tokyo 1940-2000. The Death of the City"; ibid: "At the Japan Architect, Tokyo", Summer 1991-3, p. 8; another famous "missed" occasion was the reconstruction of Tokyo after 1923’s earthquake.
9 In 1946 it was proposed a draft plan for the post-war reconstruction of Tokyo, known as Ishikawa’s plan, which failed for the shortage of materials and financial aid from the government. This plan, likewise the National Capital Plan approved in 1958, also conceived the use of a greenbelt which spread deep in the urban area.
10 "Transition in City Planning in Tokyo", issued by Bureau of City Planning Tokyo Metropolitan Government, source: www.toshkei.metro.tokyo.jp
11 In 1968 a new version of the National Capital Region Development Plan was approved which eliminated the greenbelt. Furthermore, the abolition of building-height restrictions in the 23 wards was another feature of the plan, which reflected the concern for the intense pressure on the lands in Tokyo and started the era of skyscrapers in Japan.
In 1950s Japan, the city of Tokyo was undergoing rapid urbanization due to economic growth. This resulted in the development of new industrial areas, which were often linked to areas of historical significance. The city of Tokyo was characterized by a mix of modern and traditional architecture, reflecting the country's rapid modernization while preserving its cultural heritage.

Tokyo's industrial areas were expanding rapidly, leading to the creation of new urban spaces. The city's development was driven by the need for economic growth, which required efficient transportation and infrastructure. The city's urban planning was focused on creating a balance between modernization and preservation of cultural values.

The government of Japan was committed to modernizing the country, and the city of Tokyo was a key example of this. The city was seen as a symbol of Japan's progress, and its development was closely monitored by the government.

Research into the urban development of Tokyo in the 1950s revealed that the city's growth was driven by a combination of factors, including economic development, technological advancement, and cultural traditions. The city's planners were focused on creating a balanced urban environment, which included the preservation of cultural landmarks and the development of new industrial areas.

The city's urban planning was influenced by the work of Japanese architects, who were known for their innovative and creative approaches to design. The city's development was also shaped by the influence of international architectural trends, which were adopted and adapted to suit the local context.

In conclusion, the urban development of Tokyo in the 1950s was a significant period in the city's history. It was marked by rapid growth, technological advancement, and cultural preservation. The city's planners were able to create a balanced urban environment, which included both modern and traditional elements. The city's development was a reflection of Japan's progress, and it continues to inspire urban planners and architects today.