

A Thesis for the Degree of Ph.D. in Engineering

**Advanced Assemblage Analysis of Built  
Environment and Persistence of the Identity of  
Place in Yanesen**

September, 2013.

Graduate School of Science and Technology

Keio University

Muminović Milica

## Abstract:

The Thesis advances methods of urban analysis based on the assemblage theory by increasing its capacity to address changes in built environment and relating them to persistences of the identity of place. In urban theory, the identity of place is defined as specific quality arising from a certain location, and highly related to its durability. The methodology proposed and tested in this thesis approaches place in its complexity and analyses the dynamics of change of a concrete place as a whole. The dynamics of change contribute to the persistence, which itself defines the identity of the place.

The Yanesen precinct of Tokyo was selected because of its peculiar urban character, which remains strongly associated with urban forms and practices of the past (Edo period), although the components of its built environment have dramatically changed, leaving almost no original buildings. The methodology applied was developed on the basis of assemblage theory and issues arising from the particularity of the Yanesen itself. The resulting assembled method brings together various tools and methods, in order to approach the totality of the place identity with due sensibility, addressing the built environment as a dynamic and complex assemblage system.

This study has shown that application of assemblage theory in place theory is possible and useful for better understanding of the identity of places and built environments in their full physical complexity and dynamics. Methodological advancements developed here contribute to the analysis in the fields of urban morphological preservation and conservation. The project refines analytical tools in urban morphology by providing a broader view of persistences in definition of the identity of place, in which the concrete elements of built environment are not necessarily conserved. That is related to an approach to built environments as dynamic systems, which can have multiple states which demand neither total conservation nor complete change. The study also provides methodological contributions to analyses in the field of place making by broadening the scope and including commonly overlooked ordinary urban places and practices. The refined method enabled observation of processes which are usually hidden behind the expressiveness of the various elements of built environment. That remains of particular interest for further developments in the analysis of places. Finally, this study has contributed to the assemblage theory itself by refining the core concepts and definitions of identity and becoming. The findings from the specific case study of Yanesen are potentially contributing to better understanding of places in architectural and urban design, thus informing future, place sensitive design practice.