

Developing Urban Communities by Reusing Empty Buildings As the place for creative work and collaboration by youth

C h . Kyoko Tominaga (Ritumeikan University)

[SYNOPSIS]

The aim of this study is to clarify the process of urban community formation by young self-employed people, mainly through the reuse of vacant housings. This study focuses on the alternative social and political potential of the community and creating places of stable and sustainable work.

The problem of empty housing has been discussed in recent years due to factors such as a falling birth rate, an ageing population in Japan. How do we solve the problems of 'places', such as empty houses in cities, and 'people', such as isolated young people? In considering this social problem, our research focused on the formation of urban communities through the use of empty houses and shops by young self-employed people in Japan. Previous studies have often discussed the issue from the perspective of autonomy and self-governance, and our study uses a similar analytical framework to examine young people's work and housing based on their organisational structure.

The study focused on two young workers' food and housing communities in Itabashi (Tokyo) and Kawanishi (Hyogo). The results of qualitative research, we revealed that the problem of youth community in terms of 'work' and 'labour' is how to prevent unfair in the distribution of labour. On the other hand, youth workers have their interest for their housing in terms of changes in life stages. It seemed that youth workers have their interest for equality and horizontality between members in both work and living. The study has shown how living and working together in the same community can help young people overcome their housing problems and isolation.