

HARAJUKU

Urban Stage-Set Q&A

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Preliminary Matters

What?

This book is a result of the research supported by JSPS and the University of Tokyo. It presents both a particular way of doing research about “place” in the city, and the specific area of Tokyo at which that method was tested.

Who?

(who am I? who is this book for?)

The author has a professional and academic background in architecture and urban design, and is passionate about urban matters and places. As an university lecturer, she tries to blur the boundaries between her research and teaching.

The typical readers of this book would be those who are interested in urban studies and multiplicity of expressions of urban life. That includes both students and academics in the fields of architecture, urban design and related disciplines, general public interested in cities. And travelers to Tokyo.

The book could be of particular interest to researchers and students of creative cities.

Where?

(where is the place we will be focusing at?)

The physical focus of this book is Tokyo, and one of its most vibrant and creative precincts - Harajuku. Tokyo is a metropolis known for its distinct culture and complexity of the *urban* - a global city. On the other hand, Harajuku is the microcosm of that urban complexity and a perfect example of radical distinctiveness. It exists between the challenges of the Global and the particularities of the Local.

Why?

(why this book? why this way?)

For quite a long time, urban research favors quantifiable, pragmatic and theoretically “rigorous”. Agree with those who argue that it is time to look at other aspects of the *urban*, in particular at those which do not lend themselves to calculations and pre-established theorising. This book tries to contribute to that under represented way of looking at cities.

How?

(how are we going to navigate the complexity of the urban?)

Questions are the first step towards research. Good questions constitute foundations of good research, and they help structure the investigative processes. There is an unlimited number of ways to ask questions; there are even more possible and valid answers. The intention behind the Q&A format of this book, is to emphasise the importance of asking, to facilitate communication between the author and her readers, and to empower the readers to actively contribute to thinking about Harajuku. Q&A is a clear and direct way to present not only firm answers, but also to table the dilemmas. The majority of questions raised in this book are simple; they point at the basics behind the complexity of urban realm. Their aim is to provoke both definitive statements and to expose aspects where such statements remain impossible.

This book emphasises the visual aspects of the urban. It, thus, encourages multiple readings. It is richly illustrated, and here, the picture was meant to be worth a thousand of words. We have the pictures, we have the text in its standard form and visual vignettes. Pictures open multiple readings, text fixes some of the possible answers, vignettes refer to and link with traditional theories and established bodies of knowledge.

Qs.

The questions in this book begin with “what”, “where”, “when”, “why”. They structure the material. The questions starting with “how” have a special status. The answers to the how-questions are at the core of the *Harajuku - urban stage Q&A*.

Q: What made me interested in Harajuku?

A:

Harajuku is not an alien name for East and Southeast Asians of my generation, in their thirties. Since our childhood, we were very much exposed to and influenced by Japanese culture, technology, a variety of products and media. For me, the very name *Harajuku* rings with an old, familiar sound. It stands for a place of the young, the hangout, the place where they play music, dance, and dress up beautifully. In that sense, to me it was always comparable to Siam Square of Bangkok, my home city.

My discovery of the actual Harajuku started several years ago, with a walk from the JR Harajuku Station, through the packed Takeshita dori, across the Meiji dori to Urahara. I walked slowly, immersing myself in that mythical place of my youth, breathing it, inhaling the air of Harajuku. Each step was unpredictable, the experience was so dense with information, so exciting. I even managed to get lost in the maze of Urahara (literary: *Behind Harajuku*) only to, surprisingly, emerge in the recognisable Omotesando. Another experience, another world, where. Leaving inner Harajuku, I immediately switched rth register, and started to enjoy architecture of the world-famous architects, the glamorous buildings and, maybe even more attractive, world of Omotesando shopwindows.

I was amazed with the complex, layered reality of that place called Harajuku. I was in Tokyo, but aware that this place was a very particular Tokyo. Here, people dress in a very self-conscious way, in a distinct "Harajuku-style". I enjoyed watching and deciphering the ways in which they conceive their outfits, contemplated the beauty of both men and women who so obviously indulged themselves, and enjoyed themselves in dressing up - showing off. The city centres are, by definition, exhibitionistic and voyeuristic places, but Harajuku is not just any urban centre. Harajuku is a stage, a stage-set in and of a city! The place is both a local and a global fashion centre, an epicentre of a particular lifestyle. It produces, it imports, it sells both goods and ideas.

Since that first encounter, in Harajuku I feel that I am walking in an open-air theatre. The performance goes on forever. I am a spectator, but I also an actor. Everyone in Harajuku is in that double role - both consuming places and goods on display, and being displayed and consumed by relentless gaze of the other.

I observe the small-scale urban grain of Harajuku, its shops hidden in the residential houses, interesting and provocative shop windows, spaces where merchandise spills out, into the streets. The lighting invites the gaze into the interiors, it exposes the variety of commodities on display as well as the lifestyles. It provides the feeling of peeping in.

Harajuku looks messy (that is what I particularly love about it!), but even that mess is always subtly designed. We feel an effort, an everpresent desire of each of the participants in the show to contribute to the continuous making, remaking and making-up of Harajuku. Those contributors range from designers, shopkeepers, to the young who dress up to walk there, and the visitors. The variety of *actors* and *viewers*, all together, make this whole area so unique. Not many cities in the world have places of comparable intensity of ideas.

As an architect and urbanist, I wonder why is this particular place is so energetic.

What is the essence of Harajuku - as a place?

What are the secrets which generate that excitement at the first sight?

Why is that quality so uniquely - Tokyo?

Is what I see there just an ephemeral image?

Is it all a fake, or - is this thrill real?

Those are the questions I started with. It is my search for answers (rather than definite answers) that I want to share with the reader.

From inside, the tiny Harajuku is huge. In this book I will focus only on an even smaller area comprised of East Harajuku and Ura-Hara area - where the "secrets" of Harajuku seem to be best presented.

Q: What does *Harajuku* mean?

A: Harajuku is a unique name.

Litterally translated,

原 *Hara* means field

宿 *Juku* - resting place, or station on the road

Q: What does *Harajuku* stand for?

A: Harajuku is the name of an area in West Tokyo, near Yoyogi Park and the grand Meiji Shrine. For long time, that place was just an anonymous stretch of rice paddies between the better-known Shinjuku and Shibuya.

The name came to use around the year 1906 to mark the place of a new train station on Tokyo's Yamanote line. Even today, Harajuku is not an official name of a district or of a subdistrict, of Tokyo. Not even of a street. Formally, it is just a minor toponym but in reality - everyone in Tokyo knows where Harajuku is.

Administratively, Harajuku belongs to Shibuya ku, Jingumae subdistrict. But, its real coordinates are - global.



HARAJUKU st

原
宿

Q: What kind of place is Harajuku?

A:

Without a clear boundary or formal administrative status, Harajuku is a place where many stakeholders contribute to a complex, largely spontaneous process of place making. It is a fully-rounded place, defined by an interplay of physical conditions, activities and multiplicity of dynamic meanings (Relph, 1976).

Q: What makes Harajuku a place ?

A: Harajuku is an urban situation where physical reality, activities and meanings engage in a perpetual process of placemaking.

To understand Harajuku is to see it in the full sense of the complex meaning of that word *place*.

Q: What makes Harajuku a special place ?

A: Harajuku is the place capable of creating times - new rhythms and trends in fashion.



Meaning of place

Yi-Fu Tuan 段義孚
1930 - today

Chinese American Geographer



Space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning.

Abstract knowledge *about* a place can be acquired in short order if one is diligent. The visual quality of an environment is quickly tallied if one has the artist's eye. But the *'feel'* of a place takes longer to acquire. It is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years.

Q: What are the key physical features of Harajuku?

A: Built environment of Harajuku makes it different from the rest of Tokyo. Harajuku is packed with small-scale buildings, which dramatically vary in style.

In terms of typology, individual houses dominate. Majority of them started as residential and, over time, many were transformed into shops - without losing their friendly residential scale and human touch. Their densely packed, small volumes flank narrow streets of Urahara. The streetscape is picturesque, easy to walk. Although vehicles can get in, the dominant feeling is of a safe, pedestrian environment.

The facades of those small buildings add shape the void of the streets, thus creating a unique feeling of the interior of open spaces. Their heterogeneous and dense visual charge contributes to an overall sense of variety, and special feel of diversity which defines the identity of the tiny street and squares.

The interiors of retail spaces have their own, distinctive charm. The physical and visual permeability of the shop frontages facilitates constant conversation between the inside and the outside. It blurs the boundary between the public and the private realms, almost to the level of irrelevance. But - we are at the stage, anyway. The themes of the shop-fronts create numerous narratives, offer rich stories to read and to add to. The feeling of passing from one stage-set to another, is overwhelming, the experience of the variety of simultaneous scenarios (in which we ourselves are the part of the play) is palpable and exciting.

That experience does not diminish an overall impression of walking in a coherent, single village of fashion. But at the same time there is an experiential stitch-up of details, threshold spaces that generate the bewildering rhythm of excitements, theatrical scenes which we watch, and in which we act.

Small elements, such as signage and mannequins, are deliberately placed, often on the sidewalks, transgressing into the undeniably public space. The art of dressing up gets shown along the sides of the streets of Harajuku, transforming the area into an open air gallery. The staircases are often exposed and offer get glimpses into the the lower and higher ground-level spaces. Such gazes stimulate curiosity and voyeuristic instincts in the passers by. Stairs also give an opportunity to experience vertical movement in the small scale environment, a powerful additional spatial experience of viewing from above, from below from - everywhere.



Q: What are the main Harajuku activities?

A: Harajuku is dominated by commercial activities, but one should never forget that the origin of this place was as a quiet residential area. Once the commercial activities started to take place, and even when they dramatically took over the majority of spaces in Harajuku, the place maintained its well balances, mixed feel - the quality which crucially contributes to that very particular character of Harajuku.

Commercial activity in Harajuku is of global relevance. This area is one of the hubs of the world capitalism. In the other hand, the commercial activity in Harajuku caters for basic local needs. Market places were always the most vibrant parts of any city. They generate encounters and invite exchange - not only of goods, but of words, gestures, glances - full social interaction. From the very basic needs to the most complex systems, marketplaces were always at the heart of the urban.

Commercial essence of Harajuku is very specific - almost exclusively devoted to fashion. That activity started the 1960's, when a small groups of designers found an inexpensive location suitable to start their creative businesses. The mixture of creative locals and international influences during the era of post-war recovery made a modest cluster in front of the train-stop transform into an authentic, creative precinct. The magic of Harajuku was, and it remains in its unique blending of global influences with local values, in that energy which persists regardless the innumerable changes and variations - form those modest beginnings in response to the post-war shortages all the way to the riches of Tokyo of today.

The key activities which we see in Harajuku today link back to the start in the 60's. Many of the pioneers of the original creative boom are now successful, some of the international renown.

One owner of the small boutique in the 70's managed to develop his business in the potent fashion industry with a hundred of small shops all around Japan. Five of those are in Harajuku, but they were consciously kept small, and all different. Regardless relentless pressures, Harajuku still does not let itself be dominated by the big business. It remains a mecca for new, young, creative entrepreneurs who want to challenge the Harajuku of the old, to tap into its energy and to advance. Some of them survive and flourish, others leave. Except along the glamorous Omotesando (which has its own tradition), larger companies and brands tend to respect the "Harajuku look".

But, Harajuku as we know it is undeniably under the threat. It is more than likely that it is not going to survive its own charm.





Q: What is the key meaning of Harajuku?

A: Commercial activities give big contribution to urban life. Due to the blurs between the shop-space and the street-space, between the stage and the auditorium, between the shop and the shopper, everyday life in Harajuku is a festival. People dress up carefully, just to come to Harajuku, to join the party. Harajuku never repeats its scenarios. It is costumed, from the feet to the head. Hairstyle and complete make up. The full lifestyle.

Harajuku is a good example of an urban area devoted to fashion. Its forms and activities make it stand out as a vibrant area, an interesting urban setting. Harajuku fashion is distinct. A "Harajuku's" fashion. Many magazines (such as Cutie, Non-no, Fruits, Tunes and many more) use Harajuku as their source of inspiration and as a resources of the cutting edge example. They do not use the celebrity models who wear the big name brands, but young and beautiful, provocative Harajuku "regulars" who create, rather than only consume style.

Those magazines flourish in Harajuku because the place abounds with messages that demand channels of delivery. Harajuku is their (re)source - both in terms of raw material and refined ideas.

In harajuku, each element of urban realm can be perceived as a sign. The whole environment is consciously coded, to the level of total overload. The signifiers, the signified. Those concentrated and overlapping meanings, are contributed to Harajuku by all of its the participants in its ongoing spectacle - the residents, the shop owners, the Harajuku kids, the passers-by. Each of them adds meaning and reads the already embodied messages.

The sense of place of Harajuku comes from harmonious flows of people and an unique fusion of their inputs, the built environment and dynamic, ever-changing function

Harajuku is the centre (of one particular, fashion) world..



Q: What else is Harajuku?

A: Harajuku is many things, but above all, Harajuku is - style.

Apart from its own, fast-paced weekly magazines, which both represent and contribute to the Harajuku-as-a-style, a number of recent books analyses that phenomenon. Godoy (2007) defines the Harajuku-style; Keet (2007) sees it as a significant part of broader phenomenon of uniquely Japanese fashion.

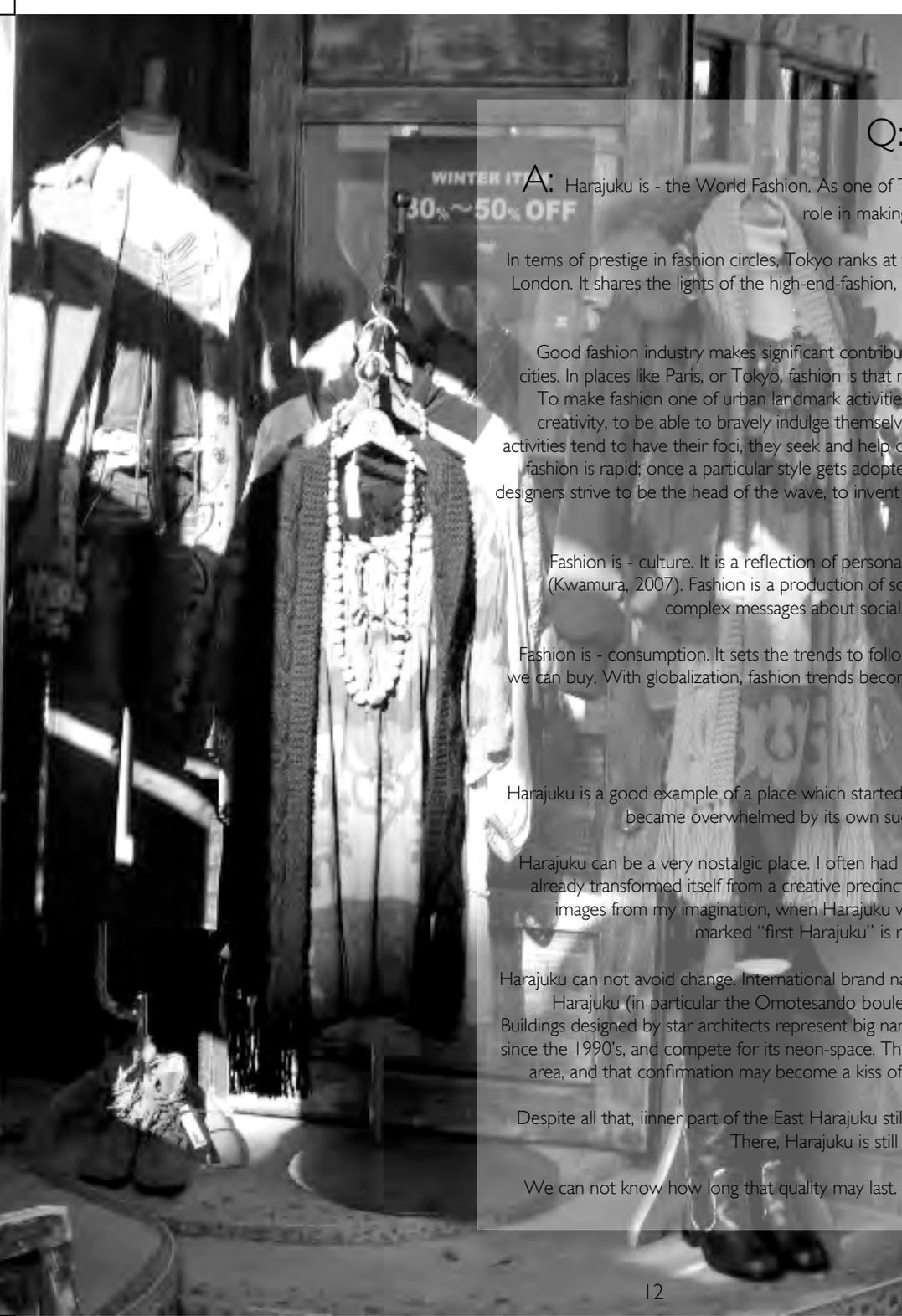
All agree - Harajuku is fashion; Harajuku fashion is - the Harajuku style.

www.style-arena.jp gives weekly up-date on how people dress in different districts of Tokyo. Here are some examples of typical street outfit that was "in" in Harajuku in December 2007. Harajuku style tends to be more individual than that of other parts of Tokyo. While there are no exact rules, all those individual creativities operate within certain sensibility - which is both defined by place, and defines that place.

In Harajuku, much of what elsewhere might be even impossible, gets mixed, blended, spiced up and enjoyed.

Harajuku accommodates several distinctive fashion tribes - such as *Gothic Lolitas* or *Cos Play*. They tend to gather in front of the Yoyogi park during the weekends. The *Cos Play* dates back to the 1980's, when the street was closed and transformed into *Hokoten* - the street paradise. Rock band *Takeno zoku* marked the era. The young dancers used to come and join their favorite band, dressed up to make yet another Harajuku stage. Their style still lingers in those places, long after cars came back. Even without the *Hokoten* and *Takeno zoku*, some new *Cos Play* kids come to Harajuku and their very specific, thematic costume contribute to a carnivalesque atmosphere of the West Harajuku.





Q: What else is Harajuku ?

A: Harajuku is - the World Fashion. As one of Tokyo's fashion hubs, Harajuku plays a prominent role in making Tokyo one of key fashion centres of the world.

In terms of prestige in fashion circles, Tokyo ranks at the very top, next to Paris, Milan, New York and London. It shares the lights of the high-end-fashion, while maintaining its capacity to develop its own, local style.

Good fashion industry makes significant contribution to overall creative character of the top-class cities. In places like Paris, or Tokyo, fashion is that magic word which gives a very distinctive nuance.

To make fashion one of urban landmark activities, cities need to have a pronounced and ongoing creativity, to be able to bravely indulge themselves in cutting-edge design and innovation. Fashion activities tend to have their foci, they seek and help create vibrant area within their cities. The pace of fashion is rapid; once a particular style gets adopted, that is the end of fashion (Barthes). Successful designers strive to be the head of the wave, to invent and lead. There is a very special talent; and, they have to be brave.

Fashion is - culture. It is a reflection of personality, which is always both individual and collective (Kwamura, 2007). Fashion is a production of society; it marks whole époques. Fashions embody complex messages about social ideals, from their evolution we can learn history.

Fashion is - consumption. It sets the trends to follow. It taps into our desires. It offers dreams which we can buy. With globalization, fashion trends become universal. People from different continents, of different race start to dress in the same way.

Fashion is a huge international business .

Harajuku is a good example of a place which started with creativity, created its own culture and then became overwhelmed by its own success and swallowed by aggressive consumerism.

Harajuku can be a very nostalgic place. I often had a feeling that I came there too late. The area has already transformed itself from a creative precinct into an industrial trademark. I also missed those images from my imagination, when Harajuku was my exotic dreamland. The authenticity which marked "first Harajuku" is replaced by more powerful fashion corporations.

Harajuku can not avoid change. International brand name fashion can choose and buy, and they choose Harajuku (in particular the Omotesando boulevard - with all its "Western" cultural references). Buildings designed by star architects represent big names. Dior, Louis Vitton, Tod's flank Omotesando since the 1990's, and compete for its neon-space. This phenomena confirms global importance of this area, and that confirmation may become a kiss of death for Harajuku of the kind we grew to love.

Despite all that, inner part of the East Harajuku stills maintains the original vigour and spatial quality. There, Harajuku is still Harajuku, a charming place that invites discovers.

We can not know how long that quality may last. It is only certain that if Harajuku-style disappears, Tokyo will suffer a tremendous loss.

Q: What else is Harajuku (2)?

A: Harajuku is culture. Style and fashion are ephemeral, they follow and create fast rhythms of time. They last when they become and intrinsic part of culture.

Harajuku is a culture of dressing-up and of the young. It is a sub culture that emerged from complex intersections between international influences, local creativity and local/global consumption. Its character dates back to the 1980's and those early express through music, dance and dress. The Harajuku *Hokoten* probably provided the crucial push (see <http://www.hispic-cafe.com/street/street1990/index.html>). During the decade 1985-1995 *Hokoten* brought together the place and the event, the location and the activity, a carnival-like atmosphere for young people to come out and share their inventions. That was the peak of prosperity of creative Harajuku. After 1995 harajuku started to change dramatically.. My interviewees speak about the decline which they associate with the abolishment of *Hokoten* .

The bridge in front of the Yoyogi park continues play a role of a meeting place - albeit for a rather specific tribe and its "consumers". That is where Gothic-Lolita kids come to offer their latest fashion excitements to the gaze of the passer by, locals and tourists alike. They pose to the cameras, and stir the hunters instincts even in the most timid amateur photographer. Music bands offer loud rock&roll, an Elvis tribe puts the show which, it seems, they genuinely enjoy despite all the cameras which follow their each move.

Space in front of the Kenzo Tange's Yoyogi park. stadium is still a very special place, a place where young people can express themselves.





Q: What is Harajuku's Urban Culture?

A: Although Westward-looking, Harajuku is a true reflection of Japanese culture

Japanese like to identify themselves with the *group* (*zoku*, clan, company, class, etc) to which they *belong*. At work, they usually wear some uniform. For instance, *Marunouchi* black suite goes together with an A4 size handbag; workers dress in their funny, carefully colour-coded balloon trousers.

Group also bring together people who share the same interest - fishing, sport, music, a hobby. There are many magazines in Japan which are specially devoted to those groups.

Harajuku can be considered a group of people who love to dress. They usually belong to some of the sub-groups or tribes as *Cos Play*, *Gothic Lolita*, *Punk*, *J. pops*, etc. Individually designed dress, like those which appear in the *Fruits* or *Tune* magazines. Trigger followers and rapidly become base for a new "uniform". Groups create their own fashion jargon. Tribes of young Japanese girls create mark their difference by distinct way in which they dress. They escape from their everyday life uniforms only to create another type of uniform dress, a group of their choosing. In that, they find space to individualise their expression, albeit within a theme "verified" by authority of the group.

Japanese culture is famous for its crafts. Many say that it is the culture of *kanji* writing and education based on hand-skills that develops into a sense of aesthetic, which makes beauty an important aspiration even among the ordinary Japanese. They seem to be seeking perfection in each small detail (Richie 2007). Harajuku is a place where such sensibility and ability flourish. Harajuku and its culture demand combination of talent, skill, creativity and courage to make, to wear and to present their creations in urban realm.

That is what makes Harajuku so powerfully creative.



Q: WHERE

A: The question *where* relates to location and *place*. The series of *where* questions helps define the boundary (or – the boundaries) of Harajuku and the specific core area which is at the focus of this book. Answers to those questions help locate events that make Harajuku, and facilitate better understanding of a variety of scales in which those activities perform, the complexity of placemaking as interaction between the events and their multiple contexts.

Much of the success of Harajuku comes from the quality of its location. The trends of urbanisation of larger Tokyo had huge impact on the ways in which Harajuku was established and in which it evolved to its present status. In a way which parallels Chinese belief in *Feng Shui* geomancy and natural energies, Harajuku become successful because it captured very specific energies that intersected this particular place. Good physical location is only part of that complex play, while social energies provided the most critical edge of difference.

Q: Where is Harajuku?

A: Harajuku is the name of the train station on Tokyo's Yamanote line and a name of the whole area near that station. Harajuku stretches between Shinjuku and Shibuya. Administratively, it is situated in the Shibuya ward's district of Jingu Mae. It is surrounded by several important institutions the most prominent of which are the Grand Meiji Shrine, Yoyogi park and the Stadium.

Q: Where are the limits of Harajuku?

A: It is very difficult to define the exact boundary of Harajuku. We can, roughly, mark its limits by following the railway Yamanote line to the West, Aoyama Dori to the East. To the North there is no sharp edge at all. That is where Harajuku simply bleeds into the indistinguishable urban tissue of surrounding areas. To the South, Harajuku borders Shibuya.

One of my interviewees told me how the territory of Harajuku can be best defined by the spread of the particular style in which people dress! As far as we can see the "Harajuku-style", the "Harajuku-fans" with their recognisable outfits, we know that we are still in Harajuku.

Harajuku cannot be defined by physical limits, but there is certain "Harajukuness", style which quite strictly delineates certain, visible limits of social groups. It is the people and the way they dress and behave that best describes the area that can be called Harajuku.

Harajuku is, thus, not a static. It is a living urban phenomenon. It is very unique, within its narrow area, within Tokyo, Japan – in the world.





Meiji Shrine

Harajuku Station

Olympic Stadium

Yoyogi Park

Shibuya Station

National Stadium

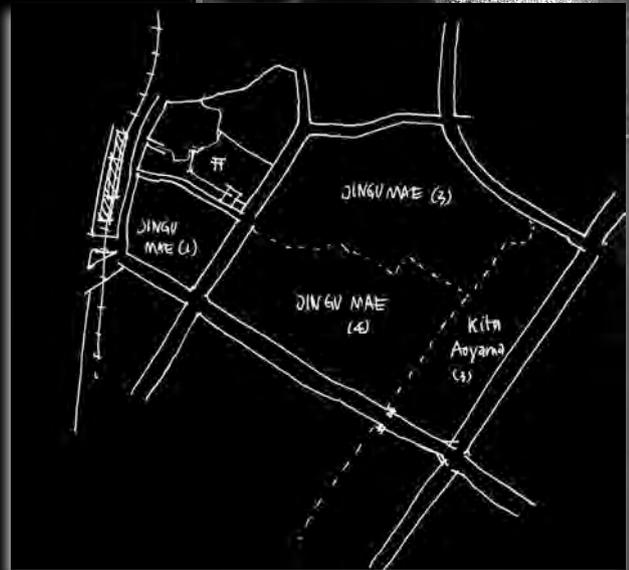
Akasaka Palace

Aoyama Cemetery

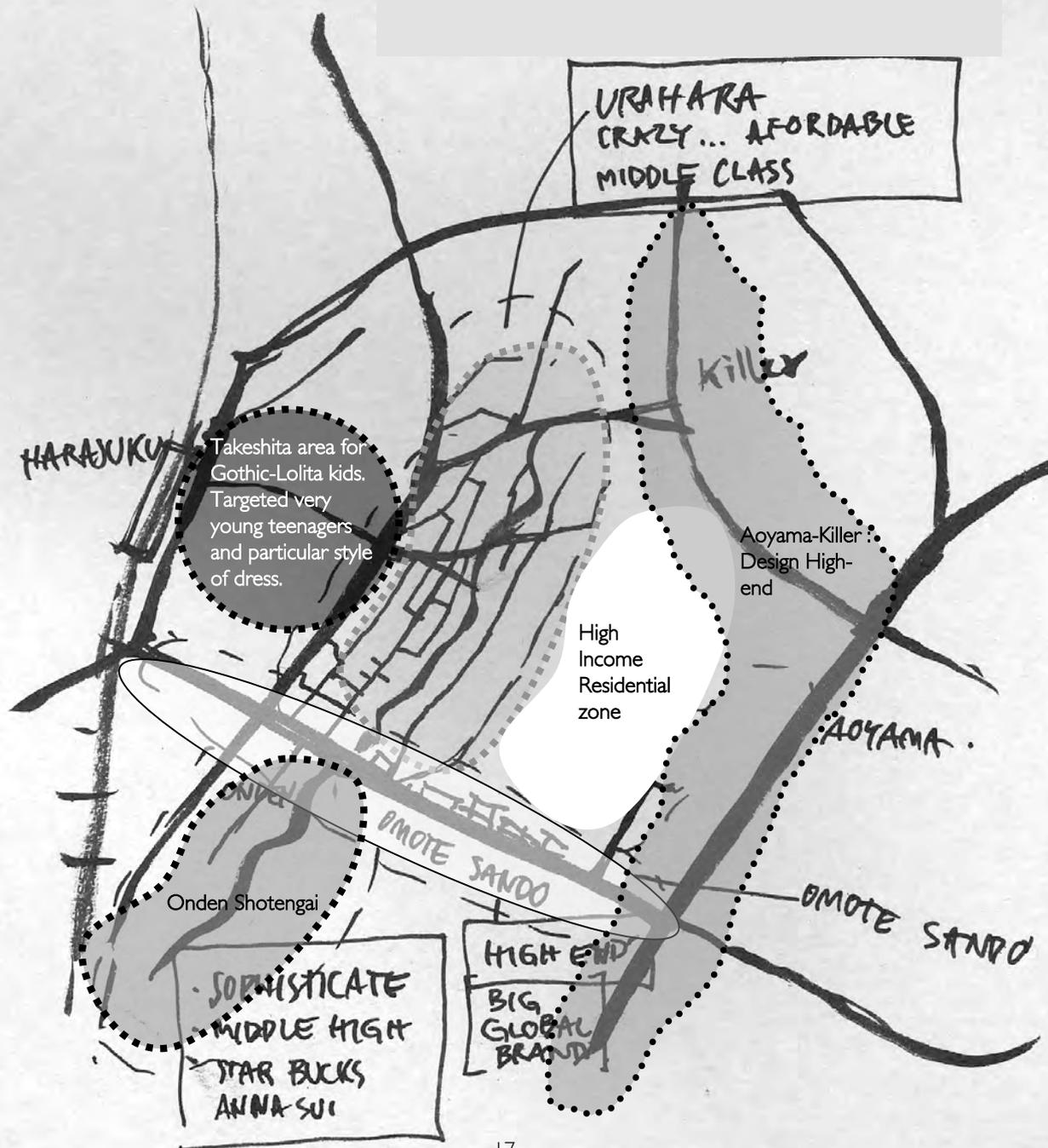
Meiji Street

Omotesando Street

Aoyama Street



Patch-work of HARAJUKU



Q: Where to heart on Harajuku?

A: If we have a closer look in Harajuku, the area resembles a jigsaw puzzle of several discrete entities. Each of those entities has its particular character.

Takehita Street, which links Harajuku station with Meiji Street, is a spine of shops and commercial activities structured by the act of walking. Mostly very young teenagers perambulate those spaces and browse small shops which sell all sort of fashion articles. Many shop are narrowly specialised, offering only very particular kinds of costumes. They address specific fashion tribes which do not like to mix, such as Gothic Lolitas, Punks and other Cosplay.

Inner parts of this area are dominated by hair salons, which appear in an unbelievable number, variety of locations and in all sorts of physical settings.

Omotesando is a large avenue, with wide pedestrian promenades on both sides of the street. That is where the most prominent fashion brands offer their glamour – both in terms of goods they sell, and architectural “packaging” in which they offer it. That is a very recent phenomenon for Harajuku, which started only in late 1990's. A strip of Omotesando stands out from the rest of Harajuku in a new way. Initially, it was conceived as a prominent, linear, rich boulevard and with these new developments that difference has only acquired another layer of class distinction.

Onden Shotengai is the area on the southern part of Omotesando, with lots of shops of various types, which range from brand fashion which leaks into the area from Omotesando, to new, creative design shops, hair salons and restaurants. This part of Harajuku seems to grow further down along the Cat Street to merge with Shibuya area seamlessly, as once the Shibuya Creek used to flow into the valley.

Meiji Street is flanked by bigger scale commercial buildings which are generic for modern Tokyo. It is dominated by two landmarks developments, the Laforet shopping mall and T's Harajuku, both of which house a variety of fashion boutiques.

Aoyama and Killer street are mainly focused on design activities. A number of design firms are gathering there as well as unique concept gallery-boutique like Watarium (design by Mario Botta) dominated on Killer Street.

Urahara is an area on the north of Omotesando, hidden inside Harajuku, behind those large buildings which now define Meiji Dori and Omotesando. The area is strongly dominated by fashion. Urahara is all of a particular very atmosphere, defined by the rhythm of its small scale buildings. The urban pattern of Urahara distinctive from the surroundings, there is a sense of unity of those various forms and spaces which gives a very clear sense of transition from the rest of Harajuku into its heart – Urahara. Urahara is also its people. There is a strong local organization which consciously frames Urahara as a fashion precinct. They publish a shopping guide brochure which is distributed within the area, and which almost verifies who is, and who isn't of Urahara.

In this book, my focus is on Urahara, which I see as an area representative of that powerful, but elusive and endangered quality which we call Harajuku.



Q: WHEN?

WHEN

A: The question *When* address the notion of time, time as a continuum, which stretches from the past, to present and reaches towards the future, but also as rhythm. The rhythmicity of the urban includes the repetitive succession of days and nights, sequences of weeks, months, seasons and years. It includes the multiplicity of individual and collective rhythms of citizens and their various groupations and affiliations.

Nothing escapes time –its lasting and its rhythms. Time makes everything older, marks every existence and vanishing obvious. Cities, probably in a way which is more complex and remarkable than with any other cultural phenomenon, treasure time.

When is a question which needs precise answers. It refers particular moments in time, demands the impossible – to make time stop. It relates to action – to an act which has happened, which is happening or which may happen. It exposes the impact of acts, consequences which become evidence of (the passing of) time.



隠田の水車 (Onden no Suisha) Watermill at Onden by Hokusai
The great view of Fuji-san from Onden Village (part of Harajuku)

Q: WHEN Harajuku appeared on the maps of Tokyo?

A: In the eleventh century, Harajuku was a post station (*juku*) on the Kamakura Kaido, the road which was leading from Kamakura towards the sem-autonomous north of the country (P. Waley, 1991). Along the road there were several *ryokans* (traditional Japanese hotels), on the stretch of today's Takeshita dori. The oldest architectural and urban elements in this area are temples and shrines.



Farm land and villages

North

In Edo period, after 1590, that land belonged to Aoyama Tadanari, who was a close adviser of Ieyasu. Elevated location was suitable for the residence of the feudal lord. The feudal lord Ie of Hikone had their suburban mansions on the far bank of the Shibuya River, which once flowed through Harajuku. Some remnants of that flow, such as ponds and fragments of the gardens of those compounds still exist.

On the Edo series map (published in 1755 and 1846), the name Harajuku was shown in the map. The lands on Aoyama side were occupied by the feudal lord, high ranks to low ranks of samurai as well as townpeople.

On the Shibuya Gawa side, there were farms and villages.



The tremendous transformation of Harajuku happened during the Meiji restoration. Mulberry trees, graves, and barracks became the most prominent features of both Aoyama and Harajuku (ibid). The strategically planted mulberry trees were part of an official Meiji policy. The idea was to augment the silk exportation and to garner the foreign currency. (The policy was badly conceived, and it did not take longer than few years to see trees devastated and the plan abandoned).

In early 20th century Yamanote railway line was constructed. Harajuku station opened in October 1906.

The land which used to belong to feudal lord Aoyama was transformed into a huge cemetery on the south, while the northern parts, all the way up to Yoyogi, was allocated for military activities. The li family land became the property of the Imperial household, and used for construction of the grand Meiji Shrine in 1911, the compound of which became one of the most fabulous green spaces of Tokyo. In 1920, Omotesando (the Outer Approach Road) was built as a representative access to the shrine. The boulevard-like, straight street of rich, elegant profile later became a very popular promenade and, most recently, the place for big, global fashion brands.

Main urban structures which now frame the pattern of Harajuku were layered over long time, from Edo to Meiji period and, in an interrupted chain of events, until today. The village patterns from Edo periods which were aligned along Shibuya River still exist, treasured in urban structure within the a corner defined by Omotesando and Meiji Dori.

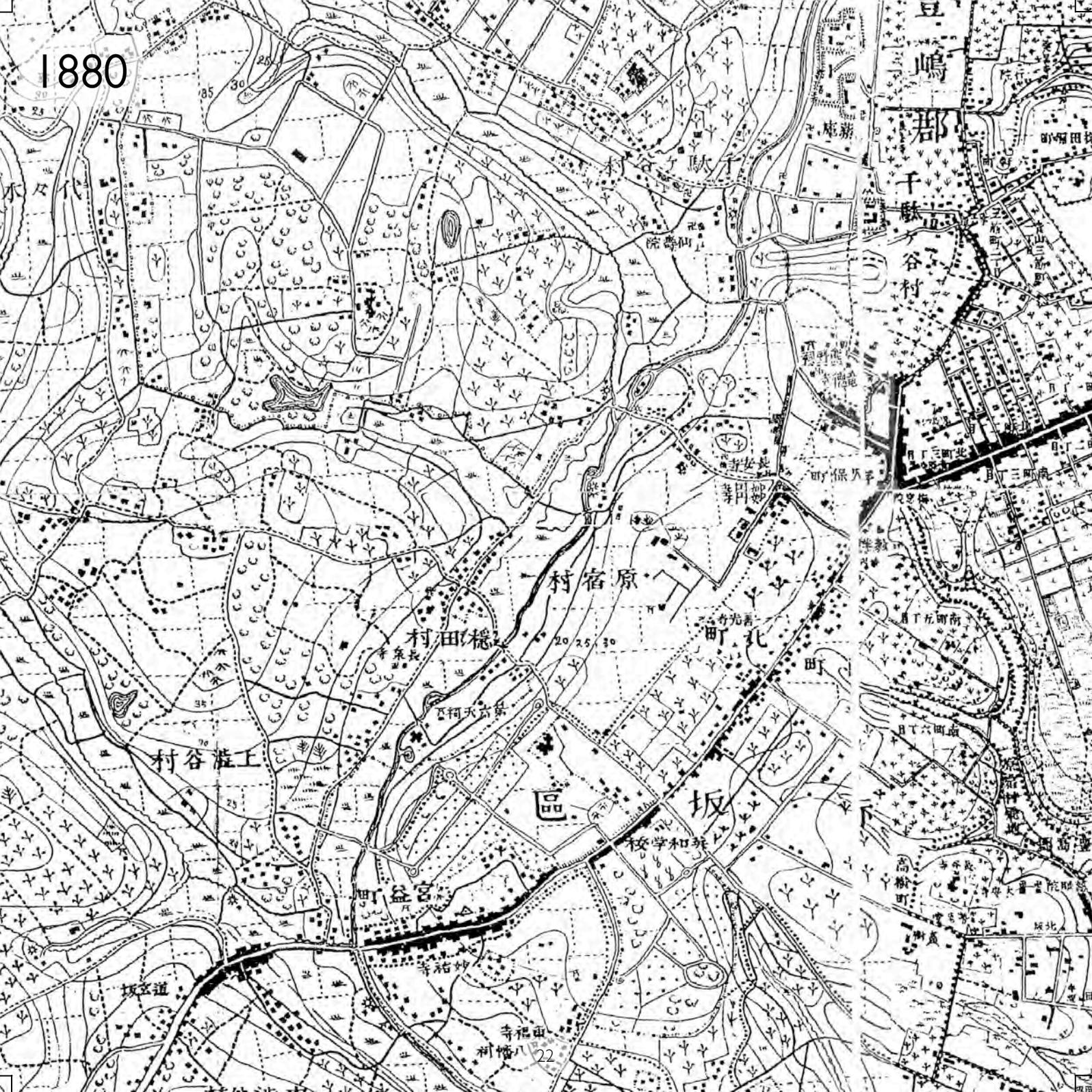
In 1923, after the Great Kanto Earth Quake, the social housing scheme, *Doujunkai* was built on Omote Sando and Aoyama Dori, as a remedy for many victims of the natural disaster.

During the World War II Tokyo suffered enormously. The whole metropolitan area was relentlessly fire-bombed. As a close neighbour of the military compound, Harajuku was all but destroyed. Only several concrete remained standing. Among those were the *Doujunkai* apartments.

After the war, the American barracks occupied the space of Yoyogi park. The name was telling: "Washington Heights". Omotesando also accommodated some of the U.S. Army facilities, such as still existing and still functioning Oriental Bazaar and Union Church.

Picture of Tokyo at the end of Meiji Period, from Edo Museum, Tokyo

1880



水代

水代

村谷瀬上

村田橋

村宿原

町北

坂区

町益宮

校学和英

坂区道

寺福田
柳幡八

豆嶋

郡

千駄谷村

鹿游

千駄

寺安長
寺開妙

町保入

町三町南

町五町南

町六町南

高柳町

町真

1909



1937



1945



1955



渋谷区

明治神宮

代々木外輪町

国立競技場

国立競技場

明治天皇御葬所跡
松島野

神宮外苑

同二丁目

Q: WHEN Harajuku became - Harajuku?

A: In the post-war period, Harajuku was at the forefront of Japanese cultural exposure to western culture. The continuous waves of influence and interaction gradually shaped this place to become what we experience, feel, and expect as "Harajuku".

During the 1950's and 1960's, European influences arrived to Harajuku. First, "French" feel started to emerge, building upon at least typological similarities between Omotesando and the Parisian Avenue des Champs Elysee. There were more and more shops with specific cultural references to France, cafes with "French atmosphere" opened along. Next was an "Italian wave", which was reflected in toponymy and names of luxury apartment mansions, such as *Villa Fresca* and *Villa bianca* (discussion with prof. Jinnai). Until late 1960's, Harajuku was a quiet, elegant residential area, with strong western influences and not many activities for, and of young Japanese.

1964 Tokyo hosted the Olympic Games. That was an event of tremendous importance for Japan, which wanted to mark the end of the post-war trauma and re-joining of international community. The authorities planned the Olympic Village at the site of the U.S. military barracks. Kenzo Tange, whose office used to be in this area, too, designed a sublime Olympic stadium in Yoyogi park. Harajuku came to the forefront of yet another wave of foreign influences.

During the 1970's, when Hippies and Rock flourished in the Western, Harajuku as *Kaiwaisei*, neighborhood street area of special character, a labyrinth-like network of streets with structure inherited from Edo period, became the locus for similar activities in Tokyo. That was in particular around Takeshita Dori and in Urahara. The place became a magnet for young professionals and students. A number of stylists and designers established their ateliers, mainly focusing at made-to-order suits and costumes. The Shibuya Gawa, which used to run through Urahara, was covered and gave space to the semi-pedestrian Cat Street. *Laforet*, built in 1978 by Mori Group on Meiji Dori, became an important landmark of new Western influence.

Harajuku Hokoten is the name of a *pedestrian paradise* - between Yoyogi Park which included a segment of Omotesando, which were closed for pedestrian during the weekend in the period 1985-1995. Thus weekends in Harajuku became regular festivals. The city provided space and allocated time for young people to create their realm and to express their energy. Main expressions were music, dance and dress.

The Hokoten became an urban stage for the youth of Tokyo. It both brought together and boosted the youth energy which already gravitated to this area. Shops started to cater for youth clients, especially those along Takeshita dori. Specialisation became very specific: *Takeno Kosoku*, for instance, provided for the needs of the fans of Takeno rock band. Stylists and designers started to work in Doujunkai apartments, and that complex gave a very special character to Harajuku – the unique combination of living, production and trade which generated much of what we today see as "Harajuku" quality.

Q: WHEN contemporary Harajuku crossed into yet another new era?

A: The new millennium brought a new wave of changes of dramatic to this area.

After the year 2000, Omotesando started to change dramatically. The flagship fashion buildings, designed by the renown starchitects aligned on both sides of the boulevard. One of the latest and most representative of the process which is unfolding in Harajuku, is Omotesando Hills, designed by Tado Ando. Symbolically, that up-market shopping centre replaced the old, charming Doujunkai.

Such interventions elevated Harajuku to the highest standards of the most glamorous World Fashion Street. The top-design buildings there house the top-fashion brands. The latest is a piece by fashionable MVRDV, which opened its doors in December 2007 and joined the beauty parade of Omotesando.

2007





Q: WHEN does Harajuku work?

A: Harajuku, in principle, operates 12.00-20.00

The biorhythm of Harajuku today is like that of any shopping mall. Those glamorous shops work mostly for eight hours only, thus probably underlying in yet another way their exclusivity and scarcity of their offer.

From 8.00 until 12 AM Harajuku energies pulsates behind the scene.

A snapshot on Friday 29 February 2008

8AM: shops are still closed, treet empty, few people walking, one mother on a bicycle brings her daughter to the school.

9AM: still empty streets, very few shops open, some deliveries are getting moved around, the neighbours walk their dogs, streets are getting cleaned

10 AM: more delivery activities, small vans and karts, more shop keepers are coming, lifting up the louvers, cleaning the shop-fronts, bring delivered goods inside, check the stock, dress the mannequins

11 AM: some of the shops open, customers start coming, many tourists with cameras appear, some of delivered goods still stay in the streets



12Am -2 PM: the curtain is up, the overture is under its way

12AM: Almost all shops open, mannequins are positioned in front of the shop, shop-signs, panels displayed prominently, streets are getting crowded, crowd is a mix of tourists and Harajuku-style customers

1PM: Harajuku-style people are beginning to dominate

3-6 PM: the climax

3PM: more and more people keep on coming, more of Harajuku-style, they are coming as couples or in groups, the excitement increases

4-5PM: in winter, in late afternoon along Cat Street the natural light fades away and artificial lighting takes over, the stage-set is getting even more exciting, the performance is full-on, the walkers are wondering around, the shop-keepers are beginning to feel tired

6-7PM: activities slow down, some shops are closing, the visitors are slowly leaving the show





8-9 PM: the finale

8 PM, shops are closed, there is no sign of life in the streets, garbage is put in front of the shops waiting for collection, the shop-keepers are lock the doors, the light are getting turned off

9PM: the streets are deserted, only few restaurants gave some lights, Harajuku falls asleep early

End of the episode (which is going to be replayed tomorrow).



Q: WHEN is Harajuku at its peak?

A: The week end and during the Sales time

Weekend in Harajuku is a carnival! During the peak hours, the whole area gets, some streets impossible to navigate. Weekly working outfits are abandoned, disguise to Harajuku style people come to enjoy another life.

Sale in harajuku are at the same time as in other parts of Tokyo. The summer sale is around early July; the winter sale - in the beginning of January. The junction in Urahara resonates with shouts: *Dozo Dozo*.

The winter sale is more attractive. The discount is 20-60% The summer sale offers only 10-30% off. Japanese love the "Lucky Bag" ritual, when shops prepare surprise packages, the price of which varies - with the most common being 10,000 yen. One never knows what exactly is inside the package - but honest Japanese merchants guarantee that the value is definitely more than was paid.

Many shops in Urahara put their lucky bag stalls in the street space. The pragmatic move, to get rid of the stock thus becomes yet another ritual, yet another dimension of the festival, the marker of yet another of innumerable rhythms of Harajuku.



SUMMER SALE



WINTER SALE

WHO

Q: WHO

A: The *WHO* questions view the urban of Harajuku through an exploration of its people. The answers are trying to describe who lives within its current activity core, Urahara, and who makes that place as exciting and as unique as it is. As any place emerges from an interaction between its spaces and people. I was inquiring how such fusion happens in Harajuku. That is a place on the move, where everything keeps on evolving and changing rapidly, and the best way to understand its dynamics is through getting to know the actors, the people that make Harajuku. Interestingly, it seems that some of the individuals who live and work there provide the most stable points in this urban whirlpool.

In this book I do not focus on some of the most common faces – fashion designers, stylists, or the Harajuku kids; a number of publications have already discussed those colorful urban actors. In selecting my interviewees, I was looking for the wide range of insights. I was looking for people whom I accidentally come across in Urahara, for some who run local business long enough to see changes and for the newcomers alike, for interesting the shop keepers for the members of the very active creative class. All of them, in a variety of ways, contribute to life of Harajuku.

In the following overview of the data I collected by speaking to the people of Harajuku, I do not give any comments. I leave the voices from Harajuku speak, as I have heard them while exploring their spaces and activities.



Shimazu-san, of *Café Luigi*

Luigi's is a very small café on Wendy's alley (streets of Urahara, of course, do not have formal names. Wendy's café is my invention because of Wendy fast food at the angle of this street on Omote Sando). Shimazu-san is a very style conscious man. Always dressed in black, wearing a beautiful hat. Sitting behind the counter, he enjoys making coffee. Good coffee. He learnt all about coffee in Seattle, he says, and decided to open his own café after working for a while as manager of *Café de Flore* on Omotesando (the original version of which was at the Parisian Montparnasse). Shimazu-san worked for a French company for many years. He now owns two cafés, this one in Harajuku and another one in Shibuya. He prefers Harajuku, while his wife looks after the Shibuya café.

Shimazu-san was describing the changes over the last six or seven years, since the economic crisis hit Japan. He calls them "tremendous". He hates all those new sneakers shop and youth cloth outlets. He loathes Omotesando Hills and never goes there.

"I am worried about the future of Japan. Young Japanese have no life philosophy. ... Before, I used to have no time to sit and talk. There were people coming in all the time. Now, there are much fewer customers... Japanese do not like good coffee."

Café Luigi opened 24 years ago. It was named after Shimazu-san's old friend, Luigi Colani, a "famous Italian designer".

"I hate Harajuku, how the business there makes money from the kids. My customer used to be adults. The old stylists could not stay here. It became too expensive for them, they had to move out - to Sendagaya, Nakamekuro, Daikanyama."

"Harajuku is different today."



Ms Kunie Usuki, *Design Festa Gallery*

Ms Usuki is one of the people who brought creative activities to Urahara. Her Gallery opened almost ten years ago, in 1998. Before that, for four years she organized art events in the Tokyo Big Site.

She came to Harajuku because of the building which now houses her *Design Festa*. The building is now fifty years old, a simple old mansion with rows of rental rooms. Ms Usuki started using the 3rd floor as her office. Then, she transformed the rest of building into an art gallery. All neighbouring houses belong to the same owner, who is behind the success of the famous *Sakura House*, a big rental company which deals exclusively with apartments for the foreigners.

Usuki-san does not like Harajuku as a fashion area. "People come here, and they all dress in the same way." Her dream was to make *Design Festa* as an event-place, similar to those she has seen in other cities in the world.

Harajuku, she says, used to be a very good place, but it isn't anymore. Urahara used to be residential. She still likes to be in that cozy area.

She is the fan of the Rolling Stones.

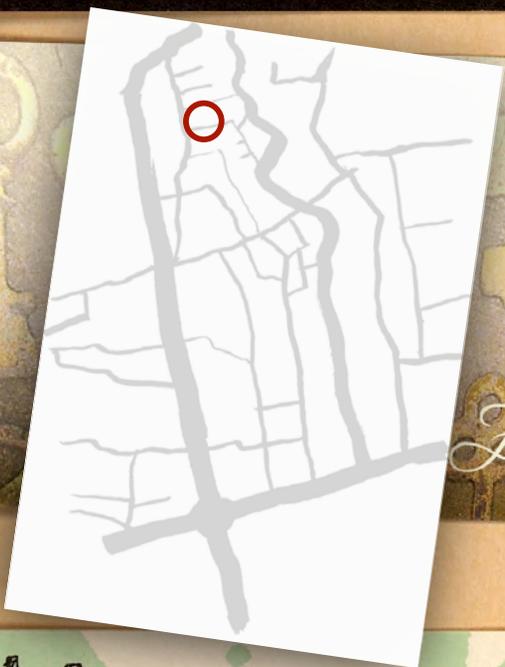
"Here, like in Daikanyama, Kichijoji, Shimokitazawa, all has changed. Nowhere is like in Harajuku, and - there is no sight of some "new" Harajuku in Tokyo."

Artists liked her idea of rental exhibition rooms. Many of them wanted to exhibit in *Design Festa*. Now, Usuki-san employs twenty staff, and has a very busy exhibition schedule. She doesn't want to open more galleries, she says how likes only this one... (But then, only few months after our chat, she opened a *Design Festa West*, in a mansion just behind her original place. This new space is almost an extension of the original one. Red color helps read two places as one, there is a kind of semi public space feel about them. Rental fees in new *Design Festa* are much higher than in the old one. They cater for other kind of artists.)





A newcomer to Urahara



A brand new shop in Urahara is Stereo Hair Salon. The manager is also a designer and a hair dresser. For him, Harajuku is not just a distinctive part of the city (*machi*, he says). It is also a culture, a "strange space" within Tokyo. He describes the boundary of Harajuku as: to the East – Kodokyo pedestrian bridge; to the West – the front of Shibuya ("very vague", he admits), to the North – clearly, Harajuku station and to the South – Omotesando Hills.

For him, Harajuku is the atmosphere, the way people dress and the "feeling" of being there. His shop opened on 12 December 2007. Earlier, he used to run one in front of the Harajuku station. That was his first shop. An independent one, not a unit in some chain company.

The Stereo first opened in 1999. Over the nine years, he has seen many changes. "Harajuku becomes mature", he said. His clients are 20-30 years old. Mostly regulars who used to be here in the past and who still stay or come back. They are members of a group, people who frequent the area. His clients are not the Cosplay girls (considered as a youth fashion tribe, dress like a costume play) Those people who dress strangely do not really come to his hair salon. They dress up by themselves, and they also make their own hair style.

He has old clients, but he is very fond of his new place, too. He was looking for "a house" in Harajuku. The owner of this one gave him a lot of freedom to modify the space. He heard about the building from the real-estate agent. An architect designed the shop for him. The shop is open each day. 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

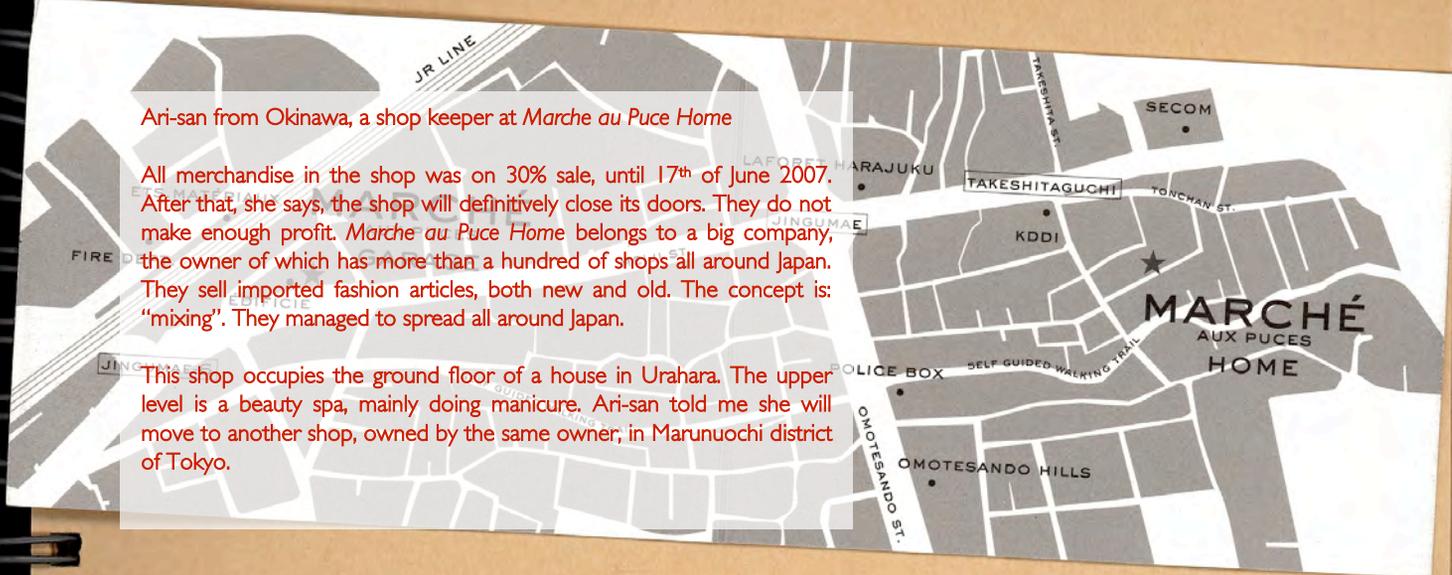
He travels to work takes about one hour. The shop still does not appear on the Urahara Map. In future, it may start featuring there. He does not have an opinion about architecture in Harajuku. It is mixed, he says. Diverse. There should be guidelines for future development, to help keep this character.

stereo
hair

Ari-san from Okinawa, a shop keeper at *Marche au Puce Home*

All merchandise in the shop was on 30% sale, until 17th of June 2007. After that, she says, the shop will definitively close its doors. They do not make enough profit. *Marche au Puce Home* belongs to a big company, the owner of which has more than a hundred of shops all around Japan. They sell imported fashion articles, both new and old. The concept is: "mixing". They managed to spread all around Japan.

This shop occupies the ground floor of a house in Urahara. The upper level is a beauty spa, mainly doing manicure. Ari-san told me she will move to another shop, owned by the same owner, in Marunouchi district of Tokyo.



〒150-0051

4-26-23 JINGUUMAE SHIBUYA TOKYO

Another shop keeper – FUA

I choose to interview this person because of the place she works in. It used to be a very old wooden house, but after an incident in December 2007 it was fast transformed into a combination of the shop, at the ground floor, and an apartment, at the upper levels. The ground floor is now being rented to a fashion accessory shop FUA. My interviewee is a manager there. She works for a company which has three shops, in Harajuku, and also other shops in Kichi-joji, Shimokitazawa, Chiba, Kawazaki.

That is not considered to be a chain store, for each shop is consciously unique, with special design articles on sale. That is a company strategy. The Harajuku shop just opened, on 3rd November 2007. The display was designed by their in-house designer. They sell "antique" accessories, such as hair pins (*kanzashiya*), general items (*kastukobo*). The clients are 70% women, 30% men. The shop-keeper works in all shops of the company, but regularly she sits only in the FUA. From her image, lots of shops of the same company in Harajuku are always group in the same place, for example the shop in front of FUA. It is also belong to the same company but have different names.





MODE ET JACOMO

Model hunters - photographers and the editor of the *Cutie* magazine

Their work depends on orders from the magazine. They take two to three hundred of shoots each week, depending on what the magazine asks. The work starts at 12 a.m., and goes on until the sunset. It depends on natural light. They are looking for people who dress in the style which fits what the magazine wants. Those may be the same ones whom they photographed before, if they dress in a way which is "cute and different", and if what they wear fits the *Cutie* concept.

The photographer I spoke to was a free lancer. He works for *Cutie* for six months already. He always sits in front of the GAP store, or in front of *Ralph Lauren* on Omotesando. Sometimes he shoots in Urahara. Just the snap-shots. The only criterion for selecting a model is - good look, a girl dressed in "Harajuku style". The emphasis is on street fashion, and the model can be anyone. The styles of dress in Shibuya and Harajuku, he confirms, are very different. Shibuya is - a *gal* style. Harajuku photographers do not shoot *gal*.

The Editor helps fix the look of the models. Same people get selected over and over again. The model hunter, who works with the photographer I was speaking to, is a University student. She studies graphical design. Her work for the magazine is part time. Inside Urahara, she says, the flow of people is not constant enough, but the magazine prefers to shoot there. *Cutie* focuses on people walking, passing by. The atmosphere. The Editor defines what style she wants, and the model hunter selects those who stand out ones from the crowd. Harajuku has a very unique way of dress, she says. Everyone there has an individual, own style. That is why they have to make two or three hundred shots per week. But, "we won't shoot a *gal*! That is Shibuya style. They are not belong here", my Harajuku model hunter keeps on repeating.

Another model hunter team - the photographer and the editor from the *Kera* magazine

They come to Harajuku each day, except when it rains. About 22 days per month. They hang in front of the *GAP*, on Omotesando.

They shoot two to ten models per day. They focus on style. Gothic, both rock and Lolitas. They seek unique cases. They are very selective, they seek girls who can model and can be copied by others. *Kera* shoot only girls. They concentrate on location in front of the *Laforet* in particular, because at first and second basement levels that shop sells goods in styles they like. They don't stay around the bridge in front of the Harajuku Station. That is "not an efficient place", it is difficult to get a good shoot there. Takeshitadori is also too busy for serious work.

The photographer has ten years of experience. The young women who helps him choose the models has two years experience with the *Kera* magazine.



The survivors in a very difficult location - Irie Yawd

Irie Yawd is a very cool looking hair salon. The name is, I was told, in Jamaican language. It means *A Funny House*. The owner brings in lots of interesting objects and puts them in the shop. He started this business years ago. He used to work as a hair dresser in this area before. The hair dressers, he explains, should start their career as assistant, and work for several years before opening their own shops. That is what he did. He found the place for 300,000 yen per month, on the 3rd floor of one building in Urahara. Initially, that was a "mansion", a residential building. Then, someone converted it into offices, and then he turned it into the shop. He doesn't want to decorate the place to look like a "shop", though. He is keen to make it feel more like "home", to be "warm and relaxed". That was his concept before he choose this place, he was actually looking for a house which can adopt such feel. Any place he chooses, he says, he transforms to feel like home.

He mainly advertises his shop by *keitai* (mobile hand phones), or finds the clients on the street. He and his staff simply ask the passers by to come up, to have a cheap, or even free service. If the client is happy, he or she may return.

The clients sometimes complain that the salon is too difficult to find. They close every Tuesday. He came to work on foot. It is ten minutes walk, from his house to Urahara. If he opens another shop, he would like it to be in Harajuku, too. Good location; easy for staff to come and go. He doesn't think that being in Harajuku is an disadvantage for him. That is the place with high concentration of activities. It is better to be in Harajuku than elsewhere in Tokyo, he believes. He can work better, and everything around him looks better than elsewhere, too. The shop doesn't profit much from the Harajuku fame, though. His shop is different from those operated by big brands, which abound in this area; they do not have the same target market. He wants his shop to belong to this place. He wants it simple, cozy.

He used to "chase" his clients. Today, clients seek him and find it fun to go around to seek his shop.

The reason of choosing this particular place, despite it is on the 3rd floor, is because of the roof. There is a deck at the top, with a nice view. That is where he meets other tenants; they got to know each other, and they share and enjoy their deck space.





4 branches around Harajuku

A memory of Dojunkai - Lunette du Jura (Petit)

This brand dates back sixteen years, but the shop in Urahara itself is four years old. My interviewee was a manager of the Urahara branch, *Lunette du Jura (Petit)*. They have six shops, four of which are located in central areas of Tokyo - Omotesando Hills, Aoyama, Roppongi and Harajuku, while the other two are outside, in Kanagawa and Niigata. The majority of the products on sale are imported from the Jura Region in Eastern France, which is well known for production of fine frames for glasses.

Lunette du Jura have a very unique concept. The products they sell must be "beautiful and funny, not seen in Japan before". The frames have to be such that they make the face of those who wear them look different.

They used to be located in old Dojunkai - famous social housing on Omotesando which was demolished to make place for the fashionable Omotesando Hills. The owner used to live there. Then, they moved out and transformed the apartment into the shop. The unit was in the front of Dojunkai. A quite good location for business, because their shop was directly facing the street.

She liked the Dojunkai atmosphere. It was unique, mysterious in a way, she says. One could never know what was inside, unless she or he opened the door and entered. Few of the shops which used to be located in Dojunkai stayed in small, dedicated zone of Omotesando Hills, but not many. Some moved to other locations in the neighborhood.

She personally liked Dojunkai. She would prefer if the new project maintained more of the unique quality of that lovely environment. "But, but..."



Lunette du Jura has a very unique graphic style of making the publication, always change and create new ideas all the time, very good for collection.





The "vintage" creator - *Me-Meno*

The owner is a man in his forties. He is in the vintage clothes market for twenty five years. He started his career in Yaesu company, and opened his own first vintage shop on Meiji Dori fifteen years ago. This Urahara *Me-Meno* shop operates for nine years. Since then, he says, a number of second-hand cloth shop in Harajuku has increased. A lot. Now there are twenty or thirty shops in that business. Some of them have same target audiences.

Almost every month he travels to Europe, mainly France and the UK, and to the United States, to buy used and antique articles. He has a very unique way to choose articles, and to decorate his shop.

There were many changes in Harajuku since the 70's. Then, there were only three shops on his street (which, in the absence of official names, I dubbed the Birkenstock Lane). There used to be lots of drinking restaurants and several stylist ateliers. They made clothes to order and were very expensive. Now there is less and less of such business in Harajuku.

He says how Harjuku has transformed almost exclusively into an exclusively shops area only five years ago. There used to be shops which cared for the local neighborhood needs. Today there are no more simple shops like that.

He mentioned today the biggest market of used cloth is in Thailand, where one can find even the goods from Europe and America.

He doesn't own any other shop. This one is unique, he is not interested in developing branches nor franchising his business.

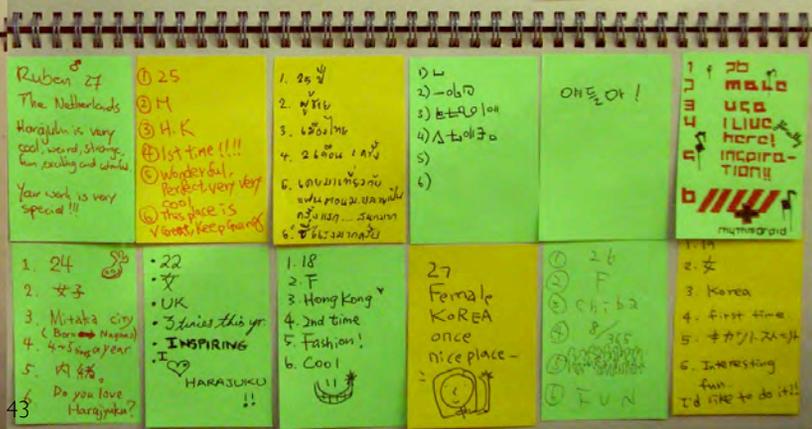
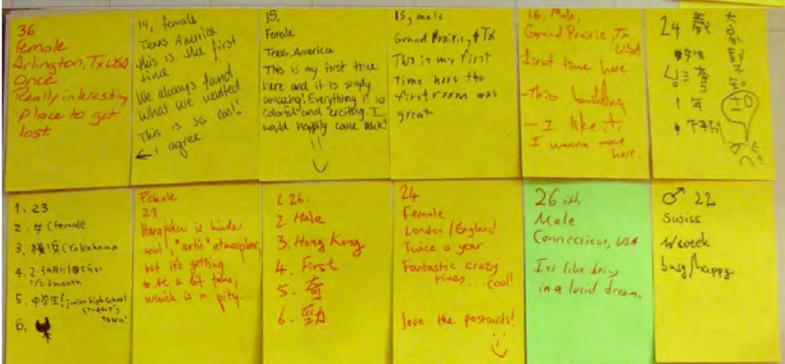
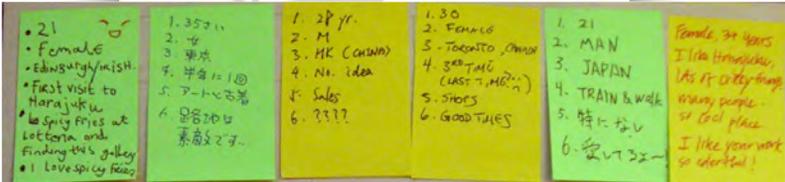


Q: WHO else comes to Urahara?

A: Apart from the people who work here, there are other people interested in Harajuku. Part of my survey of Harajuku was organized around my exhibition, held in Design Festa Gallery 26 June to 2 July 2007.

Next to my own work, I have put some empty A0 sheets of paper for the visitors of my exhibition, to write their comments about Urahara. Some 90% of the visitors were under the age of thirty. About half of them were tourists, who came to explore Harajuku and liked when they discovered this hidden exhibition space.

The American were, typically, amazed by getting lost in Harajuku. Two Japanese visitors commented how Harajuku became fake. 100% of the tourist who wrote their comments fell in love Harajuku.



WHY

WHY

The *what, where, when, who* questions invite mainly descriptive answers. The *why* questions seek analytic and explanatory answers. Here I use my *why* questions to address the complexity of and the interrelationship between a number of issues that were highlighted through the answers to the *whats, wheres, whens, whos*, those descriptions of many facets that are saying what Harajuku *might* be about. Attempts to answer the *why* questions help establish deeper understanding of the nature of the place.





Q: Why Harajuku is so attractive?

A: Attractiveness of an urban precinct is undeniably related to its creativity.

Some of my interviewees, the very people who make Harajuku what it is, spoke how they discovered that place simply amazed by its look.

People who run their business there, especially the one who survived in Harajuku for a long time, merged with the established quality of the area and actively contributed to development of its unique character. That involvement is a never-ending process. Those involved in production of the uniqueness of Harajuku have to stay active. There is no void in creative processes. If one stops, someone else fills the gap.

From its origins, Harajuku was an authentic creative precinct, born from interactions between the members a group of talented fashion designers and youth that frequented the area. Those encounters were developed in an atmosphere eager to open up, to embrace international influences and trends

Richard Florida wrote how “the creative class fosters an open, dynamic, personal and professional environment. This environment, in turn, attracts more creative people, as well as businesses and capital” (Florida 2002). That is what was and still is going on in Harajuku. The exact “chemical” balance of location (*where*), space and form (*what*), creative activity and creative class (*who*), together with a fascinating dynamics of its evolution (*when*) made a delicious recipe for an unique urban area. All those elements together contributed to the emergence of a *genius loci* of Harajuku. The attractiveness of that place keeps on attracting cultural and fashion-related activities, active participants in making and their clients, new entrepreneurs who are take over and their new clientele. From an authentic marked almost exclusively by creative activities, the new balance has emerged; new era attractiveness of Harajuku turned the area towards higher and higher degrees of consumerism. In any other place, that would most likely mean the death of creativity. In Harajuku, for some reasons, even the profane acquires the “sacredness” that goes with the acts of genuine creativity.



Q: Why Harajuku manages to stay – Harajuku?

A: It seems to be a lucky coincidence that Harajuku was never part of any big, top-down urban redevelopment plans which characterize much of production of space in Tokyo. In Shinjuku or Shibuya, for instance, train stations became communication hubs and epicenters of commercial activity. The old fabric adjacent to those stations were rapidly transformed into huge shopping malls. That was both in response to the mass of human traffics which commutes in and out of those stations and to attract such masses to use those particular stations.

Harajuku was not touched by that dramatic process which marked the seventies and the eighties. During its formative stages, it was allowed to establish its own pace and character of development, with mainly “bottom up” initiatives, projects which responded to the initiatives of local residents and businesses.

Even architecture of the Harajuku train station maintained its authentic design, even that busy place maintains characteristic, small scale of the area – which definitely is a significant contributor to the overall attractiveness of Harajuku.

For decades, only *Laforet* shopping mall dominated Harajuku. The other big one – an ambitious and glamorous Omotesando Hills - opened its doors only recently, in 2006.

It seems that all creative people of Harajuku share their concern about the impact of such developments. Regardless the architectural quality of individual buildings, Tokyo has too many recent examples where new, oversized development killed the original quality of the area. The locals in Harajuku are asking how to keep on changing their area in a way which would be sensitive, in the way where design would contribute to the character, alter but not destroy quality. Over the years such people contributed to the process by numerous, subtle, incremental changes. They were never conservative, they were bravely bringing in the bravest and the latest – but with a measure which was defined, somehow, by Harajuku itself. New to the old blended into a harmonious, fragmented whole. Individuality and small-scale competitiveness was, step by step transforming Harajuku, always into another version of - Harajuku. The places within the precinct were never treated as a mega scale *tabula rasa*, which is a common practice in other parts of Tokyo.

During one year of my own observation of Urahara, I recorded a number of drastic changes. Houses are getting knocked down rapidly. The sites are being consolidated for new and bigger development operations. A very big scale projects are being constructed, even on the subtle Cat Street. The radical changes are on the way, visible and aggressive.

Is that the last, sad moment when true creativity is being taken over by radical, global capitalism, when local sensibility is not getting taken in consideration any more? Has Harajuku reached the point of no return?

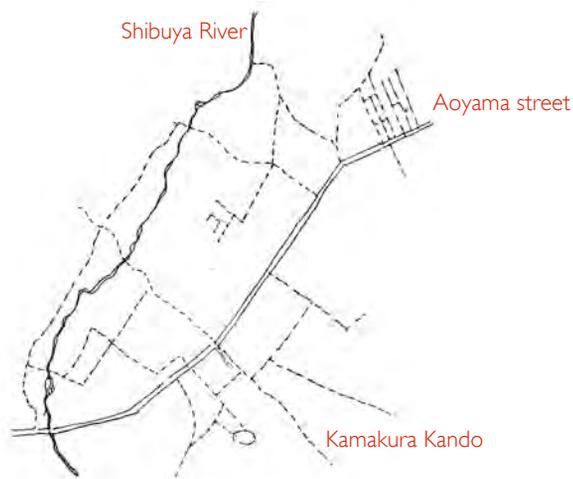


HOW

HOW?

Of all questions in this book, those starting with *How* are the most difficult to answer. They demand an understanding of the urban area. They tend to encompass much of what questions that asked *what, where, why, when* were all about. *How* involves those trajectories of time which bring together past, present and point towards the future. To me, *how* is at the core of urban analysis. Each *how* holds potential for an argument, and demands sharp methodological tools to help chisel the answer. If the question *what* can be answered by a single picture, *where* - by a single map, *when* - by a single date, then the juxtaposition or layering of multiple images, pictures and data is necessary to indicate *how* certain quality happened, persists and evolves, and where it heads to.





Q: How Harajuku grows?

A: By urban growth we usually consider physical growth - both extension and densification of an area. There is also qualitative growth - evolution of an overall quality of the place. Growth comes from a synthesis of various socio-economic, political, technological and other developments. Urban form is affected by those processes, it is itself a continuing process (Aymonino 1966).

To read the growth of Harajuku is, thus, to get to know its complex dynamics. In terms of urban morphology, some distinctive spatial lines mark that process:

(1) the linear elements of Shibuya River, Aoyama street and Kamakura Kando (an ancient path to Kamakura). Later - Yamanote railway line was added, and the small-street pattern started to appear, to link those three major linear structures;

(2) another two major axis - Omotesando and Meiji street were constructed, and they are accompanied by important complexes of Meiji Shrine and Yoyogi park. Densification of the block interiors followed, and the process included a "big negative", the disruption during the World War II, after which rapid reconstruction almost completely replaced the old urban stock; and

(3) the new street Gaien-Nishi Dori (Killer Street), north of Harajuku, where complete, new urban blocks were conceived and built very fast.

Urban growth of Harajuku was and it remains organic. Construction of major structures always gets followed by spontaneous development of adjoining urban tissue. The growth is piecemeal, and it follows patterns which, in Alexander's way, grows towards distinctive and complex whole.



Q: How to read those Harajuku lines?

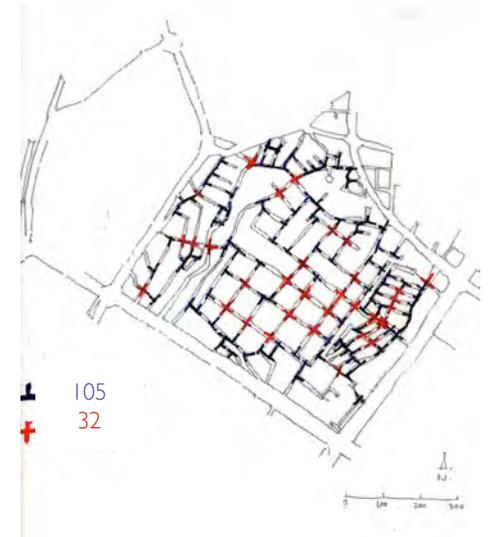
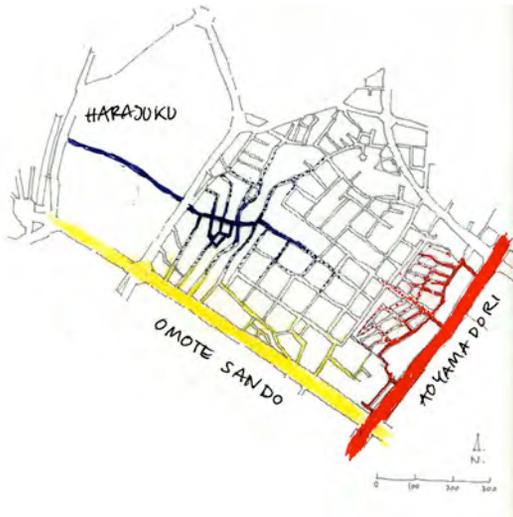
A: I draw the lines of Harajuku to understand the network and flow of communications. Their pattern makes me think of lines on the palm. Lines on the palm are readable; to those who believe, they tell the future. There are the lines of brain, those of money, travel, health, luck, love. It would be great to read urban lines and sense the future of the city. The chiromantic rules of palmistry, applied to the lines of Harajuku!

For instance, my little urbanistic game would go like this:

- 1: Life line: Aoyama, as it is the first line which brings lives into this area
- 2: Head line: Meiji street, as a line designated from the Emperor and one which links Shinjuku to Shibuya
- 3: Heart line: Omotesando, as the main spine which keeps the body upright, and boosts up the area, like the heart which pumps the blood. Without this line Harajuku is meaningless.
- 4: Girdle of Venus: Gaien West street, its crescent moon form. Not everyone has this line on her or his palm; it shows the level of anxiety.
- 5: Fate line: Cat Street, as a specific line which, again, not anyone can have. The fate line appears on palms of the lucky ones only.

All these lines combined make identity of Harajuku. They express its energy and expose the challenge that lay ahead, in the future.



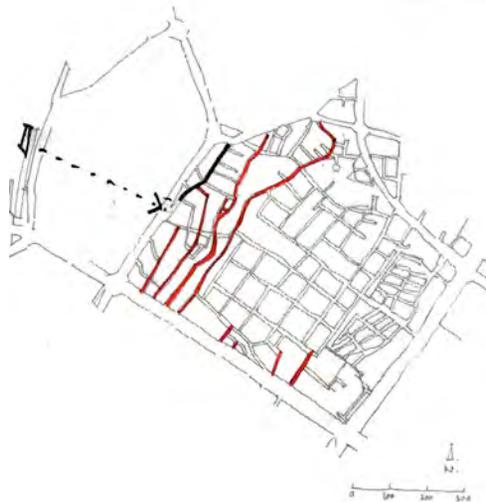


Q: How to (now, seriously) read the Harajuku's lines?

A: I propose a specific reading of urban patterns, to understand shapes, accessibility and connectivity. From my sets of maps, we can identify two distinctive patterns in this block: organic and grid. The majority of visitors access inner parts of Harajuku from Omotesando (where there are nine access points), then Meiji Street (with six access points) and Aoyama street (three). However the lanes from Omotesando do not link through to the inner parts, except with those in the Urahara area.

There is an equal number of streets in North-South and East-West direction. There are 105 T-shape junctions and only 32 of cross-junctions in the block. Only in the Urahara area the accessibility is a prominent feature of the network.

This reading confirms the particularity of Urahara spaces, and that may point at some reasons behind its character. That may help us explain how morphology of Urahara helps sustain the "Harajukeness" of the area which is exposed to the strong winds of change.

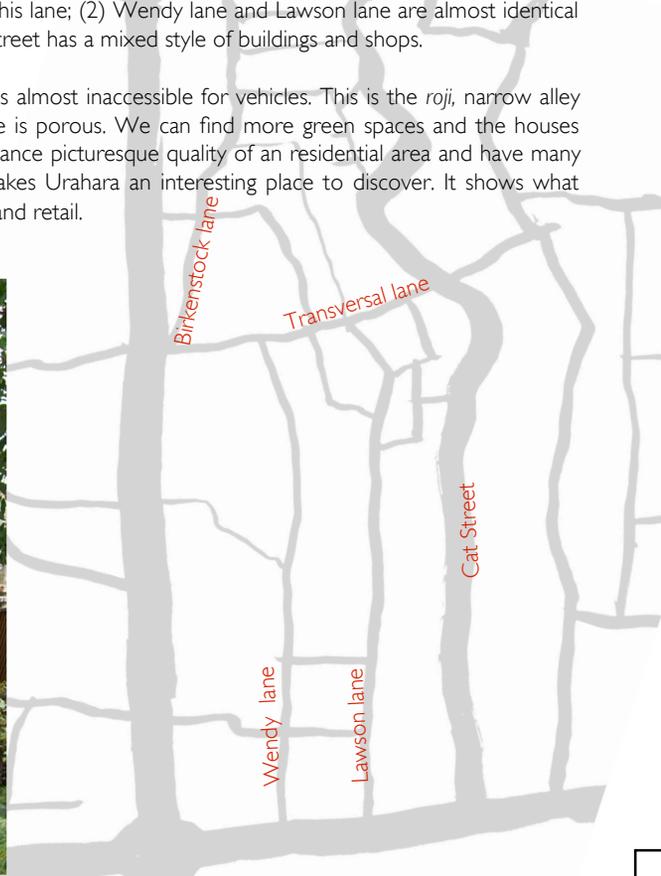




Q: How to understand urban spaces in Urahara?

A: Apart from serving as network and enabling flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, streets also provide spaces for public urban life. I am trying to capture the character of that life in a number of streetscape photos. The streets in Urahara are relatively narrow and of organic shape. They are strikingly picturesque. The experience in those narrow streets brings to mind an atmosphere of the residential neighborhood. It is a friendly environment. Cars rarely get in. There is a certain hierarchy of streets in Urahara. The Cat Street seems to be the largest street to penetrate into the inside of Urahara. Buildings along the Cat Street are higher than those in the neighbouring streets. The other three streets are narrower, and linkages between them are unpredictable. For instance, (1) Birkenstock Lane feels like the back lane of Meiji Street. Buildings face the Meiji Dori and rarely have an access from this lane; (2) Wendy lane and Lawson lane are almost identical in terms of scale and their streetscape, while (3) the transversal lane which links Meiji Street to Cat Street has a mixed style of buildings and shops.

The far end of Urahara (behind the transversal lane) is composed of even narrower lanes, and it is almost inaccessible for vehicles. This is the *roji*, narrow alley area. In the *roji* of Urahara there are more residential buildings than commercial. The atmosphere is porous. We can find more green spaces and the houses treasure their privacy. The "*roji*" of Urahara act as connectors between the main streets. They enhance the picturesque quality of a residential area and have many surprise endings at places when they join the commercial streets. This experience of contrast makes Urahara an interesting place to discover. It shows what Harajuku at its peak was very much about – a dynamic combination of living, creativity, production and retail.



Q: How are urban spaces of Urahara being used?

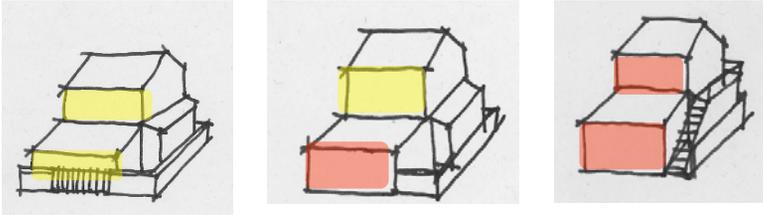
A: Streets of Urahara have that special spatial quality, and they provide the broad variety of uses. They provide space for circulation, but also a places to stop and contemplate the elements on both sides of the street. The space in which the most exciting activities happened in Urahara tend to be at the thresholds between inside and outside, at those messy junctions that define or resist to define the transition for open to enclosed, or from public to private, where private can spill out and public easily flows in.

Public moves on the street. Those movements themselves are a show. The actors and the public alike came with a purpose - to show their dress. The street provides a fashion show cat walk. Spectator can be anyone viewing the street from any angle also within the street itself. Those spectators are also the voluntary or involuntary actors. Distinction between the stage and the audience shifts easily, the observer gets observed, the actor becomes the spectator.

The shop fronts are decorated to enhance urban space, to catch attention. Some put imaginative installations of mannequins and theme the outdoor spaces; some exhibit inviting shop panels, as signs of commodities on offer. Those installation are like setting within which the scenarios unfold, become part of the streetscape. That is a complex interplay between the staged and the spontaneous, where public is invited to join in and to participate. A small, one meter street margin in front of the shop window becomes the place for dialogue and participation.

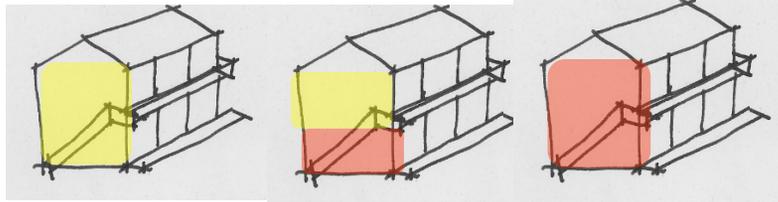


House



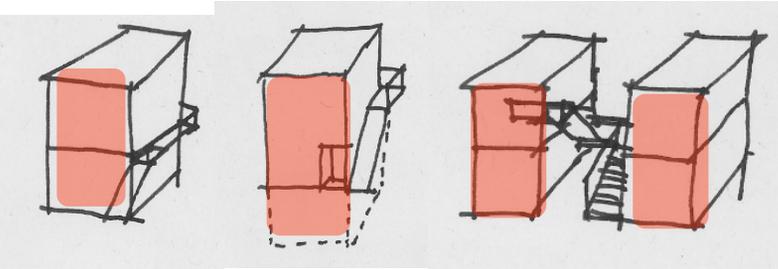
Use: Residential -----mixed residential+ commercial----- commercials

Guest House



Use: Residential -----mixed residential+ commercial----- commercials

Shop building



Use: single unit commercial ----- multiple units commercial

Q: How ... about the urban form?

A: Experience in Urahara is like - being in a fashion "village". The term "village" resonates with friendly feel, indicates an easy-going, porous environment. It is not difficult to imagine how Urahara used to look like before, since its inner part remains quiet, residential. Many shops still maintain old social structure and the feel of the post-war housing. In general, the volumes of Urahara are relatively small. The study of architectural form, together with architectural typological classification can help us understand the *raison d'être* of that particular urban type. Urahara is its houses, guesthouses and commercial buildings – and spaces that connect them. Much of that is stable and fixed, while typological variation occurs within the commercial space.

House: single and two storey postwar residential construction

House with an integrated shop: partial transformation in use, very few formal changes

Shop-house: shop occupies the whole house, staircase added for the upper levels access.

Guest House : multi storey construction developed to add residential density

Guest house: mixed used of residential and commercial

Shop in the guest house form: old guest house fully occupied by the shop

Individual Shop building: new design building for one shop

Commercial building: new design building to accommodate many shops

We can distinguish two main trajectories of change:

Residential axis: house - guest house - guesthouse+shop - commercial building

Commercial axis: house - house+shop - shop occupies whole house - commercial building



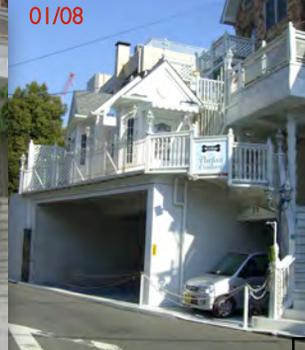
Q: How is Urahara being transformed?

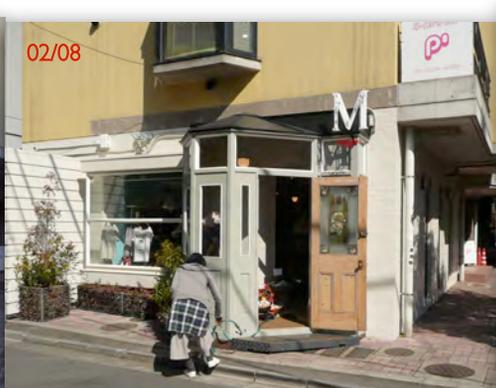
A: Urahara a commercial district designated for fashion. Changes are unavoidable. Partial changes happen each day, weekly, seasonal and fashion updates are happen often. There are also radical changes, both in terms of form and function. They vary, from make-up interventions on the façades, to total destruction and re-construction.

Individual house is a dominant type in Urahara. It suits demand for cool look and, in particular, it fits the overall cool theme of Urahara. At the same time, individual houses can be easily purchased, for lease or for radical transformation. In only one year, I noticed a number of transformations of Urahara, some of which are presented here as a before-after pictures.

Some bigger scale of transformations are underway in Urahara. At the time of completion of this phase of my research, I identified two on the Cat Street - near Omote Sando and in the inner part, towards the other end of the street.

Since August 2007, a number of houses in the area were knocking down in Wendy alley. Empty lots of land appeared one next to another, in clusters which indicate a major forthcoming intervention.







Q: How to design in Urahara?

A: Urahara needs a sensitive design which valorizes quality and responds to its urban character. There are only few examples which go against the predominant, *tabula rasa* approach which is favoured by Japanese developers.

For me *Design Festa Gallery* is a unique case of place making. Simple very subtle design interventions in the established urban fabric and modest transformations of architectural spaces of an existing building transformed the neighbourhood in a very creative way. Creative process whose result nurtures further creativity. Now, the whole block of Urahara is an eclectic, unique place marked by strong atmosphere of cultural underground. The space in between, neither private nor public, neither open nor closed, neither of Old nor of New *Design Festa*, is a simple, elevated with wooden platform. It connects several buildings, makes spaces of the Gallery, Sakura house and an *Okonomiyaki* restaurant accessible. Red color is strong, surprising, attractive. *Design Festa* is an inspiring example how existing condition can be creatively used and upgraded to match the complexity of true Urahara.



Gwen Stefani - Harajuku Girls Lyrics

<http://www.seeklyrics.com/lyrics/Gwen-Stefani/Harajuku-Girls.html>

Were mono - there's me, there's you (hoko-ten) In a pedestrian paradise. Where the catwalk got its claws (meow) A subculture in a kaleidoscope of fashion. Prowl the streets of Harajuku (irasshaimase). Super lovers, tell me where you got yours (at the super lovers store). Yoji Yamamoto, I'm hanging with the locals. Where the catwalk got its claws, all you fashion know-it-alls. With your underground malls in the world of Harajuku. Putting on a show, when you dress up in your clothes. Wild hair color and cell phones Your accessories are dead on

Harajuku Girls you got the wicked style. I like the way that you are, I am your biggest fan. Harajuku Girls you got the wicked style. I like the way that you are, I am your biggest fan

Harajuku girls, I'm looking at you girls You're so original girls. You got the look that makes you stand out. Harajuku Girls, I'm looking at you girls. You mix and match it girls. You dress so fly and just parade around (arigatou)

I'm fascinated by the Japanese fashion scene Just an American girl, in the Tokyo streets My boyfriend bought me a Hysteria Glamour shirt. They're hard to find in the states, got me feeling couture. What's that you got on? Is it Comme des Garcons? Vivienne Westwood can't go wrong, mixed up with second hand clothes (Let's not forget about John Galliano) (no) Flipped the landscape when Nigo made A Bathing Ape I got expensive taste (oh, well) guess I better save up (chotakai)

Work it, express it, live it, command your style Create it, design it. Now let me see you work it Create it, design it. Now let me see you work it. You bring style and color all around the world. (You Harajuku Girls). You bring style and color all around the world. (You Harajuku Girls)

You're looking so distinctive like D.N.A., like nothing I've ever seen in the U.S.A. Your underground culture, visual grammar. The language of your clothing is something to encounter. A Ping-Pong match between eastern and western. Did you see your inspiration in my latest collection?. Just wait 'til you get your little hands on L.A.M.B., 'Cause it's (super kawaii), that means (super cute in Japanese). The streets of Harajuku are your catwalk (bishoujo you're so vogue). That's what you drop

Cho saikou - Harajuku Girls. And that's what you drop, that's what you drop. Cho saikou - Harajuku Girls And that's what you drop, that's what you drop. (I don't think you understand I'm your biggest fan) (Gwen Stefani - you like me)

Style detached from content. A fatal attraction to cuteness. Style is style. Fashion is fashion. Girl, you got style.

Q: How to appreciate Harajuku?

A: For me, it is impossible to understand an urban place only through pragmatic analysis. There is a need of subjective *appreciation*, for cumulative readings and re-readings of the urban by many of those who shape its reality. Cities are human products, and their understanding needs human quality to reflect their totality, the *oeuvre*.

Appreciation helps generate creativity. Each of us can appreciate Harajuku in a number of ways, which may range from enjoying its spaces and atmosphere, actively joining some of the "Harajuku tribes", reading Harajuku, writing about Harajuku, capturing its themes, seeking inspiration, finding ways to express in other, own forms of medias.

Gwen Stefani, for instance, offers an example - her music was created in response to experiencing the creative fusion of the Harajuku-girl sensibility and broader trends in Japanese fashion. Her lyrics describe a pedestrian paradise, a street as a catwalk where fashion flourishes. Harajuku there, deservedly, becomes an icon, a style - now in music, her dancers mimic Harajuku Girls.

Urban analysis needs such excursions into the subjective which escapes rationalization and explanation. That is, simply, how Harajuku - is.

A0 (841x1189) - The Harajuku mosaic

Many small pieces form an A0. From a good distance the full message of the work emerges: the life of Harajuku lends itself to another reading - the kanji "Harajuku".

My own ways of appreciation of Harajuku push me towards experiments in a variety of media. CiteXture is only series of works which, in different techniques, present my reflection about the city. CiteXture was based on an understanding that the cities are textual compositions (Barthes 1965), that they can be understood as composed of multiplicity of individual "words" and "phrases", structured by the syntax of an unique language. My language. And/or (in this instance) – Harajuku language.

And, *un bon croquis vaut mieux qu'un long discours* ("a good sketch is better than a long speech", as Napoleon used to say or, proverbially, "a picture is worth a thousand words").

The artwork presented in my exhibition at *Design Festa Gallery* accompanied one phase of my research of Urahara. It paralleled traditional aspects of my investigation and, on occasions, it also fed into that other side of my work. Art satisfies my need for subjective reflection and communication in an universal language of pictures and sketches. It helps me express, both myself and **Harajuku**, in a fuller sense. And, as **Harajuku** is very much about image and image making, these drawings and collages seek to express that place as in a series of images.

My exhibition was presented through an ubiquitous architectural and urban design theme - that of "scale". The scales in which I explores **Harajuku** were translated into standard paper formats - ISO216, better known as the "A series" (1: $\sqrt{2}$ ratio). Each work covered an area of 1m², which corresponds to the A0. Paper sizes, which ranged from A0 to A8, were used to present the scales which best capture various aspects of life in Harajuku:





A2 (420x594) - The Urahara collage

The City is a collage (Rowe and Koetter 1984). In this work, the focus is on Urahara, the heart of Harajuku. An A2 is used to collage different elements of that vibrant area, all layered onto the map. The overall picture comments on the character of Urahara, as a quality in itself and as a part of Harajuku



A4 (210x297) - The Human scale

A4 is considered to be the most suitable for everyday life. It is used universally - for note-taking, writing, printing, photocopying. Here A4 presents the people of Harajuku. Unlike spaces, the people and their activities are beyond scales. These drawings capture the stories lived and told in Harajuku. All together, they weave a complex text(ure) of Harajuku.



A6 (105x148) - The Pocket scale

A6 is a postcard size. It is used for papers which we want to put in our pockets. This part of my work is comprised of a series of sketches, proposed souvenirs from Urahara. The visitors are invited to buy them, as the souvenirs, as the mementos of this place, as an invitation to remember the event.



A8 (52x74) - The 'post-it' notes

They offer a blank surface, and another invitation to you - this time that is an invitation to participate. Please take part in citeXture by answering my brief questions and providing your feedback. Your insights will lead me towards better understanding of Harajuku.

Q: How to conclude on Harajuku?

A: I might conclude my finding in Harajuku around the theme of "urban Stage-Set" (as the title of this book) a place in Tokyo where reflects this unique characteristic.

Stage-set denotes how spaces in Harajuku are being used. It reflects the main character of a fashion area which demand a special setting to see and to be seen. Harajuku is a complex ongoing process of city making. It is an arena where actors and spectators are mingled in the show. Everyday life in Harajuku is like a show, everyday is a festival due to the change of its setting. Harajuku plays a very special role in Tokyo urbanism: vibrant, young and unpredictable experiences. Harajuku represents an extreme "globalization" phenomena of Post-War Tokyo in a very particular way.

Harajuku happened with a perfect chemical of its components at the right time and a right place. Those components include:

- "Fashion" which brings creativity, ever-changing aspect, competitiveness in design, decoration and consumption
- space and form which heritage from the pattern of Edo village, smallness and the density of these spaces and forms provide a prominent picturesque structure for a creative environment.
- prime location where receive simultaneously influence of international trend
- Harajuku's people who are varies from designers, small and big entrepreneurs, shopkeepers fashionable young shopper, Harajuku kids, tourists to local inhabitants, etc They contribute different roles to Harajuku.

All those components put together with a right quantity. The most important is the way how they interact with each other. These mixture evolve through time under a different paces. And make Harajuku become Harajuku today.

Another point I want to highlight is the Harajuku's complexity of being a "Fashion place". One can say (as my interviewees) that Harajuku today is not anymore the Harajuku of the past. Of course that we cannot freeze the moment of glorious of a place, it needs to evolve through time. Harajuku at first glance is totally consumption, overwhelmed by shops and shop some look new some look authentic. The old community is day by day being gentrified by commercial activities, the sense of community has been lost. It gains a new type of fashion district in an authentic setting. In this condition the balance is necessary to be maintained. Behind the scene, there is a complex organisation of Japanese fashion industry which runs the whole mechanism. But what we have seen so far is not a phenomena of big fish eats small fish but a strange big aquarium eco-system of fashion business. Harajuku is big enough to accommodate a very different kind of fashion activity, some compete some complement each other. There are always possibilities to squeeze in Harajuku. Harajuku is not totally consumption and destroy the root of its own. We can look at Harajuku at the angle of creative re-use and recycle of the picturesque environment. The "village" environment is being used, Also the products which circulate in Harajuku big part of them are the recycle products. This aspect of Harajuku (especially in Urahara) is undeniable important to support the existence of this place. Creative Fashion activities actually safe Urahara from a total change. This quality of Harajuku is subtle and only the creative people who understand and appreciate can maintain it. Experience in Harajuku is "unpredictable" not only because of its maze street system but also the ever-changing of small shops, one can always find something new each day, each week, each month. We cannot take this quality for granted only the Harajuku components can offer this experience and if the components change it can destroy whole whole quality of the area. This change is unavoidable, for time being only Urahara still keep partially the original environment. The change is knocking the door of Urahara which way it will go?

As Lefebvre said that "city is a projection of the society on the ground" I believe that Harajuku is a reflection of the Japanese fashion culture on the West of Tokyo. Harajuku is not just a place to sell cloth in a cool ambiance, it is more than just a continuity of shop windows but a "urban stage set" opened for everyone to participate.

People who experienced Harajuku in the past (in the 70's and 80's) cannot accept how Harajuku looks today. But the young who experience Harajuku today also like the place as it is today. It is a very subjective way of judgment how people think about Harajuku. The series of Q&A I present in this book partially covered the ways I suggested that we can look through Harajuku as a "place", a very unique place which contribute a big part to the urbanity of Tokyo. Harajuku is unique for Tokyo and for the world, place where receives a global recognition and still maintain its local quality.



