

An Overview of the 2013 International Symposium, “Urban Space, Culture and Community”

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We are glad to report on the 4th annual international symposium held in the Tachikawa Memorial Hall, Rikkyo University, Tokyo. The symposium’s purpose is to engage in social-scientific discussion regarding contemporary issues in the east-Asian metropolises, such as urban development and cultural policies, and to examine their effect in bringing social changes. It was hosted by the Rikkyo Institute for Global Urban Studies, which was established within the University in 2007 to support studies of urban societies in the global context. In this international symposium, the program is composed from study series of contemporary issues in east-Asian cities. In 2010, the first symposium, with a focus upon Asian urban culture, was also held at Rikkyo University, and paper-presenters were from Tokyo, Shanghai, and Seoul. Then the next year of 2011, the project became larger, involving several other major research centers, including Tongji University, Fudan University, University of Seoul, UNESCO World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP), the Shanghai Research Centre of Chinese Culture and Creation as well as the Rikkyo’s Institute. Last year, 2012, the University of Seoul hosted the program, featuring creative city policies. And so, with this 4th event, we have returned to the site of the inaugural symposium.

The first day of the Symposium on 14th October 2013 commenced with an opening address by Professor Tetsuo Mizukami, vice-director for the Institute. The day’s program was divided into two sessions, each consisting of three papers. The first session centered on urban spaces and cultural heritage in relation to creative city design, while the second one dealt with the urban character and changes of residential areas. From the beginning of this project to date, all the papers have been concerned to raise contemporary issues that have emerged in east-Asian metropolises. The three paper-presentations of the first session were as below: “Urban Space, Culture, and Industry: Mixed Processes of the Creative City Yokohama in the First Decade” (Professor Yasushi Matsumoto, Department of Sociology,

Rikkyo University); “The Various Practice of Preserving Architectural Heritages and Sustainably Developing Township: A Case of Tongli Water Town, South-east China” (Professor Jian Zhou, College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University, and Dr. Xiaohua Zhong, School of Political Science and International Relations, Tongji University); and “From Entertainment Machine to Anti-Growth Machine: Changing Governance in Seoul” (Professor Wonho Jang, Department of Urban Sociology, The University of Seoul).

The second session also had three-paper presentations as follows: “Communal Entrepreneurship in Old Neighborhood Renewal: Case Studies of Shanghai Tianzifang Shopping District” (Professor Hai Yu, Department of Sociology, Fudan University); “Roles and Conflicts of the Principal Agents in Public Arts: Focused on the City Gallery Project in Seoul” (Professor Kee-Bom Nahm, Department of Urban Sociology, University of Seoul); and “Explaining Tokyo’s Re-urbanization and Shrinking Suburbs through Residential Choices” (Associate Professor Kayo Tajima, College of Economics, Rikkyo University).

After a very stimulating discussion that highlighted the understandings of participants as well as the prospects of urban development in each of the cases raised, Professor Yasushi Matsumoto, a Director for the Institute, thanked all participants with his concluding remarks. Afterwards, a reception was held at the Reifsnider Hall, one of the University’s memorial architectures built in 1926. Most paper-presentations on the day have been revised and we are honored to present them to you in this issue.



Photo The Reifsnider Hall, built in honor of the former president of Rikkyo University, Dr. Charles Shiriver Reifsnider, who decided that the school’s motto would be “Pro Deo et Patria.”

The next day, 15 October, a study excursion was organized to visit inner-Tokyo, namely the Aoyama and Harajuku districts, guided by Dr. Tomomi Mita (Rikkyo University). The district is one of the centers for Japan's business, especially for fashion, cuisine, and other cultural activities. The conferees visited commercial complexes, such as "Omotesando Hills," "Gyre," and the alleys in Harajuku with their small boutiques. Although the initial project had been planned to conclude with this 4th symposium, the entire program has been so stimulating and invaluable, that the conferees have agreed to continue on and develop these co-operative research projects.

