



Open Forum 2018

Borderless creators of new social actions

-Approaches beyond category boundaries
encourage city and culture's potentials-

Summary Report

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Date: Sunday, February 18th, 2018

14:00~17:00 *Open 13:30

Venue: Spiral Hall(Spiral 3F)

5-6-23, Minamiaoyama Minato-ku, Tokyo

Organizer's Greeting

Arts Council Tokyo (Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture)
Olympic and Paralympic Cultural Strategy Director, Planning Department
Yuko ISHIWATA

Arts Council Tokyo is a section of the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture. We support various urban creative and educational projects. One of the big issues we are tackling right now is promoting cultural program in conjunction with the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. We are looking towards the future leading up to and beyond 2020. What is the society that we aim to create beyond 2020 Olympics? How should the relationship between the society and arts evolve? What are the "new values" we seek for? We are planning the cultural programs taking these questions into consideration.

Today we have gathered speakers who have gone beyond traditional borders to create new values. We will hear about their experiences and can hopefully leverage these values in our social systems, perhaps even 10 or 20 years into the future. I hope that this forum will be a good opportunity to consider challenging conventional social structures, and everyone can take back and utilize something from today's discussion.

Part1: Opening Talk

Speaker



Takashi SERIZAWA

(Executive Director of P3 art and environment)

Born in 1951 in Tokyo. After graduating from the Mathematics Course in the Faculty of Science at Kobe University and from the Architecture and Building Science Course in the College of Engineering at Yokohama National University, Serizawa was involved in research related to ecological land-use planning as a member of Regional Planning Team Assoc., Inc. In 1989, he founded "P3 art and environment." He successively served as general director of the Tokachi International Contemporary Art Exhibition "DEMETER" (2002), secretary general of the Asahi Art Festival (2003 to 2016), curator for Yokohama Triennale 2005, general director of the Beppu Contemporary Art Festival "Mixed Bathing World" (2009, 2012 and 2015), and director of the Saitama Triennale 2016 (2016)

Opening Talk

Executive Director of P3 art and environment
Takashi SERIZAWA

Now we feel as if we are in a very complex era. There are several layers to every environment and situation, and as the human activity has spread in a global scale, it is inevitable we expand our minds and consciousness. For instance, talking about environmental problems, we need to think globally. On the other hand, this also causes some troubles. Economic and social disparity is growing all over the world, and the conditions are getting worse. At the same time, there are several ideas leveraging new scientific technologies, such as AI, organ transplants and the colonization of other planets, to find possibilities for the new future. However, especially for us who experienced the unprecedented earthquake on March 11th 2011, we have questions against technology creating complete and perfect happiness in the future. In the past few years, we have seen changes all over the world in politics and many forces, opposing globalism. Looking around these days, especially among the younger generation, I see a different movement, towards opening new possibilities, going against the flow to overcome difficulties.

Today we have four guests from four different cities. They are engaged in very local activities involving small communities and working closely with them. By doing so, they have to do many activities alongside their projects beyond Arts and design etc. Therefore, it is inevitable for them to go beyond boundaries. Every day we see these boundaries and walls being broken down, beyond the existing categories such as 'art', 'design' or 'culture', and rather I see them using the social system as the new space for expression. This is why we chose the forum title: Borderless Creators of New Social Actions.

The Tokyo Olympics will be held in 2020. Personally, I experienced the first Tokyo Olympics in 1964, when I was a teenager. I have experienced how Tokyo has changed, for both the better and the worse. I know that this big wave is certain to come, but the most important thing is to think about how we can make Tokyo an appealing place, beyond this big wave. I think it is very important to discuss about that altogether from now on.

Part2 : Presentation

Speaker



Alice Hui-Sheng CHANG
(Co-founder of Ting Shuo Hear Say, Tainan)

Born in 1984 in Changhua, she is a sound artist and has performed at and organized workshops and events in East Asia, Europe and Oceania, ranging from small independent events to major festivals. During many of overseas residencies, she hosted workshops and various community engagement programs. Alice is now based in Tainan, Taiwan. She is the co-founder of Ting Shuo Hear Say, a community venue and organization focused on listening, arts and discursive education.



Fran EDGERLEY (ASSEMBLE, London)

Born in 1987, she is a founding member of the Award-winning architecture collective Assemble. She works to explore the social implications of architecture, art and design through a practice that supports complexity and empathy in the city.



Michael LEUNG (Designer/ Urban Farmer, Hong-Kong)

Born in 1983, London. His projects range from collective urban agriculture projects such as The HK FARMers' Almanac 2014-2015 to Pangkerchief, a collection of objects produced by Pang Jai fabric market in Sham Shui Po. He is a visiting lecturer at Hong Kong Baptist University where he teaches socially engaged art (MA). His personal research focuses on Insurrectionary Agricultural Milieux, rhizomatic forms of agriculture that exist in local response to global conditions of biopolitics and neoliberalism.



Kenta NAKAMURA
(Representative of Nihon Shigoto Hyakka, CEO of Shigotohito Inc., Tokyo)

Born in 1979 in Tokyo, he is also in the position of director of Shigotohito Bunko. He manages job information site "Nihon Shigoto Hyakka (Japan Job Encyclopedia)" for people lively facing own job. He also supervises operations and designs of "Little Tokyo" project and "Shigoto Bar (Job Bar)" which intend to create little town in Kiyosumi-Shirakawa, in East Tokyo. Meanwhile, he has served judge of Good Design Award since 2014. On April 22, 2017, he launched service "popcorn" allowing everybody to screen movies.

Alice Hui-Sheng CHANG

Co-founder of Ting Shuo Hear Say, Tainan



I grew up in Taiwan, where perhaps the education system is quite similar to Japan: it's very top-down, lecture-style, I present information, you receive information; and we call that 'spoon-fed education'. Although it's been changing for the last couple of decades, but for art and music especially it's still very much skill- and technology-focused, and not very much about critical thinking, or social engagement, or connected with emotions.

We started a community space "Ting Shuo Hear Say" in July 2016. 'Ting Shuo' means 'hear' and 'say': together, it means rumors, or I've heard about something, someone said good or bad stories about someone else, or something happening. So we've sort of taken the words as a little play of these two meanings, of listening and sharing, as well as connected to human experience and connected to collective knowledge passed on.

So the space is run by my husband and myself, and we see it as a community and education space. We renovate the space as simple as we can, keeping its original features of the old house. We run performance workshops, and different kind of building and sharing related to sound and listening here. We also have a small library, and a small room for introducing music labels, for people to listen to composed experimental music.

So our background is sound art, improvised music and experimental music: and myself also trained in arts therapy. We use the venue to focus on running this kind of event, but in a very experiential and communal way of conducting and also trying to work against the traditional education system.



So each time we host someone in our house we treat them as our houseguest coming into our house; no matter they are artist or audience or any participants.

Experimental music is still quite new in Taiwan, because Taiwan had martial law until 1989; and so all the rush of new forms of music and art came in the nineties, and the end of the eighties. In the beginning it was very connected to social actions as well as provoking emotional responses, but now experimental music in Taiwan is very focused on technology as well as skills in programing. So that is a thing influenced by the whole education system, especially university.

We try to bring together improvisers, to create a very spontaneous performance and to create an immediate response between audience and performer, rather than having a stage and audience being separated. We try to also have lots of conversation with audiences after the performance.

An audience often feels like experimental music is something they don't quite understand, or it's for elite groups of people, or it's for the rebels of the young artists. We try to get people to talk about their experience of listening to the music, no matter what their background is. We believe that everyone has something to share, it's not about whether you've learned music or not, and it's not about whether you understand the technology or the technical ability of the performer.

We also run workshops there. For example, we had the a workshop run with recording, specifically with mobile phones and one can come and improvise with whatever medium, for example one's body, drawing or any kind of sound-making device.

Being communal is also one of the focuses. We hosted the open free dinner outside of our house, and performances on the street. So, this community-building could be about location, but another form of community could be about a group of people coming together and having a mutual shared interest together.

Through my experience, I have noticed that people are really happy to share, no matter difference of their age or background. People are passionate about sharing their own experiences. For me, the focus is on listening as well as speaking and discussing, but more importantly listening. When there are ears opening for other people to share, everyone will have something they want to share, to be connected, to feel a part of a community.

Fran EDGERLEY

ASSEMBLE, London



I'm a member of Assemble, a collective of eighteen specialists: we're non-hierarchical, we operate across the disciplines of architecture, art and design, and really enjoy working in a way that blurs the lines between these fields. The title of role of each member changes depending on the situation or the project which is at hand. Our work is really based on the idea that "a good city is one where people have an active role, relationship to their built environment and collectively shape and run it". Our practice tries to explore that gap between the people who live in the city and the forces that govern how it is made and continues to be built around them. Today I would like to talk firstly about our on-going work in Granby, in a community in Liverpool, and then also mention a few key ideas.

Granby is an area in the south of Liverpool, which is made up of rows of terraced houses which were originally built to house dockland workers in the nineteen-hundreds; and as Liverpool's importance as a port city declined in the post-war era, there was growing unemployment, a shrinking population, and a really tough social and economic situation that developed here. There were uprisings in 1981, protesting against endemic police violence, racism and the lack of economic opportunity: and this kind of became the defining public image of this particular area. So over the subsequent twenty years, there were successive regeneration projects and schemes that sought to kind of 'fix' the neighborhood through a really crude form of top-down planning, where people would be moved, buildings would be demolished and the area would start again; so people and problems were just being displaced.

Regrettably, over the course of twenty years plans ploughed on, and most of the houses in that area were emptied, leaving only four streets of the original fourteen of this neighborhood still standing. But amongst these empty houses there still lived a number of residents who gradually were working together to retake control of their streets.

They did this by extending very domestic actions out of their homes, such as cleaning, planting, painting, starting a market, occupying public space, kind of alerting others to their presence, and also starting to take their own action. So in the void created by so much damage people were able to take an enormous amount of control and freedom, because no one was watching, and no one cared.

They wanted to rebuild the area, not through one kind of single and uncompromising plan but an approach that involved or allowed for many different parties, housing associations, private individuals, organizations to have a stake. So they formed a community land trust, with the intention of refurbishing empty homes but this time retaining community ownership over those properties. We helped them to make a case to the local council to do this, presenting an incremental approach, developing a network of projects that think at a very small scale.



The project really started as ten houses, so it wasn't kind of the straight-forward restoration, but a process of repair and adaptation, responding to the specific conditions of each house. Generally, the houses were in really bad conditions, but sometimes we looked to retain these scars or previous damage if they could be usefully adopted to create better living spaces, so for instance on the scale of a room, when the ceiling had fallen down and keeping it vaulted rather than reinstating it: so keeping the layers of history, and the narrative of the struggle that these communities have been through as part of their experiences with the built fabric of the neighborhood.

I guess one of the challenges of Granby was this question of how the process of rebuilding the neighborhood would also support social infrastructure and economic opportunities that had also been deteriorating in line with the derelict buildings. So out of the process of how did we set up the Granby Workshop, so creating new business in the area but also somewhere that could continue to support that local culture of collective creative action which has been so transformative.

So we launched the business through a showroom which we built for the exhibition and a website where people could buy products made in Liverpool, allowing many different people from all over the world to invest in what was going on there. The products are all evidently handmade using processes that invite chance and purposely involve moments of improvisation and experimentation in their production, so each act of making is still something that is playful and creative. So we really kind of believe that this idea of experimentation and of making things is, whether it's at the scale of a door handle or of rebuilding a neighborhood, is a really empowering process and gives you a new way of seeing and understanding and relating to your surroundings so they are no longer fixed and intransigent or, it's unquestionable but become malleable and things to be challenged and full of possibilities.

Further down the street from the Workshop, the Winter Garden, we're also working to develop a project which combines growing space with creative activity so it's a kind of dramatic community garden space: and also in one house, and then the house is also next door, there's a kind of studio flat and community space, meeting space, to try and provide revenue to support the on-going management and maintenance of the project. These are both very much live, on-going projects; there's a lot of different people involved, and everyone has different aspirations, and progress so far has been through incremental small steps and just being opportunistic, and I think hopefully that's how it will continue.

I think any good work that we've ever done has always been contextual, and it responds to both physical and social contexts, trying to make a difference in people's lives through listening, through respect for their lived experience, generosity, their actual involvement and imaginative shifts.

I think that it's our job as designers, or artists, or commissioners, or critical thinkers of any sort, essentially the same kind of work, to question the way things are and develop new ways of working that can create better, more humane cities. I think that's really important to then also translate to how when you interact with creating working relationships and systems, so decisions around the process by which a project is delivered or how a brief is made can for us often be the critical piece of work, it doesn't have to be a built outcome; and it's really important to look at the structures that you're complicit in and reflect on how you're engaging with them, demonstrating through action and embodying change.

Professional spheres largely exist as systems of hierarchy and power, and by trying to work collectively with no hierarchy we attempt to work in a way where there is no constant negotiation of power but a continual and mutual process of growth and support and learning. Practice and workers' behaviors are saleable and the principle characters of our internal interactions as a collective based on the values and respect of multiple and varied voices attempts to reflect itself through our projects.

Michael LEUNG

Designer/ Urban Farmer, Hong-Kong



I'm a designer and urban farmer, and I teach part-time at university in the Arts department. I've been in Hong Kong for eight years but I was originally born in London.

I started bee-keeping and that got me curious about urban agriculture, rooftop agriculture, so I went to New York to work at Brooklyn Grange Rooftop Farm on the top left, and then when I came back I set up a rooftop with some friends and then here are some other rooftops that we've been working on and also a publication and almanac.

I think it's really important to talk about some of the living, housing, economic situation in Hong Kong. Like Tokyo, there is a lot of working hours, and unfortunately our minimum wage is around half of Tokyo's. There's reports that 20% of people in Hong Kong are living in poverty and there are apartments costing like, really expensive, the highest in the world.

Today I'll be talking roughly around the three projects. I'll start with the Mango King, who is a homeless guerilla farmer that I was farming with between 2013 and 2017. When he first started farming there the soil, being an unused public space, was in a very

bad state, so together we were like, composting, adding nutrients to the soil and Mango King was also processing his own human waste. There's like chili plants, papaya trees, and even in the summer we grew okra plants, as well. He really inspired my own farming practice as well.



So, the second place I'd like to talk about is Wan Chau Village, which is in the northwest part of Hong Kong. It's kind of the countryside, but there's this dense housing area nearby. Despite there being brownfield nearby, the government decided to uproot or displace 500 villagers to build social housing. It's a very top-down process, and their struggle, has lasted for two years. And in this village, there's a lot of villagers growing a lot of produce, small farms, and the area is known for having these jackfruit trees.

So last July we decided, with the villagers and concerned groups, to host the first jackfruit festival in Wang Chau Village; and the idea was to invite the public, and it's a way of also raising awareness as well. I made a character called Jackfruit Woman and the event map as well. What was great about this event was villagers that rarely came to the protests and the rallies, this was a way for them to come and enjoy, I guess, their village together and understand the greater issues at play.

The last story is about our market stall project. It's a project that we've been, working on for more than two years. In Hong Kong because the rent is so expensive, a lot of shops close up after two years now we recently met this milestone, and it's definitely something that we're really happy about, and it exists in the street market in Yau Ma Tei. Generally, a street market in Hong Kong exists as these small green metal sheds, which open and close. Unfortunately they're disappearing quickly because the government has a lot of stringent rules. In November 2015 some friends and I had the chance to use this stall and it functions as a recycle shop and as a community space for people to come and gather, we show films there and do story-telling.

There was a public space that was no longer a market stall. We thought it is important to reconfigure it. And so a friend of mine and I started to plant a community garden and people started donating their plants.

We had twenty of plants, and around a third of them were edible. The neighbors kindly filled up our water bucket every day. Someone gave us some rice water that they'd used to wash their rice, adding nutrients to the soil. A grandma, Eva helped with our radish, even she went so far as to buy plants from a shop and then plant them in our garden. Children were involved as well. But unfortunately, a nearby stall received a complaint, and because of that the government came down, and then they monitored the whole market and kindly asked us to move the plants. We're working on the second phase of this project now.

In 2017, I had the opportunity to learn about part-privatization of Miyashita Park and also how it exists now, as a development site, due to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. I think it's important to have this discussion in public. As global citizens we need to participate in the development of cities in any possible way, so that future generations can live in a more equitable and sustainable future.

Kenta NAKAMURA

Representative of Nihon Shigoto Hyakka,
CEO of Shigotohito Inc., Tokyo



I am doing a couple of things right now; I mainly run an on-line job board. I would like to tell you how I started that work.

First of all, I want to ask you all a question. For you, what is a good place, what do you think is a good place? This is something I have been asking myself my whole life. This is because my parents used to move around all over the nation for their jobs, and I was always moving around with them, which means I have a home to go back to, but not a hometown. That led me to think about the kind of places that I belong to. That's why I studied architecture, and ended up joining a real estate agency.

In those days I went to a certain bar every day, where Becky the bar tender, works. It's not like I drink a lot, but I somehow kept stopping by on the way back from work. Actually, I went to this bar to see Becky, or the regulars there. And talking with the regulars and Becky, was what I enjoyed and which made me feel comfortable. I realized that this was the main reason I went there so frequently.

When you think about all sorts of good places, you realize that the reason is the people that are there. When people who work there are lively, that leads the others wanting to come to see them. I started to think that if I could connect good people with good places, this could increase these good places. That's what led me to develop the online job board, "Nihon Shigoto Hyakka".



We introduce various jobs, and all the job posts are made based on personal interviews. I went to all of these places and asked about the good and the bad of their work; so each article is pretty long, but I made sure to mention everything I learned through the interview especially what the company and its employees value the most.

The stationery store "Kakimori" is an example of what I have on my online job board.

Mr. Hirose, the representative of this store, grew up in a family that owned a stationery store. He decided that when running his own stationery store, he wanted to do something unusual. For instance one can make your original notebooks there. They have all of the necessary parts in several different colors, and you can make your very own, one-of-a-kind notebook. Another interesting feature they have is "inkstand"; you can mix different colors of ink to make your own one-and-only color of ink. I also introduced Mr. Hirose's comment in the job post. "Nowadays due to spread of computers and smartphones, you don't need a pen to actually write something."

But that doesn't mean you don't use a pen at all. For instance when you write a letter, you would want to make sure that you use your favorite pen as it makes a big difference on how you feel. Because we're in this technological era, I think the value of writing by hand has actually increased."

I've been all the way from up north in Hokkaido to down south in Okinawa and even overseas, and posted all these jobs on my online job board. Thus this is what I've been doing, connecting people and places.

Yet I ended up thinking "I want to create a place my self." So, I created a place called "Little Tokyo". In a small space right next to Toranomon Hills, initially planned to be a redevelopment site which they let us use for a very affordable price. We connected a partly open field and a building which used to be a sushi restaurant, and called the space "Little Tokyo".

First we started the "Shigoto Bar" (the Job Bar) there. I asked several people with different profession to be a one-day bartender; the thing is, they don't make the actual drinks, rather they come and talk about their job as if they're bartenders. It's neither a writing, nor an one way talk show, but a conversation which helps people understand the kind of person and the job. Then you would think about whether you can actually work there, or what you can bring to the table: and they end up coming back as another one-day bartender. Thus one's passion is transmitted to others, which triggers another individual passion. Toranomon Hills advanced the redevelopment so we have now moved to Kiyosumi Shirakawa, East area of Tokyo, and run the Shigoto Bar, the Job Bars.

Through the job board and Shigoto bar, etc., I am trying to present various ways of working and living.

Part3 : Panel Discussion

Panelist

Alice Hui-Sheng CHANG (Co-founder of Ting Shuo Hear Say, Tainan)

Fran EDGERLEY (ASSEMBLE, London)

Michael LEUNG (Designer/ Urban Farmer, Hong-Kong)

Kenta NAKAMURA (Representative of Nihon Shigoto Hyakka, CEO of Shigotohito Inc., Tokyo)

Moderater

Takashi SERIZAWA (Executive Director of P3 art and environment)

Panel Discussion



Panel Discussion

Takashi SERIZAWA ["TS"] These four met each other for the first time today. Firstly, I would like to hear from each of them what they thought of the others' presentations, or if they have any questions for each other, and start the discussion from there. How about we go in the order that we had the presentations? Ms. Alice Chang

Alice Hui-Sheng CHANG ["AHC"] It's been really stimulating and lots of creative ideas. I've got a few words from my notes. I'll share them to start with "active", "empowering", "value", "human", "public" or "public-private", "good people", "conversations" and "comfort". Someone did mention to us, "it doesn't matter what you do, it's about who you are that makes the difference." It is people, it is the human that connects with other humans. Through each project, I emphasize that aspect.

In Taiwan, some library started creating a database of human libraries so you can borrow a human as a book and you can make an appointment with him or her to have a conversation to learn about each experience. I think if we have this openness to each person we meet and to each place we go, so many dots can be connected and this connection makes community and this connection makes everyone feel empowered and participative and also creates a very rich fiber and texture of a new kind of society.



Fran EDGERLEY ["FE"] It's been really interesting. I think there's lots of stuff that feels like it's really shared interest in terms of collective knowledge and value in human experience. It feels like we are all doing similar things, as you said, in terms of creating specific conversations or platforms. Actually, what is really interesting is that it all comes out of our own love for learning from other people, whatever form that is in. This love is what is pushing our efforts to us all in trying to create spaces for other people's mutual exchanges.

The other interesting thing was the appearance of the idea of narrative and storytelling in different ways. That's something I think about a lot in relation to our work – where is the performance? how performative is it? I think that's interesting to think about as well.

Michael LEUNG[“ML”] I really enjoyed listening to the sharing and learning about spaces that I’ve never heard about before. I feel, like Fran spoke about it a lot, that non-hierarchical, collective decision making is something I think is evident in a lot of our projects and stories. I also feel a lot of the time that we’re helping the government out and doing their job. I remember Alice talking about alternative education and learning with each other, so I really feel that having these platforms to discuss it and push each other to pursue these alternative ways of collective decision-making is really important.

Kenta NAKAMURA [“KN”] I want to ask some questions, if that’s OK. I think you all prefer participation rather than a top-down approach, My question is how far do you think you can go with freedom? Or do you simply let everyone do everything freely? Or do you have a certain line that you draw?

AHC) For me, working collectively, it can also be seen as one. For example, a group discussion for me is working with the group as a group. So for me, it is still a collective decision of when to finish or when not to finish. Perhaps maybe, one person who played the role of the host may say “I feel like it’s about time we are going to finish.”

FE) Where do you draw the line? In projects it’s kind of different, internal work versus external work. Internally, I think it is difficult because we have no hierarchy, but that doesn’t mean that we have no structure. So we have management rotating positions in the team which we share every three months, then you rotate and rotate and rotate. It means that you have to share responsibility and you acknowledge the kind of work that goes into having different roles in the collective.

It is also just exhausting having five-hour meetings. Obviously it just depends on the situation. That is not in any way to undermine what you were saying about communities not being listened to. I think there needs to be more space for conversation where people’s voices can be heard in a real way and that doesn’t happen very often at all in the world currently.

ML) Like we’ve been mentioning, this idea of the five-hour meeting and drawing the line, I guess we could have an alternative approach to this type of terminology, like drawing the line implies some sort of timeline or deadline and of course there are events where they have to be executed within a certain time frame, but I guess it’s the journey getting there as opposed perhaps to being like a curve.

In terms of the duration of these discussions, they don’t have to happen in very formal settings. They could be a meal or maybe it’s like living together – by one person going to the toilet and brushing their teeth, perhaps the idea of how to go forward comes and then they come back and communicate it with another person. How can you do urban planning in so obviously this is a very unique situation. Obviously it does happen with a lot of behind-closed-door meetings, but how can we use informal spaces like alternative meeting places to collectively make decisions within a time frame if necessary?



TS) What about you, Mr. Nakamura?

KN) I think you need to have some rules or tactics to have an active conversation and freely let things happen and improvise. I think there are little tips that can make that happen more easily. No matter what kind of a space you create, I think it's important that you make sure one can stay there even after the event. That is what I often try to do.

Even if people were a little shy during the event itself, they might end up wanting to talk to someone, to say something, and they can start a conversation thanks to that time after the event. I try to make sure that there is some space and time for people to talk.



TS) When I was listening to your presentations, I thought that all of you were valuing listening to other people and that made sense for me. I think that many young people tend to talk more than listen. However, although you are in that younger generation, I think you value others' talk and their experiences, and you make sure to take time to listen to that in order to reflect it into your projects.

So to make sure that you have that time and the atmosphere, I think that is something which all of you are trying in those different places and projects. And as you are doing that, especially when you are thinking about city planning, you see so many people with different ideas, so it is important to listen to all of these people with all different ideas and try to tie it together for purposes like architecture. Also you start to see how these people's ideas came together to shape the future. So I think another key is to have a relationship with the people who are actually going to use the space, I think it's a very important thing that you are already working on.

FE) There's a really amazing poem by one of the women who lives in Liverpool who we have been working with and the poem is very funny. She's great. It's about not having anywhere to put the bins. The recurrent theme in the poem is the phrase: "The people who know the best way for us to live."

Especially when communities are vulnerable, people make a lot of assumptions about them, telling them ways to improve their lives, how they could be better or how they could be healthier or how they could be using their space differently or how they should be living. That is something which happens a lot.

I think the listening thing is really important and that also relates to the conversation we were having around time and space and creating structures and ways of managing events or whatever it is to enable that to happen.

TS) Michael, when you are working in a city with such a large population, do you feel the same kind of thing as Fran, that you have to relate to all of them with different backgrounds? Isn't it the most important thing for you?

ML) Yes, that's right, In Hong Kong there's a lot of people, like 7.4 million. There's a lot of issues happening, both in rural and in urban. I could share a story. There was a property developer that decided to evict some residents during Chinese New Year which is a really cruel thing to do. It was quite difficult for residents to seek new place to live. Me and friends from the market stall decided to attend the meeting.



So just simply taking 5 minutes, I was able to contribute and I think that is something anyone can do. Going to a meeting or joining a struggle or community or movement. Just spending 5 minutes with some action.

TS) When I listen to stories like this, it makes me think about the two sides and how to go in-between two opposing sides, how to mesh them together and take it in a better direction, how you can change how things are going by meshing these two together. Alice, I think you do this kind of directly when you're making this improvised music with these different groups.

I think the musicians have differences and you mesh them together according to the situation, according to improvisations by each of them. So when you are doing this kind of art and running that kind of a community space, I don't know if you mean to do this, but I think those are very closely related to each other. Do you think so?

AHC) Yes. For me, it is also this idea of everyone coming into a group and keeping that individual. But, of course, there are certain things you match with the group. There are certain things that, for example, if I do a presentation about Ting Shuo for an audience who are interested in experimental music, it will be a completely different presentation than today.



I think of it more as a collaboration or a coexistence rather than actually meshing together, because I think you can still taste each person and taste each sound without blending them all into one flavor, but the collectiveness still exists and is still one dish together, still one whole. The Taiwan education system is very focused on this community. I also studied in Australia for my art education and meanwhile, they are very focused on individual. For me, they are not the idea of opposites; they are ideas that can coexist. You can have a group as well as having individuals in the group that are very much themselves.

TS) I see. It's very interesting. I want to ask another question. I think your activities are very exciting, but, I'm sure that there may be things that are difficult, many obstacles that you must overcome. If you have problems or difficulties, could you share those and maybe we can think about it together? Could you each mention a hardship?

KN) For me, I have an online job board which gathers people from all over the country, however I'm hoping that more locals will come to on space. This is why, I am trying to connect with our local community as much as possible, for instance by participating in local festivals. I'm hoping to have a closer relationship with the neighboring residents. I have been in Kiyosumi Shirakawa only for two years, so it will take time but that is one of the things I am working on right now.

ML) For instance, if the soaring rent can be controlled control, this will, of course, trickle down and affect the number of hours people have to work. When countries are being progressive, other countries perhaps could take note, and suddenly we become competitive, not in sport but in urban planning and equitable societies.

FE) I was really interested in what Alice was saying about the false dichotomies between whether it's individual or collective and that things are, in reality, plural and simultaneous, and that should be acknowledged more in lots of different ways. But I think we have to deal with that, in terms of the collective, because there's this tension between individual freedom and collective responsibilities, especially when it comes to money being involved, and financial responsibility for another.



AHC) I agree. I think often in an educational community or in a discussion situation, we can generate sharing, whether it's experience-sharing or knowledge-sharing, but I think especially in Asian society as well as modern society, we share our emotions less and less.

I would like to generate more discussion that can create a very safe and open space for people to feel comfortable, to be vulnerable, to be intimate and to grow emotionally as well as through experience, through knowledge, through skills, technology. I think it is very important to grow psychologically and to feel that there is empowerment through this communication process.

Question-and-answer session

TS) I would like to take this time for communicating directly with the audience.

Audience A)

Thank you very much for the presentations. Hearing all of you talk, it was particularly inspiring to hear how hands-on you were with your activities, and also how you go into communities and pursue your ideal shape of society. I was interested if there were moments where it didn't quite work out for you, and how you might have overcome those challenges and made it work.

FE) Yes, a lot. There is a lot of politics which aren't necessarily in line with things that we identify with, but it's something you need to deal with when you are working in those environments in terms of people at the other end of the political spectrum from you or having not had exposure to different kinds of cultural groups. You don't solve society. Obviously it's just impossible. All you can do is to try and create sustained space for ongoing conversation. The aim is just to be really long-term about it. You can go about trying to have conversations around different problematic areas because of the fact you're there and you're embedded over a long period of time.

ML) I have a short story. It relates to our market stall again. I spoke about it being a recycle shop. We'd distribute second-hand objects. Those second-hand objects are actually donations for free from our neighbors. So we have a rule at our market stall that these objects are free-pricing, pay what you want.

However, there was an incident where some kids select toys and for each toy they only put in one dollar which is really little, but personally I'm completely happy with that. It's pay-what-you-think and they only have one dollar and they pay that, but my friend who also runs that market stall thinks differently. This discussion is probably how we have these frictions where we have to talk it out.

KN) For me, I also think that a space like that can make it difficult for some people to even come to that space, so people of limited means also need a space that they can feel free to come to. What I am doing right now is making sure that these people can come. People who are shy, people who are alone, can come and be a part. That is what I think when I am thinking about how I want to be a good bartender. I go over to them and talk to them. I include them in the group and when I'm listening to their stories, I find out that they have certain ambitions. And projects start from that kind of conversation. I think that is kind of a manual way, but it has to be done by human effort.

AHC) We often have conversations with our neighbors who are mostly very old. We host a free open dinner outside of our house, they would still kindly refuse. Of course, we are not trying to force different things onto people, but we are trying to figure out how to generate different events that could make, perhaps not everyone, but at least our street neighbors feel comfortable to come to our events.

Audience B)

All of you had very playful ideas and projects. Do you have any ideas of how we could go against the government without being so exhausted?

ML) I would like to talk about a little green book that we produced. There's a group of fabric sellers in a low-income neighborhood in Hong Kong and they have been forced to relocate and have their rent increased 8-10 times by the government. This is a 40-year-old fabric market. We came together with social workers, urban planners, architects, professors, as well as the urban planning professors and created a little green book which we call a community planning platform as our proposal. I usually make mostly fiction zines or just reflecting on something that happened and that usually stays within our own little circle, but this little green book was a proposal for the government. In one meeting, someone in the government showcased the book to the public on television and said, "This book is doing the government's job." We produced a green book and as it very visual, it becomes like a tool, so rather than say, "Check out their PowerPoint or their PDF," having a physical tool, that speaks volumes. So this action really has taught me a lot. It has taken a lot of patience and government meetings, and it has been a 2-year process which is really long, but very positive so far.

FE) I think it depends. I think it is complicated, because sometimes the government is our client, in which case it depends what the project is in terms of how you prove your argument can be through, like direct action in the methodology of how you're doing the project. There is a big move at the moment in London to try and change the way planning is happening, for it to become maybe more radical, more aligned with ideas that are coming out of young practices and education, but that doesn't translate necessarily to what is actually happening.

I think what is really important to say about Granby, what is really great about this opportunity is that actually most of it isn't our work. It's really important to say that. It was only possible because of the conditions and the tenacity and the amazing passion and commitment that those people had worked for so long to do. We are just lucky to be able to work with them. I think that there is something to learn from that in that you can't artificially create that. I think that a lot of misguided conversations that happen at the level of government are like, how do we get this thing to be ground up or how do we change the way that we do things. I think it's about looking really closely at what people who are already doing all the work, basically.



Audience C)

I live in Tokyo and it's really heart-breaking for me that they are going to cut down trees in a public park. I feel like an individual can do nothing. When we look at presentations, we see so many powerful tools using art and music and trying to make the world a better place. However, I think in Japan we don't have that kind of power. Do you think there are any ways that we can get the government to realize what we really want them to do?

FE) I think it's quite hard to comment because obviously we don't really know the situation. If you are talking about collective conversation happening online, it's really important to try and get together and have that conversation as a community of people who are interested in this problem.

The greenest city of Sheffield, a city in the central-north of England that used to have all these extraordinary old trees, hundreds of them across the city. The council basically cut down the trees for the city redevelopment, and they changed the face of the city forever. That's probably not helpful. It's difficult.

AHC) Same. I don't know much about the situation. This is not really a resolution of any thoughts, but I think it is really great that you are speaking out in a big group of people and I believe as many people here that have different connections to perhaps offer different ideas. Similarly I would say, for me, not to lose hope and also to stay positive, but also to share what you are doing here, and this act of sharing – I was thinking about what Fran said earlier about where is the performance, or Michael was talking about this artist, and what Fran's group is doing and what everyone is using or trusting in the power of performance. I think the power of performance generates public interest. The power of sharing also generates collectiveness and that generates change. So in believing each of these steps and in trusting that if I speak out today, it will generate some change, even though it's not something you see immediately. So to believe in the chain of action and the chain of result that will eventually come out, perhaps not in our generation. Perhaps it will take time.

TS) That was a very important question, and we could go on and on with topics like this. If we want to attract people to Tokyo in 2020 and beyond, it is important to let our voices be heard, to listen to others, and to act as well. I think we are getting closer to that right now.

(End)