

Ngā Pūtahitanga / Crossings

Cite as: Toshio Taguchi, "Local Government Coordination in 1960s Yokohama, Japan: The Case of the Inner-City Motorway Project." In *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 39, Ngā Pūtahitanga / Crossings*, ed. Julia Gatley and Elizabeth Aitken Rose, 540-60. Auckland: SAHANZ, 2023. Accepted for publication December 1, 2022.

DOI: 10.55939/a5045p6ah6



Graphic by Amber Anahera Ruckes

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORIANS, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND (SAHANZ)
VOLUME 39

Conference hosted by Te Pare School of Architecture and
Planning, University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau,
Auckland, 25-27 November 2022.

Edited by Julia Gatley and Elizabeth Aitken Rose.

Published in Auckland by SAHANZ, 2023.

ISBN: 978-0-646-88028-0

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Ngā Pūtahitanga / Crossings was a joint conference between SAHANZ and the Australasian Urban History Planning History Group. It was the 39th annual SAHANZ conference and the 16th AUHPH conference.

Local Government Coordination in 1960s Yokohama: The Case of the Inner-City Motorway Project

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Akira Tamura Memorial – A Town Planning Research Initiative NPO

Abstract

In the 1960s, when the inner-city motorway was introduced as a new urban infrastructure, major cities worldwide faced a severe shortage of urban space for installation. Yokohama was gifted, as it could utilise its disused canals, but faced many difficulties in changing its route and structure into undergrounding. In 1968, the Mayor of Yokohama invited urban planner Akira Tamura to set up the Planning and Coordination Office (PCO). Since the route and structure of the inner-city motorway in the central part of Yokohama had been authorised by the national ministry, a year of coordinative tasks led by the PCO seemed impossible, considering the highly centralised Japanese administrative system. The success of this case marked a paradigm shift in the initiatives led by local governments. The theme of this study is to clarify how the newly born agency tackled the task that evolved into the “coordinative mechanism” within the municipal administration.

Objectives of Examining the Inner-City Motorway Issues

In the 1960s, when inner-city motorway networks (Figure 1) were introduced as a new urban infrastructure in highly urbanised regions (Figures 2, 3), major cities worldwide faced a severe shortage of urban space for installation. Yokohama (Figure 4) was gifted, as it could utilise its disused canals (Figure 5) but faced many difficulties in changing its route and structure underground (Figure 6), considering the citizens' opposition campaign against an elevated motorway.

In 1968, the Mayor of Yokohama, Ichio Asukata (1915-90, mayoralty 1963-78),¹ invited the urban planner Akira Tamura (1926-2010)² to work for the city and set up the Planning and Coordination Office (PCO) as the coordinative mechanism (Figure 7) within the municipal administration. This undergrounding project was the first task assigned to the PCO. Since the route (Figure 8) and structure of the inner-city motorway had been authorised by the national Ministry,³ a year of coordinative tasks led by the PCO seemed initially impossible.

This case is well-known among Japanese administrative officials and scholars in the field of town planning. However, the detailed process of its coordination was not clear, although it

has been mentioned in some books by Akira Tamura. There are no academic studies except the author's,⁴ which attempt to verify this project scientifically and objectively. The vertically divided system of public administration is a common phenomenon globally. A centralised power structure of national agencies is found in many countries. Both vertically divided systems and centralisation were seen as inevitable when ensuring the efficient and fair functioning of administrative organisations in line with policymakers. However, from the 1960s in Japan, regional values gradually emerged in terms of environmental and landscape issues, mainly in local governments, opposing the national values that formed the background to centralisation.

The hypothesis of this paper is that cross-organisational coordination is necessary to eliminate conflicts within municipal administrative structures and to respect regional values. It is also assumed that the vision of the independent and proactive management of the local government, which consists of the mayor's administration and councillors' assembly, for the welfare of citizens, is imperative. The discovery of the "record memorandum"⁵ of the coordination process of the motorway undergrounding compiled by the PCO revealed the details of the entire coordination process for the first time. Therefore, this study is based on the new findings of the recorded memorandum with reference to the author's previous research outcome.

Akira Tamura (1926-2010),⁶ the protagonist of this coordination, was the acting Director of the PCO. He was a Japanese expert in city management and planning who conceived citizen-oriented planning theories and comprehensively put them into practice. Tamura accomplished the tasks assigned to him as the chief planner of the City Administration over a relatively short period of time from 1968 until 1978. In honouring his achievement, he was awarded the Grand Prize of the Architectural Institute of Japan for his work, the "Formulation of Theories and Methods of Innovative Town Planning and their Practice," in 2000.



Figure 1. Multi-layered motorways in front of Yokohama railway station district in 2018 (Photograph by Toshio Taguchi).



Figure 2. The Tokyo Metropolitan Region in Japan (Drawing by Toshio Taguchi).



Figure 3. Yokohama City in the Tokyo Metropolitan Region
(Drawing by Toshio Taguchi).



Figure 4. Kannai district, central part of Yokohama, at its early period of the port opening with river and canal networks in 1859
(Courtesy of Yokohama Archives of History).



Figure 5. River and canal networks in the centre of Yokohama prior to the urban motorway planning (Drawing by Toshio Taguchi).

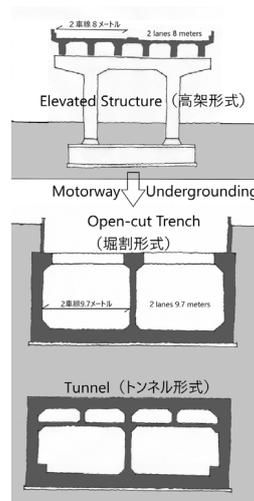


Figure 6. Change of structure from elevated to underground (Drawing by Toshio Taguchi).

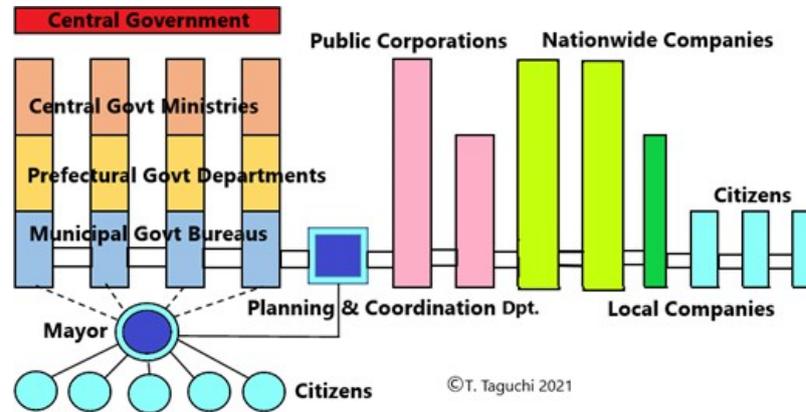


Figure 7. The concept of the PCO by Akira Tamura (Redrawn by Toshio Taguchi, based on Tamura's PhD dissertation).

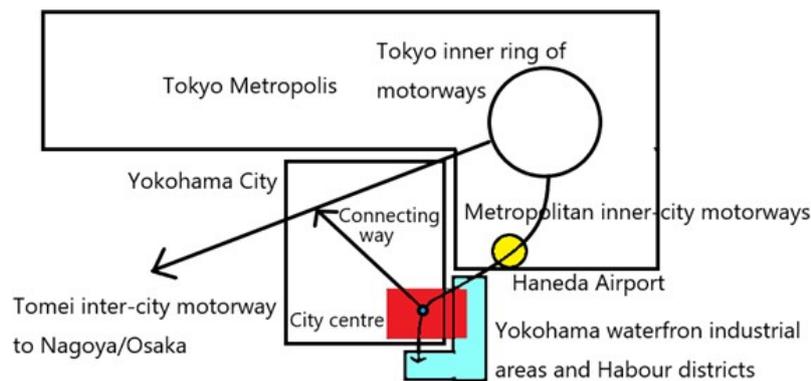


Figure 8. The initially planned motorway route from Tokyo to Yokohama City (Diagram by Toshio Taguchi, based on City and MMA documents).

Coordinative Mechanism in Municipal Administrations

After the Pacific War (1941-45), a democratic governmental system was born for the first time by the enactment of the democratic constitution and the Local Autonomy Law in 1947 in Japan. As of 2020, the administrative structure is three-tiered: the national government (state or central government), the 47 prefectures (regional governments), and the 1,741 municipalities (local governments). Each municipality has an executive head and a legislature. The head of the municipality, as well as the councillors of the legislature, are directly elected by the citizens. The mayor is a leader of his/her executive machinery, consisting of various bureaus with legal powers and financial backing that are admitted at the city assembly.

Therefore, local administrative systems are expected to address regional issues efficiently and fairly. Regional issues occur locally and often require immediate action. Increasingly, these issues arise in the boundary areas of fixed national ministerial structures owing to changes in the social and global environment. This demands coordination beyond the framework of existing national administrative organisations. As national ministries represent the interests of industries and act in their own interests first and foremost, the responses to regional issues are either ignored or significantly delayed. As a result, municipal organisations are likely to fail to act in line with the policies of the mayor. We presume the “coordinative mechanism (municipal planning and coordination function)” to be a solution to the above-mentioned organisational problems in its system.

Inner-city Motorway Planning in the United States and Britain

New York was in a severe condition for motorway installation.⁷ Contrary to Yokohama, the only way to introduce a new inner-city motorway in the Manhattan Island was to destroy existing city blocks, especially housing estates for low-income people. The history of the New York City motorway networks began in the 1920s, with Robert Moses (1888-1981).⁸ He became the president of the New York State Public Highway Authority (TBTA), which was entrusted by successive presidents, governors and mayors to build motorways and continued to do so until the 1960s. The Lower Manhattan Expressway project in Soho, Manhattan Island, was the subject of a bitter confrontation between Moses and Jane Jacobs, a journalist. Jacobs, who refused to compromise as leader of the resident group, was arrested for disrupting a public hearing in 1968. Moses, coercive as he was, was later dismissed by the governor. Mayor John Lindsay proposed the concept of joint development (Figure 9) utilising the space over the planned open-cut motorway, which could not be accepted by the opposition group, and the project was finally abandoned in 1969. New York was not an exception. Other major old cities, such as Boston, Chicago and Seattle, saw resistance to elevated structures, too.

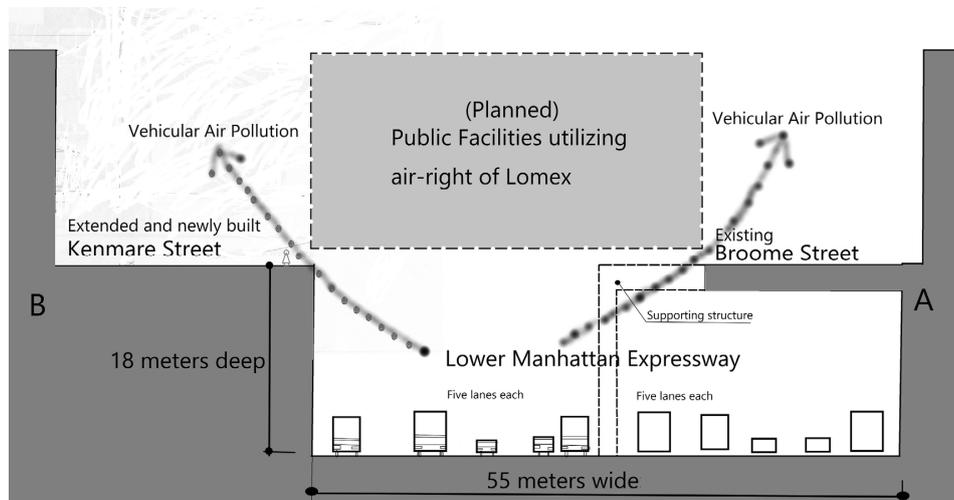


Figure 9. Concept of joint development in New York by Mayor Lindsay (Diagram by Toshio Taguchi, based on the Lower Manhattan Expressway Plan of March 1969).

In the old city redevelopments in the 1960s,⁹ Britain introduced a new concept of inner and/or middle ring roads surrounding old city centres networked with motorway systems outside city centres. This system made it possible in the old cities, such as Birmingham and Leicester, to enjoy a free pedestrian zone in those city centres separated from vehicular traffic. Since England is comparatively flat, with gentle slopes, there was almost no need to construct elevated structures for those ring roads, in contrast to its American or Japanese counterparts.

The History of Inner-City Motorway Planning in Yokohama

In 1964, Akira Tamura, who was then working at the Environment Development Centre, proposed to Mayor Asukata a plan for the future of Yokohama City (named “Six Spine Projects”)¹⁰ (Figure 10) that included inner-city motorway networks planned since 1963.¹¹ In 1965, the City of Yokohama set up the Motorway Planning Section for the planning of the motorway networks (MPS, which became the Motorway Division of the Road Bureau in 1968).¹² In March 1966, the Town Planning Bureau,¹³ together with the Ministry of Construction (MoC) and the Metropolitan Motorway Authority (MMA), proposed several routes for the extension of the Metropolitan Motorway from the Tokyo Haneda Airport to Kannai and inland districts of the city centre. Contrary to the Yokohama Canal Usage Council’s recommendation,¹⁴ the MPS regarded the idea of using the Haohka and Yoshida canals for the motorway as the most feasible option, rather than for the municipal subways. It is noted that the reclamation of canals downstream of the river was made possible thanks to the construction by-passing the upstream river.

In July 1966, the Yokohama sub-committee of the National Urban Transport Council submitted its recommendation to the Ministry of Transport (MoT) that considering the urgent requirement caused by severely congested public transport, municipal subway line No. 1, between Kamiohka (southern Yokohama) and Kannai, and line No. 3, between Yamashita-cho (port area) and Yokohama Station, be built without delay.¹⁵ In March 1967, the MoT granted a project license for new subways. It is noted that the Japanese subways are normally built underground beneath trunk roads only, with some exceptions on the surface in suburban regions. It is very rare that subways are to be constructed under built-up blocks with residents.

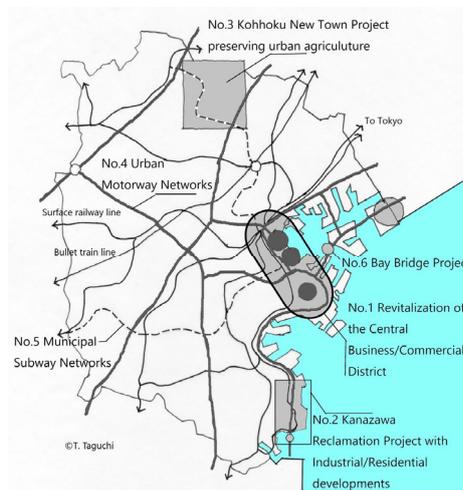


Figure 10. Location of the Six Spine Projects (Drawing by Toshio Taguchi).

In December 1967, the city assembly approved the reclamation project of the Haohka canal but suggested that the subway should be undergrounded and the motorway should be elevated. The MPS proposed a north-south line along the Yoshida canal connecting the inner-city networks with the inter-city Tomei motorway by planning an elevated interchange behind the Kannai railway station. The City Beautification Council,¹⁶ which had been considering how to guide the redevelopment of the areas along Odori Linear Park¹⁷ on the reclaimed Yoshida canal, feared that if the elevated motorway cut through Linear Park, the redevelopment project would be meaningless.¹⁸ Despite these conditions, Mayor Asukata was still hopeful that undergrounding the motorway would be made possible by any means.

Subsequently, the Kanagawa Town Planning Local Council approved the motorway under the Town Planning Law for the route along the Haohka canal only, apart from the structural

planning projects of the city,” and specifically stated that “important project plans, including the Six Spine Projects, should be coordinated with the PCO as early as possible at each point of progress.” Tamura attended executive meetings (mayor, assistant mayors, head of the PCO, head of the General Affairs Bureau and head of the Finance Bureau), and the PCO acted as the secretariat for the meetings. Tamura was a Director of the PCO at the initial stage until 1971; then, he became the head of the PCO.

The Negotiation Process of Undergrounding Motorways

The record memorandum detailed the chronology of the negotiation processes from 13 June 1968 to 23 April 1969 in a brief and concise manner, which includes when and where meetings were held, who attended the meetings and the topics that were discussed. Therefore, this document is the most important part of this research.

In March 1968, Urban Bureau of the MoC told in the city executives that they could not pass the concerned town planning decision on the subway route alone until the city had decided on its policy towards the north-south line. If the undergrounding of the motorway along the two canals was agreed upon and the interchange was also undergrounded (Figure 12), the subway had to cross under the underground interchange and go deeper, which was unacceptable in terms of cost and construction timeline. The limited space left above the ground next to the open-cut trench is unsuitable for Odori Linear Park (Figure 13). Mayor Asukata, who could not remain ambiguous about the undergrounding policy, expressed that elevated motorway would be a permanent scar on the city's future and that it was time to scrap the whole idea and start again.²¹ In June, the city started to contact MoC officials who had previously made decisions. Negotiation on the undergrounding of the motorway and its rerouting began with the city trying to get the MoC back to the table, which was angry at the city's inconsistency.

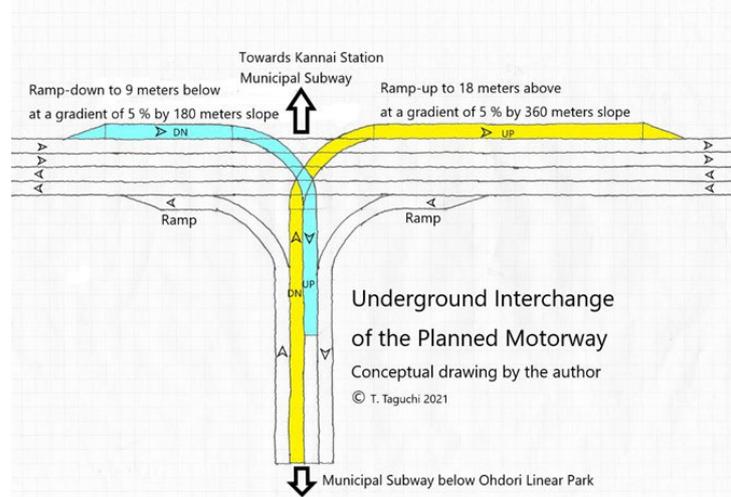


Figure 12. The planned interchange behind the Kannai railway station to connect Haohka canal route with Yoshida canal route (Drawing by Toshio Taguchi, with reference to MMA documents).²²

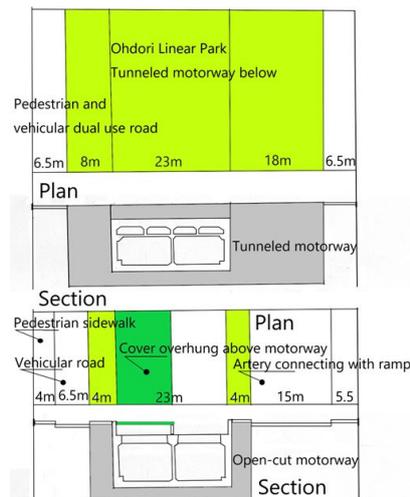


Figure 13. Plan and section of Odori Linear Park coexisted with the underground motorway (Drawing by Toshio Taguchi).

In August, the Director General of the Town Planning Bureau was asked by a MoC official whether the city would bear the increased cost of the undergrounding project and whether it would be responsible for any problems caused by the Nakamura River locals who would suffer from the rerouted motorway. On the other hand, the MoT accepted the change in the subway route. They replied that it would be possible to acknowledge a “slight change in route”²³ if the Haohka Canal was given over to the underground motorway. When the Mayor and Tamura met with the governor of Kanagawa Prefecture, he mentioned that the city’s proposal was fine and that he would cooperate, but the prefectural government’s actions stopped there.

In September, the Director General of the Urban Bureau of the MoC expressed that he wished to cooperate with the city's plan, and he did not mind the increased project costs. In October, a meeting was held with the MoC, MMA and the city to review the city's proposal. The MoC's policy was to evaluate the project's profitability in the MMA. In November, the MMA replied that it would be difficult to repay the construction investment in the required 30 years through toll revenues. In November, the MoC asked the city for a response, stating that: (1) the MMA could only be instructed to build an elevated motorway along the Haohka and Yoshida canals; (2) if the city was to replace the 6 billion yen increase in the cost of the project, the Haohka and Yoshida canals could be open-trench structures; and (3) if the Yoshida canal section (north-south line) was cancelled, the Haohka canal could be open-trench without the city's investment. The city announced that it would accept a prior investment of 4 billion yen for motorway undergrounding along the Yoshida canal.

In December, the MoC laid the following conditions for undergrounding of the Haohka and Yoshida canals: that the city pay the land cost, and concerned organisations bear the common cost such as reclamation equally. Yoshiro Watanabe²⁴ was an influential MoC official who tried to become an intermediary between the PCO and MoC. On the other hand, the city's Transport Bureau expressed that it was impossible for the subway and motorway to coexist (Figure 14) at the Yoshida canal and requested to separate them. At the end of January, the Director General of the City Transport Bureau informed the MoT that even if the subway was changed to a wide national highway running alongside Odori Linear Park a few blocks away, it would not be possible for the subway to turn around at the intersection in the centre of the Kannai district and thus would not be able to run directly to Yokohama Station. The MoT hardened its stance since the city's intention was contrary to the preconditions approved by the National Transport Council that approved the Yokohama subway project.

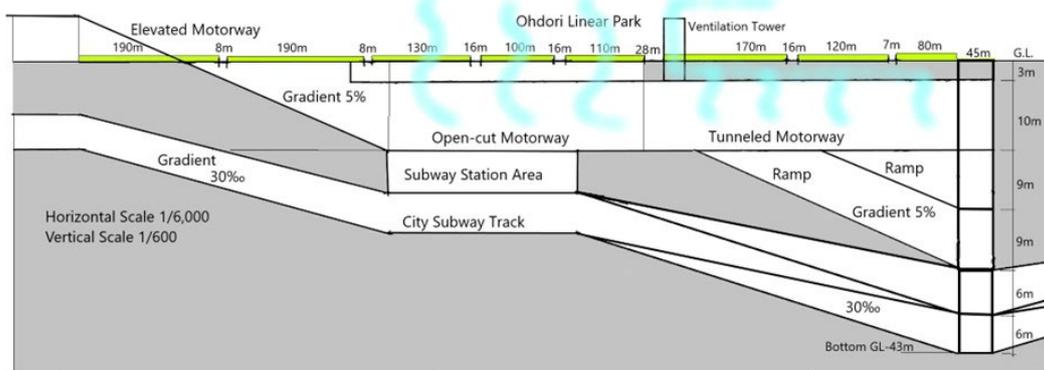


Figure 14. The coexisting subway and underground motorway along Yoshida canal (Diagram by Toshio Taguchi, with reference to MMA and Municipal Transport Bureau documents).

was difficult, and the subway and motorway should be built as soon as possible. The Vice Minister said that he understood what the city was saying.

Afterwards, a bureau meeting attended by all the officials concerned lasted until midnight, and the opposing comments led to a big controversy. In response to this situation, the project policy was reconfirmed at the city executive meeting on 3 March.²⁷ With this policy, the Mayor and the Director of the PCO met the Vice-Minister.²⁸ The Vice-Minister replied that what had been decided had to be done. On 23 April, Kanagawa Town Planning Local Council²⁹ approved the project (Figure 15), as originally proposed by the city.

Analysis of the Coordinative Mechanism

The following are the key points of the coordinative mechanism that is visible from the detailed process of undergrounding negotiations:

1. When the city administration began contacting the MoC, it reaffirmed its undergrounding policy: the executive meeting demonstrated that the city's policy was consistent and unchanged.
2. By ordering the city road bureau that was dissatisfied with the Mayor's policy change and the role of luring the MoC to the negotiations, they were expected to view the matter from the opposite standpoint, rather than the MoC's default policy, and induced them to act in accordance with the city policy.
3. As official negotiations with the MoC and MoT began and proceeded, various important decisions in terms of policy formulation became necessary. The PCO then took the lead in bringing the relevant departments together while maintaining close communication with the Mayor.
4. Engineers from relevant institutions examined the feasibility of going underground from a technical point of view. By sharing the results with relevant bodies, they attempted to find an agreeable direction according to technical theories. In his testimony, Takashi Tatsugami,³⁰ a former member of the city motorway section, said that an underground interchange would require a loose alignment for visibility that would result in an excessive amount of area for its construction. If the underground motorway and subway could not be constructed simultaneously, it would be technically difficult to bury the motorway tunnel above the subway.³¹ When looking for a place where the subway line could turn around, the only result was to go straight from the Yoshida canal towards Kannai district and use the space at the side of the City Hall.

5. In terms of cost, the city facilitated the negotiations by announcing that it would accept an upfront investment of 4 billion yen for undergrounding the motorway. Although the MMA expressed the extension of the motorway to Yokohama as unprofitable, the “upfront investment” by the city could become beneficial in cost for the MMA.³² As the MMA was a public corporation set up and supported by the national and local governments in the metropolitan region, Yokohama City was one of the investors of the MMA. It was acknowledged that the subway construction would be severely affected by the undergrounding process. The City Transport Bureau and the MoT did not expect deep-depth construction³³ that would result in a longer period of construction and an increase in cost.
6. In the end, the MoT, angered by the inability to direct the subway operations due to the change in route, suggested that the subway license be abolished.³⁴ The MoC agreed to a political settlement through the intermediary of an MP to save face for each ministry since both ministries had no other choice but to maintain their original project assignments.
7. Both Asukata and Tamura came to the brink of accepting the incomplete coexistence of motorway and subway along the Yoshida canal,³⁵ even if the Odori linear park was left as a patch of small space, so far as the MoC and the MoT were satisfied. Subsequently, the situation took a major turn when the MoT pointed out a discrepancy with the original plan for the subway and opposed it. Finally, the coordination results imply the importance of technical work and cost issues. Political mediation has its place, but only after the preconditions for the concerned bodies are established.

Conclusion

The outcome of this coordination became a milestone for the first time in the Japanese planning history – that the local government representing their citizens resisted the national planning policy authorised by the central government and ultimately accomplished their regional value endorsed by the citizens. Thereafter, the national planning system began to allow local governments to participate as a partner and moved forward as citizen-oriented by accepting the process of new infrastructure installation slightly democratised. Afterwards, the Asukata administration was recognised by the national ministries and other public bodies as a tough negotiator.

The PCO was originally established as the mobilising engine to implement the Six Spine Projects. Like Yokohama’s PCO, there were some similar municipal machineries in other local governments aimed at becoming coordinative mechanism within each administration.

Although the Metropolitan Government of Tokyo had its planning and coordination bureau at the time, the bureau stayed as a commanding post to instruct the concerned bureaus from a high place and never dared to be involved in the implementation of the projects. The shopkeepers demanded the “preservation of the urban landscape”³⁶ as a new regional value not to be destroyed by the elevated motorway. Asukata’s solidarity with their campaign forged a united movement to secure the regional value opposing the national value that promoted elevated motorways.

This case marked an “attempt to unify the administration”³⁷ as the most important element in initiating the realisation of new regional values. If not unified, the negotiation itself could not be started at all. Therefore, unification was seen as the first and the most visible germ of the planning and coordination functions envisaged by Tamura. In 1978 the underground motorway (Figures 16, 17) was opened, and Odori Park (Figure 18) was completed without an elevated motorway passing overhead. The municipal subway was opened in 1976 below Odori Park (Figure 19) as planned initially.



Figure 16. Completed open-cut motorway on the ground level in 2019
(Photograph by Toshio Taguchi).



Figure 17. Completed open-cut motorway near Yoshida canal in 2019 (Photograph by Toshio Taguchi).



Figure 18. Odori Park in 2019 (Photograph by Toshio Taguchi).



Figure 19. Municipal Subway which had been open since 1976 (Photograph by Toshio Taguchi).

However, this coordination process was a tricky one, as the record memorandum shows. If it had not been successful, as Tamura wrote in his book, “everything that the PCO said afterwards was just idealistic and dreamy,”³⁸ it would not have functioned as a coordinative mechanism in the city administration. The ‘practical function’ of planning and coordination advocated by Tamura was later abolished. In 1982, during the Michikazu Saigo administration (mayorality term, 1978-90), that followed Asukata’s, the Finance Bureau absorbed the PCO in a reorganisation process to become the Planning and Finance Bureau. The PCO was abolished on the grounds that its involvement in individual projects had undermined the autonomy of the original bureaus.

Lastly, the sense of inter-organisational collaboration in defence of new regional values continued to live on informally among young city officials even after the reorganisation. Thanks to their efforts, all Six Spine Projects were accomplished during the following twenty years until Tamura passed away in 2010.

Acknowledgements

A great appreciation for the help provided by peers and scholars as follows: Mitsugu Himaki, Kenji Asakawa, Atsuhiko Aoki and Kazuhisa Sone.

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³⁵ Planning and Coordination Office, *Toshinburuto Taigaisesho No Keisokatsu*.

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³⁷ Tamura, *Yokohama*.

³⁸ Tamura, *Yokohama*.