

A World City in the Making: The Urbanization of Tokyo in the 1960s

Eric Häusler

(Research Fellow, Institute of Comparative Culture , Sophia University)

November 25, 2020

18:00 - 19:30

On Zoom

Please register from [HERE](#)

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=p-YOaaVN3E-jFrtZnYKl0pSDtnsMuJVAtzRnSittkskIUM1RIRDIMSUExOE1YVjNCUIVCNDdHMzBGTC4u>



Entering the 21st century cities have increasingly shaped the global future by joining forces in networks like the C40 Climate Cities, the Urban 20, the United Cities and Local Governments or the Global Parliament of Mayors. More than half the planet's population lives in cities where approximately 80 percent of the global GDP is generated. Yet, the success stories of often described world or global cities could not have been predicted 60 years ago. The shape the accompanying urbanization processes would take was far from certain and often included non-intended consequences as well as negative developments. The relationship between external factors (globalization) and the autonomy of cities has been discussed in a myriad of ways.

Through the historical analysis of expectations and imagined futures and a comparative perspective, this paper aims to re-introduce uncertainties, a wider range of urbanization processes, and various possible outcomes into the narrative of post-war urbanization. Following the German economic sociologist Jens Beckert (2016), imagined futures are seen as an important factor shaping the dynamics of capitalism. This insight is a central premise guiding the analysis of Tokyo's dynamic urbanization and its status as a world city in the making in the 1960s. At the same time, expectations regarding an unknown future cannot be separated from questions of power: "To have power means: My expectations count!" (Beckert 2016, 80) To include a broad spectrum of expectations regarding the urbanization of Tokyo in the 1960s and illustrate the openness of imagined futures, three case studies were chosen: the architectural urban utopias of the Metabolist movement, the massive changes in infrastructure surrounding the 1964 Olympics and

visions for a future city based on the 1968 counterculture.

At later projects stages, a synchronic comparative analysis of urbanization in New York City and Zurich in the 1960s will be conducted. Conceptually, the past future of urbanization is seen as unpredictable, open and plural. The corresponding urbanization narratives – realized or not, hegemonic or subversive – are treated equally and without hindsight-bias. The aim of this approach is to uncover 'Histories of the Possible' with regard to the urbanization of Tokyo, New York City and Zurich in the 1960s and thereby introduce open indeterminate futures into current urban planning discussions.

Eric Häusler is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Comparative Culture at Sophia University in Tokyo. His research focuses on the history of capitalism, global urban history and urbanization in the 1960s. Primarily educated as a historian, interdisciplinary approaches and the incorporation of sociological concepts are essential to his approach. Past research projects were dedicated to the history of the Swiss embroidery industry and the bankruptcy regime of Bern between 1750 and 1900 (PhD thesis). Eric will be discussing his current postdoc research project *Dealing with Uncertain Futures through Imaginaries: Narratives of Urbanization in the 1960s. The Case of Tokyo.*