

Hundreds turn out to 'Occupy Tokyo': As in New York, protesters use chance to attack wide list of issues from nuclear energy to trade

Tuesday 18 October 2011, by [FUKADA Takahiro](#) (Date first published: 16 October 2011).

The Occupy Wall Street protests spreading across the United States landed in Tokyo on Saturday, as hundreds of people gathered to protest against corporate greed and social inequality.

In addition to decrying the widening wealth gap between the nation's haves and have-nots, demonstrators spoke out on a variety of unrelated topics ranging from nuclear power to the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, a free-trade pact promoted by the U.S.

Marching behind a large "Occupy Tokyo" banner, about 300 protesters proceeded to the headquarters of Tokyo Electric Power Co., owner of the radiation-leaking Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. "Dissolve Tepco," "Stop nuclear power plants," they chanted.

The various signs, written in both Japanese and English, highlighted some of the issues apparently agitating the public.

"Let's firmly oppose the TPP that only makes 1 percent (of the population) happy," "No to Radioactivity," "The 1 percent who are stained with their greed for profits should disappear for the sake of the world's happiness," the Japanese signs read.

One of the organizers, Mie Yasuda, said many people in Tokyo are indignant about the way Tepco and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry are handling the nuclear disaster.

Nevertheless, she left the demands to the demonstrators.

"It is fine (to protest about) any absurdity in the world that angers you," she said Friday.

Kazuko Hirano, an 80-year-old pensioner from Setagaya Ward, said she decided to participate because she strongly believes Japan should eliminate nuclear plants.

"(I joined to get) as many people as possible angry about nuclear power plants and to make demands to the state" to halt them, she said.

Masashi Hayasaki, an employee from Tokorozawa, Saitama Prefecture, decided to show up because he is concerned about the TPP talks.

Joining the free-trade negotiations will see the country "swallowed by global capitalism" and "destroy Japanese tradition and culture," he said.

"I just want to tell pedestrians not to be indifferent" to the TPP and nuclear power plants, he said.

Passers-by had mixed feelings about the protests.

A separate Occupy Tokyo event was also held in the Roppongi district.

TAKAHIRO FUKADA, *Japan Times* Staff writer, October 15, 2011

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20111015x1.htm>

'Occupy Tokyo' hits city's streets

Calling for action on poverty and income disparities, an "Occupy Tokyo" movement brought many protesters out onto the streets of Tokyo's Roppongi and Hibiya districts Saturday afternoon.

The protests, inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States, came as advocates of the Occupy movement called on people worldwide to participate in an international day of action via the Internet.

Similar demonstrations were held in many cities in other countries on Saturday.

About 80 people gathered in Roppongi, Minato Ward.

Karin Amamiya, a writer familiar with youth poverty issues, received thunderous applause from the protesters when she said, "We must show that poor people can change society if they raise their voice!"

They chanted slogans calling for the rectification of income disparities.

The protesters, who say the nation's wealth is controlled by 1 percent of the population, carried placards that said, "We are the 99 percent."

"I wanted to call for the correction of income disparities in Roppongi, which represents wealth," said Chie Matsumoto, 41, a journalist from Kanagawa Prefecture who helped organize the protests in Roppongi.

Yomiuri Shimbun, October 16, 2011

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T111015002399.htm>

Occupy Tokyo/Kyoto: Japanese join global protests, but not all on same page

Japanese have added their voices to the fast-spreading global protests against economic inequality, with hundreds of demonstrators taking to the streets of Tokyo and Kyoto on Oct. 15.

Although satisfying protesters' desires to be heard, the message took on a local slant and perhaps became diluted with protests against nuclear power, high tuition and an Asia-Pacific free-trade agreement thrown in for good measure.

In one of the protests, called "Occupy Tokyo," handmade signs read "Homes and jobs for everyone!" and, "Nuclear power and inequality have the same roots."

Haruka Yagi, a 43-year-old unemployed woman, was one of about 100 participants assembled at the rally in Tokyo's Roppongi district.

Yagi joined the rally after seeing a posting about it on Twitter.

After learning of the growing wave of worldwide protests dubbed "Occupy Wall Street," she wanted to help create an opportunity in Japan for people to connect with one another.

Yagi quit a trade paper, where she worked as a temporary worker dispatched by a job placement company.

"It is not fair for someone to make a living comfortably at the expense of somebody else," her placard read.

At Hibiya Park in Tokyo, about 170 protesters gathered on the overcast and windy day. Some of the organizers had become acquainted with one another through the Internet, and for many, it marked the first time they had arranged for a protest like this.

At first, most of the participants were silent when they began their march. But later, they got into the spirit, shouting various slogans such as "No to nuclear power," "Tuition is too expensive" and "No to the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade initiative."

They did not chant any unified slogan.

Demonstrators also went on to the Tokyo headquarters of Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the embattled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Kengo Matsunaga, 43, a former company employee, is one of the leaders that organized the demonstration.

But Matsunaga said that he is not insisting that Japan end its dependence on nuclear power and that key members of his group are not united in their opinions.

Matsunaga admitted that he has had difficulty in organizing a meaningful demonstration under the same banner with so many divergent views.

In Kyoto, about a dozen people, mostly in their 20s and 30s, hit the road from the Kyoto city hall in the protest "Occupy Kyoto" on the afternoon of Oct. 15.

Carrying signs that included "Give us real democracy!" and "We don't need nuclear power," they marched through downtown for several kilometers, chanting, "We will not put up with inequality" and "Give us jobs."

Many of the demonstrators were answering a call for participants on Facebook and Twitter.

"I was hoping to show we are able to shake up society in our daily lives, not just by voting," said Miki Hasegawa, an unemployed 31-year-old who organized the protest.

Another male participant said that by taking action, he wanted to help bring about change.

Asahi Shimbun , October 18, 2011

<http://www.asahi.com/english/TKY201110170327.html>
