Non-typological Architecture: Deterritorialising Interiors in Contemporary Japan

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Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:
http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.00014c6b

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NON-TYPOLOGICAL ARCHITECTURE
Deterritorialising Interiors in Contemporary Japan
Thesis to obtain the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with the Open University and at the Architectural Association on the authority of the Director of the PhD Programme and Director of Studies, Pier Vittorio Aureli

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JAPANESE NAME ORDER
The author is aware that in September 2019, the Japanese government announced a directive to revert to the Japanese format of names (family or surname first, then given name) in non-Japanese language materials. Reuters explained that “in line with the agenda of the conservative [former] prime minister, Shinzo Abe, who wants to revive aspects of Japan’s traditional culture, and it has been championed by those seeking to save traditions.” The policy reverses a custom in use since the late 19th century of writing Japanese names in Western order (given, family) when using the Roman alphabet. Having written the bulk of the thesis prior to this decision and because of the thesis’ audience familiarity with the names of Japanese architects in their English order - the order given, and then family name will continue to be used in this thesis. Hence ‘Sejima Kazuyo’ as she would be referred to in Japan, will be referred to as ‘Kazuyo Sejima’, or ‘Sejima’ here.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
The thesis could not have been possible without the conversations, collaborations, travel guidance and help with translations of friends, colleagues and mentors during summers in Japan (and Winter’s in London) including Miki Hiroyuki, Takeshi Yamamura, Alyssa Ueno, Mitsue Kajikawa, Yosuke Obuchi, Thomas Daniell, Hiromi Fujii and Raphael Balboa. Raphael was especially generous to provide me for periods of time with housing in Tokyo and access to resources at Tokyo University. Takeshi Yamamura, from Waseda University has been a generous and inspiring collaborator in workshops, conversations about architecture and with resources from Waseda for the thesis. A special thanks to Michiyo Furuhashi for Konohana Famiri who was very attentive and helpful with translations, guidance and explanations during my stay with her community near Fujinomiya.

It should go without saying that I am deeply indebted to my advisers, Pier Vittorio Aureli and Maria Shêhérazade Giudici for their dedication to the production of architectural knowledge and the rigor of their approach, mentorship, criticism and comradesy. I owe a big thanks for their efforts and to the administration and my colleagues at the Architectural Association - and namely Belinda Flaherty - for encouraging me and helping to make my teaching and pursuit of the PhD possible. Another debt is owed to my students, who have been collaborators in exploring the ideas discussed here, and especially Cheryl Wan-Xuan Cheah and Shanna Sim Ler Chung for a summer spent working on drawings and research. I owe a debt to my father who is not only a great teacher, but who’s courage to pursue his own creative vision against all the odds is a constant source of inspiration. I am indebted to my partner Maria Paez Gonzalez, for her frequent criticism, insights, talking-to’s, energy, encouragement, tolerance, patience and love.
Typology in architecture will be defined here as a system of knowledge or as a ‘deep structure’ for the composition of space and construction of types. Housing, through new divisions of labour, became a ‘professional’ architectural and typological project when the strategically managed reproduction of labour emerged as a cultural project and the focus of political strategies in mid-19th-century England, and in late 19th- to early 20th-century Japan.

The term ‘non-typological architecture’ is put forward in this thesis to read, consider and theorise examples of architecture and housing which tend – in a way that is plainly self-evident – towards a lack of spatial division, differentiation and composition, and which therefore tend towards the absence of history, lineage and indeed even any ‘plan’ for or idea of future; housing which has been reduced to a simple container of blank space. Examples of architecture and housing that tend towards the non-typological can be said to have emerged in Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1910s and 20s, and more widely in Japan and the US in the 1940s and 50s. Clear examples include Phillip Johnson’s 1947 Glass House and Kiyonori Kikutake’s 1958 Sky House. In late 20th-century examples such as Shigeru Baan’s 1997 Nine Square Grid House, another of Baan’s projects (Curtain House) and Kazuyo Sejima’s early 1990s Platform Houses, we even see the tendency of architecture to push towards rejecting the container (or at least its visibility); rejecting walls and façade. These examples are simply composed of two planes – floor and roof.

This thesis seeks to build a genealogy – and along with an Atlas of Shameless Interiors, theorise for future architectural practice – of famous examples of late 20th- and 21st-century Japanese architecture and housing that tend towards the non-typological by globally influential Japanese architects, including Toyo Itō, Kazuyo Sejima and their collaborators and decorated colleagues. Examples will be theorised in relation to a history of the politics of the organisation of life for production and economy in Japan since the end of the Second World War. Examples to be read include works by some of the aforementioned architects’ key influences of the 1950s and 70s in the West and Japan, including Kenzō Tange, Kiyonori Kikutake (and, to a lesser extent, Le Corbusier and Mies van Der Rohe), Hiromi Fujii and Takefumi Aida (and some of Itō’s and their influences, including Adolph Loos, Hans Hollien and Superstudio). Examples of ‘mainstream’ commercial housing architecture which these architects influenced and contested will be considered in their entanglement, indexicality and influence on the organisation of life for economy, the destruction of historical forms of life and the consequences of these tendencies. Finally, having surveyed the historical ground, the thesis will theorise examples of Japanese urban living space of the past 10 years which could be considered da-me (no good, shameless, or architecture without ‘high’ architects – to borrow a term from Atelier Bow Wow used in Made in Tokyo, their 2001 guidebook or atlas).
Introduction: Towards Permanent *Homelessness*

Chapter 1: The Ambivalence of the Blank Page – Typology and *Real Subsumption* after Hiroshima

Chapter 2: Concrete Voids – Architecture and Nihilism in 1970s Japan

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An *Atlas of Shameless Interiors* in Japan
INTRODUCTION
Towards Permanent *Homelessness*
Introduction

i. White U House, Tokyo, 1976 - Toyo Itō. Sketch by author based on Koji Taki photograph.

xiv Introduction
Since the turn of the 21st century, Japanese architecture has arguably become the most dominant, imitated, identifiable, influential and decorated of any ‘school’ or country. This thesis departed over four years ago, and one could even say much earlier than that, from a fascination with early 21st-century Japanese architecture – and initially that of some of Japan’s most well-known architects, including Toyo Ito, SANAA, Kazuyo Sejima, Junya Ishigami and Sou Fujimoto. I began pondering the thesis seriously after visiting Ishigami’s 2008 Kait Workshop, and one of the first images I considered when developing an abstract was of Fujimoto’s 2011 House NA. I was captivated by the starkness, haunting frailty, abstractness, ‘nihilism’, playfulness and sophisticated humour which one can perceive in that project and in many examples of works by these Japanese architects. In the early 21st century, an increasing global resonance with patrons and architects, and influence on the global art and architecture scene suggested that Japanese architecture, housing and perhaps also the Japanese city held crucial indications and implications for architecture, aesthetics, politics, labour (especially creative workers and architects) and the new subject at large today. These fascinations and questions arose while studying and teaching architecture, including in Japan, where I have travelled extensively, taught architecture workshops and spent the last five summers ‘living’ in many of the 21st-century examples of ‘housing’ to be discussed in Chapter 4. These and others are also redrawn in an Atlas of Shameless Interiors. The Atlas is proposed as a kind of continuation of Atelier Bow Wow’s 2001 Made in Tokyo guidebook and is a key aspect of this thesis’ ‘design’ component.

The influence of the aforementioned architects is self-evident in the sheer volume and popularity of exhibitions, magazine and book publications on Japanese projects, and in the awarding of the profession’s highest accolades, such as the Venice Biennales directorship and Golden Lion Prizes.1 Japanese magazines have had a significant impact on architectural discourse and practice since at least the 1980s, as is best exemplified by the slew of highly influential figures that have gained notoriety through, and then perhaps gone on to write the brief for, Shinkenchiku’s (New Architecture) Residential Design Competition. As we know, in the last 10 years five Japanese architects (keeping in mind that Japan is a country with 1.6% of the world’s population) – Sejima, Ryue Nishizawa, Ito, Shigeru Ban and Arata Isozaki – have won the profession’s Pritzker Prize. My personal experience as a practitioner of architecture and educator on several continents and extensively in Asia (including Japan), Europe and the United States is that the aforementioned architects have perhaps been the most commonly referenced

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1 In 2010, the Biennale entitled “People meet in architecture” was directed by Kazuyo Sejima. The 2012 Golden Lion for Best National Participation was awarded to a team that included Toyo Ito, with the participation of Kumiko Inui, Sou Fujimoto, Akihisa Hirata and Naoya Hatakeyama. The 2010 Golden Lion for best project was awarded to Junya Ishigami + Associates. The 2004 Golden Lion for most significant work was awarded to SANAA by Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa, and in 2002 the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement was awarded to Toyo Ito.
and imitated in the 21st century so far. So, while it is true that many of the architect-designed examples that we will describe as tending towards non-typological by these architects are considered ‘boutique’ or ‘at the margins’ in Japan, they have had and continue to exert an undeniable and key influence on global architectural production.

Furthermore, the Japanese city, since even as early as the 1970s (as perhaps most iconically exemplified in a long shot of Tokyo’s motorways in a futuristic scene from Andrei Tarkovsky’s 1972 film Solaris) has been perceived as our future, if only a possible, and in some dimensions, dystopian one (we are reminded of, for instance, Ridley Scott’s 1982 Blade Runner, with its Japanese signage and ‘aesthetic’ everywhere). Indeed today, some phenomena in Japan appear to be more ‘advanced’ given current trajectories in Europe. We need only think of the dramatic decline in marriage and birth rates, and the use of automation and AI for reproductive work, emotional care and service work, to name only a few. On the flipside, it is also clear that other tendencies in Japan seem to resemble the past in Europe – for instance, the wide gender disparity and the resilience of often hierarchical and ‘disciplinary’ workplace cultures.

Though Japan’s experience and aesthetics are, to be sure, enigmatic, the attraction, fascination and developmental entanglement of the West with Japan is a decidedly uncanny one. It should be argued that it is precisely in fact a relatability, resonance and deep familiarity, tempered by a simultaneous ‘distance’ or estrangement, that make Japan so important for theory anywhere and everywhere today. All things considered, the argument should be made here that Japanese architecture essentially became a globally dominant architecture in the first decade of the 21st century. This was and perhaps remains especially true for the most prestigious American and European architecture schools, offices and cultural institutions, such as art museums. Perhaps, more than we are aware, we have witnessed what the philosopher Alexandre Kojève prophesised after studies of and a visit to Japan in 1969: that the interaction between the West and Japan would lead to a “Japanization of Westerners” rather than, as one would assume, the Westernisation of the Japanese. The rise of Japanese architecture as a school or modern tradition casts a long shadow back into Japanese history. Yet there is not to my knowledge a genealogy and theory of these works that begins to theorise their relation – spatially and aesthetically – to the history of production and the governance of worker and subject’s behaviour in Japan.

3 Edō’s flower literally translates as fire but has been interpreted with approximations of the above meaning. Greg Clancey, Earthquake Nation: The Cultural Politics of Japanese Seismicity, 1868-1930 (University of California Press, 2006), 59.
4 It has been argued by many authors that this modernisation process was already underway during the Meiji Period. For example, regarding the modernisation of education, see Tetsuya Kobayashi, “Tokugawa Education as a Foundation of Modern Education in Japan,” Comparative Education Review 9, no. 3 (1965): 288–302.
5 “Thousands and thousands of happy fanatics were
A History of Accelerating ‘Destruction’

The first generation of Western architects, engineers and managers to live and work in Japan after over 220 years of sakoku (literally, closed country, a reference to a shogun-enforced isolation) were apparently fascinated and perplexed not only by Japan’s austere and elegant feudal-era architectures, and philosophies of nothingness, but also by the nihilistic displays and attitudes of even poor city dwellers. Even before the onset of rapid modernisation in the mid to late-19th century – the implementation of which brought many Westerners into employment, commissions, and advisory roles in Japan – the people of Edo (pre-modern Tokyo) were apparently “not particularly concerned with protecting themselves from natural disaster”. Contrary to popular perception, this was not due to a “fatalism or passivity” but was invited: the frequency of fires “not only made the inhabitants of Edo fearless, but let them [be] boastful of the prosperity of the metropolis. As much is recounted by the proverb: Kaji wa Yedo no Hana: fire is the flower of the City’s prosperity.” This is perhaps one of the most revealing stories that one can come across when beginning to pick apart the simultaneous ‘enigma’ – one with yet uncanny similarities to other countries which industrialised early – that marks the history of architecture and politics in Japan.

As we know, in the mid-19th century, Japan’s ruling classes were forced to ‘open up’ the country to the West on unequal terms or face military destruction and occupation by the United States and European powers. A programme of modernisation, industrialisation and militarisation was undertaken to compete and maintain national autonomy within the new world order. In 1867–68, amidst the disorientation and uprooting of old forms of life wrought by the sweeping reforms and new laws of the new Meiji era, a series of carnivals spread throughout most of the archipelago. These lasted almost a year and in some cases erupted into riotous violence. The spontaneous, mass carnivals have been understood as a form of political protest, disguised because protests were otherwise banned. People danced in the streets in costumes, chanting “eejanaikai”, a defiant and nihilistic phrase that can be translated as “Who cares?”, “Why not?”, or “What the hell?”, and has been interpreted, given the behaviour of revellers, as, for instance, “Who cares if we take our clothes off?” or “Who cares if we have sex [in the streets]?” One thing that a history of Japan teaches us is that, time and again, the uprooting of historical forms of life ignites outbursts of nihilism and displays of
behaviour among many Japanese that would have one think they were finally liberated from the typical (ethically ambivalent) straightjacket of shame (ばじ – ばずくかしこい can be roughly translated as shameful, ashamed or embarrassment).  

The carnivals were suppressed as the Meiji government began to strategically manage a transformation of Japanese daily life with particular and detailed concern for productivity and therefore ‘reproduction’, ‘welfare’, education, forms of social hierarchies and the daily lives of even poor farmers and workers. While wide-reaching taxation and archipelago-wide census and cadastral surveys date to 7th-century ‘edicts’ or decrees from the Imperial Court (which were adopted and adapted from China and Korean rulers), village, rural, everyday life and the house remained to a great degree autonomous of any centrally organised reform, control and planning until the Meiji era. The maxims ふく国きょうへい (‘rich country, strong military’) and 産業 そうぎょう (‘give rise to industry’) established the criteria for the rationalisation of Japanese everyday life. The foundation of the project and core concern of the Meiji regime was the legal, symbolic and spatial reform of the family and housing. At the same time, the first group of modern Japanese architects graduated from Tokyo’s College of Technology (京大工科大学, later to become Tokyo University’s Faculty of Engineering) in 1879, having been primarily tutored by the English architect Josiah Conder, a graduate of London’s Architectural Association. Japan’s 造匠 ぞうぎょう (daiku) designer-builder-priests – who worked on-site and consulted future inhabitants in their specific circumstances – began to be relegated to making copies of Western buildings and executing modern architects’ designs; in many cases daiku were labelled as ‘backwards’ and villainised. It short, it follows that in housing throughout the 20th century the composition, division and distribution of reproductive space were puzzled over by groups of reformers, architects and ‘cultural intermediaries’ more than any other issue. Here we refer to the organisation of rooms connected and separated by circulation, conceived of in relation to the smooth choreography of bodies and programmes, social hierarchies, schedules, and utilities. The new professional architects took the configuration of space and daily life as the object on which ideologies and idealisations, morality, rationality, preventative hygiene and other ‘knowledge’ could be exercised. To all intents and purposes, we could say that Japan became for a period ever more efficiently organised as a ‘factory’ to maximise production; a new form of typology in architecture thus emerged, as we will discuss later.

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12 Hirakawa, “Japan’s Turn to the West.”
The events surrounding the Meiji period are paradigmatic of Japan’s history since then, which has been marked by new and more rapid cycles of uprooting and nihilism, perpetually both (and quite paradoxically, it seems) caused by and counteracted by attempts to plan, contain, organise, and channel life and labour by the state, industry, the market economy in collaboration with technologies. The history of Japan teaches us that spatial and territorial management not only impedes, separates, plans and assigns, but always seems to work dualistically with appeals to desires, uprooting and releasing energy, provoking and then capturing some of the human animal’s most powerful traits: creativity and adaptation. In other words, it destroys previous forms of life and control – but then establishes new territorialities to channel and capture the energies or labours released.

We can see patterns like this very clearly in Japan, even before the archipelago’s encounter with the West. To put it succinctly – for so many reasons, which undoubtedly owe much to the scale, location, geographical, geological-tectonic and climatic history of the archipelago – Japan has experienced cycles of mass destruction and crisis mostly unparalleled elsewhere (certainly if only in their frequency). The ‘blank page’ wrought by earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons and the 300–500-year cycle of epochal feudal warfare was accelerated to something more like a 40–50-year cycle with the full onset of modernity, capitalism, industrialisation, nuclear warfare and energy, free trade and international finance. The ‘network’ era promises to see this upheaval increasingly approach a ‘zero-time’ cycle. Prophetically, phrases like ‘zero-time’ were the slogans and criteria that underpinned a restructuring of work and manufacturing processes at Toyota’s famous innovative factories in the 1960s and 70s; their open spaces have often been understood as centres for experimentation with ‘post-Fordist’ modes of production, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

In other words, while uprooting, destruction and an ensuing blankness and nihilism were not new experiences to Japan as it entered modernity, this cycle would now accelerate and ‘spiral’ over the coming 150 years. Japan was ‘thrown’ – horns now locked with the West and the rest of the world – into a tailspin down the historical abyss. Here we should briefly take what may seem a detour to situate nihilism in relation to a complex history of nothingness in Japan, which it owes to adopted and adapted philosophies of Buddhism there since the 6th century. It has been so often argued that people in Japan – and even those least familiar with Buddhist philosophy – have

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13 Jordan Sand has developed what we would characterise as a genealogy of the modernisation of housing and family in Japan in the pre-war period. Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880–1930* (Harvard Univ Asia Center, 2005).
14 This is argued by the political philosopher Paolo Virno, as will be discussed in Chapter 3. It has been argued by the Japanologist Ezra Vogel that Japan’s “strength” is not based on the “adaptation of its tradition” but on its “tradition of adaptation”. Ezra F. Vogel, “A Non-Traditional View of Japanese Modernisation,” in *Japan and the World* (Springer, 1988), 45–53.
maintained an inherited ‘philosophy of nothingness’ as the ‘ground of being’. Perhaps it is telling that to this day, 60% of Japanese people maintain a *Butsudan* altar in their house. By contrast, Western culture has apparently inherited a ground of ‘thingness’ or essentialism, exemplified in Platonist idealism, Judeo-Christian religion (in the beginning *was the word and the word was god*) and, for example, Descartes (“I think, therefore I am”). “The Platonic-Christian program of the West has been one of an ‘architecture (of forms)’ and the Japanese Buddhist program has been one of ‘deconstruction (of forms)’ …”\(^{15}\) While a lack of ground or foundation in Japan is true in certain senses, and certainly amongst intellectuals, Japanese history demonstrates that in fact forms of ground or ‘essentialism’ have always been central to culture and crucial to culture, the organisation of life, production, and reproduction there.

In the first instance, when we look at archaeological records and history, we could say a kind of ‘actual’ ground – or *dwelling* – was situated in ritual, everyday forms of knowledge and ways of life tied closely to climate, geography, flora and fauna. With the rise of the feudal state and the adoption and adaptation of Buddhism, Confucianism and Chinese political systems in the 6\(^{th}\) and 7\(^{th}\) centuries, essentialism can be observed in the form of unifying narratives and ideologies that laid claim to inherent ‘Japaneseness’. Nothingness, as fundamental non-fxity, impermanence and insubstantiality, was paradoxically transmuted into a ground or something ‘essentialist’ or constitutive of something uniquely Japanese, whether ethnic or even somehow genetic (all of this approximating what was later termed *nihonjinron* – mythologies or ideologies of Japanese uniqueness). These ideologies have been fundamental to and are paradigmatic of ‘projects’, whether architectural or otherwise, to impose abstract order and unity on otherwise historically radically different climates, peoples and cultures which were inhabiting the archipelago currently referred to as Japan.

Indeed, the paradoxical transmutation of nothingness into essentiality gives us several insights into what has contributed to the enigma or ‘uniqueness’ and sophistication of Japanese architecture and apparatuses of control: emptiness can become a kind of ground or ‘essential’ identititarian-ensemblistic trait when it is aestheticised and made a signifier. It is telling that the Buddhist ‘ideology’ of abandonment to impermanence and nothingness, while mystified and often perceived (not without good reason) as ‘wise’ and concerned with liberation by Westerners, has also been indicted by historians and critics as a mechanism to depoliticise and subjugate social classes.\(^{16,17}\) The point that, to my knowledge, many scholars fail to emphasise is that regardless of ideology,

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\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) See, for example, Matthew J. Walton, “Buddhism, Nationalism, and Governance,” in *The Oxford Handbook*.
the onset of the development of political techniques and technologies and the deep uprooting and re-planning of life for economy can be understood as having brought about an increasing coming-to-the-fore of a real or realised nihilism which we might say finally materialised the kind of ‘reality’ that Buddhism always spoke of. Historical forms of life and knowledge as ground, as dwelling, were concretely rapidly being destroyed or uprooted. The point was not lost on some Japanese intellectuals, such as the philosopher Keiji Nishitani, who wrote in The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism, which draws on his mid-20th-century essays, that:

*while the spirit of nihilism has its origin in Europe, it is by no means unrelated to [Japan] in the modern era. We have been baptized in European culture, and European education has more or less become our own… The phenomenon of nihilism shows that our historical life has lost its ground as objective spirit, that the value system which supports this life has broken down, and that the entirety of social and historical life has loosened itself from its foundations. Nihilism is a sign of the collapse of the social order externally and of spiritual decay internally- and as such signifies a time of great upheaval…*  

In one of the 20th centuries most important parables, an ‘abyss’ of history and nihilism wrought by Japan’s first half-century of modernisation famously brought about a crisis of identity and ‘ground’ in which the seeds of Japanese military imperialism could sprout during the 1920s and 30s. This historical battle between archaic modes of domination and new ones based on the techniques of production, technology and state-capitalism were decided in Japan with the epochal destruction of the nuclear bombs and the ensuing American occupation. Japan remains, of course, the only nation to experience the annihilation wrought by the achievements of a nuclear-fission war technology that some scientists theorised would generate a chain reaction, annihilate all life and turn the earth into a small sun. In the immediate aftermath, an entire generation of Japanese children who lost their parents (senjō-koji or war orphans) would go on to learn how to survive in packs in the open amidst the rubble and ash of burned-out cities. After the war, typological thinking in architecture and the mass production of housing – which did not achieve a total reach with pre-war efforts – were finally able to overcome the last traditional forms of housing and life and became a norm for a majority in Japan.

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Following this most violent of ruptures, the experience of the generations who grew up after the war was one of irretrievable distance from historical Japan. In the late 20th century, the architect Arata Isozaki wrote that:

…it should be stressed that despite being Japanese ourselves, today we see Japan with the eyes of a foreigner, precisely like those of Lafcadio Hearn or Bruno Taut. Indeed, having gone beyond the process of modernization, we see Japan from a viewpoint similar to that of Westerners. It follows that the latter view of England incorporates the same mechanism of distancing as our view of England.19

Because of the violence and rapidity of both the historical destruction and historical re-organisation of architecture and forms of life there, Japan is the context where typological thinking in architecture, and most importantly housing, has been most obvious. By the same token, it is the context where typological thinking has had the severest side effects and been most blatantly contested or rejected by architects. There is no clearer context in which we can consider the global tendency towards a rejection, or otherwise absence of typology: a tendency towards the non-typological in architecture, and most importantly its indications and implications for architecture and politics beyond Japan. As we will see, more recently, even in examples of architecture ‘without architects’, typological thinking has become increasingly absent or is receding. These examples can be understood as a kind of index or codex via which this coming-to-the fore of a realised nihilism can be read, considered, and theorised. In sum, the ethos of nihilism in Japan has given rise to a real abstraction which can be read through the historical dissolution of typology in architecture.

The term ‘non-typological architecture’ is put forward in this thesis to consider examples of architecture and housing which tend – in a way that is plainly self-evident – towards a lack of spatial division, differentiation and composition, and which therefore tend towards the absence of history, lineage and indeed even any ‘plan’ for the future. Here we refer to housing which has often been reduced to a simple container of blank space. Examples of architecture that tend towards the non-typological can be said to have emerged in Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1910s and 20s, with the American factory architecture of, for example, Albert Kahn, and the works of the Modernists such as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, and more widely in Japan and the US in the 1940s and 50s. Famous or paradigmatic examples include Mies’ 1956 IIT Crown Hall, and in housing, Phillip Johnson’s 1947 Glass House. In Japan we can cite Kiyonori Kikutake’s 1958 Sky House and Shigeru Baan’s 1997 Nine Square Grid House. In examples such as Nine Square Grid House, another of Baan’s projects (Curtain House) and Kazuyo

Sejima’s early 1990s Platform Houses, we even see a tendency of architecture to push towards rejecting the container, walls and façade, and towards being composed simply of two planes – floor and roof.

Crucially, what we see now, most strikingly in Japan and especially since the bursting of the economic bubble there in the early 1990s, is that even commercial and developer architectures have inevitably embraced a dissolution of family and historical social life – resulting in an emerging mainstream of architectures that tend towards the absence of typologisation. The thesis will focus on housing, and largely on the plan and interior because in modernity and in Japan, as we have seen, housing and especially its interior has become the most important site and index of politics and (re)production and typological thinking. But what is typology?

From Typology to Non-typological Architecture in Japan

Inherently, one of the consequences of any discourse on what constitutes an architecture that tends towards the non-typological might also offer new considerations and definitions of that which is absent or supposedly being negated: typology. The thesis will not develop a comprehensive history of the term ‘typology’ or review the vast amount of literature on types and typology in architecture; nor will it unpack its use in other disciplines and more generally. However, in this introduction we should briefly address the term and its history in architecture, and depart from a working definition.

The term typology refers to the systematic classification of the types of something according to their common characteristics. Typology is composed of ‘type’, from Latin typus, which refers to a symbol, figure or emblem. Typus is rooted in Sanskrit túptō, which means beat, strike or smite; it refers to ‘leaving a mark’ and ‘striking oneself’. Therefore, the term is rooted in leaving marks or inscriptions on an object or body. Túptō developed into the Greek túpos, referring to mark, impression or type, as in the characters that are used to compose written language and the inscriptions imprinted or ‘struck’ onto coinage.

Body in Japanese, karada, is composed of the logographic kanji characters for person and origin or foundation, and is more closely related to Latin and English corpus or corps. As we know, corps and body refer not only to the individual as the thinking, feeling, ‘doing’ human ‘organism’, but also to a social body, to a ‘community’, ‘people’ or ‘population’
– to a group of people having a common purpose or opinion; a mass. It follows that *type* also, in its general definition and usage, refers to groups or individuals – to an individual considered typical of its class, one regarded as typifying a certain profession, environment, etc. and an individual that represents the *ideal for its class*: an embodiment. This unpacking of the term allows us to think analogously with the broader word and concept of type.

It is crucial to recognise that a system for categorising types as typology is also therefore inherently instrumentalising. In other words, while the term and concept type is in the first instance analytical and establishes classes and categories, it inherently also generates and reproduces them, and makes it impossible that they will not therefore be ‘shaped’ ideologically. Indeed, the suffix ‘-*ology*’ in ‘typology’ comes from the Greek *logia*, which refers to ‘a discourse, treatise, theory or science’. Thus, typology can be understood as “discourse, theory, treatise (method) or science of types”.20 This much is obvious in language, speech and writing, and explains why as long as we speak of and ‘produce’ architecture, there can be no such thing as ‘non-typology’.

Shifting and often contradictory concepts of type and typology have surfaced since their appearance in architectural discourse in Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy’s *Dictionnaire d’architecture* (1825). Concerned with a kind of Neo-Platonic essentialism, Quatremère developed type as an ideal that architecture should strive towards – not as “image of a thing to copy or imitate” but as a key idea “of an element which ought itself to serve as a rule for the model” or the individual work of architecture.21 During the same period, though he never used the terms type or typology, Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand developed methods for classification, and has often been discussed in typological discourse. He argued that architecture must “be freed from the tyranny of classical orders”, which should instead merely become decoration.22 Architecture, he thought, should be primarily concerned not with “the imitation of nature or the search for pleasure and artistic satisfaction, but [with instead] composition or ‘disposition’” and, accordingly, convenience and economy. Durand thus worked typologically in a new sense as he developed designs for many building types which were only just emerging – for example, “hospitals, prisons, palaces, libraries, theatres, custom houses, barracks, town halls, colleges”.23

These new institutional types were concerned with the programming of functions – namely, the distribution of space as rooms and circulation. His approach either predicted or, at least in part, gave rise to the model and the pattern books, notably

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21 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 15.
those concerned for the first time with housing the working classes, of the 19th century. Furthermore, a “virulent” explosion of style emerged in the middle of the 19th century because style was something that could be “added later” to give an appearance to a composition – whether it (initially) sought to reflect the programme or not. Here we begin to understand the importance of reading the façade, the image and style in relation to a history of space.

Something that approaches the kind of typology that emerged with the very profession of architecture in the late 19th century in Japan and gained ground through the 20th century was described by Maria S. Giudici as “the deep structure of any spatial product”. Typology, she wrote “is about form (as both composition and non-composition are), but also about the people who inhabit the building in a way that transcends mere function: it is about the relationships, the subjectivity and the ethical frameworks the space itself produces”. This kind of typological thinking is perhaps best exemplified by the housing work of Alexander Klein. Klein’s typological method stood against historical forms of typology, such as essentialism and the 19th-century “frozen model” notion. In doing so, it could be said that a new concept of typology emerged that recognised the importance of type as an underlying ‘deep’ structure, but at the same time allowed for flexibility, individual expression, modification and exploration. Klein “attempted to submit the elements-identified now in terms of use-to the rationality of typology by checking dimensions, clarifying circulation, emphasizing orientation. Housing types appeared flexible, able to be adapted to the exigencies of both site and program. For Klein, the type, far from being an imposition of history, became a working instrument.”

In her discourse about Henry Roberts’ 19th-century Model Houses, Giudici articulates what has been at stake for typological thinking in architecture, both in Japan and the West, since then:

… a small-scale architectural proposal can, by virtue of its repeatability, have an impact on the city itself… the link between production of type and production of the city is not always a straightforward one. Roberts did not content himself with the possibility of influencing the city, but rather aimed to put forward an actual idea of society, and a specific form of subjectivity… the aim of the Model Houses was to create hierarchies, orchestrate asymmetries and ultimately enforce very specific behaviours.

25 Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, “Composition, Non-Composition: Architecture and Theory in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” (Taylor & Francis, 2015), 1124.
Typological thinking was pervasive amongst upper-middle class and upper-class housing in Japan in the early 20th century but was very much stifled in its reach to the entire population by a strong cultural homogeneity and the continuation of ‘traditions’. As we have touched on, typological thinking finally reached the majority of workers after the mass destruction of the war, and amidst the American occupation in the 1950s. This much is exemplified in the design of giant scale danchi ‘public’ and corporate housing projects such as Kunio Maekawa’s 1958 Harumi Apartments and Kikutake’s 1956 Tonogaya Apartments. As we will see in Chapter 1, university architecture ‘research laboratories’ and architects were concerned with how housing, the family, the individual and life in Japan might be graciously transitioned to the ideals of modern productive lifestyles; they produced a series of model types. However, rather than become something to be replicated precisely, these models initiated more abstract, deeper structures, ideologies and typology that despite a ‘real’ dissolution, arguably approximate or remain popular ideals to this day.

While a pre-modern concept of type was concerned with commonalities, essentiality and the ideal, at the threshold of modernity in the West, and even more vividly in Japan, typology became wrapped up with a set of categories, classifications and a ‘science’ of types of composition of space and organisation of life for production and economy. In other words, it became entangled with a system or abstractions and knowledge for tuptō as stamping, inscribing into, producing and, critically, reproducing instrumental, binary types of bodies, individuals and forms social life from irreducible multiplicity.

Attempts to come to terms with typology in housing in Japan have not waned: typological thinking continues to be repeatedly reanimated as an antidote to what this thesis will argue is its actual dissolution in any historical sense, but also as a complement to new modes of control. This much will be discussed throughout the thesis but most directly in Chapter 4. For example, as recently as 2006 in their book Post-Bubble City, Atelier Bow Wow’s Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kaijima suggested that architecture, urban space and furniture has been about the assembly, “implementation and repetition of behaviour”, and is therefore not unlike performance-based artworks or theatre. They argue that despite the fact that architects often bring individuality, creativity and artistry into play through compositional articulation, they nevertheless (or even therefore) consistently follow certain underlying “scores” without any substantial content. Through variations on style and types architects reproduce the same performance, ad infinitum, providing a (mere) semblance of difference.

28 Atelier Bow-Wow, Post Bubble City (Inax Publ., 2006), 12.
31 See Giulio Carlo Argan, “Sul Concetto Di Tipologia Architettonica,” ARGAN, CG Progetto e Destino (Milan:
Definitions of typology, however, have and continue to be developed. In the mid to late 20th century, for instance, several architects and theorists began to redefine the concept of type and typology as something that was essentially “functionally indifferent”. In the 1960s, Giulio Carlo Argan revisited and reinterpreted Quatremère’s understanding of type while avoiding its connections with a Neo-Platonic essentialism. Instead, he sought to trace, a posteriori, an essential form through comparing and overlapping a series of buildings to reveal formal regularities. Therefore, type for Argan was a received abstract form which could serve as the “inertia” for the project, but after which the more significant degree of “formal definition” was left to the architect.31

During the same period, Aldo Rossi also theorised type as an element of form or as common to a set of examples of architecture. For Rossi, the “logic of architectural form lies in a definition of type based on the juxtaposition of memory and reason. Insofar as architecture retains the memory of those first moments in which man asserted and established his presence in the world through building activity, so type retains the reason of form itself. The type preserves and defines the internal logic of forms, not by techniques or programs.” Type was therefore something common to architecture throughout its history – in a sense then, something essential, but at the same time lacking a concern with the kind of technique of life for production, or with any essential, given or destined function, use, end and – we might say – destiny. While the thesis does not attempt to revisit and reinterpret Rossi’s theories, in retrospect it is clear that there are theoretical affinities with the ideas that he proposed; as much will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In his pivotal 1978 essay On Typology, Raphael Moneo developed an important genealogy of type and typology in architecture, and in doing so undermined any single reading of them, thus opening the term and concept up to different interpretations, elaborations, and theory. At the same time, he maintained their centrality to architecture. This perhaps explains why the essay has maintained an influence on the re-emergence of a discourse on typology in architecture in the first decade of the 21st century. This is exemplified in, for example, the work of Pier Vittorio Aureli, his influence, and contributions, and the popular 2011 issue of Architectural Design entitled Typological Urbanism: Projective Cities. Arguing that “[t]he concept of type is in itself open to change”, Moneo begins On Typology begins with the assertion that:
Italian Theory and the Non-typological in Japan

The reader will be aware that we will often frame examples in the thesis with concepts and analysis developed by Italian thinkers. There is an important reason for this. The relationship to and exchange between ‘anti-typological’ Japanese architects such as Ito, Fujii, Aida and many of their contemporaries, on the one hand, and Italian architects and theorists such as Argan, Rossi and their contemporaries Archizoom and Superstudio, on the other, goes far beyond the influence of periodicals and images to reveal shared political and theoretical origins. In order to understand and contextualise the examples discussed here we will often reference what has recently become known as ‘Italian Theory’. The term has been used to describe a group of activists, intellectuals, and political philosophers, the first generation of which emerged in Italy out of workers’ struggles during the 1960s. The figures associated with Italian Theory include the Operaists Mario Tontri and Raniero Panzieri; Massimo Cacciari and his Negative Thought; the radical feminists Silvia Federici and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, who were concerned with reproductive labour and housework; the post-Operaists, including Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, Michael Hardt and Carlo Vercellone; but also parallel thinkers who share common concerns and influences, and including Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito (who himself developed the category of Italian Theory). Italian Theory has become prominent in US and UK academia, and in the humanities and social sciences since the late 1990s and early 2000s, following Agamben’s interpretation and expansion of Michel Foucault’s concepts of biopolitics in Homo Sacer, and Hardt and Negri’s academic blockbuster Empire, in 2000. What is little discussed about Italian Theory and the movement out of which it arose, however, is its connection and exchange with workers’ struggles, activism and ‘counterrevolution’ in Japan.

32 To raise the question of typology in architecture is to raise a question of the nature of the architectural work itself. To answer it means, for each generation, a redefinition of the essence of architecture and an explanation of all its attendant problems. This in turn requires the establishment of a theory, whose first question must be, what kind of object is a work of architecture? This question ultimately has to return to the concept of type.


35 Maurizio Lazzarato and Joshua David Jordan, Sign and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity (Semiotext (e) Los Angeles, 2014), 8.

36 “Guattari was so interested in my project he actually came to Japan. You know, he was the kind of person who wrote novels and essays that liberated the mind on the page. But he was also interested in space, so he gathered a bunch of Paris’s young architects and held this sort of research group to study about mental illness. He came to Japan because he was interested in my work – how the multi-layered space and fragmentations are connected – as a way to treat people with schizophrenia and other mental conditions. So we talked through his interpreter, Riki
The uncanny affinity of Italian Theory and the phenomenon of architecture that tends towards the ‘non-typological’ is indeed no coincidence and begs an extensive work of its own (we can only briefly touch on it here). In Lazzarato’s book *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and The Production Of Subjectivity*, the author begins by describing how “the most ‘advanced’ forms of social and material production [emerged in Japan]”, echoing Continental philosophy and Italian Theory since the 1960s, which drew on Japan’s experience and examples to analyse and theorise post-war capitalism, modes of production and labour subjectivation, in Europe and the US. Lazzarato explains by quoting one of his key influences, the French psychotherapist and philosopher Felix Guattari, who wrote that “Capitalism ‘launches (subjective) models the way the automobile industry launches a new line of cars.’ Indeed, the central project of capitalist politics consists in the articulation of economic, technological, and social flows with the production of subjectivity in such a way that political economy is identical with ‘subjective economy’.35 (Hiromi Fujii said that Guattari in fact came to Japan to discuss Fujii’s architecture.36 Like his partner, Gilles Deleuze, Guattari has a famous relationship with Japan and influence on Japanese architecture,37 including, notably, that of Ito.) Lazzarato goes on to analyse contemporary Japan’s ‘crisis’ and points out an important line of theoretical inquiry into the emergence of ‘non-typological’ architecture there:

*Japan is emblematic of the impossibility of resolving the crisis afflicting the country since the 1990s without a new model of subjectivity. Like every other country in the world, Japan is now post-Fordist, yet more than any other country it has had the greatest difficulty replacing the Fordist “capital of subjectivity” (full employment, a job for life, the ethics of work, etc.) that made it rich. It is not enough to inject astronomical sums into the economy; it is not enough to stabilize the banks, weaken and destabilize the job market, impoverish workers, and so on, in order to promote growth. To new social, economic, and political conditions, subjectivity must be made to correspond, one cognizant of those conditions and able to persist within them. It is in this sense that the Japanese financial and economic crisis is above all a crisis in the government of behavior. Economics and subjectivity go hand in hand.*38

Miyake, at the Yamanoue Hilltop. Schizophrenics have lost their sense of unity; their ability to gather and organize information. One treatment is for them to connect spaces they inhabit. They also lack the ability to remember things holistically. I think Deleuze made it clear when he said that ‘disparity’ and ‘memory’ are the same thing. Hotel in Ochanomizu. Interesting, eh?” Thesi on Japanese work in Western magazines with Fujii interview – Representation and Contextualization of Japanese Architecture in Western Architectural Periodicals.

38 Lazzarato and Jordan, *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, 10–11.
One of the most important contributions of Italian Theory is, of course, that of “epochal periodisation”, or theorising of shifts in modes of production and worker organisation and ‘behaviourology’ (to borrow a term from Atelier Bow Wow) from ‘Fordist’ to ‘Post-fordist’ (or Toyotist, as it is referred to by so many, including Negri,^39^ Virno,^40^ Lazzarato and Marrazi^41^). Their analysis and genealogies refer to the example of how ‘counterrevolutionary’ labour subjectification – as worker management and organisation – was a reaction by capital and management to worker and student refusals and resistance in Italy and Japan during the 50s and 60s.^42^^43^ Italian Theory is understood to have emerged out Operaismo and the first worker and student struggles, strikes and demonstrations of the 1960s, specifically the breakdown of traditional political organisation and unionism – something that happened both in Japan and Italy almost simultaneously. Japan and Italy were both, of course, defeated Axis allies, and after the war were under the close guidance and occupation of the United States’ ‘Marshall Plan’ (Italy) and the ‘SCAP’ occupation and restructuring (Japan). They US sought to engineer them as bulwarks against the spread of communism through, for instance, a combination of ‘democratisation’ and censorship, rapid industrialisation and US-aligned globalist financialisation and trade policies.

Nothing is more exemplary of the close relationship and exchange between the Japanese struggles and the struggles out of which Italian Theory emerged than the fact that in both Japan and Italy, groups of students and workers viewed the agreements that Communist and Socialist Union organisers or political parties made with management and the state, as a betrayal and as irreconcilable with their struggles. Despite some efforts to find a way forward with unions and ‘traditional’ parties, there was a historical fracture – in Japan beginning around the ANPO Riot of 1960 by a militant group called the Zengakuren, and in Italy, with the 1962 Piazza Statuto Riot of July 1962. The ‘group’ that emerged in Italy was in fact dubbed the Zengakuren, after their Japanese counterparts.^45^ The intellectuals and activists that emerged around Panzieri and Tonti during this period rejected old politics and “pushed for a concerted, autonomous intervention… antagonistic to capital”.^46^ What Italy and Japan shared, perhaps more distinctly than any other two nations at the time, was that new, militant activists were overcome by the forces of capital and management when work was completely reorganised and a revolution was undertaken in the way workers, technology, production and space were organised. This is something that happened earlier and more decisively in Japan than Italy, as will be discussed in Chapters 2 and

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43 See Muto Ichiyo, John Barzman and Pierre Rousset, Class Struggle and Technological Innovation in Japan since 1945 (International Institute For Research and Education, 1987).
45 R. Alquati, Sulla FIAT e Altri Scritti, Fatti e Le Idee: Materiali Marcist (Feltrinelli, 1975), 27. Cited in Wright, Cleaver and Tomba, Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism.
3. This ‘counterrevolution’, as Virno has called it, would have broad consequences for economy and life everywhere, including back in the United States, which would struggle to compete with Japan’s increasing productivity levels.

These political parallels and exchanges also had their counterpart in the affinity and exchange between Japanese and Italian architecture of the 1960s and 70s. Though Rossi and the ‘radicals’ such as Superstudio and Archizoom had very different approaches to architecture, the latter were influenced by Rossi, and all of them were involved with activism and Operaist or Post-operaist movements, and with interpreting associated political theories in architecture. In fact, Archizoom’s *No-Stop City* was based on a project by the militant Operaist and Panzieri collaborator Claudio Greppi, whom they attended university with and who bore the clear influence of Kenzo Tange and Metabolist projects in Japan. While Rossi was concerned with an antagonism, primary form and ‘exalted rationality’ in architecture, Superstudio and Archizoom appeared more concerned with a ‘cynical realism’, a ‘stripping down’ of any mystifications to a bare systematic and repetitive architecture *ad absurdum*. Hence during the late 1960s and early 70s, we might argue that all of these architects produced some of the most emblematic works that tend towards the non-typological; they would be of central influence on Japanese architects, including Toyo Ito and those who followed, as we will discuss from Chapter 2 onwards. Again, the exchange went both ways, one example of which is Rossi’s inclusion of Takefumi Aida and his *Annihilation House*, in his exhibition *Architettura razionale*. Another is Andrea Branzi’s (Archizoom) constant referencing of Japanese work and collaborations there. It should also be noted that *Annihilation House*’s rationalist and nihilist approach closely resemble that of Adolph Loos – another core influence of Cacciari’s – and of the philosopher Walter Benjamin. The latter was an associate of the Frankfurt School and has also been a central reference to Italian Theory, especially for Agamben, and for Japanese theorists whom we will reference, such as Jun Tanaka and Nishitani.

In short, we could say that the *tendency towards the non-typological* is a historical phenomenon that has been theorised by Japanese and Continental philosophers, but also most decisively and ‘usefully’ by Italian Theory. Therefore, certain categories of Italian Theory have proven fundamental to any discussion of work and space in late-capitalist contexts, including, as will be demonstrated, Japan. Furthermore, Italian Theory is crucial for architecture because it proposes a method through which theory is

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46 Wright, Cleaver and Tomba, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism.*
50 See Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism.*
developed via a “meticulous and materialist grounding of genealogy” using examples or paradigms. This builds on the methodology of Nietzsche and Foucault, who have also been central influences on Italian Theory, and on political philosophy and architecture in Japan. Italian Theory, though, has not extensively taken up an in-depth genealogy of examples from the Japanese experience – a project which would undoubtedly lead to new insights both ‘West’ and ‘East’.

Chapters

In Chapter 1, we will discuss three primary examples – and several secondary examples – of architecture that tended in different ways towards the non-typological in post-war Japan. The primary examples to be discussed include Kenzo Tange’s famous 1953 Tange or Tokyo House, Kunio Maekawa’s 1958 Harumi Apartments, and Kiyonori Kikutatke’s 1958 Sky House. The period was most distinguished, on the one hand, for (initially at least) a widespread rejection of historical symbolism and rituals and the emergence of simple, anti-stylistic, architectures that used industrial materials and often had open ‘blank’ interiors; to which we will draw analogies to the ‘blank page’ of Japanese cities and the destruction of historical Japanese culture and politics at the end of the war. Examples in the war’s early aftermath include Kiyoshi Ikebe’s 1950 Residence No. 3, Kiyoshi Seike’s 1953 My House, and Makoto Masuzawa’s 1953 9 Square Tusbo House. On the other hand, and mostly following this first ‘stage’, the mid- to late 1950s were most distinguished by a renewed search for ‘Japanese-ness’ and by a strategic transition to the now typical nLDK (number of bedrooms, living, dining and kitchen) notation system in Japanese housing. Many university-architecture-laboratories, reformers and architects were concerned with the modernising of ‘feudal’ and backwards rituals and habits and their attendant spaces, objects and furniture. They focused their efforts on the defining and separation of activities and functions such as sleeping and eating that were apparently so often still blurred in a majority of Japanese houses.

Chapter 2 departs from a discussion of Toyo Itō’s speculative and ‘darkly nihilistic’ projects, which he developed in the early 1970s, three years after departing Kikutake’s office. The projects drew on the work of European practices such as Superstudio and Hans Hollién, which came into vogue through magazines in Japan. On the other hand, the project could be said to reflect an anger and historical upheaval in a, by then, wealthy and largely middle-class (chūryū kaikyū) Japan. In one telling example of the widespread protests and strikes during the 1960s, Itō was unable to return to Tokyo University for a postgraduate degree as planned because buildings were occupied and barricaded shut for almost six months by students protesting against the increasing function of Japanese universities as ‘factory’-like assembly lines for corporate jobs. The chapter will also read a few of Hiromi Fujii’s projects in relation to a ‘dark nihilism’
which was manifesting itself in art and architecture. Fujii began by developing what we could call a *non-compositional* technique for architecture, beginning with his 1968–69 *E-Projects*, which he published in the now defunct *Toshi Juutaku* (‘Urban Housing’) upon returning from working in Italy and spending time in England. Takefumi Aida, too, and especially in his aptly named *Nirvana House*, seemed to embrace a void of history and future in his 1970s houses. Through simple, clear, symmetrical formal compositions, which otherwise resisted any association with symbolism, meaning or programme, the houses seemed concerned with provoking the emphatic movements of inhabitants.

Chapter 3 discusses and reads anti-typological works by some of the most influential architects of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, including Itō’s 1985 *Silver Hut* (which he called a ‘Primitive Hut in the City’) and Kazuyo Sejima’s 1991 *Saishunkan Seiyaku Women’s Dormitory*; it also briefly touches on the work of Junya Ishigami and Sou Fujimoto. While the work of these architects has been described in terms such as innocence, lightness of being and sincerity, they in fact owe much to a decidedly ‘heavier’ history. These works – their spaces, aesthetics and technologies – are picked apart in relation to the history of labour management and regulations in Japan as they were developed to counteract nihilism, and losses of productivity to demotivation and insubordination. This leads us to a consideration and unpacking of why these architects’ works have received so many prizes and have achieved extreme popularity and influence globally in the 21st century within new modes of post-Fordist service, emotional and creative production and life. A genealogy and close reading of examples reveals than an increasing ‘danger’ is accompanied by a potential for radical theory and politics.

Chapter 4 departs from a discussion of Atelier Bow Wow’s 2001 *Made in Tokyo*, an atlas of architecture that would be labelled *hajishirazu* (shameless) or *da-me*52 (no good or ‘junky’) by critics or architects. Rather than try to wilfully search for a new ideal, or to overturn a situation where despite an abundance of things Japan’s youth seemed hopeless, Atelier Bow Wow’s Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kaijima decided to listen and learn from the ‘hopeless’ city itself. In parallel to an *Atlas of Shameless Interiors*, Chapter 4 develops a new phase of their project in a very different context almost 20 years later. In part based on myself, the authors, personal documentation, research and experiences while living in Japan, the chapter reads a series of architectures or buildings that blur life, leisure, work, city, house, inside and outside. These including net cafés,

52 This term might have been inspired by the group of activists that began in the 1990s who called themselves *Damen* or the ‘no goods’. In a lecture at Waseda University in 1993 Kaminaga, Kōichi called for a “good-for-nothing revolution”. “Most students”, he argued, “would end up ‘working while dead’, meaning the end of life.” What sustained this system, he claimed, was people’s fear of being regarded as no-good. In order to enjoy life, one must not be swayed by the values of society. Instead one had to choose “the way of the good-for-nothing” (dame no michi) revolution”. Carl Cassegård, *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan* (Global Oriental Leiden, 2014), 59.
micro-apartments, supa-sento, shared houses, capsule hotels, *konbini* (convenience stores) and a self-sustaining Japanese ‘family’ of over 100 – all of which sit far from the ideal types promoted by the ruling classes and especially the state, which is faced with a birth-rate ‘crisis’. Finally, the chapter discusses several 21st-century works by Bow Wow and a few other studios, such as Tezuka Architects and ON Design Partners, and begins to outline a theory for a counter-typological and non-compositional architecture – another important term for the thesis, which is to be discussed.

As a Foreign Architect: Notes on Methodology

The thesis began after a crisis in my own approach to practice as an architect working in Asia and mostly China for roughly 7 years. My previous practice was developing what I would characterise as functionalist, scientific approaches and aesthetics in architecture. At some point – like Toyo Ito said of the approach his former employer, Kiyonori Kikutake, was developing – the approach felt to me contrived. The architecture of Junya Ishigami, Sou Fujimoto, Toyo Ito and Kazuyo Sejima by contrast and in a sense, much more honest, clear and appealing. This thesis departed from a fascination with these and other Japanese architects and started with the intention to develop theory for my future practice.

It should be clear that I approach this thesis as very much an outsider to Japan. A ‘foreign architect.’ I studied Japanese in UK and Japan for 3 years at the beginning of the thesis, however at the time I finished the research and spent my final summer in Japan in 2019 my conversational Japanese was still basic (but workable!). Fortunately, with some Chinese reading ability and with the ability to read Japanese hiragana and katakana phonetic alphabets, I was able to begin searching and translating in Japanese. That, along with the help of Google’s Artificial Intelligence translator, friends, and paid translators, enabled me to search through and translated 100s of Japanese language books, papers, articles, documents, blogs and so that have informed this thesis. This however cannot compensate for the potential insights I might have gained from having more in depth (untranslated) conversations while in Japan.

I relied on several important methods to develop the thesis’ research. Some of the primary methods were drawing, ‘close-reading,’ extensive general and specific historical, sociological and political research, and travel, ‘site visits’ and ethnographical research. ‘Close-reading’ can be defined as a method that starts from a reading of the form, structure, elements, aesthetics, furniture’s etc of the architecture and in my case starts with *drawing the architecture*; that is, drawing the case studies of the research. In other words, the kind of close reading that I developed necessitated that I draw and closely
observe the form of the architecture first. A reading of the *form*, space aesthetics and materiality also informed directly the choice of architectural examples, which brings us to another important point: the specific examples were chosen because, in their form, they met the definition of architecture that tended towards the non-typological. The number and selection of examples were then further reduced as I evaluated whether they were paradigmatic for their ‘moment’. The observational stage of the research then informed a contextualising of the architecture historically and, in my case, especially in relation to political economy and the organisation of labour. There was an attempt to approach a certain degree of (impossible, yes) objectivism in the drawing technique. This meant that I chose to draw plans, and isometric exterior drawings of each of the examples and eventually format them in a way that they could be compared to each other.

There is of course a myriad of illuminating ways that these examples – which differ greatly in scale, form, etc. - could have been drawn, and in fact many other methods of drawing were tested. Another version of the thesis may have seen them all treated entirely differently so as not to tether them to the same, if you will, ‘seeing machine’. Nevertheless, the plan and isometric drawing method that was finally settled on seemed important to develop a certain degree of detachment from a want to ‘express’ them uniquely. As we will see this was partly informed by Atelier Bow Wow’s discussion in their *Graphic Anatomy*, in which they write that in fields such as botany or anatomy, the technique for drawings is so constrained that individual subjectivity is suppressed. This clears the way for anyone, from anywhere, to contribute to or learn from that form of knowledge.

During the development of the thesis, I spent nearly the last five summers in Japan, for 2-3 months at a time, ‘living’ in many of these examples, from periods of one to two nights up to two weeks. During my stays, I conducted research with Japanese University library materials, and in dusty Japanese bookshops. Perhaps most importantly I became an uprooted foreigner living in and experiencing Japan first hand; staying in many of the 34 examples which are drawn in the Atlas, as well as many other hotels, guest houses, with suburban and urban families (through Airbnb or other platforms), and with a few communes like *Konohana Famiri*. There is therefore a kind of anthropological and ethnographic method employed to develop the research. Many of the specifics of the examples, layouts, objects, details, and observations were gained through recording while on site. I conducted dozens of interviews during my travels which also very much informed my picture of Japan, the thesis and the examples.
Introduction

There are many investigations in English and Japanese that deal with 20th-century Japanese housing and typology, which will be drawn on throughout the thesis. However, despite the sweeping influence of Japanese houses and housing on the global practices of architects, an inquiry that begins to incisively unpick 21st-century Japanese architecture of housing typology and the entanglement of its dissolution (both in examples of the ‘high’ architecture variety, as well as the plainest or most often ignored) with a history of labour and production seems almost entirely lacking. This is largely uncharted territory for architectural theory and politics specifically pertaining to Japan and reflects upon the unique lessons it can offer everywhere.

Japanese architecture – its rich, paradoxical and enigmatic, yet global, resonance – and especially the phenomenon of architecture which tends towards the non-typological, has an intimate relationship to this exchange between East and West, to the history of nihilism, politics and the organisation or capture of relations and life for production and reproduction, and is crucial to the development of theory today. In fact, the thesis reads the most recent tradition of Japanese architecture as a radical critique of the concept and reality of typology as the latter emerged as one of the most defining architectural tropes of modern Western civilization. What the times and circumstances that we find ourselves in – both as subjects, as new global ‘publics’ or ‘multitudes’ and architects – seem to urge or suggest is that historical forms of power and space are becoming irrelevant. However, in retrospect, the thesis hypothesises that the example of Japan proves this kind of assessment fatally naive. As we stand witness to dramatic shifts in global life, technology, politics and architecture, the example of Japan can offer us insights for action (and for deciding when and where not to design or act) as architects through its historical lessons and contemporary tendencies.

For us, theory as theoória – to consider, examine and speculate – can be understood as the development of underlying principles or methods. Theory is typically translated to Japanese as rinron – 理論 – and is composed of two Chinese-derived kanji characters; it refers to reason or logic and to put in order. The first character – 理 – is composed of two logograms. The first – 玉 – refers to gem or beautiful and the second – 里 – refers to village, country house, or a person’s origins but is a compound of soil or earth – 土 – and – 田 – field, cultivated and parcelled. The second character of rinron – 論 – refers to debate, consideration, evaluation and discourse is composed of two logographic characters that can be traced to pictograms: the first – 言 – is abstracted from a representation of a human figure speaking, and the second – 倫 – is rooted in the depiction a grid below a house’s pitched roof and is understood as to think, reason, order, or be methodical. Japanese and Chinese ideographic and pictographic characters – which in some cases still resemble the object
origin of 侖: to reason, order, to think, methodical - from xiaozhuan. This is a small seal script which was made the standard after the unification of China in 220 BCE.

origin of 里: to say, speech in Japanese, from Chinese discuss, talk, discourse order and government decree. Chinese characters were inscribed on animal bones used in pyromantic divination in the late 2nd millennium BCE. This is the earliest known form of
or action to which they refer – suggest that writing and language itself is rooted in the politics of form and space, or in other words, entangled with a discourse on the logic of putting in order and cultivating, or the organisation and distribution and management of the household, land and people.

Though in the face of Japan’s ‘realised’ nihilism, Keiji Nishitani’s assessments often sound dire, he also in fact surmised that a confrontation with ‘dark nihilism’ was a necessary stage to pass through before one could encounter what he described as a ‘creative nihilism.’ Japan’s lesson for architecture and the world begins with a realisation that the subject’s encounter with nihilism (and potential ‘creative nihilism’) has always surfaced as a result of destruction, and has then always been contained, channelled and recodified through architecture and space into systems for order and control. In our assessment, this remains the case regardless of which mode of historical or contemporary power, architecture and life we consider. It seems to us that what is always being captured, integrated, differentiated and modulated is a ‘shared’ human irreducibility and inessentiality – a common human capacity for language, architecture and therefore politics. A common, pure multiplicity – millions of tiny becomings – which in fact always threaten to unleash a perpetual revolution of types, until the term itself dissolves.
I

THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE BLANK PAGE
Typology and Real Subsumption after Hiroshima
1.1 “ON the night of 9-10 March 1945, the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) conducted the most destructive air raid in history. The target was Tokyo. By the time the fires died out the next morning, nearly sixteen square miles of the city were destroyed, leaving at least 83,793 Japanese civilians dead, more than 40,918 injured, and over one million homeless.”
Divisible into separate rooms by sliding, wood-framed, paper fusuma panels, the otherwise open room of Kenzō Tange’s own house was completed in 1953 for him, his wife, his daughter and later, his son. Laid out on a 500 x 500 mm grid, the living floor was lifted on three rows of seven 2.8-metre-high pilotis above a Tokyo which had been reduced to rubble and ash in what was likely the single most destructive human event in history, less than a decade earlier. Not unlike other examples in the post-war period, the house’s floating floor and single room space was a perfect rectangle, blank and highly abstract relative to most houses or housing that had come before it in Japan. Its composition was blank relative to ‘traditional’ pre-modern Japanese minka farmer houses and machiya city houses, which were highly ritualised, with symbolic elements and regional and individual variations created by both builder/carpenter and inhabitant; blank relative to the early 20th century norm for a large middle-class (chūryūkaikyū) by the late 1960s in Japan; relatively also blank and generic – especially in plan and narrative-brief – in relation to the famous ‘loosely shifted array of boxes’ composition that characterised pre-modern palaces and, for example, the famous Katsura Imperial Palace (Katsura Rikyū) – itself an important reference for Tange, European and American modernists from the late 19th century.

The term artificial ground (jinkō toshi) was used to refer to urban expansion, harbour-infill projects in the first decade of Japan’s economic boom during the 1950s. In a broader sense, though, jinkō toshi epitomised a recurrent motif in civic architecture, office space and, for the first time, housing in Japan after the war – namely that of an empty floor as a replication of the ground, open to an unforeseeable future. The floating, largely open floor of Tange House was even more conspicuous, blank and abstract in another project that his office had started working on earlier – his monumental Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. The project was centrally positioned in the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park (Hiroshima Heina Kinen Kōen) masterplan and built near the epicentre of the nuclear explosion above that very location just five years earlier. Like his house, the 80-metre-long Hiroshima Museum is a ‘floating’, elongated box, lifted five metres above the ground.
1.2, 1.3, 1.4 *Tange or Tokyo House*, 1953 - Kenzo Tange, digital sketch by author
1.5 Sensō koji (war orphans) living amongst the rubble, using an empty can to cook in Kita-ku, Osaka. There were over 123,000 orphans at war's end.

1.6 and 1.7: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum 1949-55 - Kenzo Tange
above the ground on exposed, reinforced concrete pilotis, whose profiles in plan evoke
the more ‘organic’ shapes of late Corbusier. The expansive, blank, open room of its
interior was, of course, left unobstructed for the free arrangement of exhibitions about
the bombing and its aftermath, and was roofed and enclosed in a vertically louvered
steel and concrete façade, subtly varied in rhythm but simultaneously repetitive and uni-
fied through a composition of repetitive elements and pattern. The distinctly ordered
yet varied arrangement of museum and park is established through the symmetry and
rhythm of elements, with additional wings that symmetrically flank the museum and the
long, axial arrangement of the park features, other buildings and sculptures that were
part of the overall plan.

During the 1920s, Tange had lived in a Western-style brick house with a lawn in a
Shanghai ‘fragmented’ by a mash-up of competing colonial powers who struggled to
assert territorial claims and control, constructing a mishmash of styles of buildings,
parks and urban layouts in a city whose Chinese imperial-era walls had only recently
been demolished to open room for industrial expansion and the free flow of com-
merce. Amongst those powers was, of course, an emerging imperial Japan, which had
occupied China since the end of the 19th century after modernising its military to emu-
late and push back against those of the Western colonial powers. When Tange’s family
finally moved back to Japan from Shanghai, they lived in a large, thatched roof farm-
house surrounded by a ‘traditional’ Japanese garden. Later, in the early 1930s, Tange
moved to Hiroshima for high school, where his professional career was diverted from
literature to architecture when he saw drawings and materials for Le Corbusier’s 1930
competition submission for the Palace of the Soviet’s published in an art journal. Cor-
busier’s proposal for the new Soviet Congress combined a machine-like aesthetic and
order with a trademark aspirational monumentality, and abstract formal richness and
expression; it organised the whole complex of buildings and auditoria symmetrically
along a long axis, into an image of order, firmness and technological progress. Tange,
who would be labelled the ‘national architect’ of Japan by the 1950s, concluded early on
that “one of my most important undertakings was the effort to uncover the secret of
[Corbusier’s] appeal.”

9 Ibid.
10 For further reading on the palace of the Soviet competition and entry, finally won by the Stalinist neoclassi-
12 For drawings, photographs and writing on the Hiroshima Memorial Peace Park, see, for example, Kenzo Tange, Takashi Asada, and Otani Sachio, “Palace of Peace, Hiroshima; Architects,” Aujourd’hui Art et Architecture, no. 8 (1956): 74–77.
13 Dower discusses common popular resentment about having been deceived, or led blindly into the war,
after the American occupation forces arrived. John W. Dower, “Post-War Japan: Cultures of Defeat, Cultures
The Hiroshima Memorial Park and Museum’s abstraction and tendency towards an absence of Japanese or other obvious historical, ideological references or symbolism were a reflection of a popular deep suspicion and rejection of pre-war and pre-modern Japanese aesthetics, ritual spaces, elements and symbolism in architecture during the late 1940s and early 50s. This paralleled a widespread anger that the Japanese people had been deceived and led blindly into the war. Amidst a rise in uprootedness, internal unrest, conflict and communist activity in the 1930s, intellectuals and the state became concerned with the recovery of ‘traditional’ Japanese aesthetics; part of the recovery of an “organic link” between Japanese state and people and of a cultural mission or moral crusade to liberate Asia from the destruction of the West, modernity and enlightenment values. A short-lived, but nonetheless future-altering rejection of ‘Japanese-ness’, and the new space and aesthetic in the city were especially evident in housing, which became of primary concern to architects after the war, when 4.2 million units were immediately needed.

On the other hand, and amidst accelerating rebuilding and urban growth, the museum stands like a testimony to an increasing optimism and point of agreement amongst most influential architects who were otherwise often at odds during the time. Namely, it seems that despite the horrors and destructive power wrought by Man’s most advanced use of scientific reason and technological development (exemplified by the nuclear bomb), if applied humanistically, democratically and non-ideologically, scientific rationality and technology could and should be used to achieve new progress, order and – perhaps most pressingly – newly ‘rational’ forms of living. “[P]ositivism and materialism dominated the needs of Japanese society [and] functionalism served as a practical model for Japanese architects conceiving the social role of architecture beyond ideological differences.”

Under the ‘nuclear umbrella’ of American defence – and amidst a sharp rise in worker power, unionisation, strikes and takeovers, politicisation, and communist and socialist parties – the Japanese government, industrialists and the American occupation authorities in Japan went about reforming, liberalising and ‘secularising’ the nation’s colonial-era industrial capacities and organisation. In 1947, Prime Minister Shigeru
Yoshida announced that the objective pursuit of economic growth was the number one imperative of the nation.  

Whether in individual houses or multi-unit buildings, private or public, there was a huge degree of cross-referencing of Western and earlier Japanese examples in the debate over what the national dwelling (kokumin jūtaku), apartment or house should look like. 

Despite widespread agreement on the pursuit of democratic, humanist, technological rationalisation amongst prolific architects of the period – this including Tange, his former employer Kunio Maekawa and a future collaborator, Kiyonori Kikutake – one of the major points of disagreements was about the plan. For instance, to what degree should the Japanese architect adopt Western typologies versus native ethnographical principles? What type or degree of programming, interior spatial composition and subdivisions, or lack thereof, truly constituted a non-ideological, apolitical functionalism?

Tange himself was engaged in debates with other members of the highly influential New Architects Union (NAU), pitting ideas of openness, flexibility and universality of the plan against varying ideas about the plan’s functionalist rationalisation, and subdivision into distinctly separate areas for defined domestic activities and functions suited to the life of a ‘modern’ nuclear family. Another core area of controversy in architectural composition that emerged after Japan regained its de jure independence from the United States swirled around a resurgence of Japanese style and references in architecture. As has been a recurrent theme in Japan since its full opening to the West, for those who chose to pursue references to historical Japanese aesthetics – or even simply artistic expression – there was a problem of integrating a representation belonging to an ar-

21 Yoshida put it succinctly in his memoirs: “The grand concept of basing Japanese diplomacy principally on friendship with the United States will in all probability not be changed in the future–nor should it be changed. It arises not from the temporary postwar situation in which Japan found herself but rather from the road she has followed ever since the Meiji Restoration. A maritime nation, Japan has no choice but to engage in overseas trade if she is to support her ninety million inhabitants. This being the case, her chief partners should be the United States and Great Britain, countries whose relations with Japan, in trade as well as history, have been closest, countries that are economically prosperous and technologically advanced. This is not essentially a question of either dogma or philosophy, nor need it lead to a subservient relationship; it is merely the quickest and most effective way–indeed, the only way–to promote the prosperity of the Japanese people.” Terry Edward MacDougall, “Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Transition to Liberal Democracy,” International Political Science Review 9, no. 1 (1988): 55–69.


22 See, for example, Izumi, “Rethinking the Social Role of Architecture in the Ideas and Work of the Japanese Architectural Group NAU.”

23 Ibid.

24 “Tange’s impulse toward mystification was nonetheless also underpinned by a constant search for historical evidence and a more concrete argument. “Perhaps he felt the need to align himself with those who had discredited one set of myths (the divine origins of imperial family) and yet desired to establish spiritual roots for his Japanese cultural identity that would not be subject to verification through the archaeological record.” Jonathan M Reynolds, “Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition,” The Art Bulletin 83, no. 2 (2001): 316–41.


26 “In the subsequent history of Japanese Architecture, extending over more than a thousand years, it proved impossible to advance beyond the form of Ise. It became the prototype of Japanese architecture. Is there anywhere another equally clearly defined form that has persisted through such a long history? The entire later course of Japanese architecture starts at
chaic mode of production and living with new technologies of manufacture, building, materials, construction processes and daily life.

Despite the embrace of modernist technological rationalisation so evident in projects such as Hiroshima and his later 1960 Tokyo Bay, Tange himself was always concerned with developing an architecture that referred to things both modern and simultaneously essentially Japanese – if only, as he remarked, in “spirit and not the details”. Thus, despite the abstraction and blankness of the Hiroshima Museum, it could be credited with an essential Japanese-ness in, for example, its pilotis, which for Tange should not only be associated with Corbusier’s five points, but more essentially with Japanese shrine architecture. The later was epitomised for him by the 7th-century Ise Shrine, which he lauded as the origin of Japanese architecture and one that has never been improved upon. In another sense, the idea that the Hiroshima Museum was both modern and Japanese could come from the oft-repeated notion that traditional Japanese architecture, especially the relatively abstract, simple, refined and elegant Sukiya-zukuri ‘style’ attributed to the famous Shoin buildings at Katsura, was ‘already modern’. This was the contention of many influential Modernist architects. In fact, following a visit to the 17th-century Katsura Imperial Palace, Walter Gropius wrote to Le Corbusier on the back of a postcard: “Dear Corbu, all we have been fighting for has its parallel in old Japanese culture.”

Western Modernist architects often saw in pre-modern Japanese art and architecture a modularity, rationality, honesty of structure and openness that all seemed to follow the ethos of ‘form follows function’. However, these kinds of attribution often seem

Ise: The use of natural materials in a natural way, the sensitivity to structural proportion, the feeling for space arrangement, especially the tradition of harmony between architecture and nature, all originated here.” Tange and Kawazoe, Ise, Prototype of Japanese Architecture, 16. As quoted in Reynolds, “Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition.”

27 Isozaki cautions against using this term to describe the Ko-shoin building at Katsura and cites Hidetoshi Saito’s use of the “unusual term kirei-zashiki (handsome drawing room with tatami) instead”. A. Isozaki, D. B. Stewart and S. Kohso, Japan-ness in Architecture (MIT Press, 2011), 278.

28 Reynolds discusses similar characterisations of those made by Gropius by the architects Bruno Taut, Richard Neutra and McNiel during the 1950s and early 60s. “[The architect working within the Japanese architectural tradition] achieves richness in his structures not with arbitrarily introduced ornaments but through subtle utilization of exposed structural elements, natural materials, and meticulous craftsmanship. Such contemporary features of Western architecture as the post-and-lintel skeleton-frame construction, the modular system, flexibility of plan, the close indoor/outdoor relationship, and ornamental quality of structural system… were anticipated by the design principles of such an architectural disciple.” In “A Traditional Japanese House: The Esthetic Discipline,” Progressive Architecture 35, no. 12 (n.d.): 109. In Reynolds, “Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition.”

29 “Japan’s indigenous architecture was evoked as an exemplar of rational design, culturally innate and therefore subject to ‘taint’ from the West. This was particularly pronounced within a modernist framework, which found both lineage and justification for modern architectural practice in traditional Japanese architecture.” Peter McNeil, “Myths of Modernism: Japanese Architecture, Interior Design and the West, c. 1920-1940,” Journal of Design History 5, no. 4 (1992): 281–94.

30 Isozaki, Stewart and Kohso, Japan-ness in Architecture, 265–79.


I. The Ambivalence of the Blank Page

to be unaware of or wilfully ignored – as Isozaki explains Tange did in his perpetuation of a Japanese origin myth for modernism – its lavish excesses, ornamentation and romanticism. Indeed, _Katsura Imperial Palace_ was designed and built in stages for a restless prince’s romantic and leisurely seclusion from the Imperial Capital; contrary to surface appearances, the palace’s composition and construction did not, in fact, use strict standard measures and modules, nor were its makers primarily concerned with anything approaching rationalist or functionalist architecture per se. Apparently, the standard measures of _shoin_ architecture called _kiwari_ were “deviated” from or “deconstructed” at _Katsura_. Instead, builders or _daiku_ (“traditional Japanese design-builder-priest”) abandoned their own regional or guild-like rules and developed customised measures and elements as scenography, to frame perspectives over the intricately composed gardens and landscapes and recreate romantic literary sceneries, many apparently derived from the 12th-century _Tale of Genji_. The palace’s location and name itself is based on a passage from its poetic scenery: “[f]ar away, in the country village of Katsura, the reflection of the moon upon the water is clear and tranquil.”

34 Isozaki points out that in his book on Katsura, Tange focused on describing and photographing elements that would mythologise Katsura as a predecessor or source for Modernism, while omitting other more elaborate ornamented features, of which there are many: Isozaki, Stewart, and Kohso, _Japan-Ness in Architecture_.

35 On the other hand, it should be noted that Tange also remarked that Katsura and earlier Japanese architecture were too concerned with expression or the elevation of taste or literary references over functionality. By contrast, Western architects, he wrote, had worked consistently to combine the “functional and expressive, material (technological) and artistic”. Stewart, _The Making of a Modern Japanese Architecture: 1868 to the Present_, 205–7. See also Izumi’s discussion of Tange’s critique of ‘traditionalists’ and functionalists in Izumi, “Rethinking the Social Role of Architecture in the Ideas and Work of the Japanese Architectural Group NAU.”


37 As Sarvimäki explained, Heinrich Engel pointed out that “it is important to note that the tatami has never, not even fictitiously, functioned as a module of any kind.” In spite of this, however, numerous analyses of Japanese architecture still regard the _tatami_ mat as a standardised module of Japanese residential architecture, whereas little attention has been paid to the primary modular methods based on column distance, or _ken_; the same applies to _ma_, which is another reading of the same ideogram, and to other discrepancies. Sarvimäki, “Japanese Module Interpreted De-Quotations of Re-Quotations on Katsura Villa.”

38 “Shaku, a 30.303-cm. module system was originally introduced into Japan from China, and was developed in the apprenticeship system based on the dominant structural system called _kiwari_ (sizing of timbers). Later, the columnation systems of Kiwari were developed further in _bashinwari_ (arrangement of columns). Particularly in the Sukiya style, the placement of the Tatami mat in the whole area of the room became common, and the sizes and arrangement of the Tatami mat became systematized in Tatamiwari. In this process, the size of the Tatami mat became unified and linked to the measurement of the Japanese body. Thus, the structural and material balances of Japanese architecture were closely united with its spatial proportions, functions, ornamentations, detailed arrangement of facilities, and human scale.” Kuroishi Izumi, “Mathematics for/from Society: The Role of the Module in Modernizing Japanese Architectural Production,” in _Nexus Network Journal_ (Springer, 2009), 201–15. Izumi, “Mathematics for/from Society: The Role of the Module in Modernizing Japanese Architectural Production.”


12 I. The Ambivalence of the Blank Page
1.1 Architecture and Real Subsumption

As we have seen, while definitions of functionalism were contested amongst members of NAU after the war, the concept was broadly accepted as the foundation for a new objective ‘humanist’ project and common ground in science, technology and reason that might transcend historical class conflict and ideological differences. NAU was established as a union between five other architectural groups in Japan in 1947, the same year that the most influential architect at the time in Japan, and its most famous member, Maekawa, wrote an article in the magazine Kenchiku Bunka (Architectural Culture) imploring architects to consider their political role and develop architecture concerned with humankind (ningen). In 1947, another key member of the group, Ryūichi Hamaguchi, wrote a book – The Architecture of Humanism (Hyūmanizumu no kenchiku) – which was to become central to the discourse and work of the group. In it, he explains that architecture should be built based on functionalism using rational engineering principles and industrial materials such as steel, concrete and glass, should be built for the people, and should be realised in a beautiful International Style.

42 Sarvimäki, “Japanese Module Interpreted De-Quotations of Re-Quotations on Katsura Villa.”
43 Isozaki, Stewart and Kohso, Japan-NESS in Architecture, 282.
45 “In 1947, Maekawa Kunio – the most influential architect in Japan at the time – publicly raised criticism against the system of Japanese modern architecture for its lack of concern about “humankind” (ningen) and politics. It was this public shift in architectural discourse that led Japanese architects to consider uniting as means of ensuring the social influence of their movement.” Izumi, “Rethinking the Social Role of Architecture in the Ideas and Work of the Japanese Architectural Group NAU.” Izumi also cites the MID Group, “‘1947 Nen No Kaiko,’” Shinkenchiku (New Architecture) 23, no. February (1948): 26. Izumi continues: “In the same year, the leaders of the five aforementioned groups came together to establish Shin Nihon Kenchikuka Shūdan (New Architects’ Union of Japan [NAU]). The previously disparate groups were now newly and collectively constituted as a single body with the aim of democratizing Japanese architectural society.”
46 As a nationwide organisation integrating them in a development way, the “New Japan Architect Group (NAU)” was founded in 1947 (Showa 1111). Ikebeama actively participated in NAU’s activities since its inception. As a publishing activity, NAU issues a “architectural newspaper” and a magazine. From The Far North of Post-war Modernist Architecture – An Essay on Kiyoshi Ikebe: Kazubiko Nanbu, Syno-Modanizumu-Kenchiku-No-Kyokushoku (Tokyo: Shokokus, 1999).
47 “Ryuichi Hamaguchi who wrote ‘Building of Humanism’ was also appointed Associate Professor in charge of architectural history and architectural theory in 1947. NAU shifted conceptually during its active period between 1947 and 1951 to focus on the ideas of modernism, humanism, and functionalism.” Izumi, “Rethinking the Social Role of Architecture in the Ideas and Work of the Japanese Architectural Group NAU.”
48 The last point, however, seems to contradict other statements in which, to the contrary, he expressly rejects aestheticisation and thoroughly endorses the dictum ‘form follows function’. “In his book Architecture of Humanism (Hyūmanizumu no kenchiku, 1947), Hamaguchi expressed his understanding of humanism as based on Le Corbusier’s cultural interpretation and connected it to the architecture of modernism as follows: ‘Modern architecture is the architecture of the people, and is based on the idea of humanism spiritually inherited from the Renaissance.’ He also referred to Le Corbusier’s design of Tsentrosoyuz in Russia and stated that a building based solely on functionalism is beautiful, that the fundamental aspect of the architecture of modernism is functionalism, and that the beauty of architecture has to be its result and not its purpose.” Ibid.
The historical rupture of the post-war period, however, was not the first time that the design and rationalisation of buildings, and notably housing, became of principal concern to the Japanese state. In the 1850s and 60s, the United States and several European countries militarily forced Japan to end more than 200 years of sakoku (economic and cultural isolation) and by 1864 the shogun was advocating kaikoku (open country). 49 Treaties forced an opening up to trade, and foreign commercial presence on oppressive terms ignited reforms, an internal civil war and political upheaval, and mass inflation on essentials, uprooting workers and farmers. 50 A series of carnivals – a form of political protest, disguised because they were otherwise banned – spread throughout most of the archipelago; they lasted almost a year and eventually erupted into mob violence and riots. 52 People danced in the streets in costumes, chanting “eejanaika”, a defiant and nihilistic phrase that can be translated as “Who cares?”, “Why not?” or “What the hell?”, and has been interpreted as, for instance, “Who cares if we take our clothes off?”, “Who cares if we have sex [in the streets]?”. 53 54 The period of unrest and seeming chaos was counteracted by the ruling, mostly reformist former samurai classes and led to a programme of virulent nationalism combined with modernisation, propelling a series of sweeping and unprecedented cultural and political reforms under the new Meiji regime, whose political project can be epitomised via various examples of its foundational maxims fukoku kyōhei (rich country, strong military) and sbokusän kōgyō (give rise to industry). 55 56

58 Hirakawa, “Japan’s Turn to the West.”
59 Jordan Sand has developed what we would characterise as a genealogy of a modernity and biopolitics of family, house and home in Japan: Jordan Sand, House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880-1930 (Harvard Univ Asia Center, 2005).
1.8 A series of carnivals – a form of political protest, disguised as carnival because they were otherwise banned - spread throughout most of the archipelago, and lasted almost a year. People danced in the streets in costumes, chanting eejanaika, a defiant and nihilistic phrase that can be translated as “Who cares?”, “Why not?”, or “What the hell?”
Though wide-reaching taxation and archipelago-wide cadastral surveys date to the 7th century and were well organised by the shogun as early as the 17th century, villages and everyday life remained to a great degree autonomous of any centralised control until the Meiji era. This radically changed when the new national government began to strategically manage a transformation of Japanese daily life, with particular concern for the organisation and welfare of even poor farmers and workers. Shortly thereafter, in 1879, the first group of modern Japanese architects graduated from Tokyo’s College of Technology (Kōbūdaigakkō, later to become Tokyo University’s Faculty of Engineering), having been tutored primarily by the English architect Josiah Conder. A graduate of the Architectural Association, he was eventually nicknamed the ‘father of modern Japanese architecture’. Along with several other Western architects and surveyors – many who had built in Western colonies in the region – he had begun designing government buildings and houses for merchants since even before the Meiji restoration. Western architects, engineers and surveyors working in Japan at first came to seek their fortune by offering modern buildings and consultancy on modern manufacturing. Soon the government began to seek out oyatoi gaikokujin (government-employed foreign engineers and architects) and there was fierce competition with other architects to establish their own appeal and recognisable style, but more importantly to achieve difficult technical building goals under the pressure of budgets and workers untrained in the techniques necessary for the realisation of these foreign assemblies. They therefore needed to become competent managers with strategies for the organisation and management of material sourcing, supply logistics, and the training and re-organisation of Japanese labour to maximise construction productivity on sites.

An enterprising Irish surveyor, described by the architect and critic Fujimori Terunobu as an ‘adventure engineer’, Thomas Waters came to Japan during the 1860s before the Meiji officials began to invite foreign experts. He was given the assignment to design and supervise the construction of Japan’s first mint in 1868. The Mint at Osaka would house machines imported from Hong Kong via the United Kingdom to produce new “uniform coinage of high quality” – one of the demands of the British government, which played a part in imposing the unequal trade agreement (along with the US). The Glasgow-trained Waters designed the building to be constructed of brick with iron

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66 See Mizuta, “Making a Mint: British Mercantile Influence and the Building of the Japanese Imperial Mint” and Vivers, “The Role of British Agents and Engineers in the Early Westernization of Japan with a Focus on the Robinson and Waters Brothers.”
columns supports – the choice of materials a financial boon for a merchant who had introduced him to the Japanese government. 69 The compound of buildings included the factory at its centre and bungalows adorned with neo-classical pediments and Tuscan columns for Western foremen. 70 Initially, he imported bricks from British Hong Kong for the mint, but for a later project to build a new brick, ‘Western-style’ Ginza district of Tokyo after the older one was destroyed by fire, he had three industrial kilns constructed near Tokyo. 71 As was the case in other projects of the period, at Ginza, massive amounts of glass – a revolutionary material and concept for Japan – were imported there from Europe. Seeing a historical opportunity, Waters became involved in a project to build the first glass factory, which was completed at Shinagawa, Tokyo in 1875. 72

Masonry and stone were the only ‘civilised’ materials proper for architects in Josiah Conder’s architecture curriculum. These materials needed to be managed by a nexus of professions imported from Europe, including experts in engineering, architecture and geology, the latter itself also included in Kōbudaigakkō’s architecture curriculum. 73 The manufacturing of industrial building materials, and their use on a building site, began to seal the fate of historical building practices and carpenter ‘guilds’ in Japan. Waters would begin to introduce to Japan a rationalisation of the production process that divorced design or conception from the making, realisation of a building on site. Processes which would divide Japanese daiku (“traditional Japanese design-builder, carpenters” 74) builder, artisans and craftsmen from the knowledge and management of the building process – a process which was to increasingly become the sole domain of the master architect in Japan. The choice of Westerners to designate daiku as carpenters in Japan reduced their position to a subservient one in the process of realising architecture, 75 undermining the fact that they performed the roles of the architect, engineer, contractor and carpenter, but also often assisted in or performed religious Shinto functions for the initiation of different stages in the realisation of architecture. 76 Waters, and soon enough newly graduating Japanese architects, would, of course, lay out the plan in drawings annotated with exact measures and with a strict modularity that would govern the whole and which obligated the workers and daiku to follow faithfully.

67 Vivers, “The Role of British Agents and Engineers in the Early Westernization of Japan with a Focus on the Robinson and Waters Brothers.”
69 Vivers, “The Role of British Agents and Engineers in the Early Westernization of Japan with a Focus on the Robinson and Waters Brothers.”
70 Mizuta, “Making a Mint: British Mercantile Influence and the Building of the Japanese Imperial Mint.”
71 Vivers, “The Role of British Agents and Engineers in the Early Westernization of Japan with a Focus on the Robinson and Waters Brothers.”
72 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 5.
75 Ibid., 28.
76 Ibid., 29.
77 Ibid., 31.
Daiku – and, for example, Kyama Hidenoshin at the 1863 Glover House in Nagasaki – would go to great lengths to achieve wayo-setchu- (Japanese–Western Compromise), complete with swinging doors, Tuscan capitals to the wooden columns and keystones in the lattice-work arcade. To achieve an eclectic Western appearance, he used “traditional [Japanese] post and beam timber frame and walls of bamboo laths infilled with layered clay, mud and seaweed, and finished off with lime plaster”. Later, many daiku bureaucratised, adapted to the demands of larger sites and industrial materials, and became more like general design-build contractors, even hiring new architecture graduates as internal designers; they eventual became the predecessors to Japan’s contemporary, giant design-build contractors. Other daiku became state bureaucrats in the new legal framework that regulated building and in, for instance, the new Construction Bureau. Daiku groups would challenge the authority of architecture in the 1890s because many patrons amongst politicians and industrialists who had difficulties with the organisation and demands of the daiku would turn to the architect and a new form of waged construction worker. The Shokkō Gundan corps of construction worker was organised by Itō Tamekichi, an attendee at Conder’s courses, a member of the newly formed Association of Japanese Architects, and apparently the first to open a private design office in Japan. He was an assistant to one of its professors, the Italian architect Giovanni Cappelletti – who took him to the United States – and he published the book Nihon kenchiku kōzō kairyōhō, which he translated as Improved Architecture for Japanese Dwellings.

In the book – in which he called himself an “American Architect” – he abandoned the earlier eclectic and somewhat technocratically constrained aesthetic of his triangle truss-frame 1890 Safe from Three Damages House in an attempt to draw daiku and a wider audience into a modernising process through familiar aesthetics. The joinery and con-

1.9 Daiku performed the roles of the architect, engineer, contractors, and carpenters but also often assisted in or performed religious, Shinto functions for the initiation of different stages in the realisation of architecture.

82 Ibid., 191–93.
83 Tamekichi Itō, Nihon Kenchiku Kōzō Kairyōhō (Tokyo: Kyōeki Shosha, 1892).
85 Ibid.
struction, though, were largely adapted from American systems that used nails and iron straps but tried to integrate, in modified form, some existing daiku tools and techniques. Though his manual emphasised resistance to natural disasters as a main motivation, Itō was interested in the reorganisation of the entire process of building. A year after the publication, he formed the Shokkō Gundan. The first term is a combination of a word for artisan and industrial or technological, while gundan refers to a kind of ‘corps’ or army. These workers were to be wage-earning employees, trained in new building techniques, rather than coming through the artisan or daiku guild-like apprentice system. Amidst the daiku’s shift to mimicking Western aesthetics and to his (false) claim that daiku built houses were not earthquake resistant, Itō lamented that the artisan spirit of old Japan had declined and that the daiku “lacked a moral sense”. These figures, he wrote, could not compete with “civilized” people [bunmeikaku-jin].

Artisans, once they learn skills and escape from their masters, spread east and west. There is nothing to regulate them. No one commands or leads them. They don’t have belongings. They are the most pitiful creatures in our society. They are incubators of sin [tsumi]… So we have to teach them new knowledge and make them have shokunin virtue… make people know that they also have a lovable nature, which is naive.

Itō found many members of the Shokkō Gundan amongst those orphaned in the destructive Nōbi earthquake. Corps members were given military-style uniforms, organized into a system of ranks, and trained in night schools not only concerned with technical skills but with character and behaviour. They were to embody loyalty to the client, and if they showed laziness, were to be disciplined. They would “follow [the] orders of the upper-level members”, of which the architect – Itō – was the head. The Japanese Labourer’s Union (Rōdō Kumiai) was formed at the same time as Itō’s Gundan, and while both promoted an increased social status and concern for the welfare of the workers, the Gundan did not acknowledge the conflicting interests of capital and labour, rejected workers’ autonomy over their own organisation and their ability to discuss interests, and denied the legitimacy of fighting for wage increases. As will be discussed in the following chapter, a political history of manufacturing industries in Japan during the 1950s and 60s also teaches us that a loss of autonomy, standardisation and de-skill-ing can become one of the most significant sources of worker insubordination, and must be strategically and reflectively overcome with divisions of labour, automation and industrialisation, and the automisation of production – which began as early as the mid-1950s in Japan.

90 Ibid.
This brings us back to post-war Japan. Conflicts, strikes, factory takeovers and historically unprecedented radical politicisation amidst the massive increase in worker power were suppressed through a combination of violence, police and American military force, but more importantly and significantly by the modernisation of the city and production processes; by a concern for welfare, culture, health and leisure; and by, as we have seen, the project to reflectively redesign daily life and ‘technologically rationalise’ spaces of reproduction and production. As seems the case with NAU and architecture in post-war Japan, this was a process that was ‘blindly’ embraced as a destined liberation from nature and history. The history of the emergence of architecture as a profession, as an organisation of manufacturing and production, but also of course, as we shall see, an organisation of urban space and architectural typology reveals precisely what was at stake at large for architecture and the production of the capitalist city: namely, what the economist Karl Marx termed the real subsumption\(^{92}\) of labour, and therefore the construction of labour subjectivity:

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(C)\text{apitalism revolutionizes both the groupings into which society is divided” and “the technical processes of labour”... the unity of these two moments (social groupings and technical processes) constitutes “a specifically capitalist mode of production”... (O)n the basis of this formal subsumption there is erected a set of “methods, means and conditions” of production which Marx terms the real subsumption of labour under capital.}^{93,94}
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The basic factor in this process is the continual growth of constant capital with respect to variable capital. In contemporary capitalism, as is well known, capitalist planning expands enormously with the transition to monopolistic and oligopolistic forms, which involve the progressive extension of planning from the factory to the market, to the external social sphere.\(^{95}\)

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95 Panzieri, “The Capitalist Use of Machinery: Marx versus the Objectivists.”


97 Izumi, “Rethinking the Social Role of Architecture in the Ideas and Work of the Japanese Architectural Group NAU.”

98 In the war’s immediate aftermath, following mass shortages, a desperate need for housing and suspicion
After the war, functionalism and progress by prominent members of NAU Kiyoshi Ikebe and Nishiyama Uzō meant that the national reform of housing was to be based on rationalisation for economic industrial production, and that the interior arrangements of space was to follow ‘realist’ ethnographic studies but also implement some spatial modernisations.96 97 ‘Bare’ and technocratic examples were influenced by the desperate need for housing and the shortage of resources but also by the rationalities, structures and materials of war equipment manufacturing.98 Ikebe’s 1950 Residence No. 3,99 100 101 Kiyoshi Seike’s 1953 My House,102 and Makoto Masuzawa’s 1953 9 Square Tsubo House103 attest to a kind of bare industrial housing but also to an upending of the spatial organisation of the historic-ritual house and even a rejection or lack of interest in adopting Western types. Several architects including Ikebe and Kenji Hirose designed over 50 case study houses; for example Seike designed 94 houses from 1941 to 1974 without names – they were simply referred to by their number in a sequence of experiments.104 105 106 Other members of NAU such as Ryuichi Hamaguchi, while sharing points of agreement with the former, argued for a functionalism more defined by the subdivision of interior for hygiene, individualism, democracy and labour economy for the liberation of women.107 Yet other members of the group and their protégées, such as Tange and Kiyonori Kikutake, also pursued a technological rationalisation in industrialisation, construction

of Japanese cultural narratives after the war, there were some architects who looked at means of re-purposing wartime manufacturing industries towards the production of housing. In 1946, Kunio Maekawa, a former staff member of Le Corbusier and of Antonin Raymond, a Czech-American architect who lived in Japan and became a prominent architect there, designed a pre-fabricated prototype housing system called Premos for the Manchurian Aircraft Company that rejected references to historical Japanese architecture and was starkly industrial though made of wood amidst metal and concrete rationing. The prototype never became popular in cities but instead became widely used by the occupation forces and as coal miner and railroad worker housing.

97 Concerned with rationalising production and economy Ikebe’s 1950 Residence No. 3 rejected the Japanese shaku measure and was based instead on a three-metre grid module measure used by European Modernists and used plywood and available industrially produced materials.
102 103 ‘Bare’ and technocratic examples were influenced by the desperate need for housing and the shortage of resources but also by the rationalities, structures and materials of war equipment manufacturing.100 101 Kiyoshi Seike’s 1953 My House,102 and Makoto Masuzawa’s 1953 9 Square Tsubo House103 attest to a kind of bare industrial housing but also to an upending of the spatial organisation of the historic-ritual house and even a rejection or lack of interest in adopting Western types. Several architects including Ikebe and Kenji Hirose designed over 50 case study houses; for example Seike designed 94 houses from 1941 to 1974 without names – they were simply referred to by their number in a sequence of experiments.104 105 106 Other members of NAU such as Ryuichi Hamaguchi, while sharing points of agreement with the former, argued for a functionalism more defined by the subdivision of interior for hygiene, individualism, democracy and labour economy for the liberation of women.107
104 106 For many of the above-mentioned examples, see Seizo Uchida, Yoetsu Fujitani and Mitsuo Okawa, Zusetsu Kindainihon Jūtaku-Shi – Bakumatsu Kara Gendai Made (Nihongo) Tankōbon (Illustrated History of Modern Japanese Houses-From the End of the Edo Period to the Present) (Kajimashuppankai, 2001), https://books.google.es/books?id=aM8pAQAAIAAJ.
I. The Ambivalence of the Blank Page

figs 1.10-1.11 Ikebe Kiyoshi's House No. 38 (Ishizu House), 1958.

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figs 1.12-1.13  Keni Hirose, SH-1, 1953
fig 1.14-1.15 Nine-Square Tsubo House, Makoto Masuzawa, 1951
1.16 - 1.17 Mori House, Kiyoshi Seike, 1951.
fig 1.18-1.19  Seike House, Kiyoshi Seike, 1954.
fig 1.20 - 1.21 Apartment Houses of Reinforced-Concrete Construction, RIA Research Institute of Architects, 1955.
1.22-1.23 *Farnsworth House*, Mies van der Rohe, 1951.
and modularity, but emphasised spatial flexibility and openness. Tange argued that both ‘modern’ and ‘social realist’ theories and examples of housing had been mistaken in developing idealised abstractions and then attempting to broadly impose them. Interior space, he wrote, was “private” and should be conceived by people in accordance with the reality of their own lives.¹⁰⁸

The architecture critic Kurokawa Takashi wrote that Tange’s primary intention in the layout of his house was to achieve a space more ‘universal’ than Mies at his famous *Farnsworth House*.¹⁰⁹ According to Takashi, at *Farnsworth*, the asymmetrical plan and position of the terrace and entry limited the possibilities for an infinite number of ‘bed’ positions, and therefore fell short of a universal or ‘supra-functional’ space.¹¹⁰ Indeed, by lifting the living floor, Tange largely freed it from the gaze of neighbours but also eliminated the need for an entry along the perimeter. The house’s sole means of access was via a stair that landed flush through an opening centred along the length of the floor. The view of anyone entering the house was obstructed by fixed service elements, such as toilet, bath and kitchen – or, as the cultural critic Shunsuke Serizawa refers to them, ‘utensils’ (*kigu*) that “summarise the conditions necessary for the reproduction and maintenance of life”¹¹¹ – which surround the upper landing of the stair. By centring the ‘core’ lengthwise and pushing it to the north, the plan was opened up. Despite a four-bay configuration of the space where the *fusuma* screens could be slid into positions that would ‘softly’ divide it, Tange did not designate zones with pre-historic or modern programmes or functions, and in this sense pushed towards a kind of blank page on the interior of a ‘domestic’ space.


Tange participated in various architectural movement groups after World War Two, including NAU and Rei no Kai (That Group). In his article ‘Logics of Creation and of Movement’ (1955), he criticized the two ideological groups in conflict over functionalism and stated his own understanding of the concept. He claimed that neither the naive Modernist architect nor the naive Social Realist architect recognised the reality of people’s lives. He said that the former only abstracted the reality of people’s lives, creating designs that reduced living space in the name of function and that the latter only examined the contact point between spatial expression and living perception, creating contradictions with reality. Tange then argued that people’s lives, both economic and social, should be understood with flexibility, and that architectural creation is situated in the relationship between architectural space and the functions conceived by people in the reality of their own lives. Proposing that architectural expression could indeed be realized between the internal function (private) and the external function (public), he proclaimed, “Only beautiful architecture is functional.” Izumi, “Rethinking the Social Role of Architecture in the Ideas and Work of the Japanese Architectural Group NAU.”


¹¹⁰ Serizawa, “Kenchikka No Jitei Ni Arawareta Kazoku I sshiki (A Family Consciousness That Appeared in the Architect’s Own Residence).”

¹¹¹ Ibid.
I. The Ambivalence of the Blank Page

Gairaigo is a Japanese word originating or based on foreign-language terms and wasei-eigo (Japanese pseudo-Anglicisms).


Isozaki, Stewart and Kohso, Japan-Ness in Architecture, 55.

Isozaki, “Essay: Sei Shonagon, or Ariadne-Architecture in the Metropolis.”

Ibid.


“The age of the industrialists is here!” At an emergency board meeting of a major business federation, one director begged for calm in the face of U.S. occupation, reputedly assuring his colleagues (in English, no less) that “Our friends are coming.” Tsutsui, Manufacturing Ideology: Scientific Management in Twentieth-Century Japan, 122.


Ibid., 177-80.

Ibid., 163-65.


MacArthur also enlisted the Japanese American women’s rights activist Beate Sirota to write articles on women’s equality. Sirota wrote women’s rights into constitution – against the protests of the government, which said it did not fit into Japanese history, Japanese

Mies’ open plans were referred to in Japan with the transliteration gairaigo, meaning ‘universal space’ or ‘unlimited space’. In a 2006 essay entitled Sei Shonagon or Ariadne: Architecture in the Metropolis, the architect Arata Isozaki – who himself had worked in Tange’s office for 10 years and was a partner for another 10 – recalled the blank space and scenes of sprawling grids of beds without walls, or with flimsy, low partitions in the gymnasium refuge centres he remembered after the vast destruction of Japan’s frequent, devastating natural disasters, writing that “it was as if an archetypal form of dwelling by ‘living’ beings had emerged unexpectedly.” It reminded him of both the Shinden-Zukuri, Japanese Heian Era (794–1185AD) housing for feudal rulers that used movable partitions in flexible and programmatically ambiguous space, and of the modern office tower space that was emerging in a Tokyo moving towards immaterial production during the 1950s: a blank, ‘universal space’, un-partitioned, unobstructed, in which repeated stacked office floors were made possible by the concrete and steel frame, the fluorescent bulb and air conditioning. Isozaki notes that there were debates in Japan from the 1950s surrounding the appropriateness of what he refers to as this new ‘universal space’, likened to factories that housed Taylorist assembly lines, which were later even called “inhumane,” “homogenous space” by the architect Hiroshi Harara.

Isozaki’s archetypal blank page of the ‘universal plan’ (re)emerged in Japanese space and architecture in the wake of the firebombing of Tokyo’s historic fabric of mostly single- and double-story housing, leaving a virtual blank page under the command the American occupying force and the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), General Douglas MacArthur. The occupation oversaw a reform of the Japanese economy modelled on the welfare-oriented New Deal reforms put in place in the US following the Wall Street Crash of 1929. The welfare project was understood as politically imperative and can be exemplified by the fact that, facing resistance from US Congress to sending
food supplies after the war, MacArthur famously replied by cable “[s]tarvation breeds mass unrest, disorder and violence. Give me bread or give me bullets.” American occupation was initially welcomed by many industrialists and managers in Japan who had battled the demands of workers and the criticism of imperialist intellectuals and military leaders for what was perceived as unchecked greed and political monopoly. When the military consolidated power before the war, many industrialists had become heavily managed by the state and even in some cases nationalised. Upon the Japanese surrender, the director of a major business federation reassured his colleagues that “our friends are coming.”

The democratisation and rationalisation of Japan was at the core of the American occupation’s narrative in a programme to wipe away historical imperial and monopolistic figures, conglomerates, codes, old ideology and its aesthetic. Aside from the trial, executions and, in other cases, temporary purging of many wartime political figures, SCAP forced the breaking up the monopolies (zaibatsu) and power structures of the Imperial period, releasing opposition political party leaders from prison, lifting bans on communist and socialist parties, and permitting labour unions. In this new liberal environment, by 1947, a national labour union had been established, the first strike was organised and the Socialist Party and Communist Parties immediately swept over 35 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives. In 1947, a team of army officers with law degrees was assembled by MacArthur to write a new liberal Japanese constitution modelled on the American one in roughly a week. The constitution enshrined universal suffrage of the over-18s – something politicians had rejected but which had won wide popularity in a referendum called by MacArthur. Legal definitions of the family from the Meiji period – the system of patriarchal and eldest male inheritance – changed to katei and de jure equalised family member rights. The term katei, adapted from the English home, was already being used by late 19th century reformers to describe a household based on loving relations and marriage. The order that would have the

customs etc. There was a vote of universal suffrage for over-18s and they overwhelmingly approved the new constitution. Gordon, A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present, 235–37.

125 “A Civil Code of 1898 established family as the foundation of the patriarchal state, with the emperor at its head. During the Meiji period the emperor this new family system was signified by a kangi (Japanese character of Chinese origin) for ie, which literally means house. The legislation established the father of a now nuclear family as the sole owner of family property which was to be inherited by the eldest son. While the former family had been subordinate to the han (fief) or village community, the new unit, cemented in the family register system of 1871 was established as the new basic unit of the modern Japanese nation-state (Nishikawa Yuko, 20). The family was to become the naturalised microcosm reflecting the relationships in the nation at large, for the emperor, as the descendant of Amaterasu [was secularised] as the source of worldly political values, they likened his role to that of the benevolent father, concerned for his subject/children but requiring their undivided allegiance.” Duus, The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century, 19: 655.

126 Nishikawa Yuko and Manko Muro Yokokawa, “The Changing Form of Dwellings and the Establishment of the Katei (Home) in Modern Japan,” U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal, English Supplement, no. 8 (1995): 3–36. Yūko Nishikawa points out: “A model is an ideal and not a reality but a model has the power to shape reality… I treat this power as a political issue.”

127 Varying ideas of what being modern – ‘modern’ (modan), ‘modernisation’ (kindai-ka) and ‘modern living’ – were inspired by different reform groups. The four-member nuclear family had been associated with modernity and progress since the 1880s. Indeed, the
most far-reaching impact was the rural land reform of 1947 which re-distributed ownership of tiny plots of farmland to previously tenant farmers as a crucial stabilisation mechanism in a situation where it was feared that protest and unionism was “leading straight to communism”. Despite that fact that farmers were given land, they often owned tiny plots and though technologies improved agricultural production many were still unable to provide for themselves. Young people began to join the swelling service and industrial sectors in the city, leaving former community and extended family life behind.

The allied powers and Japanese government invested in infrastructure, and by 1955 established the Japan Housing Corporation (Nihon Jūtaku Kōdan) or JHC, which subsidised the construction of mostly slab block type danchi apartments by municipalities which often gave subsidies to private banks and insurance companies. The bulk of reconstruction, however, was left largely to the incentive of government-subsidised private borrowing by individuals and corporations. Eventually, facing labour demands, high membership levels of communist and socialist parties and the ‘threat’ of communism on Japan’s Western shores, huge sums of money were channelled to developers and industrialists, including the pre-war oligarchs or zaibatsu who had escaped dissolution by the occupying American forces. The open universal plan of the steel or concrete framed skyscraper – devoid of any traditional architectural elements, and in which the structure was visible – had already emerged in the factories that uprooted the first farmers from their fields, into the city and onto giant blank floors to work with machines during the Meiji industrialisation of the late 19th century. After the war, the ‘archetypal’ blank plan was industrially and functionally pragmatic for a Japan that would innovate and reinvent itself as an economic power to contain unforeseeable rapid shifts in an evolving mode of production. Isozaki recounted that this was the period when Tange’s and Hara’s, respectively, ‘universal space’, ‘unlimited space’ and ‘homogeneous’ space emerged in architecture. Tange, though, had encountered the spectre of the blank page before.

Meiji government introduced civil codes that redefined the legal definitions of the family as a patriarchal and eldest-male inheritance system referred to with the term ie. This model was being contested as early as the 1880s by figures such as women’s rights activist Kishida Toshiko, and by Christian reformers and civilian movements. Gordon, A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present, 89–91.
131 Yosuke Hirayama, “Reshaping the Housing System: Home Ownership as a Catalyst for Social Transformation,” in Housing and Social Transition in Japan (Routledge, 2006), 27–58.
133 Waswo, Housing in Postwar Japan-A Social History, 55–57.
134 Hirayama, “Reshaping the Housing System: Home Ownership as a Catalyst for Social Transformation.”
135 A few of the large zaibatsu corporations were saved from dissolution as bulwarks against the perceived threat of the Soviet Union and communism. There were also petitions by workers to save their jobs and therefore let the companies continue operating. Gordon, A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present, 239–40.
136 See, for example, E. P. Tsurumi, Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan (Princeton University
Kunio Maekawa, one of the founders of NAU, and a former employee in Corbusier’s Paris offices, had employed Tange during the late 1930s, when they worked on projects for the Japanese Imperial Government in the colony of Manchuria. Under the absolute rule of Imperial Japan, city planning and the ‘visionary skills’ of architects could proceed as if hypothetically met only with a “blank… piece of white paper”.

Not unlike other architects of the period, Tange was drawn to the possibilities of the virtual blank page of Hiroshima and Tokyo—a blankness that was the negative ground of, and must necessarily precede, the kind of projects that he most emulated, namely projects such as Michelangelo’s scheme for the Capitoline Hill in Rome, or Corbusier’s monumental buildings and utopian city planning.

It is in the blank page that we can locate a kind of common ground and apparent paradox of Tange’s architecture: on the one hand, its blankness implies a sheer, exceptional potentiality, an ahistorical openness and ‘clearing’—literally. On the other, the blank page makes visible and immediate an uncertainty or disorientation, what the political philosopher Paolo Virno— not unlike the Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani, who studied with Heidegger in the late 1930s—has described as the human sense of permanent insecurity in the world. This is one that becomes unrelenting amidst the historical destruction wrought in modernity, when humans find themselves increasingly outside the ‘special places’ or shelters of familiar customs, and historical forms of life and community.

In 1958, Kiyonori Kikutake—one of Tange’s colleagues and collaborators in the Metabolist group, which formed at the end of the 1950s—completed his contribution to Mies and Tange’s universal plan ‘game’ at Sky House. Built on a hillside at the northern edge of Tokyo, the house was composed of a perfectly square concrete waffle...

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137 Isozaki, “Essay: Sei Shonagon, or Ariadne-Architecture in the Metropolis.”
139 This is evident in Tange’s Tokyo Bay Project. See, for example, Zhongjie Lin, Kenzo Tange and the Metabolist Movement: Urban Utopias of Modern Japan (Routledge, 2010).
143 Ibid., 29–39.
144 Serizawa, “Kenchikka No Jitei Ni Arawareta Kazoku Isshiki (A Family Consciousness That Appeared in the Architects Own Residence).”

1.24 Osaka spinning factory (now Toyobo) designed by Eiichi Shibusawa.

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slab platform, 10 by 10 metres in area, and 65 centimetres thick, and lifted up to five metres from the uneven sloping ground below it by four wall columns 2.5 metres by 30 centimetres thick centred at each edge of the slab. The floor, perhaps the most emblematic of the lifted artificial ground motif of the 1950s and 60s, was conceived of as a perfectly blank, unobstructed, open, interior living space. The 7.2 by 7.2-metre interior room is created by a precisely centred enclosure of glass which could slide open in several places to connect the interior to the exterior corridor and to a staircase connecting to the street level. A series of sliding panels composed of a wood grid-frame and cloth could be adjusted over the northern and southern aspects of the interior perimeter for shading and privacy. A second, outer layer of screens could be slid over the exterior perimeter of the corridor at the edges of the platform. Unlike the bundled and central core of Tange’s house, Kikutake exploded the core, and pushed the utilities or ‘services’ to the periphery, reducing them to units that could be easily updated without disturbing the interior. He ‘plugged’ a prefabricated kitchen module and appliances into the outside of the southern edge of the interior boundary of the dwelling, slightly off-centre, and a prefabricated bathroom module into the eastern edge near the north-eastern corner.

Kikutake emphasised that the most important consideration was that the house be adaptable. In one set of nine plans for the project, he depicted as many arrangements as possible of the domestic furniture, leaving one plan completely blank. The design of a house does not begin from a preconceived set of rooms, but instead emphasises the relationship of the inhabitant to their surroundings. Indeed, the structural configuration freed the glass corners of the house’s enclosure from any obstruction of views out from its elevated perch. The psychological angst of the city dweller was of particular concern for Kikutake; he saw the potential to overcome the confusion and anxieties of the ‘real ground’ by giving the individual – and in his case the newlywed couple so celebrated in the post-war period of egalitarianism, romantic love and democracy – an open house in the sky from which to take in the tranquil moon reflected in the glass pinnacles of Tokyo’s new skyline.

The openness of the blank plan but also the flexibility in a planning-in for adaptation, the generic standardisation of industrial production of building materials, factory-pro-
1.27 *Sky House*, Kiyonori Kikutake, 1958. In one set of 9 plans for the project, he depicted several possible arrangements of domestic furniture, leaving one plan completely blank.
Sky House, Kiyonori Kikutake, 1958. Shortly after the initial construction Kikutake added a 4.2 meter by 3.8 meter private ‘pod’ room for his own child. Many more rooms were added over the following years.
duced service components and de-skilling of work (as we have seen epitomised in the 19th-century emergence of architecture) that make projects such as Sky House possible become indexical of what Marx also understood as early as the mid-19th century: that in advanced capitalist economies that approach the greatest degrees of concrete development, labour can no longer be thought of in one particular form, and individuals must pass with ease to different kinds of work that can only therefore require generic faculties common to all: “[a]s a rule, the most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete development, where one thing appears as common to many, to all.” 147 In its openness and flexibility, its abstraction and concretion, Sky House and the universal plan and blank page of architecture in post-war Japan casts into sharp relief the foundation and perpetual destructive character of post-war Japan's political-economic project. A destruction or deterritorialization from historical forms of life opens up the possibility of putting to work the very energies released – namely, the human animal’s most powerful, common, generic features and the wellspring of labour power: creativity and adaptability. 148 Virno argued that capitalist economic development draws on the creative ability of humans to adapt themselves to exceptional situations and to be integrated into new modes of production, and we can add is therefore necessarily grounded in a groundlessness or negation.

In The Destructive Character, Walter Benjamin wrote an ode to the forces of capitalism and fascism in Europe during the 1930s that would – not unlike the course of events unravelling at the very same time in the Japan and its empire – uproot and extinguish so many lives, including his own. 149 In the first lines of the short denkbild, Benjamin portrays the destructive character as an oppressive figure. Someone looking back over the course of their life might recognise that “almost all the deeper obligations they had endured originated in someone who everyone agreed had the traits of a ‘destructive character’”. 150 Nowhere is the destructive character’s oppressive force and obligation (tieferen Bindungen) more visible than in the uprooting and annihilation wrought by the events leading up to, surrounding and following the war. One recalls the camps and slums that people were forced to set up on the rubble and ashes of Japanese cities after the war, and the bare incarceration camps for Americans of Japanese heritage during its course, as paradigmatic of the destructive character’s exceptional force of obligation for people to adapt and be creative while remaining inside sovereign boundaries and the law of the constitution. Reflecting on his studies of Japan’s tumultuous past, Gregory Clancey, a former University of Tokyo Japanese historian, noted: “[h]ow the unexpected natural disaster and the normative machinery of governance intertwine, creating not

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only states of emergency but emergency-oriented states, is a topic we have only begun to explore despite a plethora of intriguing evidence.\footnote{151}

We need not look any further for an illumination of this principle of governance’s rendering of life as suspended in between the exception and ‘norm’ than to the production of universal space in US – the country that would deliver to Japan the most total destruction in history, then military occupy it and write its laws with absolute sovereignty. Manzanar in fact was one of ten extrajudicial (in direct violation of the US constitution) incarceration camps established inside the US in the 1940s.\footnote{152} Following the Japanese military’s attack on the Pearl Harbour naval station in Hawaii, 120,000 Japanese-Americans, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, were uprooted, given a week’s notice to sell everything they owned beyond what would fit in a suitcase, and were moved to a systematically organized, gridiron-plan camp of wooden barrack-like sheds with little privacy, constant surveillance and no escape in a flat, empty expanse of one of the hottest deserts on earth.\footnote{153} There, under the force of US law and its simultaneous suspension, they had little choice but to carry on making a new life in and to prove themselves non-threatening and patriotic. A 1944 press release for an exhibition at the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) of Ansel Adams’ photographs of the camp describes scenes of a loyal citizenry making cheerful and liveable homes, young women learning to make clothing, and of baseball and volleyball games.\footnote{154}

While the destruction of the blank page is the \textit{sine qua non} of capitalist development, and an index of the inclusion of bare life into politics, Benjamin also recognised that the greater a “shock” caused to the subject by the destructive character, the greater the chance that one might represent or personify (\textit{darstellung}) and embrace those traits themselves, radically threatening the exclusive rights or access of a ruling, owning and creative class to the power and potency of destruction.\footnote{155} Indeed, we could argue that this seems to be the case in Japan, where the gates to the exceptional space of the destroyer’s potentiality to embrace the blank page remain guarded. Inevitably, the potentiality of a historically radical openness is cloaked or contained in new systems of order, and as was the case in Japan, in the capitalist theology of perpetual growth, technologi-
1.29 Manzanar Internment Camp, California, 1942-45. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration - Dorothea Lange.

1.30-1.31 Ansel Adams photographs of Manzanar depicting “scenes of a loyal citizenry making cheerful and liveable homes.”
cal rationalisation and progress, and therefore in a positivistic imperative to be inventive and adapt. Nowhere was the institutional re-territorialisation of social life in Japan more important that on the scale of housing. The establishment of typological thinking as a deep structure underlying the subdivision of space, design and composition of housing would, by the late 1960s, have subsumed Japanese life and become so ubiquitous as to also appear as if it had sprung from somewhere fated, if not natural and timeless.\(^{156}\)

1.3 The Construction of New Types

The Japanese cultural critic Shunsuke Serizawa suggested that 2 or 3LDK type housing – the status quo and foundation of the economic miracle by the late 1960s in Japan – did not simply ‘naturally’ emerge as a product of the blossoming of modernity and its economic and technological progress.\(^{157}\) It was designed: a cultural project that needed to pass through stages of bunkai – disassembly or decomposition. For Serizawa, the first stage of disassembly (and we should add, reassembly) must rid Japanese housing of the ‘feudal’, symbolic, ritualised, multi-generational family; the second must establish the birth of romantic love and egalitarian couple through ‘the homogenous space’ in post-war Japan; and the third must establish the nuclear family and functional segmentation of private spaces for individual children. He argued that both through their blankness, lifting from the ground and sublimation of the blank page, Tange and Sky House had established a romantic space for the control of the ‘egalitarian’, romantic couple (after the war, marriages became increasingly elective and based on romance, rather than arranged, in Japan).\(^{158}\) For Serizawa, this kind of one-room house, however, would later become untenable at the nuclear family stage when the space could no longer remain open and ‘under the control’ of the couple.

For Kikutake, Sky House was a testing ground for future projects, in addition to simply being an opportunity for internal flexible partitioning and the arrangement of furniture

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\(^{156}\) Reflecting again on Sky House, we must also remember that as the architect’s own house, and in its blankness and concern with adaptability, the example is paradigmatic of the fact that the creativity of the modern architect, as designer, as author and producer, and as cultural intermediary, is also situated precisely in destruction as a negation of a given – one which necessarily precedes a reflective establishment of new positivities, and new order of life. In order to realise their own value in the market of Japanese urban space production, and claim the right to the existence of the profession, the architect must inevitably work to harness the blank page, openness, creativity and innovation, but, as we have seen, simultaneously bring order and unity to city life, so that the underlying reality of an increasing radical indeterminacy brought about by accelerating technological development, the sweeping away or severing of old ways of life and perpetual crisis does not spill into a greater, or prolonged encounter with shock. Here we would be wise not forget the role of counterrevolutionary projects that were key influences and inspiration to Tange: his idol Michelangelo in Renaissance Italy – whose patrons sought to bring new order and subjectivity to a cities threatened with radical worker power – or of his most important influence,
– which we should note was assumed to be Western, as for instance the double bed for the couple depicted in plans and photographs of the project. As we have seen, Kikutake introduced the possibility of expansion and, seemingly paradoxically, the realisation in stages of what reformers at the time were calling for with rationalised, democratised, hygienic modern living: the programmatic functionalisation and interior subdivision of the house. *Sky House* was designed with the intention that additional rooms could be prefabricated and hung beneath the waffle slab of the house. Shortly after the initial construction, he added a 4.2-metre by 3.8-metre private ‘pod’ room for his own child. Many more rooms were added over the following years. Serizawa argued that Kikutake’s house is paradigmatic of the disassembly and reassembly of modes of life and housing in Japan during the period because it was a sort of smooth transition machine that accommodated the third tenet of the reform of everyday life: private sleeping rooms for the couple and every individual child. In the pre-modern Japanese house, and indeed in much of housing up to the post-war period, the concept of *puraibashi* (privacy) was alien. Serizawa suggested that the eating/sleeping separation was concerned with establishing distinct oppositional sites within the house, one of intensive interaction and one of purported *puraibashi* and individuality, to be perceived as free from centralised control and surveillance. Privacy was associated with *homu*, which was also adopted from English and began to be used when the focus of reformers, cultural intermediaries and architects turned their attention to the design of houses and housing in the late 19th century.

Since the Meiji industrialisation of the late 19th century, and especially after the war, the de-skilled, mono-task, monotonous and alienating realm of toil in factories and offices was to become counterpoised by a new home (*homu*): the apartment, row or detached house as the sacred realm of the housewife’s labour of love guarding narratives of self-determination, leisure, love and privacy. For a majority of the rural population of farmers and workers, pre-industrial Japanese houses were spaces of extended family, wider community gathering, collective or extended family processing of food, and the production of wares by all its members, including young children. The latter, of course,

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Le Corbusier, who in a nihilistic, post-First World War Europe, coined his maxim: Architecture or revolution! Serizawa, “Kenchikka No Jitei Ni Arawareta Kazoku Isshiki (A Family Consciousness That Appeared in the Architects Own Residence).”

Ibid.


See, for example, Ezra F. Vogel, *Japan’s New Middle Class* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013).

did not attend school, which was only legally mandated during industrialisation (the mandatory number of years of school increased after the war). Pre-modern workers’ houses were often places in which entertainment, meals, ‘education,’ sex and sleep all coalesced within a programmatically ambiguous space. Equally so, the Japanese house was highly symbolic, ritualised and gendered, especially in larger houses, where it seems women and children slept in one room, while men often slept alone in another. Late 19th- and early 20th-century housing reform projects were slow to change the way the majority lived, but the state of exception, the blank page proceeding the war, and the architectural, financial, legal and technological measures opened up the necessary conditions for the reorganisation of daily life.

Nowhere was a disassembly and reassembly, and a rational re-organisation of daily life through housing more evident than in the Harumi Apartments, the first danchi public housing project of the Japan Housing Corporation, newly formed in 1955; it was commissioned by the office of Kunio Maekawa and led by Masato Ōtaka and Ichiro Kawahara. It was composed of a 110-metre-long, 32-metre-tall reinforced concrete frame, standing atop 20 piles driven an astounding 28 metres deep into its artificial ground infill on Tokyo Bay. The great depth of the piles owes to the fact that low ground in Japan is particularly vulnerable to liquefaction because of Japan’s extreme seismic activity; Tokyo is prone to over 2,000 earthquakes a year. The initial shock and subsequent fires of the 1923, magnitude-8 ‘Great Kantō’ earthquake (Kantō dai-jishin) devastated the city and left almost 200,000 dead and 2 million people homeless. Building codes were modernised and fireproof measures and materials mandated in its aftermath.

Coinciding with Japan’s first national employment and social security laws, special housing provision laws were enacted after the First World War under the pressure of a shortage of urban housing. Following the Kantō earthquake, a housing association law was enacted under the Ministry of Home Affairs and the first reinforced concrete public housing danchi were built under a government sponsored private association, Dōjunkai. The Dōjunkai apparently led to the perception of urban flats as a desirable form
1.32-1.33 Harumi Apartments, Kunio Maekawa, 1958.
1.34 Harumi Apartments, Kunio Maekawa, 1958.
1.35 - 1.36 Dojinkai Ninomiya Apartments, Kameki Tsuchiura, 1937

of housing for a small segment of the “bohemian” middle and upper-middle classes.\textsuperscript{174} In fact, in 1938, Maekawa himself lived in the stark, Hilberseimian \textit{Dōjunkai Ninomiya Apartments} in Tokyo, in a flat – exceptionally for the time – without \textit{tatami}.\textsuperscript{175}

Harumi’s 81 apartments were arranged back to back, only two units wide and one deep, so that the two short edges of each rectilinear plan could have windows with access to ventilation and light.\textsuperscript{176} Echoing the common motif of new ground in the sky, alike those of \textit{Hiroshima, Tange House} and \textit{Sky House}, Ōtaka and Kawahara wrote of Harumi that “[t]he density and confusion of… Tokyo give little hope for a new way of living together in a community.”\textsuperscript{177} Apartments at Harumi were accessed using a relatively cheap, seismically reinforcing skip-floor system like that of Le Corbusier’s \textit{Unite d'Habitation},\textsuperscript{178} which Maekawa became familiar with when he worked in the office from 1928 to 1930. Lifts brought residents to a landing at every three levels, from which they could reach their unit through a common core, either at that level, or via stairs one level above or below. The apartments’ perfectly rectilinear and square plans came in two sizes, 42 and 32 square metres, and were housed in cedar wood frames, including joists, beams and posts exposed to the interiors of the units, which were nestled between the concrete megastructure, and fixed into place with mortar filled into grooves cut into the wood.\textsuperscript{179}

The ‘soft’ connections evoke flexible historical Japanese connection details, which use sliding or locking or slotting wooden joinery connections enabling houses and pagodas to ‘dance’ during an earthquake.\textsuperscript{180} Ironically, during the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995, thousands of reinforced concrete structures in the city of Kobe crumbled, toppled and collapsed, but the nearby 33-metre-tall wooden \textit{Horyu-ji Temple} emerged unscathed as it had from the countless earthquakes it has withstood for over 1,300 years.\textsuperscript{181} This was a lesson that had already been learned before in the devastation of the Great Nōbi Earthquake of 1891. After early Western architects such as Conder and their pupils in Japan at Tokyo’s College of Technology had consistently derided Japanese building and wood as backwards for the past 20–30 years, the brick walls of factories, iron bridges, and modern structures came “crashing down”, while many older and
ancient Japanese buildings were unharmed. The new architects in Japan were forced to re-examine traditional Japanese building knowledge and would attempt to synthesise this with imported Western methods and systems. In 1879, the daikaku Tachikawa Tomokata prophesised that if Japan were built in modern materials imported from the West “all the country may become an empty field”.

Faced with Japan’s searing and humid summers, at a time when air-conditioning was not economical for housing, and due to the small size of apartments at Harumi, internal walls, latch-able swinging doors, solid fixed partitions for privacy, and corridors to access spaces independently without passing through one another would have made the units hot and stuffy, so the apartments were essentially one room (with a bathroom) but allowed for temporary partitioning with fusuma. Apartments were partially floored in tatami but a region of the apartment, which included the kitchen, bath, toilet and a space intended for chair-and-table dining, was floored with wood. Like other danchi projects of the period – for instance, Kikutake’s 1956 Tonogaya Apartments company housing – and like the first nDK type unit designed in 1951, Maekawa and Ōtaka shunned the tokonoma (alcove for the display of taste), the genkan (entry hall) and the zashiki (guest reception room). These spaces were now derided as backwards, feudal, inefficient and superstitious, and perceived as obstacles to achieving new democratic ideals. However, as Maekawa and Kawahara themselves argued, because the majority of people were reluctant to accept modern living, at Harumi they had sought to “resolve the tension between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern living’ by combining complementary elements”, referencing both pre-modern Japanese housing for its ‘flexibility’ but also the key hygienic and functionalist principles of ‘modern living’.

Common in photographs of the Harumi apartments are dining sets that were provided on loan to residents by the JHC. The furniture would presumably stage scenes of amiable nuclear family meals, such as the ones published in the Japanese Photo Gazette, or seen in American family television shows popular in Japan after the mass production of the television in 1953. A round table and chairs would now displace the symbolic

imperial capital Edo (later renamed Tokyo) during the pre-Meji Tokugawa period.


188 Ōtaka and Kawahara wrote in an article on the Harumi that “modern living” was imported to Japan from Western civilisation and had become unified in theory and expression after the war; however, even people of a “higher social strata are reluctant to adopt it.” The principles of ‘modern living’ in the West, they wrote, were “understood only by a small class of urban intellectuals in Japan… and should be tried out in more in single [detached] houses before being employed in large buildings of this sort.” Otaka and Kawahara, “Harumi Apartments.”

189 Ibid.

hierarchy of the positions taken in traditional meals with hierarchical serving and seating arrangements. The dining set, which could be screened by fusuma from the sleeping areas, likely also doubled as a desk as the rise of competition in the office and at school violated the seemingly private boundaries of the homu with homeworking and study.¹⁹¹

¹⁹² The Harumi kitchen design was the outcome of functionalist rationalisation studies carried out by Miho Hamaguchi, one of Japan’s first influential female architects. She worked for Maekawa’s practice before starting her own building research institute concerned with designing the house to be more efficient for the housewife to perform reproductive labour — or housework and care for the reproduction and maintenance workers.¹⁹³ In her book The Feudalism of Japanese Houses (Nihon Jūtaku no Hokensei),¹⁹⁴ she advocated moving the kitchen from its traditional ‘hidden’ location at the dark north side of the house to the south for light (a position previously occupied symbolically by the zashiki), and sought to optimise the arrangements of the new, industrially manufactured, hygienic kitchen equipment, including stainless steel sink and cabinets. She also studied the relationship of walls in the house so that, for example, the kitchen could be open to areas where children played to allow the housewife to watch them while performing other chores.¹⁹⁵ As was true for another key NAU member, Uzō Nishiyama, the realisation of an egalitarian, “isolated nuclear family cloister” necessitated a complete removal of pre-modern symbolic, ritual and ‘feudal’ aspects from the home.¹⁹⁶¹⁹⁷

The development of the Harumi apartment’s nDK-type plan and the typological notation system can be traced to the efforts of Nishiyama to arrive at a single solution for the Kokumin Jūtaku (national dwelling).¹⁹⁸ All Japanese housing at present is schematised

¹⁹¹ See, for example, the ethnographic studies in Chapter 1 of Waswo, Housing in Postwar Japan — A Social History.

¹⁹² The separation of the eating from the sleeping space was viewed as crucial for hygienic living but also provided a designated space for the performance of the family meal. Critically, it also provided a separation of space for new work and study demands without causing conflict in the schedules of other family members. Long commutes extended as housing projects colonised the countryside. Cramming for studies and exams increasingly extended into the late hours of the evening. See Ibīd., 61. Compulsory education, first introduced in 1890, increased from four to six years in 1907 was extended to nine years after the war, the number of students going on to secondary education increasing from 47.4 percent in 1955 to 79.4 percent by 1970. From the start, the official emphasis was heavily on elementary education, four years of which became compulsory in 1890. Kosai, “The Postwar Japanese Economy, 1945—1973,” 505. Compulsory education was extended from six to nine years, and the rate of those continuing their education increased. The rate of students continuing their education beyond the compulsory level increased from 47.4 percent in 1955 to 79.4 percent in 1970, and the rate of students entering colleges and universities increased from 17.2 to 24.2 percent (these rates increased by 1975, to 91.9 percent and to 38.4 percent). The result was that the intellectual quality of the work force also improved. Duus, The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century, 19: 516.


¹⁹⁵ Ibīd.


¹⁹⁷ Hamaguchi, Nihon Jūtaku no Hokensei (The Feudalism of Japanese Housing).


1.39 Loaned furniture would presumably stage scenes of amiable nuclear family meals like the ones published in the Japanese Photo Gazette.
and classified using formulae indicating a number of rooms (typically bedrooms) and whether it has a room dedicated to ‘living’ in addition to dining and kitchen, hence aLDK. Nishiyama, a former wartime Jitakku Eidan (Housing Corporation) official and later Professor of Architecture at Kyoto University, published his findings in his 1942 thesis Shokushin bunrin (Thesis on the Separation of Eating and Sleeping). For reformers, several years of surveys validated the need to push for the rationalisation of housing and accordingly certain aspects that were drawn from the Western nuclear family type. The separation of eating from sleeping areas, and the separate private sleeping space for the couple was regarded as essential to establishing an orderly and hygienic “maintenance of an orderly life”. The 51C Apartment was a culmination of four years of lifestyle research led by Nishiyama at Yoshitake Yasumi Laboratory at the University of Tokyo in the early 1950s, and was selected for wide development by the JHC.

It is within the context of Japan’s key historical ruptures and modernisation – first, the Meiji reforms, and then the post-war period – that housing and typology emerged as an essential economic infrastructure, institutional and architectural project. For Michel Foucault, the rise of modernity in the West coincided with the inclusion of bare life into politics and, therefore, with the extension or indistinction of the oikonomia or the familial, economic management of the household, to the entirety of the city, territory and population. A philology of the Japanese term for household shows striking parallels with the roots of its Western-language translation. In the text Oeconomica, credited to Aristotle or a disciple, the term oikos (house) is the site of oikonomia (economy) or the ‘art of household management’ and is distinctly separate realm from polis (city), the site of politikos (politics). As was the case – though in a different form in Japan – through stages of industrialisation, the art of scientific, economic, management and legal regulation became increasingly extended to the entire population on the scale of the nation-state territory. While the English word family comes from the Latin root familia, meaning “servile”, the term for family in Japanese, katei – 家庭 – is composed of the iconograph 家 (ie or uchi), referring to house and family, and is rooted in Chinese; it can be traced to a depiction of a pig under a roof and is rooted in domestic, domesticated, and...
The second iconograph – 庭 (niwa) – refers to garden or courtyard and is rooted in meaning a court of law.

The extension and enshrinement of a specific type of familial relations signified by katei in the national legal code, and the project to produce a national dwelling type in the nLDK, as a core national project, aspired to negate historical forms, and broke down distinctions between inside and outside, familial and legal, while simultaneously constructing a mythology of their distinction and separation. In effect, the Japanese archipelago became a giant household concerned with the definition, production and management of cultural and social relations for economic production. Here, the micro-politics of daily life were drawn into or become indistinguishable from the political economy outside. With this in mind, the sociologist Georg Simmel described for us precisely the ‘problem’ with any contemporary understanding of autonomy or a space truly outside of the social factory: “[t]he deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and of the technique of life.”

Since the Meiji period, when the modern Japanese military, industrial state was formed – with the goal of beating the West at its own game and winning equal trade treaties – and when architecture became a profession, typology materialised in the subdivision of the architectural plan; this more than any other issue surrounding the production of housing design was the primary focus of architects and other ‘cultural intermediaries’. “Permutations of the basic set of living and service spaces were explored ad nauseam: the sequence, orientation, and adjacency of rooms were made to signify whole philosophies of everyday life” and were produced of occupational “necessity by experts who claimed the dwelling as the object on which their knowledge could be exercised.”

Relations of power and knowledge concerning the formation and position of the subject, and therefore the reproduction and labour subjectivity – as a real subsumption of labour – should be understood as the central focus of Japan’s architectural and economic
project. Labour subjectivity can be understood as the product of the (always evolving and contested) relation between the living human animal (and our permanent feeling of insecurity or sense of not being at home\textsuperscript{209}) and apparatuses\textsuperscript{210} as a set of “discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid”.\textsuperscript{211} The dictionary definition of apparatus states that it is the “way in which the parts of a machine and, by extension, the mechanism itself are arranged… in conformity with a plan”\textsuperscript{212} In a discussion of religion from which Foucault derived the term apparatus (\textit{dispositif}), Hegel used the term \textit{positivity} to refer to “beliefs, rules, and rites… feelings that are more or less impressed through constraint on souls… these are actions that are the effect of command and the result of obedience and are accomplished without direct interest”.\textsuperscript{213}

\ldots\textit{loaded as it is with rules, rites, and institutions that are imposed on the individual by an external power, but that become, so to speak, internalized in the systems of beliefs and feelings… the set of institutions, of processes of subjectification, and of rules in which power relations become concrete… what is at stake is [for Foucault]… the investigation of concrete modes in which the positivities (or the apparatuses) act within the relations, mechanisms, and \textit{“plays”} of power.\textsuperscript{214}

Typology presents itself as an apparatus that is both flexible but at the same time reproduces and expands upon deep structures of capitalist subsumption. In other words, via typological production, the architect is pulled into constructing the \textit{real subsumption} of labour through composition and subdivisions of space in a ‘plan’. Additionally, typology should be understood as open to flexibility, variation, improvement, stylisation and tailoring by the architect – who themselves, as subject and producer, will seek “to protect [their] internal integrity and, at the same time, accommodate itself to the shock”. Thus, the urban “social factory”\textsuperscript{215} is cloaked, and rendered increasingly frictionless and natural. In these ways, it renders itself invulnerable to the perception that it is a political construct and is protected from social ‘disorder’ and insubordination, which, as we have seen, is the greatest threat to the production of surplus:

\textit{The capitalist’s plan is the ideal shape in which \textit{the interconnection between their various labours} confronts the wage-labourers, while it presents itself \textit{“in practice, as his authority, as the powerful will of a being outside them.”}}(13) Hence, the development of capitalist planning

\textsuperscript{209} See Virno, “Grammar Of The Multitude,” 31–33. 
\textsuperscript{210} \textit{Dispositif} is a term that was developed by Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. See Giorgio Agamben, “\textit{What Is an Apparatus?}” And Other Essays (Stanford University Press, 2009). 
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., 2. 
\textsuperscript{212} Agamben, “\textit{What Is an Apparatus?}” And Other Essays. 
\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 4. 
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 6. 
\textsuperscript{215} Mario Tronti developed the concept to explore the ways in which capitalist production expands from
is something closely related to that of the capitalist use of machines. To the development of cooperation, of the social labour process, there corresponds under capitalist management – the development of the plan as despotism. In the factory, capital to an ever-increasing extent asserts its power “like a private legislator”. Its despotism is its planning, a “capitalist caricature of the social regulation of the labour process.” (14)... Capitalist ‘planning’ presupposes the planning of living labour, and the more it strives to present itself as a closed and perfectly rational system of rules, the more it is abstract and partial, ready to be utilized solely in a hierarchical type of organization. 216

It is not even suspected that capitalism might use the new ‘technical bases’ offered by the passage from the preceding stages to that of high mechanization (and to automation) in order to perpetuate and consolidate the authoritarian structure of factory organization: indeed, the entire process of industrialization is represented as being dominated by the ‘technological’ fatality which leads to the liberation of man from the ‘limitations imposed on him by the environment and by his physical capabilities’. 217

The removal of historical restrictions and limitations becomes paramount in the advance of a real subsumption of labour under capital. Post-war mass politicisation, unionism and insubordination became of paramount concern and a serious threat to Japanese capitalist development. Therefore, we should recognise that in post-war Japan, there was a marriage of functionalism and technological rationalisation with the removal of historically overt symbolism, ritual and cultural prohibitions on choice. For instance, arranged marriage and the increase of individuality and freedom can be understood as the features of an increasingly absolute regime of real subsumption. Architecture, technology and capitalism’s promise was that one could finally live – liberated from toiling the earth, and from the prohibitions of a dark feudal past – in a non-ideological house in the sky with a romantic lover. Upon further historical interrogation, we can see that from one angle of interrogation, a closer look at the floating platform itself betrays a deepening concrete subsumption in the abstractions of a social factory.
1.4 The Ambivalence of the Blank Page

Through a reading of examples of architecture that emerged during the historical rupture of the 19th century, and that of the post-war period – such as Tange House, Harumi, Sky House and the other discussed previously – we can begin to unpack the ways in which architecture and Japanese capitalism’s political project were entangled. The project involved a choreography, staging and smoothing out of both a destruction and disassembly of historical systems of control, tastes, cultures, symbolism, modes of life, production and reproduction, but also the simultaneous or proceeding construction of new ones – new positivities, divisions, modes of work, life, tastes and rituals that became habits. As we have seen, these go deeper than the immediate floor plan, and involve the entire materiality, production, financing, land and property relations atop which the project is constructed.

Architecture at the threshold of modernity in Japan and the West was increasingly stripped of symbolism and abstracted in ways that tended away from overt mystification or nostalgic identity politics. This is a tendency that can be understood in the post-war period amidst deep suspicion of the Imperial Japanese regime that had led so many ‘blindly’ into the war. However, at the same time, when we compare certain of the projects of the 1920s and 30s, such as the dōjunkai, it appears that even the modernist architecture of the 1950s was more concerned with asserting or otherwise rediscovering a Japanese-ness. In short, upon close reading, architecture and housing in post-war Japan becomes a stage on which we can witness the schizophrenic character of capitalist development and its perpetual cycles of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.

An analysis of the real subsumption of labour in the construction of a new mode of production, divisions of labour and choreography of social relationships – both within the distribution of tasks for the production of architecture and buildings, but also in its direct counterpart in the separations of space, bodies and tasks that built space as a social factory – raises important questions about the adoption of Western architecture into Japan, as well as Western and Japanese interpretations and the adoption of historical Japanese architecture such as Katsura. While Katsura was to an extent wilfully interpreted by many as rational, functionalist, modular and therefore objective or non-ideological, the fact that it was based on an interpretation of poetic literature means that we should be deeply sceptical of claims or notions that specific ‘reforms’ and ‘progress’

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218 This is a concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their Anti-Oedipus and will be discussed in the coming chapter. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 1 (1983).
in architecture are indeed following a linear development towards a ‘truthful’ universal rationality.

We should be careful not to mistake a specific division of labour and subdivision of space for the organisation of social relations and bodies as any more than one specific possibility amongst countless possibilities – one specific predicate, one specific construct of deterministic origins concerned with specific risks and outcomes whose genealogy can be excavated through periods of social and technological revolution. Indeed, some members of NAU, such as Zushi Yoshihiko, argued that technological rationalisation, functionalism in planning and the industrialisation of architecture could not be objectively or ideologically removed from the mode of production and control within which it was conceived.\(^{219}\)

The specificity of these forms of life both negate historical modes of subjectivity, work and life, but also construct positivities and predicates which shut down a radical openness left in the blank page of the rupture: a radical openness, always at hand. An openness to be – and perhaps more importantly, not to do or be – something, or someone.

While Walter Benjamin recognised that the negativity of the destructive character was a totalising force behind fascist and capitalist subjectification, he also recognised that the greater a confrontation with its shock and uprooting, the greater the possibility for those dominated by it to cheerfully embrace the destructive character for their own emancipation – the greater the possibility of rooting out their own condition and simplifying the world by radically testing its worthiness for destruction. Herein lies the potentiality in the construction of architectural genealogy, to test even our most cherished institutions, practices and assumptions for their worthiness for destruction. We should never think that we can return to some past (that never was) but might instead focus on how we can open up apparatuses such as architecture to uses beyond their capture, divisions, abstraction and ‘functions’ as means to economic ends. Indeed, considering industrial materials such as glass, Benjamin perceived another kind of ‘positive’ possibility for a kind of clarity and transparency about our condition, where any myth of rootedness, interiority or naturalness was forever destroyed. This is a possibility for technology to:

> transform human beings as they have been up to now into completely new, lovable, and interesting creatures [that] talk in a completely new language. And what is crucial about this language is its arbitrary, constructed nature, in contrast to organic language… for human-likeness – a principle of humanism – is something they reject.\(^{220}\)
The destructive character knows only one watchword: make room. And only one activity: clearing away. His need for fresh air and open space is stronger than any hatred. The destructive character is young and cheerful... it cheers, because everything cleared away means to the destroyer a complete reduction, indeed a rooting out, out of his own condition. Really, only the insight into how radically the world is simplified when tested for its worthiness for destruction leads to such an Apollonian image of the destroyer. 221

In principle or to certain extents, Tange and Kikutake themselves would seem to agree that the architect should root out or disentangle themselves from pretensions – even if altruistic – towards the monolithic planning of other people’s lives, which ultimately subjects them to domination by abstraction. Indeed, the foundation, radical sign and potentiality latent in projects such as Tange House, Sky House, the Harumi Apartments and in so many post-war houses lie in their tendency towards the non-typological, towards the blank page – signalling a potential for other forms of life and reason beyond the mastery of typology, categories and domestication. However, as we have seen, it is clear that divisions and subsumption are far more than skin and plan deep. They are hidden at a distance in histories beyond immediate view in forgotten and purely constructed divisions of land, labour, resources and rights that confront us as given from the moment that we enter the world, as ‘the ground’ of our reality.

We know from the history of Japan that there are accounts of ambivalent attitudes towards destruction and the blank page. This might be expected given the particularities of the archipelago’s climactic conditions, tectonic and geographical position, scale, and so on. Vast, steep mountainous terrain with few large alluvial plains created the funnelling of resource flows, and crowded arable fertile areas undoubtedly played a large part in Japan’s violent history of territorialising struggles for power. The archipelago’s precarious perch next to the most active fault lines in the world has wrought frequent upheaval and mass destruction of the city by seismic thrust, tsunami, typhoon and fires. Despite or because of these realities, an ambivalence was commonly recounted in a story that the Western tutors of first architecture courses in Japan during the late 19th and early 20th century knew well: apparently, the people of Edo (pre-modern Tokyo) were “not particularly concerned with protecting themselves from natural disaster”. Contrary to popular perception, this was not due to a “fatalism or passivity”, but was invited, for the frequency of fires “not only made the inhabitants of Edo fearless, but let them [be]

221 Benjamin, Selected Writings: 1927-1934.
222 This literally translates as “fire is Edo’s flower” but has been interpreted with approximations of the above meaning by Clancy, Earthquake Nation: The Cultural Politics of Japanese Seismicity, 1868-1930, 59.
boastful of the prosperity of the metropolis by the proverb: *Kaji wa Yedo no Hana* – fire is the flower of the City’s prosperity”.”222
AINU HOUSE
Hokkaidō
circa 1890
MINKA (PEOPLES HOUSE)
Kansai Plain
circa 1687
MACHIYA (TOWN HOUSE)
Takayama
circa 1859
DOJUNKAI NINOMIYA APARTMENTS
Tokyo, Kameki Tsuchiura
1937
MANZANAR INTERNMENT CAMP FOR JAPANESE AMERICANS
California
1942-45
BUS HOUSE (REFITTED CITY BUS BY WAR HOMELESS)
Yokohama
1945-46
SHACK MADE OF SCAVENGED MATERIAL
Hiroshima
1945-46
PREMOS COAL MINERS HOUSING
Tomari, Hokkaido, Kunio Maekawa
1946
GLASS HOUSE
New Caanan, Connecticut, Phillip Johnson
1949
FAUNSWORTH HOUSE
Plano, Illinois, Mies van der Rohe
1951
LAKE SHORE DRIVE APARTMENTS
Chicago, Mies van der Rohe
1951
9 SQUARE TSUBO
Tokyo, Makoto Masuzawa
1951
TANGE HOUSE
Tokyo, Kenzo Tange
1953
SEIKE HOUSE
Tokyo, Kiyoshi Seike
1954
SH-1
Kamakura, Kenji Hirose
1954
TONOGAYA APARTMENTS
Yokohama, Kiyonori Kikutake
1956
SKY HOUSE
Tokyo, Kiyonori Kikutake
1958
HOUSE NO. 38 (ISHIZU HOUSE)
Tokyo, Kiyoshi Ikebe
1958
HARUMI APARTMENTS
Toyko Bay, Kunio Maekawa
1958
II

CONCRETE VOIDS

Architecture and Nihilism in 1970s Japan

The focus on the ‘economy as existential priority one’ in Japan following the end of the Second World War drove a reorganisation of society and a boom during the 1950s and 60s, the speed and scale of which were unparalleled anywhere in modern history. In what is commonly referred to as the ‘miracle’, Japanese GDP was greater than that of any country in Europe by 1968. As was the case in Europe around the same time, Japan’s intellectual architectural culture had begun to shift towards a rejection of the ironical or optimistic ‘pop-art’ graphics, away from groups such as Archigram and from the ‘techno-utopian’ visions of Metabolism. The shift was already visible in the early 1960s in the work of architects including, notably, Arata Isozaki and Kazuo Shinohara, and was foreshadowed by the former in his 1962 essay *City Demolition Industry Inc.* A Metabolist collaborator himself, Isozaki – a figure to architecture as David Bowie is to pop music – had worked with Kenzo Tange on his canonical 1960 Metabolist masterplan project for a floating city that would colonise the expanse of Tokyo Bay. In a dark and eccentric essay, Isozaki described a meticulous and artful contract killer who sought to undermine and destroy the modern Japanese metropolis because, by perpetrating a rise in unintentionally, indiscriminate, honourless and meaningless ‘murders’ on a daily basis – modern traffic accidents, heart attacks, skyscraper, train and tall building suicide ‘jumpers’, etc. – the metropolis itself had undermined his profession and pride.

Fifteen years after its writing, Isozaki’s essay was published in an exhibition catalogue of post-Metabolist work – mostly houses – for the *Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies* in New York in 1977. The group of architects, the exhibition and the movement were labelled *The Japanese New Wave* by the architecture critic Kenneth Frampton. The name *New Wave* had been used in the late 1950s and 60s to refer to French and Japanese cinema movements which had radically departed in form, content, language and politics from the films of their mentors and predecessors. The name might also just as easily be referring to a resurgence or emergence of bare rationalism in architecture, the likes of which had not been seen since around the time of the First World War in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in Japan.

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2 See, for example, the *Kanagawa House* in Oita.
3 Notably here we could refer to the ArchiteXt group in addition to other examples such as Kazuo Shinohara earlier in the mid-1960s. Arata Isozaki, a sometime-collaborator with Metabolist himself, was critical of the group’s dogma from its inception. Charles Jencks, “ArchiteXt and the Problem of Symbolism,” *Japan Architect* 51, no. 6 (1976): 21–28; and Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Obrist, Shinohara,” *Quaderns d’arquitectura i Urbanisme*, no. 265 (2013): 27–30.
Featured in the catalogue were photographs of buildings, drawings and short pieces of writing by architects including Tadao Ando, Hiroshi Hara, Osamu Ishiyama and Isozaki, amongst others. Perhaps the most overtly nihilistic were examples by the young Japanese architects Hiromi Fujii, Takefumi Aida and Toyo Itō. Their late 1960s and early 70s houses — though very different from one another — shared overlaps in compositional strategies and language (or lack thereof) that included the use of, for instance, grids, symmetry, primary geometries, white and grey washing or aesthetic abstraction. Many were often published in high contrast or washed-out photographs with either deadpan or disorienting camera angles.

Isozaki and Kazuo Shinohara became highly critical of modernity and technology in the 1950s and 60s, and became increasingly influential in Japan following increasingly popular affirmations of their critique from the West — for instance, the publication of texts by the Italian groups Superstudio and Archizoom in Japanese magazines as early as 1969. Starting as early as 1970, Toyo Itō referenced, wrote about and published images of Superstudio and the Viennese ‘radical’ Hans Hollein’s work; Hiromi Fujii, worked in Italy and England; and Takefumi Aida spent several years travelling in Europe during the late 1960s. While all three were greatly influenced by intellectual architectural fashion in Europe and the US, it is worth considering that this influence is owed not only to the fact that it was in vogue, but that it resonated: indeed, Japan was undergoing developments which shared striking parallels to those of places such as Italy. The mood, or as we shall argue nihilism, pervading the work of the New Wave reflects more widespread experiences of life and work during this period in Japan. Excitement at new material wealth was accompanied by moods that are perhaps best described by the title of Aida’s project, Annihilation House — a word synonymous with language used by Fujii, Itō and Isozaki, who used it several times in his City Demolition Inc. essay.

Annihilation is rooted in Latin nihil, meaning “not anything, nothing; that which does not exist” and of the Greek suffix ēsmós, which forms abstract nouns denoting action, state, condition, doctrine or system. The concept was popularised (and either borrowed or coined) in the early 19th century in the West by the German Philosopher Friedrich

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9 Frampton, A New Wave of Japanese Architecture, 28.
Jacobi, who used the term nihilismus to reproach what he argued was the tendency of German Idealist philosophy to dissolve reality through a reductio ad absurdum into the nothingness of subjective consciousness. In his book, The Self-overcoming of Nihilism, the Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani explains that a nibilation in Europe emerged when realism swept out the last pillar from Hegelian pantheistic idealism and cast its Metaphysics into crisis. It is important to note that realism’s critique emerged in parallel to “social reform” and “natural science” and with “changes in political consciousness which followed in the wake of the French Revolution, the social anxiety over changes in the economic system resulting from the Industrial Revolution, and the rise of ‘liberalism’.” However Realism, in its search for new positivistic ground or essentiality, he argued, could be understood merely as an attempt to halt the advance of nihilism’s “dark shadow”.

Nishitani argued that Japan’s own experience or encounter with nihilism was unique, but nevertheless:

[w]hile the spirit of nihilism has its origin in Europe, it is by no means unrelated to [Japan] in the modern era. We have been baptized in European culture, and European education has more or less become our own. The nihilistic mood of “post-war lethargy” and the vogue of existential philosophy and nihilistic thinking are no mere curiosity about new ideas in the world. Nihilism is also our own problem. But it is also true that behind this nihilistic mood and the vogue of nihilistic thinking there lurks the unique character of the issue of nihilism in Japan… The phenomenon of nihilism shows that our historical life has lost its ground as objective spirit, that the value system which supports this life has broken down, and that the entirety of social and historical life has loosened itself from its foundations. Nihilism is a sign of the collapse of the social order externally and of spiritual decay internally- and as such signifies a time of great upheaval… The mood of post-war Japan would be one such instance.

Nishitani draws parallels with nihilism and the emptying or emptiness at the core or as the object of Buddhist philosophy, which was itself, we should remember, imported to Japan in the 5th or 6th century. He wrote that Fredrich Nietzsche’s writings – one of his
central influences – constantly referred to Buddhism (though with biases and oversights), and called “the most extreme nihilism of nothing (meaninglessness) eternally” the “the European form of Buddhism”. He dubbed the nihilistic catastrophe about to befall Europe (after World War I) “the second Buddhism”. The object of the Buddhist path is nībāna (nirvana) – the title of another of Takefumi Aida’s houses featured in the New Wave catalogue – and posits that there is no essential nature to any being or thing in our universe of contingencies and perpetual change.

Therefore, attachment to a state of being, or fixed ideas of self as a nature, are the source of illusion and suffering. Nihilism and nirvana would apparently reveal an essential absence of any transcendental doctrine, or belief in essential or ultimate purpose, meaning or values (beyond that of becoming empty in the case of the latter). A nihilistic vantage point, then, would hold that given values, meaning and forms of life which are often considered ‘natural’ and ‘timeless’ are instead abstract contrivances and are of deterministic origination; in other words, they formed from within a particular set of strategies for survival within a specific context, attempts to make meaning in the world and/or projects of power concerned with domination.

In more common usage, nihilism is of course popularly associated with indifference or despair. And nihilism, Nishitani wrote, can lead to despair and a loss of hope or will when faced with a sense that life is baseless or meaningless:

As soon as the ground which has supported historical life both within and without begins to be perceived as something unreliable, an immense void begins to open up within history. Profound anxiety shakes the foundation of human being and the more foundational the supporting ground had been, the greater the void and the deeper the anxiety.

Something not unlike the kind of ‘dark’ nihilism Nishitani described increasingly manifested itself in youth culture and the work of writers, filmmakers and photographers in 1960s and 70s Japan. Despite the miraculous and buoyant atmosphere, the new abundance of all manner of things in the midst of rapidly increasing economic surplus, for instance, the media was inundated with reports of children who were being born disfigured from eating staples such as rice and fish contaminated by industrial pollu-

23 Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*.
24 This point will be discussed throughout the chapter. For pointed discussion and the way it materialised in the New Wave films, see Desser, *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema*.
Exhaustion, anxiety and suicide were prevalent amidst increased competition in the workplace, and political suppression delivered fatal blows to students and workers’ demands for control and skills or creativity in work roles. Historical forms of identity, community and social life continued to be uprooted or to dissolve in the face of modernisation, economic-technical rationalisation and urbanisation. Nishitani argued that before Japan had noticed it, the nation’s blind drive to defeat the West at its own game had stripped the spiritual foundations out from under Japanese life, and most had not even realised it yet: “nihility… has become [Japan’s] historical actuality.”

He also, however, argued that a confrontation with what initially struck as a ‘tragic’ nothingness was a necessary stage towards overcoming nihilism through nihilism – a kind of historical singularity through which society and the individual must pass and wage “all-out struggle of [the self] against domination or suppression”.

Through their theoretical architectural projects, many of which they built, Aida, Itō and Fujii began their careers with a conscious rejection of or attack on what could be referred to as Japanese historical or status quo and middle-class (chūryū kaikyū) values, symbolism and typology in housing. Therefore, by association, the attack was aimed at the perceived mythologies of ‘democratic capitalism’ in Japan, and at architecture’s entangled attempts to create a sense of historical progress without a loss of identity through styles, nostalgia or expression. As we have seen, one recurrent dimension of this ideology is the search for ‘Japanese-ness’ in architecture (or the seemingly unshakable persistence of a search for what was called ‘oriental taste’ [shumi seishin] in the early 20th century). This preoccupied Kenzo Tange and became the subject of a famous debate in the 1950s between himself and the architect Seichi Shirai, whom Tange beat to win a proposal for the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. The houses of the three architects to be discussed here tended towards being historically style-less, and while in vogue, seemed to work in the direction of a common staging of a confrontation with Nishitani’s ‘void’ of nihilism.
2.3 Tokyo University’s occupation by students demanding the school not become an assembly line for corporate workers was ended by police siege.
2.4 Minamata Disease is one famous incidence of industrial pollution causing birth defects. W. Eugene Smith, Tomoko Uemura in her bath, 1971.

*Architecture and Nihilism in 1970s Japan*
II. Concrete Voids

2.5 Urbot 001 and 002, Toyo Ito, 1971. *Toshi Jūtaku* (Urban Housing magazine)
City of Death

In 1971, three years after having left his role at the office of the Kiyonori Kikutake – who was a leading figure within the Metabolist group – Toyo Itō published three house projects in the now long-defunct magazine *Toshi Jūtaku* (*Urban Housing*) entitled Urbot 001, 002 and 003. Each was an evolution of the one before it. In Urbot 003, a collage image and text in which he describes the design, he asks us to, “hypothetically”, imagine a 30 by 30 kilometre field of 10 million (Tokyo’s population at the time) one-room living capsules, with no windows and one door, 3.6 metres square at their base, but which taper up through their height to a vertical tube that ends in a skylight at 11 metres above a circular kitchen unit placed at the centre of an otherwise empty interior space.32 The capsules, individually inhabited, one for each married couple, individual or child, he explained, would have an inscription on the exterior tube with a registration number and would be partially “buried in the desert-like vacant lots of Tokyo”.

Itō had explained in the text for Urbot 002 – a more complete ‘house’ with four capsule beds, kitchen unit, toilet and shower, out of which the individual capsule of Urbot 003 had “crawled” – that when the inhabitant dies, the capsule would be sealed and filled with oil through the skylight, the body cremated, and the capsule buried, leaving only the tube protruding from the ground and resembling finally, a Japanese *boseki* or grave-stone.34 The registration number would become a grave inscription or *homyo* (“posthumous Buddhist name”). He described the ground between the capsules as the eroded remains of plazas and parks, foreshadowing the bare earth of the void at the centre of his later built work *U-House*, completed in 1976.36 The bare ground between the units of Urbot 003 reminds us again that a new phase of Japan’s economic rationalisation project arose from the ashes of the ‘blank page’ of Japanese cities after the Second World War.37 In the essay included in the article – *The Logic of Uselessness* – he wrote as an alter ego called Urbot, and in a similar way to Isozaki before him, mounted an attack on the Japanese architecture of the time:

*Multistorey buildings made of huge steel frames were taking shape, their outer surfaces clad with white, scale-like, precast concrete units, while endless dreary plazas and parks were being created, based on a blind faith that salvation would be assured by chanting ‘community, community’ like a mantra… this evokes a sweet, beautiful plaza in which they may gather to chat surrounded by water fountains.*38

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31 Itō, “Muyō No Ronri.”
32 Ibid., 53.
33 Itō and Daniell, *Tarzans in the Media Forest*, 31.
34 Ibid, 30.
37 Itō was kept at a safe distance from the bombings, living in the mountains several hours from his home in Tokyo, as a young child. “The Pritzker Prize: Toyo Itō Biography,” 2013, https://www.pritzkerprize.com/biography-toyo-Itō.
2.6 Urbot 003. Toyo Ito, 1971 from Toshi Jūtaku (Urban Housing magazine).
Itō goes on to characterise “modern community” as the “lowest common denominator arising from selfish human desires: bloody, filthy, hidden in darkness.” He referred to the machinery, routines, roles and technologies of the city as hollowed out and as a denial of the “non-mechanical, non-technical, irrational emotions” that “roiled” deep within him. Public spaces and ‘community-driven’ and beautifying urban design are, he wrote, “nothing more than space as a balancing point, fraught with a certain tension. The spaces around the 003 Units will be swallowed and erased within a place and time composed from the equilibrium of shared illusions.” Urbot it seems was awakening from a “dream” and confronting the calculation that characterised his “desert-like urban reality”. Tokyo was depicted as a graveyard, and its housing an indexed field of tombs and mausoleums.

Itō’s narrative is evocative of Nishitani’s (and Nietzsche’s) writings on the city and death as a manifest nihility in common. In the Self Overcoming of Nihilism, he describes images of a bustling city life in Ginza, Tokyo or New York and remarks, “[i]n double exposure, a picture of the dead”. Nishitani’s discussion itself was based on Nietzsche’s Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (The Joyful Science):

> The thought of death – It gives me a melancholy pleasure to live in the midst of this jumble of little lanes, needs, and voices: how much enjoyment, impatience, and desire, how much thirsty life and intoxication with life comes to light at every moment! And yet it will soon be so still… the bour is near, and the ocean [of death] and its desolate silence are waiting impatiently behind all of this noise-so covetous and certain of their prey. And each and every one of them supposes that the heretofore means little or nothing and that the near future is everything: hence this haste, this clamor, this drowning out and overreaching of each other! Everyone wants to be the first in this future – and yet it is death and deathly silence that are alone certain and common to all in this future.

In “New York” or “Tokyo”, the “abyss of nihility upon which the whole world is perched” is unlikely to “yawn”, writes Nishitani. All are kept from hearing the “the desolate silence of death”. In his confrontation with the work of the Metabolists, and coming in the wake of Japanese youth’s recent total political defeats – many of which happened at Itō’s own alma matter Tokyo University – he implicates architecture as complicit in constructing the clamorous ideologies of the city, and in creating objectivist rationalities and reterritorialisations, all of which work towards maintaining equi-

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38 Itō and Daniell, Tarzans in the Media Forest, 30–31.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 32.
Itō’s critique and indeed the negativity of Isozaki, Aida and Fujii – like their influences in the ‘radical’ Viennese and Italian architects – also draws direct parallels with the writing of the politician and philosopher Massimo Cacciari and the architecture theorist Manfredo Tafuri, who, as we know, were working within an Italian context that shared many parallels with that of Japan of the period. Furthermore, Nishitani’s city of death, whose ‘call’ to nothingness is drowned out in the clamour, and Itō’s futurist-allegorical architecture of the city as a perpetual destruction machine, but one which at the same time produces ‘illusions’ as ‘balancing points’ to keep it from imploding, closely parallels deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychiatrist Felix Guattari’s cultural elaboration of Karl Marx’s concept of the ‘law of the counteracted tendency’, the “twofold movement of the tendency to a falling rate of profit, and the increase in the absolute quantity of surplus value”. Essential to capitalism’s character, they wrote, is the tendency to perpetual deterritorialisation: towards the destruction of historical social relations and forms of life (nullifying in fact, ideological prefiguration of any kind). This tendency creates an “awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy or charge [the wellspring of production akin to what Cacciari, following Georg Simmel, called nervenleben, or the life of the nerves], against which it brings all its vast powers of repression to bear, but which nonetheless continues to act as capitalism’s limit”. At the same time, “to avoid reaching this limit while simultaneously tending towards it”, capitalism:

... institutes or restores all sorts of residual, artificial, imaginary or symbolic territorialities, thereby attempting... to recode and rechannel persons who have been defined in terms of ab-

45 Through the Urbot projects, Itō developed his own eccentric lens through which to ‘make things visible’: his own architectural version of ‘evolutionary exapta-
46 tion’. Through the tactic, he extrapolates the evolution of the familiar apparatuses of the social factory of the city, of its domestic space, in excess of their reproductive, cultural-social functions, to the point that they become blatantly symbolic of those hidden functions, and therefore also ‘useless’ towards that end (because they rely on the fact they are evidently fogged in clamour, telos and naturalness). Making visible and absurd these mechanisms could be could be understood as a kind of destructive, and therefore creative, act.
47 Itō and Daniell, *Tarzans in the Media Forest*, 27.
49 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 34.
50 M. Cacciari, S. Sartarelli and P. Lombardo, *Architec...
Indeed, by the time of Urbot’s publication in 1971, the adopting of Japanese “bourgeois” family tenets, as discussed in Chapter 1, and nuclear family housing types, had become the idealised norm. A large “middle class” (ちゅうりゅうかいきゅう), or what has been referred to as the “mass society”, had emerged with the means to afford either the detached nLDK ‘modern’ nuclear family house or, if this was financially inaccessible, the popular ‘mansion’ (たしゅうマンション) or danchi nLDK family apartment. Through the series of Urbot projects, Itō ‘unfolds’ a kind of prophetic dissolution of the house from the ideals of the block or mega-structure assemblage (typical of the danchi in the former and his work in Kikutake’s office in the latter), to the detached four-bed house of Urbot 001 and 002, to the single bed rooms scattered in the urban landscape of Urbot 003, which evoke a kind of ‘runaway’ evolution of “uselessness” and individuation or separation, ending up in an isolated, individual single room dwelling for each person that was to become so typical in urban Japan some 30 to 40 years later.

Manufacturing the Japanese ‘Social Factory’

To understand the context to which Aida, Itō and Fujii were exposed, from which their work arose, and to what kind of forces it was explicitly reacting, we need to expand on an analysis of Japanese housing and especially the Japanese ‘social factory’ at large. As was discussed in Chapter 1, at the threshold of the Japanese modernisation project, the exterior city and interior of the house were blurred, the blank page was obscured, and in actuality the entire city and cultural life became organised around the economy.

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51 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.
53 The term is used by a number of Japanese critics and, for instance, Yatsuka Hajime and Jordan Sand. Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture*, 1880-1930.
54 *Puchi buru* (petite bourgeoisie) is roughly equal to *ちゅうりゅうかいきゅう* (middle class) and literally translates from four kanji characters meaning roughly born into a middle level or rank. See Jordan Sand, “ちゅうりゅう（ミドル）,” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 25 (2013): 67–77.
By the time Itō left Kikutake’s office in 1968, Japan had ‘risen’ from the post-war devastation and through a total social re-organisation project – initiated and ‘enshrined’ with the explicit adoption of economic growth as the main priority of the nation61 – gone from the 34th to the second largest economy in the world the space of 15 years.62 Japan became the envy of the industrial and corporate world as its per capita productivity and economic surplus rapidly overtook those of Western nations,63 which were also being flooded by Japanese products and financial investment.64 The rise was attributed to a combination of two major strategies: on one hand, the rapid advancement of gōrika – technical rationalisation and ‘scientific management’ techniques in Japan; and on the other, the Japanese worker’s unique “deeply seated” sense of dedication, loyalty and social harmony.65 These behavioural traits in worker–management relations, perceived as “intrinsic to the soul of Japan”, were, as the Japanese social critic Muto Ichiiyo argued, on the contrary, a result of a “[calculated] form of determinism” imposed increasingly during the post-war period.66

Harmonious social relations in Japan have been attributed in large part to a strict obedience and adherence to the hierarchies of patriarchal authority that can purportedly be traced to a uniquely Japanese ‘cultural heritage’.67 68 Paternalistic ideology had in fact been an important feature not only in the household, but in the factory since the 1890s, when during debates over whether to impose stricter regulations on industry, business leaders insisted that it was not necessary. “In our country, relations between employers and employees are just like those within a family. Young and old help one another and

61 Ikeda’s “income-doubling” plan was more a symbol and a consequence than a cause of Japan’s “economic miracle”. By the time it was announced, the nation’s economy had entered the second of its three sustained booms in the 1950s and 1960s. The first, dubbed the “Jimmu boom” (*Jimmu keiki*), occurred in the 1950s, spanning a thirty-one-month period from the beginning of 1955 to the middle of 1957; the second, remembered as the “cave boom” (*iwato keiki*), began in the middle of 1958 and lasted for forty-two months until the end of 1961. During the first boom, real GNP grew about 8 percent per year; during the second, the growth rate averaged over 10 percent. The last and longest in the series, the “Izanagi boom” (*Izanagi keiki*), began in late 1965 and lasted for fifty-six months until the middle of 1970, with an average growth rate of over 11 percent per year. Duus, *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century*, 19: 188.
64 See, for example, the May 1971 issue of *Time* magazine.
66 The Japanese model has become the example of the new social order which the ruling class of developed capitalist countries wishes to impose on the labour movement. A whole new mythology has been created. One of its chief arguments is the myth that the class collaborationist “consensus” which has brought social peace to large Japanese corporations is based on harmonious relations between workers, foremen and management. This allegedly reflects a deep-seated feature of Japanese culture. The ideologues who claim this boast that the case of Japan invalidates the narrow economic determinism—which they wrongly identify with Marxism—that would have wage-earners struggling against bosses. But they have themselves come up with a far more tyrannical sort of determinism: that of culture, of the eternal soul of Japan. In fact, their theories have little to do with the contemporary history and reality of class relations in this East Asian archipelago. But that will not stop such ideas from being fashionable since their function is directly political: they are designed to facilitate the acceptance of the current capitalist reorganisation by the working class and its organisations. For instance, while marvelling at the uniqueness of Japanese national identity, employers and technocrats have not hesitated to caution “their” work-
ers to adopt the same responsible – that is, submissive – spirit which they believe they have discovered among Japanese wage-earners. Muto Ichiyo, John Barzman and Pierre Rousset, *Class Struggle and Technological Innovation in Japan since 1945* (International Institute For Research and Education, 1987).


68 Muto, “Class Struggle on the Shopfloor – the Japanese Case (1945-84).”


70 Chizuko Ueno remarked regarding the use of the word family: “[W]hen one selective relationship is described using the metaphor family like, this represents the desire of the parties involved to change the foundations of the relationship from something selective to something absolute.” C. Ueno, *The Modern Family in Japan: Its Rise and Fall*, Japanese Society Series (Trans Pacific Press, 2009), 39.

71 Ichiyo, Barzman and Rousset, *Class Struggle and Technological Innovation in Japan since 1945*.

72 Duus, *The Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century*, 19; 24. Paternalistic ideology and employment practices, limited to a few large enterprises in the pre-war period, became more widely diffused in the 1950s and 60s. Some Western observers argued that the persistence of these practices indicated a lack of “rationality” in Japanese management. But the publication of James Abegglen’s *The Japanese Factory* in 1958 led to a wider appreciation outside Japan of their economic utility.


74 Tsutsui, “Rethinking the Paternalist Paradigm in Japanese Industrial Management.”

75 Ichiyo, Barzman and Rousset, *Class Struggle and Technological Innovation in Japan since 1945*.

76 He described the violent suppression of political movements by the occupation and Japanese government and re-empowered elements of the Old Right, Korean War suppressions and the ‘red purge’ in Japan as a crucial phase of primitive accumulation. Ibid.

77 In 1969, the Zenkyo (all-Campus joint struggle, heirs to the Zengakuren) shut down universities across Japan and set fire to Tokyo University’s Yasuda auditorium (designed by Manchuria master planner Yoshikazu Uchida in 1925). Koolhaas, Obrist and Ota, *Project Japan: Metabolism Talks*, 650.


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A post-war surge of politicisation, mass left party and union membership began after the implementation of the occupation’s agenda, initially engineered to rid Japan of wartime imperialist, militarist and economically monopolistic elements, to introduce a social and economic liberalisation project (discussed in Chapter 1); this project ultimately broke up historical hierarchies, created a middle class and set in motion a process that would see a proletarianisation of “a large part of the population, both middle and working class.” The democratisation policies, however, were soon reversed after Communist forces overwhelmed the Nationalists in China and the Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear weapons tests in 1949. With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, Japan became the staging and launching ground for US military operations on the Korean peninsula. In what has been referred to as the ‘reverse course’, the occupation carried out a ‘red purge’ of the press, public workers and political elements, used the military to crush workers’ strikes, and began to de-regulate pre-war industrial monopolies and industry, which were then tapped to turn Japan into a ‘factory’ to supply the Korean War. The cultivation of Japanese capitalism was made a top priority to construct a territorial and economic bulwark on the frontlines in the United States’ struggle against the spread of Communism.

79 In 1946, the American occupation, SCAP (Supreme Command of the Allied Powers) passed the Trade Union Law which protected workers’ right to organise. SCAP ordered the release of political leaders who were imprisoned at the beginning of the war, including those of Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and re-legalised political parties. The result was mass union membership, politicisation and worker organisation, and even Socialist Party electoral victory in 1947. These new liberties and democratisation was widely embraced in the wake of a popularly held perception of Japan as having been led both ‘blindly’ (through the manipulation of a desire for identity and community amidst an already ongoing modernisation in the late 1930s) and by force of zero-tolerance oppression into the devastating war by the previous military government. In 1946, over 1,200 disputes were documented, many of them involving a demand of the workers to participate or take over production management. In 1948, union membership reached its peak, with 34,000 unions, covering 53% of the entire Japanese workforce. Haruhiro Fukui, “Postwar Politics, 1945-1973,” The Cambridge History of Japan: The Twentieth Century 6 (1988): 174.

80 Matsushita, “Taishū Kokka No Seiritsu to Sono Mondaisei.” Cited in Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, 152.


82 In 1944, Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur began to forbid labour demonstrations or strikes and suppress them. For example, in 1948, a large group of workers who had staged a six-month long strike at and occupation of the Toho film studios, finally surrendered when overwhelmed by the display of force outside, including American aircraft, military and tanks flanked by Japanese police. In 1948, the Occupation issued a directive to deny public servants the right to engage in collective bargaining or strikes. Unionists and those suspected of involvement were, as late as the 1980s, fired or beaten by semi-professional strike busters. Ibid.

83 In 1949, the Detroit banker Joseph Dodge led a mission to Japan to introduce economic reform recommendations. A deflationary programme led to a rapid fall in real wages after 1950, and the loss of over half a million jobs. The ‘red purge’, led by the occupation, forced the removal of public employees suspected of leftist leanings and in 1950, 22,000 private sector union activists were fired from their jobs. Jesty, “Tōkyō 1960-Nen Ikari to Kanashimi No Hibi Hamaya Hiroshi Ga Utsushita Anpo Tōsō Tokyo 1960: Days of Rage & Grief: Hamaya Hiroshi’s Photos of the Anti-Security-Treaty Protests.”

84 Gordon, Postwar Japan as History, 150.
Following political suppressions and the simultaneous increase in productivity and consumer technologies and culture, the late 1950s were a period of relative calm. However, mass unrest erupted again at the 1960 renewal and revision of the 1951 ‘Anpo’ Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security (Sōgo Kyōryoku Oyobi Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku). The treaty would allow the continued use of Japanese territory for US military operations and bases, and gave the US the right to intervene in domestic affairs.88 The Zengakuren89 student political movements, following “betrayals” by the Japanese Communist and Socialist Parties,90 which were concerned that the student movements’ radical actions would damage their popularity, were freed from the approval of those organisations and began more radical protests and actions. The Zengakuren played a key role in staging some of the largest protests in history after 10,000,000 people signed a petition against treaty renewal. During the Anpo protests, 300,000 people surrounded the Japanese Diet, and even politicians inside the ‘house’ attempted to physically block the ratification but were forced aside by police. After the ratification, the protests continued and descended into deadly violence.91 92 93

Despite the use of exceptional, extra-legal and extra-economic measures to defeat student and worker political organisation, Muto Ichiyo argued that they were only a preliminary step in undermining worker politicisation and self-organisation.94 He argued that the technical, computerised automation of production and the deployment of

89 The Zengakuren student political movement was established in 1948, having emerged from the Ishikai student self-government associations at elite universities across Japan. The Zengakuren was involved in organising strikes and protests throughout the early and mid-1950s with the JCP and Japanese Socialist Party (JSP), including resistance to the ‘red purge’, to the Korean War, to the ‘reverse course’ of democratisation that saw the ‘spiritual heirs’ and oligarchy return to power, and to the signing of a ‘Security Pact’ with the United States in 1951. See, for example, Ichiro Sunada, “The Thought and Behavior of Zengakuren: Trends in the Japanese Student Movement,” Asian Survey 9, no. 6 (1969): 457–74. Stuart J. Dowsey, Zengakuren: Japan’s Revolutionary Students (Ishi Press, 1970).
90 After several disagreements between the more hard-line Zengakuren and a council composed of the JCP, JSP and Sohyo (a largest union representatives), the Zengakuren organised incidents which were condemned by the Council or JCP. In a 1959 conference against nuclear weapons in Hiroshima in 1959, the JCP, JSP, and Sohyo leaders refused to agree on a condemnation of the upcoming revision and renewal of the Security Treaty. One writer remarked, “later that the left wing forfeited here a great opportunity to merge the two elements (‘peace and democracy’) in the post-war leftist movement.” Most notably, in a 1959 protest against the upcoming treaty revision organised by the Council, thousands of students rushed through the gates of the Diet. Realising a “swayed public opinion against demonstrators”, the JCP publicly broke with the Zengakuren and tried to discredit the students in the Council and to put forth an image of itself as a responsible, civic-minded opposition party working against the security treaty and for the independence of Japan. Desser, Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema, 33–36.
91 Eventually tear gas was used (for the first time in Japanese history) on the main body of students, 18 police vans were destroyed and burned, hundreds were injured, 196 were arrested and one female student was killed. Oguma, “Nihon No 1968 Konran-Ki No Kōdo Seichō e No Kyōdōtaiteki Han’nō – Japan’s 1968: A Collective Reaction to Rapid Economic Growth in an Age of Turmoil,” 2.
94 See Ichijo, Barzman, and Rousset, Class Struggle and Technological Innovation in Japan since 1945.
The Zengakuren (Zen Nihon Gakusei Jichikai Sō Rengō or All-Japan League of Student Self-Government Associations) formed in the late 1940s at universities as leftist self-governing associations. The Zengakuren was involved in organising strikes, protests, throughout the early and mid-1950s with the JCP and Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) including resistance to the ‘red purge’, to the Korean War, to the ‘reverse course’ of democratisation that saw the ‘spiritual heirs’ and oligarchy return to power, and to the signing of a ‘Security Pact’ with the United States in 1951.
“scientific” management techniques imported from the US, but expanded upon and refined in Japan’s unique ‘pressure cooker’ were much more critical. Computers began to be used in Japanese manufacturing as early as the mid- to late 1950s. The first phase of technological automation of labour processes operated through “the application of new technological methods, the modification of the organization of labour, and the enforcement of new kinds of labour control designed to pre-empt and decimate worker power. The leading factor in this transformational process was technological innovation.” The workers movement, he writes, in a “buoyant atmosphere of economic growth… was easily trapped by the myth of technological progress.” The core of organised labour was “wiped out in due time”.95

The economic historian William Tsutsui has argued that the organised left, including the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) and Sohyo (Japan’s largest union), initially made certain concessions to capital and management in order to negotiate worker gains, but later fell victim to or were complicit in the propagation of narratives which proclaimed the scientific neutrality96 of gōrika rationalisation drives, or in his words the “myth of technological progress.” “So communist and left-wing unions also agreed or conceded that the goal was to increase productivity. A member of the Japan Communist Party stated – ‘raising efficiency, increasing production and assuring abundance, sending out inexpensive commodities in large quantities and pulling up the standard of living are the joys of labor.’”97

What now stood in the way of further economic rationalisation for increased productivity, though, was a mounting sense of an experience of meaninglessness and powerlessness – a dark nihilism – met in the face of political suppression, and a continued destruction of historical forms of worker skill, knowledge, identity, values, community and social life. Reflecting a development in housing during the 1950s, in the workplace, the issue of an emerging sense of nihilism amongst workers was recognised by the pol-

95 “From the beginning these labour control systems were organically and consciously combined with the restructuring of the production process.” In the process of undermining worker solidarity, gōrika rationalisation operated through “the application of new technological methods, the modification of the organization of labor, and the enforcement of new kinds of labor control designed to pre-empt and decimate the workers. The leading factor in this transformational process was technological innovation.” The workers movement, he writes, in a “buoyant atmosphere of economic growth… was easily trapped by the myth of technological progress.” Computers began to be used to automate manufacturing processes in Japan as early as the late 1950s, de-skilling the labour force and creating a division of “line” from “staff”; the core of organised labour was “wiped out in due time”. Ibid.

96 It is perhaps ironic to note that after the nuclear bombs, physicists gained a huge amount of esteem and were often seen as the only people qualified to solve future problems. As a result, philosophers and historians were not regarded with high prestige. One of the most important aspects of the reform of work and therefore daily life during this period is the discussion surrounding scientific management – it was asserted by the Japan Productivity Center, a major intermediary between workers and capital, that scientific management was politically neutral – that all workers needed to submit to technocratic leadership if they were to improve their lives.

It appears that manufacturers consciously and explicitly constructed a programme in which identity and purpose were to be transposed (effectively re-territorialised and re-codified) into meaning through new forms of action and validation at work—a development that begs comparison with the housewife’s labour, grounded in a chosen, romantic love after the war. As Quality Control (QC) strategists at Yawata Iron and Steel remarked, “These seemingly contradictory requirements—higher efficiency and regained humanity, must be met simultaneously. The solution is to create a system that links together the hearts and minds of workers as human beings and helps them to display their respective capacity and creativity to the fullest.”

The most exemplary transposition of identity, meaning and validation arguably happened through the gōrika rationalisation and scientific management of QC campaigns, famously developed as the Kaisen System by Toyota’s management during the 1950s and 60s. Ichiyō notes that the ultimate innovation of QC was the self-management of the workers out of the ashes of the skilled workshop team there would be a re-animated form of worker collectivism and, at the same time, inter-company competition under the “institutional cum ideological device” ‘Company World’—“corpses brought to a state of trancelike animation and made to obey the commands of the person (or ideology) exercising the power”. Kaisen and its ensuing reorganisation of the subjectivity of Japanese workers, and indeed global workers, will be discussed in the following chapter.

If, as we have seen in the immediate post-war period, the house was mythologically constructed as a private, autonomous realm of desire and love—directly opposed to the realm of increasingly disciplinary, hierarchical and oppressive work on the assembly line, in the factory or in the office—then the strategies of post-war self-management campaigns began blurring these distinctions. Work, the factory and the office, aspired to resemble ideologies of contemporary ‘home’ in the sense that work was to be perceived as a realm where, compelled by a labour of love, inventiveness and self-management,
one could pursue affirmation, self-realisation and construct an identity. This new worker subjects were, however, very different from the ideal family-type figures in the sense that they would be compelled or obligated to also to reinvent their own modes of work and their roles within it.

As early as 1951, the Japanese political theorist Matsushita Keiichi pointed out that *gōrika* economic rationalisation was tending towards a totalising systemisation or marketisation of all life and social relations in Japan. Indeed, we can now construct a more complete portrait of the rationalisation for economic growth of housing evolved in its integrated and integral role as a key component within the rationalisation of the ‘social factory’ as a whole. Throughout periods of modernisation (and especially in Japan), the ‘evolution’ of housing and the wider city cannot be considered in isolation; therefore, it has become increasingly crucial to understand the reproduction of labour power relations in housing to events from within the urban and social at large. Keiichi’s analysis during the 1950s and 60s often closely resembles those of the political theorists Mario Tronti and Raniero Panzieri in Italy, itself undergoing dramatic economic and social restructuring during the 1960s. Tronti and Panzieri characterised the tendency of the entirety of society (including both urbanity and the ‘countryside’) to increasingly become an organised, integrated and continuous urban economic and therefore social, cultural-political machine, which they called the ‘social factory’.

Nowhere is the social factory’s integration in Japan more visible than in one of the seemingly least known, though pivotal, aspects behind the country’s rapid economic

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103 “Corporate capitalism advances a change in the mode of production itself, that carried out by the accumulation and the concentration of capital and the advancement of technology as its agent. This change in the mode of production makes social transformation logically inevitable, through the ‘systematization’ and ‘atomization’ that accompanies the process… Mass production is social principle – its core principle is human organization.” Matsushita, “Taishū Kokka No Seiritsu to Sono Mondaisei,” 35. Cited in Iida, *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics*, 151–53.
104 The social factory is a concept developed by the Italian autonomist Marxist Mario Tronti to analyse and describe how capitalist social relations had expanded outside the sphere of the factory and production to that of society as a whole. See Mario Tronti, “Factory and Society,” *Quaderni Rossi* (1962)(2), 1962; and Mario Tronti, “The Social Factory,” *Falling Wall Review* 5 (1976).
106 As the Italian political theorist Mario Tronti put it in 1962: “The more capitalist development advances, that is to say the more the production of relative surplus value penetrates everywhere, the more the circuit production ‘distribution’ ‘exchange’ consumption inevitably develops; that is to say that the relationship between capitalist production and bourgeois society, between the factory and society, between society and the state, become [sic] more and more organic. At the highest level of capitalist development social relations become moments of the relations of production, and the whole society becomes an articulation of production. In short, all of society lives as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over all of society.” Tronti, “Factory and Society.”
107 Raniero Panzieri adds to Mario Tronti’s concept: “The factory is busy not simply with production of material goods, but with society at large. This is because in order to maintain, defend, and develop its power, the factory must plan itself in an incessant process of integration with the whole social body. Thus the tendency to social planning is intrinsic to the new modes of production of the neocapitalist factory.” Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 18.
2.8 “The kanban, a tool that describes which and how many parts are used where and when, made just-in-time production possible.”
2.9 Campaign to promote the housewife's management of finances as a matter of national duty. "I'll Keep Planning Our Household Finances."
rise. The voluntary household management of income and expenses by the housewife, in fact, constituted the primary financing apparatus of Japan’s industrial growth. Industrial and corporate growth was maintained not only via the unwaged reproductive labour of housewives, which literally produced and maintained the labourers themselves, but asked of them to become voluntary knowledge workers and mini-managers as well. What could be characterised as a household ‘QC campaign’ (begun during modernisation in the late 19th century and accelerated after the war) to organise the voluntary self-management of reproduction by housewives, expanded in scope during the 1960s, when they were forcefully encouraged to take up the additional unwaged work of tightly managing household economy and savings for the benefit of the nation.108 109

Government- and corporate-sponsored media ‘morale’ campaigns appealed to patriotism and individual power, depicting a direct link between the housewives’ family management abilities and the success of nation in warding off imminent threats to sovereignty from foreign ‘invader’ tycoons.110 Household savings were ultimately the means by which Japan propelled its economic ‘miracle’: they financed loans to corporations while avoiding the rapid inflation and foreign debt that would have come with printing money or taking loans from abroad.111 Household management and savings campaigns not only taught housewives how to reign in their husbands checks and bonuses, and balance the family’s consumption with savings through tight bookkeeping practices;112 but neighbourhood household control meetings as social events undoubtedly provoked a culture of competition between women. Praise or ridicule from other housewives and hence a sense of achievement, valorisation and purpose could be gained through the validation of one’s performance at managing the habits of the husband, children and household.113

These developments in the Japanese ‘urban factory’, namely the household and workplace as discussed above, not only involved the tendency towards an economic, tech-

110 Ibid., 18.
111 Garon, “Post-War Japan’s National Salvation.”
112 “[T]he Housewives Association nonetheless paralleled official efforts in its own campaigns to persuade every housewife to keep an account book and join the ‘housewives’ savings movement.’ In 1954 the Housewives Association became a permanent member of the Central Council for Savings Promotion – along with the more conservative National Federation of Regional Women’s Organizations and the woman’s auxiliary council of the Agricultural Cooperatives. The three women’s federations and others joined with the Central Council to convene the National Women’s Meeting for ‘New Life and Saving’ in 1959. Over the next four decades this annual meeting brought together officials and women’s delegates to devise strategies for rationalizing household finances. Oku, too, championed the rationalization of spending as good for the housewife and good for the nation. In place of consumption, she urged members to ‘strive for a life with imagination and resourcefulness,’ for ‘unless the clever housewife maintains her household, this country will not rise.’ Echoed by women’s leaders and officials alike, this deep-seated ambivalence toward consumption reinforced Japan’s savings ethic even as material life rapidly improved.” Ibid, 14.
113 Ibid., 11–12.
nical rationalisation of productive and reproductive spaces, programmes, utilities and functions; at the same time, it required the overcoming of the threat posed by the potential for reason or a clear perception of what was an increasingly totalising cultural and political subjugation. We have seen that in housing, the resolution of this contradiction through an architectural, cultural and political programme had the effect of obfuscating, compensating and consoling for a destruction and dispossession of historical forms of identity, sustenance and autonomy.

Not only did the scientific rationalisation of housing typology take as its object a choreography for the increasingly efficient economic organisation of life, but, as we have seen in the factory and house, in order to do so, architecture was tasked with creating the opposite perception. The typological grounded composition of space, programme, aesthetic and symbolism have, of course, been deeply entangled with these tasks. If the 1950s saw a stripping back of historical features and an often raw pragmatism necessitated by post-war shortages, the mid- to late 1950s saw resurgences of ‘Japanese-ness’, and by the 1970s “an innate tendency to illusion” and a mash-up of foreign and Japanese historical styles in housing had become the status quo. Chris Fawcett, a critic of Japanese architecture, wrote that new and common forms of detached housing were “tarted up” with tricks and devices not unlike those of Japan’s fantasy love hotels. In a 1974 Japan Architect article, the Japanese critic Mayumi Miyawaki discussed how eclectic American or a “currently fashionable Spanish style” were the popular styles of the time in the cities and suburbs of Japan.

In the late 1960s and 70s, advancing technology, increasing wealth and consumerism led to an optimistic atmosphere which was reflected in the famous projects of Metabolists during the 1960s. To briefly summarise Metabolism’s key motif: newly mobile individuals would choose the customised features of a high-tech, factory-built ‘living pod’ which could be easily upgraded with innovations in technology and would

117 “No matter whether the motif is modern American or the currently fashionable Spanish, however, there is always at least one and sometimes more Japanese style rooms. The prevalence of houses of this kind – seen in tremendous abundance throughout the cities and suburbs of the country – testifies to the popularity the style enjoys with the average citizen. But in recent years a group of a group of young architects have been seeking in some way to break the hold on this conventionalised house pattern on the populace. Immediately after World War II the people of Japan had lost the traditional homes and the traditional ways of life. Architects at the same time developed the modern living style for the sake of these people, and that style has now come to exercise complete sway over the residential design scene.” Miyawaki, “Are the Young Architects Changing Course?”
118 Koolhaas, Obrist and Ota, Project Japan: Metabolism Talks, 19.
120 While the New Wave rejected the kind of optimism in technology that the Metabolists embraced, we should note that both groups of architects were either actively or by association involved with the political left (for example, the famous Metabolist Kisho Kurokawa considered himself communist until 1958, and another associated loosely and critically with the group, Arata Isozaki, was a member of the Japanese Communist Party until 1968). Many of the Metabolists,
2.11 Ocean City, Kiyonori Kikutake - featured in the 1960 Metabolism 'Manifesto'.

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2.10 Spanish Style remains an option amongst Japanese detached nuclear family type houses. This is a recent ad featured on a relator site.
Referring back to Itô’s critique of the contradiction between capitalist technological rationalisation and an uprooted human emotional life, the Metabolist projects could perhaps be considered one of the most striking portraits of what Cacciari called the “metropolitan aura”. Urban planning, he wrote, through its attempt at an “organic organisation” of “homelessness, or unpoetical dwelling” claims the possibility and image of a unity or synthesis in the face of forces, functions and languages which are either diametrically opposed or contradictory. The intrinsic nonsensicality of this attempted synthesis becomes a “decorative enrichment of the metropolitan chaos that it intended to dominate. This totalised image is the metropolitan ‘aura.’... This image, which has overcome the ethical denunciation of the metropolis (or, in so far as it has overcome it), often emphatically ‘publicizes’ the metropolis’s functions, transposing them into the dimension of sacred aura.”

But by the late 1960s the narratives and visions of the Metabolist had become increasingly suspect when the national “mood turned increasingly sour”, despite rapid...
economic growth. Land prices had increased 20-fold in 10 years, increasingly delaying (in most cases permanently) the widely held dream of detached home and even apartment ownership.\textsuperscript{123} \textsuperscript{124} There was widespread depression amongst isolated and confined housewives, and overwhelming stress and exhaustion amongst commuting salary men. There were increasingly reports of environmental disasters, and children were being born disfigured simply from eating food staples such as fish and rice, which had been poisoned by the air and water.\textsuperscript{125} \textsuperscript{126} Epidemic depression and suicide meant that housing projects such as the Japan Housing Corporation’s gigantic Takashimadaira – where 133 people had committed suicide in eight years – were retrofitted with flower patterned guard rails to exterior corridors to prevent jumpers.\textsuperscript{127} \textsuperscript{128} People then began to hang themselves with household items from the new metal fixtures.\textsuperscript{129} \textsuperscript{130} Politicians and economists expressed concern that people were focusing too much on what they called the ‘negative externalities’ of economic growth.\textsuperscript{131} \textsuperscript{132} \textsuperscript{133} 

Fashion and exploding consumer culture, with its perpetual destruction of ‘traditions’ and the lack of any stable identity sparked cries from both the political right and left about a loss of national identity and a crisis of morality.\textsuperscript{134} Japanese Sun Tribe films of the mid- to late 1950s and then New Wave films of the 1960s depicted a coming-of-age youth, coddled in newly atomised and modernised nuclear family housing, depoliticised, alienated and powerless after the events surrounding the Anpo treaty and ‘betrayals’ of youth by the organised left.\textsuperscript{135} Youth were depicted as having encountered a ‘dark void’: in place of their dreams and traditional political voice or actions, they were substituting materialism, sex and violence.\textsuperscript{136} 

\textsuperscript{123} Chikuma Gakugei Bunko, 1995), 222–223.
\textsuperscript{124} from: Tanaka, “Decaying ‘Swamp City': The Death of Shōwa and Tokyo”, 280.
\textsuperscript{125} Japan Development Institute Research Institute, “Takashimadaira Danchi Tōshin Jisatsu Bōshi Taisaku No Kenkyū. Takashimadaira Complex Study on Suicide Prevention Measures,” 1975.
\textsuperscript{127} André Sorensen, The Making of Urban Japan: Cities and Planning from Edo to the Twenty First Century (Routledge, 2005), 334.
\textsuperscript{129} Oguma, “Nihon No Konran-Ki No Kōdo Seichō e No Kyōdōtaikei Han'nō - Japan's 1968: A Collective Reaction to Rapid Economic Growth in an Age of Turmoil.”
\textsuperscript{130} For an introduction to a discussion on the nationalist author Yukio Mishima’s search for meaning in the cultural dissolution of post-war Japan, see Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics. The social critic Oya Soichi said that consumer culture and television were turning Japan into a nation of one hundred million idiots. See: Jayson Makoto Chun, A Nation of a Hundred Million Idiots?: A Social History of Japanese Television, 1953–1973 (Routledge, 2006).
\textsuperscript{131} See Desser, Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema, 26–31.
\textsuperscript{132} Desser, Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema.
2.12 Arata Isozaki wrote that Shomei Tomatsu (photo 1964) was the ‘only’ photographer after the war.
Non-Compositional Housing

In 1971, three years after returning from a four-year stint working in Italy with Angelo Mangiarotti and also staying in the UK, Hiromi Fujii published 15 projects in *Toshi Jūtaku*. Though Fujii would not refer to them as such, all of the projects published were housing, except for two. Of the housing projects, two had been already been built. The simplest and most paradigmatic of the projects, though never built, were entitled *Project E-1* and *Project E-2*. The E projects are followed in the *Toshi Jūtaku* article by two other series, called *Project-S* and *Project-L*, which appear to rationally ‘unfold’ or sequentially extend upon the formal operations which started in the *E Projects*.

In the *E Projects*, like all of Fujii’s drawn, modelled and built work, he ‘sets out’ the conception of the architecture starting from a one-metre by one-metre grid. This decision ultimately establishes the inescapable logic from which the rest and total of the composition ‘unfolds’ through every scale of the project, down to the details. *Projects E-1* and *E-2* are composed of a series of arrayed and contiguous cubes: *E-1* is a three by three square arrangement of nine cubes, and *E-2* is a two by six rectangular arrangement of 12 cubes. *E-2*, one of the rows of six are enclosed cubes, the other of six has no roof. Every face of the interior, and the four faces at the two short edges of the perimeter have a door-sized opening and the enclosed cubic rooms have a double hinged swinging door. The rows or rooms form an enfilade of identical, non-hierarchical spaces. Above each of the doors there is a one grid cell size void or window centred on an intersection point of the grid. The grid is mapped as joint details on every surface of the house. On every wall without a door, there is a one grid cell size opening which has a window for the enclosed rooms and is left void in the rooms with no roof.

Despite the fact that the project title makes no reference to housing, the enclosed series of rooms correspond to the ‘programmes’ of a nLDK nuclear family type. Starting from one end of the enclosed six-long row, there is a room with a bed for two people; a room with two single beds and two desks; then a room with a toilet, shower, bath and bathroom cabinet; a room with kitchen equipment and a bar; a room with a circular table surrounded by four chairs; and finally a room with a square set of seating around a small table. The equipment and furniture, in their design and configurations, have also been derived from the original grid and sequence. Chairs and tables, for example, are circles and located at the intersection or centres of grid cells. The clusters of the furniture in each room become a kind of compact equipment that are constrained to

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138 Ibid.
139 Chris Fawcett, “Ideas Which Operate Between

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within a one grid cell offset of the entire interior periphery of the room, which leaves a
one grid cell-wide square ring of open space around the equipment in every one of the
rooms.

As can be seen in the models and drawings of E-2 and in another built project, Suzuki
Residence, the grid drives the materialisation and detailing of the finished house. In Suzuki, it gives the logic of the articulation of interior and exterior cladding, the
flooring, lighting locations and detailing. In a model of E-2 photographed in Toshi
Jūtaku, the interior and exterior of the card walls bear the lines of the grid and at each
intersection, a small section of circular metal tube has been inserted into a hole there.
These moves have the effect of simultaneously rendering the project totally concrete
in its objecthood, and yet it is a concreteness that openly bears the marks of the pure
abstraction through which it was given form.

The grid has been employed as an apparatus for measurement and for the division of
space since at least as early as colonial Egyptian fortress towns such as Buhen in the
early second millennium BC and, of course, in Chinese city planning going back
to 500BC. The Chinese model was later adapted and modified by the Empress Jito
(686–697) at the Fujiwara capital of the late 7th century, the first Imperial capital Nara
in the year 710 and in 794 in Heian-kyō (present-day Kyoto). All of these examples,
though, were bounded by a perimeter wall, earthworks or moats – clear limits – unlike
the seemingly infinite grid suggested on Fujii’s drawing board. Recalling projects
such as Ildefons Cerdà’s masterplan for Barcelona and Le Corbusier’s Ville Radienue, the
grid is the most fundamental ‘modernist’ urban planning and spatial management ap-
paratus to set out the rational organisation of a systematised urban plan. In Japan, grid
systems with subdivision logics to quantify at fine grains were employed by the early 7th
century to carry out archipelago-wide cadastral surveys, assign ownership and collect
taxes on quantities of production and labour.

On the other hand, the grid could be said to create a perception of separation and
freedom for each ‘part’ through the subdivision of territory, and yet at the same time
establish an abstraction as artificial division and opposition. In this capacity, during
the rationalisation and systematisation of industrial urban space, the grid has been

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140 Fujii, “Fu-Ka Esukisu. Towards Negative Es-
quise.”
141 See, for example, N Moeller, The Archaeology of
Urbanism in Ancient Egypt: From the Predynastic Period to the
End of the Middle Kingdom (Cambridge University Press, 2016).
142 K Yamamura et al., The Cambridge History of Japan
143 William H. McCullough, “The Capital and Its
144 Ibid., 106–7.
145 Torao Toshiya, “Nara Economic and Social
419–24.
2.17 The Nara State developed a system of grided subdivision to allocate lands based on family members in the mid 7th century. Rents and taxes were levied based on area, crop and expected yields. "Research on the composition of farm households in Nara times indicates that a typical household was made up of thirteen persons: five males and six females over six, and two children (one male and one female) under six."

2.16 the layout of Heian-kyō in the late 8th century was modeled fairly closely on the grid system used in the allocation of agricultural land.
employed towards the choreography and measurement of territories and the multi-directionality and maximisation of flow (but also of congestion, when we think of, for instance, Manhattan) and exchange, but simultaneously the ordering and capture and accumulation of the energies generated within it. The grid is almost entirely void and opportunity – a self-referential and therefore self-fulfilling system which in this way renders itself irrefutable when questioned from within the absolute power of its own logic. It signifies exactly what it does; it is the ultimate sign and materialisation of the possibility for endless subdivision, universal equivalence and infinite expansion.

Yet in Fujii’s projects we might understand the grid as seemingly paradoxical: on one hand, it is paradigmatic of life exposed to colonisation by abstraction; on the other, it sets out a condition which opens up the possibility of stripping and ‘freeing’ the city from historical symbols and orders of power, and speaks about a fundamentally human condition in the fact that it negates an original nature. In this sense, the grid is only possible starting point for Fujii – a kind of simultaneous clarity of concrete, geometrically rational order and reference, and yet an abstract openness and tabula rasa within which one is not bound to history or any possibility for ‘understanding’. In Project E-2, as was indeed the case with several built projects to follow, Fujii obeys the grid’s formal rationality and inscribes it visibly so that the built form speaks of its negativity, and ultimately then silence or non-dwelling.

That Fujii chooses housing for many of his projects and for E-2 is crucial because in this way he stages an attack at the very heart of the urban factory’s identitarian-enssemblistic production and inscription of meaning and values through rituals that become habit. By adopting a sequence of unfolding operations that follow from the logic of the grid and form strict enfilades without corridors, he refuses the kind of typological-compositional exercise inherited from the West and from Japanese reformers since the late 19th century – one concerned with choreographing an unalienating, frictionless expe-

146 See Superstudio’s Continuous Monument and Super-surface projects intended to “deliberately intended to strip architecture of everything except its most naked living truth.” “We prepared a catalogue of tri-dimensional non-continuous diagrams, a catalogue of histograms of architecture with reference to a grid transportable in diverse areas or scales for the edification of a nature both serene and immobile in which we might finally recognize (re-know) ourselves. From the catalogue of histograms followed effortlessly objects, furniture, environments and architecture… But all these things didn’t matter much, nor have they ever mattered much. The surface of such histograms was homogeneous and isotropic; every problem of space and every problem of sensibility having been accurately removed. The histograms were also called ‘the tombs of the architects’.” Lang and Menking, Superstudio: Life without Objects, 13.

147 Of interest to the critic, then, is rather the absurdity of the “reason” illustrated here, the paradoxical aspect of the whole thing. Taken literally, of course, the “absurdity of rationality” is an obvious paradox, but ever since Modernism went bankrupt as an ideological entity, paradoxes of this kind have been surfacing all over the “field”, and it would even appear that “paradox” has been made into a form of thematic capital – this is a far more serious phenomenon than Charles Jencks realises with his theory of equivocation. Modernism, superficially at least, has consistently abhorred formalism, identifying rationalism with Zwecklosigkeit, and, for a rationalism of this type, it is clearly possible to claim that the logic which addresses itself solely to the reason behind form (and not even to architecture itself), in a strict sense should not be regarded as rational. Hajime Yatsuka, “Fujii’s, Hiromi Vision-Reversing Machine,” Oppositions, no. 22 (1980): 2.
rience in one of the most constructed, exploitative and therefore potentially contestable of realms. As Frampton observed, in E-2 ‘house,’ interlocking rooms accessed through double hinged doors create a maze of “unavoidable, unforeseeable frontal contact” and would likely result in an “inevitable promiscuity of social interaction”.

As mentioned in Project E-2, Fujii makes a distinct decision to depart from the grid and to use the square and cube, but then to ‘unfold’ the design through a rational sequence which follows from the first step. This kind of unfolding sequence is clear in the most famous of his projects, the 1976 Todoroki Residence. This decision reduces the reproduction of subjectivity, his will to idealism, reproduction of ideology or the production of style per se in the authoring of the project. In other words, it could be said that he attempts to practise, through a non-compositional exercise, a refusal of any will towards the sublimation of his own uprootedness and anxiety. This compulsion can be understood as the core of the architect’s subjectivity as author and producer, someone who should produce a semblance of ‘freedom’, individuality, innovation or uniqueness that obscures or is suspended within the opposite – a reality of increasing dependency and exposure to calculation and control.

The result of the non-compositional sequence is that an unrelenting rationality permeates every detail of the house, from the enfilade, to the repetition of scaling cubes in the rooms and furniture, to the ubiquity of the grid pattern on surfaces and corresponding windows and lighting, pushing through the repetitive to the “incantatory”. Therefore, as was his intention, an experience of the housing – as exemplified by his 1971 Suzuki Flats, a block of four small units – becomes, at moments, disorienting. The typical expectations of homeliness (katei or homu, from Japanese Protestant reformers’ version of home) and familiarity one would expect are patently absent.

Apparently for Fujii, the relentless repetition and lack of signs or symbols which might arouse inherited references, meanings and values are intended to provoke a kind of

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149 Frampton, A New Wave of Japanese Architecture: (Exhibition; New York), September 25-November 14, 1978, 11.
151 Frampton, A New Wave of Japanese Architecture, 8.
152 Sand, House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880-1930, 22.
154 “The transcendental insures intellectual cognition. It is a meaning which is supported by an objective sense of the appropriate, which in its turn constitutes an absolute standard in the context of reality. What counts is whether the available meaning satisfies this appropriateness which is in itself independent of our personal feelings. Before this objective system, our feelings are deprived of all their power. In order to judge the meaning of things in light of criteria prescribed by an objective system, we enclose ourselves in parenthe-
confusion, dread, disorientation and encounter with ‘nothingness’ in which one is “pinned in mid-air” to a concrete experience stripped of any possibility for intellectual cognition. Once the feeling, acting, thinking individual is freed from the “parenthesis” of “appropriate objective meaning” which deprives “feeling of all its power”, the object without any references outside of its immediacy can be encountered. It is from within this bare experience that one can only be present in an unbracketed relationship with the material conditions of the object and their relationship to it – a condition Fujii understood as necessary if one were to discover the possibility or power of generating meaning for oneself, “through the self”. Reflecting on Fujii’s work, the Chris Fawcett wrote, in the first article about Fujii’s work published outside Japan:

In his projects, Fujii also attempted to open up the potential for someone to confront their own space and habits by building a completely blank one-room housing outfitted with what he called ‘action furniture’. This was described on a 1971 Toshi Jūtaku cover (designed by none other than Arata Isozaki) featuring Fujii’s furniture's. The action furniture in his proposals – and, for example, in his 1970 Suzuki flats – were meant to supply all of the ‘utilities for living’ that one would need: shelves, desks, fold-out beds, slide-out tables, storage and even a kitchen. Only the shower and toilet were given a small peripheral sliver of space. In the Suzuki Flats, the units are simply a single blank room derived from the grid and bearing an inscription in the tiling and placement of lighting, electrics etc. and is outfitted with an ‘action furniture’ unit that can be folded and moved about. Here his intention was apparently to keep the space free from the architect’s assumption or reproduction of a type of living or choreography.
2.18 Todoroki House, Hiromi Fujii, 1975.
Cover of 1971 issue of *Toshi Jūtaku* with Fujii's Action Furniture which he designed in the early 1970s.
II. Concrete Voids

2.22 Nirvana House, Takefumi Aida, 1972, GA Houses.
Anti-Ritual House

Articles by Superstudio appeared and were translated in Japanese magazines as early as 1969.\(^{159}\) In 1971, the third article in a Japanese magazine to publish writing and projects by the Italian Group appeared in *Japan Interior Design Magazine*.\(^{160}\) \(^{161}\) Not only did Toyo Itō write about being influenced by the work of Superstudio,\(^{162}\) but it seems obvious, when considering the drawings of Fujii and Aida, that their work was also influenced by the Italian ‘radicals’. In the article entitled *The Single Design: Histograms, Villas, Monuments*, Superstudio discusses Sigmund Freud’s claim that the cube – the most archetypical form of the *New Wave* houses – is a sign of anguish, writing that “we all live in houses of anguish, even [the Austrian philosopher Ludwig] Wittgenstein who had built himself a cubic house because he likes the houses designed by [Adolf] Loos.”\(^{163}\) In the *Japan Interior Design* article, Superstudio presented their *Catalogue of Villas* as “transit stations on the way to hope”.\(^{164}\) The villas’ bare, undeniable resemblances to Aida’s and Fujii’s projects, namely in the use of orthogonal and cubic primary form, and especially in that every surface of the projects, is inscribed with a grid.

For example, Aida’s *Nirvana House* and *Annihilation House*, completed in 1972, both bear strong resemblance to the houses of Loos (for instance *Vila Müller*), to *Haus Wittgenstein* and to Superstudio’s villas: all blank containers as “volumes… indicating the place of living.”\(^{165}\)\(^{166}\) Both of Aida’s houses are white cubes constructed in concrete,\(^{167}\) with industrially produced window frames and utilities. In the case of *Annihilation House*, the cube appears half buried in the earth. Both houses have a square plan, and a symmetrical formal composition, which, as Aida remarked in a *Japan Architect* article, sought to “ascertain the innate substance of architecture”.\(^{168}\)

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\(^{159}\) International magazines distributed in Japan including *Domus* and *Abitare* carried articles as early as 1969, and the first Japanese magazine to publish an article by Superstudio was *Japan Interior Design* in 1970. See Peter Lang and William Menking, *Superstudio: Life without Objects* (Skira-Berenice, 2003), 229. Superstudio, “Superstudio.”


\(^{161}\) Ibid.

\(^{162}\) Itō, “Muyō No Ronri.”

\(^{163}\) “[T]he greatest project is to always project a whole life under the sign of reason, a life with precise directions, chosen and serenely accepted, with limits as corner stones. To construct ourselves with a series of primary gestures, magic gestures, calibrated and shining, through an architecture of clarity and lucidity not of cruel intelligence but understanding all reasons… modern architecture has already solved all relative problems, and on the other hand has demonstrated its social and functional absurdity.” Lang and Menking, *Superstudio: Life without Objects*, 110. Lang and Menking, *Superstudio: Life without Objects*, 110.

\(^{164}\) Superstudio, “Superstudio.”


\(^{168}\) Aida, “Speculation in the Dark.”
OKOSHI-E
ARCHITECTURE

Annihilation House, Takefumi Aida, 1972, GA Houses.

2.23 Annihilation House, Takefumi Aida, 1972, GA Houses.

II. Concrete Voids
As we have seen, the word ‘annihilation’ comes from Latin *an* (towards) and *nihil* (nothing); ‘nirvana’ (from *nibbana*) is the term which signifies the Buddhist ‘end goal’ of the path to eternal liberation from suffering and cycles of rebirth. Nirvana is also equivalent to *surya* (emptiness) as *anatman* (lack of self) and posits that there is no essential nature to any concept, being or thing in our universe of contingencies and perpetual change. Therefore, attachment to being or fixed ideas of self as a nature are the source of illusion and suffering. Fuji himself wrote that “transcendental meaning… [is] the instrument of a particular message”, suggesting that all transcendental concepts of reality and notions which constitute an idea of self are of dependent origination – abstract ideas and concepts constructed from within a particular context and perspective for the instrumentalising organisation of material and social relations.

*Nirvana House* has two entrances, one opening to the north elevation and one to the west elevation. Every elevation has a symmetrical composition of windows and doors. While the exterior is basic, using simple industrial construction materials, finishes, elements and organisation, the interior is finished in ‘softer’ and ‘warmer’ materials. On the ground floor, every interior surface is finished with wood, and on the upper floor with wood and wallpaper. The tripartite interior composition is a sequence from a wide foyer inside the north entrance which compresses to a narrow corridor and then opens to a wide-open floor that runs from the east to the west façades on the south side of the house. This processional sequence is centred on the plan from north to south, following the organisation of the façade.

In Aida’s projects, there is an emphasis on approach, sequence, and procession through formal arrangement. *Annihilation House*, for example, protrudes from an artificial mound of earth, and is decisively composed to be approached via a wide, dominating staircase up the retaining wall-bound landform. The ‘entry’ into *Nirvana House* is extended through a tripartite procession composed of an expansion inside the entry, leading towards the interior, a single step and compression through a dark narrow corridor, and finally to a wide ‘opening up’ into the largest room of the house. The exterior form of his later *Stepped Platform House* could be said to resemble a subtly sloped Mesoamerican temple in section as the eastern and western elevations of the house are composed of a series of steps. In the case of the *Stepped Platform House*, though, these steps – while potentially provoking a kind of ritualistic awareness in their form, edges, dimensions and symmetry – neither lead to a room, terrace or altar, but instead to nowhere.

170 Takasaki, *An Introduction to Buddhism*.
172 Ibid., 95.
Nirvana House’s interior composition on both first and second floors derives its organisation from the tripartite processional sequence previously described, a decision that it seems is likely to have preceded the interior composition and therefore is both its genesis and a kind of constraint or limit. The house’s form organises a series of spatial divisions that depart from its own rationality – one ultimately centred around Aida’s decision to emphasise bare form, sequence, and legibility. Legibility might be provoked here by symmetry in composition, bareness or a lack of signs and symbols, and perhaps most importantly through a form of awareness provoked by procession. The subject is invited to a formal and therefore phenomenological sequence of compressions and openings, distinct shifts in width and height, light and darkness.

The interior and its processional sequence might remind us more of a temple than a house, in which emphatic movements of the body are reverentially ‘performed’ and constitute a means of absorption through ‘actioning’. In the case of the temple, the ritual can be understood as emphatic because it is performed on occasion, ceremoniously and with focus; in the case of the typologically organised nuclear family nLDK, housing rituals are ‘performed’ daily *ad absurdum* from a young age and become habit. ‘Actioning’, the ritual in the nLDK, via bodily movement in space over time and through a series of named, ‘programmed’ rooms and spaces, should be understood as the most inconspicuous and effective source of value and identity transmission of social factory, and constitutes one of the primary mechanisms for social and cultural reproduction, familiarisation and domestication. In the *Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, Nishitani’s translator outlines his discussions of routine, habit, the city and an avoidance of a confrontation with an actual or realised nihilism:

> If certain features of the modern city are especially conducive to nihilism – even while at the same time covering it over – they operate in Tokyo (site of the first phase of the translation) at full pitch. In a city where such a huge population does so much – and so much moving – in the course of a day, and in an environment so distanced from the natural, nihilistic moods are more likely to arise in the event that any kind of break occurs in the routine. In the ineluctable awareness of the active presence of multitudes of one’s fellow human beings devoting their energies toward work and recreation – both as means to survival and distraction – the question of the point of it all is more apt to arise with some force. One comes to appreciate Heidegger’s saying that we exist for the sake of one “in order to” (wozu) after another, all the way down to the final “for the sake-of-which” (worumwillen) – which may be ultimately in vain: for the sake of nothing at all.\(^{176}\)

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Nirvana House tends towards an absence of style or synthesis. The exterior of the house was radically blank and spoke of a realised nihilism, effacing Cacciari and Heidegger’s poetics of dwelling. In fact, in photographs – taken amongst neighbouring detached nuclear family houses decorated with Japanese and Western symbols – Nirvana House shows a cold, blank, expressionless face.177 Here there seems an attempt, not unlike that of Itō and Fujii, to reject the typical tasks of the architect. In other words, the project rejects an engagement in the task of reconciling or synthesising, on the one hand, the ‘groundless’, increasingly deterministic, contingent reality of the social factory, and on the other, its ideological production of perceptions of self-determination, ‘meaning-full-ness’ or dwelling.178 The ‘tarting up’ and the ‘habitual’ plan here tend towards being rejected for, instead, a confrontation with nihilism and/or nirvana.

By Virtue of Emptiness

Broadly speaking, the problematic of Japan’s ongoing modernisation project at stake in the projects, essays and articles written by Itō, Fujii and Aida during the period are summarised in the architecture historian Michael Hays’ discussion of Tafuri’s A Critique of Architectural Ideology of 1969: “Following Simmel, Tafuri understands the metropolis as the general form assumed by the process of technical rationalization and objectification of social relations brought about by the monetary economy. This process dissolves individuality into a flow of weightless impressions, abstracts and levels down all particularity and quality, and restructures subjectivity as [capitalist] reason and calculation.”179 While it is apparent that the projects discussed here refuse certain compositional tasks perceived as complicit with the capital’s cultural production, it is important also to question whether or not they ultimately land somehow against or outside a reproduction of Japanese capitalist subjectivity.

As we have seen, the profession of the architect emerged out of a division of intellectual and physical labour during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the state undertook mass industrialisation and modernisation reforms.180 Most significantly, the architect, as a university-educated and accredited professional, emerged during industrialisation, as was the case in Japan. ‘Architecture’ became an inherently pre-emptive act, a series of abstract methods as theory and design separated from the process of construction on site. Before modernisation, the daiku (master builder, carpenter, and

177 Aida Doi Architects, “Nirvana House (1972).”
178 Simmel: “The deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and of the technique of life.” G Simmel, K. H. Wolff, and Free Press, The Sociology of Georg Simmel (Free Press, 1950), 409.
180 See Chapter 1.
181 Sand, House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture,
Shinto ceremonial figure for buildings) acted as builder and intermediary to the design devised by the inhabitants, reportedly often by the mistress of the house, on-site\footnote{Domestic Space, and Bourgeois Culture, 1880–1930, 264–266.} (Sand suggests that ‘modern architects’, of course, have a completely different idea of functionality from them).\footnote{Ibid, 265.} So it should give us pause to realise that the very profession itself in Japan was created by state institutions concerned with control and economy.

In the case of the houses by Aida, Fujii and Itō, there is a clear tendency towards a rejection of cultural values, and a seeming break with the architect’s ‘task’ of creating synthesis – and perhaps a desire to avoid any kind of imposition of ‘values’ at all, if for a moment we ask whether, contrary to an initial reading, these projects can be understood as part of a continuity rather than a break with the historical dialectics of capitalism. Against an initial impulse to view them as \textit{post} or \textit{anti} ‘modern’; they might instead be considered and understood as a \textit{necessary} reaction from within Japanese ruling, owning and managerial classes. What will also become clear through the study of Japanese history is that negation by the ruling class is an \textit{ancient} and \textit{resurgent} phenomenon, and is increasingly laid bare and visible during the post-war period of Japanese history. After the war, the capital- and land-owning and management or knowledge classes\footnote{A term I will not qualify here but defer to the use of countless Japanese critics who use it – for instance, Yatsuka Hajime and Sand cited throughout this chapter.} were forced to face the total destruction of their historical social relations and values (as was notable in the writings of Itō’s boss Kikutake, who lamented the destruction of the landed aristocracy and its historical culture after the war\footnote{Kikutake: “My architecture was my protest, as a former landlord, against the dismantling of the entire landowning system. Landlords provided vital support for the local community. Take the landlord away and you undermine the entire social and cultural fabric of the community.” Rem Koolhaas: “So, indignation was one of the important forces for your architecture?”}. As we have seen, after the initial suppression by military and the state, management had to reinvent technological and cultural-political strategies for production to defend itself against newly politicised workers, while striving to innovate amidst fierce competition with the West and the international industrial and financial elite.

Faced with challenges to a status quo, resistance, upheaval and the acceleration in modes of production to suppress these, architects and their patrons – the Japanese owners and managers of industry, politicians and dominant cultural figures – were apparently ‘forced’, and especially during periods of structural transition, to take a position of \textit{Negativity}. The relinquishing of previous values, and of fixity or any pre-determined ‘limitations’ to possible forms of culture or life, and the accelerating destruction of historical conditions of familiarity, demanded an embrace of nihilism and the ‘pure object’. An absence of any \textit{telos} (\textit{kōma mokuteki tanbu} as end, purpose, edge or horizon) meant also a recognition on the part of the Japanese bourgeoisie, of one’s own self-subjugation, of a commitment to the artificiality of reality, ‘calculation’, and acceptance of perpetual ‘homelessness’. One must absorb and internalise the shock of this ‘nothing-
ness’ in order to understand, accept and cope with its inescapable reality, and therefore to maintain a kind of understanding and hence an asymmetrical political power relative to the population.

To dispel anxiety by understanding and internalizing its causes: this would seem to be one of the principal ethical imperatives of bourgeois art. It matters little whether the conflicts, contradictions, and torments that create anxiety are absorbed into a comprehensive mechanism capable of reconciling those differences, or whether catharsis is achieved through contemplative sublimation... To remove the experience of shock from all automatism, to use that experience as the foundation for visual codes and codes of action borrowed from already established characteristics of the capitalist metropolis – rapidity of change and organization, simultaneity of communications, accelerated rhythms of use, eclecticism – to reduce the structure of artistic experience to the status of pure object (an obvious metaphor for the object-commodity), to involve the public, as a unified whole, in a declaredly interclass and therefore antibourgeois ideology: such are the tasks taken on, as a whole, by the avant-gardes of the twentieth century.

It is important here to note though that while there was a need to overcome fixed values, one value became the great idol. No other value, humanistic, natural, or religious could survive the “fetishization” of economic growth and the maximisation of profit implicit in capitalism.

As we have seen, this negativity and therefore potentiality – this sovereignty – must be maintained as the privilege of a few. However, what we can also see from a study of Japanese history, and moving forward to the 1980s and 90s in the proceeding chapters, this nihilism can be said to be increasingly encountered by workers – who themselves will be obligated to become thinkers, or ‘innovate’ – as long as they do not see and cannot challenge certain aspects of the framework atop which that innovation operates. Japan is now at the threshold of developments that will continue to transform life there – accelerating technological change, an approaching mass shortage of labour (followed by increased automatisation or robotising of production, and even service and care work), the expanding proletarianisation of all workers in the face of growing global competition and a global market. Perhaps an increasing ‘coming to the fore of nihilism’

K: “Yes, that’s exactly right. It stands as the most important issue among the original inspirations for my ideas. My conceptions for Tower-Shaped Community (1958), Marine City (1958), and the others were all fundamentally about land. This is the first time I’ve said this,” Koolhaas, Obrist and Ota, Project Japan: Metabolism Talks, 133.


187 Uprooting is cruel in particular for those who are not religious (because piety is a second Heimat and also portable) or who lack money (because money can procure completely new roots) or who do not enjoy
– despite perpetually provoking counterreactions in phantasmagorical regurgitations of the past and past futures – will dissolve the possibility for workers to ‘procure… new roots’ or to trust and believe that a ‘poetic homeliness’ or dwelling is still possible, ultimately opening the gates of sovereignty to all. Despite what could be considered a bare confession of the metropolis’ contradictions – and its destructive character – in the houses of Aida, Itō and Fujii, we can also recognise the potentiality for what Keiji Nishitani described as a “will to power”, “total insight”, or a move to push through a dark to a creative nihilism:

... nihilism is the transition from the standpoint of observation to that of “passionate” Existence. It means taking the entirety of history upon oneself as a history of the self, shifting the metaphysical ground of that history to the ground of the self, and saying “No” to it in this ground. It is at the same time to deny oneself the ground of the being of the self given by history and voluntarily to demolish the ground which has become false, turning the being of the self into a question mark.

Nibilism demands that each individual carry out an experiment within the self... By virtue of emptiness everything is able to arise, but without emptiness nothing whatsoever can arise.

Once we embrace the emptiness, the void, a potentiality which is always at hand, can ‘arise’. Learning from Loos, Itō, Aida and Fujii, it seems that the task in front of us is to learn how, through the act of architecture, to say ‘I’d prefer not to’ to the forms of planning, compositional synthesis, signification and sublimation that capitalism obliges us to produce in the city.

188 “The past expectation, admittedly already in doubt, that the homeliness of the homeland [das Heimatliche der Heimat] could still be immediately saved – this expectation we no longer cherish. The expression that I wrote in 1946 to a French friend speaks more precisely to this point: ‘Homelessness is the fate of the world’. Modern man is settling himself into this homeliness. Yet, this homeliness conceals itself behind a phenomenon that my friend Tsujimura has already indicated and that I call for short ‘the world civilisation’: which a century ago broke in upon Japan as well. World civilisation, that means today: the dominance of the natural sciences, the dominance and primacy of the economy, politics, technology. Everything else is no longer even a superstructure [Oberbau], but merely an utterly run-down annex [Nebenbau].” Kōichi Tsujimura, Martin Heidegger and Richard Capobianco, “Martin Heidegger’s Thinking and Japanese Philosophy and From Martin Heidegger’s Reply in Appreciation,” Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy 12, no. 2 (2008): 349–57.

189 “Total insight. Every great growth actually brings with it a tremendous crumbling and perishing: suffering and the symptoms of decline belong to times of great progress; every fruitful and powerful movement of humanity has at the same time created a nihilistic movement. Under certain circumstances it would be a sign of incisive and essential growth, of transition into new conditions of existence, that the most extreme form of pessimism, true nihilism, would come into the world.” Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, The Will to Power (Vintage, 1967), 112. Cited in Nishitani, The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism, 99.

190 Ibid., 7.

191 Here Nishitani seems to be thinking of his former tutor Heidegger, who published an essay in 1947 entitled “Letter on Humanism” in which he emphasises an anti-anthropocentric position and rejects humanistic, anthropocentric misreading of his Being and Time; instead he argues that these are housed in language: “Language, is the clearing-concealing advent of Being itself” (“Letter,” 249). Ibid., 180.
PROJECT E-2
Hiromi Fujii
(unbuilt) 1968-71
ANNIHILATION HOUSE
Mutsuura, Takefumi Aida
1971
URBOT 002
Toyo Ito
(unbuilt) 1971
URBOT 002
Toyo Ito
(unbuilt) 1971
URBOT 003
Toyo Ito
(unbuilt) 1971
NIRVANA HOUSE
Fujisawa, Takefumi Aida
1972
STEPPED PLATFORM HOUSE
Kawasaki, Takefumi Aida
1976
TODOROKI HOUSE
Ichikawa, Hiromi Fujii
1976
III

A HOUSE WITH NO INTERIOR
The Architecture of *Homelessness* and Real *Sublimation*
During the 1980s and 90s, Japanese art and architecture was apparently attempting to “remedy the modernist error of Western, male bourgeois domination” but was also “simultaneously vacating the ground on which alone the contours of modernism can clearly be seen”.  

Akira Asada’s assessment in his 1989 essay *Infantile Capitalism and Japan’s Postmodernism: A Fairy* resembled one made by Rem Koolhaas five years later in *The Generic City* – that architecture and the city’s contemporary “aspiration toward tropicality automatically implies the rejection of any lingering reference to the city as fortress, or citadel; it is open and accommodating like a mangrove forest.” In a meditation on Singapore, he argued that the city’s presence of form was “vulnerable” because it was extensively planned, “built-to-last” and would be “viable only as long as everybody knows their place, but that will not be forever”.

In 1990, Hiromi Fujii also stressed a decisive turn away from the heavy, confrontational and ‘theoretical’ architecture of his earlier generation. This new generation, Fujii wrote, was displaying traits which had “hitherto” been considered “feminine” in both Japan and the West: “lightness, softness, frailty” [or delicateness (*yawa na mono*)]; sensations instead of ideas, parts and fragments instead of the whole, the natural instead of the artificial, and absence instead of presence. *Androgynous* is perhaps another way of describing these architectures. For, while their ‘image’ might provoke aesthetic-cultural associations with femininity, in many examples, the gendered, spatial, programmatic and ritual features are increasingly dissolved, thus leaving them essentially genderless in any historical sense. It was during the 1980s and 90s, too, that the total male domination of ‘high’ Japanese architecture was first shaken by the appearance of Itsuko Hasegawa and Kazuyo Sejima.

Perhaps it is no mistake then that, for Fujii, the work which was most intriguing and exemplary of the tendencies he observed was being designed by Toyo Itō and a young woman architect who formerly worked with his office: Sejima. As is self-evident when one scans the pages of their many *El Croquis* issues, the work of Itō and Sejima, and of their predecessors, has developed into what we could call a recognisable ‘school’ of...
fig 3.2 *Sincere by Design*, Noriko Takiguchi

*The Architecture of Homelessness and Sublimation*
architecture (this an almost singular phenomenon in the 21st century). We should count among the schools’ members Ryue Nishizawa – an architect who formerly worked for Sejima and is now her partner at SANAA (Sejima and Nishizawa and Associates) – as well as their former staff member Junya Ishigami. Sou Fujimoto has been grouped with these architects in exhibitions for the similarity of his work and interests, including those expressed in his important 2008 book *Primitive Future*, and has collaborated on projects with Itō and SANAA. As is evident in many examples of their projects, all of these architects share a tendency to ‘strip back’ architecture – all have often whitewashed their buildings and or made them so transparent that roofs or floors appear to float. They often use simple rectangles or squares in plan, but then also painstakingly strive for newness and striking aesthetics. Itō, Fujimoto and Ishigami, in particular, have been obsessed by metaphors of, for instance, animal’s nests, natural phenomena, forests, clouds, etc. For these reasons, but also because we should recognise that Itō’s 1985 *Silver Hut* – which he called a *Primitive Hut in the Modern City* – is an important precursor to much of the school’s later work – we will henceforth refer to them as the *New Primitives*.

The *New Primitives* have become some of the most globally recognised and influential architects of the 21st century. They are favourites of prestigious cultural institutions and prizes. By 1998, three years after Sejima formed SANAA with Nishizawa, the practice won the prestigious *Prize of Architectural Institute of Japan* and has since then built several seminal projects for dominant global cultural institutions. Three of them have won the *Hyatt Foundation’s seminal Pritzker Prize* (Sejima and Nishizawa in 2010 and Itō in 2013). Another contemporary whose work also paralleled theirs, Shigeru Ban, won the prize in 2014, and one of their key mentors and influences, Arata Isozaki, won it in 2019. All of these architects have won at least one prestigious *Golden Lion* at the *Venice Biennale*. All of them have been widely published and exhibited at eminent cultural institutions and universities with terms such as a “A New Innocence”, “sincere”, “free… inclusive… democratic”, and a “lightness of being”.

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7 Ibid.
8 Ishigami never worked for Ito, but did for Sejima and Nishizawa, both of whom worked for Ito. It should also be noted that Ishigami has turned towards a ‘heavy’ architecture in some recent projects, such as his *restaurant and house*.
12 Ibid., 11.
Dark to Light

In 1976, Ito completed *White U* house for his sister. She had recently lost her husband to cancer at a time when pollution-induced increases in terminal illnesses and deformities were just beginning to wane after new environmental protection legislation had been enforced.\(^{13}\) The house appears to ‘turn its back’ to Tokyo,\(^{14}\) confronting the street with a completely bare and windowless, curving, fair-faced concrete façade. In plan, the house is a ‘U’ shape, or in fact more of a stretched ‘D’ shape. A courtyard at its centre surrounded by the 4.5 metre-wide band of space contained by curving walls for a great deal of its length. Despite a couple of small rooms that hug the periphery of the band of space, in what seems a compromise with the sensibilities of his sister, Ito left the space largely open, creating what he referred to as a “flow” space which might dissolve a typical domestic sedentism. Thus, it would not easily fall into typical images of family life or inherited modes of inhabiting a house. The curving walls do not lend themselves to hanging things, such as photographs or clocks; they do not lend themselves to contemporary furniture designed for orthogonal rooms, nor permit the use of traditional orthogonal Japanese elements such as the *tatami*, *tokonoma* and so on. Hence at *White U*, with a simple gesture, Ito undermines what we expect of historical domestic spaces, reflecting his continued rejection of the dominant nLDK type, which for him was a “fantasy […] unrelated to daily life”\(^{16}\).

In *White U*, Ito abandoned the “axial lines and symmetry”\(^{17}\) of earlier projects such as *Urbot*, and his 1974 *Black Recurrence House*. The latter was built with a nearly black façade that wrapped the roof and even then turned downwards, sheathing the walls of a large interior skylit stairwell. Outside became inside as the façade and roof material continued on either side of the large glass skylight. Ito apparently thought that the typical white walls of the domestic interior could not avoid the “shadows” cast by a “sedimentation of urban anxiety”: the “panting and body heat” and ‘fear’ of the city lowers like a “dark cloud” and seeps into the interior of the house.\(^{18}\) In *White U*, Ito stated that he could not bring himself to stifle the gentle beauty of the curving white wall with any hard form or symmetry: “Following a confrontation between my impulse to define a form with an axis and my extremely sensuous impulse to pursue spatial beauty, I

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3.5- 3.6 Black Recurrence, Toyo Ito, 1974

III. A House with No Interior

The Architecture of Homelessness and Sublimation
3.7- 3.8 Silver Hut, Toyo Ito, 1984.
chose the latter.” Evidently for him, the loop at White U created a “soft and flexible”, “continuous and fluid” “flow” of changing expressions, air, light and people. The ‘flow space’ surrounded and counterposed itself to a ‘lag’ space in the bare ground of the central courtyard. Fluorescent bulbs and spotlights were installed near the bottom of the blank whitewashed and curved walls to cast the shadows of his sister and nieces on them. He modified the original design, visiting the site during construction because he was struck by the shadows of scaffolding and workers in motion being cast onto the white plaster. “I want to enquire into what people desire and what causes them grief and make architecture as a field that may touch on such emotions.”

Much later, in a 1996 interview with Koji Taki, Itō argued that a ‘hard confrontation’ with the city could no longer deliver a social critique:

[Toyko] was already changing quite rapidly. Urban space had been sinking into a very grim state in the early 1970s. In the 1980s however, things took a turn in the opposite direction, and we saw the emergence of a brighter atmosphere, one that you could even say was brimming with vitality. I became aware of a strong trend toward producing an urban space that was unreal and fragmented. But I realized that the days in which this kind of realness, shut off from the outside could deliver any kind of critical social message were already at an end.

In the late 1970s, Itō began to ‘open’ his architecture to the exterior and became interested in materials and forms that would reflect city life and expose the domestic interior. He began to use more industrial materials such as steel and thin sheet metal, and thin metal rails rather than the concrete he used to make earlier solid, opaque constructions. In his own house, the 1984 Silver Hut, Itō used primary colours on the walls and in the skylights, and we can see many of the light, porous features, such as corrugated and perforated metals, that would later also characterise the early work of Sejima and were obvious antecedents to the aesthetic of SANAA, Ishigami and others.

Silver Hut was built in the centre of a Tokyo where only a few years later the prices of real estate had skyrocketed. The 1.15 square kilometres of gardens and park on which the Emperor’s palace stood in Tokyo’s centre were valued at more than the combined

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20 See Ito, “White U.”
21 Ito discusses how his original plan to use colours other than white on the interior was abandoned as he continued the ‘bleaching process’ during the finishing. He wrote that he became frightened that the process of bleaching was “testing” some of his “own realities”. “In literature, in painting and in architecture, white is not used as a colour filled with expectations. For me, white possesses a sense of dread that is far from sweet. That is because white summons white. Just as a curved surface conjures another curved surface, I think that magic powers are concealed in white.” Ito and Daniell, Tarzans in the Media Forest, 20.
22 Ibid., 18.
3.9 Pao for the Tokyo Nomad Shojo (Teen), Toyo Ito 1985 and 89.
property values of the entire state of California.\textsuperscript{24, 25} Like Sejima’s later Platform Houses, the plan was based on a regularly spaced grid of steel and concrete columns in a ‘flexible residential’ layout that Itō called \textit{dom-ino}, after Corbusier’s formative project.\textsuperscript{26} The column and steel beam arrangement, topped by a vaulted or arched, triangulated metal roof structure, were intended to remove any burden from the walls as divisions, to open the plan and to maximise flexibility.\textsuperscript{27} The layout of the house rejects codified typological house planning, and did not contain any space which could easily be identified as, for instance, a ‘living’ or ‘dining’ room. Here the domestic space forms a layer around a void, rather than a living room, reflecting Itō’s observation that the “restaurant” now gave a greater sense of family togetherness than the dining room, and that the convenience store was increasingly more important than the kitchen.\textsuperscript{28} In photographs, the (perhaps staged) arrangement of elements in the house defies programmatic definition, with furniture loosely arranged in open, nondescript space.

He describes the house as like a spaceship that had landed but, at the same time, like a ‘primitive hut’ crafted from found materials in the industrial ‘urban forest’. Like the space inside a loose forest, its industrial canopy littered with triangular skylights on the vaulted metal roof, the house left numerous angles of exposure to the city, vegetation and sky – an exposure which he described as intended to ‘challenge’ the inhabitants. Despite the decidedly simple industrial materials and structure, Itō also included a Japanese-style room with tatami and a tokonoma which is rarely seen in photographs. In an article titled \textit{Primitive Hut in the Modern City}, Itō explains that by using traditional Japanese roof tiles for the floor, he wanted to evoke the memory of the “classical compact earth floor [called \textit{doma}] that was typical of the Minka Japanese farmhouse”.

One year after \textit{Silver Hut} was completed, Itō designed his famous \textit{Pao Dwelling for Tokyo’s Nomad Girl} or \textit{Shojo} (\textit{shojo} can be translated as a girl or young woman and is composed of the kanji characters referring to ‘little’ and ‘woman’). The project was initially conceived of as a space to display a line of furniture in a department store.\textsuperscript{29, 30} Sejima, who worked in Itō’s office from 1981 to 1987, worked on the project and, in fact, Itō had ostensibly modelled it on her: the nomadic urban ‘convenience store little woman’ – a
Tokyo woman who flees “the oppressive, conventional family, lives alone and drifts lightly in the vast plain of information. [Their day] starts in a steel-and-glass-made office, a Mies dream, where they play a keyboard and computers.” For Itō, the Tokyo shojo apparently consumes fashion in bare concrete spaces, and “make[s] themselves subject to visual images and materials of various locations and times in movie theatres, play houses and museums”. Their individual experiences are played out in media, then discussed in café-bars designed like New York City loft apartments. These nomads, he wrote, never become tired of the city’s collages of dreams, time and space because they are ever changing – and though “beautiful, transitory and vulnerable”, they are for them “real”.

Pao was later redesigned for an exhibition in Belgium and in that version, Itō elaborated an urban scenario for the project. Like a parasite or scavenger (in fact not so unlike Urbot 003), Pao might inhabit the empty lots and rooftops of Tokyo, amplifying the convenience store girl’s form of life, which takes the exterior of the city as the new house. Irrespective of the ambiguity of spaces for family gathering and dining at Silver Hut, taken literally, Pao is a radically bare one room nomad ‘hut’ wrapped in a porous membrane; there is no bathroom, no kitchen and no ‘bedroom’. There are no walls, and one would be at pains to claim that there is even any façade. Here Pao begins to materialise an emerging tendency increasingly clear in 1980s Japan: functions that were once artificially separated, hidden inside the house and mythologised as the sites of romance and the labour of love, care and privacy were being increasingly ‘taken over’ by the city outside. In other words, Pao speaks about a real dissolution of ideal types constructed during modernisation as the functions that the house began to dissipate into the city. The ‘hard’ modern divisions of reproductive and productive labour cultivated since the late 19th century and accelerated after the war had visibly begun to dissolve with new

33 Kazuyo Sejima, El Croquis 77 (I), El Croquis (Cristina Poveda y yolanda Muela, 1996), 9.
34 The term pao and the Japanese kanji for it comes from Chinese character bāo, which means roughly bundle or package, and is used in the Chinese phrase Ménggǔ bāo, which means the Mongolian ger (yurt). The ger served as a single room dwelling for the nomadic Mongolian herder people who migrated to different pastures with the seasons. The dwelling was a lightweight though sturdy structure, circular in plan (like Ito’s original designs for Pao) for the simplicity of precise assembly, but also performed very well in the high winds of the steppe. Though there were no physical divisions, there was a very specific ritual division of the yurt space: the women occupied the ‘impure’ eastern quadrant and men the ‘pure’ western, honoured

3.11 Mongolian Ger with gendered division of labour, knowledge, ritual space.
guests the north quadrant, near an ancestral altar, and children the eastern quadrant with the women. Food preparation was done by the women and children on their side and the cooking was done at the centre. In this nomadic, pre-modern scenario, women were relegated to a reproductive role; however, in the case of the ger or pao, it was not hidden away but in plain view. Sacred texts were kept on the males’ side and women were forbidden to read them less they upset the order of the society. An ancient proverb read “for a woman to look at a book is like a wolf looking at a settlement”. The Mongolian pao was a place where strict ritual and cultural impositions of patriarchal control had the effect of an absolute confinement of women to given territories and roles and denied them the ‘sacred’ knowledge. Daphne Spain, “Gendered Spaces and Women's Status,” Sociological Theory, 1993, 137–51.

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If we compare the woman photographed in a set of famous images for Pao’s publication to photos of a young Sejima, it is difficult for us to come to the (correct) conclusion that it was actually her in the photos using the furniture she designed. Perhaps the “twinges of resistance” that Sejima confessed she felt while working on the project were reflected in her demeanour; she would not have liked to be referred to as shojo and would have known that the term Pao comes from the Chinese character referring to the Mongolian yurt (ger). In Mongolian culture, the ger was a highly gendered space; women were forbidden from entering ‘pure’ regions of the house, marked by invisible but internalised boundaries and rules, and were forbidden to read sacred texts and obtain the knowledge of the men there. Despite Itō’s distaste for and rejection of the typical or constraining, Sejima – who seemed to agree with and admire Itō and many of his positions – nevertheless thought it too constraining; she did not like that fact that it ‘wrapped’ and apparently reproduced ‘old’ ideas.

In what reads as a contemptuous and combative interview, the architectural critic Koji Taki pressed Sejima about the ‘openness’ of space in her early projects, and their apparent lack of adherence to or pursuit of any theory or ideology. On the other hand, he accused her of being the epitome of the contemporary immaterial worker: a ‘manipulator of signs’ through the keyboard interface. Sejima responded that while she admitted she was a product of her time, she was consciously rejecting any preconceived ideology – she simply dealt with the ‘real’. She was interested in process and not ideology. She made it clear in this and other interviews, and through her work, that architecture should not attempt to define or constrain the subject: it must be free and like her, could or should no longer bear the rigid impositions of the past. Architecture should simply give its potential inhabitants a platform.
Sejima’s reply to *Pao* was manifested most clearly in a series of conceptual drawings that she published in 1990 – three years after leaving Itō’s office – along with photographs and writing for her first two projects, *Platform House I and II*.³⁷ ³⁸ ³⁹ Sejima wanted architecture to assume a wide variety of possible movements, and to allow people to ‘pass through’ it easily. *Platform House* rejects the possibility of preconfiguring a ‘dwelling’ for any predicated type of individual. In Sejima’s conceptual drawings of the *Platform Houses*, not only does she reject the idea that an architect can or should preconfigure the interior life through the compositional subdivision of space, walls, rooms, corridors and doors, but by shedding the façade and proposing only bare planes that elaborate *ground* and *roof*, architecture is ostensibly stripped of its mandate to enclose or contain.⁴⁰ Her drawings test the worthiness for destruction of the most assumed, given and typical features of a house: containment (interiority), scale, range and timescales for movements and inhabitation, and even the assumption of sedentary life.

Inevitably though, there is a stark contrast between the reality of the realised projects, and Sejima’s aspirations for them. *Platform House I*, for example, was in fact built as a company retreat. Despite her radical ‘conceptual’ drawings of the projects, when *Platform Houses I and II* were realised, they had a façade and were thus enclosed. Moreover, the drawing for *Platform House I* does not describe what was built below the platform – a concrete box with several rooms, including a ‘Japanese room’ and bathroom, linked through and separated by doors along a corridor. The houses employ a simple arrangement of thin steel columns – and in *Platform House II*, glue-laminated timber columns – not unlike Itō’s *dom-ino* system. *Platform House I*s two-row grid of equally spaced columns support a deeply undulating corrugated metal roof surface that appears in the conceptual drawing as if it also wants to evaporate and be set free. The built houses include large areas of sliding glass or hinged doors that can open to exterior terraces and outdoor furniture. In the case of *Platform House II*, there is a much less distinct sense of boundary or enclosure due to the fact that the façade is no longer simply rectilinear but meanders or zigzags, and because of large windows above sections of ‘clear-story’ walls that flood every corner of the space with light.

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³⁸ Sejima, *El Croquis 77* (I), 10–11.
³⁹ *Platform House I* was built as a holiday retreat for the staff of a fashion brand and *Platform House II* was a photographer’s house. Daniell et al., *An Anatomy of Influence*, 277.
⁴⁰ Sejima: “When he came out with Pao… I remember wondering why he was trying to wrap up and bind the design in cloth. It seemed to me a reflection of the old architectural concepts that Ito was perpetuating… I don’t envision architecture as a kind of personal covering as in Ito’s Pao. I see it more as a kind of open stage that should serve to facilitate freedom of movement… At a first glance, some people might get the impression that my platform Houses emerged from Ito’s Pao. But actually, they couldn’t be more fundamentally different; I wanted to challenge the notion of architecture as a thing in which to wrap people up. My response was to create a place through which people could pass quite freely. I wanted to challenge the way in which Pao tried to seal off the individual from the urban surroundings. I believe an architect should put up structures that serve to mutually incorporate people, city and information or media.” Sejima, *El Croquis 77* (I), 7.
⁴¹ Hiromi Fujii discusses the work of Ito and Sejima while also referencing Isozaki, levelling his criticism through a reading of Isozaki’s Team Disney building.
As if amplifying the dissolution of a sense of containment, in *Platform House II*, the grid of columns is staggered and topped by a roof mesh, composed of beams that triangulate column positions. These large triangles at times become a frame for glass skylights. A playful, flowing curve defines the shape of a mezzanine space which nests against one edge of the interior. Translucent sheets are hung below the glass roof triangles and send a diffused, flattening light through the space, ‘softening’ the hard edges. This kind of effect foreshadows the ‘softening’ characteristic of the work of SANAA. Despite a fragmentation of parts – which was en vogue with the so called ‘deconstructivist’ trend emerging in architecture during the 1980s and 90s – Sejima pushes for what Hiromi Fujii described as a “graphic” whole, one that conveys a “poetry and beauty” and softness.41

Counterrevolution

The *shōjo* of *Pao* smacks of what was lamented by many as the superficial “new breed” (*shin-jinrui*) stereotypes of Japanese middle-class (*ebûryû kaikyû*) youth born after 1960, who had no experience of the struggles, hardships and discipline of their parents during pre-economic-miracle Japan.42 44 45 This *new breed* were increasingly lamented in the 1980s for their rejection of old values, roles and the jobs of their parents; for their self-interest, superficiality and leisurely, consumerist lifestyles financed by their parents’ savings.46 47 Indeed, it seems that many saw the ‘9–5’ labourer *sarariman* or the housewife-type roles as a “kind of death”.48 This phrase seems to capture the attitude of many Japanese youth who found new life and meaning in resistance. One such group was the *Dumere*, or the ‘no goods’. In a lecture at Waseda University in 1993, Kaminaga Kōichi called for a “good-for-nothing revolution”. “Most students”, he argued “would end up ‘working while dead’, meaning the end of life.” Carl Cassegård, *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan* (Global Oriental Leiden, 2014), 59. This reflects very similar attitudes in Italy and the United States during the same period: “What was essential was the recognition of a possibility – conceiving waged labor as an episode in our lives rather than a prison. There followed then an inversion of expectations: refusing to strive to enter the factory and stay there, and instead searching for any way to avoid and flee it. Mobility became no longer an imposed condition but a positive demand and the principal aspiration; the stable job, which had been the primary objective, was now seen as an exception or a parenthesis.” Paolo Virno, “Do You Remember Counterrevolution?,” *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, 1996, 243.

“Severed, layered or inclined fragments usually create a perception of some intensity and suggest a whole, whether dispersed and invisible or provisional and incomplete. However, the composition of fragments in this building has quite the opposite effect. The fragments are coordinated in a graphic way, so that the whole has poetry and beauty. It is unbelievably beautiful, yet to the very extent that it is beautiful it seems to me to fail to explore the possibilities for new methods of composition.” Fujii, “A Japanese Architectural Scene, 1991.”

45 Yuki Honda, “‘Freeters’: Young Atypical Workers in Japan,” *Japan Labor Review* 2, no. 3 (2005): 5.
46 Yoshitaka, “Culture = Politics: The Emergence of New Cultural Forms of Protest in the Age of Freeter.”
48 This phrase seems to capture the attitude of many
3.16 Sejima working in Ito’s office 1984.
ical figure, though, sharing in a historical uprootedness and rejection of the past (and we should remember that she was only the second female architect to win the Pritzker, coming from a society with one of the most oppressive gender gaps), Sejima worked extremely long hours for little pay. She was perhaps, like so many Japanese youth and young architects in the Japan of the 21st century, eating convenience store food and sometimes even sleeping in the office. Despite likely being perceived as an unproductive member of the new breed, Sejima was to become an ideal role-model for the kind of the ambitious creative worker and entrepreneur that economists and politicians hoped would propel Japan towards future economic growth – one for which they adopted a series of legislative and financial ‘structural adjustments’ from the 1980s onwards.

In order to build a genealogy of these anti-types, it is important to take a closer look at the development of new modes of labour organisation which emerged during the late 1960s and 70s. Mass union membership and participation in organising actions against the government, corporations and universities were followed by an increasing refusal of the roles and regimes of work, school, house and family to which one was obliged by mainstream Japanese society. In fact, Toyo Itō himself had intended to return to Tokyo University in the late 1960s, but amidst what was referred to as the Tokyo University Struggle (Todai toso) some buildings, including the main Yasuda Auditorium, were barricaded and occupied for up to six months in 1968–69 by students protesting against the transformation of Japanese universities into education factories – essentially assembly lines to mould ideal types of worker. The occupation of Tokyo University was ended only when the police deployed 8,500 police in riot gear. The mass protests, strikes and occupations staged by students and workers in the 1950s and 60s threatened to cripple Japan’s ‘economy as number one’ policy. Therefore, faced with a

been a dream for many of their parents, now appeared as a kind of death.” Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire (Harvard University Press, 2001), 274.
50 The author is here referring to the personally recounted experiences of several colleagues, friends and students who worked in Japanese offices during the 2000s and 2010s.
51 See: Yoshitaka, “Culture = Politics: The Emergence of New Cultural Forms of Protest in the Age of Freeter.”
55 One quarter of the 8,500 police were deployed and the rest were on back-up and to deal with potential uprisings as a result of the siege. Hiroaki Sato, “Recalling ‘the Fall of the Yasuda Auditorium’ and the End of Japan’s Student Movement,” The Japan Times, April 2009, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2009/04/26/commentary/recalling-the-fall-of-the-yasuda-auditorium-and-the-end-of-japans-student-movement/.
56 Despite the surge of politicisation that was also reflected and perpetuated by Japanese New Wave Cinema of the 1960s, the Yakuza Film – with plot lines of unwavering dedication and loyalty to the extremely hierarchical clan – was the most popular genre in cinema. Cinemas at the time were selling fewer and fewer tickets because people were staying in to watch their new televisions. D. Desser, Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema, A Midland Book; MB 469 (Indiana University Press, 1988), 55. Jayson Makoto Chun, “A Nation of a Hundred Million Idiots,” A Social History of Japanese Television, 1953–1973, 2007.
recognition that workers were increasingly prone to politically organise and protest, and when suppressed, to become nihilistic and unproductive, the Japanese state and industry began to preside over a series of laws that gave the police greater powers but more importantly, a total re-organisation of the office and factory floor, economy, city and worker.

We should remember that the revolution in modes of production began as early as the mid-1950s when micro-electronics and automation were first being used in factories to reduce repetitive labour, de-skill and render workers general, expendable, replaceable and exchangeable. Echoing statements by managers at companies such as Toyota, Quality Control strategists at the giant Yawata Steel remarked that “seemingly contradictory requirements – higher efficiency and ‘regained humanity’, must be met simultaneously. The solution is to create a system that links together the hearts and minds of workers as human beings and helps them to display their respective capacity and creativity to the fullest.” New innovations on the Taylorist systems included strategies such as the Quality Control Circle, just-in-time, lean, flexible production, and worker self-management (Jishu Kahn). In part because of tight constraints on destroyed Japanese industry after the war, limited resources and worker politicisation, in the ideal scenario the company would communicate with the markets constantly and produce only what was demanded just-in-time. Here, communication and information feedback come to play a central role in production and the development of production knowledge; these are early signs of what was to become a core feature of the immaterial economy.

Companies would outsource much of production to smaller subcontractors who were not as regulated, had lower paid workers and therefore allowed the manufacturer to be much more flexible.

In the factory, workers were divided into small, self-regulating teams which would compete with other teams within the same company – a novel idea for the time that op-

61 This high-sounding pronouncement was more realistically expressed by Nikkeiren (Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations), which said, “The sense of belonging to a small group will give workers more satisfaction and lead to higher efficiency.” Ichiyo, Barzman, and Rousset, Class Struggle and Technological Innovation in Japan since 1945, 36.
64 Y. Sugimoto and G. McCormack, Democracy in Contemporary Japan (Taylor & Francis, 2017), 152.
66 “Nowadays young workers know how to speak...
Worker productivity, dedication and loyalty increased dramatically with these reforms. Though QC drives take diverse forms they generally have the same basic purpose: (1) making the workers think on behalf of management, or penetrating the inner world of individual workers with management ideology, thus preventing them from having their respective independent inner worlds beyond the world of the work place; (2) alleviating the sense of isolation workers suffer in the wake of technological innovations; (3) spurring competition among the workers to emulate the achievements of others; (4) placing workers under minute and constant control with regard to their ideology and behaviour; and (5) improving efficiency and raising the level of product quality. In many cases, the primary emphasis of the drive is on the first goal. In the 'company world', the workers are no longer allowed to do just what they are told to do but are supposed to contribute positively to the company out of a feeling of 'voluntary participation'. But participation is not in fact voluntary since the demand for it comes from the top.

Worker productivity, dedication and loyalty increased dramatically with these reforms. Loyalty, commitment and security, however, were also due to, at least for those contracted to work, full time in large corporations, 'welfare'-oriented benefits, namely (the uncommon) lifetime employment and scheduled seniority pay rises (referred to as the nenko system).
The Toyota and Yawata Steel examples are paradigmatic of wider innovations in Japanese labour management during the period. For industry to survive amidst increasing global competition, management in Japan during this period needed to put the desire for creativity, individual expression, self-realisation (jiko jitsugen) and autonomy to work. Japanese production did not need to invent a new subjectivity, but rather had to invent and organise the means to dominate those which were already emerging as a result of previous forms of abstraction and economic rationalisation. In his 1996 essay, Paolo Virno explained that counterrevolution is:

… literally revolution in reverse… [I]t is an impetuous innovation of modes of production, forms of life, and social relations that, however, consolidate and again set in motion capitalist command. The counterrevolution, just like its symmetrical opposite, leaves nothing unchanged. It creates a long state of emergency in which the temporal succession of events seems to accelerate. It actively makes its own “new order,” forging new mentalities, cultural habits, tastes, and customs — in short, a new common sense. It goes to the root of things, and works methodically.  

We could argue that in the second half of the 20th century, ‘visible’ disciplinary impositions of the spatio-typological regime began to effectively (and we will return to qualify this later) become obsolete and counterproductive. New powerful forms of social cooperation and communication began to arise outside of work, namely in the self-organised and self-affirming movements of the students and workers. An unstoppable demand for creative mobility emerged out of the destruction of historical modes of experience and life, and even out of the ‘desiring’ explosion of consumerism, which, far from simply offering concessions and counterpoints to the drudgery of work, began also to mutate subjectivity away from discipline and old forms of normalisation. We should, of course, recognise that these phenomena apply in various ways to the sub-

73 “What does the word counterrevolution mean? We should not understand it as meaning only a violent repression (although, certainly, that is always part of it), nor is it a simple restoration of the ancien regime, that is, the reestablishment of the social order that had been torn by conflicts and revolts. Counterrevolution is literally revolution in reverse. In other words, it is an impetuous innovation of modes of production, forms of life, and social relations that, however, consolidate and again set in motion capitalist command. The counterrevolution, just like its symmetrical opposite, leaves nothing unchanged. It creates a long state of emergency in which the temporal succession of events seems to accelerate. It actively makes its own ‘new order,’ forging new mentalities, cultural habits, tastes, and customs — in short, a new common sense. It goes to the root of things, and works methodically.” Virno, “Do You Remember Counterrevolution?,” 240.  
74 “Since the production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labor involved in this production as immaterial labor — that is, labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication.” Hardt and Negri, Empire, 290.  
jectivity of labour beyond Japan. As is clear, the work of the *New Primitives* has in fact become arguably as entangled with subjectivity outside of Japan as inside, perhaps even more so.

A ‘regained’ humanity, the ability to realise creative potential to the fullest at work and the *planned* imbuining of the factory and office role with emotional investment resemble a cultural-political ideology once reserved for the space away from work – housing. As we have seen, the post-war housewife’s unwaged reproductive labour – which can also be defined as immaterial labour because it leaves no lasting product – was the foundation of the Japanese economy because it produced workers ‘for free’. The unwaged housewife role was (and remains) marketed as a source of purpose, identity and emotional investment – essentially a ‘labour of love’. However, we can see a marked shift towards a greater possibility for personal self-realisation in the spaces of ‘work’ in the office and factory. The house’s *interior* – of course, mythologised as the private space away from or *outside* of the political economic activity of the city – is increasingly laid bare: it is an economic space completely integrated into the whole productive assemblage, or social factory, that is the city. What were once features of reproductive labour – work that does not result in a lasting product – and work that involves emotional investment and emotional care of others, and the production of affect increasingly became the mainspring of the generation of an economic surplus and began to dissolve historical gender distinctions in the *real*. Again here we can consider Fuji’s characterisation of an emerging ‘soft’, feminine architecture and city. Here, though, the potential also opens up for an *androgyne* that dissolves these kinds of abstract, oppressive binaries.
In Sou Fujimoto’s 2008 book entitled *Primitive Future*, he wrote that reflecting on an architecture of the ‘future’ is strikingly similar to reflecting on ‘primitive architecture’. He described his “cave” and “nest” like housing and cultural projects, two examples of which are his 2008 *Final Wooden House* and his 2013 London *Serpentine Pavilion*, as playful spaces that encourage “people to seek a spectrum of opportunities”. This is a theme shared with projects by SANAA and, for instance, their famous *Rolex Learning Centre*, in which one is encouraged to adapt to a landscape by interpreting the scales, convexity and concavity of surfaces. Here one finds oneself decreasingly subject to an imposition by divisions of space, choreography of role types, and contrasts of free and subjugated, inside and outside – but one must explore without ‘cues’.

Sejima’s clearing of the interior in the *Platform Houses*, her desire to remove the wrapping or the walls, when considered against contemporary economic developments reveals, as Koji Taki might have been suggesting, a push towards a kind of increasing impossibility of ideological prefiguration of the plan. The lack of a ‘plan’, the “habit of having no habits”, the professional traits of the new immaterial knowledge worker *par excellence* make themselves increasingly visible in Sejima’s architecture. Here the *nomad* or the *anti-type* is always waiting for an opportunity that can never be foreseen before the process: indeed, Sejima remarked of her architecture that “you might call it a ball game in which the rules are not fixed, but changing constantly.” Turning to the architects own ‘interior’, to their own subjectivity, it seems that we had long been accustomed to uprootedness; we internalised the obligation to clear out our own houses and remove the walls from our interior. As we saw already emerging as early as the 19th century in this kind of reality, one must actively engage with the perpetually unstable social, cultural and technological milieu around for affirmation, valorisation, security and survival.

With the counterrevolution, nihilism and *nomadism* emerged as the qualities of a pro-

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81 This is the title of his 2008 book. S. Fujimoto et al., *Primitive Future, Contemporary Architect’s Concept Series* (INAX, 2008).
83 Sejima, *El Croquis 77 (I)*, 16.
85 “Actually, it is always capital that ‘seeks to use the worker’s antagonistic will-to-struggle as a motor for its own development.’ Empire develops the same argument: capitalism can only be reactive since it is the proletariat that ‘actually invents the social and productive forms that capital will be forced to adopt in the future.’ It was the Italian workers’ stubborn resistance to the Fordist rationalization of work, and not mere technological innovation, that forced capital to make a leap into the post-Fordist era of immaterial work.” Paolo Virno, “Grammar Of The Multitude,” *Philosophy*, 2004, 11.
86 K Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Polit-
fessional profile: “nomadism, [a] distaste for a stable job, [an] entrepreneurial self-sufficiency, even [a] taste for individual autonomy and experimentation, were all brought together in the capitalist organization of production.”

“Today’s productive revolution exploits, as its most valuable resource, everything that the project of “modernization” counted among its effects: uncertain expectations, contingent arrangements, fragile identities, and changing values. This restructuration uproots no secure tradition (no trace remains of Philemon and Baucis dispossessed by the entrepreneur Faust), but rather puts to work the states of mind and inclinations generated by the impossibility of any authentic tradition. So-called advanced technologies do not so much provoke alienation, a scattering of some long-vanished “familiarity,” as reduce the experience of even the most radical alienation to a professional profile. Put in fashionable jargon: nihilism, once the dark side of technology’s productive power, has become one of its fundamental ingredients, a prized commodity in the labor market.”

In this complete turning upside-down of former modes of production, innovation became the mainspring of the economy. And creativity and innovation cannot simply rely on machines but must rely on human communication, cooperation and adaptation. Marx developed a concept he called the general intellect to refer to a tendency for these basic human capacities to increasingly become integrated as working parts of the machinery of fixed capital (literally, machinery) and technology, in a total assemblage of production. In his view, the general intellect referred to the totality of accumulated social knowledge, which has been reified in the fixed capital of machinery, processes, cooperation and communication for production. The concept has been revised or updated by Virno, who argued that in Post-Fordist modes of production, “conceptual constel-
lations and logical schemata that cannot be reduced to fixed capital play a decisive role, since they are inseparable from the interaction of a plurality of living subjects.**

\[ \ldots \text{well beyond the idea of knowledge materialized in fixed capital. The “general intellect” includes the epistemic models that structure social communication. It incorporates the intellectual activity of mass culture, no longer reducible to “simple labor,” to the pure expenditure of time and energy. There converge in the productive power of the general intellect artificial languages, theorems of formal logic, theories of information and systems, epistemological paradigms, certain segments of the metaphysical tradition, “linguistic games,” and images of the world. In contemporary labor processes there are entire conceptual constellations that function by themselves as productive “machines,” without ever having to adopt either a mechanical body or an electronic brain. Models of social knowledge do not equate the various activities of labor, but rather present themselves as the “immediate forces of production.”}\]

As we have seen is the case in earlier periods, but which now increasingly now comes into plain view, creativity and innovation become the most important sources of economic value creation. Constant revolutions in the productive process cannot rely on fixed capital to produce innovation and value, but must invest in the mobilisation of the most basic, powerful and common or shared of human abilities – language and the ability to adapt.**

Manufacturing Precarity

By the time Sejima built Platform House 1 in 1988, revolutions in the cultural organisation of labour, coupled with Japan’s top-down, Keynesian-like economic guidance and security-oriented wealth distribution had transformed the country into an economic superpower with the largest middle-class in the world; it was projected to overtake the US in GDP by the year 2000 despite having half the population. Japan had become the
largest exporter of automobiles, electronics, robotics and computers, and was starting to emerge as the undisputed global leader in information-based electronic devices and digital cultural and gaming products (such as Nintendo).92 A large proportion of youth were able to enjoy the fruits of their parent’s labour and the security provided by ‘Japanese Style Welfare System’ (Nihonga Fukushi Shakai),93 itself rooted, for the fortunate, in a family wage, lifetime employment and retirement packages distributed through corporations.94 In a marked new wave of flight from role types and from the persistent pressures and hierarchy of Japanese schooling, corporate and family life, increasing numbers of youth were retreating into ‘fantasy’ worlds of new consumer electronic products, games and fashion.95

Visiting Tokyo in the 1980s, the psychotherapist Felix Guattari described Japanese subjectivity as a mutation propelled by virtual machines, information as a key factor in labour, and immaterial production.96 Itō remarked in an essay on Sejima’s work that computers and new media were changing the sensibilities, – the “physical sensations or sense in relation to space” – rapidly. Stereotypes were again coined. These depicted young people as more nihilistic, more politically apathetic, less willing to work and more consumerist than their rebellious counterparts of the 1960s: taking the stage were “the new breed” (shin-jinrin), the parasite single (parasaito shinguru) or freeter (furītā), the otaku (the geek, an animation or tech-obsessed and anti-social individual97 98), kogyaru (“little girls” accused of shallowness and conspicuous consumption), and NEETs (not in education, employment or training).99 Unlike the politicised youth of the 60s – and manifesting a dismissiveness or mistrust of any ideology – rather than protest, this new breed simply often chose to ‘drop out’.

Throughout the post-war period, the most powerful economic arms of Japanese governance – including the Ministry of Finance and Bank of Japan – used what was called ‘window guidance’100 to selectively inject investment and steer Japan’s industry. This allowed for the cultivation of an economy and culture that was mutually beneficial for select corporations, which benefited from a giant global market share and increased pleasurable things such as brand name goods and the Internet. Accordingly, his thesis is that a new ‘breed’ of Japanese is coming of age today that is soft, rather than hard, in its commitments to social institutions of the past – school, family, work.” Allison, “The Cool Brand, Affective Activism and Japanese Youth,” 97. And citing Tatsuru Uchida, Koryū Shikō: Manabunai Kodomotachi Hatarakanai Wakamonotachi (The Orientation to Go Downstream: Children Who Don’t Study, Young People Who Don’t Work) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2007), 11–14.

Japanese export surpluses and the monopolisation of sectors of global production, real estate and finance were frequently seen as a major threat in Europe and the US. The latter – who had a continued massive military presence and was the military shield of Cold War Japan – insisted that Japan open up to foreign investment and imports, and change its economic structure, compelling cooperation and capitulation through a series of negotiations and agreements. Under immense pressure from the US, the UK and the G-5 economies, and faced with the devaluation of the dollar against the yen in the Plaza Accords, the Japanese government, financial elite and bankers began “favour deregulation, liberalization, and an abandoning of direct intervention in the economy.”

The motivation for these reforms has been attributed – not unlike the reforms of the Meiji era – to a deep “anxiety” at being shamed or losing any form of independence in a competition with West, and especially the US.

In 1983, the (unelected) governor of the Bank of Japan called for a transformation and liberalisation of the Japanese economy. And in 1986, his successor stated, “the time has thus come for Japan to make a historical transformation of its traditional policies on economic management and the nation’s lifestyle… there is an urgent need for Japan to implement drastic policies for structural adjustment and to seek to transform the Japanese economic structure into one oriented toward international cooperation.”

101 Ibid., 1–9.
102 “Japan’s current neoliberal program can be traced back to the LDP cabinet of Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982-86), whose tenure coincided with the militant chauvinism, anti-union policies, and market fundamentalism of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the US. Over the next two decades, Japan relied heavily on a neoliberal economic policy of monetarism and deregulation. This led to a bubble economy based on inflated real estate and stock prices, which eventually collapsed. All the while income distribution became more unequal, unemployment and the number of people living in poverty slowly increased. The divorce rate also rose and single mothers performing as heads of households experienced a decline in income. Japan’s relative poverty rate, which stood at 14.9 percent in a 2004 OECD survey of 30 nations, rose to 15.7 percent in 2007, the year the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare for the first time acknowledged the problem.”

103 See Werner, “Princes of the Yen: Japan’s Central Bankers and the Transformation of the Economy.”

104 “In order to resolve this ‘Japan problem,’ representatives of leading economies intervened in world financial markets and demanded that Japan must take decisive action in terms of market liberalization and deregulation. The United States further pressed Japan to implement specific deregulation measures… which started in 1989. These changes… led the Japanese government to ease financial regulations and allow abundant low-interest loans into the market [affecting] planning policy development in the following years.”

105 “Public management and planning tools were mere methods to achieve the state-led economic...
the events that followed, the German economist Richard Werner, who was an invited scholar and researcher at the Bank of Japan and Japanese Ministry of Finance, described how a financial crash was engineered because it was decided that the only way to provoke a change in deeply rooted ‘cultural’ and economic behaviours that were seen as impediments to new liberalist culture and economy was to engineer a crisis. Werner details in his book how in the 1980s a bubble and then a crash (1991) was planned through the flooding of the market with bad debt with the explicit goal of forcing sweeping cultural change and liberalisation.

Since the 1980s, a series of structural reform programmes aimed at cultural guidance had been given names such as ‘Structural Reform and the Everyday Life of the Family’ (Kazoku no Kurashi to Kōzō Kaikaku) and ‘Life Revolution: Changes of People’s Consciousness and Structural Reform’ (Seikatsu Kakumei: Kokumin no Ishiki Henka to Kōzō Kaikaku). As part of economic growth planning, the Japanese government identified the unpaid care by housewives of children and the elderly as the ‘hidden capital of the Japanese economy’ and the foundation of the Japanese Welfare Society (Nihongata Fukushi Shakai). The project sought to remove regulations and mechanisms for the distribution of wealth that had provided husbands with a ‘family wage’ and made it financially possible for women to be confined to the home as housewives. While it was already true that a decision not to have children or to undertake the role of a housewife was increasingly common amongst young women, it could be said that the Japanese economy also saw an opportunity for expansion in adjusting regulatory apparatus and cultural ideals to this phenomenon and perpetuating rather than condemning it. Through cultural channels financed by the government, young women and housewives were encouraged to finally ‘empower’ and liberate themselves by undertaking paid work (which was often poorly waged and precarious). The Japanologist Takeda Hiroko
describes how the goal of the reforms was to turn women into productive individuals who were “in search of meaning, responsibility, a sense of personal achievement, a maximised ‘quality of life’ and hence of work.” Despite these new expectations, women were, of course, also expected to remain the good housewife and maintain their role as reproductive labourers.

After Japan’s financial crash, Werner explained that he had asked the unelected governor of the Bank of Japan why they simply did not make the obvious currency volume and rate adjustments that would correct the financial crisis. The governor replied that that would defeat the purpose: people had not learned to change their thinking – culture had not changed yet. It was taking time but people, he thought, were becoming increasingly “conscious of the need to implement... transformation.” The recession forced even fiscally conservative politicians to accept austerity and deregulation, and in 1995 led to an official government “Deregulation White Paper”. Increasingly thereafter, companies and educational institutions have transformed the work culture to provoke innovation, individual competition and precarity. Progressively incentivised were merit-based pay and rewards for creative individuals, alongside reduced benefits, forced retirements and redundancies, and the adoption of ‘flexible hiring’ practices. The effect of removing work security not only removed a source of income but also a stable lifestyle, identity and security – provoking a vicious circle of attempts to procure or sublimate these lost forms of sustenance and security, both literal and existential, in ways that only deepen subjugation.
In Isozaki’s essay *Sei Shonagon, or Ariadne: Architecture in the Metropolis*, he wrote that Sejima’s buildings reminded him of blank spaces after the vast destruction in the aftermath of war or of the 1995 Hanshin and 2011 Tohoku Disasters. People suddenly found themselves homeless, living in the open and level space of gymnasiaums and auditoriums, and were forced to adapt and make a new life. “They reminded me of Sejima’s style.” Itō and Sejima, Isozaki claimed, were shaping the outlines of a “21st century architecture”. “It was as if an archetypal form of dwelling by ‘living’ beings had emerged unexpectedly.”

These scenes also reminded him of Sejima’s 1993 *Kinbasha Pachinko Parlour*, where a spectacle of humans, machines and money were set adrift on a single, blank, open platform. Seemingly very conscious of the blank stage and its spectacle, Sejima designed a kind of bleacher seating area to look down over the main floor.

Isozaki goes on to discusses Sejima’s 1991 *Saishunkan Seiyaku Women’s Dormitory* for the trainee telemarketers of a Japanese pharmaceutical and beauty products company. In an initial proposal, Sejima had evenly distributed 80 beds on an open floorplan without any walls — in what she explained was an attempt to expose or accentuate the bizarre phenomena of contemporary societies. The client had asked her to maximise social interaction, and to create a sense of community for the profit of workers and therefore the profit of company. However, the client rejected her initial proposal: as she told Koji Taki, it is useless to propose some radical “unrelated abstract” philosophy that tries to expose a social reality. “The managers are thinking that the dormitory [arrangement] will be tied to the profits of the employees, and then the company, and so on.” She said she resolved to deal with this issue openly but still do what she could to give a “more honest rendering of society”.

In the built project for the *Saishunkan Seiyaku*, a large central space is flanked by two bands of 10 rooms with four beds per room. There are wide corridors on the side of the band opposite the main space. The rooms each have large single sliding doors that recorded in the postwar era. So too was the record number of voters — more than 2 million — who invalidated their ballots by writing in their own choices of candidates.” Bix, “Neonashonarizumu, Neoribe Seisaku No Moto de Shin’en Ni Chikadzuku Nihon (Japan Under Neo-Nationalist, Neoliberal Rule: Moving Toward an Abyss).”

122 Isozaki, “Essay: Sei Shonagon, or Ariadne-Architecture in the Metropolis.”
123 “In the final section of his book, Gunshū: kikai no naka no nanmin (The Crowd: Refugees in the Machine), Matsuyama Iwao draws attention to the phrase ‘gluey architecture’ used by Tange Kenzō in a 1983 discussion with Shinohara Kazuo to describe architecture within an information society. The new perception of space occasioned by environmental management, information networks and other similar phenomena made possible through technology most probably bore a connection to this architectural space free from boundaries, spewing on and on so that one is not sure what is happening where.” From: Jun Tanaka, “Decaying ‘Swamp City’: The Death of Shōwa and Tokyo,” *Japan Forum* 23, no. 2 (2011): 273–85.

126 Ibid., 13.
3.18 shelter for those displaced by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. The system of partitions was designed by Shigeru Ban with The Voluntary Architects’ Network.

3.22 - 3.23 Shakujii Apartments, Tokyo, SANAA, 2011.
can open up the entire building and make a single continuous space. Not even wash-
basins are private – they line the edges of the open space. Bathrooms are shared.¹²⁷
The main, giant room is distinctly flat, both spatially and materially. There is little to no
visible hierarchy, and as Isozaki described of her later public housing project for the
Gifu Kitagata Apartments, there is no communal “centre for convergence”, whether living
room or courtyard as communal centre. The spatial arrangement is directly derived
from an endless grid that erases visible hierarchies – a flatness and abstraction that is
reflected in the light or white, industrial materials.

Articles on the project commonly debate how humane the extremes of exposure that
the project imposed on these workers was.¹²⁸ Isozaki wrote in Sei Shonagon that the
project was a manifestation of the homelessness that had emerged in contemporary Japan.
Considering that the women also worked together in an open-plan office space, the
open plan of the dormitory exposed almost every moment of the female worker’s day
during the one to two years of training at the company. Sejima appears to have captured
a ‘ghastly portrait’ of labour subjectivity in Japan at the very moment when the bubble
and crisis were being engineered to set people free or perhaps kick workers out of the last
vestiges of Japan’s modernisation project and break the ‘Japanese style welfare system’.

Sejima’s Saisbunkan non-plan indexes an emerging reality, or at least a coming to the fore
of a phenomenon that had long been the case: a total exposure with no choice but to
compete and perform, but also to simultaneously, collaborate and communicate. Exposure
is common in many projects of the New Primitives but is perhaps nowhere more
pronounced and extreme (especially because it is a domestic space) than in Fujimoto’s
famous 2011 House NA, a series of very thin, cascading white platforms and columns
walled in glass; or in SANAA’s 2011 Shakujii Apartments – in which eight units with undu-
lating floor heights, one room per floor, are exposed behind an almost entirely glass
façade; or as a museum, an enclosure for art, in projects such as the 2006 Glass Pavil-
ion at the Toledo Museum of Art, in which a series of glass enclosures create a beautiful,
maze-like spectacle of transparency and refraction.

If the latter half of the 20th century for Japan was, as Werner had argued, a ‘wartime
economy’ – in which government guided flows of capital, industry, policy and daily life

¹²⁷ Ito wrote in an essay on Sejima’s work that the company had a strong social presence, and that because
the women would live in the building during a training period their lives were marked by a high degree of
discipline. Like soldiers, they would wake up early and retire early. They would work in rows in open plan
office wearing identical uniforms: Charlie Chaplin’s Modern Times parody of the clumsy industrial worker
being swallowed by machines, but now in the computer age. He implied that this was not very different from
contemporary reality and in Seiyaku Sejima was able to realise a diagram of the future. See Toyo Ito, “Diagram
¹²⁸ See, for example, Ibid. and Peter Davey, “Utilitas,” Architectural Review 193, no. 1159 (1993): 14; Yuko
Hasegawa, Kazuyo Sejima, and Ryûe Nishizawa, Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa, Sanaa, vol. 168 (Mondadori
Electa, 2005), 10; and Isozaki, “Essay: Sei Shonagon, or Ariadne-Architecture in the Metropolis.”
– the financial reforms of the mid-1990s, referred to as the “Big Bang”, sought a “radical reform of Japanese subjectivity and ultimately of Japanese society”. The “strong individual” (tsuyoi kojin) is confronted with the ‘natural’ reality of exposure in which they must take risks and “individual responsibility” (jiko sekinin). Here it seems that one cannot choose not to participate. One eventually has no choice but to express oneself; one must speak, communicate, cooperate, act and adapt without a ground, and yet still within a set of codes and rules. The greater a perception or image of openness, freedom and self-realisation – the more disciplinaries sink into the invisibility of the organic ‘landscape’; the more the enclosures are softened, blurred and disappear in plain sight – the greater the subsumption, provocation and capture of creative productive potentiality.

However, it is crucial to bear in mind that in the specific context of Japan, there is a kind of compounded burden on the individual that takes a uniquely stressful form when compared to other post-Fordist economies. In Japan, one could say there remain lofty expectations of duty, success, social hierarchies and certain formalities of behaviour (reflected so clearly in typical Japanese language, which maintains strict hierarchical formalities) despite the continued liberalisation, proletarianisation and shared experience of the majority. The infamous consequences of this reality are well known in Japan’s infamous phenomena of suicide and death from overwork (karōshi), and in, for instance, hikikomori (of which the psychiatrist Tamaki Saitō famously estimated there were one million in 1998 and of which there are an estimated 1.55 million in Japan today). These individuals lock themselves into a single room for six months or more without leaving. They are, of course, only able to do so because someone else buys their food, and pays their rent and debts.
Beneath the unique aesthetics and concepts introduced by Fujimoto in *Primitive Future*, which at a superficial glance invite a romanticised notion of ‘return’ to a pre-historic, nomadic or even animal-like state of building and dwelling, the term *primitive* here also provokes us to consider the mechanisms via which capitalism orchestrates — technologically, culturally, aesthetically and ideologically — *new waves* of primitive accumulation. This is an ongoing enclosure of the common and a shutting down of possibilities outside of those which evolve in step with increased surplus production and asymmetrical accumulation. Contrary to the impression given by the titles and phrases that are now well known to surround the work of these architects — and including *A New Innocence* (Harvard Lecture Series), *Lightness of Being* and *Sincere* Architecture — the light, soft and blurry features of the *New Primitive*, upon a closer reading, betray a violence. They speak of a shutting down, but also an opening up of the radical potentialities after the real destruction of historical identities, tasks, orders, place, hierarchies and so on.

Here it is useful to continue to consider the subjectivity of the architect her or himself. Sejima — as a unique and yet paradigmatic subject that so many of us, as architects, can relate to — rejected the hierarchies, inheritance and frankly suspect or archaic ‘disciplinaries’ of the past; she wanted to make a house as a platform with no walls in which she could not be wrapped. To achieve such a sense and image within given realities, her practice is compelled — not unlike so many others who do innovative work, and infamously Ishigami — to spend an incredible amount of time puzzling over hundreds of models per project, enduring gruellingly long hours of work, compelling unpaid

and Political Responses” (BMJ Publishing Group Ltd, 2010).
136 “Tamaki Saitō, who first coined the phrase, originally estimated that there may be over one million hikikomori in Japan, although this was not based on national survey data. Nonetheless, considering that hikikomori adolescents are hidden away and their parents are often reluctant to talk about the problem, it is extremely difficult to gauge the number accurately.” See Tamaki Saito, *Shakaiteki Hikikomori: Owaranai Shishunki* (PHP Kenkyujo, 1998).
138 Marx argued that the transition to capitalism crucially depended on the mobilization of a number of tactics of primitive accumulation aimed at separating producers from direct access to the means of production, the enclosure of collective forms of property, and ultimately the creation of a ‘free’ class of wage labourers. According to David Harvey (2003a, 2003b, 2005), since around the 1970s, one of the ways in which capitalism has addressed the problem of overaccumulation is by following a strategy of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ — a spatio-temporal fix aimed at overcoming the inherent contradictions of capitalism — which ultimately relies on the dispossession of populations from common resources and spaces previously shielded from the capitalist market. Among other processes, Harvey identifies privatization and the enclosure of the environmental commons as key mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession.” See Adrienne Roberts, “Privatizing Social Reproduction: The Primitive Accumulation of Water in an Era of Neoliberalism,” *Antipode* 40, no. 4 (2008): 535–60.
139 The title of Pedro Gadahno’s essay for the MOMA Exhibition catalogue is “An influential lightness of being”.
interns to plug away for 14+ hours per day, six or seven days a week, and even to bring their own computers.143 Why, as is increasingly true in the wider ‘high’ architecture world, is there a massive surplus of models with only subtle variations on the refinement of a curve, dozens of iterations on the placement of a column, countless hours spent in a perspective view making shapes and tuning space in mediation between, on the one hand, economic, regulatory, and financial goals, and on the other, an emotional evaluation criterion?

These phenomena are in part reflective of what Sejima relayed in her interview with Koji Taki: she is not interested in fixed ideas and cannot foresee a solution ahead of time; there can be no pre-configuration or reference. The architectural profession – as both reflective and productive of, and subservient to economy and prevalent culture – seems to become groundless, devoid of any telos, and increasingly “a game with no time-outs and no finish”.144 This new organisation of production confronts the worker as a given and as auto-poetic in the sense that it perpetuates a feverish and either unwitting or obligation to opportunism – to solving ‘problems’, doing more with less, giving an aspirational image to the nihilism of finance. Opportunism, Virno argues, springs from a:

… sense of belonging to unstable contexts [which] crops up only as a perception of one’s perception of one’s own vulnerability to change, as unlimited insecurity…[here] fear that takes root. The absence of any authentic historical telos capable of univocally directing practice makes itself known, paradoxically, in the feverish spirit of adaptation of the opportunist, a spirit that grants the dignity of a salvational telos to every fleeting occasion. The opportunism we have come to know in recent years lies in the application of the logic of abstract labor to “opportunities”.

As many of us know only too well, ultimately the contemporary architect is compelled to become an opportunist. Moreover, not unlike her contemporaries in the wider high culture, fashion and art ‘industry’, she is drawn into the production of aesthetics that subsume, internalise and sublimate an experience of unbounded insecurity and groundlessness.

Sublimation has been described by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud as a crucial psychological defence mechanism. It refers to a means by which repressed or realised
libido was transformed into “socially useful” forms of production and expression. Sublimation, he thought, was the result of a need to mediate between fulfilment or satisfaction and security without the perturbation of an awareness that one was sublimating – lest it betray its usefulness to protecting the integrity or security of the perceiving subject. Aesthetics of sincerity, lightness, blurriness, softness, openness and frailty recall Nietzsche’s discussion of “sublimations in which the basic element seems almost evaporated and betrays its presence only to the keenest observation”. The ‘basic element’ here might be best summarised as autonomy or potentiality to be and not to be.

To consider sublimation is to contemplate the consequences, reactions and affectual instantiations – which are literally organs – of the Japanese capitalist political-economic assemblage. In other words, it is to consider the new forms of real subsumption and the way in which they crystallise into the architecture, social relations and subjectivities of the city.

**Real Sublimation**

Cynicism reflects the location of praxis at the level of operational models, rather than beneath them. This location, however, in no way resembles a noble mastering of our condition. On the contrary, intimacy with the rules becomes a process of adaptation to an essentially abstract environment… It is no accident, therefore, that the most brazen cynicism is accompanied by unrestrained sentimentalism. The vital contents of emotion – excluded from the inventories of an experience that is above all else an experience of formalisms and abstractions – secretly return, simplified and unelaborated… Nothing is more common than the mass media technician who, after a hard day at work, goes off to the movies and cries.

Features of lightness, ‘frailty’ and blurriness which began to appear in the Platform Houses, in Ito’s Silver Hut, Tower of the Winds and in Pao (though tinted with irony) become increasingly sophisticated in later SANAA work (and markedly their museums), as well as in the work of Junya Ishigami. The implausible thinness of Ishigami’s Magic Table, or the thin, white, bamboo forest-like blurriness of his 2008 Kanagawa Institute of Technology Workshop – in ways not unlike SANAA’s 2010 Rolex Learning Center, with its sinuous sur-
III. A House with No Interior

face landscape – invites a blurring of programme, inside and outside, and drowns out the perception of edges, giving a distinct semblance of boundlessness and freedom.

The meticulously composed, though organic or haphazard-looking, ‘field’ of columns at the Kanagawa Institute of Technology Workshop support the roof through a pattern of beams subdivided to accommodate the arrangement of columns. All of these elements – column, beams and ceiling – are whitewashed to create a ‘softening’ flatness.\textsuperscript{150} The compositional and structural rationality is highly irregular and complex because it is subservient to the image and to the always unique and varying impressions given by the column field as one drifts through the space. A fleeting sense of order, a blurriness and softness or variation that sits atop an otherwise precise, hard rationality was evident in earlier projects such as Sejima’s \textit{Saishunkan}, where she arranged light diffusing elements, and translucent panels over structural and service elements. A floating cylinder-shaped volume (housing a caretaker’s room) lends variation and excitement to the otherwise blank, square-gridded, white-tiled open space.\textsuperscript{151} Her 1998 \textit{Gifu Kitagata Apartments}, too, despite its absolute spatial and structural adherence to a relentless grid, and its radical tendency towards a \textit{non-compositional} arrangement of apartment plans which are subservient to the rationality of the grid, was nevertheless adorned with a mesmerising field pattern of thin mirrored panels on its exterior.\textsuperscript{152}

Ishigami’s studio is in perpetual pursuit of the new and fantastical because, as he explains, architecture is “not free enough”. “We need to introduce more varieties of architecture to better address peoples’ dreams. I want my architecture to create new possibilities,” he wrote.\textsuperscript{153} As is well known, the practice was scrutinised heavily in architectural media in 2018 for being composed entirely of unpaid interns.\textsuperscript{154} Ishigami’s striking and unique project for his \textit{House and Restaurant} was constructed through “digging holes in the ground, filling them with concrete and burrowing out the soil around them”\textsuperscript{155} and ran out of money so quickly that Ishigami sought other means to realise the project, making an impressive effort and presenting the project at nearby universities to recruit architecture students as volunteers for the manual work.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{150} The author personally visited the project on several occasions in the summers of 2017 and 2018.

\textsuperscript{151} “Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa,” \textit{Japan Architect}, no. 35 (n.d.): 46–51.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 72–77.


\textsuperscript{154} Unsurprisingly, it is difficult to corroborate knowledge communicated by those who have worked in the office unpaid. The policy, however, can frequently be found in comments online. For example, see “Junya Ishigami + Associates Reviews,” Glassdoor.com, accessed 10 February 2019, https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/Reviews/junya-ishigami-associates-Reviews-E1549723.htm.


\textsuperscript{156} This is an account from several interviewees who do not wish to be cited by name. To date, it is impossible to confirm this information in a scholarly article or reputable source; however, it is widely known by those involved in the project who are personal contacts of the author.
III. A House with No Interior

Discussing the Kanagawa Institute, Ishigami expressed a desire to do away with any perceived hierarchies normally caused by the casting of shadows and bright light.\textsuperscript{157} Sejima has often discussed “try[ing] to make a space without shadows”\textsuperscript{158} or hierarchies,\textsuperscript{160} an obsession that we can see began as early as the Platform Houses. This withholding of difference, blurriness and the rendering of edges as imperceptible has been compared to the qualities of perception valued in the darkness and the cutting off of light to spaces in pre-modern Japanese architecture called Yūgen. Yūgen refers to an aesthetic quality of dark obfuscation that evokes mystery and depth. If “the outlines of Japanese interiors once melted in the depths of darkness; today they often do the same in the evanescent light of a new yūgen”.\textsuperscript{161} As early as 1977, Itô recognised what he called a rising impossibility of darkness: we are increasingly left, he wrote, in a “bright world without shadow, or colour, or light sources or even time”.\textsuperscript{162}\textsuperscript{163} Antonio Negri argued that the architecture emerging at the turn of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century (which he called “hypermodern reformism”):

\begin{quote}
... tries to correct the metropolis from within, ruled by the ideology of transparency (light materials, linear figures, predominance of glass, and so on). It is a case of bending the complex substance of the metropolis onto an axis that is at once plastic and formalist. Here the industry of architecture reveals its close relationship to the fashion and film industries. This project involves all sectors of architectural production; it decomposes and recomposes them according to a logic that, in fact, hides the desire to disarticulate any possible antagonism of subjects and knowledges, flooding all the spaces where exploitation and pain cannot be shown with artificial lights. Rationalism and functionalism have become soft, but they are still effective in their mystifying activity...
\end{quote}

If abstraction can be considered a machine for invisibilisation,\textsuperscript{165} when it comes to the more recent architecture of the New Primitives, the most abstract, transparent enclosures and


\footnotesize{162} “That is because there are no longer situations in which true darkness is produced. Having said that, a contrast between light and shade is not the intention either. I think this is because we no longer have light strong enough to give an impression of contrast in our surroundings – neither a flickering light floating within dark shadows, nor a strong light dramatising the relief of a rhythmical surface. Instead, we are left with a ‘bright world without shadow, or colour, or light sources or even time’.” In “Signs of Light,” Ito and Daniell, *Tarzans in the Media Forest*, 21.


\footnotesize{165} “The process of invisibilization of the world is the core of the abstraction process that is the main trend of the relationship between Real world and the Economy. ‘All that is solid melts in the air’, wrote Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* of 1948. But in the Indust-Reality the invisible goal of abstract
III. A House with No Interior


3.29 The Glass Pavilion at the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo Ohio, SANAA, 2006.
invisibility of assemblage requires the most sophisticated technological development and seamless planning and integration of parts. The enclosure is increasingly more diffuse, precisely engineered and technologically advanced than ever – and yet it tends towards some of the most abstract experiences of architecture in history. The ‘magician’ structural engineer Mutsuro Sasaki has been essential to achieving these effects in many of the New Primitives projects. In an essay for an exhibition entitled A Japanese Constellation held of these architects’ work at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, Taro Igarashi describes how SANAA’s spaces conceal masterful feats of structural engineering behind an openness and transparency. He goes on to explain that Ishigami has taken this tendency of his former mentor to such an extreme as to almost ‘transcend’ materiality completely in an “evocation of invisibility and lightness” that very few people recognise as being the result of extreme structural precision and innovation.

Like projects by Itō and Sejima before him, Ishigami’s works strive for the ability to provoke a sense of natural phenomena such as clouds and a forests, yet they are achieved with high-tech, computer-generated, precisely engineered structures that must employ advanced manufacturing techniques and high-tech engineered materials. His Art Biotope Water Garden project, for instance – a mesmerising spattering of ponds in forest – creates a beautiful, semi-natural phenomenon that is paradigmatic in that its aesthetics and spatial experience create a direct opposition to the heavy use of machinery and the technologies and labour in its realisation and maintenance. Hundreds of trees were completely uprooted and moved with heavy machinery, and the ponds are underlaid with thick layers of waterproof membranes, and connected with an underground system of water pumps, cleaning and filtration apparatuses.

SANAA’s Toledo Glass Pavilion uses sophisticated detailing, advanced Teflon, silicon and adhesives, striving to make the connection between materials disappear; it needed custom-built machinery to create and install parts, and uses technologies such as small flakes of aluminium inside large glass layers to reflect heat and sunlight – all of course requiring excessive budgets. If we consider typology not only a system for the valorization was obtained by physical manipulation of visible things. Semicapitalism dissolves the visible process of production, and financial capitalism, at last, is the utter dissolution of the sphere of visibility and the melting of capital accumulation into the abstract kingdom of virtual exchange… This is why the relation between Economy and Aesthetics becomes crucial for the understanding of the present cultural becoming.” From Franco Berardi, “And. Phenomenology of the End: Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication,” 2014, 94.


167 Ibid.

168 Ibid.

composition of space and choreography of subject in architecture – but also a ‘science’ or system of knowledge for manufacturing specific types of subjects as ‘parts’ and subsumed in a productive assemblage – then here frailty, thinness and softness present themselves as the signs of an aesthetic cultural and political technology to make what is in fact a deepening typology disappear. Depending on your definition, this is either the biggest form of architecture, or its near total absence. The aesthetic sublimation of exposure and groundlessness here pushes the limits of form so far that they are perceived as no-form.170

Ito’s desire for a poetical composition of beautiful affects that appeal to people’s grief and desires, his clouds and forests, also evoke and aestheticize a kind of sorrow or pathos under the overwhelming forces of what he called “dark cloud” of “urban anxiety”. U House’s fleeting impressions and flows of light, air and the shadows of drifting inhabitants feel as ambivalent as his writings. On one hand, there is a despair and sadness, on the other, a beauty, poetry and even optimism and excitement. A subtle sadness and beauty at the inevitable passing of things has been historically symbolised in Japanese art and film by the juxtaposition of, on the one hand, cycles and temporality in nature, clouds, white cherry blossoms falling in spring; and on the other, with figures, social life and architecture.171 Mono no aware is an aesthetic concept associated with being deeply moved by ambiguous emotional experiences, including something like a mixture of elation, joy and sadness, amidst the precarity that comes with an awareness of intransience and the inevitable passing of things.172 The concept has been attributed to the 10th- and 12th-century culture of the Imperial Heian court memoirs (nikki) written there, and most famously The Tale of Genji and Sei Shonagon’s The Pillow Book (Makura no Soshi).

As Isozaki wrote in the Sei Shonagon essay, Sejima’s “sensibility resembled the temperament of Sei Shonagon” – a ‘lady’ of the Heian court. The Heian, considered the Classical period of Japanese aesthetics, was a period of strict gender division in which women were expected to fit into roles and cultivate behaviours that certainly still had a great deal of impact on the perception of what Fujii referred to as ‘hitherto feminine traits’ in the work of Ito and Sejima. A study of variations on the ‘feminine’ and

170 This reminds us – and especially recalling Toyo Ito’s essay “The Transparent Urban Forest” – of Tafuri’s discussion of Laugier’s writing about the organic compositional methods the architect might use to create a synthesis between the contradictory demands of planning; an instrumentalising economical technical rationalisation, on the one hand, and a sense of freedom, consolation, naturalness or even transcendence, on the other. The “great, new problem is that of balancing opposites, the appointed place for which must be the city, lest the very notion of architecture itself be destroyed”. Manfredo Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,” Architectural Theory Since, 1968, 13.


172 See M. F. Marra, Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and Interpretation (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), “The connotations of the phrase mono no aware diverge over interpretations of aware. Use of the Chinese character for ‘sad’ to render the Japanese word aware associates mono no aware with sad or fleeting experiences. That nuance is not, however, intrinsic to the phrase, whose essence is the experience of being deeply moved by emotions that may include joy and love as well sadness.” “Mono No Aware” and Japanese
feminine manners) in the Heian period reveals that historically ‘feminine traits’ were cultivated in the society of the imperial court, a realm of abundance and detachment from historical modes of working life (the imperial court was, of course, accumulating mass amounts of rice and wares as tax surplus, and on labour or military service or conscription called corvée [yō]), in which struggles for power and control bred highly sophisticated codes, aesthetics, games and forms of sublimation.

It has been argued that Sei Shonagon, through socially accepted or cleverly evasive forms, “challenge[d] normative representations of gender and desire… Heian women were expected to write like women, and nothing else. What a Heian woman was, how she wrote, and what she wanted, have historically not been matters that women decided for themselves. A Heian woman did not decide what she was, how she wrote or what she wanted.” In *The Pillow Book*, Sei Shonagon avoids categorisation into genre, is “ambivalent” towards the historical rule-based prose form of the period and “self-consciously [tests] the boundaries of Heian fictions of the feminine”. Shonagon occupied a highly precarious position as an aging confidant of the empress. Under intense competition with younger women of the court, she eventually left in her early 30s. Her writing has been characterised as, on one hand, gossipy – laced with boredom and feelings of superiority to the ‘commoner’ – and on the other, layered with a subtle melancholia at the fickleness of things (reflective of her own position) and laced with expressions of mono no aware.

* Mono no aware… is the longing for eternity and permanence that is found in the topsy-turvy emotional life of women in the Heian Court… [mono no aware is] the expression of a frustration and its accompanying sorrow that these women have sublimated into aestheticism and hedonism… They were politically and economically disenfranchised and, even more importantly, they were at the mercy of their lovers’ whims, waiting night after night wondering whether their men would show their faces on the verandas of the estates that were their prisons. This value is eventually defined as a derivative mode of beauty found in the midst of pain and sorrow…

174 See Marra, *Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and Interpretation*.
178 “Similarly, Sei Shonagon linked subjects that stir, excite, and delight in another masterpiece of classical literature, the Pillow Book. In that collection of poems, observations, and musings, which begins, ‘In spring it is the dawn…’; she added her own wit to the experience of mono no aware. The ‘Snow on Xianglu Peak’ episode from the Pillow Book, in which the author subtly demonstrates her deep knowledge of poetry, is a favorite subject for paintings.” “Mono No Aware” and Japanese Beauty.”
Mono no aware has been described as “dissolution [of self] in the sensation of shock” – a strategy to turn to a state of ‘beautiful sadness’ in a psychically dissolved identity or contingency in the face of precarity.\textsuperscript{180} The aesthetic and its use in representation has been criticised as suggesting an obligation for the individual to surrender to the inevitability of purportedly ‘natural’ change and to accept and submit to suffering and impermanence.\textsuperscript{181} An abandonment to destiny (and, paradoxically, one that never seems to escape its attachment to nation, race and destiny – lest it become revolutionary) is nowhere clearer than in the example of Kamikaze pilots, who during the Second World War were to suicide-dive-bomb their planes into the American fleet of warships advancing towards Japan in the Pacific. The pilots were sent off with branches of the white cherry blossom, one of the most poignant symbols of mono no aware. With the blossom emblazoned on their planes next to the Japanese flag, they would fatefully “fall like a blossom from a radiant cherry tree”.\textsuperscript{182} In the concept of mono no aware, we are confronted with an ambiguity or ambivalence that we find also in the work of the New Primitives: on one hand, an abandonment to impermanence suggests a condition that is shared, universal, inevitable and destructive – in the good sense; but on another, it can be used as a tool of domination.

The conditions under which the sublimation and aestheticisation of precarity arose – whether in the Heian court, the Second World War, or the crises of 1991 and 2008 – requires us to consider why the work of the New Primitives has had such an impact on architectural education and production globally, and why it has become so important to most dominant cultural institutions. Indeed, in 2019 Junya Ishigami won the commission for London’s Serpentine Pavilion;\textsuperscript{183} his appointment followed that of Itō in 2002, SANAA in 2009 and Fujimoto in 2013. Constructed every year in London’s Hyde Park


\textsuperscript{181} “Such an aesthetic sense, even (especially) applied to daily life, not only aids the etiolation of [mono no] aware, but also enables the attuned Japanese observer to participate in the greater harmony and awe of nature. Time is thus perceived not as linear but as cyclical in this ‘seasonal sense.’ There is another consequence to this aesthetic strategy, however. There is also a specifically ideological dimension. For in seeing time as cyclical, one must also see history as myth—that is, history as an endless cycle of life-death-rebirth—rather than as the product of economic, social, and political forces. A reliance on decentered narrative, episodic plotting, and a cyclical view of life can encourage a disbelief in the validity of individual action, a devaluation in the idea of change. It was always in the best interests of the ruling class of succeeding generations to encourage a transcendental view of life. Much like the strategy
near the site of one of the world’s first artificial lakes, Fujimoto’s playful nest of opportunities, or Sejima and Nishizawa’s floating ‘organically’ shaped mirror, at worst lend an aura of simplicity, whimsicality and reconciliation with a simple ‘primitive’ innocence to the “speculative machinery of transnational architectural financing that the commission otherwise represents”.

Have these commissions – like those of their work and prizes from cultural institutions funded by the owners of vast financial concerns – been appropriated into form of ‘pastoral politics’? Ideologically, they blur expanding disparity with spectacles of engineering that give meditative organic impressions – here the “aesthetics of austerity”.

The Hyatt Foundation – which awarded architecture’s premier Pritzker Prize to SANAA Sejima and Nishizawa in 2010 and to Itō in 2013 – wrote that a concern for behaviour was behind the motivation to establish the prize. The award’s mission statement imparts the story of how growing up in Chicago and developing hotel properties, the now 29-billion-dollar family realised that “design had a pronounced effect on the mood of our guests and attitude of our employees.”

While the architecture of Chicago made us cognizant of the art of architecture, our work with designing and building hotels made us aware of the impact architecture could have on human behavior. So in 1978, when we were approached with the idea of honoring living architects, we… believed that a meaningful prize would encourage and stimulate not only a greater public awareness of buildings, but also would inspire greater creativity within the architectural profession.

We can only conclude now that these architect’s radical potentiality was and is enclosed by institutions of containment. Are the forms of labour subjectivity that the capital and finance who commissions their work seeks to construct in the population already approximat-
Anti-Dialectic

In 2009, Sejima grappled with the question of whether the city was ‘post-ideological’.\textsuperscript{190} This was a keen observation: there was a lack of \textit{ideological figuration} at certain levels of social organisation – they were not \textit{where} they used to be. The decreasingly ‘fortress-like’ city no longer overtly speaks about its form, its relationship between parts, and to achieve this, these relations have become smaller and smaller and less and less visible to the naked eye. Thus, it tends to no longer solicit historical forms of insubordination and worker organisation. If architecture has up till now been a membrane that pulsates between and “under the rhythm of two different worlds and two different beats of life”,\textsuperscript{191} its increasingly ‘soft’ interface can be understood as one that continues industrial-modernisation’s project of attempting to reconcile the emotional, desiring, meaning-seeking human animal with a continued fractally expanding capitalist ‘rationalisation’. At the same time, blurring, softness and the continued dissolution of the city as ‘fortress’ or signifier into a \textit{spectacle} as an experience of phenomenological conditions or affect tend to abstract, mystify and substitute a highly contingent and deterministic assemblage of concrete social relations. Here, any sense of the possibility for critical analysis to perceive or untangle the system’s “imbrication” with the “vicissitudes of social processes”\textsuperscript{192} slips into a blurriness or fog which can only be opened to critical analysis with efforts that must be increasingly rigorous and ‘self’-effacing.

In the work of \textit{New Primitives}, we bear witness to a waning of the planned interior on the scale of architecture – to a waning of instrumental programming and subdivision of space for the disciplinary production (familiarisation) of the subject and organisation of labour. A continued telescoping of the real subsumption of labour, in which “[i]deology [should ideally no] longer superimposed on activity – which was now concrete because it was connected to real cycles of production – but [becomes increasingly] inherent in the activity itself.”\textsuperscript{193} The role of architecture and art in the world of total commodification becomes a:
... legitimation process, displacing to a certain degree such classical mechanisms of domination as authoritarian conditioning and formal ideological indoctrination. The claims of classical ideology could to a certain degree be assessed as objectively either true or false. But when ideology is embedded in the objective order of things (as ideology invades and increasingly pervades the fabric of ethos), it ironically escapes the realm of objectivity. Adorno defines the commodity as “a consumer item in which there is no longer anything that is supposed to remind us how it came into being. It becomes a magical object.” In effect, you can’t argue with magic. This is the character of advanced forms of domination: they operate in ways that leave few obvious traces of their functioning. Thus... domination operates increasingly through two divergent but complementary means, through values of mass consumption and the harnessing of desire (repressive sublimation) on the one hand, and through the mechanism of techno-bureaucratic control and instrumental rationality on the other. These are the two poles of the historic tendency away from traditional dominance and subordination and toward impersonal mechanisms of social domination.194

Ideology, as form of abstraction that overlays, subdivides, encloses and channels the human animal’s adaptability, openness and potentiality, has continued to construct ever more sophisticated, concrete, real abstractions in the general intellect – in which the thinking, producing subject themselves are increasingly subsumed.

It is, however, also clear that despite, or perhaps because of, these innovations in the mode of production discussed here – as Virno also remarked – everything returns: “The reappearance of relatively primitive productive sectors alongside innovative and driving sectors of the economy, and the revival of archaic disciplinary measures for controlling individuals no longer subordinated to the rules of the factory system. All this stands before us.” The reproductive nuclear family still presents itself as capitalism’s necessary counterbalance to a bottomless nihilism and apparently the only idea when it comes to reproduction.195 Amidst the inevitable decline in birth rates (despite Japanese government subsidies for the freezing of eggs and tax incentives for childbirth), the nuclear family type and social unit is constantly promoted as a timeless and natural ideal by cultural and political intermediaries, the government and Prime Minister in Japan. Nuclear family housing typologies, heavily enclosed and opaque, flourished with emblems of traditional Japan and the West, are commonly built and despite decades of decadence, remain a popular ideal, especially in Japan.

193 Tafuri, “Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology.”
194 John P. Clark, The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2013), 103.
195 Maurizio Lazzarato and Joshua David Jordan, Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity (Semiotext(e) Los Angeles, 2014), 12.
3.31 Pritzger Prize Ceremony: Ryue Nishizawa (left), Tadao Ando, Kazuyo Sejima, Rafael Aranda, Glenn Murcutt, Carme Pigem, Ramon Vilalta, Toyo Ito, Shigeru Ban.
With this in mind, when read closely within their context and history, the projects of the New Primitives which tend towards non-typological discussed here are barbaric, and we can say this in a ‘positive’ sense. These projects not only destroy or negate historical ‘domestic space’ and familiarity, they reject functionalist programming, reject the inscriptions of hierarchies of the past as social diagrams to organise space, strip bare the interior, give one only a wall of glass, and expose us to the our (im)potency. Uprootedness or homelessness – too often for the past century the object of loss, lament and despair – should not be understood as something to mourn and something to attempt to retrieve. Instead, we might recognise that the “uprooted spirit of the metropolis is not ‘sterile,’ but productive par excellence. It is the definitive rupture of the subject’s natural being that permits it the “will to power”. Of course, this condition is an ambivalent one: on one hand, continuous rupture is the engine of the capitalist city, but at the very same time it constantly approaches the limit beyond which potentiality cannot be contained or channelled. Perhaps the only criticism that can be levelled against the New Primitives is that they do not go far enough.

Being careful not to romanticise their difficult and often unavoidable condition, a will to power here can be queried through figures such as the Japanese hikikomori, or furita who have not only recognised and rejected a ‘traditional’ Japan but also the pursuit of possession, or obedience or duty to anxiety, and precarity. It is likely that many of them have made a conscious decision about what for them is necessary, what is not, and said “I would prefer not to” to the myths of Japan’s capital culture. If, on the one hand, Sejima’s Platform Houses present themselves as a sign of the obligation to insecurity, precarity and production in the 21st century, on the other, they suggest the possibility of a shared condition – a life liberated from the downward spiral of a ‘fear-refuge’ dialectic, and from a deeply cynical cycle of dominating and being dominated that obligates us, the “non-dwellers”, to “violate the earth beyond its possibility”.

196 “Barbarism? Yes, indeed. We say this in order to introduce a new, positive concept of barbarism. For what does poverty of experience do for the barbarian? It forces him to start from scratch; to make a new start; to make a little go a long way; to begin with a little and build up further, looking neither left nor right.” See Chapters 1 and 4, and Walter Benjamin, “Experience and Poverty,” Selected Writings, 1999.
199 “We Subjects who make nature mathemata, who violate the earth beyond its possibility, we are the non-dwellers.” Cacciari, “Eupalinos Ou l’architecture in L’objet Architecture,” 3.
BLACK RECURRENCE (HOUSE IN SAKURAJOSUI)
Tokyo, Toyo Ito
1975
WHITE U HOUSE
Tokyo, Toyo Ito
1976
PLATFORM HOUSE II
Katsuura, Kazuyo Sejima
1989
SAISHUNKAN SEIYAKU WOMEN’S DORMITORY
(Author drawing based on Kazuyo Sejima sketch)
1990
SAISHUNKAN SEIYAKU WOMEN'S DORMITORY
Kumamoto, Kazuyo Sejima
1991
SHAKUJI APARTMENTS
Tokyo, SANAA Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa
1989

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[Diagram of SHAKUJI APARTMENTS by SANAA Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, 1989]
IV

NO-HOUSE
The New Primitives
During the period of economic and psychic ‘depression’ referred to as the ‘lost decade’ in Japan, Ryū Murakami wrote the novel *Exodus to The Promised Land (Kibō no Kuni no Ekusodasu).* In this 2000 work, he describes a Japanese youth who, despite an overabundance of ‘truly all manner of things’, were overwhelmed by a feeling of oppression and a total lack of hope. The youth abandon Japanese society and form a new one in a rural area of the northern island of Hokkaido which they call *Noboro.* At the supposed end of the ‘lost decade’ – not unlike Murakami’s youth – the architectural practice Atelier Bow Wow1 (*Atorie Wan* in Japanese, ‘wan’ being a Japanese onomatopoeia for a dog’s bark or ‘bow wow’) also acknowledged a kind of overabundance of all manner of things in the city. However, rather than confronting, fleeing or searching for a new ideal or ‘next stage’, they chose to ‘open their eyes[,] strain their ears’, and listen to the hopeless city itself. In 2001, they published their *Made in Tokyo* and *Pet Architecture* guidebooks to a Tokyo ‘impoverished’ by both hopelessness and overabundance, but in which, nonetheless, they discovered humorous new ‘animals’.

Through basic information, small photographs and simple line drawings of exteriors, the guidebooks constructed an atlas of architectures that for them are “off” when measured against architectural “cannons”. The buildings they choose are neither nostalgic nor idealistic, and would, as they say, therefore be labelled *hajishirazu* or *harenchi* (shameless) or *da-mē* (no good or ‘junky’) architecture by critics or architects. Built with limited budgets, and in awkward or leftover spaces, these examples were not concerned, they said, with nostalgia, mannerism, taste or idealism. They were instead conceived with a concern for eclectic, immediate use that undermined typical architectural or urban categories, sanctities and typological thinking. On the cover of *Made in Tokyo*, they compiled the examples into a kind of analogous map of *shameless* Tokyo.

Examples from *Made in Tokyo* include a highway/department store that combines a ‘utilitarian’ urban infrastructure with what we would, in Tokyo, normally expect to be an elegant and or spectacular architecture for shopping. Another project in *Made in Tokyo*, which they call *bridge-home*, is a housing project that nestles into and uses the structure of a bridge, while also taking advantage of an adjacent cemetery and small triangle park

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2 Ibid.
3 Founded by Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kajima in 1992.
5 Ibid., 10.
6 This term might have been inspired by the group of activists beginning in the 1990s who called themselves *Dameren,* or the ‘no goods’. In a lecture at Waseda University in 1993 Kaminaga, Kōichi called for a “good-for-nothing revolution”. “Most students,” he argued “would end up “working while ‘dead’, meaning the end of life.” What sustained this system, he claimed, was people’s fear of being regarded as no-good. In order to enjoy life, one must not be swayed by the values of society. Instead one had to choose “the way of the good-for-nothing!” (dōme no midō) revolution”. Carl Cassegård, *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan* (Global Oriental Leiden, 2014), 59.
8 Ibid., 46–47.
4.2 Pet Architecture 001, Made In Tokyo, Atelier Bow Wow, 2000.

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for greenery and space.9 Here they write that the pillars of a highway bridge seem to have been re-cast as the pilotis of a Corbusian architecture. In one example that will lead them to develop a new survey of tiny buildings in their Pet Architecture guidebook, they study a tiny triangle-shaped house of no more than 12 square metres whose exterior perimeter, and therefore façade, is essentially hidden behind a washing machine and several vending machines, not unlike those so typically found adorning street edges in contemporary Japan.10 Despite what many might perceive as a hopelessness that indicates a ‘problem’ to be grappled with, in Pet Architecture Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kaijima describe the examples as small, “humorous” and “charming”, like “domestic pets”.11 They squeeze into tiny spaces, which are far from spectacular or high tech, and are instead cheaply built, adapted to immediate circumstances and needs – or perhaps more precisely, to a shameless individual’s hierarchy of needs, appropriating an abundance already at hand.12

Andrea Branzi, in his 1986 Domestic Animals (a title that begs us to draw parallels with Pet Architecture), proclaims: “[h]ouses like machines yesterday, machines like houses today. Houses like factories yesterday, factories like houses today. Within the fragile and constantly violated borders of our homes a new hierarchy can be created, one where even information has solely a decorative value.”13 Branzi’s ‘prophecy’ suggests a kind of borrowing and ‘profanation’ of a Modernism that might be best exemplified by Corbusier’s ‘pure’, canonical works and aesthetic, and of course, through his statement ‘the house is a machine for living’.14 In one interpretation, Branzi’s prophecy explicitly predicts one example in the Made in Tokyo guidebook: a concrete-factory-apartment building which mixes offices, concrete processing, loading and housing into one jumbled structure. The building cannot be distinguished as any one of the three categories, but is instead none of them and all of them at the same time. These are architectures stripped of purity or expression. Concerned with a “here and now” and nothing else,15 they could be called architectures without architects – or, at the very least, architectures with shameless architects.16

Shameless architecture, Tsukamoto and Kaijima remarked, could become illuminat-ing because it reports on the reality of the city’s condition. Such “an existence seems anti-aesthetic, anti-historic, anti-planning, anti-classification.”17 These paradigmatic examples of shameless, non-typological and non-compositional architecture in the city make vis-

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9 Ibid., 142.
10 Ibid., 166–67.
12 Ibid.
14 L. Corbusier, J. L. Cohen and J. Goodman, Toward an Architecture (Getty Research Institute, 2007), 151.
15 Atelier Bow Wow, Made in Tokyo, 13.
16 Ibid., 8.
17 Ibid., 12.
4.4 Screen grab from video documentary series based on Shiho Fukada’s portrait series, *Japan’s Disposable Workers*.
ible both an absence of categories and (as Bow Wow suggested) an absence of history. We might elaborate further, and also recognise that they therefore tend to lack heritage, culture, planning and indeed therefore a future; they lack mythos and telos. Tsukamoto has pointed out that Tokyo is a constantly ‘metabolising’ city, one where the average housing life span is 26 years\(^1\) and where, as we have seen, a history of earthquakes, war and furious economic growth has stripped away the traces of the historical city. Indeed, in the almost 20 years after the initial publication of *Made in Tokyo* and *Pet Architecture*, the Japanese city has continued to transform rapidly. It has continued to deconstruct and destroy historical architectures and modes of life, their tasks and categories, and as Tsukamoto suggests, ‘metabolise’ and ‘granularize’ into increasing complex decentralised relations.\(^2\)

Almost two decades after the publication of the guidebooks, we can observe an even more dramatic or accelerated ‘destructive’ tendency in the Japanese city: the flexibilisation of work, decreasing real wages, rising unemployment, and yet continued or even tightened rigid hierarchies and intense performance expectations at work and in everyday life have propelled mass escapism, with large portions of the population described as ‘refugees’, ‘homeless’ and ‘parasites’.\(^3\) Part-time workers, the homeless and escapees of all colours sleep in 24-hour internet and manga cafés and are often referred to as *netto kafie nanmin* (internet café refugees) or *mac-nanmin*.\(^4\) Young adults and workers who could not find stable employment or afford their own housing – or otherwise refuse to enter the kind of oppressive workplace and lifestyles on offer – shelter away in their parents’ house indefinitely.\(^5\) At the same time, this does not mean that they continue to socialise with or maintain a close social relationship with their parents. In many cases, they tend to interact with their family less and less, evidenced by the fact that nLDK house types that shelter a ‘parasite single’ child have private entrances to access that room.\(^6\) The infamous *bikikomori* are usually young to now middle-aged adults who refuse to leave their rooms for six months or more and have been estimated to number up to two million in the early 21st century.\(^7\)

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9 In addition to the guidebooks, see Ibid., 29–43.
15 Cassegaard, *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan*.
19 Ibid., 2848.
Commercial and private architectures ‘without ideals’ are increasingly built as the market itself responds to rejections of and exclusions from what was formerly the ‘family type’ and status quo.  

In re-appropriations that could not have been foreseen or potentially even predicted, these new refurbishments ‘misuse’ existing buildings and infrastructure in the sense that they deviate from the original design and plan. These phenomena, we could argue, are propelled by a continued contradiction between, on the one hand, models, predicates, idealisations or systems of culture and oikonomia, and on the other, what we might call an excess of living beings that can never be categorised or captured. This chapter aims to consider how both individually and taken as a whole these paradigmatic examples tend ever more explicitly towards the non-historical, non-idealistic, non-typological and non-compositional condition that Atelier Bow Wow already recognised in 2001. These tendencies presage or otherwise reveal the coming to the fore of a new primitive figure.

This chapter, along with a counterpart, Atlas of Non-Types and Shameless Interiors, will continue the project of Bow Wow’s guidebooks to survey recent housing, subjects and forms of life in the contemporary Japanese city in order to develop a theory for a new primitive architecture. In short, this chapter’s research indicates that, taken together, the examples to be discussed strip the city bare of origin stories, history, idealism and destiny, revealing the extent to which an impossibility of dwelling has become the norm.

Against a ‘negative’ reactionary perception of the city’s current darkly nihilistic condition, the chapter will question whether this bare negativity or deprivation should instead be perceived ‘positively’, as the precondition for any coming Architecture and Politics. The chapter’s architectural ‘design’ proposal involves exposing a ‘stubborn honesty’ in these examples and interpreting their already present theory for a non-typological,
non-compositional architecture. In other words, departing from Bow Wow’s guides, and through a series of examples in the contemporary city, we will sketch the outlines of a theory of Architecture. The very act of writing about, drawing examples, constructing genealogies, and making them ‘speak’, it should be argued, is the most important act of non-typological architecture itself.

Shameless Destroyers

In Japanese media and literature since the 1950s, and perhaps earlier, youth who do not become responsible, productive adults with a full-time job and a family are derided as selfish, hedonistic and amoral.32 33 34 Even for those who do work but have experienced increasingly precarious contracts, low wages and unemployment, politicians such as the former Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and the former Governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro, have blamed Japan’s suffering economy, the decline in marriage and extremely low birth rate on young people’s laziness, selfishness, brash consumerism and obsession with eroticism.35 There is now a 1.2 child per two adult birth rate, 44% of 34-year-old Japanese are reportedly still virgins, and kodokushi (a lonely death where the body is not discovered for months or years after the fact)36 and karōshi (death through overwork)37 have become epidemics.38 These phenomena are entangled with the dissolution or fragmentation of the scale and fabric of the historical city itself as increasingly single children inherit land; because they cannot pay the high inheritance taxes, they subdivide it up into tiny plots to sell, which in turn breeds new tiny buildings.39 Aside from the terminology such as ‘parasites’ used to refer to these disenfranchised youth, women over 30 without children have been described in media as makeinu (loser dogs).40 Even the political left and ‘progressives’ in Japan have derided figures such as the bikikomori,

new capitalist regime. This attack has blamed young workers’ supposed laziness for productivity losses leading to the sinking Japanese economy; singled out young Japanese positions women’s ostensible selfish consumerism for shrinking the Japanese population by refusing to breed; and castigated young men and women for organizing much of their lives around pursuit of erotic pleasure – in effect, pinking Japan into one huge soft-core porn film, known as ‘pink films’ (pinku eiga).” Driscoll, “Hyperneoliberalism: Youth, Labor, and Militant Mice in Japan,” 549.
37 Naoki Kondo and Juhwan Oh, “Suicide and Karoshi (Death from Overwork) during the Recent Economic Crises in Japan: The Impacts, Mechanisms and Political Responses” (BMJ Publishing Group Ltd, 2010).
39 Kitayama and Nishizawa, Tokyo Metabolising, 48.
freeters and NEETs for their political apathy – for being uninterested in protest or rebellion and in engagement to produce new ideals.\textsuperscript{41}

While the description of these figures as parasites and animals is ‘dehumanising’, it brings to light the extent to which nihilism and basic life (and, for instance, its biological reproduction) has become irreducible and indistinguishable from contemporary Japanese ‘civil’ life and politics. In this politics what is denied is not only the animal, but the human. On the other hand, this dangerous dehumanisation – a denial of the subject, the human and the animal – is a sign of a historical potential for the actualisation of a threshold beyond which beings cannot be captured, confined and ordered. As the poet Friedrich Hölderlin quipped: “[w]here danger grows, grows also saving power”.\textsuperscript{42} In other words, what these new animals (or what we might call new primitives, because they are, of course, still human) might portend is a possibility for an overcoming of what the philosopher Giorgio Agamben has termed ‘anthropological machines’ which capture and orient life and its forms.\textsuperscript{43} This much is evident when we observe the Japanese city, the dissolution (or otherwise “fragmentation”) of historical forms of life and architecture, in the withdrawal, rejection, ejection and the derision of Japanese who reject becoming (re)producers. What comes to light in the sheer overabundance and hopelessness or poverty is an increasing “expiry” and “devaluation” of any positive projects and apparatuses of humanisation.\textsuperscript{44}

Since the late 1990s, many nLDK, ‘mansion apato’ units, once the broadly dominant type of dwelling of the nuclear family in Japan, have been converted to small or tiny individual units such as the ‘1’, 1K, 1DK, One Room or SOHO (small office home office apartment)\textsuperscript{45} apartments; these typically have floor areas of around 20 square metres or less. These apartments contain tiny, prefabricated bathroom units and cooking facilities that are often too small to prepare a cooked meal. This is especially true in urban centres such as Tokyo where by 2009, 40\% of the rented stock had one room and, more often than not, only one occupant.\textsuperscript{46} Even when considering the entirety of Japan, both rural and urban, by 2015 one person households were the most common, and one to two person households constituted 60\% of the total.\textsuperscript{47} Part of the reason such small

\textsuperscript{41} Carl Cassegård, “The New Cultural Movements,” in Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan (Global Oriental, 2014), 45–78.
\textsuperscript{43} Giorgio Agamben, The Open: Man and Animal, Meridian (Stanford, Calif.) (Stanford University Press, 2004), 37–39.
\textsuperscript{44} ‘Biopolitics is indeed as old as the hills, yet in modern times something new has happened and is happening to it, i.e. the coming to light of its negativity due to the expiry or devaluation of all positive projects under the condition of nihilism.” S. Prozorov, Agamben and Politics: A Critical Introduction, Thinking Politics (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 98.
\textsuperscript{45} Ronald and Hirayama, “Home Alone: The Individualization of Young, Urban Japanese Singles.”
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
4.8 Ramen restaurant with stalls which, according to the restaurateur who supposedly invented them, enhances taste through social isolation.

4.9 A typical konbini - 24 hour convenience store.
apartments are possible is because the city has ‘sympathetically’ developed into a kind of giant house itself with a domestic infrastructure, externalising functions once internal to the house. Here the apartment or the housing unit is increasingly simply reduced to an unscripted cell for sleeping, work or consumption (often it seems even in bed) and as a place to simply sleep, dress and ‘go out’ again.

Kaijima and Tsukamoto, too, have characterised Tokyo as a city that tends towards lack of distinction between interior and exterior. This is, of course, in large part thanks to the extraordinary Japanese konbini (convenience store) – a place in which one can buy a huge range of cold or hot meals, groceries, toiletries and clothing items, and even pay bills. Open 24/7 and so numerous that one never seems to have to walk more than five minutes to get to one, they are so convenient and seductive that they become a regular fixture of the majority of Japanese people’s daily lives. In contrast to Toyo Ito’s depiction in his 1985 Silver Hut of the family-centric image of the restaurant replacing the family dining room (see Chapter 3), the spaces of consumption, sustenance and care in the Japanese city have also become paradigms for a total breakdown of old social relations in what is one of the most densely crowded of places in the world. For example, it is not uncommon to find ramen or soba restaurants in Tokyo where one orders from a machine and then sits in a tiny, gridded, cubicle-like partition around individual eating stalls, which allow people to pack in at close proximities without becoming uncomfortably close to a stranger.

Increasingly common to Japan’s dense areas, and predominately Tokyo, in the past five to 10 years are ‘closet’-like apartments of 10 square metres or less that include basic ‘living’ amenities such as a bed, kitchenette and tiny bathroom. Micro-apartments are so compact that they must be incredibly precise in their use of space. Companies are now adjusting designs by the millimetre and are obtaining patents for their configurations. These apartments have become popular in media and in the majority of the

48 The author is recounting personal experiences from having lived in Japan.
49 For reading on the konbini, see, for example, Gavin H Whitelaw, “Konbini-Nation,” Life in Post-Bubble Japan, n.d., 69.
51 As is typical, in one example, the apartments are accessed through an 80cm-wide corridor which, at about half way through the length of the apartment, is half-obstructed by a ladder that leads up to a sleeping space that is about 100 by 200cm. They include a tiny bathroom unit which in some cases has a hinged rotate-out toilet to save space and a nook kitchen with a single cooktop and a mini-sink. There is one relatively large window; the spaces are painted white to be as light and reflective as possible and they have a 3.6m-high ceiling to allow for the loft bed and alleviate the sense of claustrophobia. Inhabitants often convey a lack of need for the kitchenette because they eat out or buy food at konbini and some choose to mix up their bathing experience, avoiding the claustrophobia and monotony of a tiny shower by going to the sentō bathhouses, which are still common in the city.

4.11 Listing advertisement photograph from Funabashi Share house.
interviews the inhabitants are students and/or part-time service job workers who also use the apartment as a work and office space to pursue their own creative ambitions.\textsuperscript{53} \textsuperscript{54} The hyper-compactness of these units means that floorplans seem guided by a hyper-rationality that has no social ideal whatsoever but is concerned with a tight provision of functions and otherwise undefined individual space. In fact, the plans of many micro-apartment resemble the theoretical \textit{non-compositional E-Projects} of Hiromi Fuji developed during the 1970s – they are simply a hyper-rational subdivision of a rectangle into equal parts and demand no flourishes, glorification or embellishment of any kind.

There are, however, more temporary and even more compact, pay-by-the-hour sleeping options in Japanese cities for those who cannot afford, or otherwise refuse to be tied to, any fixed dwelling place. Examples such as the capsule hotel and internet café cells can, of course, be traced to the first capsule hotel \textit{Capsule Inn Osaka}, built in 1979, designed by Kisho Kurokawa and based on his \textit{Nakagin Capsule Tower}.\textsuperscript{55} Originally, the capsule hotel was designed to give commuting salary men a place to sleep after a long night, in an obligatory social bonding ritual over heavy sake and beer drinking with colleagues. Since then, the capsule hotel has also become one of the cheapest options for temporary and transient workers, for growing numbers of tourists and for increasing numbers of people who prefer not to enter the obligations of the rental or property (and often job) market. Similarly, a range of service and entertainment businesses have also begun to increasingly ‘mutate’ and renovate to include functions once relegated to housing. For example, numerous manga and net cafés are open 24 hours, include comfortable reclining chairs and food and drink, and increasingly, showers, laundry and food preparation areas.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{Net cafés} offer both private, fully enclosed cabins – in which if one can lie flat if one is not too tall – and cubicle-style compartments with amply padded reclining chairs. All of the stalls (typically) have large-screen computers with television. Net cafés often have manga libraries, an area with free drinks, snacks and soup, showers and a laundry. Such cafés have become full-service, pay-by-the-hour hotels, places for couples to escape cultural customs and ‘traditions’, and for young people to have sex away from the family and customary expectations that scrutinise and put dating partners through the gauntlet. The net café can now be called a form of housing for increasing numbers of what are referred to as \textit{netto kafiu nanmin}, or net café refugees.\textsuperscript{57} \textsuperscript{58} These refugees are com-

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} These findings are the result of ethnographical and immersive research conducted in Tokyo over the course of four summers from 2015 to 2019.
\textsuperscript{56} Ethnographic research carried out in Tokyo, other cities in Honshu, Okinawa and Sapporo from 2015 to 2019 by the author.
\textsuperscript{58} See Mizushima, “Netto Kafiu Nanmin to Hinkon Nippon (Net Café Refugees and Poverty in Japan).” Cited in Driscoll, “Hyper neoliberalism: Youth, Labor, and Militant Mice in Japan.”
posed of the ‘homeless’ and jobless, but also of part-time workers who cannot afford a deposit (sometimes the equivalent of six months’ rent) for an apartment.  

Net cafés and capsule hotels are like micro-apartments but even more extreme because they pretend to be temporary; here, precarious figures escape into an opaque grid that is laid out to optimise costs and efficiency. Not only can we consider this hyper-rational subdivision of the interior non-compositional, but not unlike the examples in Atelier Bow Wow’s guidebooks, one-room apartments, net cafés, micro apartments and other examples of fragmenting architecture often renovate and re-purpose found buildings that are cluttered with hybrid functions. In this sense, we can call them non-compositional on the exterior in that they occupy and re-appropriate ‘found’ buildings that were designed for something else. These are often buildings that at some point may have had some ambition to culture, communication, idealism or purity of category, but are now 

\[\text{da-me}, \text{shameless}\] exteriors whose internal organs are also being stripped of any historical social ideal or relation and tend towards the non-typological.

\textit{Sentō} (public bathhouses) and \textit{onsen} (natural thermal water bathhouses) have ‘mutated’ into what are called \textit{supa sentō} (super \textit{public} bathhouse) and now cater to inexpensive overnight stays and offer everything one would need to permanently live there. \textit{Sentō} have been slowly declining in number since the rise of \textit{ofuro} private baths in houses surpassed 50\% in 1965, following the Japan Housing Corporation’s introduction of them into its units in 1955. However, \textit{supa sentō} have rapidly increased in number since the 1990s; a 2013 study found 531 nationally. Historically, the \textit{sentō} emerges in literature as a bathhouse maintained by eighth-century monks, in which ‘commoners’ would also bathe and leave an offering or donation. \textit{Sentōs} later became famous as therapeutic centres where one could come to heal both physical and psychological ailments, and during a few periods became brothels before being regulated legally.

\textit{Supa sentōs} can be found both inside and on the periphery of urban areas. When one enters a \textit{supa sentō} – in this case let us take the example of a giant \textit{Oedo Onsen Monogatari} near Shizuoka – you will first encounter a kind of \textit{mega-genkan}, where your shoes are to be stored in tiny lockers, and umbrellas and jackets are left. Guests are provided with a \textit{yukata} (robe) to wear after bathing; therefore, all of the activities one can perform in the space are generally done naked or in the \textit{yukata}. Main axis of the building is organ-

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
ised along a long central corridor split into a male and female area where all clothes are removed and stored (as is typical in Japanese bathing). One bathes seated, ‘Japanese style’, and then can enter a series of indoor or outdoor hot and cold baths, saunas and a wide range of therapeutic areas. After bathing, one may choose to take children to collective play areas (or, in some cases, leave them in nurseries), or eat in a range of different dining options, such as cafés with giant collective eating areas. Or one may sleep in both tatami rooms for small groups of four to 10, and also in areas for up to 60 people on rectangular tatami mats, or in excessively cushioned reclining chairs, all laid out in expansive grids.

The condition described above is typical of other super sentō sleeping areas which can be called perhaps an absolutely non-compositional architecture because in plan, a giant sleeping area for a 30–100 people is simply defined by a rectangular arrangement of tatami mats with walls enclosing perhaps two to three sides. More recently, designated work areas that resemble co-working offices are being introduced into super sentō. In the case of, for example, the Ryōkoku Yuya Edoyu in the Sumida Ward of Tokyo, there are both common rooms with desks littered with power and USB outlets, smaller glass rooms with tables and desks for working and a large rolling landscape of spaces without furniture but with cushions and bean bags that can be used for working, eating or sleeping, in a motif that reminds one of SANAA’s Rolex Learning Centre. While this kind of rolling landscape has been critiqued as a phantasmagorical device entangled with neoliberal subjectification, it is also in this extreme danger that we encounter its radical yet suspended potentiality: this kind of form lacks prescription and decreasingly calls upon us to be or act less like any historical, dignified, or identified figure of Man.

And yet the state always seems to intervene to counterpose this tendency. In recent years, the Japanese government has subsidised sentō, and regulated the form and services provided at onsen. They are now providing insurance-covered medical services in sentō that follow ‘traditional’ Japanese sentō rules. In these sentō, “government intervention keeps the practices alive [or reinvents them] and makes sure they follow a specific representation of ‘Japanese-ness.” In the sentō, Japanese identitarian rituals and symbols are evoked to counterbalance the consequences of a continued actual dissolution of a life that resembles anything in historical Japan. The steel and concrete of the city is balanced with wood and natural stone; urban density is contrasted with a countryside,

65 This is based on the authors visits to several super sentō, including for example Ryōkoku Yuya Edoyu in Tokyo in July 2019.
69 Ibid.
4.16 - 4.17 Yokohama Apartments (share house), Yokohama, ON Design partners, 2012.
garden setting; continued (or complete and mutated) Westernisation and foreignisation is contrasted with ‘traditional’ Japanese symbolism and dress; isolation and ‘coldness’ is contrasted with proximity and warmth. On the other hand, super sentō generally break with many traditions, have a decidedly less nostalgic aesthetic (in fact, Ryōkaku Yūya Edōyu renovated from a ‘traditional wood’ façade to a perforated metal one with backlighting in 2018, and converted one of its bath spaces into a co-working space) and are offering areas such as the co-working space, and a range of different, very inexpensive temporary housing. Like other service businesses that are becoming pay-by-the-hour housing, super sentō also appear as if they might be turning into a kind of anti-categorical boarding house that accommodates everything that the house and city used to.

Since 2007, apartment buildings and nLDK types are increasingly being converted into ‘share houses’ (shea kyojū or sheahausu) and more recently into ‘social apartments’ in Japan. Some of the first known modern shared houses in Japan were established independently by single mothers with children in the mid-1990s after the crash; these women re-appropriated nuclear family types for a form of life that had no institutional precedent in Japan. In a shared house, individuals typically have private rooms – of, on average, around 10–12 square metres – where they normally sleep; all other spaces and labour are shared. The popularity of shared houses has surged because they provide more flexible rent contracts, looser tenant profile requirements and much lower up-front costs, and are closer to work and amenities. Examples of newly built share houses have become popular with magazines and exhibitions inside and outside Japan, one of the most famous examples being the Share House LT Josai, designed by Naruse Inokuma Architects and completed in 2013. Another often-cited example is the Yokohama Apartments designed by ON Design Partners (Osamu Nishida and Erika Nakagawa) and completed in 2012.

70 Again, we can see that the state is one of the primary partners of capital, ensuring a longer-term balance and maintenance of the status quo. When we zoom out, in this example we can clearly make out a de and reterritorialisation not unlike that described by Deleuze and Guattari: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983): 34.
71 These are observations of the author following visits in 2017 and 2019.
75 Meagher, “Make Yourself at Home: Dreams and Realities in a Japanese Sharehouse.”
The Yokohama Apartments were designed for ‘young artists’, and like so many examples of shared houses, the layout must tend towards the non-compositional because these places are not only driven by efficiency and function, but are unable to reasonably predict the lifestyle of individuals who live there, or prescribe in any great detail how they will interact socially. The four interior rooms in Yokohama are given by subdividing a (roughly) square plan from the centre of each edge into four equal quarters. Each room has a compact, peripheral kitchenette, shower and toilet, but is otherwise simply a blank enclosure of about 12 square metres. Each unit has an individual access stair that descends around the periphery but kinks and lands underneath the block of lifted rooms into a shared open space sheltered by the rooms sitting atop it like a ‘roof’. A large shared generic set of kitchen equipment sits near the centre of the common area. At each corner of the ground floor square, a triangle-shaped room works like a thickened column, holding up the block of rooms. These ‘columns’ contain a shared toilet, some storage spaces and four small office or studio-type rooms so small that the activities taking place in them seem likely spill into the common area.

Unusually, the common area has no exterior walls to the surrounding street or site, but only translucent plastic curtains, which makes it feel like neither an interior nor an exterior space. Amidst a neighbourhood of otherwise hermetically sealed houses, the concrete slab of Yokohama and its common spaces, its kitchen, dining and working areas, extend to the edge of the site and have no boundaries towards the public street. Although it is a newly built project, like many of the projects of Bow Wow, Yokohama Apartments is undoubtedly architecturally ‘off’ in one of their categories for qualifying as “magnificent architecture”. The building is constructed of standard siding materials and stucco, and blends with the backdrop of apartment blocks and single-family houses that are roughly the same scale.

The Yokohama Apartments shares many parallels with the 2002 Eda Apartments housing project by Ryue Nishizawa, Kazuyo Sejima’s partner at SANAA. Eda Apartments organizes 100 units into a three-level ‘monolithic slab’ which is elevated to leave one level of open space below it and is perforated with evenly spaced voids to provide light and air into the otherwise unobstructed massive and ‘anti-typological’ floorplan. The project takes its organisational ‘setting out’ from the site boundaries; the arrangement is based on a series of overlaid grids aligned with the surrounding streets. Like the Yokohama Apartments, there are no corridors in the project and no interior subdivisions or walls per individual unit; every individual unit has its own staircase access to the ground lev-

79 These observations were made by the author on a tour of the house in December 2017.
4.20 - 4.21 *Sutairo Ui* Uzu Daikanyama, Mothers share house 2013.
el. In *Eda*, every apartment has a highly figuratively unusual space, curving walls and awkward corners. There seems a call to discover one’s own unique way of using furniture and inhabiting the project. In the case of the *Eda Apartments*, as in *Yokohama*, the ground level is an continuous space open to the outdoors that has no preconceptions or recollections of the kind of life that might unfold there; yet it creates architecture through its most basic or common grammar – shelter, platform and a roof.

The *Sutairo Uizu Daikanyama* is a single-mothers-only shared house located near Shibuya in central Tokyo, in a renovated 1960s corporate employee dormitory designed and marketed by the Tokyu Corporation. Other shared house, as is the case with new studio apartments, are often renovated 1960s or 70s *danchi* apartment buildings, large family houses and small apartment buildings. The building is a concrete, post and slab construction and has a utilitarian, industrial appearance – it was clearly built at as low a cost as possible in a triangular site left over at the edge of the railway line. It is composed of 18 individual single space ‘bedroom’ units, from 11 to 16 square meters each, arrayed evenly as squares in a plan along corridors, and all other spaces are shared. Each of three floors has six ‘bedrooms’ which share a kitchenette, laundry facilities, a bath, showers, toilets and washing facilities. On the ground floor, there is a large kitchen area that seems able to accommodate 10 mothers cooking, cleaning and preparing meals at the same time. A marketing website for the house even suggests that children should sometimes join in the work. Next to the kitchen is a large dining area and next to that a floor seating ‘living room’ space furnished in photographs with a series of low tables and cushions. The rooftop is also a large open space with garden planters, some cooking facilities and dining tables, and suggests an exterior, collective platform living space where the kitchen is liberated from any enclosure, reminding us of ‘Tezuka Architects’ 2009 *Roof House*. A project in which the open roof – usually a place where ‘birds might live’ – is emphasised as the core of the living space and includes a kitchen, a shower and dining area. The space can be accessed via stair ladders and skylights from almost every room in the house. What is remarkable is that the roof seems to be the primary living space, and yet is constituted through a lifted ground, a platform and perhaps a set of services, but otherwise lacks enclosure, subdivision and symbolism.

85 Ibid.
86 A studio founded in 1994 by Takaharu + Yui Tezuka.
The *Konohana Famiri* community offers yet another example of the sheer diversity, complexity and tendency towards the *anti-historical* that has emerged during the ‘lost decade’ and its aftermath. In the case of *Konohana*, the group explicitly seems to have acknowledged and embraced an impossibility of dwelling because they simply rejected the typical Japanese modes of living. They rejected the *oikonomia* of the city and isolation, and took up the task of re-inventing and managing their everyday life and hierarchy of values together. In 1994, after the crash, 20 members moved to a rural agricultural area around Mt Fuji and have collectively learned how to farm and organise themselves as a growing society of over 100, with ages ranging from new-borns to members over 90 years old.  

*Konohana Famiri* occupies a series of collective houses, shops, warehouses and company dormitories that they bought with pooled money, and borrows fields left unused by elderly farmers; everything they produce is consumed through farming. In their large dining hall and kitchen, lunch and dinner are eaten collectively every day at long tables where children, elderly people and those who chose to work there instead of farming (even if for a few days) manage the cooking and cleaning together. The space also serves as a flexible hall, a place where daily meetings are initiated by children to discuss the stories of the day. It is also where suggestions for changes to the way that work and living are organised are discussed, with topics ranging from mundane small adjustments to major overhauls of how the time schedules, roles and labour are organised. During the day, the hall serves as a school for children, some of whom choose to go to government-funded schools, and is a space for celebratory events and festivals, during which the space and tables are either rearranged or cleared from the space. Some members live in their own house nearby and others live in collective houses and share bedrooms, in addition to all other spaces, including large common Japanese baths that are used at set times by both genders.  

Marriages exist but are not common; many single mothers have moved to *Konohana*, and many formerly isolated elderly people live there. Children typically do not live with their parents but at a very young age move into a common house above the main hall where they sleep six to one room, which has no furniture but mats on *tatami*; the ages of the children range from eight months to 16 years. There are ‘mothers’ (one of whom is male, transforming into what would be typically be considered a more effeminate individual over the course of their life at *Konohana*), individuals who naturally

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88 The author worked, lodged with, and interviewed many members of the *Konohana* community from 8 to 16 August 2019.  
89 The author stayed in a large lodging about 2km from the main canteen, kitchen and meeting space. These peripheral houses have their own large kitchens and large *chōmon* room (room for a ‘family’ to eat, entertain, study, nap, etc.)
4.22 Members of Konohana famiri effectively turn the fallow agricultural fields surrounding their collective houses into living space, setting up tatami and canopies, temporary kitchens, and tents to play, meet, cook, and sleep for 2-3 days at a time.
gravitated towards spending more time with children, but who also do a variety of other tasks at Konohana. The ‘de-typologising’ of the mother, father and child (not to mention other) roles has led to fluid and changing kinship relations, which continue to change, based on attraction and affinity, rather than on prescriptions. Konohana inhabits existing buildings and sometimes renovates them. For periods of up to three days, they effectively turn the surrounding fallow agricultural fields into living spaces, setting up tatami and canopies, temporary kitchens, and tents to play, meet, cook and sleep. Konohana is both without historical precedent or any believable categorical precedent in Japan; in constantly changing their modes of life, the groups has created a kind of permanent non-dwelling.

Despite the sheer explosion of complexity in the idiosyncratic ways in which individuals might live, and in acts of “self-actualisation” that withdraw, become transient and form new giant households – which move towards what Atelier Bow Wow described as the anti-categorical, anti-historical and anti-idealistic – there are constantly new attempts to capture these tendencies in new apparatuses, to categorise them and to braid them back into the oikonomia of the city. For instance, in 2013, the Sutairo Uizu Daikanyama shared-childcare programme (which, in fact, turns out to be run by a subsidised private company), in a pattern that can be traced in many shared house and related business, was promoted by the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which sponsors “projects and the creation of new businesses for the development of conscientious and supportive human relationships and resources”.

The Sutairo Uizu Daikanyama is owned and operated by the Tōkyū Corporation (Tōkyū Dentetsu), a railway corporation keiretsu (a cartel of diversified business and banking) that own and operate key railway, elevated rail and subway lines throughout the Kansai region, with a station two minutes’ walk from the Sutairo Uizu Daikanyama project. The Tōkyū group includes other companies in transport, real estate, retail, leisure and cultural endeavours. Its real estate companies are Tokyo Land, Tokyu Livable and Tokyu Community. The head of the division of Tōkyū, called the Department for the Promotion of Living Changes, which manages Sutairo Uizu Daikanyama, described the impetus for project, saying that while the company works in urban planning, it is interested in improvements and increasing value along its lines in the city. With this project, they intended to establish new businesses that would “create something that

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90 Nakagawa, “Min’na de Kosodate Suru Shea Hausu, Daikanyama Ni Tōji” (Daikanyama, a Share House Where Everyone Can Raise Children).”
91 “Min’na de Ishu Ni Sukunaka Kosodate Ka demo Wa Watakasho Watasahi Mo Nobinobi (Let’s All Raise Children Together. The Children Are Excited).”
93 Tokyo Corporation is a company that is eager to maintain and improve the value along the line through city planning. From early on, the company has promoted the relocation of older people and younger generations along the line. Nakagawa, “Min’na de Kosodate Suru Shea Hausu, Daikanyama Ni Tōji” (Daikanyama, a Share House Where Everyone Can Raise Children)."
responds to the changes in the way we live”.94 A press officer for a rental company that lists rooms at the property reported that communal childcare and places for collective, self-organised events is an important part of that vision to increase property values in the neighbourhood. Another of the companies share houses, Kamii kedai, was described as open and integrated into the surrounding neighbourhood’s values.95

A pattern of, on the one hand, promoting new forms of conscientious and supportive human resources is consistent with government and corporate endeavours and policy, especially in the wake of the Tohoku triple disasters. In 2013, a government education ministry announced that the kanji character of the year was kizuna or “bonds” – a term used and obviously emphasised at the 2016 Venice Biennale Japanese Pavilion, along with terms such as place of belonging (ibasho) and connectedness (tsunagari).96 In the case of Daikanyama, the location and high rent means that the project targets many women who work in the corporate centres of Tokyo’s Shibuya district. The demands of the corporate and entrepreneurial world mean that models for “increasing the possibility for women’s economic strength”97 and continued ability to manage their daily lives, reproduce the labour force and find solidarity at home with other adults, all while infiltrating the competitive and gruelling Japanese corporate world, are desperately needed to maintain such intensity. With the decline and rejection of the nuclear family (kaku kazoku), and after telescoping deregulation and labour flexibilisation, it is not only reproductive labour which must find new models, but it seems that affective care, solidarity and kinship not found at work cannot simply be replaced by the market alone (as was the vision of some economists in the 1980s and 90s, discussed in Chapter 3).

In Japan, there has been a rise of rental family services;98 in addition to the expansion of the enormous Japanese prostitution industry, hugging or ‘spooning’ cafés have sprung up to provide care and to maintain or simulate familiar relations and rituals – albeit in a form completely aware of its artificiality and commodification. The reality is, of course, that increasingly few people can afford these kinds of commodified care or re-enactments of ‘traditional’ social relations. Architects are promoting a search for new models; for instance, Ikuko Koyabe has advocated for shared houses that are open to multiple generations, genders, backgrounds and classes where income is pooled, and ex-

94 Ibid.
95 “Min’na de Issho Ni Sukusuku Kasodate Kodomo Wa Wakanuunu Watachi Mo Nohinichi (Let’s All Raise Children Together. The Children Are Excited).”
96 See Meagher’s discussion of the mainstream popularity of the terms connectedness (tsunagari) and bonds (kizuna). But for all the euphoria (and nationalism) surrounding togetherness, it was also very much of the moment. Also see Allison, Precarious Japan, 198.
97 Nakagawa, “Min’na de Kasodate Suru Shea Hausu, Daikan’yama Ni Tis (Daikanyama, a Share House Where Everyone Can Raise Children).”
99 Indeed, since the 1990s, architect Ikuko Koyabe has advocated the adoption of permanent government-funded collective housing as a response to generational segregation and other demographic dilemmas, such as single motherhood. The communal housing that Koyabe envisions differs in important features.
penses and responsibilities are shared. Seiseki, on the edge of Tokyo, is a shared house that occupies a large renovated company dormitory, where 108 adults of different age live. Collective meals are shared 20 times per month and care for children and elderly is shared by everyone.

An Impossibility of Dwelling

Taking a suggestion from Atelier Bow Wow’s guidebooks, rather than react to the city’s increasingly ‘hopeless’ scenarios by attempting to constitute a ‘solution’ – as is so often our noble impulse as architects – or to model or plan a new community, we might instead take a ‘stubbornly honest’ look and learn from these phenomena. Our contemporary malaise – as is increasingly visible in Japan and elsewhere – is too often the consequence of such well-intentioned ‘false hopes’ and idealistic positivity. When idealism is married to the state, finance, law and construction, false hopes are transformed into gross falsifications which, nonetheless, weave the robes of a mythos about progress. As Atelier Bow Wow suggests, when we ‘open our eyes and strain our ears’ to the real movement of the city, to examples of its subjects and forms of life, and to the ‘diversity of its spatial practices’, it renders visible a tendency towards becoming increasingly ‘shameless’, anti-historical and non-typological. The shameless city increasingly bears witness to the impossibility for the architect of making a plan or conceiving of predicates, of ‘positive’ identitarian, rules, norms or features which might constitute any ideal ‘community’ or form of life that can be understood on any historical grounds.

When we look and listen, we can see that what is already always there in the city is that which can never be enclosed by any system, that which negates all other constituted ‘positives’ assigned by apparatuses of power; this, we should add, is also therefore paradoxically ipso facto common and universal. With the increasingly visible potential for a disappearance of Man, a figure emerges like an asterism from the immeasurable constellation of contemporary life. This figure is neither animal nor Man; this new primitive is “ungovernable [and] is the beginning and, at the same time, the vanishing point of

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99 Seiseki, on the edge of Tokyo, is a shared house that occupies a large renovated company dormitory, where 108 adults of different age live. Collective meals are shared 20 times per month and care for children and elderly is shared by everyone.


102 Ibid.
every politics”. Revealed here is a potential beginning that though not chronologically contingent, is increasingly enunciated by the destruction of history and the coming to the fore of the useless and humorous domestic animals of Atelier Bow Wow, Branzi, Agamben and – why not? – Shinzō Abe.

In Europe, as early as the First World War, Walter Benjamin, in his denkbiild, Experience and Poverty, already perceived an increasing or already actualised nihilism or impossibility of dwelling in the world, as a consequence of the “tremendous development” of capitalism and “technology”. Benjamin describes this poverty of experience as the loss of any “authority”, knowledge and ways of life that have been gained through experience and passed down from generation to generation as heritage. Building on Benjamin, Giorgio Agamben wrote that “our sentiments no longer make us promises. They survive off to the side, splendid and useless like household pets… Deprived of an epoch, worn out and without destiny, we reach the blissful threshold of our unmusical dwelling in time. Our word has truly reached the beginning.”

As we have seen, a wide encounter with an impossibility of dwelling opened up with the destruction of historical modes of life and social relations during the late 19th-century Meiji reforms. The country was plunged into a transition of total social reorganisation, industrialisation and capitalism more rapid and violent than perhaps in any other place before or since. We can recall the carnivals of people who danced in the streets in costume, when currency was thrown in the air and the crowds chanted “eiganaika?” (“what the hell?”). The mass destruction of both the physical, psychic and cultural fabric of Japan during the Second World War and the reforms that followed delivered a yet more absolute destruction. This was discussed by figures such as the philosopher Keiji Nishitani, the novelist Yukio Mishima and the Sinologist and cultural critic Takeuchi Yoshimi, who wrote that the historical rupture of the ‘economic miracle’ after the war was made possible precisely because of the lack of historical subjectivity in

105 Ibid.
106 Benjamin: “A generation that had gone to school in horse-drawn streetcars now stood in the open air, amid a landscape in which nothing was the same except the clouds and, at its center, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body.” Ibid. Agamben: “Our sensibility, our sentiments, no longer make us promises. They survive off to the side, splendid and useless, like household pets. And courage, before which the imperfect nihilism of our time is in constant retreat, would indeed consist in recognising that we no longer have moods, that we are the first men not to be in tune with a Stimmung. [And] if moods are the same thing in the history of the individual as are epochs in the history of humanity, then what presents itself in the leaden light of our apathy is the never yet seen sky of an absolute non-epochal situation in human history. The unveiling of being and language, which remains unsaid in each historical epoch and in each destiny, perhaps is truly coming to an end. Deprived of an epoch, worn out and without destiny, we reach the blissful threshold of our unmusical dwelling in time. Our word has truly reached the beginning.” Giorgio Agamben, Idea of Prose, Intersections (Albany, N.Y.) (State University of New York Press, 1995), 91.
108 George Macklin Wilson, “‘Ec Ta Nai Ka on the Eve of the Meiji Restoration in Japan,” Semiotica 70, no.
Japan. As discussed in Murakami’s *Exodus* novel, the total lack of hope and the sense of nothingness – as nothing to remain here for and work on – again resurfaced during the neoliberal destruction of the ‘Japanese welfare system’ during the ‘lost decade’ at the turn of the 21st century.

In *Experience and Poverty*, Benjamin shifts perspective on his poverty category, describing poverty of experience as an “oppressive” overflooding of experience, it is an oppressive abundance of recycled or reanimated cultural relics, aesthetics and ideas both foreign and ‘native’. Again, we are reminded of Murakami’s Japanese youth at the turn of the century, who find the greatest hopelessness and poverty in the total overabundance of everything. Far from being a “genuine revival”, Benjamin explained, this is instead a “galvanisation” – a kind of superficial spattering or “carnival” of masks that conceal an inner ‘core materiality’. Benjamin’s refers to James Ensor’s painting a city of “ghosts; philistines in carnival disguises… wearing distorted masks covered in flour and cardboard crowns on their heads”. This core of being, hidden behind the mask, and the mask itself could be called precisely this poverty – as a fully realised impossibility of dwelling.

Ever since it became undeniable, an impossibility of dwelling is something the sovereign power in the West, like Japan before it, has made a point to maintain as the exclusive right of the sovereign (state or ruler), guaranteeing that the labouring classes avoid any real encounter with it. Reflecting Japanese, and more recently Western sovereign power, by 1933 Benjamin had already clearly recognised that in the midst of this poverty of experience, “holding on to things has become the monopoly of a few powerful people, who, God knows, are no more human than the many; for the most part, they are more barbaric, but not in the good way”. Benjamin’s essay suggests that a realised poverty of experience is fatally dangerous to sovereignty and the politics of suspension and domination because those who encounter and embrace it become “barbarians”.

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110 Benjamin, “Experience and Poverty.”
111 Examples of the way power in Japan allies’ repetition, ritual, aesthetic, identity, architecture and, at the same time, nothingness stretch back into prehistory. For example, for at least the last 1,300 years, the Shinto shrine *Ise Jingu* has been torn down and rebuilt every 20 years in an elaborate and highly controlled ritual that can only be officiated by a priest or priestess from the Imperial House of Japan. As we have seen in examples such as the *sentō* and shared houses, private and government aesthetic regulation, subsidising and financing constantly seeks to capture the excess of groundlessness and destruction – excess in forms of life – and to ‘re-galvanise’ or re-channel it into new apparatuses and assemblages. Perhaps we can claim that the genius of governance in Japan derives from the idea that nothingness or nihilism was wedded to absolute sovereign power in an explicit way long before something similar began to make its appearance in the West. As the elaborate ritualisation and national cultural aesthetic prove, however, the destruction of capitalism and modernity has rendered the impossibility of dwelling absolute in Japan; it was only after a “tremendous development of technology… [that] a completely new poverty [had] descended…” The destruction-to-ashes of Japanese cities by the most advanced technology, and the consequent destruction of the dwelling mythos in a Japanese superiority rooted in some essential genetic or ontic feature finally and completely left Japan “screaming like a newborn babe in the dirty diapers of the present”.

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An ‘encounter’ with the impossibility of dwelling, or its opposition in what we might call a ‘simulacrum of dwelling’ is decidedly complicated in Japan, and we can only briefly mention it here. Suffice it to say, the ideologies of Buddhism and its telos in the ‘emptiness’ of Nirvana through the overcoming of desire, and the acceptance of the groundlessness of being, perpetual change and suffering, must also be understood as entangled with complex ideological apparatuses of governance. For instance, the philosopher Nishida Kitaro’s conception of mu no basho (place of nothingness) was an attempt to formulate an essential “foundation (or predicate)” and a place from which reason can be derived, and alongside the category yamato gokoro (Japanese mind) was also posited as an essential feature of Japanese identity (together with myths of genetic exceptionalism) to assemble Japanese workers into an Imperial war machine in the 1930s and early 40s.\(^\text{112,113}\)

Despite appeals to emptiness that were paradoxically used to construct Japanese identity politics, and despite associations of Japanese culture with ‘Zen’ and emptiness from the outside, we can argue that nothingness or a realised nihilism has historically been avoided in everyday Japanese life, which has instead been governed by an abundance of decidedly non-nihilistic, positive features, laws, rules, duties and emotional-behavioural pathologies, including shame or haji (hazukashii can be translated as shameful, ashamed or embarrassed).\(^\text{114}\) In stark contrast to ideologies in the West, what governance in Japan seems to share with Western strategies is the basic reality that nothingness or groundlessness as window to ‘pure reason’ and calculation has been reserved as a right by the sovereign power to make exceptions to any rule necessary to maintain its domination. Furthermore, as we have seen because of the perpetual ‘natural’ and ‘man-made’ destruction in Japan, arguably nowhere else has destruction and adaptation been such a key feature of life. Could it be that in a necessarily equal and opposite way, from within and against this groundlessness, one of the most ritualised, identitarian, aestheticized cultures, and also one of the most obsessed with importing the foreign and ‘new’ and fashionable, has historically flourished in Japan?

\(^{112}\) “[In the period of the ‘cultural renaissance’ (bungei fukkō kai) that emerged out of the mid-1930s sense of spiritual void and widespread decadence. Thus we may see Nishida Kitaro’s conception of the ‘place of nothingness’ (mu no basho) as a kind of parallel of Motoori’s yamato gokoro, in that it attempts to formulate the foundation (or ‘predicate’) from which reason is derived, a place that would later be seen as the essence of Japanese identity.” Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, 204. See Chapter 2 and page 204. See also Kōjin Karatanai, Kotoba to Higeki (Language and Tragedy) (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmei Sha, 1989), 280. As cited in Iida.

\(^{113}\) “In the political and discursive context of the late 1930s and early 1940s, Nishida’s notion of the “place of nothingness” (mu no basho) and Watsuji’s aesthetic representation of the moral Japanese community were linked together, in a broad ideological narrative that identified the people as the collective embodiment of a Japanese cultural essence, attaining the state of “contradictory self-identity.”” Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, 42.

\(^{114}\) See, for instance, Keiichi Sakuta, Kimiko Yagi and Meredith McKinney; “A Reconsideration of the Culture of Shame,” Review of Japanese Culture and Society 1, no. 1 (1986): 32–39. This includes a discussion of haji in
Continental philosophers, including Alexandre Kojève, Roland Barthes and Felix Guattari (psychotherapist), have made the study of Japan central to their diagnosis of contemporary apparatuses of power in the West. Barthes described Japan as “an empire of signs” in which the exchange of empty stylised signs had become a game in which the participants did not actively attribute any meaning or historical content per se.\textsuperscript{115} Similar readings are also common amongst Japanese authors and philosophers such as Takeuchi Yoshimi, Murayama Masao and the art historian Okakura Tenshin, who described Japan as a kind of museum where artefacts are “imported and warehoused with little trace of subjective intervention”.\textsuperscript{116} Despite the obvious importation of stylised signs without content from the West that is so often ascribed to Japan, Kojève argued that the interaction between the West and Japan would lead to a “Japanization of Westerners”\textsuperscript{117} rather than, as one would assume, the Westernisation of the Japanese.

After a visit to Japan in 1969 and in a note to the second edition of his 1947 \textit{Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit}, Kojève revised his earlier optimism. During the 1930s, he prophesised a ‘disappearance of Man’ after the halting of Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic as the “historical process of negating action” constituted through ‘work’ for the Master. The only thing to remain, he thought, would be an ‘animalized’ humanity which could engage in the pleasures of “art, love and play devoid of all human meaning”.\textsuperscript{118} However, after visiting Japan in 1969, he felt compelled to revise his optimistic prophecy of this coming new figure. He saw the emergence of a new subject that “leads a life ‘according to totally formalized values – that is, values, completely empty of all “human” content in the “historical sense’”’ and deprecatively caricatured this post-historical figure the \textit{snob}.\textsuperscript{119} In the absence of ‘Religion, Morals and Politics’ proper, he explains, Japanese civilisation had established apparatuses that negated the animal or natural, and that ritualise, retained or borrowed “historical values”, using “them in a purely formal manner that deprives them of all of their meaning”.\textsuperscript{120} Recalling Tenshin’s museum curator figure, the \textit{snob} was, of course, not Kojève’s animalised human, because an animal simply cannot be a \textit{snob}. “This humanity will no lon-

\textsuperscript{115} Some of this was picked up by Roland Barthes, who, discovering what he saw as the absence in Japanese society of a modern notion of subjectivity, described Japan as ‘an empire of signs’. In Barthes’ view, social interaction in Japan was guided and constituted by the stylised exchange of signs, without the subject taking an active part in ascribing meaning to the world they live in. Although there is perhaps more than a degree of ‘Orientalism’ in both of these analyses – they are insights obtained at the risk of ‘imposing’ on Japanese society outsiders’ perspectives – their observations do, to my mind, nonetheless capture some core feature of the society with the freshness of the outsider’s perspective.

\textsuperscript{116} Iida, \textit{Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics}, 202.


\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 159.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 162.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. cited in Prozorov, \textit{Agamben and Politics: A Critical Introduction}, 135.
ger consist in the transformative work of negation that produced new content, but rather in the formalised rituals that the snob tirelessly reproduces with no developmental or progressive effects whatsoever.¹¹² In this formulation, the human remains ‘trapped’ in a ‘bad infinity’ or simulacrum of history and in the anthropological machine.

For Kojin Karatani, in fact, the figure of the snob was nothing new, but was instead a rehabilitation of 19th-century pre-Meiji principle of iki exemplified by the hedonistic and stylised culture he called the ‘paradise of fools’. Iki was later described by Kuki Shuzō as “the sensibility of keeping a certain distance from the woman one loves in order to avoid passion and folly”, “a mood that has been compared to nineteenth century European ‘dandyism’.” Karatani described iki as not unlike Heidegger’s ‘playing with the Abgrund’ as the “deliberate negation of all perspectives favour of the sole purposeful pursuit of aesthetic sophistication”.¹¹² Here identity is kept vacant to a degree in order to adopt, at any moment, any identity.¹¹³

Though stepping back much earlier, something akin to iki is clearly obvious already in the culture and aesthetic of the Heian Imperial households of the 10th century, a period heralded as the classical source of Japanese aesthetics. As we have seen, strict customs and a yet a nihilism and precarity wrought by power games characterised the noble court of the sovereign. Karatani attributed a coming to the forefront of iki to the destruction of ri, of historical reason or of a ‘single morality’, and wrote that this destruction was most clearly already achieved by the 18th century, evidenced in the studies of the philologist and philosopher Motoori Norinaga.¹¹⁴ This nihilism, as lack of any possibility of pure reason, morality, or historical experience and any destiny, is the essential ground in nothingness that in fact has always been the ground of the sovereign’s power in Japan. Norinaga’s work criticised the Nihon Shoki (an 8th-century emperor-commissioned book that invented a Japanese creation myth) for its creation and imposition of a single morality, echoing Nietzsche’s criticism of Platonism and Christianity for the creation of a single morality and a world beyond this one, therefore

¹¹² Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, 203.
¹¹³ Ibid.
¹¹⁴ Karatani, Kotoba to Higeki (Language and Tragedy), 137–38. “It bears pointing out that according to Karatani’s historically and philologically informed analysis, the Japanese word for ‘reason’ encompasses a much broader field than what can be translated by logos, reason, or rationality, such that when the Chinese character designating ri is used in combination with another adjective character signifying various concepts – sense/way, principle, truth, logic, philosophy, rationality, reason.” Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, 297.
¹¹⁵ Karatani, Kotoba to Higeki (Language and Tragedy), 137–42. Cited in Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, 203.
¹¹⁶ Atelier Bow Wow, Post Bubble City (Inax Publ., 2006).
¹¹⁷ Ibid., 25.
¹¹⁸ Ibid., 9–13.
¹¹⁹ “It is likely that the times in which we live have not emerged from this aporia. Do we not see around and among us men and peoples who no longer have any essence or identity – who are delivered over, so to speak, to their inessentially and their inactivity (Inoperosita) – and who grope everywhere, and at the cost of gross falsifications, for an inheritance and a task, an in-
negating or obscuring the core inessentiaality of life as plurality, becoming and contradiction.\textsuperscript{125}

In their 2006 book Post-Bubble City, Tsukamoto and Kaijima suggested that architecture, urban space and furniture has been about the assembly, “implementation and repetition of behaviour”, and is therefore not unlike performance-based artwork or theatre.\textsuperscript{126} They wrote that since the end of the Second World War, and especially since the 1960s, with the “explosive expansion in the range of movement of people and objects, as well as the spread of information networks”, architects in Japan and the United States have been concerned with “relating architecture to the appearance of the individu-al”.\textsuperscript{127} We might also interpret this as a relating of architecture to the construction of their individuality or subjectivity. Tsukamoto claims that despite the fact that architects often bring individuality, creativity and artistry through compositional articulation, they nevertheless (or even therefore) consistently follow certain underlying “scores” without any substantial content. Through variations on style and types, architects reproduce the same performance, \textit{ad infinitum}, giving a [mere] semblance of difference.\textsuperscript{128}

For Benjamin and Agamben, despite having been delivered over to an impossibility of dwelling – to an encounter with inessentiaality – the post-historical man here “grope[s] everywhere, and at the cost of gross falsifications, for an inheritance and a task, an inheritance as task… The traditional historical potentialities-poetry, religion, philosophy which… kept the historico-political destiny of peoples awake, have long since been transformed into cultural spectacles and private experiences, and have lost all historical efficacy.”\textsuperscript{129} We are reminded by Atelier Bow Wow and Agamben of so much of the ‘high’ Japanese architecture of the late 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries that has been sanctified by the new priesthood of the elite cultural institutions in museum exhibitions and so on, which are often patronised by global finance\textsuperscript{130} and, tellingly, pharmaceutical corpora-tions,\textsuperscript{131} all of whose \textit{modus operandi} exemplify the lack of a distinction between biologi-cal life, economy and politics.

\textsuperscript{125} Despite this emphasis on the importance of individuality, creativity and artistry, architects often bring individuality, creativity and artistry through compositional articulation, they nevertheless (or even therefore) consistently follow certain underlying “scores” without any substantial content. Through variations on style and types, architects reproduce the same performance, \textit{ad infinitum}, giving a [mere] semblance of difference.

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\textsuperscript{131} All of whose \textit{modus operandi} exemplify the lack of a distinction between biologi-cal life, economy and politics.

\textsuperscript{132} "The Open: Man and Animal," 76–77.

\textsuperscript{133} "Who Funds the Arts and Why We Should Care," Financial Times, 2014, https://www.ft.com/content/4313691c-3513-11e4-aa47-00144feabdc0.

\textsuperscript{134} "OxyContin Maker Stops Marketing Opioids, as Report Details Payments to Advocacy Groups" (British Medical Journal Publishing Group, 2018).
While works of architecture that tend towards the nihilistic from Japan often underscore an impossibility of dwelling, in the spirit of *iki* they also aestheticise it, and put it on display in the museum. This kind of separation or suspension keeps the impossibility of dwelling’s radical political potential contained or guarded. Through stylisation and sublimation that act on sensibility and emotional response, an affective spectacle of formalised metaphors for non-dwelling function, like the pharmaceuticals that financed them, on ‘bare life’. Agamben reminds us that the apparatuses of governance and *oikonomia* “take life as their object” precisely because in a condition of poverty and in the absence of any real historical project or tasks, they are at “risk of unravelling”.132

It is not easy to say whether the humanity that has taken upon itself the mandate of the total management of its own animality is still human, in the sense of that ‘humanitas’ which the anthropological machine produced by deciding every time between man and animal; nor is it clear whether the well-being of a life that can no longer be recognized as either human or animal can be felt as fulfilling. To be sure, such a humanity, from Heidegger’s perspective, no longer has the form of keeping itself open to the undisconcealed of the animal, but seeks rather to open and secure the not-open in every domain, and thus closes itself to its own openness, forgets its ‘humanitas’, and makes being its specific disinhibitor. The total humanization of the animal coincides with a total animalization of man.

Drawing comparisons to Karatani’s *human inessentiality*, and Benjamin’s *poverty of experience* (as non-dwelling), *inoperativity* (*inoperosita*) is a category developed by Agamben from Kojève’s *désœuvrement* or ‘worklessness’ that can be understood as the inessentiality or total absence of any nature proper to human beings as the animal with language.133 Further, he argues, are there no external tasks to which humans can be fixed or defined; humans are not predestined to any positively constituted existence in any imperative or predicate. Contemporary nihilism “renders void all established values and discloses the absence of any historical tasks to which humanity must devote itself”.134 Therefore, inoperativity also suggests an original deprivation from any ‘genuine’ experience of dwelling in the world (as animals do) that is actualised by the fact of the human animal having been ‘thrown into history’ through an entry into language and speech. Inoperativity is the ground(lessness) of human “potentiality” – a potentiality not to do or to be trapped in a ‘closed’ determinism, whether biological, vocational or otherwise. “While the inoperativity of the human being was for centuries veiled by religion or political ideology, the advent of nihilism entails its coming to the foreground of social life”135 (and yet, as we

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133 “[Politics] is that which corresponds to the essential inoperability of humankind, to the radical being-without-work of human communities. There is politics because human beings are *argo*-beings that cannot be defined by any proper operation, that is, beings of pure potentiality that no identity or vocation can possibly exhaust. Politics might be nothing other than the exposition of humankind’s absence of work as well as the exposition of humankind’s creative semi-indifference to any task, and might only in this sense remain integrally assigned to happiness.” Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, Theory out of
have seen the “apparatuses of government, law or culture… expropriate our potentiality and tie us to particular environments, codes, functions and specialisations”\(^{136}\).

Beyond an analytical category, Agamben developed inoperosita as a mode of action, an impotentiality or becoming that can be carried into action or praxis. While the English definition of inoperativity suggests “out-of-order, defective, invalid, etc.” or, on the other hand, an “absence of utility (inoperative as useless, unworkable, out of service, etc.)”, he does not advocate the inactivity, destruction or total nullification of a given activity, but rather imagines a praxis that affirms human inessentiality\(^{137}\) – a praxis that is devoid of any inherent essentiality, proper nature or destiny (telos).\(^{138}\) An overcoming of subjectivity, an “absence of any tasks” or ‘nature’ “proper to the human being” comes to the fore when humans are subtracted from the apparatuses of the anthropological machine and governance; this is a prerequisite for any overcoming of the bad infinity of the historical dialectic. By rendering the apparatuses inoperative, the human might appear in its ‘eternal infancy’, cast out of any ‘specific adventure or environment, but for the first time into a world… [the] sole animal of its kind.”\(^{139}\) As was the case for Benjamin, a destruction of experience which reduces the human to an original poverty, to a barbarian, is the precondition for the possibility for a ‘positive’ barbarian to emerge:

*For what does poverty of experience do for the Barbarian? It forces him to start from scratch; to make a new start; to make a little go a long way; to begin with a little and build up further, looking neither left nor right. Among the great creative spirits, there have always been the inexorable ones who begin by clearing a tabula rasa. They need a drawing table; they were constructors.*\(^{140}\)

Here shamelessness is crucial, especially in the context of Japan: shame is one of the original signs of an infant passing into and confronting becoming a subject. If the halting of the apparatuses “would result in the disappearance of the subject as we know it”,\(^{141}\) as we have known it, leaving us with a new kind of human animal, a new primitive figure, it is impossible to develop a ‘positive predicate’ to any coming figure or community because our knowledge or possibility of conceiving of humans, architecture and politics is entirely dependent on and produced by a “myriad of apparatuses” that have constituted us in “various positive ways”.\(^{142}\) Rather than sublimate or distract ourselves from nihilism and homelessness, or try to map out and predict a coming figure, or try to save *Man,*

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134 This is Prozorov’s interpretation Prozorov, Agamben and Politics: A Critical Introduction, 34.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid., 73.
140 Benjamin, “Experience and Poverty.”
141 Prozorov, Agamben and Politics: A Critical Introduction, 23.
142 Ibid.
Architecture might do the work of continuing a project of destruction, or subtraction from apparatuses. We might carry *inoperosita* into the act of Architecture; this is precisely the premise upon which a *non-compositional* and *non-typological* architecture can operate.

Despite this coming to the fore of an impossibility of dwelling, and of human in-operativity as original deprivation, what an inquiry into the Japanese city and history teaches us is that one of the main reasons that we become trapped in the suspension or simulacrum of history is that humans always need a window towards the *transcendent*.143

As Paolo Virno explains – building on Kant’s *dialectic of the sublime* and, as we have seen, approximating the politico-philosophical assertions of Keiji Nishitani and Karatani – humans need a source of existential security to protect them from the anguish or “random blows” of a world that no longer offers heritage and the familiar customs of substantial communities. It would be “foolish either to overlook the theme of security, or (and this is even more foolish) to brandish it without further qualification (not recognizing the true danger in this very theme, or in certain of its types)”.144 Virno identifies the potential for a sense of security and orientation precisely in the “apotropaic resource” of those ‘common places’ that are “no longer inconspicuous, but rather [have] been flung into the forefront” amidst an increased dissolution of the special places in which one might dwell.145 Amidst an impossibility of dwelling, these common places, he writes, “appear on the surface, like a toolbox containing things which are immediately useful”.146

And here we can state our thesis in concise form: in the work of Atelier Bow Wow, in their guidebooks to Tokyo and increasingly so in the contemporary examples built in the ‘shameless’ city itself, we can recognise a coming-to-the-fore of our impossibility of dwelling, and therefore also an *impossibility of ascribing any positive predicates* to the subject of any coming architecture, community or politics. This impossibility of dwelling produces a coming-to-the-fore of a *common-in-negative*. Here we do not speak of the common-in-death of Nietzsche (discussed in Chapter 2). What is in fact universally common (and *transcendent in-the-real*) is precisely an original irreducibility of humans, an impossibility of dwelling, an original inoperativity which is therefore a ‘wide open’, without history or destiny. Herein lies also that which can give orientation, both in the fact that it is, it can speak without meaning or signification, and that because it is, it negates our dwelling in the world (like animals and man do) every time it is ‘uttered’. Here we speak of the common places in the very *fact of* language or ‘speakability’, and *the*  

143 See also, for example, Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion*, Harper Torchbooks, vol. 1st (Ameri, 1959).
145 Ibid., 35–37.
146 Ibid., 37.
fact of architecture, in the resource of their collective memory, and in their absence of destiny.

There can be no destiny because despite the potentiality or openness of the negated animal (as closedness or captivation in nature), the new primitive, standing in the clearing of being, must perceive the fact that animal captivation, as the negated ground of its being, is nevertheless its limit. Here, animality and nature neither remain hidden, nor are they penetrable as objects of knowledge, and hence mastery or destiny. One cannot surpass this limit. The New Primitive is the one who serenely sets out into the night of pure abandonment to inoperativity, neither closed in animal captivation nor driven by an attempt to know or master it.147 The methods explored by Atelier Bow Wow, and in fact the tendencies (towards the non-typological and non-compositional) of the city today, reveal how the architect might carry inoperativity – as neither captivated by any essentiality, nor destined to any given end – into the act or praxis of Architecture.

A New Primitive Architecture

One of the most striking features of Atelier Bow Wow’s built projects is that they carry inoperativity, through architecture, into the act and built project, opening up a means for the re-appropriation and ‘misuse’ of apparatuses, the excess and the ‘common places’ of architecture.148 This inoperativity ‘carried into the act’, this ‘courageous’ tendency towards a non-typological and non-compositional architecture, for them, operates in different ways on the exterior and interior of their built projects, and is brought into the way they represent and write about them in their books. In their 2007 Graphic Anatomy, they describe their method with phrases such as a “liberation from subjectivity” and the “earnestness of observation”. This suggests the possibility of an architecture that is shameless and patently anti-utopian, and yet draws its resources precisely from the common places that mark an impossibility of dwelling already manifesting itself in the city. This suggests an architecture that does not attempt to introduce anything positive into this condition of poverty but to use this condition and expose it, thereby opening architectural knowledge up to the possibility of new use.

148 “[A]bsolute consciousness… is an affirmation of the superiority of the transcendent… that stands above and is contemptuous of all existing things that are finite and empirical. It rejects all purposes, and thus rejects Hegelian dialectics. If one does anything, it is not for meaning or reason. However, it is not nihilism; contrary, it discovers meaning in the self-consciousness that seriously plays with meaningless things, being fully aware of their meaninglessness.” Karatani, Kojin, cited in Iida, Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics, 63.

IV. No House
Learning from their observations, in many of their projects, Atelier Bow Wow develops a non-compositional architecture by borrowing and recomposing fragments from the kind of shameless examples that they ‘found’ in the city and surveyed in books such as Made in Tokyo and Pet Architecture. Additionally, their buildings seem to learn from these examples by ‘bending’ into the particularities of the situation in a new kind of usefulness, without any adherence to an ideal, style or image. Their 1998 Ani House’s exterior or shell appears to borrow and recompose fragments from a side of Tokyo abandoned to total industrialisation and the absence of any proper cultural identity. The house was built with basic industrial materials: it is clad in corrugated metal sheeting, and the front elevation is adorned with two large windows that simply find the centre of façade, above a full façade-width strip of windows intended to allow light to a half level below. It is, however, even more important to look at their work as a whole; we can cite examples such as the 2000 Moka House, the 2003 Gae House or 2008 Pony Garden because they share a lack of some kind of stylistic unity across the range of projects. They lack any pretension to a “magnificence” or specific historical identification. Instead, they borrow from their contexts and make new use of ‘commonplace’ shells, sometimes accentuating them and re-appropriating their signification, as in the case of Pony House, where the shell and language of the barn as a place for animals is exaggerated or caricatured and becomes a place for humans to live. Their work speaks about a simple anti-functional, utilitarian, common use of architecture and about its essential inoperativity by, at one and the same time, borrowing from examples and ‘profaning’ them – opening them up to reimaginations and new uses.

What is critical to consider about these projects is that while, on their exterior, they tend towards the non-compositional through borrowing and re-appropriating, on the interior, they speak even more decisively about an impossibility of dwelling. In several examples, Bow Wow does not add internal subdivisions and goes to lengths to open up the living space, even from the ‘imposition’ of utilities or services. For example in Ani House, despite the fact that the three levels of 3 x 3, 9-square-grid plans of the house were designed for a family, there are no walls and no doors in the interior; therefore, the house is essentially a single continuous space over three floors, connected by the vertical axis of a stair and with an open roof terrace. Unlike the houses of the surrounding neighbourhood, it is offset from the site equally on every side, and has windows on each of them, creating a kind of ‘anti-directionality’. The kitchen is relegated to one thin peripheral sliver of ground floor space, and the bathroom is given a separate volume outside on the periphery of the main plan.

149 Atelier Bow Wow, Graphic Anatomy, 123.
150 Ibid., 48–51, 130.
152 Atelier Bow Wow, Graphic Anatomy, 10–13.
Tsukamoto remarked that this form came about in part because of his memory of the open fields that used to be common in the city – these are now completely cluttered with buildings – where he used to spend long childhood hours playing outside with other children. In *Atelier House*, they bring the exterior open field into the interior. This radical blankness of the interior in the early 2000s houses is visible in many examples, such as the 2000 *Moka House* and the 2000 *Saito House*, which can be described as a blank square in plan on the first level and a divided square on the second. In other examples, they introduce subdivisions but establish a new set of hierarchies that efface known typologies and expected functionalism. In their 2008 *Ikushima Library*, for instance, the client’s massive collection of books led them to conceive of the house as a library. The library house is therefore ‘centred’ around large open spaces surrounded by shelves for the books; the clients have only peripheral, compacted spaces for other parts of their daily life. The house seems to cater to temporary “lodgers” rather than *dwellers*.

This borrowing and re-appropriation at the level of the exterior and the tendency towards non-typological on the interior is consistent with the logic and lessons of *Made in Tokyo* because in the book, the interior is never described or shown. Therefore, to all intents and purposes, the interior and plan remain blank and essentially inoperative in *Made in Tokyo*’s architecture. Here Bow Wow seems to either explicitly or implicitly relegate the subdivision of the plan to something that should not, or perhaps in the context of contemporary Japan, cannot become a problem or game or, especially, a system to drive formulaic compositions and spatial subdivision. Unlike the studies of reformers, such as Uzō Nishiyama in the 1940s, these observations do not turn to survey and cannot serve as a set of data for the architect to develop a new system for the ‘plan’. This kind of non-compositional borrowing of the shell, or otherwise anti-idealistic, utilitarian exterior and, on the other hand, blank interior that tends towards the non-typological or non-compositional, becomes prophetic when we look at what is happening without the ‘high architect’ in the most ‘shameless’ of the contemporary city’s examples, as discussed above.

What we find with the net café, one room *apato’s*, micro apartments and shared houses is that, on the one hand, they often literally appropriated older buildings that were built for something else, and therefore have absolutely ‘non-compositional’ exteriors

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155 Koțeje et al., *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 98.
156 A. Badiou and O. Feltham, *Being and Event* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2007), 408.
157 One aspect that we might call ‘positive’ in *Atelier Bow Wow’s* work is that of ‘a simple gesture’. This gesture can be understood in the negative, as the non-compositional method of simply re-appropriating, exposing its fact and opening architecture to new common use. Or, on the other hand, and referring to Andrea Branzi’s writing in the essay “Studies for Houses on a Central Plan”, this ‘positive’ can be described...
in that they have re-appropriated these shells and opened them up to new uses. As we have seen, on the interior, they carry out a kind of subdivision that tends towards the non-compositional. Many emerging forms of standard Tokyo interiors bear uncanny resemblance to (again perhaps prophetic) works such as the 1970s E Projects by Hiromi Fujii, in which he sought to erase himself from the project through a method of subdivision of the plan that unfolded in a hyper-rational sequence that obeyed a one-metre grid and set out from primitive geometry, either rectangle or square.

Here we should differentiate between non-compositional strategies such as those of Tadao Ando, for example his iconic, blank 1976 Sumiyoshi Raw House; SANAA, in many of their exteriors that tend towards the ‘zero-degree’; and earlier predecessors such as Fujii, for example his 1974 Tadoroki House. All of which strike a stark contrast with the wood, tile, Japanese-ness, homeliness or otherwise and spectacle which characterises much of the city. All of these works deploy a non-compositional strategy that aestheti- cises and exhibits non-composition as a style; they exhibit an inessentia- lity or worklessness towards the city and exterior, innately confronting or pitting itself against, and therefore dialectically engaging with, the existing city’s ‘motley melange’.

Architecture whose exterior exhibits what becomes a spectacle of poverty, inessentia- lity or worklessness as non-compositional works historically because it inherently asserts a kind of revolutionary declaration by directly confronting the ‘given’ in what can be understood as an attempt to negate or destroy it. For Kojève, historical negating action must initiate a destruction of the existing world: “[The] idea can be transformed into truth only by negating action, which will destroy the World that does not correspond to the idea and will create by this very destruction the World in conformity with the ideal.” However, this kind of ‘revolutionary’ destruction only reproduces the historical process: “[k]illing somebody is always a matter of the (ancient) state of things.” However, a negation of this negating action would need to avoid producing something ‘positive’; it must avoid any engagement or possibility of incorporation as it would need to produce something that was indiscernible from the negated situation.

This is not to diminish the importance of these earlier examples that tend towards the non-compositional, but instead to highlight the fact that at different stages of the city’s historical development (or unveiled total lack thereof), there might indeed be different definitions of

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(non)typological and non-compositional architecture. In the work of Atelier Bow Wow, we see a
different strategy for an architecture that tends towards the non-compositional on the
exterior – one that instead borrows from the melange of common inessentiality that is
increasingly commonplace and always already emerging with the destruction of experi-
ence carried out by the capitalist city. By doing so, it tends towards refusing an engage-
ment with or want of recognition from what it negates and subtracts itself from.

This kind of method brings an inoperativity into the act, working to erase any unwitting
reproduction of a subjectivity that strives to alleviate its own anxiety and positively con-
stitute itself against the actuality of a realised nihilism. In other words, the non-com-
position becomes a meditative practice through which we might work inoperatively at
subtracting the living being from the apparatuses which suspend and separate its impo-
tentiality from being carried into the act, into architecture and life. When we realise that
the runaway, _shameless_ and _hopeless_ city now seems to _naturally_ produce non-typological,
non-compositional architecture itself, increasingly it appears that the _most radical approach_
suggests that, as architects, we should _simply let the shameless city happen._

From another angle, we can also propose that type in architectural methodology can be
decoupled from typology, as a system or science entangled with instrumentality, cate-
gorisation and assignment. Specific examples and what they share at the most generic
levels as ‘types’ can also be an ‘apotropaic resource’ that does not blindly reject resourc-
es that have been created in common. A ‘type’ like the finite and generic figure that we
find in the nine-square grid motif of Makoto Masuzawa’s 1951 _9 Square Tsubo House_,
in _Ani House_ or Shigeru Baan’s projects – not to mention the religious buildings of ant-
quity, pre-modern city plans and so on158 – need not become ‘typology’ and therefore
tied to specific instrumentality, essentiality or functions, but merely provide a resource
which should be reappropriated and opened up to new uses. In other words, in this
sense an architecture which is ‘non-typological’ need not be obligated to reject types
outright, but might find old types useful for new and evolving uses.

We should also not limit our understanding of Bow Wow’s illumination of what a
pedagogical architectural project can be to their built works, but should also recognise
that their publications, modes of representation, drawing and writing are ‘the project’.
In _Graphic Anatomy_, they write that in fields such as botany or anatomy, the technique
for drawings are so constrained that individual subjectivity is suppressed. This clears the
way for anyone, from anywhere, to contribute to or learn from that form of knowledge.

159 Benjamin, “Experience and Poverty.”
It is here that we can begin to understand how a guidebook, atlas or even a built work of architecture can offer ground in common, can speak about an impossibility of dwelling and can therefore open architecture up to new potentialities and to new uses without new predicates.

This kind of honesty, carried courageously to its radical conclusion, casts into question the subject and subjectivity of the architect, and the entire historical practice of architecture. But this confrontation does not mean that any coming, new primitive, non-typological and non-compositional architecture must not not-act. Instead, it must work to carry our essential inoperativity and its common ground into the act of architecture, be it drawn, written or built. Here architecture and the architect themselves might become “barbarians” or new primitives. As Atelier Bow Wow, Kajima, Tsukamoto and indeed so many of the Japanese architects discussed, including Ito, Sejima, Fujimoto, Aida, Fujii and Isozaki, teach us:

…the main thing is that [our work does] so with a laugh. This laughter may occasionally sound barbaric. Well and good. Let us hope that from time to time the individual will give a little humanity to the masses, who one day will repay [us] with compound interest.\textsuperscript{199}
9 SQUARE GRID HOUSE
Kanagawa, Shigeru Ban
1997
ROOF HOUSE
Hatano, Tezuka Architects
2009
HIROSHIMA HUT
Akitakada, Suppose Design Office
2007
LT JOSAI
Nagoya, Naruse Inokuma
2013
NISHINOYAMA HOUSE
Kyoto, Kazuyo Sejima
2014
APARTMENT HOUSE
Tokyo, Takahashi Ippei
2018
CONCLUSION
Towards the Non-Typological
What then might the term non-typological teach us? What are its indications and implications given the case and specific examples we have discussed in Japan? At the most general level, the term non-typological can be understood as an historiographical device through which we can develop a theory of architectures like the ones which have been unpacked here in Japan. As we have seen, the term and concept ‘non-typological’ is ultimately ambivalent; though as much could be said of nearly all phenomena that we have explored in this thesis with its specific history of architecture, and political economy of labour in Japan.

As we have seen, because of the violence and rapidity of both the historical destruction and historical re-organisation of architecture and forms of life there, it can be argued that Japan is the context where typological thinking in architecture has been more obvious than in any developed capitalist country. By the same token, it is the context where typological thinking, and planning and organization of forms of life has had the severest side effects and been most blatantly contested or rejected by architects. For western democratic capitalist countries Japan is distant and yet, simultaneously, familiar - can become by virtue of its distance, an important mirror for western architecture. But what does a close look at several examples of architecture and architects and other labouring subjects since the emergence of the profession in Japan using the term non-typological teach us? Furthermore, as architects, what does the term ‘non-typological’ give us, in terms of an attitude, theory and method for working, if you will, like a ‘New Primitive?’

The thesis historiography, development of method in Chapter 4 and the Atlas of Shameless Interiors aims at a kind of intentionally inconclusive, or perhaps ‘non-typological’ conclusion, if you will. It seems that one of the most important lessons of the thesis - which traces a history from the rise of the professional architect designer to the architect’s theoretical dissolution into new collectives at Konohana - is that an ethics of the non-typological would see us relegateing of an increasing amount of ‘design’ to an architecture’s inhabitant. Architecture here might be a techne something that will which unfolds in negotiation, with far reduced levels of abstraction, and within the realities of any future inhabitants’ everyday relationships and lives. However, until then and for the professional architect, this thesis wants to begin to elucidate another potential method. To propose a kind of meditative act on the part of the architect, so as not to attempt a kind of new, idealised approach to architecture but to observe, listen and look; to expose and suspend, and as we argued, in a sense, ‘simply let the city happen.’ This is of course an impossible task, as long as one designs. Therefore, the term non-typological seems to suggest that we push towards the design of means of not designing. Here, we touch upon the key limit and paradox of this discussion, and one that is exemplary of the limits that contain any discussion of a possible radical ethics. We might embrace this danger, this seeming paradox, as an ally. At the end of this brief conclusion, we might therefor
Towards the Non-Typological attempt to lay out a series of points to summarise both the lessons and a kind of open (yet decisive) manifesto for working non-typologically. It can never be reiterated enough, as has been done throughout the thesis, that working non-typologically undoubtedly goes beyond the level of architectures discipline proper, and of course therefore beyond working solely non-Compositionally, per se.

The brief ‘Manifesto’ at the end of this section intends to be absolute, but only in the most absolute and essential sense – that is, in the sense that it wants to work at the level of something so absolute, so clear and so defined as to leave everything else open. In fact, as has been and will be argued in a myriad of ways and from varying vantage points, certain things must be absolute-ly clear in order for everything else to be in-absolute; in order for everything else to be an object and subject that can be opened up to political consideration. Leaving everything open, or more precisely undefined and worse, relegated to an area outside of our consideration because it supposedly stems from natural course of history and things, would mean, as was discussed most extensively in Chapters 3 and 4, to work typologically in the most contemporary sense. To assume an end of history, to assume a naturalness resolved through millennia of society into which we have finally settled: these are perhaps the most reckless of assumptions. To work intuitively and towards a sense of freedom, catharsis, sublimation or liberation and yet still under these kinds of (often unnoticed) assumptions and atop the structures and superstructures that underpin architecture and building now would be to uphold the status quo of ‘high’ architectural design.

Furthermore, and as was discussed in Chapter 3, being a disruptor and nihilist and rejecting anything and everything that we have would mean to leave ourselves and the ‘users,’ or subject suspended in nihilism and forced to adapt and innovate from a perceived ‘scratch’. Desperately searching the new and yet unwittingly reproducing a new and aspiring image for more of the same. In other words, as we saw in Chapter 3, leaving the subject suspended and constantly striving for the new, cathartic and sublimating aesthetics is both the motor of expanding and deepening production but is also precisely how the rationality of contemporary calculation, order and control at one and the same time mystifies itself or produces its phantasmagoria with images of newness, freedom, the future, origins, destiny etc.

This thesis, by contrast, therefore, aims at developing an ethics of practice with a focus on the exposure and suspension of certain ‘default’ modes of architectural composition. This set of conclusions will ultimately be very personal – but by means of Socratic method that has unfolded behind these pages with so many other authors across millennia, and in conversation and debate with so many colleagues, advisers, architects, critics and students, I would hope that it arrives at a rigorous analytical and theoretical
position. A position so primary, so primitive in its attempt to define the humans and their relationships which will occupy it, if you will, so as to relegate the greatest degree of autonomy to the subject and future. The method wants to recognise the irreducibility of each becoming within a constellation of other becoming.

To attempt to deny the fact that we still work within all kinds of categories and constraints would, as the thesis has outlined, be to work well within the bounds of the new status quo where everything is presented as flexible, malleable and indeterminate. One of the key points of putting forward the concept non-typological is to root out, expose and test typologies and typological thinking, those systems, visible and invisible, in their worthiness for destruction. To do this, and as we continue to operate within the bounds of the architectural profession, language, law, private property and so on, our paradox resides in the fact that we must use categories to push towards the destruction of so many others. This is analogous to the fact that we might use the category of type (which I oppose to typology at every level except that of archetypal form) in architecture to push towards the exposing, testing and perhaps refusal or destruction of typology. In fact, this is what so many architects in the thesis, from Kenzo Tange to Kazuyo Sejima or Atelier Bow Wow have done, whether they were aware of it, or would admit it, or not. This opens up a key question: isn’t the term, concept and category ‘non-Typology’ inherently impossible and contradicting itself from its inception?

Non-typology as Oxy-moronic Contradiction!

One might be compelled to ask: is creating a term to identify and describe examples of architecture that tend towards the non-typological a topologizing act in itself? Yes, indeed it is. As we have seen, language is an example of an instrumentalising, abstract reductionist typologisation and categorisation of phenomena in the world that are always completely singular and irreducible. Aside from, perhaps, onomatopoeia’s like ‘Bow Wow’ – phenomena have no ‘real’ or ‘actual’ relationship with the systems of representational symbols or sounds.

As discussed, it is crucial to recognise that a system for categorising types as typology is also inherently instrumentalising. In other words, while the term and concept ‘type’ is in the first instance analytical and establishes classes and categories, it inherently also generates and reproduces them, and makes it impossible that they will not therefore be ‘shaped’ ideologically. Indeed, the suffix ‘-ology’ in ‘typology’ comes from the Greek logia, which refers to ‘a discourse, treatise, theory or science’. Thus, typology can be understood as “discourse, theory, treatise (method) or science of types”. This much is obvious in language, speech and writing, and explains why as long as we speak of and ‘produce’ architecture, there can be no such thing as ‘non-typology’.
In other words, the term ‘non-Typological’ is a linguistic class and category which identifies both an absence of characteristics or features in specific examples of architecture but also therefore a set of shared traits or *commonalities* between those examples most importantly *by virtue of what they negate*. The thesis used the term and category as a device to expose and suspend so many mythologies, ideologies and unwitting psychologically induced phantasmagorias that aid in (and increasingly become the engine of) an obscured reproduction of typologisation.

On one hand, the aim of the thesis is not to completely avoid categorisation or typologisation, but to use the category of ‘non-typological’ to *probe the limits of theory and architecture*. To *push them to the breaking point: to find a category that brings us to the frontier of a collapse into non-category*. What is revealed at the threshold of architecture, in its bare instantiation, is in fact the ‘blank page’, the negation of previous forms and therefore the *sine qua non* of politics. Thus, the concept non-typological is inherently ideological but again pushes ideology to its limits - seeks to identify, expose and make operative (or inoperative) a potential for suspending existing categories and typologies or at the very least, exposing their unwitting reproduction – for, again and critically, exposing and testing typologies in their worthiness for suspension, destruction or misuse.

However, on the other hand and more importantly, the category ‘non-typological’ of course includes a negative *prefix* which expresses and absence or negation. Therefore, the only thing we can say about architectures that approach the non-typological is that what they are not. This is key to understanding the way in which the thesis seeks to develop a method for in terms of architectures relationship to the prefiguration of predicates, the subject, their social, economic or political relationships.

A look at the tumults of de- and reterritorialisation in Japan over thousands of years, and the marked acceleration of ‘destruction’ in recent decades reveals a lack of anything natural about the current state of things. As Japanese Capitalism increasingly and more rapidly destroys any previous forms of life or fixity. As it calls on and yokes the most basic traits of the human animal, insecurity, creativity and adaptation it increasingly makes visible and brings to the fore an inessentiality. One that increasingly approaches a limit beyond which it might destroy deeper aspects of our society’s typologies. Thus, we arrive at that paradox that the only thing is *essential* about us, is that we lack any *essentiality* save an ultimate ground in the fact that we are animals. Architecture, in its basic act of constructing an environment that *separates* from a being in direct relation to ‘nature’ is also essential in the fact that it negates, or if you like creates a sharp rupture, from an *original capture in animal being* in the world.
These arguments are in fact fundamental to one of the core claims of the thesis and lessons for working architects: that what we share in common is primarily three-fold: firstly, it is our inessentiality (lack of proper forms, tasks, orders, meanings, etc.) and yet our inescapable capture in animal being, secondly, it is that we have an archive of common recurring forms (e.g. a rectangular wall enclosure), that are, thirdly, inessential forms in that they return and recur in a myriad of different uses, functions, meanings, and so on. They are not tied to any essentiality other than that of their bare form, their imagination, the fact that they are entangled with an original negation of our animal-being in the world - they break a capture in animal being, genetic coding, environment, and so on.

The Ambivalence of Non-Typology

If there is one thing this research seems to have revealed, it is that all concepts are ambivalent. We could even go as far as to argue that there is in fact nothing inherently or necessarily wrong with typologisation, but our discussion here has mostly accepted the existence of the figure of the architect as the ‘head designer’. For example, it might be the case that a ‘system’ of burning one’s house down every year apparently prevalent in neolithic settlements over 10,000 years ago on what is currently the Japanese archipelago was a decisively political act with the consent and awareness of everyone who was involved. In fact, it seems precisely a kind of mechanism and system of participation designed to avoid a monopoly on decision that would rob others of the rise of a single decision maker to deplete others autonomy or displace their involvement in a process of political decision making. A process of deciding their form of social relations and life.

Therefore, while there is an ambivalence to non-Typology and Typology as concepts that describe certain tendencies in architecture and practice, we could however argue that there is something wrong with not seeing typology in its instrumentality. The problem, following Georg Simmel, lies in not seeing typology for its instrumentality; for how it works and shapes life. And therefore, for having the potential to participate in the reimagining its forms, use, destruction, or new construction by those whose lives will be entirely shaped by it. This takes us back to the rise of the architect in Japan, where we see that an act of creation (not as creare ex nihilo but as facere de materia), design, decision is divided, separated from those who will inhabit a building and modify it within the unfolding realities of their own everyday lives.

This is what made Konobana famiri perhaps the most barbaric ‘architects’ that I met in all my time in Japan. More than any of the other architects discussed in the thesis, and
largely because they are not architects, they are testing even deeper aspects of architectures typology in their worthiness for destruction – again and to be categorical: divisions of labour, gender roles, privacy, financing, wage labour, private property and the very role of the architect as head designer themselves. Because they have pooled resources, labour, eliminated money internally, completely broken and reassembled labour relations and gender roles. Because they have reappropriated architectures and landscapes to reimagine forms of use and social life. Most importantly of all though, they are ‘barbaric’ because they refuse to accept any of these aspects of their lives, social relationships and architecture as given, natural, fixed, or destined. They are constantly discussing and designing their architecture together.

Kazuyo Sejima’s inquiry (discussed in Chapter 3) into whether she lived in a post-ideological society is crucial – for it seems that at least since the 1990s, we have lived in a society that wants to either claim it is non-ideological or hide the fact that ideology is rampant. Perhaps this kind of Fukuyamian claim and an associated plethora of ideologies parading as the non-ideology approximate the kind of typologies which the thesis senses it must attack with an ‘ideology’ of ‘testing the world in its worthiness for destruction.’ Throughout the history of Japanese architecture, from NAU, to The New Wave, to Ito, Sejima and Ishigami etc. there have been attempts to avoid ideological thinking – to do something that is simply right, good, free, liberated, and does not impose some abstract contrived predicates on the subject to perceive, use and inhabit the architecture.

In chapter 1 we recounted the stories of how both Western architects like Walter Gropius looked to ancient Japanese buildings like Katsura as architecture that approached a rationality at the edge of the ‘non-ideological.’ Amongst Japanese architects, non-ideological attempts to construct the national dwelling were flawed from the very inking of that core mission statement. We learned how New Architecture Union member Zushi Yoshihiko, already understood that any architecture that must operate within the established system of production, social relations, law, education property and so on was inherently ideological. As the thesis also confirmed through its analysis, Yoshihiko argued that technological rationalisation, functionalism in planning and the industrialisation of architecture could not be objectively or ideologically removed from the mode of production and control within which it was conceived.

We see with the work of Ito, Sejima and Ishigami that the technological development of architecture is precisely what allows them, (along with the magician engineer Matsuro Sasaki) to make the architecture say, “I’m free”, “I’m lighter than air, I’m not enclosed,” “I am your anxiety, but I can also make it dissolve.” As Adorno, following Marx elucidate when speaking of the commodity form, it appears (and is) a thing
amongst things, an architecture and assembly of material and objects amongst other architectures and assemblies with material, structural, phenomenological, emotional affects. An architecture with comparable to and better than others at making us feel a certain way. An architecture with a high exchange value if you will.

But it is precisely via fact that the thing communicates (or obscures a communication with any clear ideological content) that it avoids political interrogation and skirts a deeper reading which would reveal that its form, form of production, exchange, and consumption underhandedly shape politics and social life in themselves, without any direct or democratic negotiation or participation. As the thesis has demonstrated, specific forms of designing, financing, buying, and building architecture are entirely bound up with ideology in the sense that they are very specific systems. This is what is indicated by the concept real subsumption and is one of the key axis around which the thesis builds its theories from Chapters 1 until this quotation in Chapter 4:

[The role of architecture and art in the world of total commodification becomes] a legitimation process, displacing to a certain degree such classical mechanisms of domination as authoritarian conditioning and formal ideological indoctrination. The claims of classical ideology could to a certain degree be assessed as objectively either true or false. But when ideology is embedded in the objective order of things (as ideology invades and increasingly pervades the fabric of ethos), it ironically escapes the realm of objectivity. Adorno defines the commodity as “a consumer item in which there is no longer anything that is supposed to remind us how it came into being. It becomes a magical object.” In effect, you can’t argue with magic. This is the character of advanced forms of domination: they operate in ways that leave few obvious traces of their functioning. Thus… domination operates increasingly through two divergent but complementary means, through values of mass consumption and the harnessing of desire (repressive sublimation) on the one hand, and through the mechanism of techno-bureaucratic control and instrumental rationality on the other. These are the two poles of the historic tendency away from traditional dominance and subordination and toward impersonal mechanisms of social domination.¹

That brings us back to one of the key observations of the entire thesis and one of the core aspects of the non-typological as an index and actuality. Forms and space, the architectural mechanics that are designed to organise life must always negate historical modes of subjectivity, work and life. They always work also by constructing new positivities and predicates, these predicates shut down a radical openness left in the blank page of the rupture: a radical openness, always at hand. An openness to be — and perhaps more importantly, not

¹ John P. Clark, The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2013), 103.
to do or be—something, or someone. The concept non-typological, in its tendency towards the suspension of positivities (save the most essential) is ultimately therefore, a reminder of said inessentiality. This is also what makes Capitalism—in its tendency towards the negation of all values aside from profit—deeply (but not entirely) non-typological in itself! It destroys everything and can allow no stable form of life. In this respect and following Keiji Nishitani’s passage through dark nihilism to a ‘creative nihilism’ we might understand Capitalism as essential to overcome a history of control, domination or subordination. The trick is of course, the State capitalist form today relies on all kind of absolute reterritorialisations and (purportedly natural, timeless or inescapable) predicates like private property and the Nation State-form.

Nonetheless, through a series of examples of architecture that tends towards the non-typological we can recognise a coming-to-the-fore of our impossibility of dwelling, and therefore also an impossibility of ascribing any positive predicates to the subject of any coming architecture, community or politics. This impossibility of dwelling produces a coming-to-the-fore of a common-in-negative. Again, this is not to speak of the common-in-death of Nietzsche as discussed in Chapter 2. Instead, what is in fact universally essential and common (and transcendent in-the-real) is precisely an original irreducibility of humans, an impossibility of dwelling, an original inoperativity which is therefore a ‘wide open’, without history, destiny or naturalness beyond our ground in capture—whether animal, or historical.

Herein lies also that which can give orientation (existential security as approximating the one of the key political categories developed in 20th century philosophy and politics), both in the fact that it is, it can speak without meaning or signification, and that because it is, it negates our dwelling in the world (like animals and man do) every time it is ‘uttered’. The common places can be found in the very fact of language or ‘speakability’, and the fact of architecture, in its original deprivation of our dwelling in the world. As we know, architecture too has an absence of destiny, proper use, tasks, functions, programmes, ways of conceiving of an producing it, ways of seeing it and talking about it. Bow Wow painted for us one of the clearest portraits of this potential at the beginning of the 21st century. Let us take those modes further. Like Konohana Famiri, let us, at the deepest levels, test our architecture in its worthiness for destruction and experiment with it, thereby opening it up to new, free and common uses.
MANIFESTUM

(THAT WHICH IS ROOTED IN THE PALPABLE, MANIFEST, AT HAND)
1. A tendency towards the non-Typological, towards the erasure of historical configurations of space, and methods for the composition of space, emerges most vividly during periods of historical upheaval or ‘rupture.’ It can therefore be considered an index and actuality of a supra-legal and supra-politico-economic ‘destructive’ force acting on the city. A tendency towards the non-Typological is therefore the sine qua non of politics, both indexically, and actually.

2. Japan gives us the most striking, extreme and violent, example of a context within which to observe an otherwise global tendency towards the non-Typological. Earthquakes, tsunami’s, war, bombs, and more substantially, revolutions in modes of technology and production and the planned popping of economic bubbles during modernisation have left a ‘blank page’, wiping out forms of historical tradition, production, social relations and life, and indeed literally the city and architecture in their wake.

3. A tendency towards the non-Typological as analogous to the ‘blank page’, is reflected in architectural space, and most remarkably in that of housing in Japan. In many examples, what becomes clear is that a gap opens up, in which the architect cannot, if only for a short period, justify any plan either related to the past, or the future. This kind of phenomena accelerates with the increasing complexity of technology and crisis of financial capitalism.

4. A tendency towards the non-Typological is however also an index and actuality of the fact that a new system is in the process of being established; something is being cleared or negated in order that something new can take root. Japan is also the context where typology has been most violently and abruptly imposed. Certain examples of Japanese architecture become a stage on which we can witness a tendency towards de- and reterritorialization.

5. A tendency towards the non-Typological, as a conscious act brought into the architects own production thinking, methods and acts, is also therefore most clearly visible in Japan. Nowhere has typological thinking been as clearly rejected or contested. And yet, the strength of Japan’s legalistic, financial and cultural systems (in part re-enforced by a degree of isolation and cultural homogeneity) mean that too often, the deeper aspects of architectural, building and the cities imposition of behavioural norms and endless work are not challenged, but are merely given an image that appears as if they are being refused or challenged.
6. A tendency towards the non-Typological seems to be accelerating in its realised actuality - in its scope and scale. Even the most banal or architect-less, for profit buildings in the city in Japan are beginning to tend towards the dissolution of any plan, historical or future oriented. As the economy moved from planned, welfare capitalism to financial capitalism and flexible accumulation, old economic protections and guarantees were removed and labour was forced into self-management, flexibility, adaptation, creativity etc. This has led to a breakdown in the possibility or effectiveness of the plan.

7. A tendency towards the non-Typological, or no-plan has thus become a sign and actuality of one of the key engines of endless and deepening determination of total production on life.

8. A tendency towards the non-Typological is an index and actuality of the fact that mass planning, design and organisation as abstraction uproots and alienates, tending towards a total social breakdown and towards a ‘limit.’ In order to avoid the limit of deterritorialisation - to avoid psychic, social and demographic collapse – architects (patronised by capital and the state) constantly reterritorialize themselves and craft new spatial, symbolic and aesthetic apparatuses to reterritorialise other subordinate subjects in the city. Thus, everything returns and recurs – architecture produces cathartic and sublimating affects, raises archaic typologies from the dead, and deepens its technological complexity at all levels of the process, construction, and monitoring etc.

9. To work non-typologically is to recognise that a tendency towards the non-typological is ambivalent, in that it is both a tool of and threat to Capitalism. We cannot return to some imagined past. Aestheticization, catharsis, sublimation and regurgitation are the mask of the trap. We need not accept the blackmail of nihilism and get stuck in a bad infinity. The thesis proposes that we must take the deterritorialisation, destruction further and deeper. As architects we might work to ‘tip the balance.’

10. To work non-typologically the thesis puts forward non-composition as a set of formal methods in architecture which therefore seek to refuse not only the planification of others’ lives. We can refuse a kind of unwitting production of complex aesthetics that give architecture an image other than what it really is and prolong our ability to avoid an encounter with shock.
11. To work non-typologically is to recognize that runaway, *shameless* and *hopeless* city now seems to produce non-typological, non-compositional architecture without the high architect and therefore perhaps the most radical approach suggests that, *as architects, we should in a sense, simply let the shameless city happen.*

12. To work non-typologically means to reject the ideology of the lone, creative and ahistorical individual and therefore open the possibility of something truly ‘new.’ We have a vast archive of forms, a vast collection that is the common city. We can open what we have, to new, free and common uses – to experimentation at the deepest levels. This archive is, in itself, an index and actuality of our inessentiality, and we can bring this inessentiality into the act of producing our architecture.

13. To work non-typologically means to reject the task of assigning predicates, of assuming some timeless, original or predestined feature of human beings beyond the very same fact, that we are inessential beings. *Essential being in common* can never be predicated but only be approximated by an immediacy of action and praxis. The absolute abstraction and primacy of the non-typological is an index and actuality of this irreducibility and impossibility of abstraction of living beings and their social relationships.
GLOSSARY (OF PRIMARY CONCEPTUAL TERMS)
Non-typological:

The term ‘non-typological architecture’ is a concept and category put forward by the thesis to consider architectures – in a way that is plainly self-evident – towards a lack of interior subdivision, or the lack of any designed, functionalist, representational, idealistic distributions of space, symbolism and aesthetic. The thesis reads that the chosen examples therefore both concretely – in their composition and distribution of space etc. - but also conceptually and ideologically in that they tend, and tend is a crucial term here, towards the absence of history, or ‘plan’ for or idea of future.

Therefore, in other words, non-typological architecture can be said to refer to examples which tend towards a simple container of blank space or otherwise tend towards the ultra-generic, perhaps primary and on the other hand even tend to disappear containment. Thus, the term non-typological has been developed to frame and probe architectures that tend towards a lack of composition as ritualistic, functionalist or programmatic distributions of space, and furthermore, tend towards a lack of symbolic or emotive-aesthetic composition.

Anti-typological and Counter-typological:

While the term ‘non-typological’ is used to discuss examples that tend towards the lack of interior subdivision, or the lack of any designed, functionalist, representational, idealistic distributions of space, the terms Anti-Typological and Counter-Typological pertain more specifically to a theory and conscious intent by the architect to reject the tasks that are ultimately entangled with typologisation as an imposition of functionalist, programmatic, idealistic planning, and in more extreme cases nostalgic, cathartic or soothing composition.

Non-Compositional:

Non-composition can be defined as a category put forward in the thesis to push towards a formal method to test and root out aspects of the architect’s set of tasks in their worthiness for destruction. Therefore, the term indeed relates directly to Anti-typology, but while the latter refers to an attitude, a criticality and a theory, non-compositional refers more specifically to a method. While typology refers to formal, aesthetic and categorical aspect of architecture it also is inherently inseparable from a whole set of aspects of architecture that sit beneath those properly understood as within the professional set of tasks including for example formal design, programming, materiality, detailing.
gy can be tied to forms of labour, ideologies of production, gender divisions, financing, private property etc. While formal and aesthetical composition do not have a one or often easily identifiable relationship with these aspects of architecture, composition, as the thesis argues, is nonetheless completely entangled with the production and reproduction of typological ideology.

The paradox of non-compositional architecture is of course, as we have seen in the case of Hiromi Fujii’s Counter-Typological, Non-Compositional method, that he ends up producing something very distinct and identifiable and one might call ‘compositional’ and perhaps even ‘typological’ as a result. However, the thesis argues that the point is not to avoid methods of composition or typologisation at all, but to push them to the limits in order to expose and test their stowaway (concealed, unwitting) entanglement with “behaviouralism”. Indeed, Fujii’s own method is critiqued because as the thesis argues, it aestheticises non-composition and ‘puts it on display.’ Therefore, asking for attention from the thing it is negating and engaging in a kind of dialectical relationship with it. As we have learned from the material history of Japan’s labour and architecture, this leads to a synthesis which always deepens and obscures the subsumption of labour into the ‘must do’ of highly constrained and apolitically deterministic forms of production.

What is offered in the thesis as an alternative possibility, is the non-compositional method suggested by Atelier Bow Wow. It borrows from existing forms in the city and opens them to new uses without any kind of functionalist determinism. This non-compositional method is also therefore the more properly formal, aesthetic and properly architectural-disciplinary method of pushing towards the anti-typological. The resulting architecture could be said then to be both anti-typological and tend towards the non-typological.

**Primitive:**

The term *Primitive* in the thesis refers to authors (architects) and subjects that tend towards the non-typological in the sense that they tend towards rejecting or lacking historical or future-oriented ideological entanglements. This is what makes them somehow anti-typological and perhaps non-compositional actors (depending on the methods and practices which drive their work). Primitive is used in the thesis in both ‘negative’ and ‘negative-positive’ ways. In Chapter 3 Kazuo Sejima, Ryue Nishizawa, Sou Fujimoto, and Junya Ishigami are referred to as the ‘New Primitives’ because, following Walter Benjamin’s notion of the Barbarian, they are destroyers. Destroyers of old architectures, destroyers of many of the tasks that architects have historically taken on. However,
their work is nonetheless criticised in that it holds on to or must inherently rely on a
deeper set of typologisations outside of the typical scope of architecture proper. Cer-
tain architects are therefore perhaps working at the cutting edge, discovering a new set
of tasks through which to satisfy their patrons. As was outlines these involve intensive,
emotional-aesthetic and labour heavy composition that seems to give certain cathartic,
sublimating image to what is otherwise raw calculation, deepening technological sophis-
tication, dependency, political determinism, and increasing production.

In the 4th Chapter, the term Primitive is developed in relation to non-canonical archi-
tects and non-idealistic or ‘shameless’ subjects which would simply ‘prefer not to’. They
are neither intently engaged with any historical form of composing their life necessarily,
nor do they have some idealised and hopeful image of the city’s future in mind. As Ate-
lier Bow Wow wrote, they are concerned with the here and now. They make good use
of what is there and shamelessly adapt it for their own enjoyment. This kind of notion
can apply to many of the subjects discussed in the thesis that somehow refuse the existing regimes of production but nonetheless do not openly contest them.

Abstraction:

The term abstraction is rooted in *ab* which means “away from” and *trahō* which means
to “drag, haul”. *Abstrahō* therefore means, I draw away from, drag or pull away. I with-
draw, alienate from and (figuratively) I divert, draw away. Throughout the thesis we
can see the development of concepts, systems, laws, technologies and organisations of
the organic and inorganic, and spatial diagrams, and typologies that are applied across
broad territories to organise or graft a kind of ‘grid’ of rationalisation onto life. There
is of course here an attempt to rationalise it, shape and guide it into very specific forms,
which as we have seen in the thesis departed from the existential criteria “rich soldiers”
or “strong military, strong economy” and led to new rationalities of the organisation of
technology, space, and bodies. The term is abstraction then is, at its base, multi-faceted
and relates also the concept de- and re-territorialisation because with the same gesture
that subjects are *pulled* into new forms of organisation, they are *pulled* away from others.
Subjects are then also pulled away from an irreducible complexity and multiplicity – a
constant reality of change, becoming and irreducibility to anything other than one’s ac-
tions and relationships in the world at any given instant. Pulled to instead, a purportedly
timeless predicates or ‘positivities’, e.g. housewife, student, Japanese, creative etc.
Abstraction through, is ambivalent, for in fact forms of abstraction tend to destroy any
previous forms of capture or fixity and are the *sine qua non* of politics. They reveal, as
in in a society of very advanced technological and productive development, a figure of
architecture that is ‘concretely abstract’ and therefore reveals an essential indeterminacy of proper or pre-ordained tasks, use, destiny, functionality etc.

Typology:

The suffix ‘-ology’ in ‘typology’ comes from the Greek λογία, which refers to ‘a discourse, treatise, theory or science’. Thus, typology can be understood as “discourse, theory, treatise (method) or science of types”. Typology in architecture will be defined here as a system of knowledge or as a ‘deep structure’ for the composition of space and construction of types. Housing, through new divisions of labour, became a ‘professional’ architectural and typological project when the strategically managed reproduction of labour emerged as a cultural project and the focus of political strategies in mid-19th-century England, and in late 19th- to early 20th-century Japan.

While a pre-modern concept of type was concerned with commonalities, essentiality and the ideal, at the threshold of modernity in the West, and even more vividly in Japan, typology became wrapped up with a set of categories, classifications and a ‘science’ of types of composition of space and organisation of life for production and economy. In other words, it became entangled with a system of abstractions and knowledge for túptō as stamping, inscribing into, producing and, critically, reproducing instrumental, binary types of bodies, individuals and forms social life from irreducible multiplicity.

Something that approaches the kind of typology that emerged with the very profession of architecture in the late 19th century in Japan and gained ground through the 20th century was described by Maria S. Giudici as “the deep structure of any spatial product”. Typology, she wrote “is about form (as both composition and non-composition are), but also about the people who inhabit the building in a way that transcends mere function: it is about the relationships, the subjectivity and the ethical frameworks the space itself produces”. This kind of typological thinking is perhaps best exemplified by the housing work of Alexander Klein. Klein’s typological method stood against historical forms of typology, such as essentialism and the 19th-century “frozen model” notion. In doing so, it could be said that a new concept of typology emerged that recognised the importance of type as an underlying ‘deep’ structure, but at the same time allowed for flexibility, individual expression, modification and exploration. Klein “attempted to submit the elements-identified now in terms of use-to the rationality of typology by checking dimensions, clarifying circulation, emphasizing orientation. Housing types appeared flexible, able to be adapted to the exigencies of both site and program. For Klein, the type, far from being an imposition of history, became a working instrument.”

2 Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, “Composition, Non-Composition: Architecture and Theory in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” (Taylor & Francis, 2015), 1124.
In her discourse about Henry Roberts’ 19th-century *Model Houses*, Giudici articulates what has been at stake for typological thinking in architecture, both in Japan and the West, since then:

... a small-scale architectural proposal can, by virtue of its repeatability, have an impact on the city itself... the link between production of type and production of the city is not always a straightforward one. Roberts did not content himself with the possibility of influencing the city, but rather aimed to put forward an actual idea of society, and a specific form of subjectivity... the aim of the Model Houses was to create hierarchies, orchestrate asymmetries and ultimately enforce very specific behaviours.

Raphael Moneo, in his essay ON Typology wrote that, “To raise the question of typology in architecture is to raise a question of the nature of the architectural work itself. To answer it means, for each generation, a redefinition of the essence of architecture and an explanation of all its attendant problems. This in turn requires the establishment of a theory, whose first question must be, what kind of object is a work of architecture? This question ultimately has to return to the concept of type.”
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CHAPTER 2

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4.3 Author and He Wang, *Tokyo Net Cafe*, 2019, drawing.

4.4 Shiho Fukada, *Japan’s Disposable Workers*, 2014, photographs, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5bVWzTy7E.


4.6 Tezuka Architects, *Roof House*, photograph, https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/6dXIA8YvgkBKQfjxkv6hCCKZDRnvFhhh7-

4.7 *Kyoto Shijo* (ramen restaurant with stalls which, according to the restaurateur who supposedly invented them, enhances taste through social isolation), photograph, https://kyoto-shijo.or.jp/cms/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/IMG_1534-2-825x510.jpg


4.12 Bing maps, 2019, aerial photography of Akihabara.


4.14 Bing maps, 2019, aerial photography of Sumida City, Tokyo.


4.19 Author and Shanna Sim Ler Chung, *Sutairo Uizy Daikanyama, Mothers Share House* 2013, 2020, drawings.

4.20 Bing maps, 2020, Aerial of Shibuya Tokyo.


4.23 Author and Cheryl Wan Xuan Cheah, *Konobana Famiri in the Field*, 2020, drawing.


4.32 Author and Shanna Sim Ler Chung, *Yokohama Apartments, Yokohama, ON Design Partners*, 2020, drawings.


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5.2 Bing Maps, 2020, aerial photography of Nagoya.

5.3 Bing Maps, 2020, aerial photography of Osaka.

5.4 Bing Maps, 2020, aerial photography of Tokyo.

5.5 Author, 2020, compilation of drawings.
5.6 Author and Shanna Sim Ler Chung, *Le Carrefour Room* 2020, drawings.
5.7 Author and Shanna Sim Ler Chung, *Tamaizumikan 1R Apartment*, 2020, drawings.
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AN ATLAS OF *SHAMELESS* INTERIORS IN JAPAN
Shameless (harenchi) or ‘non-pedigreed’ architecture – wrote Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kaijima of Atelier Bow Wow – can be illuminating because it reports on the reality of the city’s condition. At the end of the 1990s – often referred to as the ‘lost decade’ in Japan – Atelier Bow Wow\(^1\) published their *Made in Tokyo* and *Pet Architecture* guidebooks to a Tokyo ‘impoverished’ by both a hopelessness and an overabundance, but in which, nonetheless, they discovered new, humorous ‘architectural animals’. This *Guidebook to Shameless Interiors in Japan* is a counterpart to the thesis on architecture that tends towards the non-typological in Japan – *Non-Typological Architecture: Deterritorialis-ing Interiors in Contemporary Japan*. It proposes a kind of continuation of their guidebook project 20 years later, and with a focus on domestic interiors across Japan. This *Guidebook* will survey recent housing, subjects and forms of life in the contemporary Japanese city. In short, it is the observation of the thesis and this *Guidebook* that, taken together, the examples to be discussed strip the city bare of origin stories, history, idealism and destiny, revealing the extent to which an impossibility of dwelling has become the norm.

Through basic information, small photographs and simple line drawings of exteriors, Atelier Bow Wow’s *Made in Tokyo* guidebook constructed an atlas of architectures that, for them, are “off” when measured against architectural “cannons”.\(^2\) Built with limited budgets, and in awkward or leftover spaces, the examples were not concerned, they said, with nostalgia, mannerism, taste or idealism. The buildings they choose could, as they write, therefore be labelled *harenchi* (shameless) or *da-me*\(^3\) (no good or ‘junky’\(^4\)) architecture by critics or architects. They were instead conceived with a concern for eclectic, immediate use that undermined typical architectural or urban categories, sanctities and typology. Such “an existence”, they wrote, “seems anti-aesthetic, anti-historic, anti-planning, anti-classification.”\(^5\)

These paradigmatic examples of *shameless*, *non-typological* and *non-compositional* architecture in the city make visible the dissolution of categories, and as Bow Wow suggested, history. We might elaborate further, and also argue that they therefore tend to lack heritage, culture, planning and, indeed, therefore future (or anti-planning as a lack of any

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3. This term might have been inspired by the group of activists beginning in the 1990s who called themselves *Dameren*, or the ‘no goods’. In a lecture at Waseda University in 1993 Kaminaga, Kōichi called for a “good-for-nothing revolution”. “Most students,” he argued “would end up ‘working while ‘dead’, meaning the end of life.’ What sustained this system, he claimed, was people’s fear of being regarded as no-good. In order to enjoy life, one must not be swayed by the values of society. Instead one had to choose “the way of the good-for-nothing” (dame no michi) revolution”. Carl Casseggård, *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan* (Global Oriental Leiden, 2014), 59.
5. Ibid., 12.
7. In addition to the guidebooks, see Ibid., 29–43.
stable form or urgent destiny); they lack a kind of mythos and telos that has long guided the design of the city by architects, planners and politicians. Tsukamoto has pointed out that Tokyo is a constantly ‘metabolising’ city, where the average housing life span is 26 years;

one where, as we know, a history of earthquakes, war and furious economic growth continues to strip away the traces of the historical city. Indeed, in the almost 20 years after the initial publication of Made in Tokyo and Pet Architecture, the Japanese city has continued to transform rapidly and has continued to deconstruct and destroy historical architectures and modes of life, their tasks and categories. As Tsukamoto suggests, it continues to ‘metabolise’ and ‘granularize’ into an increasing complexity of decentralised relations.7

Almost two decades after the publication of the guidebooks, we can observe an even more dramatic or accelerated ‘destructive’ tendency in the Japanese city: the flexibilisation of work, decreasing real wages, rising unemployment, and yet continued or even tightened rigid hierarchies and intense performance expectations at work and in everyday life; these have propelled mass escapist, with large portions of the population described as ‘refugees’, ‘homeless’ and ‘parasites’.8 9 10 11 12 13 Part-time workers, the homeless and escapees of all colours sleep in 24-hour internet and manga cafés and are often referred to as netto kafue nanmin or mac-nanmin (internet café refugees).14 15 Young adults and workers who could not find stable employment or afford their own housing – or who otherwise refuse to enter the kind of oppressive workplace and lifestyles on offer – shelter away in their parents’ house indefinitely.16 At the same time, this does not mean that they continue to socialise with or maintain a close social relationship with their parents. In many cases, they tend to interact with their family less and less, as evidenced by the fact that nLDK house types that shelter a ‘parasite single’ child have private entrances to access that room.17 The infamous hikikomori are usually young to now middle-aged adults who refuse to leave their rooms for six months or more and have been estimated to number up to two million in the early 21st century.18

In Japanese media and literature since the 1950s, and perhaps earlier, youth who do not become responsible, productive adults with a full-time job and a family are derided as

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17 Ibid., 2848.
selfish, hedonistic and amoral.\textsuperscript{19} \textsuperscript{20} \textsuperscript{21} Even for those who do work but have experienced increasingly precarious contracts, low wages and unemployment, politicians such as the former Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and the former Governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintaro, have blamed Japan’s suffering economy, the decline in marriage and the extremely low birth rate on young people’s laziness, selfishness, brash consumerism and obsession with eroticism.\textsuperscript{22} There is now a 1.2 child per two adult birth rate, 44\% of 34-year-old Japanese are reportedly still virgins, and kodokushi (a lonely death where the body is not discovered for months or years after the fact)\textsuperscript{23} and karōshi (death through overwork)\textsuperscript{24} have become epidemics.\textsuperscript{25} These phenomena are entangled with the dissolution or fragmentation of the scale and fabric of the historical city itself as increasingly single children inherit land; because they cannot pay the high inheritance taxes, they subdivide it up into tiny plots to sell, which in turn breeds new tiny buildings.\textsuperscript{26} Aside from the terminology such as ‘parasites’, used to refer to these disenfranchised youth, women over 30 without children have been described in media as makeinu (loser dogs).\textsuperscript{27} Even the political left and ‘progressives’ in Japan have derided figures such as the bieikomori, freeters and NEETs for their political apathy – for being uninterested in protest or rebellion and in engagement to produce new ideals.\textsuperscript{28}

Since the late 1990s, many nLDK, mansion apato units, once the broadly dominant type of dwelling of the nuclear family in Japan, have been converted to small or tiny individual units such as the ‘1’, 1K, 1DK, One Room or SOHO (small office home office apartment)\textsuperscript{29} apartments, typically with floor areas of around 20 square metres or less. These apartments contain tiny, prefabricated bathroom units and cooking facilities that are often too small to prepare a cooked meal. This is especially true in urban centres such as Tokyo where by 2009, 40\% of the rented stock had one room and, more often than not, only one occupant.\textsuperscript{30} Even when considering the entirety of Japan, both rural and urban, by 2015 one person households were the most common, and one to two


\textsuperscript{22} “Japanese conservatives like Prime Minister Abe Shinzō and neofascists such as former Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintaro (to say nothing of the implicit youth bashing of Keidanren) have provided camouflage and cover for hyperneoliberalism by scapegoating the very young workers victimized by the emergence of this new capitalist regime. This attack has blamed young workers’ supposed laziness for productivity losses leading to the sinking Japanese economy; singled out young Japanese positions women’s ostensible selfish consumerism for shrinking the Japanese population by refusing to breed;
person households constituted 60% of the total. Part of the reason such small apartments are possible is because the city has ‘sympathetically’ developed into a kind of giant house itself with a domestic infrastructure, externalising functions once internal to the house. Here the apartment or the housing unit is increasingly simply reduced to an unscripted cell for sleeping, work or consumption (often it seems even in bed) and as a place to simply sleep, dress and ‘go out’ again.

Commercial and private architectures ‘without ideals’ are increasingly built as the market itself responds to rejections of and exclusions from what was formerly the ‘family type’ and status quo. In re-appropriations that could not have been foreseen or potentially even predicted, these new refurbishments ‘misuse’ existing buildings and infrastructure in the sense that they deviate from the original design and plan. These phenomena, we could argue, are propelled by, on the one hand, instrumentalising, reductionist or idealising models, predicates, idealisations and economic rationalisations in contradiction with what we might call an excess of living beings, a pure multiplicity that can never be categorised or captured. The thesis and this guidebook aim to consider how both individually, and taken as a whole, these paradigmatic examples tend ever more explicitly towards the non-historical, non-idealistic, non-typological and non-compositional condition that Atelier Bow Wow recognised in the everyday Japanese city as early as 2001.

In short, rather than react to the city’s increasingly ‘hopeless’ scenarios by attempting to constitute a ‘solution’ – as is so often our noble impulse as architects – to model or plan a new community, we might instead take a ‘stubbornly honest’ look and learn from these phenomena. Our contemporary malaise – as is increasingly visible in Japan and elsewhere – is too often precisely the consequence of such well-intentioned ‘false hopes’ and idealistic positivity. When idealism is married to the state, finance, law and and castigated young men and women for organizing much of their lives around pursuit of erotic pleasure – in effect, pinking Japan into one huge soft-core porn film, known as “pink films” (pinku eiga). Driscoll, “Hyperneoliberalism: Youth, Labor, and Militant Mice in Japan,” 549.
24 Naoki Kondo and Juwan Oh, “Suicide and Karoshi (Death from Overwork) during the Recent Economic Crises in Japan: The Impacts, Mechanisms and Political Responses” (BMJ Publishing Group Ltd, 2010).
26 Kitayama and Nishizawa, Tokyo Metabolising, 48.
30 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
construction, false hopes are transformed into gross falsifications which, nonetheless, weave the robes of a mythos about progress. As Atelier Bow Wow suggests, when we “open our eyes and strain our ears”\textsuperscript{33} to the real movement of the city, to examples of its subjects and forms of life, and to the “diversity of its spatial practices”,\textsuperscript{34} it renders visible a tendency towards becoming increasingly ‘shameless’, anti-historical and non-typological. The shameless city increasingly bears witness to the impossibility for the architect of making a plan, conceiving of predicates, of ‘positive’ identitarian, rules, norms or features which might constitute any ideal ‘community’ or form of life that can be understood on any historical grounds.

When we look and listen, we can see that what is already always there in the city is that which can never be enclosed by any system, that which negates all other constituted ‘positives’ assigned by apparatuses of power; this, we should add, is also therefore paradoxically ipso facto common and universal. With the increasingly visible potential for a disappearance of man, a figure emerges like an asterism from the immeasurable constellation of contemporary life. This figure is neither animal nor man; this new primitive is “ungovernable [and] is the beginning and, at the same time, the vanishing point of every politics”\textsuperscript{35}. Revealed here is a potential beginning that though not chronologically contingent, is increasingly enunciated by the destruction of history and the coming to the fore of the ‘useless’, no-good, shameless and yet humorous domestic animals of the Japanese city.

The following set of drawings will present 34 examples of recently refurbished or constructed buildings or ‘living’ spaces that are of the non-pedigree variety and are often ‘shamelessly’ commercial- or developer-driven for profit; they manifest a kind of raw reality. I have spent nearly the last five summers in Japan ‘living’ in many of these examples, from periods of one to two nights up to two weeks. Regarding many of the examples, the fact that one can live in buildings that are not categorised as housing – and that many do – is the reason that it almost seems that the only qualification to make it into this guidebook is that there is an important reproductive space, once mythologised as belonging solely to the domain of housing in each. For example, the Mitsui Fudosan Life Sciences is an office building; however, like many offices in addition to kitchen areas, it now offers beds for staff to nap in. Many, of course, end up sleeping there overnight. As I have discovered, one can plausibly now ‘live’ in all of the examples described in this Guidebook.

In the estate agency’s listing for the Tamaizumikan building’s many 1R (one room) apartments, there are four photographs. One is of the exterior, one the blank and division-less interior, and the other two are of a Family Mart, and a 7-11 konbini (convenience store): a place in which one can buy a huge range of cold or hot meals, groceries, toiletries, clothing items and even pay bills. Open 24/7 and so numerous that one never seems to have to walk more than five minutes to get to one, these shops are so convenient and seductive that they become a regular fixture of the majority of Japanese people’s daily lives. In contrast to Toyo Ito’s depiction in his 1985 Silver Hut of the family-centric image of the restaurant replacing the family dining room (see Chapter 3), the spaces of consumption, sustenance and care in the Japanese city have also become paradigms of a total breakdown of family and the couple in one of the most densely crowded places on earth.
The continuous, lonely space of the ‘Gorilla’ Apartments’ one-room options is indexical and reminiscent of the "blank page" wrought by war and the "innovation" of economic reorganisation in Japan. Gojira is a portmanteau of the Japanese words gorira (gorilla) and kujira (whale); Godzilla was conceived of as "a cross between a gorilla and a whale" and drew on the American King Kong. Godzilla was imagined as a giant, destructive, ancient sea monster empowered and awakened by nuclear radiation. With the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fresh and poignant in the Japanese consciousness, Godzilla has been understood as a metaphor for nuclear weapons. It has also been suggested that Godzilla is a “metaphor for the United States, a giant beast woken from its slumber which then took a terrible vengeance on Japan".

‘GORILLA’ APARTMENTS
4-chōme-20-2 Iwadokita Komae, Tokyo 201-0004
1989 (2016 refurbished)
Le Carrefour is an example of how, since the late 1990s and increasingly in the 2010s, many nLDK mansion apartment units, once the broadly dominant dwelling type for the nuclear family in Japan, have been converted to small or tiny individual units like the ‘1’, 1K, 1DK, One Room, SOHO (small office home office apartment) apartments, which typically have floor areas of around 20 square metres or less. These apartments contain tiny prefabricated bathroom units and cooking facilities that are often too small in size to prepare a cooked meal. This is especially true in urban centres such as Tokyo where by 2009, 40% of the rented stock had one room and more often than not, one occupant. Even when considering the entirety of Japan, both rural and urban, by 2015 one person households were the most common, and one to two person households constituted 60% of
This 14-square-metre, third-floor apartment at Kapatos – an apartment for women only – has one room. In the ads on the estate agent’s website, the room is referred to as a kyoshitsu-nai – which is understood as living room, but is composed of the terms for stay/or home, room and inside. The room includes a kitchenette with one hotplate or burner and a sink 20 x 30cm in size. Here the kitchen becomes a frail and lonely but perhaps liberating fragment of the kitchens that Miho Hamaguchi designed – and which resembled the Frankfurt kitchen studies – for women during the 1950s that would allow them to efficiently juggle a series of tasks, including complex meal preparations, cleaning, storage and organisation, and child supervision all at the same time.
In the 12.75-square-metre concierge apartment, it is nearly impossible to include any walls, even around the toilet, which is instead fitted with a ceiling rail and shower curtain. Here the utilities, or services, are exposed to the open space of the ‘living room’: the pipes, sink, shower, washing machine and toilet are not enclosed by walls or even cabinets. Thus, the rent is relatively cheap and for Kumiko, who is working at an office as a clerical secretary part time, but produces her own music and hopes to one day make enough to never have a boss again, the room becomes her production studio and house. She has lined the walls with sound-absorbent materials after complaints from the neighbours, but can still only play at certain hours of the day.
“Ofuro [bath] in the middle of the room. Again, there is a bathroom in the middle of the room…! It is also a skeleton type. A two-tone bathroom with white tiles and glass. It’s a square inside a square, a space that is geometrically beautiful. The space is unified in white, and there is only a pole for storage. It can be arranged and displayed in a fashionable way like a shop! When you open the door, you meet your wardrobe. Is there any other floor plan like this?

It's a rare floor plan, so don't worry about the difficulty of arranging furniture.
Let's find the joy of "creating" a new life.

Minuses:
There is only one rack for storage.
Since the floor plan is very unusual, it may be difficult to arrange furniture.
But I think you can have a lot of adventures!"

– Goodroom letting agency, Osaka
Suga is an example of one of the many renovations from family-type housing to one-room accommodation. The structurally reinforced concrete construction was originally built in 1985, and in 2015 the apartments were renovated from 3LDK 'mansions' to one rooms aptos. The developer cited ‘environmental or circumstantial changes’ (kankyō henka o fumae) for the renovations and stated that they wanted the building to last for another 20 years. This is a decent amount of time for a building in Japan, where the average building life-span is 26 years. The incredibly narrow and tiny space for living means that, as is the case in so many apartments in Japan, the tenant will not own a bed, which would take up almost all of the space. Instead, a sleeping mat is rolled out in the same area that one eats, works and spends one’s leisure time – ironically, this is reminiscent of the pre-modern Japanese ima.
SAKURAKARO ONE ROOM APARTMENT
1-6-4 Higashiakusa, Taito-ku, Tokyo
2016

Kodokushi or lonely death refers to a Japanese phenomenon – first seen rising as early as the late 1980s – of people dying alone and their bodies remaining undiscovered for a long period of time, in some cases many years. **Kodokushi** is increasingly a problem in Japan, and can be attributed to the breakdown of familial social relations, care for elderly by family members, to economic and work pressures on children and to the rapid decline of the birth rate. A large number of **kodokushi** involved the elderly, or people living alone who were receiving welfare or had few financial resources. The Japanese value of enduring without complaint – or **gaman** – means that people do not seek help from neighbours and authorities; they risk “slipping through the cracks” between governmental and familial support.
No one had noticed his absence as rent and utilities had been withdrawn automatically from his bank account. His skeleton was only discovered when the authorities came to the apartment and found his skeleton next to the kitchen, only meters from the next-door neighbours. “4,000 lonely deaths a week,” estimated the cover of a popular weekly magazine in 2017. “Single-minded focus on economic growth, followed by painful economic stagnation over the past generation, had frayed families and communities, leaving them trapped in a demographic crucible of increasing age and declining births. The extreme isolation of elderly Japanese is so common that an entire industry has emerged around it, specializing in cleaning out apartments... 'The way we die is a mirror of the way we live,’ says Takumi Nakazawa, 83.”
In part a response to Japan’s booming tourism sector, but also to an increasing number of transient, temporary and immigrant workers in Japan, many former nuclear family LDK units are being converted into new kinds of ‘closet’ hotels. One enters a code to gain access without ever encountering a worker or caretaker. Only the most basic sleeping facilities, kitchenette with microwave, washing and shower facilities are provided. Private ‘rooms’ are, in fact, a kind of glorified bunk bed with faux wood panelling to enclose each bunk, which are also accessed via opposite sides so to provide a sliver of individual space next to them for access and luggage. Here, the house becomes the bed.
With a frontage of 2.7 metres and a depth of 11.7 metres, the Music Guesthouse Ikuha is a renovation of a machiya or city shop house. Most of the walls and floors were cleared out of the space on the upper second and third levels to release the pressure of the narrowness and lighten the space. This meant that a series of bracing structures had to be added to the space and one must duck in order to move around it. The renovation uses raw building materials such as ply and particle board to create rows of tiny sleeping rooms with 40mm-thick walls that are the size of a bed, with all other facilities shared. The ground floor has a tiny café, bar and kitchen.
Increasingly common in Japan’s dense areas and predominantly in Tokyo in the past five to ten years are ‘closet’-like apartments of 10 square metres or less that include basic ‘living’ amenities such as a bed, kitchenette and tiny bathroom. Micro-apartments are so compact that they must be incredibly precise in their use of space. Companies are now adjusting designs by the millimetre and are obtaining patents for their configurations. These apartments have become popular targets of journalists, and in the majority of the interviews the inhabitants are students and/or part-time service job labourers who also use the apartment as a work and office space to pursue their own creative ambitions. The hyper-compactness of these units means that floorplans seem guided by a hyper-rationality that has no social ideal whatsoever, but is concerned with a tight provision of functions and otherwise undefined individual space.
Twenty-five-year-old Sotaro Ito lives in a 9.46-square-metre apartment with a loft in the capital's retro-hip Koenji district. His apartment looks... like an office cubicle, with a desk and computer chair dominating a third of the room. A reading pillow is propped up against one of the walls, but there isn't enough space for him to stretch out his body. A clothesline rope stretches between two wall sconces for him to dry his laundry, and his kitchen is equipped with a small sink and a single induction cooktop... The ceiling of the apartment is 3.6 metres high and three windows have been built into the exterior wall, letting in plenty of light. A white ladder takes Ito up to a 4.5-square-meter loft that's 1.4 meters high – tall enough for him to sit upright. Ito's crib has separate rooms for a shower and high-tech bidet toilet.
Micro apartments often have around three jo of studio room floor space, which works out as 4.64 square metres. Of the 1,200 rooms offered by one company, called Ququri, which occupy a diverse range of buildings around Tokyo, almost all are rented. They have become increasingly popular with people in their 20s and 30s – and 40 percent of Ququri residents are women. The micro-apartments are apparently desired for their centrality and access to “entertainment and cultural events… [and] also major rail hubs, making for short, easy commutes to offices and schools in the city (Spilytus estimates about 60 percent of residents are office workers, and another 30 percent students).” Rent in a Ququri can be around £400 a month, which is very low for Tokyo.
“We’ve been adjusting our design by the millimetre… the devil is in the details, Kimoto says. Japanese building regulations stipulate that the maximum height of the ceiling for structures of this size must be no more than 30 times the width of the pillars supporting the structure. In order to secure a ceiling that is 3.6 meters high, the company uses 12-centimeter-square columns that are 15 percent thicker compared to those used in typical wooden apartment buildings. ‘That allows us to build spacious lofts that essentially function as an extra room,’ she says. The company has constantly been tweaking the interior on its properties. For example, it changed the colour of the floor panels of the apartment rooms from brown to white to create a brighter atmosphere. Coupled with the large windows and high ceilings, this adds a sense of openness despite the pocket-sized floor space, Kimoto says.”
In the wake of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, the homeless found themselves on the floors of shelters, sharing one giant room with strangers — in this case the junior high school gymnasium in Rikuzentakata. Though tolerable for short periods of time, the lack of privacy or separation quickly becomes a source of tension. Shigeru Ban designed an emergency paper partition system that uses cardboard tubes and curtains. “The modular system allows for fast and easy assembly and disassembly and can be made different dimensions for different sized families depending on where the cloth is hung. 1,800 individual units of PPS paper partition system were assembled in 50 provisional shelters for evacuees affected by the disaster.”
Since 2007, apartment buildings and nLDK types are increasingly being converted into shared houses and more recently into 'social apartments' in Japan. Some of the first known modern 'shared houses' in Japan were established by single mothers with children in the mid-1990s after the crash so they could share costs, labour and support, and escape loneliness. Social apartment Miyamadeira includes over 80 private rental apartment rooms of 12.5 square meters. One giant kitchen and 'lounge', library and work area, and game room are shared on the second floor. The ground floor of the building is occupied by shops and restaurants.
The social apartment concept at Musashi Makahara was conceived of by developers as a slightly more private option when compared to a shared house; many of the rooms offer a small kitchenette in addition to a communal kitchen. In addition to shared toilets, there are showers and laundry per floor. The first or ground floor has a giant lounge, a bar, a kitchen, a work room and a library, and rooms called ‘studios’ – available for a range of ‘whatever’ uses.
The management lists the reasons one would join Manahouse: “For mothers: you can eliminate loneliness and anxiety. There is a sense of security in that someone will always be there even in the event of a disaster or earthquake. Have collective weekday meals. There is always someone ‘watching’. Discuss child-rearing with each other and with advisers who will visit.

For children: At no time will you need to be alone (elimination of loneliness and loneliness). You can be like a sibling to a giant family. Get to know and have relationships with many adults. Be loved by the caretaker and other moms.”
The Sutairo Uizu Daikanyama is a single-mothers-only shared house located in a renovated 1960s corporate employee dormitory. Many shared houses are located in renovated 1960s or 70s danchi apartment buildings, large family houses and small apartment buildings. The building is concrete, with a post and slab construction, and has a utilitarian, industrial appearance; it was clearly built at as low a cost as possible in a left-over triangular site at the edge of the rail line. Each of the three floors has six ‘bedrooms’ which share a kitchenette, laundry facilities, a bath, showers, toilets and washing facilities. On the ground floor, there is a large kitchen area that seems able to accommodate 10 mothers cooking, cleaning and preparing meals at the same time. A marketing website for the house even suggests that children could sometimes join in the work.
Sentō (public bathhouses) and onsen (natural thermal water bathhouses) have ‘mutated’ into what are called supa sentō (super public bathhouse); these now cater to inexpensive overnight stays and offer everything one would need to permanently live there. In the Ryōkoku Yuya Edoyu, there are both common rooms with desks littered with power and USB outlets, smaller glass rooms with tables and desks for working, and a large rolling landscape of spaces without furniture but with cushions and bean bags that can be used for working, eating or sleeping. A giant sleeping area for 30–100 people is simply defined by a rectangular arrangement of tatami mats. Ryōkoku Yuya Edoyu was renovated from a more traditional sentō with a nostalgic wood façade to a supa sentō with perforated, backlit metal façade in 2018.
At tenka taihei, one first stores one’s shoes in a tiny locker. The main axis of the building, organised along a long central corridor, splits into a male and a female area where all clothes and belongings are removed and one puts on a yukata (robe). One then bathes seated, ‘Japanese style’, and can then enter a series of indoor or outdoor hot and cold baths, saunas and therapeutic areas. After bathing, one may choose to take one’s children to a collective play area (or in some cases leave them in nurseries); eat in a range of different dining options, and cafés with giant collective eating areas; or sleep in both tatami rooms for small groups of four to ten people, in areas for up to 60 people on rectangular tatami mats, or in excessively cushioned reclining chairs laid out in expansive grids.
The first capsule hotel, Capsule Inn Osaka, built in 1979; it was designed by Kisho Kurokawa and based on his Nakagin Capsule Tower. Originally, the capsule hotel was conceived of for commuting 'salarymen' to have a place to sleep after working late or after obligatory drinking with colleagues. Since then, the capsule hotel has also become one of the cheapest options for temporary and transient workers, for growing numbers of tourists, and for increasing numbers of people who prefer not to enter the obligations of the rental or property (and often job) market. Shoes are deposited in lockers before entry, and clothing and possessions are left in an interior locker before one accesses the individual 'capsule' stacked shelf-like in long corridors. Capsule hotels increasingly include work areas, large dining rooms, cafés, food preparation areas and communal baths.
Since quitting one’s job is shameful and suicide can burden a family in Japan, many fed-up workers simply opt to disappear. Jouhatsu is a term that refers to people who intentionally vanish from their established lives without a trace, often paying companies, called yonige-ya or ‘fly-by-night shops’ to erase them. Apparently, many jouhatsu end up in what was once referred to as Sanya, an area still controlled by Yakuza (the Japanese mafia), where one can cheaply rent a room, work and live anonymously without ID and be paid in cash. The Luma Inariya, an inn that had, as of 2018, been converted into a collective house, has been so swallowed by vegetation that it is almost unrecognisable as a building. Residents have small workshops in their rooms, and one of the rooms had been converted to a gym (noted in a visit of 2018).
During the Edo period, Sanya was home to itinerant workers who rented Sanya's cheap kichinyado lodges. Following the war, Sanya was largely a city of American military tents for people left homeless by the American bombings. The tents were eventually replaced by cheap hostels and by 1963 around 15,000 day labourers lived in 220 hostels. In the late 1960s, the government expunged the name Sanya from official records in an attempt to erase its association with poverty, alcoholism, violence and the hiyatoi rodosha – day labourers. The ‘village’ surrounding Tamahime park is where johatsu (workers who disappear from their normal lives) live in small, often well-organised wood and tarpaulin structures. ‘I’ve come here to drink, chat and enjoy the weather – sunlight is free after all,’ says Katchan, a day labourer who moved to Sanya 16 years ago. ‘I only get very occasional work, but I’ve stayed here because this is where my friends are.’
Net cafés offer both private, fully enclosed cabins – in which if one can lie flat if they are not too tall – and cubicle-style compartments whose walls often do not run to the ceiling, and which can provide amply padded reclining chairs. All of the stalls (typically) have large-screen computers with television. They also often have manga libraries, an area with free drinks, snacks and soup, and showers and laundry. Net cafés have become full-service, pay-by-the-hour hotels, places for couples to escape cultural customs and ‘traditions’, and for young people to have sex away from the family and customary expectations that scrutinise and put dating partners through a gauntlet of cultural expectations and qualifications.

‘COMIC BUSTER’ NET CAFE
060-0061 Hokkaido, Sapporo, Chuo Ward, Minami 1 Jōnishi, 4-chōme–13-1
2017
The net café is now a kind of housing for increasing numbers of what are referred to as net café refugees. These refugees are not only composed of the ‘homeless’ and jobless, and of part-time workers who cannot afford ‘key money’ (sometimes up to six months’ deposit) for apartments. Many, it seems, choose net cafés because they do not want to work typical jobs or live a typical Japanese lifestyle. The Kaikatsu club offers a membership card which can be used at other branches and with which one can check in by the hour or for longer periods to gain access to a work space, showers, laundry, food preparation area, manga, internet, etc.; it has private, fully enclosed, padded stalls of 80cm x 180cm, complete with pillows for sleeping. Young professionals avoiding a commute, couples there to have sex and foreign tourists made up the clientele when we stayed at Kaikatsu Club.
Akiya means empty house. In 2013, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication wrote that eight million out of Japan’s 60 million houses were ‘akinya’. With death rates outpacing birth rates, and with young people moving to urban centres, more and more houses are being left vacant. A programme of bank lending and policies was begun to encourage people to move to communities and refurbish abandoned houses. In the case of this house, originally built in the 1960s, a family of three moved from Okinawa and refurbished a house with a 3LDK configuration into a less clearly segmented space. The type seems to dissolve or fragment in the example.
The hostel is part of a working temple, originally built around 1182 and rebuilt around 1615. It was not uncommon for temples to offer accommodation called shukubō to pilgrims and to travellers as early as the 8th century. The tenshoji hostel is now part of the youth hostel international network and is frequented by Japanese and foreign travellers alike. A monk assigns five people to tatami rooms. There is a shared dining room, a large chanoma (communal room with hearth), and shared bath and laundry rooms.
With the rise of industrialisation in Japan, farming and ways of life that saw most time spent outdoors doing physical labour increasingly shifted to repetitive, indoor work, and to service or clerical work. By the 1910s and 20s, middle or wealthier classes were adopting and adapting leisure activities, many from the West, to connect with the ‘outdoors’ and stay physically healthy. An avid hiker and mountaineer, Shigetaro Imada set up a corps to develop trails and build a mountain hut at Hotakadake. As noted on a visit in 2018, one sleeps here with about 12 others to a ‘stall’-type bed. One eats at tables with 12–20 others and can use a series of shared rooms, including a library and lounge.
It is normal to see office and service workers sleeping in a range of different places, including coffee shops, trains and subways, both on the morning and evening commutes, and in the middle of the day. Inemuri, as it is referred to, is a result of long commute times, high performance expectations and long hours at work. Japan is the country with the lowest average amount of sleep and the infamous epidemic of karoshi, or death from overwork. Recently, companies have begun to install beds or bed-like chairs into designated rooms in the office and promote 'hirune' as a nap during the day. When faced with deadlines and other pressures, though, workers will simply sleep overnight in the office.
With office hours of on average 60 hours per week, and with commute times often reaching one to two hours, the time spent at home for many urban Japanese workers is often not sufficient to recover for the next day. This phenomenon emerged in the post-war period. Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, on the back of a national policy making the economy number one, encouraged companies to build a culture of, and reward, long hours at work. In Japan, there is a related pandemic of suicides and karoshi, or death from overwork. It is common to see people in business suits sleeping on the streets, and especially in subway and train cars – where if there is room, some even lay out a kind of temporary bedroom-like space. Some undress, use their jacket as a blanket, and bag or briefcase as a pillow.
A 30-minute train ride from central Tokyo in a dense area of Chiba, Funabashi shared house accommodates up to 45 residents. Rooms of about 14 square metres are rented privately, while kitchens, showers, washing areas, study rooms, a library, and lounge, laundry and rooftop are shared. The shared house was renovated and split into nearly equiscalar spaces in 2014 from an apartment building with 1-3LDK types built in the 1960s. What we find with shared houses is that they often literally appropriated older buildings that were built for something else, and therefore have ‘non-compositional’ exteriors. As we have seen, on the interior, they carry out a kind of subdivision that tends towards the non-compositional, and even bear resemblance (prophetically) to works such as the 1970s E Projects by Hiromi Fujii, in which he sought to erase himself from the project through a method of subdivision of the plan that unfolded in a hyper-rational sequence obeying a one-metre grid.
Following Japan’s economic crash, in 1994, 20 people formed a collective and moved to a rural agricultural area around Mt Fuji. They now number over 100 (and growing) and range from new-borns to those over 90 years of age. The group occupies a series of collective houses, shops, warehouses that they bought with pooled money. They borrow fields left unused by elderly farmers to produce everything they need to consume. In one of their large collective houses (above), the group has meetings led by the children, to organise their labour, decide on what they produce and how, and how they live. In this same building, many of the children live with other children and parental figures of the community rather than blood parents, who live at least two to each room, in neighbouring collective houses. Others in the community opt to live in more ‘typical’ forms.
Konohana famiri use fallow agricultural fields surrounding their collective houses to set up tatami mats and canopies, temporary kitchens, tents and outdoor baths to play, meet, cook and sleep for two to three days at a time. The field becomes a paradigmatic space for Konohana — whose form of life together is apparently always a matter of collective negotiation and development. This kind of open space is analogous to their large dining hall, where kitchen, lunch and dinner are eaten collectively every day at long tables where children, elderly people and those who chose to work there instead of farming (even if for a few days) manage cooking and cleaning together. The space also serves as a flexible hall where daily meetings are initiated by children to discuss stories of the day and to discuss suggestions for changes to the way that work and living are organised. Topic range from mundane small adjustments to major overhauls of how the time schedules, roles and labour are organised.