



## TOKYO: TOWARDS A NEW PUBLICNESS

*Tokio: hacia una nueva idea de lo público*

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**ABSTRACT:** Tokyo, that epitome of Japanese cities, reflects in its urban structure a culture in which the meaning and use of public space has traditionally been very different from those of European cities. Two concurring and opposed processes are currently taking place in the biggest city on the planet which challenge that preconception: on one hand, a gradual canceling out of the original small-scale, multilayered urban fabric, substituted by huge, monolithic private developments; and on the other hand, a gradual collective acknowledgement of the sociopolitical role of public spaces, including a new attitude toward publicness and a new awareness of urban design's potential to facilitate social interchanges. An experimental event carried out in Tokyo in 2014 is presented as an example of this change in the perspective on public space in Tokyo, and as a model to engage students in architecture and social sciences in a beneficial transformation of the city, toward a new publicness.

**KEYWORDS:** Tokyo, City, Publicness, Social & Political Use of Public Space, Demonstrations, Festivals, Matsuri.

**RESUMEN:** Tokio, epitome de la ciudad japonesa, refleja en su estructura urbana una cultura en la que, tradicionalmente, el espacio público ha tenido un significado muy diferente del de las ciudades europeas. Dos procesos concurrentes y opuestos se están dando hoy día en la mayor ciudad del mundo, poniendo en crisis esa preconcepción: de una parte, una cancelación gradual del tejido urbano original, de pequeña escala y formado por múltiples capas, que viene sustituido por enormes promociones privadas monolíticas; por otra



parte, un reconocimiento colectivo progresivo del papel sociopolítico de los espacios públicos, incluyendo una nueva actitud hacia la idea de lo público y una nueva consciencia de las posibilidades del diseño urbano para facilitar los intercambios sociales. Un evento experimental llevado a cabo en Tokio en 2014 se da como ejemplo de ese cambio de perspectiva respecto del espacio público y como modelo para involucrar a los estudiantes de arquitectura y de ciencias sociales en una transformación beneficiosa de la ciudad, hacia una nueva idea de lo público.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Tokio, ciudad, lo público, uso político y social del espacio público, manifestaciones, festivales, Matsuri.

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**RESUM:** Tòquio, epítom de la ciutat japonesa, reflecteix en la seua estructura urbana una cultura en la qual, tradicionalment, l'espai públic ha tingut un significat molt diferent del de les ciutats europees. Dos processos concurrents i oposats s'estan donant avui dia a la ciutat més gran del món, posant en crisi aquesta preconcepció: d'una banda, una cancel·lació gradual del teixit urbà original, de xicoteta escala i format per múltiples capes, que ve substituït per enormes promocions privades monolítiques; d'altra banda, un reconeixement col·lectiu progressiu del paper sociopolític dels espais públics, incloent una nova actitud cap a la idea d'allò que és públic i una nova consciència de les possibilitats del disseny urbà per facilitar els intercanvis socials. Un esdeveniment experimental dut a terme a Tòquio el 2014 es dona com a exemple d'aquest canvi de perspectiva respecte de l'espai públic i com a model per involucrar l'estudiantat d'arquitectura i de ciències socials en una transformació beneficiosa de la ciutat, cap a una nova idea d'allò públic.

**PARAULES CLAU:** Tòquio, ciutat, el públic, ús polític i social de l'espai públic, manifestacions, festivals, Matsuri.



## I. Introduction

The conurbation of Tokyo is a vast metropolis, the biggest urban agglomeration in the world.<sup>1</sup> It has been the world's largest, or one of the largest, metropolitan areas since ancient times,<sup>2</sup> but this complex organization of activities, fluxes and lives has historically occurred with no planning determining its form – unlike the case of Kyoto, the former capital of Japan, which is based on traditional Chinese models: formal, regular and hierarchized. Tokyo's morphology is, rather, the result of a different, quite organic approach to urban functionality. Not grounded on a designed form, it is based on the interaction of different forces and on the optimization of their relationships, to assure a precise, clockwork mechanism serving millions of people.

Occasions for its redesign have arisen in certain moments of recent history, like in the wake of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, or after the devastating incendiary bombings of WW2 in 1945 (fig. 1). Both events swept away almost the entire city, producing a blank canvas on which a new urban structure could have been organized. But the efforts of those advocating comprehensive urban planning were quickly overcome by urgent necessities and limited resources, the city's high-speed dynamics, and the lack of sufficient

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1. There is no set definition of 'urban agglomeration', but by different measures Tokyo is the largest metropolitan area in the world. Tokyo city itself, with an area of 1810 km<sup>2</sup>, has a population of 13 million, while the most commonly used administrative area, the Ito Sanken ('One Metropolis, Three Prefectures'), has a population of 35.6 million in an area of 13,555 km<sup>2</sup>. Main strategic decisions are taken following the 'National Capital Region Planning Act', which comprises 43.5 million people in an area of 36,890 km<sup>2</sup>. All figures rounded off and according to the Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2010 census ([www.stat.go.jp](http://www.stat.go.jp)).

According to 2012 data, the biggest metropolitan areas after Tokyo are those of Seoul and Shanghai, each with about 25 million people. The biggest conurbation in Europe is Moscow (20 million), followed by Greater London (13.5 million).

2. At the beginning of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603, which established Edo (the former name of Tokyo) as the *de facto* capital, Kyoto was the largest city in Japan (430,000). Edo caught up in 15 years. By 1750, Edo had grown to 1.2 million, the largest city in the world at that time. After a period of steady growth and subsequent stagnation, by 1935 the resident population of Tokyo had risen to 6.36 million, comparable to the populations of New York and London at that time. Immediately after WW2, its population halved to 3.5 million, rebounding thereafter and breaking the 10 million mark in 1960. It has been growing ever since.

political and social backing to implement such schemes, and the initiative for transformation was relinquished to self-construction or powerful interests. Tokyo ended up in both cases being practically rebuilt on its old traces, with no extensive or significant changes.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1. Tokyo, 1945. After USAF incendiary bombing.

With all its peculiarities, Tokyo epitomizes the Japanese city in many respects. Morphologically it is the result of several overlapping processes and actions, at different speeds, at different moments, and with different goals. In Tokyo, however, in spite of its role as the capital of a mighty economy, its dynamism and its sheer size, these processes and actions have not yet can-

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3. A thoroughly researched and detailed account of the Great Kantō Earthquake and the circumstances in its aftermath is given in J. Charles Schencking, *The Great Kantō Earthquake and the Chimera of National Reconstruction in Japan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. A concise account of Tokyo's reconstruction after WW2 can be found in Ichikawa Hiroo "Reconstructing Tokyo: The Attempt to Transform a Metropolis", in C. Hein, J. Diefendorf, Y. Ishida eds. *Rebuilding Urban Japan After 1945*, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2003, pp. 50-67. This book focuses on five cities and compiles articles mostly from Japanese scholars, making a relevant contribution to understanding of a period not yet studied in depth or published in Western languages.

celebrated out the previous ones, but coexist in an ever-increasing layered result, where old and new, big and small are intimately intertwined on a truly unique scale and intensity. With no hierarchically defined form, these overlapping processes coexist with the same level of relevance. Infrastructures such as railways (of key importance in Tokyo and elsewhere in Japan), or the highway system built after 1959 and in full operation for the 1964 Olympics, for instance, are laid over the existing urban fabric, neither imposing their logic nor affected by preexisting urban patterns (fig. 2). The result is a sort of awkward, or unformalized, coexistence of mutually accommodating systems.



*Figure 2. Tokyo 1965. After the Olympic Games.*

This multilayered, uncoordinated superimposition of actions has given Tokyo the reputation of a chaotic city. This, in fact, is a superficial assessment based on Western prejudices on what a city should look like. In reality, Tokyo is an extremely complex urban entity that runs as smoothly as clockwork. Few places in the world outside Japan are as safe, as ordered, or as reliable as Tokyo. Its order is clearly not visual, but of another sort. And it raises some interesting questions about the image of the city and the way it is spontaneously used and



inhabited. Certainly, the crudeness of many actions Tokyo has undergone (for instance, the layout of its infrastructures or the strict application of solar regulations are inevitable obstacles) is both shocking and appealing, in the sense that it reflects a fresh, direct approach to urban design, as opposed to the over-designed and imposed formality or beautification of the West.<sup>4</sup>

The final result of all these interactions may seem chaotic at first glance, but in fact urban building regulations are very strict in Tokyo, mainly aimed to accommodate coexistence, as mentioned above. The most common rules in the city's wards are those requiring minimum separation from neighboring sites, and ensuring adequate insulation, at least on paper. Ultimately, all these regulations refer to the individuality of the architectural object (including both built and unbuilt 'objects', like parks or gardens), not to the whole, which is basically regulated by different sorts of zoning. In fact, Tokyo has grown almost organically, following very rudimentary or unsophisticated guidelines, like those of a medieval town: higher buildings along the main roads, low buildings elsewhere. It is all the more astonishing that this happens in one of the world's capitals, a vibrant metropolis concentrating a significant portion of the world's wealth, with close to a hundred universities and colleges, the highest level of technology, and connected to – and influencing – global interactions in many respects ever since the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

This highly dynamic city has a vibrant public life, but in spite of its status, like other Japanese (or Far Eastern) cities, Tokyo has no system of public spaces for its public life to function within. There are no piazzas or communal areas for social and political representation and discussion, and the traditional use of public spaces is limited to parks, where people gather on specific occasions. Eating outdoors beyond those occasions, or having a coffee on a terrace, for instance, are still quite rare activities. There are reasons for this. In Japanese culture there is a sharp contrast between *within* and *without*, the latter being the realm of dirtiness and the interior (house or public building) that

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4. See the ideas of Japanese architect Kazuo Shinohara, who first described the “beauty of urban chaos” in the early 1960s, embracing the reality of a complex and haphazard result as an outcome of multiple independent interactions. He further elaborated this notion into the idea of “progressive anarchy” in the article “Towards Architecture”, *The Japan Architect* 09.1981, pp. 31-32, taking the argument further in the section “Tokyo: The Beauty of Progressive Anarchy”, in his essay “Chaos and Machine”, *The Japan Architect* 05.1988, p. 28.





of pulchritude. The exterior can be understood as a continuous backyard: it is even considered acceptable to hang one's washing out on the main façade of the house – and not necessarily because Japanese houses are generally small.

Public spaces in Japan are mostly single-use, commercially-oriented spaces that do not generally constitute a place for citizens to share experiences. But all this is changing quite rapidly, as we will see later. There is a growing awareness of the different roles and uses of public spaces in the city, from political to leisure, beyond the commercial, and similarities are beginning to appear with Western ways of understanding public spaces: open areas that can be used in different ways, open to everyone at any time, where people share and exchange knowledge, information and pleasure, representing a society. This shift is also leading to a new awareness of the role of architects and social scientists in urban design, fostering better places to host communal life. However, at the same time, since the 1990s Tokyo has been subject to strong pressure that is pushing city life in completely the opposite direction.

## 2. Tokyo's urban challenges and the idea of public space

In spite of the changing perception of public spaces, and its rich and intricate urban structure, today Tokyo is fast becoming a mundane, uniform city. Many neighborhoods with multiple layers of small or medium scale structures and urban fabric are being replaced by huge developments that span several blocks and suck all public life from the street into privatized commercial spaces, rendering the remaining exterior spaces useless, superfluous and unconnected.<sup>5</sup> Tokyo is thus becoming as dull as contemporary Shanghai or Dubai. And it seems the 2020 Olympic Games are not being seized as an opportunity for positive transformation of the city. Rather the contrary: they are actually accelerating this current trend toward urban amalgamation, a trend that must be criticized and overturned without further delay.

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5. Although embedded in the Japanese approach to urban design, this tendency toward privatization of urban space in Tokyo has now gained devastating momentum. For a concise but precise and still valid account of this trend, see Marc Boudier "L'opportunismo al servizio dell'urbano. Pubblico e privato nello sviluppo di Tokyo", published in *Casabella* n° 608-609, 01-02 1994, pp. 86-92.

This necessary criticism should not be based on a sort of nostalgia for the incredibly fertile complexity ensuing from the apparently disparate overlapping structures that coexist in Tokyo, affecting property, mobility, building codes and so on. Cities must inevitably transform to adapt to new challenges, as Tokyo has done remarkably well since Edo times.<sup>6</sup> This criticism should be about prioritizing which challenges – and which changes – are socially relevant, embodying a vision of urban life and facilitating the open use of the city for the next generation.

Now these challenges seem clearer than ever. Social unrest after the Fukushima disaster in 2011 brought thousands of people onto the streets in unprecedented demonstrations urging the government to make changes (fig. 3). True, five years later everything seems to have gone back to normal: even electricity consumption has skyrocketed again, whereas between 2011 and 2012 people were making more rational use of energy; and the last elections in 2014 seemed to give strong support to the ruling president, albeit with caveats.<sup>7</sup>



*Figure 3. Tokyo, 2011. Fukushima disaster protests.*

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6. See note 2.

7. See by way of example, “Retaking Japan: The Abe Administration’s Campaign to Overturn the Postwar Constitution”, a recent keynote speech delivered by the noted social writer and activist Muto Ichiyo at a peace conference held in Hiroshima Aug. 4-5, 2015, marking the 70th anniversary of Japan’s defeat in the war. His exposition, although seemingly radical, actually reflects a common view held by much of the general public in Japan. Published in *The Asia-Pacific Journal | Japan Focus*, Volume 14, Issue 13, Number 3. Available at <http://apjjf.org/authors/view/14621>.





However, the desire for change that prompted so many people to take to the streets, and that is probably behind the highest ever abstention rates in the last elections, is still very much alive, and needs to be addressed. It is a desire to participate in the country's decisions, to have a say in the way things are planned and executed that goes beyond casting a vote every few years, a decision and its outcome that, after all, Japanese people have to discuss, take and share.

Nevertheless, in the urban context, Tokyo, and other cities in Japan, needs to clearly assess the importance of public space and its legal implications in order to face these challenges and prepare for a better future. Tokyo must do this in at least two senses:

First, social uses of public space are gradually changing in Tokyo, possibly due to exposure to other cultures and to internal changes in social relationships and structure. Moving toward the construction of a true quality public space now seems more urgent than ever if this social shift in perception is to be catered for, drawing from experiences of other leading cities around the world that have benefited from such transformation in the last decades.

Second, the structuring quality of public space should be considered as a system that is just as important as mobility or communication infrastructures. A city is much more than roads and buildings related to varying degrees in an objectual design approach: it is the construction of this relational environment we call public space that gives meaning to the need to live together in groups, and that infuses belonging to a place with multiple meanings and possibilities. Without that, we cannot speak of urban life in a contemporary sense.

It is time to start insisting that things can be different, and that they have to be different. If Tokyo is to be sustainable and capable of facing all the unexpected turns life brings, and of surviving the challenges it will surely have to deal with in the future, it needs to be founded on the publicness of urban space and to overturn the ongoing privatization of city life. Only by safeguarding the multiplicity and variety of society and its uses of the public realm can we be sure that we will all be able to contribute to the resilience of Tokyo, and that its citizens will all be able to proudly say that they are part of it, because it belongs to everyone.



### 3. Publicness through Action: Designing a Street Festival

The opportunities for considering the processes and qualities of open and public spaces in Tokyo, or for developing ideas for them, are still few and far between, and much less so for a non-Japanese architect. But that was precisely the enticing proposal I received from Professor Taku Sakaushi of Tokyo University of Science (Rikadai): to run a ten-day architectural design seminar on publicness and public space, so students could have a first-hand approach based on my experience in such projects and in how Barcelona has tackled these issues in the last decades. But although enticing, it was also quite a challenge. The task seemed impossible, not only because the available time was very short to prepare a project of any significance, but especially because the notion of public space and public uses as we understand them in Europe is so alien to Japanese tradition, education and urban structure. There are streets, of course, and there are activities taking place in the streets. But streets are not meant to be places of conviviality, although they are places of exchange, usually commercial, as we have seen.

What I was most interested in doing, however, was not so much to show students how public space is understood and designed in Barcelona, but to make them aware of the contemporary importance of public space in building our cities – any city, including Tokyo; to press home the idea that urban design of public spaces is not about beautifying our urban environment. For instance, there are many cases in Tokyo where money and attention have been poured into designing a place, but that completely fail to become an active part of citizens' lives. They are just fancy decorations, trying to normalize Tokyo as a 'nice' city, but they are not places where people can freely develop their own interests.

My main goal was to emphasize that, beyond its materiality, public space is about use: about how we use it and how the architecture generating that space can encourage people to use it in different ways at different moments, or simultaneously, or sequentially. This is our main task as architects when we design public space: to contribute to social life from our own expertise, helping it to develop spontaneously in ways that cannot possibly be imagined – or designed.

When people use spaces on their own initiative, perhaps changing the rules of those spaces, then we have an inclusive city of which any segment of society can feel it is the owner, and maker, of those public spaces. The city is vibrant, and is



singing to tunes other than commercialism or formality, and society feels like a real group. Drawing from its own history, there are two examples of this socio-political use of Tokyo's urban spaces that could serve as models for the seminar. One is very recent, and the other, very old.

The recent example is the social protest and self-organization that erupted after the Fukushima disaster in 2011. People took to the streets and strongly expressed two crucial things: their will, and their intention to share it. The place where they shared it was, of course, the public space. Pictures of those days convey the feeling of great power citizens achieve when they come together as a society, and how much the city changes when this power takes to the streets and other public places. Even though today we can instantly connect with the other side of the world and work or meet or laugh together over Internet, we still need to meet real people in real places, places that belong to all of us: these are the public spaces. This mix of taking to the streets and using social media (as in the Arab Spring uprisings) is especially relevant in Japan, where technology dominates all aspects of life.

In these specific moments, the city changes because people use it differently. This, I believe, is the great lesson from 2011 and similar historical situations that have occurred in the city.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Tokyo, I think it is especially important that students, and by extension everyone, understand that the city is much more than commercial spaces; and that without these 'other' uses of the city, we cannot be true citizens. The city, and its architecture of public spaces, should therefore facilitate this multiplicity.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Tokyo has a fairly long, and for many, surprising, history of public demonstrations and riots. A few examples are the Hibiya Incendiary Incident of 1905, the Communist May Day Riots of 1952, or a series of students' demonstrations starting in 1960 and leading to the protests of 1968, which predated those of Paris. The movie *United Red Army* (2007), by director Kōji Wakamatsu, offers a broad perspective on the political climate of the 1960s.

9. The visibility of the socio-political use of public space is also increasing. After the Fukushima disaster a change in attitude took place in the media, which could no longer ignore what was going on in the streets. As the Japanese political scientist Oguma Eiji describes, "In the five years since 2011, a change has taken place in Japanese society. The rallies against the security legislation in the summer of 2015 were much more widely reported in the mass media than the antinuclear movement was in 2012." In Oguma Eiji, "A New Wave Against the Rock: New social movements in Japan since the Fukushima nuclear meltdown", published in the *Asia-Pacific Journal - Japan Focus*, Volume 14, Issue 13, Number 2, July 1, 2016, translated by Alexander Brown, available at <http://apjpf.org/2016/13/Oguma.html>.



The old example refers to the long-established tradition of popular local festivals (*matsuri* in Japanese) in which the city or the neighborhood is used as a communal space at certain times of the year. These festivals are usually, although not always, linked to some religious custom, but many are thought to be older than their religious transposition. In Tokyo they can be seen throughout the city at different times of the year, merrily interfering with the daily life of this busy metropolis. In those moments, some of its streets become different because they are used differently, and Tokyo feels like a domestic community, like a small village, making it easier for one individual to connect with others.

*Matsuri* in Tokyo have a special significance, not only because they reenact historical events. As I see it, they are important from the point of view of urban design because they represent a certain reading of the city and its structure. In fact, these festivals are based on a sort of pilgrimage around designated areas, and follow specific routes connecting different nodes of social life. They are at the basis of a significant portion of Tokyo's urban structure, actually defining by their very existence a hierarchy of still visible and acknowledged streets. We might even say that *matsuri* have made some parts of Tokyo the way they are now.<sup>10</sup>

So, if in order to learn how to design public space we should first learn how to use it, why not take the notion of *matsuri* as the greatest example of conviviality we have in Japan, and in Tokyo in particular, as the basis for our work? That was my proposal for the seminar. But because it was for architects, it could not be just any sort of festival. It had to tell a story bound up with our vision of the city, and that could be interpreted as an urban comment about our times, not about history or legend. The answer was to reenact the story of Rikadai and the conflict over its campus in Kagurazaka.<sup>11</sup> (fig. 4). This approach had the advantage of being local, telling a real story and commenting on the current urban processes taking place in Tokyo.

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10. Remarkable in this respect is the research done in the mid-1980s by Hidenobu Jinai, summarized, both in Japanese and English, in his monograph "Ethnic Tokyo", *Process Architecture* n° 72, January 1987, especially sections 23 through 27.

11. Kagurazaka is one of the old neighborhoods of central Tokyo. It is widely regarded as one of the best-preserved parts of the city, and is very popular nowadays as an entertainment area.



*Figure 4. Kagurazaka area in central Tokyo.*

The story is as follows: Once upon a time... the Rikadai campus was, in its beginnings, much smaller and fitted neatly into the traditional urban fabric of Kagurazaka, its original setting. But when the institution began to expand, it needed much bigger buildings, including skyscrapers and major developments, and it applied for planning permission. Popular pressure by local residents eventually brought the process to a halt, however, obliging Rikadai to find another campus for its expansion. And in Kagurazaka only medium-size buildings were built, and only on the main road, not in the center of the neighborhood. The newest one, built a few years ago, blends in with the small scale of its surroundings and creates a connecting gate between University and Neighborhood.

This is a good story that ended well for the city and the neighboring community. But this sort of outcome is still very rare in Tokyo. Processes that cancel out the previous urban fabric and replace it with huge buildings prevail and are rapidly taking place in too many places around the city. In this workshop we wanted to foster the notion among students that another approach to urban reality is possible: an approach based on diversity of uses and people, and on coexistence of different scales; an approach that allows for formal and informal activities, that leaves no doubt that the city consists of people, and that people change and develop, and probably now feel the need for closer



relations in public spaces. We wanted, in short, to celebrate public spaces as the main glue holding city life together.

The workshop “The Construction of an Event: Kagurazaka NeoMatsuri” was carried out in four parts, pedagogically relevant to the students and coherent with the conceptual approach explained above:

– Research into the history and urban structure of Kagurazaka, including the history of Rikadai and its relationship with the neighborhood, Japanese Matsuri history and significance, and current trends of the use of public space in Tokyo (fig. 5);

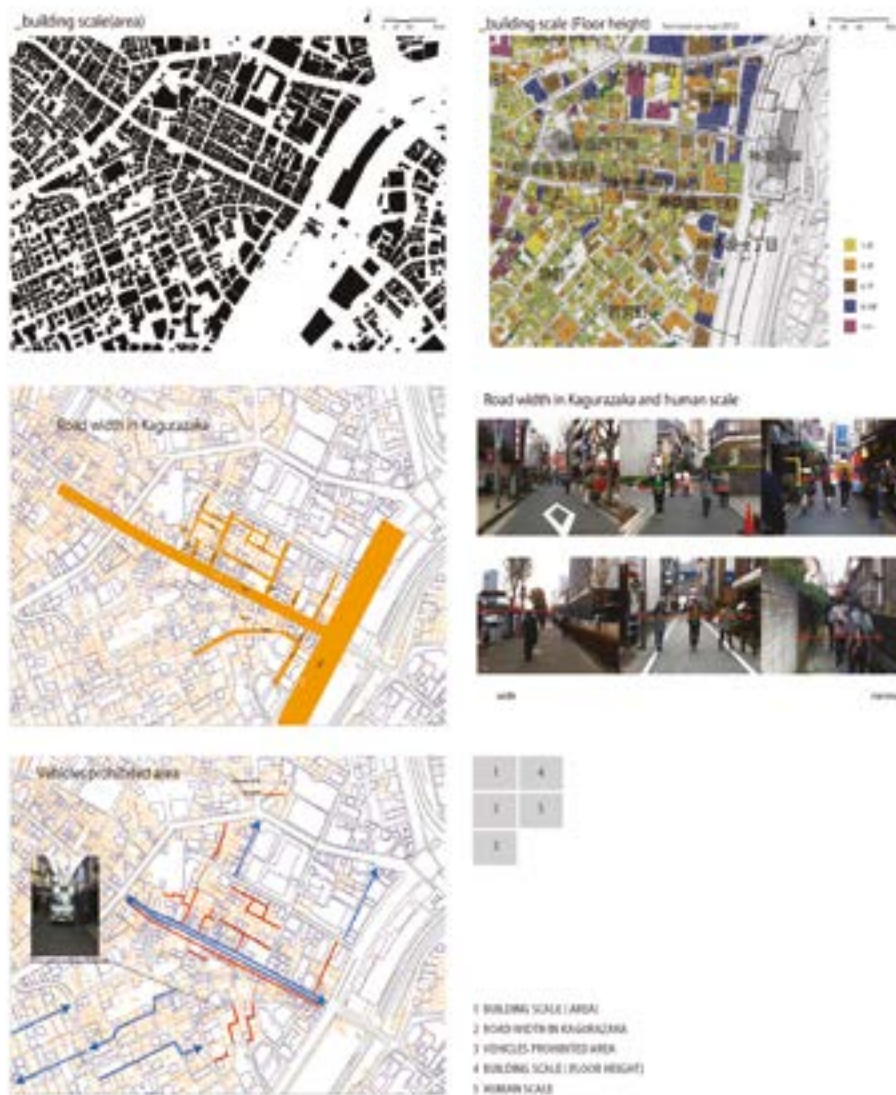


Figure 5. NeoMatsuri\_01 – Preliminary studies in Urban Structure.



– Design of the event, its narrative, the parade route, its elements and its conceptual definition as an architectural action. The main purpose of the event was to become a collective tool for urban criticism of current processes of transformation taking place in Tokyo, by which the small scale urban fabric is canceled out and replaced by large scale buildings and privatization of public life (fig. 6);



*Figure 6. NeoMatsuri\_02 - Costume Design.*

– Making all the elements for the NeoMatsuri by upcycling, that is, transforming discarded materials to create all props. The props included a Kagura Miko-shi (portable shrine), a Kagurakasa (portable element), costumes, food and music. Designing elements to enhance the neighborhood for the event, such as constructing a canopy to mark the central point of all activities; and designing, printing and distributing flyers explaining the event to the general public (fig. 7);



Figure 7. NeoMatsuri\_03 - Food, Props and Site Design.

– Performing the event in the streets of Kagurazaka, bringing together all the above-mentioned elements in a single architectural action. This included several parades around the neighborhood drawing attention to its urban structure, a representation of the struggle between small and large scale, and a public meal embodying this struggle, to which the local community was invited (fig. 8).



Figure 8. NeoMatsuri\_04 - Performance, December 20th, 2014.



#### 4. By way of conclusion

It is critical for the open development of cities that their inhabitants have an informed say in their future. If this is true for the general public, it is even more so for architects and other specialists who, through their work, can have a major impact on shaping the city. Their work should not be regarded as merely technical, limited to putting solutions in place. Their most important contribution is not to give answers, but to raise questions that keep the common good in mind. This is an important aspect of architectural education: to foster students' critical awareness of the multiple processes shaping the city, and to design their projects accordingly.

Two aspects were important in the Kagurazaka NeoMatsuri seminar: firstly, approaching the design of public space not from the conventional use of Western models to shape the space itself, but by starting to think about public space from users' interactions and how they can effectively form the city. The second aspect was to emphasize the idea that by renouncing the construction aspect of architecture and embracing ephemerality we were not renouncing our activity as architects. On the contrary, we were expanding the field and its potential to have a positive impact on society.

All the discussions in the various sessions we held together were social, architectural and urban at the highest level: because *matsuri* in general, and Kagurazaka NeoMatsuri in particular, are architectural, social and urban events, connecting our capabilities as people specialized in reading the city and operating in it, with our possibilities as citizens. In this wonderful, extraordinary experience we took to the streets, we shouted and we performed an urban story that was also relevant for the neighborhood and its history.

This unforgettable event, besides team discussions, included many interactions with Kagurazaka and its inhabitants such as talks with neighbors to ascertain the role and image Rikadai has today in the neighborhood. Permission to publicly perform in the streets was required, a process that involved close dealings with the Kagurazaka traders association; once their approval had been given, the police granted the permit. It also involved a careful dimensioning of all the props in the event to adjust them to the real size of the streets, many of which are very narrow. In sum, it provided a unique oppor-



tunity for the students to be involved in the actual making of city life, transforming for a while the urban landscape. And it was an excellent occasion to place public space, and a new understanding of publicness, at the core of their architectural thinking.

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