DESIGNING FOR THE FUTURE: SUSTAINABILITY AS A CORE EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLE/

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Abstract. This article explores the integration of sustainable practices within the university-level product design education, positioning sustainability as an essential, holistic method in the teaching process, deeply connected to the principles of design thinking. The focus is on embedding sustainability throughout the entire design journey – from concept and technical solutions to packaging and transportation – encouraging students to adopt a systems-thinking mindset. Given the current environmental and economic challenges, it is crucial to guide emerging designers to think and act sustainably across all project phases. Sustainability must become an organically embedded principle in product design, not a secondary consideration.

The problem – the fundamental driver behind the creation of a design object as a solution – is today inseparable from sustainability considerations. This article examines both the pedagogical methods which have proven effective in fostering sustainable thinking and the challenges encountered during studio-based project work. It further offers a critical reflection on how sustainability is not merely an additive component of the design process, but an inherent and inseparable dimension of contemporary product design practice. Within the educational context, the student-designer is guided to discover the integral role of sustainability as a value-generating element that shapes and informs the entire design process. Rather than being introduced as an optional or external principle, sustainability is revealed as a fundamental aspect of a holistic design approach.

As part of its methodology, the article proposes a re-evaluation of selected student design solutions, analysed in the context of this research through the lens of three key indicators: (1) student receptiveness to the holistic design process, (2) the degree to which those solutions reflect the process, and (3) the extent to which students internalized sustainable practices and later applied them autonomously in subsequent projects.

By employing this framework, the study aims to identify non-invasive pathways for integrating sustainability into studio projects – approaches that enrich rather than inhibit the design process. The theoretical foundation of this inquiry is supported by a series of selected case studies drawn from second- and third-year design studio projects, providing insight into the evolving relationship between sustainability and design education.

This article also examines both the successes and challenges encountered in implementing these principles within the design studio. Among the obstacles, the most prominent include resistance to change, limited resources for prototyping sustainable solutions, and a lack of awareness or confidence in balancing environmental responsibility with creative freedom. On the positive side, effective methods, such as project-based learning with real-world constraints, interdisciplinary collaboration, and critical reflection sessions proved particularly valuable in reinforcing sustainable thinking.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals gaps and shortcomings which persists throughout the academic year, stemming both from students and educators. Students often struggle to maintain sustainable considerations beyond the conceptual phase, while educators face the challenge of balancing free-creative leeway and inducing a certain sustainable solution. Addressing these gaps requires a cultural and curricular shift toward treating sustainability not as an external constraint but as an inherent design opportunity, one that enhances rather than limit creativity and innovation.

Introduction. The profession of product design is currently undergoing a profound transformation, and this transformation is directly influenced by the way in which design education shapes its students. For instance, the history of design, as it is traditionally taught, often privileges iconic objects of modernity, many of which were conceived in a context where sustainable thinking was not a central principle. This aspect often generates a first level of confusion among students, who tend to idealize historical models and aspire to reproduce them *"at any cost,"* without realizing that, under current conditions, the *"cost"* can be a significant ecological one. In light of these tensions, it is necessary to reevaluate the premises of initial design training so that the values perpetuated through education reflect contemporary realities and responsibilities.

This article starts precisely from this discrepancy between the disciplinary tradition and the demands of the present, proposing an analysis of how sustainability can be organically integrated into educational practice. The approach investigates the impact that pedagogical structures—workshop projects, formative assessments, case studies, and exposure to current industry examples—have on how students internalize sustainable thinking.

Instead of introducing sustainability as an external criterion, applied belatedly or forcibly, the article argues that it should be understood as a fundamental principle of the design process, present in all stages: from problem definition to concept, prototyping, materiality, production, use, and end-of-life scenario. From this perspective, education becomes the privileged space where future designers can learn to combine creativity with ecological responsibility, without perceiving the two dimensions as antagonistic (but rather as part of the same whole).

In this sense, the article examines both the effective pedagogical methods implemented in university product design programs and the recurring challenges that prevent a deep integration of sustainability: from the tendency of students to limit sustainability to the choice of recycled materials, to the lack of technical resources, time, or updated cultural references. The analysis proposes a series of directions for strengthening an educational culture in which sustainability becomes a permanent cognitive filter and a critical evaluation criterion. At the same time, by reconstructing these formative practices, the possibility of rewriting a part of design history emerges — not by denying the iconic objects of the past, but by reinterpreting them in relation to contemporary imperatives and by training a new generation of designers capable of producing the *"iconicity"*

of the future: one that is responsible, sustainable, and deeply anchored in the realities of today's world.

Design Thinking Intertwined With Sustainability. Over the last century, the design profession has shifted toward a more holistic way of thinking - one in which social, ethical, and inclusive considerations have increasingly become essential. Yet even now this approach is far from universal. Throughout much of the twentieth century, design was, in essence, a reactive practice rather than a generative one (distinction made by Wolfgang Jonas): it responded to consumer demands and industrial needs instead of envisioning alternative futures.

The culture of sustainability began to take a recognizable form in early 1990s, catalyzed in part by the 1992 "Earth Summit" held in Rio de Janeiro. By that point, global environmental problems had grown too urgent for design to remain a passive participant in a consumer society. As Margolin argues:

> *"The primary question for the design professions thus becomes not what new products to make, but how to reinvent design culture so that worthwhile projects are more clearly identified and likely to be realized. Just as other professionals are finding ways to earn their living in the culture of sustainability, so will designers have to do the same in order to create new forms of practice"* (Margolin, 1998, p.86).

He expands on this by noting that design has long been *"a contingent practice rather than one based on necessity"* (Margolin, 1998, p.86) - a field shaped by specific circumstances, commercial pressures, and cultural expectations, often at the expense of alternative possibilities.

Today, design occupies a broader and more influential role, one that cannot stand apart from sustainable practices. What once contributed to what Fry calls the phenomenon of *"defuturing"* (Fry, 2020) - the production of futures that undermine their own viability - must now position itself among the key drivers of sustainability.

One such driver, urgently and unavoidably, is design education. It forms the foundational layer of contemporary design thinking, shaping new generations of practitioners who can imagine and enact more responsible, long-term, and systemic approaches to design's role in society.

Design Communication - Design Education. Although this article focuses primarily on institutionalised educational environments, it is important to acknowledge that individual, non-specialized learning also has a role to play in shaping a more sustainable future. Products - and the designers behind them - carry a certain persuasive power. As Richard Buchanan argues, design can subtly instill specific forms of behaviour at the consumer level, and these shifts can accumulate into meaningful movement toward more sustainable habits.

Buchanan begins one of his 1985 essays with the claim that *"If one idea could be found central in design studies, it most likely would be communication"* (Buchanan, 1985, p.4). He clarifies that by 'communication' he does not mean vague messaging, but rhetoric: *"the inventive and persuasive relation of speakers and audiences as they are brought together in speeches or other objects of communication"* (Buchanan, 1985, p.4). In this sense, he continues, *"rhetoric is an art of shaping society, changing the course of individuals and communities, and setting patterns for new action"* (Buchanan, 1985, p.6). From this perspective, when sustainable methods are employed in the design studio, they don't merely generate greener products - they embed healthier messages into design's communicative power. *"Design is an art of thought directed to practical action through the persuasiveness of objects and, therefore, design involves the vivid expression of competing ideas about social life"*(Buchanan, 1985, p.7).

Even so, as Stegall notes, designers have not typically acted out of malice; many simply failed to fully consider the cultural and social consequences of innovations like disposable products. When viewed through the lens of sustainability, these inventions reveal themselves as "catastrophic failures" (Stegall, 2006, p.58).

This is why emerging designers carry a real responsibility: even in their earliest formative years, they must begin to adopt sustainable methods in their work. Stegall pushes this point further by arguing that ignoring design's rhetorical influence produces artifacts that make unconscious or accidental arguments about how people should live – arguments that, today, often reinforce unsustainable lifestyles. His notion of "intentional design" aims to correct this by expanding and redefining existing environmental design principles.

Our position is that this expansion needs to originate from the educational foundation itself. By reshaping design education, we reshape the assumptions, skills and values that guide future designers - and, by extension, the futures they help create.

Sustainable Design Practices In Academia. It is essential to cultivate a solid foundation for sustainable thinking, and the most fertile place for this to begin is within university design term/core projects, and overall practical or/and theoretical training. Until recently, students were introduced to sustainability primarily through theoretical courses, sometimes as part of design history lectures, and more recently through specialized curricula dedicated to this field. However, these concepts were seldom applied within the design studio projects, where the core of practical learning takes place. This separation between theory and practice has contributed to the widespread perception of sustainability as a topic confined to abstract discussion rather than a concrete design requirement.

Such a perception is not unique to this context; it reflects a broader tendency across disciplines in which sustainability should function as an essential criterion throughout the design and development of any product. Whether in architecture, product design, or urban planning, sustainability must transition from an optional academic theme to a fundamental evaluative framework embedded in the design thinking process itself. Only through this integration can future practitioners develop the capacity to address contemporary environmental and societal challenges in a meaningful and responsible manner.

This disconnect can also be understood as a generational phenomenon. As Stegall notes, it was not the result of intentional omission; rather, educators taught in ways that reflected the norms and priorities of the industry at the time. In previous decades, sustainability was rarely a primary

concern in professional practice, in many cases it was entirely absent from design and production processes. In today's context, sustainability has evolved into an indispensable requirement. A systemic shift is needed, not only at the conceptual level, but also within production methods and, more broadly, throughout the industrial supply chain.

In response to this shift, we have begun to integrate sustainability as an evaluative criterion within students' practical project assignments in the 2nd and 3rd Industrial Design Studio. Interestingly, during initial discussions on sustainability, students tend to focus primarily on materials, particularly on incorporating recycled materials into product components. While material choice is certainly relevant, this approach represents only a small fraction of what it truly means to design a sustainable product. Sustainable design encompasses a much broader set of considerations, including lifecycle thinking, energy use, durability, reparability, user behavior, and end-of-life scenarios, among others. Guiding students toward this more comprehensive understanding is essential for cultivating a responsible and contemporary design practice. As one author notes, *"Creating, with design, is important here in two ways: first, the creation is not basically one of expression but rather an innovative response to a perceived situation and need; second, the design ultimately makes more than an object or arrangement - it makes new context and associations"* (Newcomb, 2012, pg.594).

Challanges - Case Studies. Over the two-year cycle of the class, beginning in the second year of their studies and continuing through the end of the third, certain patterns began to surface among students - some that proved both intriguing and somewhat concerning from a tutor's standpoint. When confronted with the assignment of designing a toy, for instance, second-year students tended to neglect the sustainability dimension almost entirely. As noted earlier, it appeared more as an afterthought than a consciously addressed component of their process.

This led us into a rather difficult dilemma: either insist on the integration of sustainability and inevitably redirect time away from refining the final solution, or overlook it within their assignments and risk reinforcing an unhealthy mindset among future designers. We chose the former.

A further issue emerged in relation to material choices during prototyping. The majority of students gravitated toward 3D-printed models, which led to a significant overuse of plastics. While PLA filaments are often described as relatively more sustainable, this advantage is effectively undermined by the sheer volume consumed in iterative prototyping.

Although somewhat improved, these challenges persisted into the second year of the study cycle. As the students entered their third year of design studies, their core assignments became increasingly more complex and reflected more closely real industry demands. Among these demands, sustainability through shipment, material use, repairability, industrial production and core concept was at the forefront. For example, when working on designing a chair, students worked in focused groups, each choosing a conceptual nucleus from which to build their solution on. Some chose sustainability as their fundamental focus. This was not only a good opportunity for evaluation, but an opportunity to dive deeper into how exactly a product can be sustainable not only through material use, but through the means mentioned before (carbon footprint, packaging, shipment, durability, individual component manufacturing, etc). Other teams, regardless of the concept, were encouraged to apply the same principles. However, for all of the teams, sustainability at one point or another hindered the natural progression of their proposed solution. They treated these concerns as separate from design thinking, which created a fragmented relationship between the two.

Interestingly, many students gravitated toward so-called *"sustainable plastics"* as a quick, catch-all solution, overlooking - just as noted earlier - the broader criteria that define genuinely sustainable practice.

Pursuing this dual objective proved - and, to some extent, continues to prove - challenging: on the one hand, developing well-resolved projects supported by presentable prototypes, and on the other, ensuring the meaningful integration of environmental considerations throughout the process. As elaborated in the following section, we deemed it essential to embed such considerations holistically within our pedagogical approach—not merely as static evaluative criteria, but through a more fundamental, organic reconfiguration of how projects are introduced, developed, and assessed.

Implementation - Applied Theory, Scopes, Methods. As tutors, we implemented approaches that allowed design and sustainability to merge organically within student assignments and, more importantly, within their developing mindset. We placed stronger emphasis on sustainability as a foundational component of design thinking, encouraging them to pursue solutions grounded in responsible means and methods. We presented new environmentally responsible materials and clarified what it genuinely entails for a material to be considered sustainable, always in parallel with discussions on form and function. In doing so, we framed design as a threefold practice: environmentally conscious, functional, and aesthetically compelling. Field trips to showrooms featuring responsibly produced furniture, along with more in-depth research on the topic, served as additional strategies - methods that proved both engaging and effective.

One such exhibition was CIRCULAR #1, presented at Intro Design, a showroom in Bucharest that showcases pieces created by both established contemporary designers and historically influential figures. The exhibition centred on the notion of circularity in furniture, highlighting the considerable challenge this poses for an industry renowned for its intensive use of natural resources, many of which are difficult to regenerate. Fortunately, together with the students, we observed that numerous companies - such as Normann Copenhagen and Mater - are currently developing practices and furniture lines conceived in accordance with rigorous sustainability principles. Their primary focus lay in materials, approached not merely in terms of composition but through the lens of production methods, local sourcing, processing techniques, and the broader responsibility associated with a product's end-of-life scenario. Ideally, such a product, when reaching landfill conditions, would be able to degrade naturally and reintegrate into the environment due to the material from which it is made.

By exposing students directly to current industry practices, we aim to demonstrate that sustainability is becoming not merely an aspiration

but a concrete necessity and requirement they will inevitably encounter once they enter the professional field. Although, as evidenced by the first series of core projects, sustainability remains in the mind of the student an underdeveloped aspect, often perceived as challenging, restrictive to creativity, difficult to apply beyond considerations of material selection, or a product's initial interaction with the user. We strive to implement practices that subtly shape and influence their cognitive approach.

One such practice involves minimizing the use of printed materials and conducting the majority of project reviews through digital boards and presentations. We also encourage students to use natural, recyclable materials for model-making, while reserving 3D-printed prototypes for the final outcome. Additionally, we advise them to avoid spray paints containing toxic solvents when finishing physical models.

We consistently seek to instil this practice through personal examples and through concrete illustrations drawn from industry. We consider sustainability to be an aspect that, in order to be meaningfully integrated into design projects, must be exercised on a daily basis, both within the professional sphere and beyond it, in everyday life. By developing such habits, students will, over time, cease to perceive sustainability as a challenge and instead recognize it as an opportunity for growth and for differentiation within an increasingly competitive product landscape.

Based on our experience and on the implementation efforts undertaken over the past two years, we developed a student questionnaire designed to assess how sustainability is perceived as a criterion in the development of studio projects, as well as how students have experienced the introduction of this concept within the broader university curriculum.

Results. A few conclusions can be drawn from these questions. As stated earlier, students found it easiest to engage with sustainability in their projects through material-related decisions. Out of 41 responses, 68% selected 'material selection and prototyping' when asked how sustainability is introduced in their design studio course (Figure 1). In addition, 82% reported that they explored sustainability primarily through material reuse and recyclability (Figure 2).

Our goal of organically intertwining sustainability with design thinking proved to be, for the most part, effective, as almost half of the responders stated sustainability is introduced in their education naturally, or at least occasionally mentioned (Figure 3).

The most common obstacle (Figure 4) is *"limited knowledge or guidance"* (51%), which indicates that students are willing but lack some of the curricular support they need. It is important to note that the questionnaire was distributed to design students from the 1st to the 5th year of study, meaning that the implementation methods discussed earlier were not equally applicable across all levels and may not have reached every group in the same way, especially since pedagogical methods differ from one class to another. Closely following this is a very practical constraint: *"lack of technical or prototyping resources"* (46%), suggesting that even when students know what they want to attempt, they do not always have the physical or material means to carry it out.

Time pressure is another strong barrier: 41% struggle to fit sustainable methods into tight project deadlines. More specific hurdles - like finding suitable materials (34%) or the idea that sustainability might restrict creativity (31%) - show that some of the challenge is not just logistical but also cultural and perceptual, and showcases how these cognitive barriers need to be further analysed.

However, most students said sustainability changed the way they approach design (Figure 5), which is encouraging.

Altogether, the responses describe a system where motivation exists, but structural support, material access, and confidence lag behind. Strengthening guidance, resources, and curriculum space would remove most of these bottlenecks and make sustainable practice feel less like an added burden and more like a natural part of the design process.

Instead of a conclusion. The responses indicated that this preliminary pedagogical approach has encouraged students to become increasingly autonomous in making environmentally responsible design decisions. At the same time, we learned that we must address sustainability more explicitly and from earlier stages within project briefs, and that this concept should be introduced as early as the first year of study-both as a practical component within studio projects and as theoretical instruction-so that knowledge can fuse more effectively throughout their formative academic trajectory.

Innovation within the product design profession can not be sustained without the educational environment that gives rise to future designers. Our analysis shows that sustainability can not continue being a didactical annexe or a mere exercise, an afterthought. Instead, we opt to see suitability through a critical and holistic lens. Its coherent integration, through applied projects, meaningful assessments, exposure to contemporary practices, and the recontextualization of historical references, has the potential to transform not only students' competencies but the disciplinary culture itself.

Based on our findings and exeriences in the design studio we put forward a transferable framework rather than as a context-bound description of one programme. The proposed pedagogical model shifts sustainability from a secondary academic topic to a foundational method of inquiry, addressing the gap between theoretical knowledge and studio practice. This framework relies on four interconnected core points designed to transform environmental responsibility into an inherent design opportunity rather than an external constraint.

The first point proposes a curricular change by embedding sustainability into project briefs as an explicit, core requirement from the first year of study. This ensures students engage with systemic factors as value-generating elements rather than afterthoughts.

Secondly, the focus should be on forming sustainable habits through daily studio practices. This experimental component influences the student's cognitive approach by prioritizing digital reviews and the use of natural, recyclable materials for early prototyping, reserving 3D printing and high-impact resources only for final outcomes.

The third point is systematic reflection and day to day good practices, implemented through questionnaires and critique sessions, on how students internalise and autonomously reapply these practices in subsequent projects or on their day-to-day life.

The final core point involves contextual reification through direct exposure to contemporary industry practices. Field trips and the analysis of successful brands demonstrate that circularity is a concrete market necessity, helping students overcome barriers such as limited guidance or a lack of confidence. This strategy validates the academic framework by aligning it with real-world industry demands, ensuring the pedagogical model remains relevant and scalable across different institutional contexts.

Although the model emerged within a specific institutional context and curriculum, its components are intentionally described at a level of abstraction that allows adaptation to other design schools and related fields, such as architecture or visual communication. For instance, the same fourfold structure could be implemented in shorter workshops, in first-year foundation courses, or in interdisciplinary studios that share technical resources but calibrate the intensity of sustainability requirements according to local constraints.

By presenting the approach as a replicable and adjustable framework, the article invites further experimentation, comparison, and refinement across institutions, thus positioning the proposed model as a starting point for broader pedagogical innovation rather than as an isolated case. Thus, education becomes the space in which the tension between tradition and the present can evolve into a driver of innovation, and the history of design can be rewritten from a responsible perspective, not by negating its values, but by critically reactivating them.

Note.

The data presented in this research is derived from inquiries conducted by students enrolled in the Industrial Design Section (Years 1–5) at "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism.

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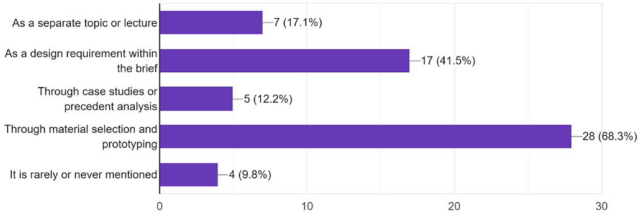
Figures.

Figure 1 – Ways in which sustainability is introduced in design studio courses;
Figure 2 – Sustainability aspects most frequently explored in student projects;
Figure 3 – Students' perception of how naturally sustainability is integrated into design education;
Figure 4 – Main barriers encountered when applying sustainable design principles;
Figure 5 – Impact of sustainable thinking on students' overall design approach.

1.

In your experience, how is sustainability introduced in your design studio courses? (Multiple choice)

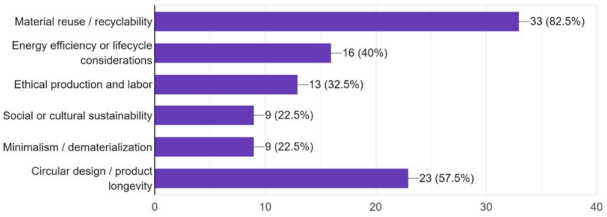
41 responses



2.

Which of the following aspects of sustainability have you explored most in your projects? (Check all that apply)

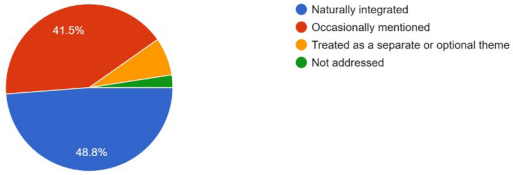
40 responses



3.

Do you feel sustainability is integrated naturally into your design education, or added as a separate theme?

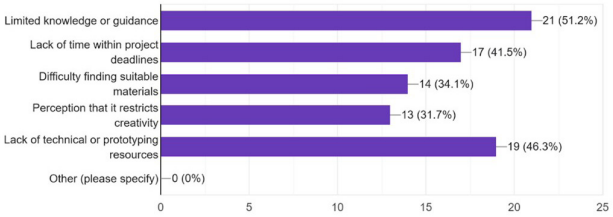
41 responses



4.

What are the main barriers you face when trying to apply sustainability principles? (Check all that apply)

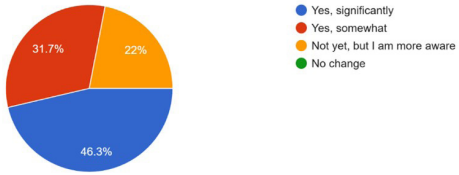
41 responses



5.

Do you think sustainable thinking has changed the way you approach design in general?

41 responses



THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF DISASTER-RESISTANT BUILDING DISTRICTS AND PATHWAYS TO REGIONAL REVITALIZATION: CHALLENGES FACING THE "HONICHI BUILDING" IN THE YOSHIWARA HONCHO SHOPPING DISTRICT/

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Abstract. The Yoshiwara Honcho shopping district in Fuji city, Shizuoka prefecture, originated from "Yoshiwara-juku," which was one of the 53 stations along the Tōkaidō road. The Honichi building, completed in 1961, stands at the eastern end of the shopping district, and is an extremely important structure in Yoshiwara's history.

Its exterior features a light and airy design that emphasizes horizontal lines—a hallmark of Showa modernism. The approximately 95-meter-long facade has retained its original design. Designed by Mimura-Nousu Collaborative Architects Office, the building's modern aesthetic has made it a landmark in the shopping district.

Construction of the Honichi building was closely tied to postwar urban fireproofing policies realized under the collective defense concept to improve urban structures' vulnerability to fire. As a joint construction by multiple landowners, the building's structure is complex. The original land ownership divisions persist as an "uneven rhythm" in the internal frontage spans and spatial composition. The mixed-use building has shops on the first floor and offices and residences on the second and third floors. This valuable spatial arrangement carries the traditional lifestyle culture of the shopping district into the modern era.

Despite the challenges including aging and stagnant management posed by its multiple owners, the Honichi building is a valuable community resource from the postwar reconstruction period with high potential. The most crucial strategy for regional revitalization and the future of the Yoshiwara shopping district is to promote its preservation and utilization through unified efforts by the owners, community, and administration. Regenerating the Honichi building is paramount because it will serve as a "living asset," connecting the Yoshiwara shopping district's past, present, and future while forming the core of regional revitalization efforts.

Introduction/ History Nurtured by the Post Towns Along the Tōkaidō Road and the Beginning of Modernization. Located in the heart of Fuji city, Shizuoka prefecture, Yoshiwara Honcho shopping district has long flourished as a commercial hub between Tokyo and Osaka. It is known for its history as "Yoshiwara-juku," one of the fifty-three stations along the Tōkaidō road during the Edo period. As a post town, Yoshiwara-juku supported the flow of diverse travelers on the main road connecting Edo and Kyoto. Following the Meiji era, the opening of railways and changes in industrial structure transformed the area into a core commercial district for the region. Today, the shopping street stretches approximately 500 meters from east to west. While retaining faint traces of its former character as a post town, the street blends long-established shops dating back to before the war with new businesses, creating an urban landscape where past and present overlap.

At the eastern end of this historic axis, in a location that could be the "face" of Yoshiwara, stands the Honichi building, the subject of this investigation. Completed in 1961 (Showa 36), the building holds significant historical value in the shopping district. It was the first fireproof building constructed in the densely populated, wooden neighborhood, which was constantly threatened by fire during an era when such buildings were rare. The Honichi building exemplifies postwar urban disaster prevention and modernization ideals. Its construction marked the beginning of a disaster-resistant building district in Yoshiwara, and the building became a landmark that shaped the city's subsequent development.

The building's exterior features a unified white finish with tiles or spray-applied texture. A rhythmic sequence of horizontal windows accentuates the building's horizontal lines, giving the facade a light and airy appearance. The long facade stretching approximately 95 meters along the street, the horizontal lines and the rhythm of the windows evoke the refined aesthetic of Showa modernist architecture. Its appearance has remained largely unchanged to this day, firmly establishing it as an integral part of the Yoshiwara shopping district's historical landscape.

However, the building currently faces challenges regarding future maintenance and management, including aging structures and complex property rights. This paper examines utilization strategies of the Honichi building for the community's future, considering its historical context and the results of a recent survey.

I. Historical Context of Construction: The Spirit of the Disaster Prevention Building Blocks Construction Act

1.Postwar Reconstruction and Urban Fireproofing Policy. The construction of the Honichi building is closely tied to urban disaster prevention policies during Japan's recovery from postwar chaos and transformation into a modern nation. Immediately after the war, cities were extremely vulnerable to fire due to war-damaged ruins and the disorderly densification of wooden buildings that accompanied rapid population growth. Commercial districts and shopping streets, in particular, were constantly at risk of nighttime fires destroying the local economic base. The Yoshiwara shopping district was no exception and was perpetually at risk of a major conflagration.

Against this backdrop, the national government promoted the establishment of fireproof building belts to improve urban safety fundamentally. The Disaster Prevention Building Blocks Construction Act, enacted in 1961, provided the legal foundation for this policy. The goal was to prevent the