

# Open-space districts in the city planning act of Manchukuo

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## **Abstract**

Manchukuo was a Japanese puppet state that existed in northeastern China before World War II. In Manchukuo, city planning was legislated through the Town and Country Planning Act, which was drafted based on the Japanese City Planning Act of 1919 but included 'open-space districts' (later 'open-space areas'), which did not exist in Japanese law at that time. Open-space districts were the first land-use regulations for open space in Japan and its colonies. The current Japanese City Planning Act of 1968 divides city planning areas into urbanisation promotion areas and urbanisation control areas. Many studies in Japan have observed that Japanese city planning techniques and methods were almost complete in the 1930s based on the similarity of the text of open-space areas and urbanisation promotion areas. This study examined the validity of this claim through a comparative analysis of open-space areas in the Manchukuo Town and Country Planning Act and urbanisation control areas in the Japanese City Planning Act of 1968. In terms of dealing with sprawl, open-space areas and urbanisation promotion areas have the same purpose; however, the former was a spatial blockade, while the latter was a land-use guideline based on the assumption that the area would be developed in a planned manner. The latter was also a new technology that compensated for the shortcomings of the former. This paper refutes the widespread claim that Japanese urban planning techniques and methods were largely perfected in the 1930s.

## **Keywords**

Manchukuo, Manchuria, colony, China, open space

## **How to cite**

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## INTRODUCTION

Manchukuo (Manshūkoku, Wèi-Mǎnzhōuguó) was a Japanese puppet state that existed in northeastern China before World War II. Japanese bureaucrats drafted the Manchukuo Town and Country Planning Act (Toyū keikakuhō) based on the Japanese City Planning Act (Toshi keikakuhō) and Urban Area Building Act (Sigaichi kenchikubutsuhō) and included open-space districts (Ryokuchiku) and open-space areas (Ryokuchi kuiki) that had not been mentioned in Japanese law. These open-space districts were the first land-use regulations for open space in Japan and its colonies, and urban planning in these regions was greatly influenced by the emphasis on green belts to control urban expansion in regional planning theory after the 1924 International Town Planning Conference in Amsterdam. Iinuma Kazumi's *The Theory of Regional Planning* (*Chihō keikaku ron*) was the first book to introduce regional planning theory in Japan. He wrote, 'Regional planning and open space are inseparable. Plans that do not take open space into account should not be included in regional planning'. In Japan, the Special City Planning Act of 1946 (Tokubetsu toshikeikakuhō) introduced open-space districts; however, these districts had already been institutionalised in Manchukuo 10 years earlier. The contemporary Japanese law did not contemplate the open-space district; hence, the colonial city planning orders have been considered advanced. The open-space district was introduced for the first time in the Japanese sphere of power with the Town and Country Planning Act in Manchukuo of 1936. Japanese academics generally recognise in that the legal system in Manchukuo realised the ideal earlier than in Japan.

Koshizawa Akira argued that Japanese colonial city planning laws and regulations 'had many more advanced provisions than Japanese law as a regulatory method to control the formation of urban areas'. Here, 'advanced provisions' refer to the open-space districts of the Manchukuo Town and Country Planning Act of 1936 and the open-space areas of the same act of 1942 as pointed out by Ishida Yorifusa. Ishida stated that the division system of urbanisation areas and open-space districts in the 1942 act was extremely similar to that of urbanisation promotion areas (Shigaika kuiki) and urbanisation control areas (Shigaika chōseikuiki). Koshizawa supported this point by arguing that 'the provisions are almost identical to the "line drawing" system established in the complete revision of the Japanese City Planning Act of 1968. In other words, Manchukuo's legal system was a quarter of a century ahead of Japan's in this respect'. The line drawing system here pertains to the division between urbanisation promotion areas and urbanisation control areas. The introduction of the line drawing system signalled a qualitative shift in Japan's urban planning from a mere 'district system' to an 'area classification system'. On this basis, Koshizawa argued that Japanese urban planning techniques and methods were largely perfected by the 1930s.

This study compares and analyses the open-space districts in the Manchukuo Town and Country Planning Act and the urbanisation control areas in the Japanese City Planning Act, examining the validity of the widespread belief that Japanese urban planning techniques and methods were almost complete by the 1930s.

This study establishes facts through a survey of historical documents, which mainly consisted of reports and official journals published by administrative bodies as well as specialist jour-

nals on urban planning. In the journals, when a person involved in the planning and operation of the system contributed or commented, it was considered to reflect the views of the relevant administrative body. In this paper, unless otherwise stated, 'Town Planning Act' and 'Special City Planning Act' refer to Japanese legislation, while 'Town and Country Planning Act' refers to Manchukuo legislation.

## OPEN-SPACE SYSTEMS IN THE THEORY OF REGIONAL PLANNING

In his regional planning theory, Iinuma describes open spaces as 'land not reserved for building sites, such as forestry, park, roads, squares, sports grounds, botanical gardens, airfields, agricultural land and forestry land'. There are two means of securing open space in the legal system: 'expropriation' and 'limitation of rights'. 'Expropriation' refers to the development of open space as an urban facility. Iinuma describes the case of park development in the United States under the beneficiary pay system as 'parks, a type of open space'. With regard to 'right-of-way restrictions', Iinuma suggests two methods: 'use districts as open space' and 'restrictions by building lines'. The 'use districts as open space' method restricts development by establishing 'open-space districts' or 'agricultural districts' as use districts. According to Iinuma, the benefits of open space around urban areas include 'productive green space for subsistence food production', which corresponds to agricultural districts, and 'prevention of urban bloat', which pertains to open-space districts. Iinuma does not make a strict distinction between agricultural districts and open-space districts as in many places he uses the term 'agricultural districts' to describe open spaces that discourage urban expansion. Meanwhile, the 'regulation by building line' method controls development by limiting the roads to which building sites must abut. As mentioned above, Iinuma proposed three ways to legislate for open space:

1. open spaces as urban facilities
2. regulations as use districts
3. regulations by building line

Iinuma does not state their superiority or inferiority, and the three methods are equivalent.

In Japan, the Special City Planning Act of 1946, enacted after World War II, was the first to institutionalise open-space districts covered by (ii) as use districts although the 1940 amendment to the City Planning Act institutionalised (i) 'green spaces as urban facilities' in Article 16. The Special City Planning Act was enacted to realise urban reconstruction after the war.

In the Japanese colonies, open-space districts were first institutionalised in the Town and Country Planning Act of 1936 followed by open-space districts in the Korea Urban Area Planning Order of 1940 (Chōsen shigaichi keikakurei) and agricultural districts in the Kwantung Regional Planning Order of 1938 (Kantōshū shūkeikakurei). In Taiwan, areas not designated as zoning districts were operated as 'agricultural areas' to implement '(iii) regulations by building line'. The Taiwan City Planning Order (Taiwan toshikeikakurei) prohibited building

on land that was not adjacent to a city planning road or a road designed by land readjustment (Articles 29 and 41). This meant that building was disallowed in areas without official planning. This is an example of how open space was implemented through the building line system. All three methods proposed in *Theory of Regional Planning* were applied in the Japanese colonies.

## OPEN-SPACE DISTRICTS AND AREAS IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT

The Town and Country Planning Act (Imperial Decree No. 82 of 12 June 1936) was promulgated on 12 June 1936 and the Enforcement Regulation (Institutional Decree No. 38 of 28 December 1937) on 28 December 1937. The former act combined the Town Planning Act and the Building Control Act into a single law, with reference to the Korea Urban Area Planning Order. Although it was generally an improvement on the Japanese City Planning Act and Urban Area Building Act, there were some differences such as the introduction of open-space districts and the floor area ratio system. The drafter was Kenzaburo Kondo. The act was overhauled in 1942, and the Enforcement Regulation was promulgated the following year. Hideshima Kan was in charge of technical matters, while Oguri Chushichi was responsible for administrative matters.

### OPEN-SPACE DISTRICTS IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT OF 1936

Article 25 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1936 contains provisions for open-space districts, while Article 14 of the Enforcement Regulation of 1937 lists the buildings that can be built.

### TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT OF 1936

Article 25 The competent Minister may determine the necessary matters concerning buildings and their sites in order to prevent the urbanisation of open space districts.

*Town and Country Planning Act Enforcement Regulation of 1937*

**Article 14** *No building shall be constructed in an open space area except in accordance with one of the following points*

- i) where the total area of each floor does not exceed one hundredth of the area of the site; or*
- ii) those necessary for agriculture, forestry, horticulture, pastoralism, fisheries, salt production, ceramics and mining and coal extraction; or*
- iii) Temporary buildings, the duration of which does not exceed one year.*
- iv) In addition to the above, those which the administrative authorities consider to be unavoidable in the public interest.*

In January 1936, the Manchukuo Ministry of Civil Affairs, through its Town and Country Division, Public Works Bureau, formulated the 'Policy and Objectives for the Establishment of Open Space Districts' to clarify the significance of open-space districts and the concept of their designation.

## Policy and Objectives for the Establishment of Open Space Districts (January 1936)

### Setting Policy

Urbanisation areas and open space districts form the town and country planning areas. First, urbanisation areas are defined according to the expected population, and open space districts are arranged in a ring around the urbanisation areas to prevent urban sprawl. The size of the open space districts must meet the following two conditions

- i) Open space districts shall be at least 1 km wide.
- ii) The area of the open space districts shall be at least equal to the area of the urbanisation areas.

### Main Purpose

Without defining urbanisation areas, it is not possible to define plans for land use, public space, transport, water supply, drainage, etc. Open space districts are the best means of defining urbanisation areas.

(omitted)

**Annex II,** Although it would be ideal to acquire open space districts and ease restrictions on private rights, it is difficult to do so due to financial resources. Initially, Harbin's policy was to acquire open space districts, but the policy was changed due to opposition from the Ministry of Finance.

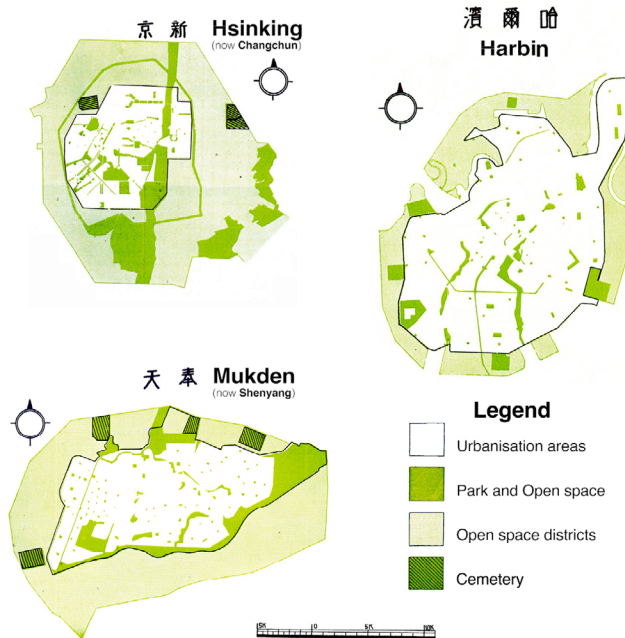


Fig. 1. Railroad network and station locations in western Tokyo in the 1920s.

The setting policy clearly states that open-space districts aim to prevent urbanisation around urbanisation areas and limit the areas where urbanisation is allowed and control its expansion. Their main purpose is to set planning conditions in terms of regional distribution, public land, transport, water supply and drainage, among others. The descriptions of the town and country planning areas of Harbin and Mukden indicate that open-space districts are outside urbanisation areas. The planning maps of major cities in Manchukuo show open-space areas surrounding urbanisation areas (Figure 1).

According to Yamada Hakuai, Harbin's town and country planning areas are described as follows: Urbanisation areas will cover 267 square kilometres, surrounded by a green belt about 2 kilometres wide as open space, where general construction will be prohibited. To ban construction, the plan is to acquire all the land outside the urbanisation areas. Land acquisition was intended to secure open spaces as an urban facility. Annex 2 of the Policy and Objectives for the Establishment of Open Space Districts states that 'acquiring open space districts and relaxing restrictions on private rights would be ideal, however it would be difficult due to financial resources'. Although securing open space through land purchase was seen as the ideal solution, financial constraints prevented land expropriation. This history shows that the restriction of rights through the zoning system was in fact the result of a compromise.

Matsumura Mitsuma, director of the Japanese Ministry of the Interior's Planning Bureau, explained that the City Planning Act of 1940 introduced green spaces as an urban facility because it was necessary to create green belts around the city to prevent it from becoming overcrowded. The purpose of open spaces as urban facilities, which is to control urban expansion by enclosing green belts, is the same as that of open-space districts. Open spaces are considered urban facilities 'because it is necessary to implement them as an urban facility in order to secure open spaces as quickly as possible'. In Japan, open spaces were the subject of land expropriation. In Manchuria, securing open spaces through acquisition was impossible for financial reasons, and a compromise resulted in the introduction of open-space districts. Manchukuo urban planning was no more able to realise its ideals than Japanese urban planning had been.

#### OPEN-SPACE AREAS IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT OF 1942

The 1942 amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act institutionalised open-space areas in place of open-space districts. Article 43 formally stipulated the division of town and country planning areas into urbanisation areas and open-space areas. Article 41 of the Enforcement Regulation of 1943 listed the buildings that could be constructed. In contrast to open-space areas, the law prohibited buildings with a floor area ratio of 1% and temporary buildings of less than one year and newly allowed structures necessary for inhabitants' living such as transport and defence, hospitals and prisons, cemeteries and crematoria, slaughterhouses and sewage treatment plants, production and storage facilities for explosives and shops and restaurants of 20 square metres or less. Open-space areas, like open-space districts, were still subject to use restrictions limited to agriculture, forestry, horticulture, animal husbandry, fishing, salt production, mining and ceramics.

Regarding the location and size of open spaces, Oguri Chushichi, a drafter of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1942, stated that the 'Guidelines for Designation of Productive Green Spaces define the location and size of open spaces'.

### **Guidelines for the Designation of Productive Green Spaces**

*In order to ensure the healthy development of the city, productive green spaces, which are special agricultural open spaces, are to be secured around urbanisation areas. These are located in the town and country planning areas and designated as open space areas. In the open space areas, agricultural management will be maintained and a system of self-sufficiency for perishable food in the city will be established. At the same time, civil health, economic and military defence issues will be addressed.*

### **Establishment of open space areas.**

*1) Productive green spaces, which are special agricultural areas around the city, shall be secured and designated as open space areas in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act.*

*2) Open space areas shall be established in accordance with the following standards, with the exception of large rivers, low marshy areas, mountainous areas, large parks, cemeteries and other areas unsuitable for cultivation.*

*a) Open space areas shall include productive green spaces of approximately 2.5 to 3 times the area of the urbanisation areas and shall be designated in a circular or radial pattern around the periphery of the urbanisation areas.*

*b) Forested areas shall be considered as fuelwood replenishment areas.*

*c) Open space areas shall be at least 1 km wide.*

The Guidelines for the Designation of Productive Green Spaces require a green belt at least 1 kilometre wide around an urban area, which is similar to the Policy and Objectives for the Establishment of Open Space Districts. The difference, however, lies in the increased green belt area in line with securing productive green spaces. Hideshima Kan, another drafter of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1942, explained that 'green space districts, which had restrained the uncontrolled expansion of the city, were further developed to have the character of subzones and positive production fringe areas in urban areas'. Simply put, open-space areas represent the institutionalisation of the operational reality of conventional green districts and the strengthening of their function as productive green spaces. According to Ishida Yorifusa, green districts are a regional system for securing a narrow circular green belt, which is a park system in planning theory, and the shift towards open-space districts has qualitatively transformed them from a 'regional district system' to an 'area classification'. If open-space districts are a park system, then such a system includes productive green spaces. Besides the area of productive green spaces, no significant changes have taken place in the approach to green district and open-space designation and land-use regulation.

## URBANISATION CONTROL AREAS AND OPEN-SPACE AREAS

In the major cities of Manchukuo (Figure 1), open-space plans were formulated in a form close to the ideal type that surrounded the urban area. This section examines the validity of Koshizawa's assertion that urbanisation control areas were completed with the institutionalisation of open-space areas.

### SIMILARITY BETWEEN ARTICLES

Article 7 of the City Planning Act (Act No. 100 of 15 June 1968), as amended in 1968, divides city planning areas into urbanisation promotion areas and urbanisation control areas and is similar to Article 43 of the Town and Country Planning Act of 1942, which divides the planning area into two parts as well.

#### **City Planning Act of 1968**

**Article 7** *In order to prevent uncontrolled urbanisation and ensure planned urbanisation, urban planning areas shall be divided into urbanisation promotion areas and urbanisation control areas.*

#### **Town and Country Planning Act of 1942**

**Article 43** *In order to control the use of land, the Minister of Transport shall divide the land within town and country planning areas into two types, urbanisation areas and open space areas.*

*This section analyses the process and purpose of establishing the system of urbanisation control areas and compares it with that of open space areas.*

### URBANISATION CONTROL AREAS NOT JUST FOR BUILDING RESTRICTIONS

Oshio Yoichiro, director of the Japanese Ministry of Construction's Urban Planning Division at the time of the enactment of the 1968 City Planning Act, had this to say about controlling urban area expansion:

*One strategy to deal with the high concentration of population in cities is to prevent urban concentration by developing the countryside. Another possible approach is to try to prevent the expansion of large cities through regulations such as the Green Belt. However, this approach has been effective in areas with slow population growth, such as London, but has failed in cities with high population concentration, such as Tokyo. The utter ineffectiveness of relying solely on regulation was demonstrated by the failure of the Green Belt approach in the Japanese metropolitan area.*

*If urban concentration is inevitable and economically rational, it is effective to induce the planned formation of high-density urban areas in the future fringe zones of large cities. If the population can be absorbed there, urban sprawl can be prevented. This is the opposite of green belts.*



Here, Oshio criticises open-space districts under Article 3 of the Special City Planning Act of 1946, referring to them as the 'green belt concept for the metropolitan area'.

#### **Special City Planning Act of 1946**

*Article 3 The competent Minister may designate open space districts within or outside the urban areas referred to in Article 1(3), if this is deemed necessary for special city planning purposes.*

In their statement of purpose, the Japanese Imperial Diet argued that open-space districts were created to preserve open spaces secured by the Air Defence Act. Until then, the open spaces provided by the Air Defence Act had deterred excessive urban expansion, but the act was repealed, and open-space districts were formed as a new method of regulating land use. In Tokyo, the Ministry of Construction's Notification No. 17 of 26 July 1948 contained a designation for open-space districts (Figure 2). The regulations for open-space districts, as stipulated in Article 3 of the Enforcement Order and Cabinet Notification No. 31, are as follows:

#### **Special City Planning Act Enforcement Order of 1946**

*Article 3 In open space districts designated in accordance with Article 3(1) of the Act, no buildings shall be newly constructed or extended, unless they fall into one of the following categories*

*buildings erected for the business or residential use of persons engaged in agriculture, forestry, stock-farming or fishing*

*buildings forming attached to parks or sports grounds*

*buildings designated by the Prime Minister, the building area of which does not exceed one-tenth of the land area.*

*which the Regional Director considers unavoidable in the public interest.*

#### **Cabinet Notification No. 31**

*The following buildings are designated in accordance with Article 3(1)(iii) of the Special City Planning Act enforcement order.*

10 October 1946

Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru

*i) detached or duplex dwellings*

*ii) the kind of shops necessary for daily life*

*iii) shrines, temples and church buildings*

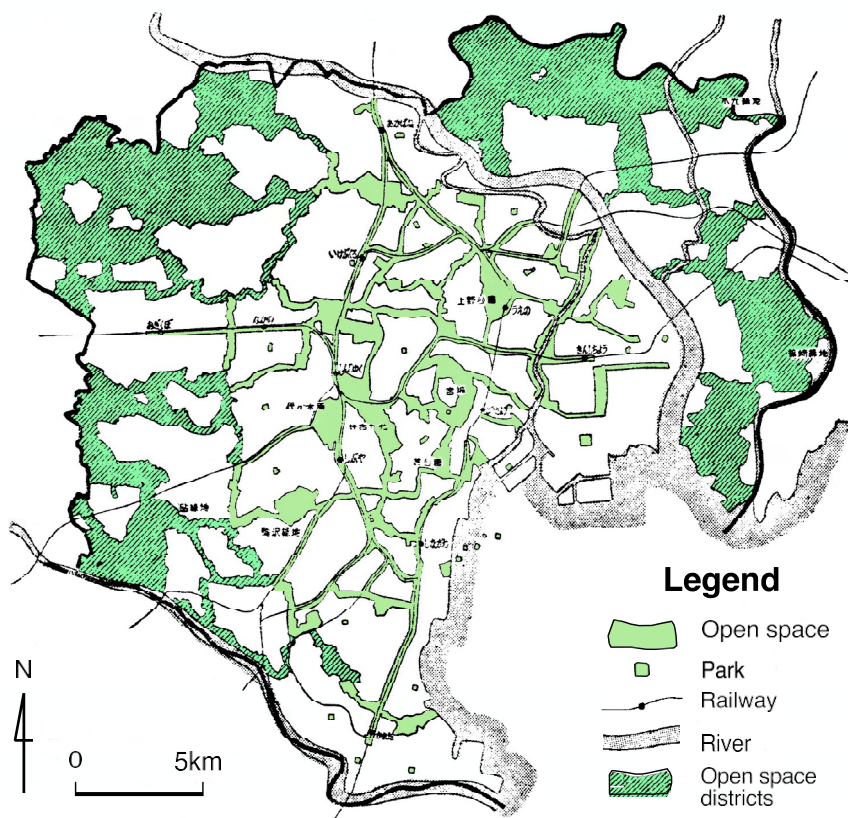


Fig. 2. Tokyo Reconstruction Open Space and Park Map of 1947.

Oshio said the case of Paris, not London, should be examined. In London, the Green Belt was a success because the United Kingdom's rural population had already been reduced to 4%, and income levels were higher than those of urban workers, so there was less population pressure on cities. In contrast, the population of Paris was growing by 170,000 a year, and urban sprawl was well underway. The political and economic weight of Paris in France is greater than that of Tokyo in Japan. Oshio focused on France's deferred development zones (zone d'aménagement différé, or ZADs), which the Minister of Construction designates at the request of the municipality, requiring the municipality to develop roads, sewers, parks and other facilities within the ZAD and also granting a right of first refusal based on a predesignation assessed value. However, the right of first refusal was granted for eight years. Oshio described the ZAD as 'the concept of a high-density urbanisation zone, the opposite of a green belt. It is a method of preventing urban sprawl by systematically building high-density urban areas to absorb population pressure, rather than blocking urban space with vacant land'.

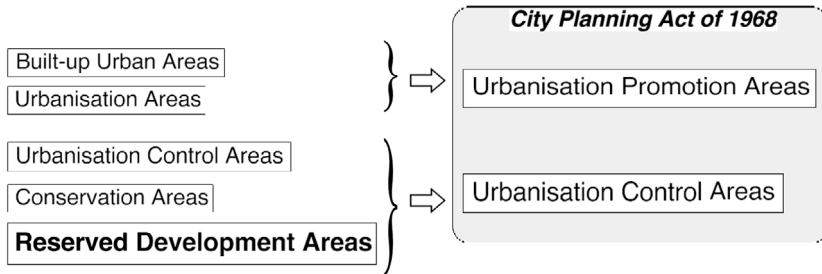


Fig. 3. Internal study of the Japanese Ministry of Construction on the City Planning Act of 1968.

The ‘urbanisation promotion areas’ and ‘urbanisation control areas’ in the City Planning Act of 1968 are known to have resulted from the reorganisation of four areas (‘built-up urban areas’, ‘urbanisation areas’, ‘urbanisation control areas’ and ‘conservation areas’) that were originally conceived as a rough draft. However, besides these areas, ‘reserved development areas’ were considered within the Japanese Ministry of Construction.

Oshio stated that the reserved development areas were modelled after the French ZADs but were not included in the bill. Miyazawa Michio, Oshio’s subordinate who was involved in the drafting process, said, ‘Some of the urbanisation control areas will be preserved as a result, while others will be developed. At the drafting stage, it was decided to merge “urbanisation control areas”, “conservation areas” and “reserved development areas” into “urbanisation control areas”’. Urbanisation control areas include the concepts of ‘reserved development areas’ and ‘conservation areas’ (Figure 3).

The open-space districts in the Special City Planning Act Enforcement Order of 1946, while allowing housing with a build-to-land ratio of up to 10%, restrict the main use of land to agriculture, forestry and fisheries, similar to the open-space districts and areas in the Manchukuo Town Planning Act. Oshio pointed out that the green belt failed not because it allowed buildings with a 10% build-to-land ratio but because it was a ‘policy that relied only on regulations’ with no mechanism for absorbing population pressure in a planned way. Meanwhile, the system that dared to provide for areas to absorb population pressure was the urbanisation control area.

Open-space areas and urbanisation control areas have the same goal in dealing with urban sprawl. However, the former was a spatial barrier whereas the latter was a land-use guideline based on the assumption that the land would be developed in an organised manner. Urbanisation control areas are a new technology that addresses the shortcomings of measures that solely rely on regulation and are essentially the next generation of systems after open-space areas. Therefore, the functions of urbanisation control areas were not completed during the open-space area stage.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study compared and analysed open-space areas in the Manchukuo Town and Country Planning Act and urbanisation control areas in the Japanese City Planning Act and investigated whether the argument that Japanese urban planning techniques and methods were almost complete in the 1930s was valid.

The open-space districts in the Manchukuo Town and Country Planning Act of 1936 were introduced because of the financial challenges surrounding the acquisition of open space as urban facilities. It was not a realised ideal but rather the result of a compromise.

The open-space areas in the Town and Country Planning Act of 1942 signified the institutionalisation of the operational reality of the open-space districts in the Town and Country Planning Act of 1936. Although they had the same objective as the urbanisation control areas of the City Planning Act of 1968 in terms of addressing urban sprawl, the open-space areas were spatial cut-offs whereas the urbanisation control areas constituted land-use guidance based on the claim that the area would be developed strategically, and the latter was a new technology that compensated for the shortcomings of the former.

This paper therefore rejects the common claim that Japanese urban planning techniques and methods were largely perfected by the 1930s.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author reports no potential conflicts of interest.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR(S)

**Goto, Yasushi** works for the Yokohama Municipal Government in Japan as a civil engineer and urban planner. He is a professional engineer in urban and regional planning, certified by the Japanese government. He holds a bachelor's degree in engineering from Waseda University and a bachelor's degree in law from Keio University. He also holds master's and doctoral degrees in engineering from the Tokyo Institute of Technology. His interests include the history of urban planning legislation in East Asia under Japanese rule.

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## IMAGE SOURCES

Figure 1 Nihon kōen ryokuchi kyōkai (Japan Parks and Open Space Association). "Manshūkoku shuyō toshi ryokuchi keikaku zu (Open space plans of major cities in Manchukuo)". *Kōen ryokuchi (Parks and Open Space)*, vol. 3, no. 4 (1940): Frontispiece.

Figure 2 Nihon kōen ryokuchi kyōkai (Japan Parks and Open Space Association). "Hukkō ryokuchi oyobi kōen zu (Reconstruction Open Space and Park Map)". *Kōen ryokuchi (Parks and Open Space)* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1947): Accompanying illustration.

Figure 3 Author's work.