

Imagining and Imagineering Tokyo

– Asking with and to the Olympic Games in Tokyo 2016

Mototaka MORI (Waseda University)
(e-mail: wienmoto@waseda.ac.jp)

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government and its Governor *Shintaro Ishihara* is officially inviting the Olympic Games 2016 to Tokyo. How should we interpret this project? The Governor *Ishihara* has appeared on the stage of Tokyo typically as populist like some of the similar kind of politicians in Europe at the beginning of the 21st Century¹. He has been always nationalistic and xenophobic. In his first term of office not only China and Korea but also the USA and the United Nations criticized his political words and deeds. However, he got three Million votes in the gubernatorial election of 2003.

In the last half of his second term of office he proposed to invite the Olympic Games to Tokyo. Tokyo has held the 18th Olympic Games in 1964. That was a symbol of the industrialized modern Japan. Therefore, the most crucial issue at the gubernatorial election 2007 was whether Tokyo should stand as a candidate for the host city of the Olympic Games in 2016 again or not. However, *Ishihara* got win very easily.

The Governor *Ishihara* has already appointed one of the most famous architects *Tadao Ando* as general director for this project. We want to know how he can reorganize and reconstruct the city of Tokyo thorough this project of the new Olympic Games Tokyo 2016.

I intend to describe this political and social process with some historical contexture and some empirical research data.

1. 'Empty Center' and Individual Sub-centers

In the beginning of 2008 I asked 624 persons who live in Tokyo by an internet questionnaires research². One of the questions was "How do you think about Tokyo?" Typically some responded that Tokyo was 'convenient', 'narrow', 'tight', stiff, and so on. Some responded that Tokyo had too many people, a very large population and a disordered scenery etc.

A very famous French philosopher *Roland Barthes* says his impression of the city of Tokyo. "For many reasons (historical, economic, religious, military), the West has understood this law only too well: all its cities are concentric; but also, in accord

¹ Mototaka MORI, "Neo-nationalism or palaeo-nationalism –Is Ishihara an indicator for the populism in Japan?", in: Hede Helfrich, Melanie Zillekens, Erich Hölter (eds.), *Culture and Development in Japan and Germany*, Daedalus/Munster, 2006, pp.93-112. Mototaka MORI, "Who votes Mr. Ishihara –Two Analytical Consideration on the Populism in Tokyo", in: Shigekazu Ksune, Yoninori Nishijima and Hidehiko Adachi (eds.), *Socio-Cultural Transformation in the 21st Century? –Risks and Challenges of Social Changes*, Kanazawa Electric Publishing Company 2007, pp.335-346.

² This questionnaire research "The Invitation of the Olympic Games 2016 and the Image of the Tokyo Metropolitan Governor" was designed by the seminar for 'Can we live together?' in the School of Culture, Media and Society (Sample: the 624 members registered as monitor in the internet research company *Macromill*). This outcome is downloadable from the next cite:

<http://www.f.waseda.jp/wienmoto/Japanese/Research/TokyoGorin20160801.pdf>

with the very movement of Western metaphysics, for which every centre is the site of truth, the centre of our cities is always *full*. (...) The city I am talking about (Tokyo) offers this precious paradox: it does possess a centre, but this center is empty"³.

Indeed, the center of Tokyo has been empty so long, because there has been only the imperial palace in this center. Of course, it might be a spiritual center. So, none could enter there. However, this core had very artificially constructed and it had been moved from Kyoto to there suddenly just with the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

However, this center of Tokyo has been existing for a very long time. For instance, a socialist Governor *Ryoukichi Minobe* (his office term: 1967-1979) as well as a very technocratic Governor *Shuichi Suzuki* (1978-1995) would not reconstruct the center of Tokyo. This center may have been sealed so long!

Very interestingly, the Governor *Suzuki* intended to develop lots of 'sub-centers' with their individual characters in the early 1990s during his reign. According to his idea seven sub-centers (Ikebukuro, Shinjuku, Shibuya, Osaki, Kinshicho-Kameido, Ueno-Asakusa and the Waterfront new sub-center) are ordered around the empty center.

In his long office period of twelve years, *Suzuki* could firstly complete the 'Shinjuku new sub-center' in the early 1990s. He moved the City Hall from Yurakucho near the Tokyo Main Station to Shinjuku. This project had a very symbolic meaning for constructing other sub-centers. At the same time, that big City Hall building was a symbol of a boom in the beginning of 1990s.

It was very natural that the Governor *Suzuki* was ambitious to develop the next center, namely 'the water front sub-center'. He wanted to complete this blue print with the World Cities Exposition 1996. He was one of the most typical high-class bureaucrats in Japan. He had completed perfectly the Olympic Games 1964 Tokyo as vice Governor of Tokyo. Just after that he had completed the Exposition 1972 Osaka as secretary general. Therefore, this water front developing project and the World Cities Exposition 1996 should have been a very successful finale of his glory career. He was born in 1910.

However, it was very unhappy for him that this big project itself had caused a sudden and steep rise in particularly land prices not only in Tokyo but also everywhere in Japan in the beginning of 1990s.

2. A Typical Instance of the Grassroots Democracy in Japan?

In the mid of 1990s this idea of land developing had to be canceled. In the gubernatorial election 1996 *Yukio Aoshima* came forward as a candidate to pledge the public to cancel the World Cities Exposition 1996. He got 1.7 Million votes and he had the courage to cancel this total project. This gubernatorial election was a typical instance of the grassroots democracy since the 1980's in Japan⁴. However, he could not find any alternative. In the last half of 1990's in Japan, under a very heavy

³ Roland Balthes, *Empire of Signs*, New York 1982 (originally published in 1970), p.30.

⁴ Mototaka Mori, "Basidemokratie versus traditionelle Lokalpoliti –Das Beispiel der Bürgerinitiative in der Stadt Zushi", in: Gisela Trommsdorff, Hans-Joachim Kornad (Hrsg.), *Gesellschaftliche und individuelle Entwicklung in Japan und Deutschland*, Universitätsverlag Konstanz, S.195-211.

economic depression, lots of voters disappointed of him. Probably lots of them had expected for another way. He could not answer to this expectation properly. The feeling of the mass is always fickle. His very solitary fighting with the City Council and the voter's disappointment had become a very sad isolation.

The Governor *Suzuki* had wanted to develop a new sub-center as waterfront sub-centre. The Governor *Aoshima* canceled to do it. Therefore, today we can see only an artificially distorted cityscape in this waterfront area. We have to call this outcome an emptiness of the waterfront sub-center.

In the gubernatorial election 1999 *Shintaro Ishihara* was elected. He was a novelist, a sportsman, and a Diet member. He is well-known as a very strong nationalist. In the disaster's prevention training in 2000 he marched the armored cars thorough the Ginza Street. In spite of his very radical deed and his very xenophobic rhetoric he got 3 Million votes in the gubernatorial election 2003. I assume, we could observe a very strong tendency of the grassroots democracy in the 1980's, however, a very strong expectation for the political leadership have appeared since the great depression in the 1990's.

If you see the figure 1, each age group is very closely related to the preference of 'Aoshima' or that of 'Ishihara'.⁵ If you see the Contra-Aoshima and Pro-Ishihara group, we can understand that the older generation tended to choose *Ishihara*. The Pro-Aoshima and Contra-Ishihara group shows us that the baby-boomer generation, who were 40-49 years old in 1999, tended to choose *Aoshima* in the gubernatorial election 1995. In 1995 this generation had expected for the Governor *Aoshima* to cancel the World Cities Exposition etc. This generation is corresponds to the '68-generation' in Germany. This counterpart in Japan had learned some concepts of the democracy with textbooks and its practice with their students' movements in the late 1960's.

The older generation of the Contra-Aoshima and Pro-Ishihara group is the same generation as the Governor *Ishihara*. This generation likes *Ishihara* with their own nostalgia for their old good time.

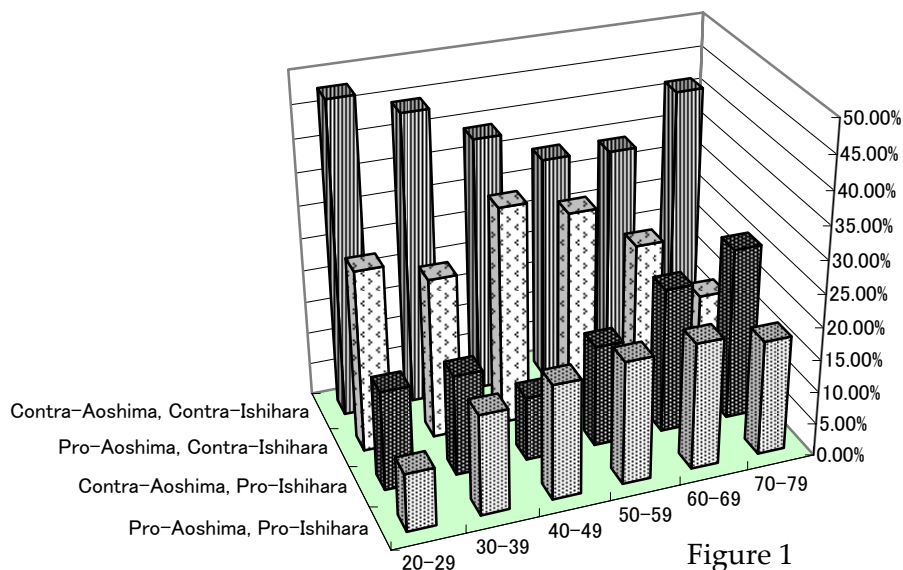


Figure 1

3. Imagineering the next Tokyo

The Governor *Ishihara* and the Tokyo City Government are very eagerly inviting the Olympic Games 2016 to Tokyo. In spite of *Ishihara's* very strong antagonism against China, he visited Beijing officially during the Olympic Games Beijing in order to promote the Olympic Game 2016 in Tokyo. You see, he also has been always a politician.

So, he would like to design a new Tokyo with this Olympic project. According to the mission statement of Tokyo 2016 Olympic Games Bid Committee, "The Olympic Games are the world's greatest sporting event. They foster mutual understanding in a spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play. (...) Hosting the Olympic Games in Tokyo will inspire and foster dreams in our future leaders — the youth of Japan, the youth of the world — and will contribute significantly to human advancement, global peace and prosperity. (...) All of the competition venues, (...) are located within an 8-kilometre radius of the Olympic Stadium, fulfilling the IOC suggestion of a compact Olympic Games in the heart of the bustling urban metropolis of Tokyo. Furthermore, there will be no need to acquire land for the construction of venues, and temporary structures will be used for facilities expected to have low post-Games utilization rates and existing facilities that must be restored to their original conditions. Such planning will reduce costs and limit environmental impact."⁶

The most important is: their promotion phrase for the International Olympic Committee is expressed only as a 'compact' and 'environmental' Olympic Games. However, what is 'compact'? How is 'environmental'? As above mentioned they say that they are going to accomplish most of projects within the 8 kilometer radius. If you know where this 8 kilometer radius is, you can understand this area.

They would like to re-reconstruct a center of then sub-center in the waterfront again. They would like to fill the emptiness of the sub-centre, namely the Waterfront sub-centre, with various facilities for the Olympic Games 2016.

Ishihara nominated one of the most famous architects *Tadao Ando* as director general for this project. However, we don't know any concrete images about the Olympic Games 2016 Tokyo still now.

4. Imaging the next Tokyo

So, I would like to finally and very briefly sketch the ordinary peoples' image of this Olympic plan. The crucial issue of the gubernatorial election 2007 was the pros and cons of the invitation of the Olympic Games 2016 to Tokyo. *Shiro Asano*, who was the ex-Governor of Miyagi prefecture, held up the objection to the invitation of the Olympic Games to Tokyo as his main election campaign. This situation was very similar to that of *Aoshima's* campaign in 1995. However, *Asano* could not defeat *Ishihara*. According to my research data, *Ishihara* got the 40.6 percent voters in this election. *Asano* got only the 16.3 percent. And only 50 percent of them were against the invitation of Olympic Games (Figure 2).

⁶ The website of Tokyo Metropolitan Government: <http://www.tokyo2016.or.jp/>

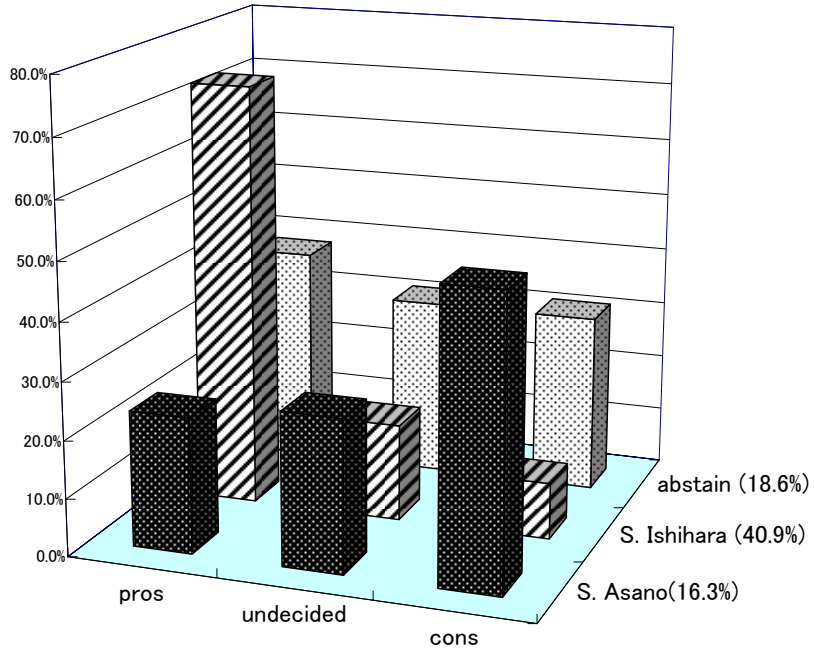


Figure 2

The Figure 3 and 4 show us some relations between the pros/cons of the invitation of the Olympic Games and the age groups.

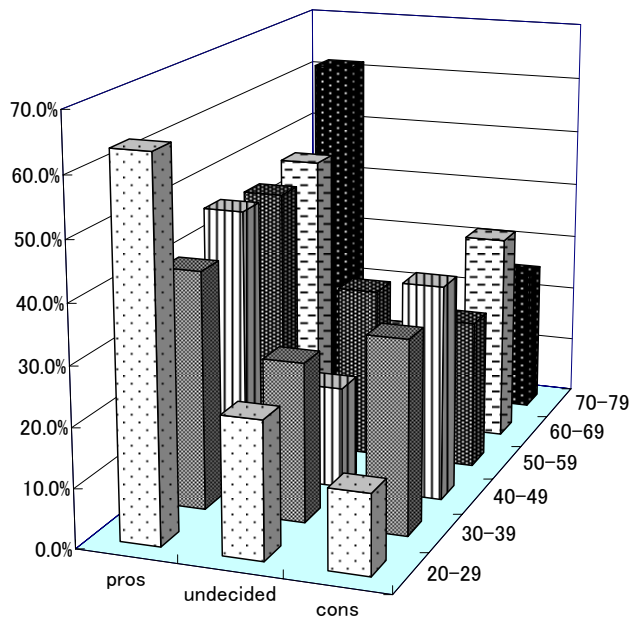


Figure 3 (male)

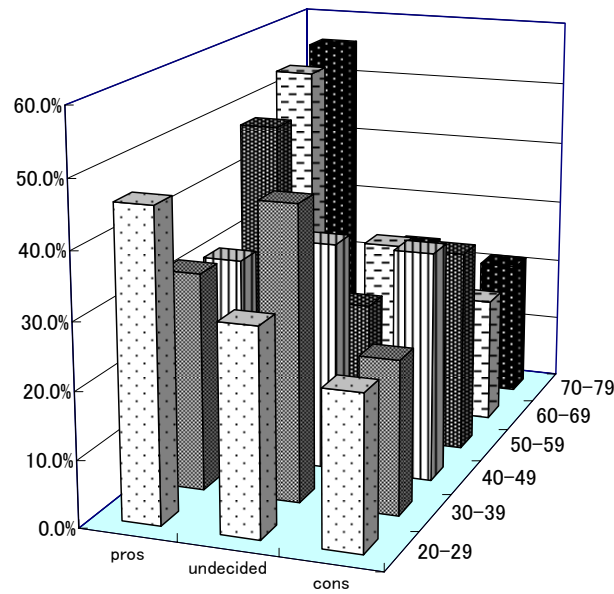


Figure 4 (female)

Very interestingly, according to my research data, the younger or the older (not the middle aged), the voters do agree with the invitation to Tokyo.

If you see the Figure 5, the old-fashioned grassroots democracy might have been over. In the gubernatorial election 2007 the 49 percent of the then Pro-*Aoshima*, who had cast their votes for *Aoshima* in 1995, are agree with inviting the Olympic Games 2016 to Tokyo.

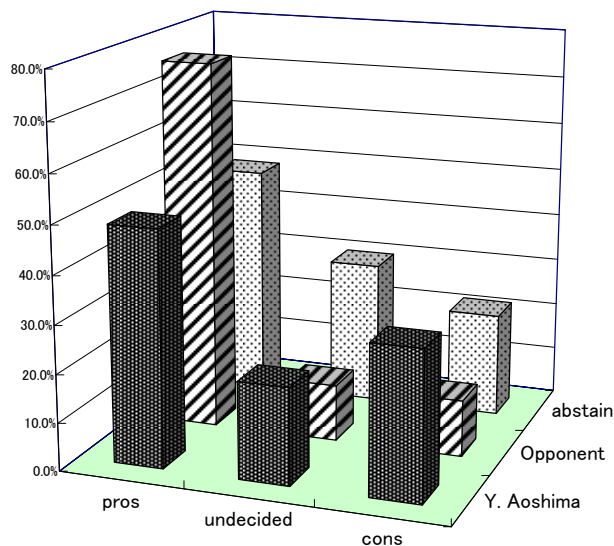
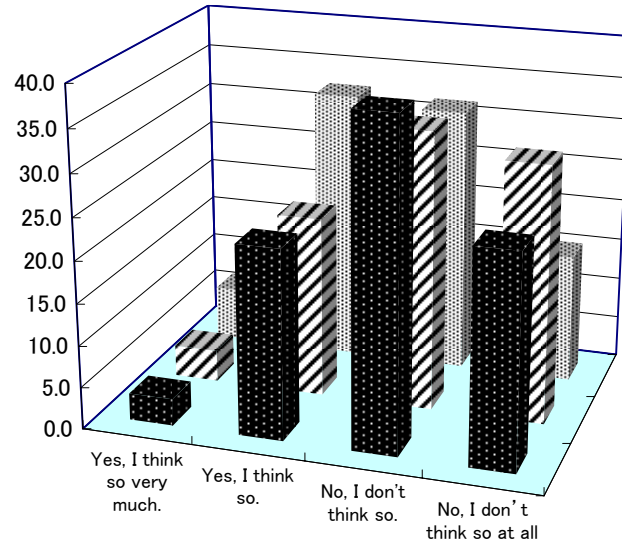


Figure 5

Lastly I asked them how they think about some typical opinions on this project

(see Figure 6). According to my research data, I assume, lots of the respondents don't realize this worldly famous architect as general director, they don't expect for the leadership by Governor *Ishihara*, and they don't know the main structure of this plan.



- We should expect for this project very much, because a worldly very famous architect areprojecting and designing it.
- ▨ We should expect for this project very much, because this project is being promoted by a very strong initiative of the Governor Ishihara.
- ▩ This project will produce a new axis for the mega-city Tokyo, because this project will be assuming the very compact venues' plan with using the existing facilities and transport network.

Figure 6

5. Some Problems to be observed

Certainly there are some discrepancies between the Governor, the worldly famous architect and the voters. The Governor and his architect want to very eagerly imagineer a next Tokyo by their big projects. Not few voters agree with the invitation itself, however, many of them don't know anything concrete of its project.

I assume that the leadership of the Governor *Ishihara* has become weak. In other words, particularly his strong image which has come from his very eccentric deed and rhetoric has become weak. Planning a city could not be completed by the so-called grassroots democracy. If only some geniuses for political leadership, planning, administration and architecture could do complete it with some kind of combination and harmony between them, one important element, namely the political leadership seems to become weaker and weaker.

Originally his populist appearance in 1999 has already been empty. Indeed, the Olympic Games 2016 will be able to automatically held as an event only thorough an administrative procedure. However, it will be difficult whether the 8 kilometer radius' sub-center can be filled with something individual.