

ABSTRACT

Dissertation Title: **INVENTING AUTHENTIC URBAN PLACES:**
The Politics of Heritage Conservation in Urban Redevelopment

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In the urban century, global heritage discourse proposed a paradigm shift towards conservation as place-making, which has authorized the heritage sector to intersect with urban political economy. Despite having an opportunity to be part of the global debate on authenticity and challenge the Eurocentric framework in the early 1990s, the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan and Japanese heritage professionals locked up modern urban heritage in the rationale of traditional heritage system, thereby detaching it from the urban process until the establishment of the heritage-led regeneration framework. In the late 1990s, long term economic depression and national deregulation policy laid the foundation for the implementation of heritage conservation in urban strategy. Simultaneously, however, it opened a door for a battleground at the interplay between authenticity, heritage conservation and urban redevelopment.

Given these backgrounds, the main goal of this dissertation is to unveil the cultural and micro-politics of place-making in contemporary Tokyo with a special eye to heritage-led regeneration decision-making processes in two specific urban districts, namely Nihonbashi and Marunouchi. In doing so, I identify institutions and actors involved in those processes, and examine their complex political economic intentions and power relations in shaping authentic urban places. As a global city, Tokyo provides a vantage point to analyze heritage-led regeneration projects and their socio-spatial outcomes. For this, I present an integrated framework for analysis by adopting authenticity conditions set out in the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity to envision the structure and dynamics of crafting urban authenticity. Global urban and cultural strategies, and the public-private partnerships fall into heritage-led regeneration. Therefore, I argue that their combined effects tend to select a few urban heritage properties and put them in dominant position. The original physical fabric of these chosen properties plays a central role in pursuing place authenticity. This turns authenticity into a singular entity leading to the homogenization of urban places.

In Nihonbashi, the municipal authority displayed its power through agenda-setting in the beginning of the regeneration policy process. However, the national heritage designation of the Mitsui Main Building in 1998 underpinned the power shift in the public-private partnership between the municipal government and Mitsui Fudosan. This patronaged the Mitsui corporate identity to take over the Nihonbashi authenticity. In Marunouchi, Mitsubishi Estate led urban spatial restructuring, not only controlled the district but also exercised its power over urban heritage properties. Whether undertaking urban heritage conservation or reproduction, heritage practice came down to increasing the presence of the Mitsubishi corporate identity over the Marunouchi authenticity. In this fashion, the Mitsui and the Mitsubishi corporate powers monopolized urban authenticity by debilitating the visibility of other cultural and historic qualities in both urban districts. Hence, this transformation from authenticity of heritage to authenticity of place is signaling that the reality of authenticity is no longer limited to the heritage sector and aesthetic category. As a matter of fact, in the current era of neoliberal globalization, authenticity demands not just the change management of urban heritage but also the management of urban change.