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# Desktop Planning, Local Knowledge and the Yamba Dam Project (Gunma, Japan),

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## Abstract (in French and English)

On January 22, 2015, construction began on a large gravity dam on the Agatsuma River. From planning to the start of construction of the dam took a "mere" 66 years. En route to that date, planners motivated by a desire to prevent massive flooding in the Tokyo/Kanto region layed out a massive civil engineering project that restructured all of the major, and many tributary rivers over five provinces. The Yamba Dam was the final piece of that project, but its construction more than a half century after its construction was announced was not the product of the original plan. Engineers in Tokyo planned a project that ignored local conditions which made construction highly problematic, made inadequate provision for relocating affected populations, took no account of the area's economic foundations, and in the long run did much to destroy even those parts of the town that were not directly affected by the construction of the dam and its reservoir. Controversial from its inception and ignoring local wishes in newly democratized Japan, this project ultimately became the poster child for environmentalists' criticism of overbuilding and a focal point in the 2009 parliamentary election.

**Keywords:** Japan, dams, local knowledge, environmental criticism, democracy

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