EMERGENT FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVISM IN JAPAN: POLITICS, CULTURES AND TECHNOLOGIES

This conference brings together an international, multi-disciplinary group of scholars seeking to document and understand emergent forms of political activism, social engagement and cultural resistance among youth in Japan. From street politics to new forms of socialities, from creative representation to active resistance, our goal is to develop a critical language that captures the range of alternatives to what was once considered political. Through the heritage of post-war student and citizens’ movements, popular culture shifts during 1970’s affluence, and post-bubble recessionary disenfranchisement, we will explore these alternative currents right into our post-3.11 moment.

Date
June 11th, 2011 (13:00 – 18:00) / June 12th, 2011 (13:00 – 19:00)

Venue
TUJ Azabu Hall, room 212 (Access)

Webpage
Event Webpage  Event Facebook Page

Organizers
Kyle Cleveland, Temple University Japan
David H. Slater, Sophia University
Love Kindstrand, Sophia University

Admission
General: 1,000 yen (Sat & Sun inclusive) / Student: Free with student ID

Language
English & Japanese (simultaneous translation is not available.)

RSVP
Open to all / RSVP not required

Saturday, June 11

Opening Remarks: David H. Slater, Sophia University. Emergent Politics in Japan Today

13.00-15.00: ART, CREATIVITY, REPRESENTATIONS AND RESISTANCE

Tomiko Yoda, Japanese Literature and Media Studies, Harvard University
Between Pop and Radical: Feminism and Media Culture in Early 70s Japan

Sharon Hayashi, Cinema and Media Studies, York University
From Exploitation to Playful Exploits

Patrick W. Galbraith, Information Studies, University of Tokyo
Train Man, Radiowave Man, Underground Man: Revisiting the Politics of Pleasure after the Akihabara Incident

Discussants: Anne Allison, Duke University and Yoshitaka Mōri, Tokyo University of the Arts

15.30-18.00: CURRENTS AND CULTURES OF ACTIVISM

Yoshitaka Mōri, Tokyo University of the Arts (Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku)
Reconsidering Cultural-Political Movements in Japan in the Age of “Freeter”

Higuchi Takuro, Social Movement Studies
A Prehistory of the Alterglobalisation Movement in Japan: Subterranean Autonomous Networks Since the ‘90s

Robin O’Day, Cultural Anthropology, University of British Columbia
Union is Hope: The Role of Networks and Digital Media in Organizing Japan’s Young Irregular Workers

Love Kindstrand, Cultural Anthropology, Sophia University
Tactical Currents, Spatial Framings: the Movement Against Nike-ification of Miyashita Park and Beyond

Discussants: Patricia Steinhoff, University of Hawaii and Daishiro Nomiya, Sophia University

18:00: “GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION” DEMONSTRATION

June 11 is a global day of action organized by the Japanese movement against nuclear power. After the final panel on Saturday we will leave together for a gathering held in central Shinjuku. Anyone who is interested in attending is more than welcome to join. More details are available at http://nonukes.jp
Sunday, June 12

13.00-16.30: TRAJECTORIES OF ALTERNATIVE POLITICS

Ikuo J. Gonoï, Political Theory, Rikkyo University
*The World's End: The Cognitive Turn from “Sekai” to “Shakai”*

Patricia Steinhoff, Sociology, University of Hawaii
*Transforming Invisible Civil Society into Alternative Politics*

Mizukoshi Shin, Media Studies, University of Tokyo
*Communal Storytellings in A Regimented Society: Critical Media Practice on People’s Media Literacy and Expression*

Anne Allison, Cultural Anthropology, Duke University
*Stopping Death and Organizing Around Life: a Politics of Survival*

Shibuya Nozomu, Cultural Sociology, Chiba University
*Radioactive Contamination and the Common*

Discussants: Tomiko Yoda, Harvard University and Sharon Hayashi, York University

17.00-18.00: ROUND TABLE:

POST-3.11 FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIP AND ACTIVISM

Since the Tohoku earthquake on March 11, Japan has seen a renewed sense of national and political crisis, and an intensification of nationalistic narratives. Perhaps more importantly, there has been a reawakened political subjectivity that goes beyond existing anti-capitalist or anti-nuclear alternatives, which suggests a broader and more lasting repoliticization of everyday life. Demonstrations in Tokyo have been some of the largest since the Anpo era, but this is only one aspect of a post-3.11 critique of key institutions at the heart of the Japan, Inc. power structure. In this round-table discussion our presenters will attempt to make sense of the events since 3.11, and explore their implications for our own scholarship.

Chair: Kyle Cleveland, Temple University Japan

18.00: RECEPTION (light food and drinks will be served)
Hosted by TEMPLE UNIVERSITY JAPAN: Wakai Project
EMERGENT FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVISM IN JAPAN: POLITICS, CULTURES AND TECHNOLOGIES

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Abstracts: Saturday, June 11

13.00-15.00: ART, CREATIVITY, REPRESENTATIONS AND RESISTANCE

Tomiko Yoda, Japanese Literature and Media Studies, Harvard University
Between Pop and Radical: Feminism and Media Culture in Early 70s Japan
This presentation examines the resonances between new images of femininity that appeared in fashion and lifestyle magazines for women in the early 1970s and the “liberation of sex” (sei no kaih) called for by radical feminists in Japan at the time. Through this discussion, I analyze the alignment as well as disjuncture between feminism and consumer culture in the early phase of post-developmental Japanese society.

Sharon Hayashi, Cinema and Media Studies, York University
From Exploitation to Playful Exploits
As part of a larger project documenting the intersection of artistic and political protests in Japan since the 1960s, this paper will focus specifically on the rise of a loose network of collectives since the mid-1990s of young, often part-time workers, musicians, artists and students that have created sustainable new forms of collective activity. Creatively responding to the deepening financial crisis in the wake of neoliberal policies in Japan that have shifted the responsibility of the economic recession onto individuals, these collectives have refused to be defined solely by their exploitation. Instead they employ playful exploits to create new strategies of social engagement and models of place-based community.

Patrick W. Galbraith, Information Studies, University of Tokyo
Train Man, Radiowave Man, Underground Man: Revisiting the Politics of Pleasure after the Akihabara Incident
This paper examines the response to the Akihabara Incident in 2008 and mass-murder Katō Tomohiro to open a window onto the possibilities and limitations of “otaku” as an alternative mode of existence and politics. In the mass media, Katō came to represent a failed worker and man, linked to otaku, while in the niche media he represented a failed otaku. I argue that this has to do with the status of otaku as “reluctant insiders,” those who are alienated by their very inclusion in the middleclass and find a place on the margins through unacceptable consumption and play. It seems that the only way out of this destructive circuit is “playing with one’s self,” effectively exploding the system with laughter. Likewise, the political potential of otaku lies not in refusal or withdrawal, but in moments of pleasure that fail to resonate due to excess, deficiency or humor, thus becoming a form of “productive interference.”

Presentation Abstracts continued…
Saturday, June 11
15.30-18.00: CURRENTS AND CULTURES OF ACTIVISM

Yoshitaka Mōri, Tokyo University of the Arts (Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku)
Reconsidering Cultural-Political Movements in Japan in the Age of “Freeter”
Since the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, young people have developed new ways of involvement with politics in Japan. Within their politics, diverse cultural practices, such as music, dance, performance, painting, photograph, designing DIY media and presentation of new ways of everyday life, have increasingly become important elements. Looking back its short history from foreign immigrant and homeless people support movements in Shibuya, Yoyogi and Shinjuku in the mid-1990s via new life style movements, Dameren and Shirotano Ran, to the recent protest movement. I would like to examine the way in which young people have used cultural practices in their politics and discuss why culture has become an important category in the political movements in the age of “Freeter”.

Higuchi Takuro, Social Movement Studies
A Prehistory of the Alterglobalisation Movement in Japan: Subterranean Autonomous Networks in Japan Since the ’90s
Notions such as prefiguration, horizontality and connectivity, are characteristics of the alter-globalization movement after Seattle. Some researchers argue that they have developed in European autonomous movements since the late 70s, though it is hard to find such streams in Japan. Yet, the idea of DIY (Do It Yourself) punk has diffused within Japan since early 90s. In fact, the punk movement triggered the big diffusion of autonomous movement in the early 80s in Europe. DIY punk culture has tried to construct their own music scene independently from the market, and fostered autonomous networks of people over the last three decades. Some researchers find the basis of connectivity in this phenomenon. This paper, then, aims to describe the rise and development of DIY punk since the early 90s in Japan as a prehistory to the contemporary alter-globalization movement in Japan.

Robin O’Day, Cultural Anthropology, University of British Columbia
Union is Hope: The Role of Networks and Digital Media in Organizing Japan’s Young Irregular Workers
The concept of alter-activism is in part an attempt to identify what separates contemporary forms of protest from previous youth movements. Theorists suggest that what distinguishes alter-activism is its emphasis on youth, global connections, networks, collaboration, and being more heavily shaped by new technologies. While alter-activism is a global phenomenon, local ethnographic studies of alter-activist movements are only beginning to emerge. In this paper I explore how the local context influences the articulation of alter-activism in Japan. Through ethnographic fieldwork with a social movement in Tokyo, the paper considers how youth, networks and digital media are central components of the “Union Yes!” campaign to organize young irregular workers into community unions.

Love Kindstrand, Cultural Anthropology, Sophia University
Tactical Currents, Spatial Framings: the Movement Against Nike-ification of Miyashita Park and Beyond
The 2010 occupation of Miyashita Park in Shibuya, Tokyo, was a denunciation of exclusionary urban redevelopment and corporate-orchestrated commercialization of public space. It was also a six-month celebration of alternative visions of globalization and the organization of urban commons. This paper will approach the campaign against “Nike-ification” of Miyashita Park as a spatiotemporal plateau in a locally embedded yet globally distributed culture of protest. The alternative globalization movement is an exploration of alternatives to global neo-liberalism, the pathways to which are actualized in the spaces the movement creates, in and through the multiplicity of engaged participants.
Abstracts: Sunday, June 12

13.00-16.30: TRAJECTORIES OF ALTERNATIVE POLITICS

Ikuo J. Gonoï, Political Theory, Rikkyo University

The World's End: The Cognitive Turn from “Sekai” to “Shakai”

In what kind of reality, contextualising themselves, are the youth living in the 2010s especially after 3.11? How do Manga, animations and light novels which illustrate today’s everyday life, originally independent but increasingly categorized together as media art, connect with each other, and what sort of reality does it provide to the audience? Focusing on the collapse of “Sekai-kei” and the new “reality” of reenchantment of “everydayness” my presentation will show people come to terms with social issues (“shakai-kei”) for the first time which leads to transformative culture. Here young people for the first time new perceptions on reality and the connection with others.

Patricia Steinhoff, Sociology, University of Hawaii

Transforming Invisible Civil Society into Alternative Politics

This paper traces links between the New Left culture that developed during the protest cycle of the late 1960s-early 1970s and emergent forms of engagement and political activism in contemporary Japan. Veterans of these earlier protests have been pursuing alternative politics for nearly four decades through Japan’s invisible civil society, transmitting organizational forms, cultural practices, and specific institutions. These are now being discovered by a new generation of young activists and combined with their own innovations, offering new possibilities for alternative politics.

Mizukoshi Shin, Media Studies, University of Tokyo

Communal Storytellings in A Regimented Society: Critical Media Practice on People’s Media Literacy and Expression

It has long been lamented that citizen participation in civic activities and building community networks has been declining in Japan. With the advent of new information technologies such as social media and mobile phones, it is natural for many researchers and practitioners to expect these technologies make change this regimented social situation. However, emphasizing techno-oriented perspective too much may be dangerous. We should critically examine the whole media ecosystem in Japan and practically try to design cultural programs and technological systems to cultivate local communities and revitalize ordinary people’s network at both theoretical and action-oriented levels. This presentation will address the possibilities and challenges of some interactive digital storytelling activities and media plays for local communities, developed by his trans-disciplinary research project, “mediaexprimo”.

Anne Allison, Cultural Anthropology, Duke University

Stopping Death and Organizing Around Life: a Politics of Survival

Even before recent events, social insecurity in and around everyday life, getting by, keeping up, planning ahead, had become risky for more and more Japanese. In times of encroaching precariousness, people have been turning to resources or reserves for surviving hardship, drying up. This includes human capital and connectedness in an era when elderly die alone (kodokushi) and loneliness has become epidemic. I look here at attempts to combat, and survive, the precariousness of life in newly constructed zones of human connectedness such as local drop-in centers (chi iki no cha no ma) or “water-holes” (tamariba) where membership is post-identitarian and the agenda is mutual contact and help (fureai ibasho). Is precariousness a new rubric, and potential, for not only sociality but survival in Japan today?

Shibuya Nozomu, Cultural Sociology, Chiba University

Radioactive Contamination and the Common

Disaster obstructs both reproductive activities (child care) and productive activities (paid work). Facing disaster, we tend to prioritize the former (life), over the latter (work). But in the case of the radioactive contamination from Fukushima nuclear plant, curiously the government seems to have priority on recovery of production. Japan has long history of neglecting reproductive activities. It is the history of postwar Japanese employment system and of developmentalism, which made nuclear power possible. The aim of my presentation is to clarify how developmentalism has repressed the common. Along with this perspective, I argue for alternatives to developmentalism, referring to autonomia and eco-feminism.
Ann Allison
Anne Allison is a cultural anthropologist who teaches at Duke University. She is the author of three books: *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*, *Permitted and Prohibited Desires: Mothers, Censorship, and Comics in Japan*, and *Millennial Monsters: Japanese Toys and the Global Imagination*. Her current research is on precarity, a sense of home, and the (re)emergence of social soul in contemporary Japan. The book she is writing on this is tentatively titled: *Soul on Strike in Precarious Japan*.

Kyle Cleveland
Kyle Cleveland is a sociologist and administrator at Temple University's Japan campus in Tokyo. As the founding Director of TUJ’s Institute of Contemporary Asian Studies, he has supervised special programmes in Japanese popular culture and visual media studies, organized a lecture series, and produced symposia related to contemporary political issues. Through the Wakai Project, he organizes a series of events in which scholars, activists, and students from various universities collaborate to address how globalization is affecting youth culture in Japan. His research focuses on youth politics, popular culture and trans-global ethnic identity.

Patrick W. Galbraith

Ikuo Gonoï
Ikuo Gonoï is Assistant Professor of Politics and International Relations at Rikkyo University and Visiting research Fellow of the Social Science Research Institute (SSRI), International Christian University. Between 2004-2010, he was selected as the Research Fellow of Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) and also appointed as Council member of Policy Planning and Research Office, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan for the past two years.

Sharon Hayashi
Sharon Hayashi is Assistant Professor of Cinema and Media Studies in the Department of Film at York University, Toronto. Her current research interests include the uses of new media by new social movements and the architecture of cinema. She has published articles on Japanese pink cinema and the travel films of Shimizu Hiroshi, and is currently creating *Mapping Protest Tokyo*, a historical mapping website that analyzes the new media work of artistic collectives and new social movements in relation to artistic performance and political protest in Japan and globally from 1960 to the present.

Love Kindstrand
Love Kindstrand is a Graduate student in anthropology at Sophia University, Tokyo, interested in urban countercultures and radical spaces. Find him on Twitter: @lovekindstrand

Shin Mizukoshi
Shin Mizukoshi is a professor of media studies, the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies at the University of Tokyo, Japan. Mizukoshi advocates “socio-media studies” based on historical and social perspectives, rather than focused on information technologies. His research activities include the MELL Project (Media Expression, Learning and Literacy Project), a practical studies on citizen's media expression and media literacy, and Media Exprimo: a transdisciplinary research project to develop cultural programs and technological systems to encourage general people's media expressions and storytellings. He is the author of *Formation of Media: A Dynamic History of American Broadcasting*, among many other works in Japanese.

Yoshitaka Mōri
Dr. Yoshitaka Mōri is associate professor of sociology and cultural studies at Tokyo University of the Arts. His research interests are postmodern culture, media, art, the city and transnationalism. His publications include a book *Storiito no Shiso* (The Philosophy in the Streets) and *Bunka= Seiji* (Culture=Politics). He also published several English essays including, *Culture=Politics: The Emergence of New Cultural Forms of Protest in the age of Freeter* (Inter-Asia Cultural Studies, vol.6 No.1, Routledge, 2005) and *Subcultural Unconsciousness in Japan: the War and Japanese Contemporary Artists* (Popular Culture, Globalization and Japan, M. Allen and R. Sakamoto eds, Routledge 2006: London). Since 2006, he has worked as one of the directors of NPO, Art Institute Kitakyushu (AIK).
Daishiro Nomiya
Daishiro Nomiya is Dean of the Graduate School of Global Studies at Sophia University. His research focuses on globalization and civil society, cultural anthropology/folklore studies, social movements and comparative historical sociology.

Shibuya Nozomu
Shibuya Nozomu is an associate professor of sociology at Chiba University. He is the author of *Tmashii no Rodou* (Labor of the Soul: Anatomy of Neoliberal Power), and *Middle Class Matters*. He investigates global justice movements with particular emphasis on prefigurative politics.

Robin O’Day
Robin O’Day is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia and former visiting researcher at Sophia University’s Institute of Comparative Culture (2007-2009). His current research project is an ethnographic study of Japanese part-time workers in protest. His study is based on fieldwork with several social movements in Japan that are politically mobilizing around what they perceive as mounting inequality in the workforce. Theoretically his research project grapples with how irregular employment in Japan is influencing emergent forms of political resistance.

David H. Slater
David Slater is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Sophia University. His research focuses on capitalism, youth, labor, semiotics and urban studies. He is the editor of *Social Class in Contemporary Japan* (co-editor Hiroshia Ishida).

Patricia Steinhoff
Patricia Steinhoff is Professor of Sociology at the University of Hawaii and currently serves as Graduate Chair for the department. She has done extensive research on how Japanese social movements interact with the state, including work on the policing of social movements and how the Japanese criminal justice system treats persons accused of politically motivated offenses. She has recently edited *Going to Court to Change Japan: Social Movements and the Law* (forthcoming from University of Michigan Japanese Studies Series) and is currently writing a book on Japan’s invisible civil society.

Higuchi Takuro
Higuchi Takuro is an independent sociologist of social movements. He is researching the post-Seattle transformation of social movements in Japan, identifying with a tradition of activist anthropology after the reflexive turn, that maintains a deep engagement in reality.

Tomiko Yoda
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Access: Temple University Information Center / Tell: 0120-86-1026 (03-5441-9800) / URL: Temple University Japan Homepage

Temple University Japan / Azabu Hall (room 212)
2-8-12 Minami Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106-0047

- From Shirokane-Takanawa (Tokyo Metro Namboku Line, Toei Mita Line): 7-minute walk from Exit 4. (Once you reach the sunken courtyard on the B1 floor, take the stairs to the right and continue straight.)
- From Azabu-Juban (Tokyo Metro Namboku Line, Toei Oedo Line): 10-minute walk from Exit 1. (After coming out of Exit 1, walk toward Sunkus convenience store.)
Institute of Contemporary Asian Studies: Wakai Project

Produced by the Institute of Contemporary Asian Studies’ WAKAI PROJECT at Temple University, Japan Campus. WAKAI provides a forum for students to interact with cultural innovators, advance serious discussion about social issues and problems facing young people, and impact social policy and debates concerning the status of youth in Japan. The network of universities and organizations that WAKAI draws on provides academic grounding to popular culture issues, and empowers students to integrate their academic and social lives.

Institute of Contemporary Asian Studies: WAKAI PROJECT
Temple University, Japan Campus
Project Director: Kyle Cleveland  Email: kyle.cleveland@temple.edu
Tel. 03-5441-9800 / Mobile. 090-4606-9779
Information: Email: tujicas@temple.edu

Previous Wakai Project Events

Youth and Imaginative Labor: East Asia and Beyond
Digital Youth in East Asia
Youth Work in Contemporary Japan
The Politics of Popular Culture
Wakai Politics X Pecha Kucha