The opening ceremony, the lighting of the torch, the Olympic Village, a national stadium, silver, gold and bronze—these are fundamental aspects of the modern Olympiad. Although presented by host cities as a novel, ephemeral experience that prompts spectators to travel across the globe, the Olympic Games are, at their core, a technical reproduction. However, inherent in reproduction is distance from the original. A space is thereby created for each host city to produce new meaning despite the façade of a familiar Olympic tradition. This derivation is a result of the "Olympic effect."

The Olympic effect is a series of architectural interventions envisioned to alter the reputation and structure of the host city. The following publication features the games as a platform for highly curated, intentional images that reflect heavily on the host nation and their national identity. This book explores debates on success and failure, constantly asking: To what extent has a guiding vision been realized? And, how do we evaluate Olympic "success"? Key terms linked to QR codes—legacy, urban boosterism, utopian idealism, and failure—allow the reader to transcend time and see the 1992–2020 Olympic games through a lens of common critique.

In essence: has the Olympic effect and its accompanying quest for nation building rendered the original values of Olympism—such as social inclusion, harmonious development, and an ethos of friendship and fair play—irrelevant?
Inspired by the success of its International Exposition in 1929, Barcelona yearned for another opportunity to showcase itself to the world. When Barcelona won the bid to host the 1992 Summer Olympics, a citywide makeover commenced. A collection of international and local architects gathered together to realize the city’s potential. Along the coastline, Port Olímpic slowly became the center for leisure and one of the most picturesque settings for the Olympics. The Hotel Arts and Torre Mapfre stand as the impressive and modern structures that tower over the waterfront and occupy the Barcelona skyline, while Frank Gehry’s Peix glitters under the sun. Port Olímpic becomes the backdrop of Barcelona’s Olympics: a vision of modernity and sophistication.
Architecture has always played an important part in Barcelona’s identity; accordingly, the city used its Olympic architecture as a way of projecting its vibrancy to the world.

Structurally, the most drastic change was the reorganization of the city’s urban planning. The infrastructure of the city was streamlined to make everything more efficient and usable. The city did not just need to look contemporary and beautiful, but it also had to function in a way that was conducive to the activities of the Olympics.

Aesthetically, the most drastic change to the face of the city was the actual creation of the waterfront. From a waterfront crowded by industrial buildings, the city created two miles of beachfront and constructed a new marina. The combination of the new and old architecture of the city lends to its eclectic personality and appearance.
The creation of Port Olímpic was pivotal in Barcelona’s Olympic makeover. This recreational site supplemented Barcelona’s new beachfront and through the two skyscrapers, represented how the city utilized architectural design to showcase its burgeoning prowess in modern technology.

The Hotel Arts was designed by Colombian-American architect, Bruce Graham (of Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill) who was famous for creating some of the world’s tallest skyscrapers. Influenced by the design philosophy of structural art, the hotel exhibits a skeletal, yet streamlined design. The exterior façade of metal girders employs functional durability and also serves as a design feature.

Torre Mapfre, designed by Iñigo Ortiz de Tortosa and Enrique Leon Garcia, was complete in 1992 and at its time, was the second tallest building in Spain. The design of Mapfre tower, with its mirror-like façade, also complements the reflective surfaces of the water and El Peix.
Located at the foot of the Hotel Arts, El Peix is a gold stainless steel structure that sits at almost one hundred and eighty feet wide and one hundred and fifteen feet tall. This huge golden fish sculpture was designed by Frank Gehry, an architect famous for a number of buildings cited under contemporary architecture. The design of El Peix necessitated a sophisticated approach in its construction as it was modeled entirely through 3D computer software, “CATIA” (computer aided three-dimensional interactive application).

From certain perspectives, against the blue sky, El Peix looks like it’s swimming, and from an areal view, El Peix looks ready to jump into the Mediterranean sea. This factor is exceptionally significant because it highlights one of Barcelona’s greatest Olympic projects, the beachfront. Indeed, despite the number of new buildings during this time of Barcelona’s urban renaissance, El Peix is the one that emerges as a representation of the 1992 Olympics.
Barcelona is the inspiration for any city holding an Olympic Games after what happened in 1992.”

— MAITE FANDOS,
Deputy Mayor for Quality of Life, Equality and Sports
ASSESSING ATHENS 2004 THROUGH AIRPORTS

The 2004 Olympics was the finale that held the 'promise' of a new Greece. Athens believed that preparing for the Games would prepare them for a modern world. As the appraisals began, the fulfillment of promise became the primary criteria. The representation of the airports exemplifies a post-Olympic confusion and division as to Athens' legacy. Some point to international impact and spectacle, and others to ruin. In these extremes, the questions for which and whose future are more productive than asking 'success or failure?' Ultimately, 2004 displaces the unstable, myopic belief that Olympic interventions could ever be urbanism. Athens 2004 was still an accomplishment, but the idea of a successful urban legacy is as much a dramatic fiction as the impression of Athens as an absolute failure.
The two sides of pride and disappointment are exemplified in the two airports. The new Eleftherios Venizelos is the 27th most used airport in Europe. Meanwhile, the old Athens airport houses more than 2,000 refugees. Athens added 190 km of roads, an entirely new tram system, additions to the subway system and a new airport.¹ However, whether this amounts to a successful urban legacy is a different consideration. In fact, the transportation points to the myopia of the Olympic plan. As is noted by some critics,² entire neighborhoods were displaced or ignored in the planning. The ability for the expansions to serve the local population later was, at best, an afterthought. There was also no attempt to create the governmental bodies necessary to maintain the new improvements. Athens’ lack of infrastructure was not just material but also bureaucratic.³ Vissilis Harissis, Director of the Organization for Athens, said as Athens originally sought the bid, “Getting the Olympics is the best chance we’ll ever have to save Athens.”⁴

Obviously and ultimately, Olympic success becomes conflated with urban success and renewal. Accordingly, this infrastructure and the discourse surrounding its implementation offer a lens through which to discuss the if and how Athens went wrong.

---

² Planner, Ntina Vaiou wrote, “the official discussion and designs are happenings without the input of those who live and work in the broader region.” See Traganou, Designing the Olympics, (New York: Rutledge, 2016): p. 143.
³ Athens was never forced to develop its own government structures to maintain the transportation expansion. Eva Kassens-Noor wrote, “For Greece, even an event like the Olympics was not enough to change how we do things.” See Planning Olympic Legacies, (Milton Park and New York: Rutledge, 2012): p. 76.
This is strongly evident in the rhetoric of the airports, in which the need for a big, new international airport triumphed over the existing one, Ellinikon Airport. Rather than expand or renovate the existing one, the old airport became a crude and last minute site for fields and stadiums. Beyond the Olympics, there was no afterlife. In the media and official texts, words like promise and future dominate. Addition and scaling up become the operation of Athens. The tense as well as the vocabulary underscore this future-focused attitude. The grammatical construct of the future anterior becomes particularly dominant. It is not an indefinite future but one tied to a specific reference point: 2004. It is not ‘Athens will be this.’ It is more often ‘By 2004, Athens will have been catapulted onto the international stage.’

Promise is short term because it infers imminent fulfillment. Discourse around Athens curiously obsesses over this future, even after the Olympics have passed. In the years after 2004, there is a shift into what Athens could have been, or even what it still could be. This future-in-the-past focuses still on promise, even if it is a failed one. The vision of a ‘new Greece’ remains. In this interest there is a hope that the Olympics still had the potential to save Athens. Even if Athens accepts the insufficiency of its planning, that planning still is believed to hold such redemptive power. There is even an almost retroactive attempt to re-brand Athens. People still ask, ‘Will Athens be left in a better place?’ Athens planned for a short future, and yet still gave those Olympic plans their hopes for a long term future.

Satellite Human

Athens struggles not just for when these interventions should be planned but also for whom. There is a fundamental preoccupation with the international and the spectacle. Yannis Pyrgiotis, an Executive Director of the Organizing Committee wrote that the Olympics offered a chance to define a “new face for Greece, outward looking and ready to take up the challenges of globalisation [sic].” The impact of the interventions weighs most heavily not on the nation or the world but on the local populations, when the world has moved on. This is an important distinction for all Olympics. The event has been scaled from the city to the world.

Aerial images and renderings focus on the spectacle and the scale of transportation improvements in a way that allows them to gloss over their suitability. There was no long-term plan for Ellinikon. There is a general disinterest in the local issues. How a massive modern ruin affects the local area is a secondary concern. Official documents show impressive shots of the airports. From a distance, Ellinikon looks populated, planned and beautiful. From the closer, human perspective, one sees what has actually been left behind. Nearly 2,000 Afghan refugees camped on unused baseball fields, swam in old kayak courses and played on forgotten airport equipment. The difference in the types of images used to frame Athens as a success exemplify the weight the international opinion carried. The images show “the rule of gigantisation [sic],” “a gigantic scum,” and how much of Athens’ urbanism is not truly for its urban inhabitants.

7 Quoted in Gold, Olympic Cities, p. 267
8 “Despite the fact that they are awarded to cities rather than to nations, the Olympics function as arenas that celebrate national character. See Traganou, “National and Post-National Dynamics.”
10 Nikos Koundourou wrote, “Whatever happens around us is not ours. The forged Olympic Games are not ours either,” in an article titled “A gigantic scum.” See Eleftherotypia (7 August 2004).
The future of Athens is perhaps best explained with a term proposed by Penelope Dean—deadline urbanism. Together the images and the text create a certain voice that convey waves of promise, concern, and finally renewed optimism. In both the images of the Hellinikon Project, a new urban intervention planned to revitalize the area, there is a continued desire to return to the rhetoric of forecast hope and international spectacle. Images are bright, and the tag line for the project reads, “A glorious past, a promising future.”

Even in these new beginnings, the ruin of the airport remains. There is an almost retroactive attempt to re-brand Athens. Athens displays a particular tendency to want to incorporate and “glorify” the past, even as it reveals its problems. In Athens, the failure of recognizing the proper scale of impact perhaps still led to a successful Olympics. However, in the pursuit of impact, ideal, and representation, actual urbanism—interventions that answered urban questions—was left unresolved.

The future of Athens is perhaps best explained with a term proposed by Penelope Dean—deadline urbanism. Together the images and the text create a certain voice that convey waves of promise, concern, and finally renewed optimism. In both the images of the Hellinikon Project, a new urban intervention planned to revitalize the area, there is a continued desire to return to the rhetoric of forecast hope and international spectacle. Images are bright, and the tag line for the project reads, “A glorious past, a promising future.”

Even in these new beginnings, the ruin of the airport remains. There is an almost retroactive attempt to re-brand Athens. Athens displays a particular tendency to want to incorporate and “glorify” the past, even as it reveals its problems. In Athens, the failure of recognizing the proper scale of impact perhaps still led to a successful Olympics. However, in the pursuit of impact, ideal, and representation, actual urbanism—interventions that answered urban questions—was left unresolved.

“Getting the Olympics is the best chance we’ll ever have to save Athens.”

—YANNIS PYRGiotIS, Director for the Organization of Athens

The future of Athens is perhaps best explained with a term proposed by Penelope Dean—deadline urbanism. Together the images and the text create a certain voice that convey waves of promise, concern, and finally renewed optimism. In both the images of the Hellinikon Project, a new urban intervention planned to revitalize the area, there is a continued desire to return to the rhetoric of forecast hope and international spectacle. Images are bright, and the tag line for the project reads, “A glorious past, a promising future.”

Even in these new beginnings, the ruin of the airport remains. There is an almost retroactive attempt to re-brand Athens. Athens displays a particular tendency to want to incorporate and “glorify” the past, even as it reveals its problems. In Athens, the failure of recognizing the proper scale of impact perhaps still led to a successful Olympics. However, in the pursuit of impact, ideal, and representation, actual urbanism—interventions that answered urban questions—was left unresolved.

“Getting the Olympics is the best chance we’ll ever have to save Athens.”

—YANNIS PYRGiotIS, Director for the Organization of Athens

The future of Athens is perhaps best explained with a term proposed by Penelope Dean—deadline urbanism. Together the images and the text create a certain voice that convey waves of promise, concern, and finally renewed optimism. In both the images of the Hellinikon Project, a new urban intervention planned to revitalize the area, there is a continued desire to return to the rhetoric of forecast hope and international spectacle. Images are bright, and the tag line for the project reads, “A glorious past, a promising future.”

Even in these new beginnings, the ruin of the airport remains. There is an almost retroactive attempt to re-brand Athens. Athens displays a particular tendency to want to incorporate and “glorify” the past, even as it reveals its problems. In Athens, the failure of recognizing the proper scale of impact perhaps still led to a successful Olympics. However, in the pursuit of impact, ideal, and representation, actual urbanism—interventions that answered urban questions—was left unresolved.

The 2004 Athens Olympic Games was intended to be an occasion of revival for the ancient city. Selected to architect this urban renewal was starchitect Santiago Calatrava. Yet with positive intent, the Olympic complex propagated an all too familiar architectural typology, accompanied by the public reception Calatrava made his name on.
In 1996 Athens submitted a bid to The International Olympics Committee for what they saw as their right: hosting the centennial Olympics. Denied the privilege in favor of Atlanta, Athens went back to the drawing board, re-submitting their bid for 2004 and winning. After selection, Athens formed The Athens 2004 Organizing Committee (ATHOC), of which Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, a prior member for Greek parliament was president. It was under her direction that urban renovation and renewal would be designed and carried out in the name of the 2004 Olympic Games (Pollalis 6). As Harvard GSD Professor Spiro Pollalis notes in his survey of the project, Angelopoulos-Daskalaki envisioned the Olympic Games as an opportunity for Greece to be repositioned on the international stage as more than an antiquated relic:

“The success of the Olympic Games, the most high-profile and costly undertaking in Greece’s recent history, would give the country a boost of confidence that will show the world the transformation of a small, developing country into a modern, dynamic European state”

— Spiros Pollalis, GSD

Images of the opening ceremony recall Athens’ Hellenic roots, contrasting the Olympic Committee’s vision of a “new” Athens. Images courtesy of (Top) McCauley Sound (Bottom) Canadian Olympic Committee

Calatrava comments on his work for the 2004 Athens Olympic Complex saying, “The return of the Olympic Games to their country of origin provides an opportunity for renewal… many people today have lost touch with [the origins of the Olympics]… that encounter has been crucial to me in the work I have been allowed to contribute.” The complex, though receiving significant criticism with respect to surpassing the budget by three time and being completed just hours before the opening ceremony, received decent reception with respect to the design.

In his comments, Calatrava echoes the sentiments of the ATHOC, that the complex is an opportunity for the face of Greece to be reframed in a new age, its architecture breaking free from the shadow of the Parthenon. But, the question is whether the origins of the renewal were in the design itself or in the name of the designer. Supposedly inspired by Byzantine architecture, the sweeping curves and vault like quality of the structures recalls the country’s past. Is this the influence that Calatrava speaks of when he references the origins of the Olympics? And, is his appropriation of the style, to further his obvious (personal) aesthetic agenda, enough for him to sleep at night. Greece got a chance to sit at the cool kids table, and Calatrava got to add another sculptural, white structure to his black book, but did any of it result in “renewal” that both the designer and client purported?


(Opposite) Views of Olympic complex highlight the structures’ overpowering presence in the Athens skyline.
Images courtesy of Calatrava Associates
The colossal cost and extravagant design of the Sypros Louis Stadium slowed down construction and failed to live up to promises made by the Athens Olympic committee. Despite a flashy agenda, the technical difficulties of the games’ icon did not get past the critics. Writers from major publication sites like CNN, NBC, and The Telegraph spoke to the nightmares of funding the project, and seemed largely unimpressed by the city’s large-scale effort to accommodate the new stadium with transport and green tech.¹ One writer for The Telegraph opened his article: “The Athens Olympics were supposed to be the moment when the Greeks proved once and for all that they were an efficient European country,” yet still reported on the shortcomings of the endeavor.


Images courtesy of The Guardian
THE AFTERMATH

THE GAMES IN RUIN

Though the vast amount of criticism of the 2004 Athens Olympic Park nears the comical, the stakes are higher than the result of two big egos getting together for drinks. The remains of the construction project have now fallen to remains, dilapidating a city that was already in crisis. Thirteen years later, public reception has turned sour on an international scale as the Olympic Stadium and surrounding park have fallen subject to abandonment and ruin, among a years long Greek economic crisis. Though initially seen as an opportunity to revive the city’s Hellenic ideals and reposition Athens as a powerhouse on the international stage, the architecture of Calatrava’s Athens Olympic Park was the distinct result of two complementary objectives, and egos, of designer and client. With little attention to the actual user, the city of Athens, the complex fell subject to evergreen coverage of the project’s failure—now marked by the international press as an example of a failed Olympics.

Images courtesy of Crater News Agency
The permanence of the Olympic venues in the 2004 Summer Olympic Games directly contrast with the temporal nature of the Games. The Athenian planners did not create a long-term plan that provided a sustainable life for the venues. In failing to do so, they doomed those venues that were at one point monumental and filled with spectators to a life of empty solitude. Many of these stadiums and fields deteriorated over time due to high maintenance costs and a lack of investment. Therefore, this urban planning mishap led to the underwhelming legacy of the 2004 Games.
The bird's nest during the Olympic opening ceremony, crowned with stunning C.G.I. fireworks.

Image courtesy of wallpapersite
Although Greece succeeded in revitalizing certain areas at the time of the Games, those locations fell back into a depression once the tourism and the Games had left. The purpose of the conventional land use plan had no strategic development perspective in that it did not formulate a coherent policy response that would allow the Olympic projects to meet the city’s growing needs, or to influence the dynamics of urban change in Athens.

“Nobody was thinking what would happen the next day”

—Spyros Capralos, Former Olympic Athlete
“We simply made the biggest mistake in our history: we switched off, locked up the stadiums, let them fall to pieces, and everything finished there.”

—Pyrros Dimas

The baseball field before and after the 2004 Summer Olympic Games located in the Hellinikon Olympic Complex
Images courtesy of (Opposite) Clive Mason/Getty Images
(Above) Milos Bicanski/Getty Images

DURING & AFTER
“More than any other two-week period, the Olympic Games result in choices, plans and project that can affect a city for generations-for the better and, more often, for the worse.”

—NATE BERG, Journalist on Architecture and Urban Planning

“For such a small country, there was a lot of unnecessary extravagance”

—DIMITRIS EVANGELOPOULOS, Greece’s National Track and Field Coach

“I used to think the Olympic Games were worth it. Now I don’t”

—STELIOS DIMOTSIOS, Former Greek Sprinter

PERMANENCE

At the start of the Games, Athens saw a new and renovated urban underground system capable of carrying 100,000 passengers a day (around 20 percent of the population); 90km of new roads were built with a new computerized traffic management systems installed, as well as the construction of a new airport. There were many preservation projects to help highlight the unique quality of Athens hosting of the Olympics. The Acropolis was made accessible through the installation of a wheelchair stair-climber and lift. New lighting was installed ahead of the Games; Athens Archaeological Park was created; and the Panathinaiko Stadium was upgraded. Only venues that are relevant to the Greek culture were renovated into other permanent stadiums. Although the government is striving to keep stadiums alive, many stadiums are simply not practical to put money and time into based on their location, structure, and relevance to society.
Some believe there was no plan for the venues to be used after the Olympics, leading to the lack of opportunities for reuse. Greece lost a lot of money—for such a small country there was a great deal of unnecessary extravagance. Too much money was put into entertainment rather than using it to emphasize the already existing unique qualities of Greece. The layout of the stadiums were originally supposed to be placed on poles. The north end by the airport and the south end by the waterfront. Although the waterfront was redeveloped, the planning committee failed to carry out their strategic axial plan, which resulted in scattered stadiums that did not fit into their respective neighborhoods and are now difficult to integrate. Greece now faces extreme economic depression that originally the Games had intended to avoid. Although transportation, environmental aspects, and cultural preservation saw positive outcomes, urban regeneration and the years following did not meet the projected expectations.

“...There was no plan the day after... Olympic projects were left in limbo like the fossils of white elephants, decaying”

—KATHIMERINI 2008
By organizing the Olympic Games, Greece has taken on a considerable challenge, forming part of the still greater aim of boosting the modernization of the country, in particular of its capital. The major projects completed have not only improved the accessibility to major functions, they also created a large amount of infrastructure for the years to come, considerably improving city transport and enhancing cultural assets. Projects included: building, extending and improving the metro system, a tramway that opens the city out towards the sea, a motorway and slip roads to facilitate access to the international airport, and a network of footpaths to link archaeological sites.
If the choice of Athens for the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 was a symbolic recognition of the contribution made by Hellenism to Western culture, entrusting it with the 2004 Summer Olympic Games was a big challenge to contribute to this new century, this new era, this newly emerging Europe. It is the gamble of modern Hellenism in the face of our history, our tradition and our heritage. It was also an attempt to establish a bridge between Greece’s past and future.

Faced with the great challenge of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games, Greece gave the best of itself so that millions of visitors could enjoy the city of Athens, which henceforth bears the stamp of Europe. The city of Athens made every attempt to show the modern and dynamic face that Greece presented during the Games.
NEA ANCHIALOS NATIONAL AIRPORT

“The bridge between Greek past and future.”

—CHRISTOS FOLIAS

“The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well.”

—Pierre de Coubertin, Father of the modern Olympic Games

Images courtesy of http://palyarch.com
“A glorious past, a promising future.”

—THE HELLENIKON PROJECT

Regular visitors to Athens are amazed by the improvement in the quality of life and of the air, brought about by the modernization of the city’s public transport.

The Transport Services for the Olympic and Paralympic Games were based on a modern road network covering the broader Attica Region. Attiki Odos: 70 kilometres of modern motorway with 32 intersections. The motorway forms the main peripheral road connecting different areas of the greater Attica Region as well as with the new “Eleftherios Venizelos” International Airport, thus decongesting local, inter-municipal roads and the city’s center. It is the main connecting route between the two National Roads, the Athens–Patra and the Athens–Thessaloniki National Roads to the south and to the north of Greece respectively. The Attiki Odos motorway was extended to the entry of Markopoulo, thus facilitating the access to the equestrian and shooting competition venues.
The Beijing National Stadium, also called Bird’s Nest, was the architectural centerpiece of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. Chinese dissident and artist Ai Weiwei was the building’s artistic consultant, but later disowned the building due to its use as Communist Party propaganda. The building was deliberately and artificially framed to promote a positive image, but Ai’s attempt to distance himself from his work is just as impossible as China’s attempt to fake clean air and full stadiums. The vision inevitably must crash down. The Bird’s Nest stands at the crossroads of artificial utopia and harsh reality, and there it will remain.
The Bird’s Nest was a Herzog & de Meuron project, but its best-known contributor is its estranged artistic consultant Ai Weiwei. This is much to the contemporary artist’s chagrin, as he has done his best to avoid and disown the work.

Ai Weiwei is best known for social and political commentary, and he is vehemently anti-communist. As the Bird’s Nest went up, perhaps just then he began to realize that his involvement made him part of the propaganda machine he has avidly tried to fight throughout his career. It helped to promote the government’s perfectly-crafted image in the summer of 2008, the year of the Beijing Olympics.

The aestheticizing of communist politics was abound in the production design of China’s immaculate public mega-performance. The little girl singing the Chinese national anthem was actually lip-synching to the more beautiful voice of a less beautiful child. China implemented a program to minimize pollution during the event, yet the relief was only visual; many Olympic athletes had trouble breathing in the thickly toxic air. The day after the Olympics ended and the industrial functions of Beijing resumed, the gray skies returned immediately. Image was prioritized over truth.

The Bird’s Nest proudly participates as an aesthetic player in the grand design to propagate China’s artificially glorious image. Its massive steel beams look impossibly light and whimsical when photographed from afar. The fantastic fireworks above the Bird’s Nest were computer-generated. Events were reported to be sold out, and the cameras all focused on packed stands. Off TV and in reality, however, the Bird’s Nest was far less wonderful. The giant stadium dwarfed its few inhabitants, making even crowds of hundreds seem isolated. The fireworks that the in-person crowd saw were much smaller and less stunning so that they could be obscured by digital
The Bird's Nest during the Olympic opening ceremony, crowned with stunning CGI fireworks. Image courtesy of WallpaperSite.
masking and replaced. Even prime seats remained unfilled during the events. Olympic organizers resorted to bringing in civilians off the streets to falsify crowding in the tightly-cropped television shots.

In an op-ed in *The Guardian*, Ai Weiwei wrote that “we live in a world where everything is politicized, but some people insist the Olympics should be different. They imply that this fortnight of sport is somehow disconnected from history and psychology, unrelated to theory and morality, and on a more elevated plane than base human nature.”

Ai dismisses others’ strategies of avoidance, neutrality, and willful ignorance, choosing to push an agenda of politicization and change. But he is ignoring his own history and psychology, theory and morality. He grounds his œuvre in political critique, and yet has played as a pawn in the very system he hopes to dismantle. Dismissal of such a dissonant situation is not the appropriate move; he should use his authorship of this work of architecture to his advantage. When art is taken out of well-meaning hands and used to promote problematic agendas, it should be acknowledged, discussed, and reclaimed.

This project is now a mark of failure for all involved; it has been disowned by Ai Weiwei and is an unfortunate hassle for China.

The Bird’s Nest costs China $11 million in yearly maintenance, and yet for most of the year it stands empty. It has been the site of many half-hearted experiments such as a winter park and a concert venue, but nothing can adequately fill the 80,000-capacity seating bowl. Not even the Olympics managed full stands, so how could anything else? Now tourists Segway along the Olympic track that Usain Bolt set two world records on.

It is inert, a hulking hollow skeleton with no purpose for the present or in the future. Now, nearly a decade after the 2008 Olympics, it is time for Ai Weiwei to reclaim the cage he built.
China’s leaders wanted to present the country’s economic growth and modernization to the international audience and used the Olympic Games as an opportunity to demonstrate their global connectivity through architecture.
The Beijing National Stadium maintains traditional 'modernity' by utilizing innovative technologies which brands the city as an open/universal superpower. Beijing’s Olympic architecture in was recognized for having conceptual architectural advancement and technological innovations in structure/construction technology, safety, and information technology. Its new technologies included a double translucent roof that helped with waterproofing, new cladding (ETFE) that insulated acoustics well and was more sustainable because it was lighter and thinner than glass, efficient seating design that allowed quick seating (it takes no more than 5 minutes to find a seat) and exiting (it takes 8 minutes for everyone to evacuate), innovations in information technology and resistance to earthquakes of up to 8 on the Richter scale. It seats up to 91,000 people and is designed to make sure everyone has an optimal view no matter the seat they have. At 254,600 sq meters, it is considered the largest enclosed space and is the world's largest steel structure with 26km of unwrapped steel used.  

Since the Olympics gain much international attention, Olympic architecture is expected to represent modernization. The stadium reached this status since it was often called “monumental” or an, “architectural icon” and is commonly depicted at night with bright lights within and surrounding the building. What aided in this perception was commissioning international architects to implement avant-garde Western design to symbolize modernization. This aesthetically pleasing perception of the stadium is part of a trend to reorient the image of Beijing from a dusty post-socialist city into an emerging global city. Ren, an assistant professor of sociology and global urban studies at Michigan State University, admits, “Signature design from international architects functions as transnational urban space that caters for the needs of the transnational.” Enlisting Herzog & de Meuron of Switzerland to produce the Beijing National Stadium speaks to China embodying a ‘global city’ because it is literally bringing in different races to work on projects. This, in turn, makes Chinese buildings approachable to the international audience because they are marked by modernity—the type that is inclusive of different ethnicities working together. The architecture of the Beijing National Stadium successfully branded the country as a powerful global city because it sold modernity through incorporating innovative design and utilizing Western architects.

The Olympic Games always have an epic, mythical quality surrounding them. The extravagant firework displays, the opening ceremonies, the awards, and the heroic reams of athletic records being broken are some of the proudest moments in human history. When the Water Cube transitioned into the realm of post-Olympic architecture, it preserved the sense of spectacle, without the integrity. For the most part, it’s become a venue with only superficial cultural value, and serves as a mode of propaganda to distract from systemic issues in China.
Leaving behind any historical roots that may have grounded it within its original Olympic context, the Water Cube was renovated and heavily rebranded into the “Happy Magic Water Cube” water park. Crowded with fantastical slides, hanging jellyfish sculptures, and extravagant light displays, the water park is a true spectacle—an anomaly within the olympic architecture canon and an aesthetic absurdity.

The 2013 art installation by artist Jennifer Wen Ma and lighting designer Zheng Jianwei entitled “Nature and Man in Rhapsody of Light,” is also spectacular, but isn’t a spectacle—it doesn’t decontextualize or commercialize cultural hype like the previous examples.

Computers analyze and interpret the emotions expressed via emoticons on Chinese social media sites (such as Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter) and correlate them with the passage for the day from the ancient text I Ching. An algorithm translates that data into a unique LED color display after dark. These nightly ‘pictures in light [are] painted’ with color, light, composition, rhythm, and movement on the sides of the building.

The piece “interprets the collective current state of mind of the nation.” It is first and foremost public art, not a ticketed spectacle, and thereby succeeds in a way that the Water Cube has never been able to fully do. Indirectly, it also interprets the state of the nation itself; its innovative use of online public forums draws attention to institutional Chinese issues like internet censorship, freedom of speech, and corruption.

Migrant workers on the 2008 Olympic Games site in 2007. The mythology of the Water Cube hasn’t been crafted yet; it’s not particularly spectacular.

Image courtesy of Piotr Malecki for Panos Pictures
“Surfing on the top waves of the Chinese Zeitgeist, foreign architects, whether as carpetbaggers or cultural radicals, have been seamlessly co-opted by a regime determined to demonstrate its super power. The glitzy icons they have produced, whether well designed as ad hoc objects or poorly designed as isolated incidents, have too easily been turned into spectacular objects of propaganda.”

—T. ZHU

On May 12, 2008, just before the Games, an earthquake with a magnitude of eight struck the rural Sichuan Province, southwest of Beijing. Ten thousand schools collapsed, and more than ten thousand children died, igniting widespread public outrage. After the earthquake, local officials tried to squash inquiries into poor construction, paying off grieving parents and downplaying any possible connections to governmental corruption. For decades, rural education had been severely underfunded, leading to shoddily constructed schools and the build up of $7.3 billion in debt owed to contractors and teachers.” In contrast, government officials annually spent nearly $120 billion on dining, entertaining, the use of vehicles, and domestic and overseas tours. By the end of the Games, the government spent $40 billion on Olympics-related projects.

While the Water Cube’s creators may have been passionate about a project that pushed the boundaries of sustainable architecture and incorporated Chinese philosophies of nature into the design, the structure was not built for China—it was built to shape the legacy of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The mythology it crafts as a “spectacular object of propaganda” conceals underlying political issues like institutional corruption from international memory. In China, however, the Water Cube’s institutionalized ideology is one that ordinary Chinese people know all too well.

Boys at the Olympic Games site sneak a peek over the fence in 2007 to look at the Water Cube, amongst a construction yard full of debris and rubble, much like the post-earthquake wreckage. The Water Cube juxtaposes the lot—it’s a pristine, expensive project. This photo, incidentally, symbolizes the economic and class divides surrounding the Games all too well.

Images courtesy of Piotr Malecki for Panos Pictures
The London 2012 Summer Olympic Games were a triumph of British ingenuity and the latest in sustainable architectural design and practice. Though reportedly not the most stunning or memorable, the structures exemplified how Olympic buildings can benefit the city at large by reflecting its historical might while ensuring a prosperous and sustainable future. Highlighted here are four of the key facilities used during the Games.
The visual identity of the Games originates from the well-known and controversial logo. Its spirited design was bold and unconventional, highlighting the edginess that throngs the London streets. By not highlighting sports in the design, this logo encapsulates the overall cultural impact of the games and the historical legacy of the city (which is shown in the opening ceremony). Thus, much of the visual design of the games comes from an interpretation of this logo and its jutting shard like appendages.
The organizers had to develop a plan for the location of the Olympic Park. The site, Stratford (an industrial backwash, toxic, marsh-like dump on the outskirts of the city), was a bit of a mess. The soil itself was a sickening mix of tar, arsenic, and other products of glue manufacturing and industrial runoff. Yet, despite this field of dismembered buildings and tar pits, designers saw promise. As Julian Sutherland, the design director at Aitkins, the engineering and design consultant for the Olympics said, “You could have knocked it all down… [but] that would have been the base case in the absence of trying to do something more sustainable.”

Thus, the London games became the first Olympic games to measure its carbon footprint throughout the entire process of constructing and the games themselves with a goal of having as little landfill waste as possible. So, as all the buildings were being torn down, 99% of it was able to be re-purposed and reused, mainly in the construction of the Olympic park itself! The 2 million tons of soil were cleaned and used in the adjacent park, 302,000 wetland plants and native trees were planted in the vicinity of the compound, and the River Lea received an entire face lift with new water treatment plants and bridges.

Once everything was said and done, the Olympic Park complex received the highest marks from virtually every authority governing sustainability and eco-friendliness. Today, the park is still known as the Olympic Park or the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Everything from large sporting events to smaller cultural happenings (such as concerts or art installations) have occurred here. The park enables visitors to take in fresh green space in an area of the city that used to be nearly uninhabitable.
Designed by Populous Architects, the stadium hosted both the opening and closing ceremonies along with track and field events. London's Olympic stadium is known to be one of the most sustainable stadium the Olympic Games had ever seen. The roof structure is made out of recycled abandoned gas pipelines making it environmentally friendly and lighter to hold. As the stadium would be a permanent resident of London, it was realized that 80,000 seats would not be needed once the Olympic Games were finished. The architects at Populous were innovative and designed the stadium so that once the games were finished, seats could be removed to hold up to 60,000 people by using retractable seating on the lower level. However, although the stadium receives praise for its sustainable features, many architecture critics very much disliked its design. Architecture award winner Amanda Levete and architecture historian Charles Jencks went on to say that the stadium was very generic and, compared to its predecessor in Beijing, there was nothing special about it. Additionally, the cost of the stadium, 486 million pounds, was controversial because it was felt that with such a large budget, London could have done so much more with its design, but instead, it lost an opportunity. Lastly, it can be said that the Olympic Stadium does not shine as bright as its neighbors in the Olympic Park because it does not take people's breath away at first glance and it relied on the Olympic Games to bring it to life.
Designed by WilkinsonEyre, this structure became famous as being the largest temporary structure ever built for the Olympic games. Despite its transitory nature, it’s ingenuity and design on a budget set it to become one of the most visually dramatic buildings of the games.

In league with the overall theme of the Olympic architecture, the project description called for a building that was simple to construct and extremely sustainable yet capable of hosting one of the most popular Olympic sports. This building was never meant to stay standing after the games concluded yet the amount of which the Olympic committee relied on this structure tells of the importance and trust they placed on sustainable, temporary structures (like the Beach Volleyball stadium).

In terms of this building today, it has been disassembled, as intended by the design and architects. Conversations were held in 2013 as to whether the building would be moved to Rio for the 2016 Summer Olympics, however that plan was nixed due to the Rio planners not believing in its feasibility. Though the arena might not have made it to Rio, the very idea that it could have been transported abroad speaks to the sustainable approach the London planners made to the game as well as the strength of British ingenuity.
The basketball arena for the London Olympics was the largest temporary venue ever built for the Olympic Games. Made out of an environmentally friendly PVC material, it was a unique structure. For instance, because the outer shell was thin and hollow, lights were installed within the walls, allowing it to be lit up for different occasions; such as, the winning country’s flag colors. Additionally, the PVC structure was 100% portable. This meant that it could be disassembled, shipped to the next Olympic City, and used for future games. In fact, Brazil was interested in reusing the basketball arena for the Summer 2016 Games, but ultimately decided not to go through with the idea. While this building was monumental, both in size and in sustainability, it was criticized for looking inexpensive. Architecture critics believed that the venue was just a straightforward way of getting the job done and were relieved to hear that it would be taken down once the Games were over as London would not benefit from it in the future.
LONDON’S OLYMPIC GEM

Designed by a London firm, Hopkins Architects, the venue holds 6,000 seats and includes an indoor cycling track, changing rooms, retail facilities, workshop, and a 360° glass viewing concourse that allowed audiences from outside to peer inside and watch the track in action. Not only was the stadium known for hosting cycling events, but it was also known for its green and sustainable design. For example, the exterior of the building had ventilation louvers, or small ventilation holes, that helped ventilate the venue naturally. This design eliminated the need for air conditioning in the summer and has a mechanical system to heat the interior in the winter. Additionally, the Velodrome’s roof collects rainwater, which reduces water consumption by 70%. While Olympic structures faced a lot of criticism for either being too expensive or for being too bland, the Velodrome was highly praised by athletes, the press, and architectural critics. Great Britain’s cycling team was invited to test out the track before the games and they left the venue buzzing with excitement. The team captain of the cycling team believed that because of the natural ventilation, which kept the air warm and air pressure low, records would be broken at the 2012 Olympics. In fact, the Great Britain team took seven gold medals out of nine indoor cycling events. The structure’s praise is perhaps because the Velodrome had an elegant, yet simple design that was influenced by both cyclists and the bicycle itself. The structure was deemed a success because it was designed for specific conditions that cyclists could thrive in, it was the perfect size—not too big or small—to accommodate spectators, and it met London’s goal of being sustainable.

“It feels fast...the fact athletes are going to be in the best shape of their lives at the Olympic Games, you will see records go.”

—TEAM GREAT BRITAIN CYCLISTS

“You can feel the movement of the bikes in the architecture. You can imagine the noise of the tires...”

—AMANDA LEVETE, Sterling Prize Winner

“...tooled to perfection like a Stradivarius violin”

—THE GUARDIAN
For the British success in the 2012 Summer Games, cycling cemented itself as a booming industry and pastimes. Incorporated now into the Lee Valley VeloPark, the facility has around 7 million annual visitors. Unless there is a scheduled event, anyone, from schools, clubs, or community groups, is able to use any of the tracks and equipment on the premises.

Features: original indoor track, Outdoor BMX, Road Cycle, and Mountain Trails, plus dedicated bike workshops and multipurpose rooms for meetings or conferences.
In 2009, Brazil won the bid for the Summer 2016 Olympics, much to the joy of the then-president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who believed that the Olympics would provide an opportunity to turn Rio de Janeiro into a world-class city. Rio was the first South American city to host the games and it was predicted that the Olympics would be a catalyst for much-needed infrastructural changes in the city, especially with regards to the favelas that dot the hills of the landscape. This desire for a world-class status would prove costly not only financially, but also socially as many parts of Rio were left in ruins.
The 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro are now infamous. They seemed to contain the dreams of a booming yet struggling nation’s leadership and in every act of construction, destruction, and ideological shifts, the international community bore witness to the largest overhaul of Brazilian society in the 21st century. According to the Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions, in the past two decades of Olympic Games, over two million residents have been displaced from their homes for the sake of the mega-events. Residents of Rio’s favelas have faced forces that include the police, the military, financial stakeholders, and political officials in the struggle to stay in their homes. One egregious example of this form of urban warfare is found in Vila Autódromo, a favela that was decimated because of its proximity to the new Olympic Village. This revamping of Rio de Janeiro was a form of institutional violence on marginalized communities in Rio: the Olympic Games and its architecture devalued the urbanism found in favela communities around the city of Rio. As a result, two distinct urban forces formed: one that focused on corporate internationally-renowned infrastructures, another that highlighted a form of urban growth that is and continues to be rooted in the disenfranchisement of Afro-Brazilian communities in Rio. These two forms of urbanism create two jarring city identities that do not often coincide and present the tensions between local needs and global neoliberalism.
One major re-development project taken on by the municipality of Rio was the Porto Maravilha project. The idea was that the development of this region would attract foreign investment and be a catalyst for further development throughout the city. In addition to Calatrava’s flashy monument of “progress,” the development included hotels, office buildings, bike paths, and a new light-rail transit system. Washington Fajardo, president of the Rio World Heritage Institute, explained that the city was beginning to look at the downtown port area “as a desirable area now for the first time in 50 years,” (qtd. in Whitefield, Porto Maravilha: Reclaiming Rio de Janeiro’s neglected port). A blooming port area was seen as progressive and tied to images of other internationally-renowned cities. This form of development strove to put Rio at the forefront of the tourism economy, while seeking architectural prestige as well.
“It’s a bit ironic to build a museum looking at the future when Rio doesn’t even have one to acknowledge its terrible history of slavery.”

— LULU GARCIA-NAVARRO
Military police deployed in Complexo de Mare raise their weapons.

Image courtesy of Reuters/Ricardo Moraes
The turmoil surrounding the construction of the Olympic Village is a microcosm of a medley of issues in Rio’s Olympic vision. Mass-favela clearances and thousands of furious cariocas were not part of Mayor Eduardo Paes’ original plan for urban renovations leading up to the 2016 Summer Olympics. He, as the city’s executive, declared that no one would be displaced for the games and he promoted his egalitarian vision for the city everywhere. In hindsight, Brazil’s major recession made it difficult to accomplish these goals: the city struggled to complete projects on time while paying workers. Over 300 families living in “precarious conditions” agreed to resettle in a housing project in Parque Carioca while others were paid to evacuate their homes. A year before the Summer Olympics began, only twenty percent of the community’s nearly 600 families remained. The favela was the site of some of the most fervent police violence and community resistance seen in the lead up to the games. Now, like most structures built for the mega-event, the Olympic Village is largely out of use and somewhat ironically occupies land that hundreds of people were forced to leave for a month-long spectacle, 31 high-rises out of touch with Brazilian architecture and the needs of Rio de Janeiro.
Favelas are essential to the fabric of Rio. They began to develop towards the end of the 19th century as the country gradually abolished slavery, transforming from a Portuguese colony into a Republic. These informal settlements grew rapidly and as they did, they developed internal infrastructural systems where the government had not extended aid to the communities. In fact, the state paid little attention to the favelas until the late 20th century, when Rio de Janeiro’s law enforcement agencies incited a war on crime and drug trafficking that devastated dozens of favela communities across the city.

Favelas are often built on the sides of steep mountains and for that reason, they are visible from miles away. They are as quintessentially Carioca as caipirinhas, yet because of their reputation as breeding grounds of violence, they and their residents were not included in any of the promotional materials for the Olympic Games. This concerted effort to obfuscate one-quarter of the city’s population while simultaneously waging a campaign of slum clearances that physically and psychologically terrorized the most vulnerable of the city’s residents caused many of those affected to make their anger towards the government publicly known.

Dr. Lea Rekow, director of Green My Favela, wrote about state-sponsored violence in the city in a particularly austere light – recent annual statistics show that police in Rio de Janeiro have been killing close to the same number of people as do all police forces in the United States. Like in the U.S., most victims of this violence are poor, young black males.

This institutional violence has only increased under the shadow of the Olympics. There was tremendous pressure from the International Olympic Committee for Rio to become safer, especially knowing that millions of outsiders would be visiting for the first time, giving Rio an unprecedented opportunity to present itself to the world stage.

“Rio’s militarism is part of a wider framework of ‘structural violence’ that produces suffering - both directly through acts of violence, torture, and murder, and indirectly through an institutionalized political social pathology that results in dispossession, lack, and insecurity.”

—Lea Rekow

“The ongoing violence around the Olympic developments is only the most recent manifestation of political elites protecting their connections to private business interests.”

—Lea Rekow
“The truth is that the city of Rio de Janeiro is trying to terrorize us psychologically. That terror isn’t new, it is ancient. It just so happens that now it has become more and more intense.”

—Pedro Berto,
A resident of Vila Autódromo, in an interview with Latin Correspondent
Utopian visions are not always located in the future, images of lost paradise and golden ages populate several utopian narratives.

- PAOLO MAGAGNOLI

The two-week focus brought on by the Olympic Games transforms the Olympic host city into a stage and the whole event a spectacle. However, the purpose of a show is to resonate with the views consciously and subconsciously. Host cities use architecture, media, and urban planning to build a physical scene emanating a very particular message.

In the case of Tokyo, since its ports opened in 1859 and it let the outside world in, an effort has existed to agitate the western hegemony and receive acknowledgment for its superior development. The postmodern utopia imagined for the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, in every way, continues this age-old battle.
Tokyo is set to host the Olympic Games in 2020. There is much anticipation for the Games, especially because of the lasting innovative legacy the city left after the 1964 Olympics, when the Japanese introduced to the world the first high-speed bullet train known as the Shinkansen. The world is expecting many more technological advancements from the city in the upcoming Games, with the promise of many new innovations to follow. The concept of Zaha Hadid’s design for the new national stadium reflected this forthcoming innovation; however, it received negative criticism from the Japanese public and the Olympic Committee. Now turning to the minimalist architecture of Kengo Kuma, whose architecture looks to respond to Japan’s society, the Committee looks to set a new course.
Robots, driverless taxis, high resolution projection screens, 5G wifi networks, among other proposals are a part of the upcoming technological upgrades set to debut during the 2020 Olympic Games. The media cannot stop talking about it. In fact, this is the main topic for the 2020 Games, almost becoming a theme for the “most futuristic games ever”. Hadid’s design for the Olympic stadium could not have boosted the hype more than it did. Her initial concepts and designs tell a narrative similar to the new technology. Her stadium proposed an innovative material structure, with a sleek, futuristic look. Nevertheless, Hadid has received major criticism due to the cost and size of the sports complex. The stadium is over 78,000 square feet and would potentially cost around 2.65 billion USD. The community of Japan is in an uproar because the project seems to ignore the current financial and cultural conditions of Japan as they continue to rebuild the nations economy after the destruction caused by an earthquake in 2011. Hadid’s design won the initial competition, however two years later, in 2015, the project was scrapped after retooling the design. Kengo Kuma, a renowned Japanese architect was among the leading critics. His design was ultimately selected by the Olympic Committee in a second competition. It is currently undergoing construction.
"...A turtle waiting for Japan to sink so that it can swim away"

—DEZEEN EDITORIAL
Kengo Kuma gained the community’s grace and was awarded commission for his version of the new national stadium in Tokyo. Kuma challenged the Olympic Committee, exposing their decision to elect an architect who was not a native of Japan. After Kuma won the second competition, the message for the Olympics changed. It was no longer about the technology of the games. The focus was on Japan’s society.

The community is responding well to the new architecture of the stadium. It could be that the Kuma’s design schematics compliment the current time period in Japan. To start, Kuma has a different approach to materiality. Instead of using steel and concrete as the primary materials for his structure, Kuma believes that the best material to use is wood. He started analyzing the materiality of wood after the 2011 earthquake wrecked coastal communities in Japan. The destruction led him to believe that architecture should relate back to nature and that we should focus on strengthening its relationship with humans. Wood is not the strongest material. However, Kuma argues against this, stating that wood can be developed into a very strong and useful building system. He says this will be done by going “back to the future” meaning we should think about the ways in which wood is shaped and used in our structures and use the new technology in today’s age to further advance it.

Kuma looks to incorporate wood in his version of the Olympic stadium. With his minimalist approach, Kuma plans to use wood from structures that were destroyed during the earthquake sending a message of unity and uplift for the Japanese community. This also helps Japan national economy as well because a small percentage of the materials will be recycled.
“Tokyo” is sprawling, bright and modern. At least that was the image created by architectural interventions of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. If 1964 was modern, what is left for Tokyo to pursue in the upcoming 2020 Summer Olympics? Postmodernism: going beyond modernism. Designs for 2020 reject the established temporal order and thrust old and new into simultaneous existence. Through this, Edo tradition is complimented by Metabolist, utopian designs, situating Japanese identity as synonymous with perfection.
In Japan memory and past are atypical. In an effort to disassociate with its World War II wartime identity, the Japanese government, with support from United States occupying forces, fabricated a “new” Japan. Through obliteration of time and history, the new image was conceived as an inverse of the old. Japanese scholar Carol Gluck explains, “People saw the war as a judgement on a longer history, the question immediately became the nature of Japan’s modernity, and also of the premodern that preceded and was responsible for it...These linked narratives comprised the main historical agenda, newly constructed from the vantage point of 1945.”

Effectively, Japanese origin and history were completely reconceived at the end of World War II so that modern Japan would neither be tainted by the country’s past actions, nor fated to follow the same path. A specific part of this historic reconception was a fabrication of “tradition” via a brightened memory of the Edo Period (1603-1868). A “rose colored” Edo history was curated to embody true, traditional Japanese culture.

Thus Olympic structures iconizing principles associated with the unrivaled peace and prosperity of the Edo Period such as living with water, acknowledgement and appreciation for nature, and low-level wood architecture, reinforce an ahistorical concept of culture and heritage for both the Japanese and global Olympic spectators alike. Many structures of 2020 purposefully manufacture nostalgic longing for a romanticized “past” in efforts to further an idealized “Tokyo.”
“The return to the past is, in fact, clearly an attempt to recuperate alternative visions of the present.”

—PAOLO MAGAGNOLI
To go “beyond” modernism achieved in 1964, Tokyo 2020 combines tradition with innovation. Structures such as Tokyo Big Sight that lifts its functions into the air and development of the Tokyo Bay Zone that expands Olympic venues into the water reflect and arguably realize the hyper futuristic, utopian models of the 1960s school of Japanese Metabolist architecture. Appropriation of air and sea as spaces for life shown in Isozaki Arata’s City in the Air and Tange Kenzo’s Plan for Tokyo 1960 were architectural explorations intended to accommodate Tokyo’s incredible and rapid growth.

Beyond noting the irony of situaing a utopia conceived in the past transposed into the 2020 future, one must ask, what is the intention of this purposeful inclusion? Unlike incorporations of Edo imagery that forge new associations of heritage, the scattered, futuristic structures being built for 2020 exhort preexisting ties to utopia and perfection to suggest that in Tokyo is utopia. Furthermore, associations with Metabolist plans, of which a penchant is accommodating future growth, portray Japanese attainment of political, social, and structural resilience and sustainability.