

Situated Urban Rituals: Rethinking the Meaning and Practice of Micro Culture in Cities in East Asia

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Abstract : Contemporary cities, especially in Japan, have reached an indescribable complexity and excessive, global investments blur formal, rooted structures. Modern urban agglomerations blindly trust a macro understanding, whereas everyday activities which portray the human degree of living space are being suppressed and erased. The paper will draw upon the approach 'Micro-Urbanism' which focus on the sensitive and indigenous side of contemporary cities, which in fact can hold the authentic qualities of a city. Related to this approach is the term 'Micro-Culture' which is used to clarify the inner realities of the everyday living space on the example of the Japanese urban backstreet. The paper identifies an example of a 'micro-zone' in terms of 'street space', originally embedded in the landscape of the Japanese city. And although the approach 'Micro-Urbanism' is more complex, the understanding of the term can be tackled by a social analysis of the street, as shown on the backstreet called roji and closely linked examples of 'situated' urban rituals like (1) urban festivities, (2) local markets/ street vendors and (3) artistic, intellectual tactics. Likewise, the paper offers insights in a 'community of streets' which boundaries are specially shaped by cultural activity and social networks.

Keywords : urban rituals, community, streets as micro-zone, everyday space

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