Much has been written in recent years about the importance of civil society in ensuring positive outcomes for people in the development of urban space. For citizens to be involved in a meaningful way in urban planning requires the existence of a political space – created by organizations, community groups, social movements, voluntary societies – that is outside the control of government. The development of the international planning movement during the first decades of the twentieth century is an excellent example of the importance of such non-state actors in developing a competing vision of the urban future – and a set of prescriptions on how to achieve it – that was both at variance with the priorities then being pursued by national governments and which explicitly put forward the public welfare and urban quality of life as the highest values. Japanese planners, architects and municipal administrators were avid followers of international planning ideas during this period, attending many of the international congresses and attempting to adopt many of the current ideas for use in Japan. While the early years of the Taisho period saw a proliferation of social organizations in Japan and the development of an embryonic civil society, however, by the early 1930s an expansion of the role of the state, and particularly of the activities of the Home Ministry had resulted in its effective absorption of most of the political space available for independent agendas in city planning. After this period, planning thought and practice was firmly central government territory. This paper examines the role of this important watershed in the development of Japanese city planning and urban management practice.

Introduction

In recent years the importance of civil society for city planning has received increasing attention [1]. It has been argued that a vibrant civil society is essential to ensuring positive outcomes for people in the development of urban space. A range of definitions of the term ‘civil society’ exist, and there is little agreement on its precise meaning. For the purposes of this paper, the concept can be defined simply as the set of institutions, organizations and behaviours situated between the state, the business world, and the family. This includes voluntary and non-profit organizations, social and political movements, the public sphere, and professional and advocacy organizations.

This new emphasis on the importance of civil society for city planning practice is particularly
prominent in Japan, where participatory methods of community mobilization in the development of detailed local planning policies and practices (collectively referred to as *machizukuri*, or community building) are widely held to represent the most promising recent city planning development [2]. Not only has the emergence of an increasingly vibrant civil society in the 1990s been identified as an important factor in the emergence of participatory *machizukuri* techniques, but the recent mobilization of urban citizens’ movements in support of local environmental improvement is also seen as central to the much belated re-emergence of civil society itself in the 1990s [3]. For example, the effectiveness of existing local *machizukuri* organizations in co-ordinating disaster recovery efforts in the aftermath of the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995 forced policy-makers to recognize the value of such organizations. The earthquake is seen as an important turning point in the legitimacy of civil society in Japan, and to have speeded the passage of recent legislation granting easier access to legal status as voluntary Non Profit Organizations (NPOs) in 1998, a status which had hitherto been reserved primarily for government-funded and dominated organizations [4].

Although there has been a recent re-emergence of enthusiasm about the importance of civil society among planning theorists, the institutions of civil society have long played an important role in city planning. The development of the international planning movement during the first decades of the twentieth century is an excellent example of the importance of non-state actors in developing a competing vision of the urban future – and a set of prescriptions on how to achieve it – that was both at variance with the priorities then being pursued by national governments and which explicitly put the public welfare and urban quality of life forward as the highest values. It is arguable that the great period of the influence of civil society on planning was at the turn of the century when the international city planning movement was first forming and the idea of city planning as a solution to the urban problems of the industrial city was first gaining momentum, before city planning became a routine part of central and local government activity. Public health and hygiene activists, professional associations of architects, surveyors and engineers, housing advocates, settlement workers, anti-slum campaigners, labour and co-operative movements and a range of others provided a vocal constituency with political skills, connections and financial resources which backed many of the campaigns for greater government intervention and regulation of what had hitherto been relatively unregulated processes of urban development.

The key role of these varied voluntary associations and planning advocates in the development of city planning is well established [5]. Most of the central ideas of city planning were discussed before the First World War, and an international planning movement had emerged out of the series of great international expositions at the end of the nineteenth century. These great fairs were not only displays of industrial innovation but also provided an important meeting place for the exchange of ideas about social politics, social insurance, mutual credit societies, workers’ housing provision, garden cities and city planning [6]. Rodgers similarly describes the rise of city planning ideas as a part of the international movement of social politics of the turn of the century which was characterized by the international exchange of ideas among like-minded reformers through conferences, expositions and investigative tours by the eve of the First World War, there were regularly convening international conferences on labor legislation, the welfare and protection of children, social insurance, unemployment, housing, garden cities and city planning, public baths, prisons, and the public and private relief of poverty [7].
A key role of these organizations was as generators of new ideas, analysis and approaches to existing problems. Rodgers suggests that these various groups contributed greatly to the formation of public policy, even though they worked primarily outside of government, and their input into policy was not direct. Rather they functioned as independent generators of new ideas, analysis and policy, which state policy-makers could draw upon as political circumstances demanded. Further, ideas and policy solutions themselves can have an agenda-setting function, by transforming regrettable but irreversible conditions into issues amenable to policy action [8]. Critically, their location outside the state meant that they enjoyed intellectual and creative freedom from the constraints inevitably encountered by state policy-makers, at the same time that it meant that their ideas often remain untapped if a political conjuncture that would make them attractive to state policy-makers did not arise.

Such groups and organizations also play another important role which Rodgers puts less emphasis on, as propagandists for their ideas and as active shapers of public opinion. Although their impact certainly varies widely in practice, these groups are not only passive producers of ideas, but can also contribute, sometimes significantly, to the shaping of public opinion and thus the political acceptability of their ideas. In this regard the activities of the Garden City Association are exemplary. The idea of a new model of building towns was spread through both the common avenues of public lectures and publications and, more dramatically, by the building of two demonstration garden cities in England which became ‘must see’ destinations for urban reformers from around the world. Their activities helped to transform what had been a marginal, Utopian proposal at the end of the nineteenth century into an idea that was accepted around the world between the wars, and which became government policy in Britain and elsewhere after World War II. A second important role of civil society is thus to provide channels for the spread of ideas from their originating circles to a broader public.

This picture of the progressive origins of planning has been challenged by some recent American planning historians who criticize the ‘standard’ version of planning history for having treated all planners as direct ideological descendants of the early reformers of the progressive movement, and for being blinded by ‘the rhetoric of reform that planners drew upon to legitimize their actions’[9]. In this view the effort to locate the roots of planning in the progressive movement was designed primarily to glorify the role of planning, and served as a means of indoctrinating and inspiring young planning students, while ignoring the complexities, compromises and failures of planning practice. This may be a useful corrective to an oversimplified interpretation of the development of planning practice, but it should not be allowed to obscure the lasting impact and importance of planning’s origins in the progressive movement. In many western countries, the diverse, often confusing mixture of independent organizations that actively contributed to the shaping of a new idea of city planning at the turn of the century by promoting new ideas of social justice, state production of workers’ housing, and state regulation of new urban growth were tremendously important to the development and acceptance of planning as an idea. Hall’s authoritative intellectual history of the city planning movement makes quite clear the movement’s debts to the progressive social reformers, the anarchists and the garden city activists, at the same time that he includes others such as the regionalists, the hygienists and the authoritarian architects as important planning forebears [10].

The importance of civil society to the early development of western planning thought and practice is underlined by an examination of the Japanese case. This paper focuses on the period
at the beginning of the last century when the Japanese city planning system was first developed. The ‘Taisho Democracy’ period takes its name from Emperor Taisho who ruled from 1912–26, although historians commonly refer to the Taisho Democracy period as lasting slightly longer, from the end of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 to the end of democratic governments and the increasing dominance of the military after the Manchurian Incident of 1931, and it is that longer period which is referred to here [11].

The early years of the Taisho period saw a proliferation of social organizations in Japan and the development of democratic institutions and an embryonic civil society. Japan appeared to be following a similar path towards liberal democracy, labour movements and social policy during the first decades of the twentieth century. Advocates of better city planning joined those pushing for municipal housing programmes, better social policies and increased rights for labour organizations in a civil society movement that was similar in many respects to contemporary developments in the West. Japanese planners, architects and municipal administrators were avid followers of the international planning movement during this period, attending many of the international congresses and attempting to adapt the ideas for use in Japan. By the early 1930s, however, an expansion of the role of the state and, particularly, of the activities of the Home Ministry had resulted in its effective absorption of most of the political space available for independent agendas in city planning. To a very great extent the emerging civil society of the early Taisho period had disappeared by the early 1930s. After this period, planning thought and practice was firmly central government territory, remaining the almost exclusive territory of central ministries until the 1970s, with only gradual decentralization of power thereafter [12]. This capture of planning as an exclusively central government-controlled activity had profound consequences for the development of planning in Japan and for Japanese urbanization generally. This paper traces this crucial moment in the early development of city planning in Japan and explores its implications for the city planning system of the post-war period.

Urban industrial growth in the Taisho period

The Taisho Democracy period was one of enormous change for Japan. By the end of the Meiji period (1868–1912) Japan had established itself as the dominant regional power in Northeast Asia, having defeated China and Russia in war, and having gained a colony in Taiwan, extensive economic interests in Manchuria from Russia, and undisputed control over the Korean peninsula which was annexed in 1910. To a great extent, therefore, the main goals of the Meiji period had been achieved: Japan was an internationally recognized great power, it had achieved revision of the unequal treaties forced on it by the colonial powers in the 1850s, and had developed modern industries and a strong military. On the other hand, Japan was still a primarily agricultural nation at the beginning of the Taisho period, and the traditional lifestyles of the majority of the population had been little affected by modernization and the growth of the industrial economy during the previous 30 years. During the period from the end of the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 up to the outbreak of war in the 1930s the pace of industrialization and urbanization quickened and a much more urban society emerged.

Rapid increases in industrialization and urbanization were probably the most significant
forces propelling social change at this time. In particular, the First World War, which Japan entered on the side of Britain with which it had been allied since 1902, speeded the process of industrial economic growth through Allied orders for munitions and other war material, and also through the opportunities for Japanese manufacturers to move into markets abandoned by blockaded European countries such as Germany. At the same time Japanese chemical imports, which had been primarily from Germany, were cut off, forcing their domestic production. Industrial production almost doubled between 1914 and 1919 and average profit rates for industry increased sharply. Japan thus emerged as an industrial nation during the Taisho period, with a doubling of GNP from 1910 to 1930, and a quadrupling of real output of mining and manufacturing, and of employment in heavy and chemical industries during the period [13].

An important product of industrial growth, particularly during the period from 1905 to 1919, was the rapid expansion of urban population. From 1898 to 1920 the share of Japanese population in settlements of more than 10 000 increased from 18% to 32%, and the total population of the six largest cities (Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Kobe and Yokohama) more than doubled from 3.04 million to 7.63 million between 1897 and 1920 [14]. In common with the other industrializing countries, rapid urban population growth manifested itself both in greatly increased population densities in the central area, particularly in working class industrial areas, and in rapid unplanned growth on the urban fringe. While in 1900 the population of the then City of Tokyo was 1.12 million, that had increased to 2.17 million by 1920. More dramatic was the increase in population of the surrounding 82 towns and villages which were incorporated into Greater Tokyo in 1932 to form what is today the 23-ward area.

At the turn of the century those areas were basically rural and had a population of 380 000, but by 1920 their population had increased by 369% to 1.18 million [15]. Virtually all of this urban growth took place as haphazard unplanned sprawl in and about existing farm villages on the urban fringe. Similar processes were at work on a smaller scale in the other main industrial centres of Osaka and Nagoya.

Rapid urbanization caused a range of social problems familiar to students of the industrial revolution in western countries, of which worsening housing conditions, increasing densities of population in poor areas and worsening epidemics of cholera and tuberculosis were prominent. These were exacerbated in the Japanese case by the rapidity of the process of economic change and the very weak infrastructure base of the cities, which was inadequate even before the rapid doubling of urban populations. Because of widespread poverty among industrial workers, housing conditions in urban areas declined, particularly during the First World War years. The traditional housing for the urban poor, the back alley nagaya (literally, long-houses), which were essentially long rows of single-storey, back-to-back wooden shacks, became ever more crowded with many families sharing a single room measuring approximately 3 m by 4 m (six tatami mat size), and 15 to 20 families sharing an outdoor privy [16]. When the famous British welfare reformer Beatrice Webb visited Japan in 1911 she judged the slums of Osaka to be ‘as bad as anything in London’ with widespread malnutrition, neglected children and inadequate relief efforts [17]. In addition the larger cities saw the development of large new industrial districts on the urban fringe where workers lived in miserable slums scattered among the factories.

Predictably, worsening living conditions for the poor gave rise to increasing social conflict which was expressed in repeated outbursts of popular protest. The Hibiya Riots of 1905, and
the mass protests over the rise of streetcar fares in the spring of 1906, the movement for constitutional government of 1912–13, protests against naval corruption in 1914, were all signs of popular discontent and increasing militancy. The government and ruling élites were particularly shaken by the nation-wide Rice Riots of 1918. Although wartime inflation saw general price rises throughout the economy, rice prices rose even faster. While the wholesale price index doubled between 1915 and 1918, the price of rice tripled during the same period. Speculation among merchants, landlords and wholesalers was rampant, and tensions finally exploded in July 1918 with several weeks of violent riots and demonstrations spreading throughout the country which were only subdued by the use of the army against the demonstrators [18].

Of equal concern to the ruling élite was the growing membership of labour organizations during the war and the dramatic increase in the number of labour disputes and the number of workers involved in them until the summer of 1919 when there were over 2388 disputes and strikes throughout Japan. Far from the stereotypical image of docile company unions that has been prominent in depictions of post-war Japan, in the early stage of union development conflict was much more open. Unions were illegal organizations under the provisions of the Peace Police Law of 1900, and labour organizing and work stoppages were brutally repressed. Labour organizing continued to spread, however, and workers were active in the spreading movements for universal suffrage, the right to strike and the legal recognition of unions [19].

During the Meiji period the Japanese government had shown little tolerance for dissent and engaged in wide-ranging suppression of opposition movements, including the banning of mass meetings, the exclusion of leaders from the Tokyo area and the censorship of books and newspapers as authorized under the Peace Regulations of 1887. Those powers to restrict anti-government activity were broadened under the Peace Police Law of 1900 which banned political activity by women, minors, police and members of the military, outlawed labour organization and strikes, and extended Home Ministry administrative controls and supervision over associations, meetings and demonstrations. During the first decades of the new century those powers were increasingly invoked in attempts to prevent the spread of socialism and left-wing activity in general, and the labour movement in particular. Japan’s first left-wing political party, the Social Democratic Party (Shakai Minshuto) was banned by the government within a day of its founding in 1901, and a similar fate met most other such attempts in the following decades [20]. Repression of dissent was the ever-present counterpart to the other social policies described in more detail below. Notwithstanding the effective repression of opposition political parties and movements, however, the first decades of the new century also saw significant democratic development, the emergence of greater pluralism and the budding development of civil society.

Taisho democracy

There has been considerable debate about the extent of democratic development during the Taisho period. The traditional view of many western scholars has been that Taisho democracy was merely a brief and not very significant detour on the path from Meiji oligarchy to the
bureaucratic totalitarianism of the Pacific War years. More recently, however, the argument of many Japanese historians that the ‘Taisho Democracy’ period was, indeed, a period of significant democratic development in Japan has gained increasing acceptance in the West [21]. One important factor was the waning power of the ageing oligarchy who had carried out the Meiji restoration and who had effectively controlled the government during the Meiji period. This was balanced by a gradual increase in the influence of the political parties which led to the first party-controlled cabinet with the appointment of Hara Kei, the leader of the conservative Seiyukai party, as prime minister in 1918. Apart from several brief non-party cabinets formed immediately after the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, from 1918 until May of 1932 Japan was governed by party cabinets formed by whichever party held the balance of power in the elected lower house of the Diet, whether the Seiyukai or its rival the Kenseikai (renamed the Minseito in 1926). During this period the ideal of ‘normal constitutional government’, meaning the formation of cabinets and the control of the civil government by the party in control of the elected Lower House, attained wide support as the logical development of Japanese democracy.

There were important liberal voices both inside government and in academia, such as Yoshino Sakuzo, professor at Tokyo University who was a major advocate of liberal thinking through his concept of minponsbushi (people-as-the-base-ism), which suggested that welfare of the people was the basic purpose of the state. Yoshino’s concept was important because it was successful for a time in treading the careful balance between the advocacy of greater democracy through universal suffrage and the strengthening of the Diet, while still upholding the absolute sovereignty of the emperor [22]. This was essential because open advocacy of democracy (minshushugi) was considered treasonous as it implied that sovereignty rested in the people, not the emperor. A number of other important steps towards greater democracy were taken during the 1920s, including the passage in 1925 of universal male suffrage. Further, the spread of social movements, opposition groups, women’s rights movements, labour organizing and rural tenant associations all pointed to a more pluralistic political situation in which competing visions could be aired.

The tradition of domination of legitimate activity in the public sphere by government officials thus seemed to be changing in the early Taisho period. Iokibe argues that compared to the Meiji period, during which the government had imposed strict central control over virtually all aspects of society in the interest of building national strength, the Taisho period was one of an ‘Associational Revolution’ in which a period of sustained peace fostered the development of private activity. He describes the Taisho period as one which saw a Budding civil society between the developmental authoritarianism of the Meiji period and the militarism of the Second World War.

Looking at the rise and fall of private-sector organizations, we can see that the pre-war peak falls roughly in the period centering around the 1920s, between the Taisho Political Crisis (1913) and the Manchurian Incident. In terms of numbers, there was an eruption of private organizations formed before the war, an ‘associational revolution’ in its time; and they were tremendously diverse in purpose and type. Not only were there business-related groups such as the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, but numerous labor unions and welfare societies in every field of industry, the Japan Fabian Society and ideologically inspired organizations such as the National Federation of Levellers, and cultural and academic societies and international exchange groups such as the Pacific Society. The proliferation of nonprofit as well as ‘value-promotion’ organizations was phenomenal [23].
Advocates for improved city planning measures took their place among a wide range of other private interests which worked for the public good at this time. There was a vigorous public debate on urban issues by writers such as the journalist Yokoyama Gennosuke, whose exposé of poverty in Tokyo was modelled on the poverty surveys of Charles Booth in London, and Koda Rohan [24], a popular novelist who wrote a visionary treatise on the need to rebuild Tokyo with broad roads, parks, sewers, public markets and libraries. Even more influential was Mori Ogai, one of the most prominent writers on urban issues of turn of the century Japan. While his status as a high ranking military physician means he was a central government officer, Mori was also a widely read novelist, and a prominent activist on urban issues so can reasonably be claimed as a part of civil society. He wrote a wide range of essays on urban issues, focussed primarily on issues of hygiene, public health, sewerage and water supply, and urban planning and building regulation, drawing on his experience studying German medical medicine and public health practice for four years until his return to Japan in the early 1890s. On his return he was an advocate of stronger building regulation and urban planning legislation and was a prime mover in failed efforts to pass strengthened building regulations in the 1890s. Mori was also a persistent critic of Japanese urban policy, and advocate of a more activist approach to improving housing conditions for the poor [25].

More radical were the Christian socialists, Abe I soo and Katayama Sen, both of whom had studied in missionary colleges in the eastern US and had arrived at their advocacy of municipal socialism based on Christian teachings. Katayama, a professional labour organizer, criticized Japanese urban policy of the turn of the century as being simply concerned with economic development, ignoring the plight of poor working people who suffered appalling urban living conditions and excessive rents. While this analysis was hardly new, his solution that the goal of urban policy should be a high quality of living environment for all the citizens, and that this could be accomplished through greater local government powers of self-government and broader municipal ownership of essential services and housing was radical for the time [26].

A much more mainstream and influential critic was Kuwata Kumazo, a prime mover of the influential Social Policy Association (Shakai Seisaku Gakkai) [27] who, following the German approach, argued in a paper titled ‘Urban Social Policy’ that to prevent social unrest urban social facilities should be provided to improve the living conditions of the poor, and that local governments should become much more active in modernizing urban transport, building parks and providing essential services such as sewers and water supply [28]. In 1905 the main topic of debate of the Social Policy Association annual meeting was the issue of municipal ownership and, in 1911, the city of Tokyo bought the privately built electric streetcar company and thereafter ran the system itself. By that point there were 190 km of routes and 1054 streetcars in operation [29]. Similarly, in Osaka the streetcar system was in municipal ownership from the start, and the local government itself built the system, using operating profits to widen main roads and build an extensive streetcar network on the new boulevards. By 1926 about 90 km of streetcars lines were in operation [30].

Even more acceptable to central government leadership in the early years of the century was the well-known journalist Miyake Iwao, who published his book on urban policy Urban Studies (Toshi no Kenkyu) in 1908 [31]. As Hanes notes, two of the Meiji oligarchs, Okuma Shigenobu and Inoue Tomoichi, even wrote prefaces to the work, giving it the official stamp of approval [32]. Miyake was an advocate of municipal autonomy and argued that to deal better with emerging urban social problems local governments needed stronger planning powers and
broader sources of local tax revenue, such as betterment taxes on increases of land value. These are just a few examples of the wide range of voices participating in a vigorous debate about the future of urban policy in Japan. They provide one part of the context of the passage of the first modern city planning system in 1919.

This is only one side of the story, however, for at the same time a powerful counter current of central state and, particularly, bureaucratic power was gaining strength. This current eventually led to the eclipse of the emerging constitutional democracy of party-controlled cabinets and of civil society itself in the early 1930s, and is the other essential background to understanding the planning system that emerged. The middle 1920s were the high point of the process of development of civil society institutions in Japan, after which the areas of social life that lay beyond the reach of the state grew ever smaller as state power expanded, continuing the processes begun during the Meiji period. By the mid 1930s there was little effective political space for any sort of popular movement directed at influencing government policy.

The weakly democratic political structure created by the Meiji constitution was an important factor in subsequent developments. In particular, Japan was still very far from the achievement of a democratic system based on the sovereignty of the people. For example, until the passage of universal suffrage in 1925, the franchise was extremely limited and had served to restrict effective electoral power at both the national and local levels to a small property-owning élite. The tax qualification for national elections restricted the electorate to around 10% of males over the age of twenty-five, effectively restricting the vote to wealthy property owners, merchants and industrialists. One unfortunate consequence of the restricted size of the electorate was that it made it much easier for politicians to gain election by vote buying and pork-barrel public spending, which was an important factor in the declining respect for the established political parties and the system they represented during the 1920s [33]. The restricted electorate also meant, of course, that parties organized to represent the working class had little chance of electoral success even if they had not been immediately repressed, and the two established conservative parties based their electoral strategy primarily on appeals to the interests of the owners of property.

Similar voting restrictions applied at the local level. In Tokyo, for example, only male Japanese citizens over the age of twenty-five who had lived in the city for over two years and who paid over two yen per year in national or local taxes could vote. That meant that less than 10% of adult males could vote. A further significant restriction was the class system of voters based on their share of taxes paid which was copied from the Prussian system applied in Berlin. Voting power was divided equally between three classes of voters, each of which paid one-third of city taxes. According to the calculations of a leading contemporary socialist thinker, Abe Ikuo, one vote in the top class was worth 1012 votes in the bottom class [34].

The weakness of democratic development in Taisho Japan was not merely a result of the limited franchise, however, as is suggested by the fact that it was only in the 1930s, after the granting of universal male suffrage in 1925, that the formation of party-controlled cabinets ended, and a totalitarian state emerged. Throughout this period the parliamentary parties and their House of Representatives were only one among a range of power centres within the state. The legal structure set out by the Meiji constitution, with its institutionalized dispersal of power among the oligarchy, the Imperial Household ministry, the Privy Council, and the House of Peers was hardly affected by the shift toward party cabinets that
was the most important sign of democratization. The Emperor was the ultimate authority and the organs of state were responsible to him, not the people, and derived much of their power though their interpretation of his will. The Prime Minister was still not chosen by the parties, but by the oligarchs, and both the Privy Council and the House of Peers could reject any act of the House of Representatives. Crucially, the army and navy had a great deal of independence from the cabinet, as their supreme commander was the Emperor, and they could and did bypass the rest of the government and get direct Imperial authorization for their policies. This structure meant that it was relatively easy for the military to gradually seize control of power during the 1930s without the necessity of any sort of coup d'état, or even any constitutional revision.

Silberman argues that the main beneficiary of the rather undefined relationship between the different power centres was the state bureaucracy, because it gained responsibility for much of the actual policy formation, and argues that by the middle of the Meiji period it had achieved a dominant role in the organization of interests and the determination of public policy. He suggests that while the development of state bureaucratic power between 1868 and 1945 can be divided into three main periods; bureaucratic absolutism from 1868 to 1900, limited pluralism from 1900 to 1936 and almost total (civilian and military) bureaucratic control from 1936 to 1945, ‘the crowning paradox is that despite such pendulum shifts, the bureaucracy continued to enjoy the highest status and the most powerful place in the formation of public policy, a place it continues to enjoy today’ [35]. Although bureaucratic power was a constant feature of the Japanese state from the Meiji period, however, with the growth of the economy in the early twentieth century, the resources available to it, as well as the scope of its activities, expanded enormously. The size of the bureaucracy grew rapidly after the Russo-Japanese war along with urban/industrial growth, from 52 200 government officers in 1907 to 308 200 in 1920 [36]. Central government spending tripled in the decade before the Russo–Japanese war to 289 million yen in 1903, and doubled again during the two years of war, then remained at the level of about 600 million yen until 1913 [37]. The greatly expanded realm of state activity in developing its new colonies, aiding industrial capital formation, and especially military expansion which consistently consumed about half the budget, required a larger and more activist bureaucracy. Although it is true that the oligarchs had ruled Japan through the bureaucracy during the Meiji period, thus gradually increasing its status, it is fair to say that it was during the Taisho period that the bureaucracy attained its status as an independent and powerful player in the Japanese political economy. Ultimately the status and power of the bureaucracy derived from their position as loyal servants of the emperor, and their claim to represent the national interest more faithfully than the fractious political parties in the Diet.

As Eisenstadt explains in his description of the central role of the emperor in the Japanese political system, the concept of the emperor as embodying a national community which encompassed all social and political arenas

was closely related to the weakness of any autonomous public space and civil society. The processes of economic development, urbanization, and education gave rise of course to kernels of a new modern civil society – various associations, academic institutions, journalistic activities, and the like. But these kernels were not allowed to develop into a fully fledged civil society with a wide-ranging autonomous public space and autonomous access to the political center. Public space and discourse were monopolized by the
government and the bureaucracy as representatives of the national community legitimized by the emperor.

He argues that the distrust of open politics as potentially subversive of the development of the ‘general will’ required the conflation of state and civil society [38]. As shown below, to a very great extent the creation of that ‘general will’ was the job of the Home Ministry, which carried out its task both with the batons of the police and with the social management activities of its local organizers. Both approaches were deleterious to the development of civil society in Japan.

From social mobilization to social management

During the Meiji period the project of national self-preservation in the face of expanding western power had served effectively to mobilize popular support, and nationalistic exhortations to the Japanese people to mobilize their energies and make sacrifices to protect national independence had been very effective. With success in the Russo-Japanese war those goals had been assured and mass mobilization of the people became a more difficult prospect as the national project shifted from national survival to imperial expansion. The end of the Russo-Japanese war thus ushered in a new phase of Japanese development and modernization and, as Harootunian argues, the Japanese ruling elite was keenly aware of this ending of the Meiji project and the beginning of a new phase of development during the first decades of the twentieth century. Mobilizing the people for the next stage of national development became a central concern of Japanese policy-makers [39].

Pyle, in his seminal work on Japanese government efforts to use nationalistic social organizing to counter the social problems created by industrialism and imperialism, contends that central government bureaucrats saw Japan as embarking on an economic war in which the state had to invest in industrial growth and education in order to develop the resources to support the Empire. The people thus had to pay higher taxes and work harder while consuming less in order to contribute to national strength [40]. The primary goal of the Japanese state at this time was not individual or even collective welfare, but national strength. The problem, of course, is that that strategy inevitably had costs, particularly noticeable among which were the increased burdens on the people. As Yazaki argues, ‘The benefits accruing from public projects have to be weighed against the involuntary commitment to near-poverty on the part of most citizens in support of national policies of industrialization, expanded overseas trade, colonization and militarization’ [41]. A major problem faced by the Japanese state during the Taisho period was that increasing numbers of Japanese questioned this ordering of priorities, as demonstrated by the increasing social conflict and opposition movements generated by the strategy of rapid industrial, military and imperial growth. It was these pressures that generated increasingly active strategies of social management during the Taisho period. Government officials argued that in order to compete with the wealthier and stronger Western powers Japan would have to rely on the greater unity of the Japanese people. Far from relying on some instinctive Japanese sense of nationalism, however, as Pyle has shown, central government bureaucrats were actively involved in fostering nationalism by
‘devising techniques to mobilize the material and spiritual resources of the population in order to cope with social problems and to provide support for Japanese imperialism’ [42].

The main instigator behind the development of social management practices was the Home Ministry, which was responsible for the highly centralized local government structure, supervision of national and local police forces, and a wide range of other administrative functions from election management and fire fighting to city planning. Its chief power base was its control over local administration, which it controlled through appointment of its own senior staff to prefectural governorships and other key positions in local governments throughout the country [43]. Within the Home Ministry the social developments since the Russo-Japanese war and, particularly, the spread of socialistic ideas and labour unions were a cause of grave concern. Worsening urban conditions, such as increasing poverty and growing disparities of income, documented in the Home Ministry’s Bureau of Local Affairs survey of poor households in 1911 and the Tokyo Bureau of Social Affairs survey of 1920, and the evident popular discontent expressed by the Rice Riots of 1918 and other mass demonstrations, called for action. The Home Ministry response had two apparently contradictory faces.

On the one hand the Ministry suppressed political opposition with its Higher Police and Special Higher Police who were brutally effective in their repression of socialist and communist organizing, labour unions, and opposition political organizing more generally, attempting to ensure the stability of the state through systematic elimination of organizations that challenged the status quo. On the other hand, officials of the Ministry’s Bureau of Local Affairs attempted to develop social policies that would alleviate the sources of discontent by instituting social welfare programmes, by providing better housing and urban environments through city planning, and by organizing local communities in self-help associations. These divergent strategies shared the goal of reinforcing the strength of the state by ensuring social stability.

It is important, therefore, to recognize the range of views within the bureaucracy at this time. Garon argues that while most historians tend to dismiss Japan’s inter-war bureaucracy as primarily conservative opponents of the liberal tendencies of Taisho democracy, in fact there was a great deal of diversity within the bureaucracy, and the initiative behind many of the most important progressive reforms came not so much from the bourgeois parties – and certainly not from the weak social democratic movement – but rather from activist cliques of higher civil servants . . . Whereas the ‘economic bureaucrats’ of other ministries worked primarily to further industrial unrest development, the ‘social bureaucrats’ of the Home Ministry sought to reduce the sources of social unrest that arose from unrestrained economic relations and inadequate living and working conditions [44].

Among the élite stream of top-level bureaucrats there were a considerable number who advocated progressive policies as a pragmatic response to emerging social problems. Many of the city planners working within the Taisho period Home Ministry argued that city planning could improve urban housing and working conditions as shown below, and should be counted among these progressive social bureaucrats.

Early Home Ministry campaigns, such as the Local Improvement Movement, were carried out in rural areas to recreate traditional community values of mutual support and assistance and prevent the decline of village society. Agricultural co-operatives, community credit societies, youth associations and reservist associations were all enlisted in the job of organizing
self-help and mutual support groups. Designed in part to further integrate local administration with central government, the movement included efforts to step up the amalgamation of hamlets into larger administrative towns and villages, the mergers of Shinto shrines and their integration into the national administrative machinery, and the promotion of grass roots organizations in support of thrift, diligence and the payment of taxes. The Home Ministry successfully incorporated many existing communal groups, such as agricultural co-operatives, young men’s and women’s organizations and military reserve associations into national, hierarchical organizations in order to develop effective direct links to local areas throughout the country [45].

Although the Local Improvement Movement had been primarily directed towards rural areas, both because that was where the majority of the population lived, and because the villages were seen as the most stable repositories of traditional values and thus more susceptible to the government’s messages, it provided the model for later efforts at social management by the Home Ministry in urban areas. In the 1920s these included a variety of social policy initiatives, including the district commissioner (homen iin) system, where local ‘people of virtue’ were selected as unpaid intermediaries between the poor and public and private social services. This initiative was a modified import from the social policy of Bismarckian Germany, in that it was consciously modelled on the Elberfeld system of charity organized by local community groups [46]. The district commissioner system was designed to reduce the burdens on public poor relief by organizing local volunteers to provide advice and encourage mutual support, and had been disseminated throughout the country by the early 1930s.

One goal of the commissioner system was to revive the neighbourhood responsibility system of pre-modern Japan, in which rural villages and urban neighbourhoods had shared responsibility for payment of taxes, maintenance of public order and prevention of fires, and the maintenance of local public infrastructure such as roads and wells. To a great extent it was successful in mobilizing the urban middle classes in support of the social policy goals of neighbourhood mutual support and encouraging local charitable support groups to bear a large part of the burden of funding poor relief. According to Garon,

Most urban commissioners appear to have been the owners of small stores or workshops, with a smattering of doctors, priests, and professional social workers. These middle-class elements became further integrated into the state apparatus during the 1920s. Many district commissioners concurrently headed neighborhood sanitation associations and youth associations, served in ward assemblies, or functioned as ‘moral suasion commissioners’ in the government’s ongoing drives to encourage household savings, promote loyalty to the emperor and cultivate good morals.

The sanitary and youth associations, and others including neighbourhood shopkeepers’ associations (shotenkai), shrine parish associations, parent teacher associations, army reserve and veterans groups, served as the breeding ground for the emergence during the first decades of the century of a very broadly disseminated network of local neighbourhood associations (chokai or chonaikai) led primarily by the old urban middle class [47].

There is some disagreement about the degree to which the neighbourhood associations were the direct product of government social engineering. Smith contends that in Tokyo they were created from below, resulting primarily from the efforts of local merchants and reflect the enduring traditions of Edo period neighbourhood (cho) organizations:
Wholly spontaneous organizations at the cho level, the chonaikai rose in number from a mere 39 in 1897 to 452 on the eve of the Kanto earthquake, by which time about half the city was organized (the other half following quickly in the decade after the earthquake)... the chonaikai were essentially a means of sustaining local community solidarity in the face of rapid population turnover [48].

Dore, on the other hand, suggests that while the old Edo neighbourhood organizations had virtually disappeared during the upheavals of the Meiji period as new local government organizations took their place, they were increasingly revived after the turn of the century ‘as local governments saw advantage in having small local organizations to co-operate in public health programmes’ [49]. The main activities of the chonaikai were to organize local garbage collection points and recycling campaigns, sanitation and insecticide campaigns, street cleaning, installation and maintenance of streetlights, and organizing night watches against fire and crime. One thing that all agree on is that chonaikai were dominated by the old urban middle class, land owners and small business proprietors, and that their main function was to carry information and directives down from central and local government to the people, and seldom functioned in the reverse direction, to carry requests or protests towards those in authority. In the pre-war period, the chonaikai were thus in many regards less a part of civil society than they were the lowest-level auxiliary bodies of local administrations.

During the 1930s the chonaikai were gradually extended throughout the country and transformed into an effective link from central government ministries reaching into every community and virtually every home in the country, providing an impressive means of social control. In 1940 the Home Ministry made them compulsory for the whole country and legally incorporated them into the local government system, giving them responsibility for civil defence, rationing and the promotion of savings associations. They were also used by the ministry’s thought police as a way of gathering information on deviant behaviour. As Dore notes, the system was extremely effective at exerting pressure on families and individuals and their coercive aspects were exploited to the full during wartime [50]. With the successful dissemination of the chonaikai throughout the country during the 1920s and 1930s the Home Ministry was able to reproduce to a remarkable degree the Tokugawa period system of vertical hierarchical connections reaching from the top levels of government into virtually every household in the nation. This strengthening of traditional neighbourhood social ties was achieved at the same time that most independent civic organizations at the broader national or municipal level were being suppressed or co-opted. The political space available to civil society was thus squeezed from above by repression of unauthorised organizations and from below by the incorporation of neighbourhood organizations into the government system.

In hindsight it is difficult not to see the activities of the Home Ministry in the light of the fact that the chonaikai and other community organizations were absorbed in the late 1930s into the system of totalitarian control and mobilization of the country for war. From that perspective the social bureaucrats were little more than the advance agents of the totalitarian regime. It should neither be assumed that the emerging social management practices were unwelcome, however, nor that the primary goal of the social bureaucrats was the imposition of totalitarian control. In fact, as Garon argues, many of the government’s efforts at social management, even the most intrusive, relied on a great deal of voluntary participation by Japanese citizens and interest groups, particularly by the middle classes. Without minimizing the obvious negative aspects of Japanese social management in the inter-war period, it is
possible to interpret the attempts to organize local community self-responsibility as a reasonable approach to solving the urban social problems that were emerging in Japanese cities. As Hastings has shown in her detailed study of Home Ministry programmes in poor areas of Tokyo, many of the activities of the social bureaucrats at the local level, such as employment exchanges, hostels for single men and cheap housing for workers, were clearly of benefit to local communities [51].

The *chonaikai* are, however, clearly part of the answer to the question of why the middle class was not more active in lobbying for better city planning. The fact is, they were very active at the local level, co-opted into government-directed local activities such as providing most of the local social welfare and community services as well as garbage collection and street cleaning, and providing their own street lighting. This relieved local governments of the need to provide a range of costly local services, as well as providing a direct conduit for central government information and directives to reach every neighbourhood and ultimately every family in the country.

The *chonaikai* were just one example of such social management practices in the pre-war period, although one particularly pertinent to city planning. Garon details a wide range of programmes aimed at promoting savings, neighbourhood mutual support, encouraging thrift and good household management, promoting a model of the ideal woman as a good wife and wise mother, and the promotion of Shinto as the established state religion while attempting systematically to eliminate the fast spreading ‘new religions’ [52]. We cannot know what direction Japanese social management might have taken if Japan had not been simultaneously slipping towards war and the militarism of the 1930s. The important point here is that all of these campaigns served to increase the presence of government in the everyday lives of ordinary people, and served to narrow the space available for independent conceptions of the public good, or independent activities supporting public goals. Civil society had virtually ceased to exist in Japan by the middle of the 1930s.

**The development of city planning**

The Taisho Democracy period was an important watershed in the development of Japanese city planning. The city planning system developed at this time has had important long-term effects on city planning in Japan. Not only was the 1919 city planning system the first nationally applicable city planning law, it was in effect for almost 50 years until the major revisions in 1968, thus providing the framework for city planning during the post-war years of rapid economic growth and urbanization. Further, the approach taken in 1919 has had important ramifications until the present, with one of the main thrusts of planning reforms during the 1990s being to decentralize the highly centralized planning system set up in 1919.

The development of the new city planning system was closely associated with the attempts by reformist bureaucrats within the Taisho period Home Ministry to develop social policies to alleviate the urban social problems emerging during the first decades of the new century. The new social policies, and the new city planning policies developed from the end of the First World War and the early 1920s, were both initiated by the reformer Goto Shimpei, an aristocrat of exceptional administrative talent who had played a key role in reorganizing the
Japanese colonial administration of Taiwan as top civilian administrator [53]. In 1917 then Home Minister Goto set up a Relief Section within the Local Affairs Bureau to co-ordinate efforts to alleviate poverty and unemployment. That small Relief Section was later expanded into a Social Affairs Bureau in 1920 which dealt with unemployment, poor relief, veteran’s assistance and children’s welfare. It is that bureau which led many of the social management efforts discussed above. Also in 1917 Goto set up the Urban Study Group (Toshi Kenkyu Kai) within the Local Affairs Bureau to study urban planning issues, with Ikeda Hiroshi as Director. The study group was chaired by Goto himself until his death in 1929. The group included young bureaucrats from the Home Ministry, several professors from the University of Tokyo, a Diet member, and a newspaper journalist [54]. This was a highly influential group, which apart from researching and lobbying for the improvement of planning legislation, also published the journal Urban Review (Toshi Koron) as a forum for enlightened thinking about urban policy.

In May of 1918 Goto established the City Planning Bureau (Toshi Keikaku Ka) within the Home Ministry, with Ikeda Hiroshi as chief. In the same month the City Planning Research Committee (Toshi Keikaku Chosakai) was established to begin drafting a new city planning law. That committee was composed almost entirely of central government officers, including several professors from the University of Tokyo departments of Law, Medicine, Civil Engineering and Architecture [55]. In the twelve months from July 1918, Ikeda drafted the City Planning Law (Toshi Keikaku Ho). At the same time the Urban Buildings Law (Shigaichi Kenchikubutsu Ho) was drafted by Sano Toshikata, a professor of Architecture at the University of Tokyo, Uchida Shozo, another professor of Architecture at the University of Tokyo who later became a famous president of the university, and Kasahara Toshiro, a Home Ministry officer and former student of Sano and Uchida. Kasahara later wrote one of the first Japanese textbooks on city planning and building regulations that was published in the early 1930s.

The system as envisaged drew from the best practice of several European planning systems. The draft city planning law included the main provisions of the earlier Tokyo City Improvement Ordinance (Tokyo Shiku Kaisei Jorei) (TCIO) for designating and building public facilities such as roads, a zoning system based on the German technique as used in Frankfurt, and an urban version of the Land Readjustment system, which had previously only been designed for agricultural land improvement. It also included several financial measures including a tax on the increase in land values that resulted from city planning projects (a betterment tax), a system of financial support by central government of designated city planning projects of not less than one-third and not more than two-thirds of the total project costs, and a system of land expropriation modelled on that used so effectively by Haussmann in Paris. Usually literally translated from the Japanese (chokashuyo) as ‘excess expropriation’, this system allowed expropriation of an area significantly wider than a planned new road so that profits from the sale of the valuable new street fronting plots could be used to pay the costs of the project. The City Planning Law was complemented by an Urban Buildings Law that detailed the building regulations, including permissible building uses, heights and lot coverages for the use zones of the zoning system. The latter law also included a building line regulation system modelled after the German Bebauungsplan system. The proposed laws encountered strong opposition from the Finance Ministry, however, which stubbornly opposed central government financial support for city planning, arguing that urban improve-
ment was not an important responsibility of central government, such as education, national
defence or transportation and communications systems. As a result of Finance Ministry
pressure, several key provisions of the law including articles relating to central government
financial support for planning projects had to be deleted before the law could be passed [56].

While the intent of many of those involved in creating the new planning system was
undoubtedly to create better means of city planning and alleviate emerging urban prob-
lems, however, the new laws suffered from the prevailing tendency towards increased
bureaucratic and central government power, which was particularly pronounced in the pre-
war Home Ministry. In the long run, the centralization of planning power effected by the
1919 law was probably the most influential feature of the 1919 legislation. Prior to 1919
local governments could, if they wished, prepare their own plans and implement them
because there was no national law on city planning. In fact, several local governments had
developed active city planning programmes, some of which were more sophisticated than
the national projects being carried out in Tokyo. An excellent example is Osaka which,
under the inspired leadership of its deputy mayor Seki Hajime, had established an
ambitious urban improvement programme and had even drafted its own proposal for a
new city planning law. The most distinctive features of the Osaka approach championed by
Seki were that the first priority of city planning should be the creation of a good urban
living environment, and that the main source of finance for urban improvement should be a
new tax on increases in urban land value [57]. These approaches were rejected by the
Home Ministry, however, and a much more restrictive approach to city planning was
instituted. After 1919 all ‘public facilities’ (toshi shisetsu), including city planning roads,
zoning plans, land readjustment projects etc., had to be approved by the Home Ministry.
The legal process for ‘City Planning Designation’ (Toshi Keikaku Kettei) that had been
developed to allow direct Home Ministry control over the implementation (by the Tokyo
municipal government) of the TCIO, by its inclusion in the 1919 City Planning Law at one
stroke gave central government sweeping powers of detailed planning control over the
whole country [58].

It is hard to overstate the eventual impact of this centralization of planning authority on city
planning practice in Japan. One important example is the fact that one zoning code became
applicable to all urban areas throughout the country, and local governments had no legal
authority to alter the national standards or create new types of land use zones that were more
appropriate to their local conditions. As Ishida points out ‘Throwing a single standard at
diversified situations invariably leads to the creation of the lowest common denominator in
any city’ [59]. This was certainly the case in Japan, where haphazard sprawl development has
created serious urban environmental problems throughout the post-war period [60]. Only
with the substantial revisions to the City Planning Law passed in June of 2000 did local
governments finally gain the legal authority to create their own legally enforceable local
ordinances to regulate the use and development of land to standards different than those
specified in national law. There is no doubt that the limited legal powers of local governments
to create their own planning approaches has been a major factor in Japan’s poor record of land
development and land use control.
The long-term impacts of Taisho period planning

There are three interrelated aspects of the development of city planning in the Taisho period that proved key to the development of Japanese city planning practice in the twentieth century: The first is that the possibility of a planning system that could harness the creativity and energy of civil society was effectively eliminated. While the early Taisho period saw the emergence of a wide-ranging civil society-based debate on urban issues, with a variety of different conceptions of the role of city planning, municipal activity and state regulation, and a proliferation of independent city planning initiatives in cities such as Kobe, Kyoto, Yokohama and Osaka, by the late 1920s city planning was a thoroughly central government activity, with Home Ministry permission required for every plan, zoning designation, and road project throughout the country. At the risk of over-generalization, in the other developed countries city planning originated in the activities of broad based and shifting alliances of housing activists, hygienic reformers, professional associations, journalists, charitable housing providers, philanthropic industrialists, property developers and local governments. That is to say, the values and ideals of the international city planning movement were largely generated from within the institutions of civil society, not within the central state, which tended to follow rather than lead. To an extraordinary degree early planning developments in Japan, however, were the work of a small group of elite bureaucrats within the Home Ministry, a fact that has continued to shape attitudes towards city planning to the present.

The second is the extreme centralization of political power and planning authority which resulted in the top-down imposition of plans and regulations, weak local governments and the dominance of national over local goals and priorities. Ishida [61] has argued that one of the most serious problems of the 1919 system central government bureaucrats significantly extended their powers over local city planning efforts, which having been ad hoc and unregulated, had been outside the control of central government. With the passage of the 1919 law, while greater legal powers for city planning became available, they were accompanied by closer control by the bureaucrats in Tokyo. Further, the national legislation allowed no variation in use zones or building regulations between areas with quite different urban patterns and urban problems, and suffered from the attempt to impose a solution to Tokyo’s problems on the whole country.

Centralization of planning power during the Taisho period had wide ranging consequences, some positive and some negative for the development of city planning. Centralization allowed Japan to effectively play its game of catch up with the most advanced western nations. In particular, the active tradition of learning from the example of western countries meant that very quickly a high level of technical expertise in plan making and legislation drafting were concentrated in the City Planning Department of the Home Ministry. National projects such as the rebuilding of Tokyo-Yokohama after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, the building of the national railway system, or the build-up of military and industrial power for example, were pushed forward with great speed. At
the same time, however, centralization had real drawbacks. In particular, the requirement that all plans and budgets be approved by the central ministry prevented the development of planning expertise at the local level and inhibited the development of alternative approaches to planning issues. It also allowed the central government to prioritize its economic and military development strategies, while largely ignoring the need for planning and investment in public goods that would contribute to urban quality of life. Local governments, which might have been more responsive to such needs simply had no legal powers or finances to apply higher planning standards.

As the central state grew stronger during the Taisho period, with greater resources deriving from economic growth and increasing bureaucrative control, the autonomy of local governments grew ever weaker, to the point where they were operated essentially as local branch offices of the central ministries. The central government bureaucracy held a deep-seated distrust of local government as concerned primarily with local, not national interests and, as a consequence, deliberately kept local governments weak. The city planning system developed during the Taisho period under Home Ministry leadership was thus highly top-down, with new planning regulations imposed entirely from the top and with no variation amongst different cities. In Japan there was little of the outpouring of small-scale experimentation and local innovation seen in many western countries. This system stands in great contrast to the spread of zoning in the US during the 1920s, for example, where once the legal precedent had been established, local communities across the country voluntarily passed their own zoning bylaws, with wide variations in types of zones designated, reflecting differing local priorities.

A third important legacy of the Taisho era is the weak tradition of popular support for and expectations of city planning which is, in part, a result of Japan’s weak civil society and in part a result of the high degree of centralization of the planning system. Until the 1990s there has been very little popular support for or expectations of city planning. While it seems possible that in time the developing civil society of the early Taisho period might have generated a broader constituency in support of city planning, that avenue was effectively closed off by the elimination of civil society itself in the inter-war period, and by the nationalization of all city planning activity by the Home Ministry. After 1919 local governments had precious little independence in their planning activities, and even cities with their own city planning traditions were gradually brought under the effective control of central government. This was critical because in Japan, as elsewhere, the development of stronger environmental controls was opposed by vested interests as well as by inertia, and the political obstacles to effective planning were often more substantial than the technical ones. In Britain, for example, only a long process of public campaigns was able to overcome the resistance of large land owners to stricter planning regulation and establish the principle that public regulation of urban development was important to protect the public interest [62]. In Japan such an evolution never happened, and the rights associated with land ownership have remained extremely strong, posing a powerful obstacle to efforts to improve urban environments.

It seems clear that the early imposition of a fully developed planning system from above inhibited the development of significant local political support for planning, as lobbying for better or different approaches to city planning was neither necessary nor likely to have much influence. The lack of broader public support for planning left planning advocates in
the Home Ministry and local governments weak. The élite group of Home Ministry technocrats who argued for improved city planning legislation had little outside support for their proposals, and ran into opposition both within the government, and later in implementation whenever planning proposals ran counter to local interests. Without a broad base of organizational support in local governments, or the plethora of citizens groups and professional organizations that kept pushing environmental issues onto the public agenda in the West, it was easy for the Finance Ministry to block the financial measures that might have given substance to the 1919 city planning system. Even measures that required little direct government financial outlay, such as improved regulation of land uses, or stricter requirements for land and building developers to respect planned road networks, were difficult to implement because they encountered opposition by vested interests, but little support from potential beneficiaries. In many western countries the establishment of city planning was the result of long campaigns by planning advocates against the established interests of property owners. While after the turn of the century there appeared the beginnings of a civil society-based planning movement in Japan, by the end of the 1920s it had disappeared, central government had taken control of city planning and active social mobilization campaigns had been launched to incorporate urban neighbourhood associations into providing essential local services.

The lack of an effective planning movement meant that there was little public education about the benefits of planning compared to contemporary developments in the West. There was little of the popularization of planning ideas and values which formed such an important foundation for the development of more interventionist planning regimes in western countries. Instead, effective government campaigns mobilised neighbourhood associations and promoted the idea that local people should be responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of local facilities, waste sorting and removal, local policing and even the support of the poor. The idea that local governments should be responsible for a range of public goods, such as the provision of sewerage, sidewalks and local roads, local parks or playlots, or facilities such as child care centres and libraries, was very slow to take root even in post-war Japan, and still today there is little expectation that a quality urban living environment should be a responsibility of local government.

While it would be incorrect to suggest that the developments during the Taisho period described here can fully explain the subsequent development of urban planning and urbanization in Japan, they do provide important insights into some of their puzzling features, such as extremely weak land development controls and the belated and inadequate provision of basic public goods, such as sewers, pavements and parks. Certainly, it is hard to understand the twentieth century development of Japanese urban planning and Japanese cities without first understanding the social and economic context of its beginnings in the Taisho period, the fragile and short-lived civil society of pre-war Japan, the extent of government centralization and the weak basis of public support for and understanding of urban planning in Japan. Each of these features of Japanese urbanization and planning were first strongly established during the Taisho period.
Notes and references


6. A. Sutcliffe, *ibid.*


11. The Manchurian Incident refers to the unauthorised sabotage of a railway in northern China by Japanese army officers in September 1931. This provocation ultimately led to the occupation of Manchuria and war with China as had been hoped by the provocateurs. For a thorough discussion of


25. Ishida has written extensively on Mori’s contributions to Japanese urban planning thought, see Y. Ishida, Ougai Mori and Tokyo’s Building Ordinance, in H. Ishizuka and Y. Ishida (eds) *Tokyo:...
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27. The Japanese Social Policy Association was modelled after the German Verein für Sozialpolitik, founded by the German historical economists in 1872 to advocate state social welfare legislation to ease class conflict.
32. J. E. Hanes, op. cit. [28].
34. T. Yazaki, op. cit. [14], p. 334.
40. K. B. Pyle, op. cit. [37].
41. T. Yazaki, op. cit. [14], p. 415.
42. K. B. Pyle, op. cit. [37], p. 53.
44. S. Garon, op. cit. [19], pp. 73–4.
47. S. Garon, op. cit. [17], pp. 53–4.


52. S. Garon, *op. cit.* [17].


54. It is worth noting that while academics might be a part of civil society in some countries, employees of Japanese national universities were and are national civil servants, governed by civil service code. This is particularly true of the University of Tokyo, which is both the principal training ground of national civil servants, and the main supplier of academic expertise for government consultative committees. On the establishment of the 1919 system, see J. Okata, Paradigm Change in the Japanese Urban Planning Profession: the formation of the Japanese housing policy and its implication to the planning [Kyu Hou Seisakuki no okeru Juutaku Seisaku to toshi keikaku no kankei ni kansuru ikkousaku: Nihonteki toshii keikaku paradaimu no keisei ni kansuru kenkyuu]. *Collected Papers of the Japanese City Planning Association* [Nihon Toshi Keikaku Gakkai Ronbun Shu] 21 (1986) 103–8. A. Koshizawa, *City Planning of Tokyo*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991, p. 14.

55. J. Okata, *ibid.*

56. A. Koshizawa, *op. cit.* [54], p. 15.

57. J. E. Hanes, *op. cit.* [28].

58. Y. Ishida, *op. cit.* [12].

59. *Ibid.* p. 6

