

The Creation of 'Tourist City' and the Attack on Homeless People: Neoliberal Urbanism in Osaka City, Japan.

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1. Introduction

Osaka is one of the most industrialized cities in Japan but experiencing economic decline. During the postwar period of rapid economic growth of Japan, economic status of Osaka relatively fell as central functions of economy were concentrated in Tokyo. In addition, global restructuring of industries had damaged the economy of Osaka, which deeply depended on the manufacturing industries. To rehabilitate its economy, Osaka metropolitan governments cooperated with business circles of the city to undertake the big development projects and to hold multitude of events since the early 1980s. The aim of the strategy was to boost the 'tourist city' image of Osaka, replete with cultural heritages, public amenities, fun-filled amusement sites, business opportunities, lovely people, and so on.

Such a method could be identified as correlating with the strategy of the Walt Disney Company known as 'imagineering' (Archer 1997, Paul 2004). 'Imagineering' is a strategy that mingles reality with the imagination and promotes a particular set of values and goals, in order to disguise increase of socio-spatial injustice. Moreover, many neoliberal discourses justify neglecting or policing people of the urban lower class (Smith 1996, 2002). In Osaka, homeless people and squatters increased rapidly in the 1990s, and the metropolitan policies concerning them are increasingly revanchist in character.

In this paper, I will show how was the inconsistency between the 'tourist city' strategy and other urban realities such as homelessness caused, and how did revanchism emerge within this situation. Firstly, I will outline the precedents and contexts from which the 'tourist city' emerges as the main strategy of Osaka metropolitan government. Secondly, I will show the inconsistency between the 'tourist city' strategy and homelessness in the city during the 1990's. Thirdly, I will show the transitions in policy vis-a-vis the people living outside in the city. Finally, I will show that these revanchist policies towards homeless people have been widespread in recent years.

2 The Period after the Expo'70: From a 'Civil Minimum' to an 'Event-Oriented Policy'

To start, I will try to outline the genealogy of the 'tourist city' since the 1970s. Between the 1950's and 60's, the metropolitan government's policy was led by the idea of 'developing Osaka'. The government sought economic growth by means of building large-scale industrial facilities such as industrial complexes and their concomitant transportation systems and housing. The slogan went into full swing when it was decided that the Expo would be held in Osaka in 1970. Infrastructures were rapidly built up during the late 1960s, and Fordist urban planning was thoroughly put into practice for this period.

Moreover, the Expo' 1970 paved the way for a model of economic growth and urban planning that would define the post-Fordist era¹⁾. Spectacular architecture and advanced scientific technologies fascinated visitors. It was estimated that over 60 million people, equivalent to about half of the Japanese population at the time, visited the Expo (Yoshimi 1992).

After the Expo had faded into history, Osaka in the 1970s was confronting the contradictions of its metropolitan policy which took the heavy chemical industry as its centerpiece. Heavy chemical industrialization brought serious problems of contamination, and neighborhood movements demanding healthy environments broke out across the city. With this metropolitan situation as a backdrop, the

Marxist economic metropolitan theories earned considerable support²⁾. They advocated the idea of a 'civil minimum', which emphasizes the responsibility of local governments to provide common social consumption for occupants according to their constitutional right to subsistence (Matsushita 1971). In metropolitan policy as well, a reform government was born and the focus of metropolitan management shifted from economic growth to living environments.

However, this current did not continue for long. With the economic downturn of the mid-1970s, reformist metropolitan management faced a financial crisis and was defeated. With this, narratives seeking metropolitan lifestyle and environmental justice were hindered by the drop in Western Japan's economic position and were replaced by narratives demanding economic growth with cultural theory as a pretense³⁾. The ghost of the Expo had returned to haunt Osaka.

One influential theorist was Taichi Sakaiya, former director general of the department of economic planning, who produced the 1970 Osaka international Expo. He advocated an 'event-oriented policy' in the 1980s and provided economic legitimacy for metropolitan culture theories (Sakaiya 1985). First and foremost, Sakaiya's theory defined culture as associated with the information and service industries which were newly materializing. For Sakaiya, intellectual productivity and information processing power were indispensable for these newly materializing industries and therefore a culture to increase their potency was a source of economic growth. Thus, Sakaiya suggested a specific methodology for intensifying metropolitan culture. According to him, metropolitan policy with events as its centerpiece would gather competent people from around the world and invite mutual exchange and stimulus.

3. The Inconsistent Geography of the 'Tourist City'

With these metropolitan narratives, metropolitan policy in Osaka prefecture and Osaka city struggled for economic development. In 1982 the '21st century Osaka Association' was established by the prefectural and city governors in cooperation with the financial world, and a program titled the 'Osaka 21st century plan' was put into motion. Under this program, the city held a great number of events such as the Osaka Castle 400th anniversary festival (1983), the International Sailing Festival (1983) and the International Garden and Greenery Exposition (1990). Large-scale development projects were pushed forward one after the other in pace with these events. In the 1990's, event-oriented policy was remade as a 'tourist city' strategy, oriented towards the tourist industry more directly. Under the 'tourist city' strategy, metropolitan governments began activism to bring the Olympics to Osaka⁴⁾.

During this period, however, event oriented policies were proven to be unsuccessful on their own terms. From the 1980s to the 1990s, economic power shifted instead to Tokyo and with the 1990s recession, Osaka city and Osaka prefecture wound up holding a financial deficit. Further, in the 1990s, Osaka would face new metropolitan challenges. The recession caused large-scale unemployment and the city saw a rapid increase in people living outside⁵⁾.

According to surveys of homeless people and squatters conducted from 1998 to 1999, the number of people living outside in Osaka city had risen to 8,660 (OSUSG 2001). The situation of Osaka's homeless and squatters was different from that of European cities. 97% of people living outside were men, single, and the average age was 55.8. They had been day laborers in industrial sectors and especially in the construction industry⁶⁾. The 'tourist city' conception of the late 1990s carried on, pregnant with the contradiction of the homeless/squatter metropolitan reality (Mizu'uchi 2001).

The city government at first responded to them with expulsions and eviction⁷⁾. As the number of workers forced to live outside dramatically increased in the early 1990s, the existence of homeless people and squatters came to be recognized as a social problem and the situation slightly changed. Aid organizations were formed which became active around the main parks in the city in this period. Survey

research which became regular in the late 90s proved that the homelessness was caused by unemployment. The government recognized its responsibility for the homelessness and 'the special measures law for the homeless self-reliance support' was enacted in 2002. Social identification of homeless people and squatters changed through the 1990s from being objects for eviction to objects for subsumption.

4 From Subsumption to Retribution

However, the situation is changing dramatically. In recent years, people living outside have returned from being objects for social subsumption to being objects of eviction. In part this developed from the logic of the self-reliance support law itself. This law defines all people living outside, squatters and homeless who refuse state services as "people who refuse social life". After its enactment, services were offered to the homeless, albeit inadequate. The claim that "when services are offered, people still choose to live outside, and that can only be out of laziness" became generally accepted⁸⁾. Such claims underpinned the 'tourist city' strategy, which no longer pretended to care about the needs of the homeless people.

To clarify the point, it is useful to reconsider the genealogy of 'tourist city' strategy in terms of the transition in definition of public spaces. In the metropolitan narratives that we've examined so far, the ways in which public space is imagined and defined have been redone and touched up. For example in the 1970s, neighborhood movements were widespread, and in the era where Marxist economics had earned solid support, public space came to be a means for common social consumption to be provided for the living rights of its occupants. However, in the 1980s, when the event oriented policy kicked off, there were revisions to this definition. Public space under this policy became space for the opening of different kinds of events⁹⁾. Metropolitan public space was already being imagined as a space for consumption. The push to introduce this imagined public space product came with the privatization of public space¹⁰⁾. By privatizing public space, it can be expected that a transition from parks to consumption spaces will rapidly take place. Additionally, it is likely that eviction and surveillance of homeless people and squatters will intensify dramatically, as we can see in the following recent cases.

1) On January 30th, 2006, Osaka city evicted the tents and huts of squatters living at Utsubo park and Osaka-jo castle park, two parks located in the city center. The subtext for the forced evictions undertaken at both parks was clearing the way for the opening of city events. At Osaka-jo castle park, a 'National Greening Fair' was held from March to May, and at Utsubo park, the international event known as the 'World Rose Convention' was held in May¹¹⁾.

2) The experience at the tent village of Nagai Park (the Association of Poor People in Nagai Park¹²⁾) tells the story of how far the privatization of park management has proceeded¹³⁾. In 2002, the first private policing contract was consigned to Nagai Park, and private security guards were dispatched. Surveillance by security guards began openly around 2002¹⁴⁾. At this point, private security guards were patrolling the perimeter of the tent village at the frequency of once every 10 minutes, and when the squatters attempted to build new tents, private security would notify the park office, who would try to obfuscate attempts to build new housing. Private security guards were subsequently stationed directly outside the tent village on lookout. Finally, the tent village was surrounded by a construction fence. After private security was dispatched in 2002, the tent village at Nagai park has been under constant surveillance in this same way¹⁵⁾.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the metropolitan events strategy, which began with the aim of economic growth in the 1980s, is still continuing in spite of the severe experience of economic recession and the massive increase in homeless people and squatters in the 1990s. The strategy is more and more revanchist in character, and is justified by claims which identify homeless people as enemies. The Osaka metropolitan governments are now trying to invite a summit to be opened in 2008, and this trend will most likely get stronger and stronger. In parallel, the privatization of public space is being introduced full-scale in metropolitan reform measures.

Against this slide into revanchism, resistance movements are diversifying¹⁶⁾. I hope to address the potentials of these resistance movements at another time.

Footnotes

- 1) In the 1960s, Japanese Fordism matured on the basis of high wages, career employment and promotion by seniority. At the same time, a new accumulation regime later known as Toyotism became more and more ascendant with the defeat of the labor movements. In the 1970's this new regime enabled Japan's economy to make a quick recovery from economic downturn. However, as I will show below, this process was accompanied with an excessive concentration of population and industry in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, and a drop in Western Japan's economic position.
- 2) For example, Kenichi Miyamoto took Osaka as his field of inquiry, and after publishing his *Social Capital theory* in 1967, outlined the economic and environmental burdens of the Senboku industrial complex, and thoroughly critiqued the development economy which stemmed from heavy chemical industrialization (Miyamoto 1967, 1977).
- 3) One forerunner of this cultural theory was the 'sacred city theory' worked out by Tadao Umesao. By naming the city 'sacred', Umesao claimed the following: 'sacredness' was the cultural heart of the city, which itself had no function for residence. Thus the culture of the city was generated by people gathering there. For Umesao, to place residence at the center of metropolitan policy was nothing but a denial of the cultural diversity and dynamism of the city (Umesao 1983).
- 4) Though this activism failed to bring the Olympics to Osaka, the government met its goal of attracting other projects such as Universal Studio Japan.
- 5) Every city in Japan experienced the same sort of sudden growth in homeless and squatters, however out of all these cities, the largest scale homelessness developed in Osaka.
- 6) Although there were various ways in which they had been cut off, the most direct reason had been the widespread cut-backs in the hiring hall in the Kamagasaki neighborhood of south Osaka, which is well-known as a region populated by day laborers. In Kamagasaki, 20,000 to 30,000 day workers live in simple boarding houses and get work at the regional hiring hall (Haraguchi 2003). However, the 1990s continued a particularly deep decrease in job vacancies, and workers who had lost their jobs could not pay lodging fees and had no other choice but to live outside, leaving Kamagasaki and scattering throughout the city interior (Shima 1999).
- 7) From the outset the work at Kamagasaki was precarious, and even before the 1990s, workers had no choice but to live outside due to temporary or seasonal unemployment, at this time squatters and homeless people had already spread throughout the city. The city government at first responded to them with bannings and eviction. In 1983, the southern precinct of the Osaka prefectural police began compiling a list of 'vagrants', targeting every squatter or homeless living at Minami, Osaka's original business district, fingerprinting and

photographing was also introduced. Tennoji park, located in Osaka's southern section, began charging visitors entrance fees with the aim of banning homeless people from the park in 1990 (Nagahashi 1995). The park was also surrounded with a fence. Here was a period where the event oriented policy was in full swing, and already this policy was being carried out by shelving the problems of the lower class and suppressing them (Haraguchi 2005).

- 8) For example, Hajime Tanba judges squatters and the homeless to be guilty of anti-societal behavior in his work *Osaka Power*, and suggests that the reason this behavior has not been controlled stems from failures of metropolitan policy; he assertively calls for the enactment of regulations to control squatting and homelessness (Tanba 2005).
- 9) Ishikawa (1983) pointed out features of the 'event-oriented policy' as follows. "This is a program which includes various types of events such as design, fashion, sports, music, symposium, which are held indoor and outdoor. What distinguishes the program from Osaka Expo held in 1970...is summarized as follows. These are events that will be held at the ordinary space such as road, park, port, river, square, without being confined in particular time and place. These events shouldn't be conceived as transient one, because the aim of the policy is to make events fixed in the city spaces" (Ishikawa 1983, p11-12)
- 10) This was an important problem taken up in city reform manifestoes. According to the "Easy Green promotions office" of Osaka city, in the city's largest six parks, the office "strives to improve citizen services, including the effective use of park facilities by private know-how and the introduction of management systems for the efficient industrial management of the parks." (EGPO 2006a)
- 11) According to the city, the opening of the World Rose Convention was an important event in communicating to the world the cultural charms and economic vitality of Osaka (EGPO 2006b). The eviction by force had a huge impact on squatters and the homeless in the city, as well as the organizations which support their lifestyles and labor. With this eviction, Osaka city demonstrated its antagonistic position towards those living outside and showed that the city would not hesitate to use coercive means.
- 12) You can know more about the Association of Poor People in Nagai Park on the website
(<http://www.geocities.co.jp/WallStreet-Bull/8932/>)
- 13) After refurbishments which included the building of a track and field stadium in coordination with the National Athletic Meet of 1997, this park became the home stadium of a soccer team and was the stage for many events, from APEC, to the World Cup, to efforts to attract the Olympics to Osaka city. Simultaneously, from the late 1990s, blue tents multiplied and in 2000, Osaka city's first temporary refuge ("shelter") was built to respond to this.
- 14) From autumn of that year, attacks by teenagers in Nagai Park greatly increased, and squatters gathered into a tent village in order to protect themselves. Those squatters who had been chased out of neighboring areas also brought themselves to the tent village.
- 15) An activist with the comrades organization describes the experience: "Here we are surrounded by this fence, with the security guards as our happy jailers. And when I look over here I see that's what it's come down to. Shucks. Wouldn't you know it? But that's how it's been from the beginning, we're just people to be surveilled."
- 16) I can't cover all of these movements, but I would like to bring this report to a close by mentioning a few of these tendencies. At Ogimachi park, a squatter has appealed to the courts for the right to register an address for their tent inside the park, and has won. At Nagai park, which I introduced earlier, inhabitants are growing vegetables in a suburban plot, selling them in the park, and thereby creating connections with the people of the area. These kinds of forays are still small, but it can be said that they are a powerful antithesis to metropolitan policy which tries to seize public space as a source of profit. In other words, they are engaged not in the right to live in the city, or to consume public space, but in activity which actualizes the right to use

public space (Deutsche 1996).

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