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Neighborhood Tokyo

Creative Urban Milieus as Places of Innovation and Polarization

A virtual *u:japan lunch lecture* by Heide Imai

Thursday
2022-06-30
12:30~14:00



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Against the background of the new attractiveness of urban centers, creative people are gaining more and more importance as potential initiators for various urban development processes. On the one hand, the activation and participation of these creative people is important in order to integrate innovative potential into various development processes, on the other hand, creative people are showing increasing interest in the development of their city and are demanding their participation.

In Tokyo, creatives represent a relatively hidden but important part of the larger creative ecosystem, made up of many different influential stakeholders (e.g. state, city authorities, big companies and foreign investors), all of which actively contribute to its functioning. As such, creative actors occupy a unique meta-position between the two worlds of creativity, as they are both part

of everyday neighborhood life and part of the larger economic system in which they (want) to thrive. Therefore, they also can also be described as ‚facilitators‘, bridging the two dimensions of Tokyo’s creative ecosystem, as their hybrid, bi-directional role enables the important exchange between systematic/economic and neighborhood creativity.

This lecture aims to illuminate and better understand the role of existing creative urban milieus in the urban development of Tokyo. Various neighborhoods of Tokyo are introduced and ‚walked through‘ (Bakurochō, Hikifune, Kyōjima, Ichigaya, Kiyosumi Shirakawa, Kōenji, Kuramae) to capture how milieu-bound creativity as a collective network resource has and is affecting Tokyo’s urban development, especially during and after the Covid -19 Pandemic.



Dr. **Heide Imai**, Architect and since 2020 Associate Professor at Senshu University, Faculty of Intercultural Communication, and Research Associate at Keio University, studied architecture, cultural studies and urban sociology in Leipzig, Rotterdam, Oxford and Manchester. Author of *Tokyo Roji: The Diversity and Versatility of Alleyways in a City in Transition* (Routledge, 2017), *Asian Alleyways: An Urban Vernacular in Times of Globalization* (with M. Gibert-Flutre, Amsterdam University Press, 2020), *Creativity in Tokyo : Revitalizing a Mature City* (with M. Ursic, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). She is primarily concerned with urban places, through which we can understand urban development processes between revitalization and decay, creativity and sustainability. A new publication on the subject entitled *Everyday Yokohama – Neighborhoods between Decline and Revival* will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2022.

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