

Urban Regeneration Strategies and Place Development in Contemporary Tokyo: The Case of Shibuya Station Area

Introduction

Around the world, urban regeneration has become one of the key instruments in the hands of policymakers to manage urban development, improve places, and stimulate economies and investments. Previous scholarship has explored theories and practice of urban regeneration (Roberts *et al.*, 2017; Tallon, 2013), focused on significant case studies (Balsas, 2004; Porter and Shaw, 2013; Rossi and Vanolo, 2013; Sasaki, 2010), and discussed some of the pressing issues around regeneration (Hackworth, 2007; Smith, 2012). Among these, sustainability has received much attention (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011; Lombardi *et al.*, 2011), and sustainable development has become a quasi-ubiquitous catchphrase in policy documents and projects across the globe after being identified by the United Nation as a top priority in the international urban agenda (UN, 2016; UNWCED, 1987).

As a global city, Tokyo is no stranger to urban regeneration. On the contrary, the Japanese capital has a rich tradition of planning and policymaking that offers valuable insight into global urban phenomena. If compared to the post-war period, and similarly to other cities in Europe and North America, the Japanese authorities' approaches to urbanism in Tokyo share numerous similarities with the neoliberal urban agenda (Fujita, 2011; Sorensen, 2010; Waley, 2013). This encouraged a recent wave of urbanisation that is transforming numerous districts across the city—a trend that intensified after Tokyo was selected as the host city for the 2020 Summer Olympics in 2013. While the disruption brought by the Covid-19 pandemic over Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games casts shadows over this strategy, it is hard to deny the transformative influence of these projects on key districts of the city; an impact that is still not fully understood by scholars and policymakers alike.

This paper aims to shed light on current initiatives of urban regeneration around the Shibuya Station area in Tokyo. The objectives are twofold. One is to illustrate the characteristics of the masterplan and the planning approaches to place development framing the interventions. The other, to identify the design strategies employed to reshape the urban landscape and the public realm in the district. By doing so, the study discusses the impacts of the urban regeneration happening in Shibuya within the context of contemporary Tokyo's place development and management strategies.

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3 After the introduction, the paper continues with an overview of the debate surrounding urban
4 regeneration and the planning context in Tokyo, followed by an explanation of the methodology of the
5 study. The urban history and key features of Shibuya as a place are then illustrated. Thereafter, the paper
6 examines the masterplan and the planning documents underpinning the ongoing regeneration, before
7 exploring the material and immaterial features of the urban landscape produced as a result of the
8 transformation. The concluding section summarises the characteristics of the urban regeneration of the
9 Shibuya Station area and discusses the place development implications of the case study.

16 **Planning and urban regeneration in Tokyo**

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18 Urban regeneration is not a new phenomenon. The idea of employing urban redevelopment to ameliorate
19 the space and the socioeconomic trajectories of cities can be traced back to the 1950s in the context of
20 European and North American cities suffering from early signs of industrial decline (Roberts *et al.*, 2017;
21 Tallon, 2013). Starting from the 1980s, and influenced by neoliberal approaches to urban governance,
22 redevelopment initiatives show a significant turn towards entrepreneurialism with an emphasis on the
23 private sector, market competition, place (re)branding, and flagship mega-projects (Hackworth, 2007;
24 Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Harvey, 1989, 2005; Vanolo, 2017). At the core of these strategies was the belief
25 that by improving the design of the urban landscape, transforming governance, and encouraging
26 privatisation economic growth and new investments would naturally follow. From the late 1990s, and by
27 reflecting on the impact of flagship mega-projects and their ability to catalyse area revitalisation (Doucet
28 *et al.*, 2011; Fainstein, 2008; Grodach, 2010), the debate around urban regeneration started to be reframed
29 under the sustainable development paradigm—i.e. an approach to development that incorporates social,
30 economic, and environmental sustainability (Mensah, 2019). Since then, sustainable development has
31 become a tagline for urban regeneration initiatives. However, whether this represents a true departure
32 from neoliberalism towards more critical and sustainable urbanism remains debatable (Lang and
33 Rothenberg, 2017; Lombardi *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, what sustainability means in the context of urban
34 regeneration is still discussed and typically interventions tend to focus on providing green infrastructures
35 or reducing cities' environmental footprints rather than transforming governance and addressing all the
36 components of sustainability (McCormick *et al.*, 2013).

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38 While the pattern of neoliberal urbanism and the challenges of sustainability are by no means uniform
39 across the world, they dramatically transformed the practice and the discourse around urban
40 regeneration—which is now a multifaceted, ever-changing, and sophisticated global phenomenon (Leary
41 and McCarthy, 2013). New scenarios of urban regeneration are emerging after the 2007-2008 global
42 financial crisis, and contemporary projects attempt to transform not only spaces, but also the way they
43 are signified, perceived, and lived. By both confronting and constructing neoliberal trends, urban

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3 regeneration is then revealed as ‘an active practice through which the notion that all places should be
4 seen as having to compete is lent institutional support and reinforced verbally and non-verbally by a
5 physical environment freighted with signs’ and where local circumstances and global trends intermingle
6 (Lovering, 2007). At the same time, and notwithstanding these ambiguities, the practice of urban
7 regeneration might support transitions towards more sustainable futures by stimulating dialogue between
8 different stakeholders and innovation (Evans and Jones, 2008).
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15 Recent initiatives of urban regeneration in Tokyo bear a significant resemblance to the trajectories of
16 neoliberal urbanism. Since the late 1990s, the Japanese Government and the Tokyo Metropolitan
17 Government (TMG) started to promote regeneration as a strategy to stimulate a stagnant economy,
18 attract investments, and restructure the Japanese capital as a global city (Hirayama, 2017; Sassen, 2001;
19 Waley, 2007). While planning in Tokyo still incorporates traits of the ‘developmental’ state ideology
20 characterising post-war Japan (Fujita, 2003, 2011), and even though the city might lack some of the typical
21 features found in neoliberal urbanism (Waley, 2013), the renewed attention to urban development
22 accelerated the shift towards corporate-sector led projects and international competition.
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30 Japanese authorities’ approach to urban regeneration was utterly efficient in transforming the landscape
31 of Tokyo in the last two decades. Large-scale redevelopment projects mostly at the scale of inner-city
32 compounds—such as Roppongi Hills, Shiodome, or the Marunouchi area—are a prime example (Waley,
33 2007). Similarly, high-rise condominiums emerged in small sites all over the city—especially in premium
34 locations within the metropolitan area—further concentrating power and gains from redevelopment
35 initiatives in the hands of private corporations (Hirayama, 2017; Sorensen *et al.*, 2010). While scholarship
36 has yet to fully analyse and understand the characteristics of the most recent initiatives of urban
37 regeneration in Tokyo, studies found that some of them resulted in issues of gentrification (Miura, 2021),
38 conflict (Fujii *et al.*, 2007), and socio-spatial inequalities (Kubo, 2020); with inner areas enriching and
39 improving their trajectories while outer suburbs are declining and shrinking (Ohashi and Phelps, 2020).
40 Other concerns arise from the management, use, and quality criteria of privately owned public spaces
41 (POPS)—a kind of space that is typically featured in Tokyo’s redeveloped sites and offers insight into
42 the evolving understanding of public space and place development in the Japanese capital (Cybriwsky,
43 1999; Dimmer, 2012).
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55 The estimated economic gains from Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games accelerated the speed of this
56 transformation (Lützel, 2020; Mori, 2017), both around Olympics venues and central urban districts
57 such as Shibuya, Shinjuku, or Shinagawa. While sustainability, renewable energies, disaster prevention
58 and mitigation, and environmental quality feature more prominently in these projects and recent policy
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documents approved by TMG (TMG, 2020)—a trend that echoes similar initiatives in Japan and East Asia (Lin, 2018; Ortiz-Moya, 2020; Sorensen, 2010)—these issues still seem to be secondary to economic growth, especially in the context of Tokyo. It is worth noting that such initiatives of regeneration, and the privatisation of urban commons they imply, are not unopposed by activists and local communities—see the case of Miyashita Park in the Shibuya area (Andrews, 2020). However, their effectiveness in reshaping development plans is often limited.

In brief, while projects of urban regeneration were highly successful in restructuring a significant portion of Tokyo's urban landscape, important questions remain unaddressed. In a socio-economic conjecture that remains volatile—especially in light of the disruption brought by the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games—additional research is needed to explore and reconsider recent initiatives of regeneration from the perspective of place development and management. More evidence is especially necessary to understand the impact of these interventions, and whether this approach to urban development is equitable and sustainable. While answering in full to these questions exceeds the scope of this study, this paper intends to provide empirical evidence on the effects of the ongoing urban regeneration project happening around Shibuya Station in such context.

Methodology

The urban regeneration of the area around Shibuya Station has been selected as a particularly significant and timely case study in the context of recent academic debate on Japanese urbanism and place development. The area is one of the city's core districts and is located along the JR Yamanote Line, the circular line running around Tokyo's central area and connecting the city's major districts. Four railway companies converge on Shibuya Station—JR East, Tokyu Railways, Tokyo Metro, and Keio Corporation—and carry in and through the area more than 2 million passengers per day. Shibuya is a vibrant place, one of the most visited districts of the Japanese capital, and a famed epicentre of fashion, entertainment, and youth cultures. Roaming the dense network of streets that still characterise large parts of the area around the station, visitors can savour the richness and the contradiction of Tokyo's urban history. The role that the corporate sector has historically played in the development of the district adds further value to Shibuya as a case study and allows to closely observe, investigate, and foresee urban regeneration trends in the Japanese capital.

By using a case study approach, this paper combines data from historical and archival research—which is used to contextualise the ongoing transformation—and documentary sources underpinning the Shibuya Station area's current phase of urban regeneration. These include policy documents, project plans, and reports authored by both public authorities and private stakeholders; as well as articles from different

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3 news outlets documenting the redevelopment. Sources are available in English or Japanese—with
4 translations of Japanese terms provided by the author when needed. Collating these different materials
5 helped to generate rich qualitative evidence, and account for the multifaceted and ever-changing socio-
6 technical reality of Shibuya. Documentary sources are supplemented by extensive fieldwork undertaken
7 between 2015 and 2019. This was instrumental to gain first-hand knowledge and record the gradual
8 changes in the area through a variety of techniques including photos, videos, maps, and sketches. The
9 methods employed to analyse data and produce knowledge are interpretative, iterative, and entail the
10 researcher's positionality and reflexivity (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2015). From this standpoint, the
11 encounter with the urban field is context-specific, and each visit to Shibuya was key to discover
12 relationships and meanings and get a better sense of the data collected over time.
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21 **Placing Shibuya**

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23 The creation and development of Shibuya—and other similar districts in Tokyo such as Shinjuku or
24 Ikebukuro—is rooted in the urban history of the Japanese capital. As the city rapidly expanded in the
25 aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, new and mostly unplanned urban fabric started to
26 appear in the areas located at the intersection between suburban railways and the Yamanote Line loop.
27 The importance of these districts kept growing during and after the post-war reconstruction, when they
28 became a cornerstone of the planning strategies devised to promote polycentrism and alleviate the
29 concentration of functions in Tokyo's CBD (Nakabayashi, 2006; Sorensen, 2001; TMG, 1994). The work
30 of the national government to promote urban growth by softening regulatory frameworks (Sorensen *et*
31 *al.*, 2010)—chiefly through the Urban Renaissance Special Measures Law of 2002 and its subsequent
32 amendments—concurred to boost development around Tokyo's 'subcentres'. As a result of highly
33 flexible land use and relaxed floor area ratios, and encouraged by TMG's strategy to achieve urban policy
34 goals by relying on private-sector initiative and capitals (TMG, 2011), projects of large-scale urban
35 regeneration started in numerous districts of the city.
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47 Planning around Shibuya Station is further complicated by the network of actors operating in the area
48 and the complexity of the place management and development processes they employ. Besides public
49 authorities—which include the national administration, TGM, and Shibuya City—railway companies and
50 their subsidiaries play a determinant role thanks to their historical function as urban developers in the
51 district. This is a common feature in Japanese large metropolitan areas, Tokyo in particular, and is the
52 result of Japanese railway companies' ability to manage a diverse portfolio of businesses to stimulate and
53 profit from passengers' ridership and revenues—a model perfected over the years and under which the
54 development of terminal stations and commuter-oriented districts like Shibuya is key (Calimente, 2012;
55 Chorus and Bertolini, 2016; Saito, 1997).
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5 The urban development promoted by railway companies, especially Tokyu Corporation, is a prominent
6 feature of the place identity of Shibuya—the traces of which can be found in iconic buildings in the area
7 such as Shibuya 109, Bunkamura, Shibuya Mark City, or the old Tokyu Bunka Kaikan now replaced by
8 Shibuya Hikarie. Major Japanese department stores, international retailers, and a variety of local
9 businesses are also located in Shibuya—a mix that gives the district its characteristic vibrancy and
10 cemented the reputation of Shibuya as a place for fashion and youth cultures. Although plans and
11 interventions promoted by both private and public actors have repeatedly regenerated the district since
12 the 1960s as a ‘staged’ place for consumption and urban experimentation (Morris, 2010; Yoshimi, 1987),
13 around Shibuya Station it is still possible to find dense urban fabric characterised by pre-war street
14 patterns, pockets of green space, independent businesses, and small residential buildings. These different
15 urban landscapes, and the socio-technical conditions they represent, coexist not without friction and,
16 currently, their precarious equilibrium is being renegotiated due to the pressure of the large-scale urban
17 regeneration happening around Shibuya Station.
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28 The combination of these forces defines Shibuya as a vital yet contradictory place. The presence of
29 crowds, leisure, and consumption might be interpreted as an expression of Japanese place-making
30 traditions typified by the notion of *sakariba*, a ‘third place’ in between the residence and the workplace
31 where to gather and liberate one’s identity from everyday social constraints (Cybriwsky, 1988; Linhart,
32 1986; Yoshimi, 1987). The increased pervasiveness of private initiative in the urban landscape, on the
33 other hand, is representative of the ‘commodification’ of subjects and places produced by modernity in
34 Tokyo (Fuji, 1999), and a sign of a progressive ‘metamorphosis’ of public space characterized by
35 increasing privatization and marginalization of spontaneous and unregulated activities (Reggiani *et al.*,
36 2018). By being key to determine the future of the district, the current process of urban regeneration
37 prompts a re-examination of this conundrum that lies at the core of Shibuya’s identity as a place.
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47 **The redevelopment plan of the Shibuya Station area: a ‘historic’ opportunity for** 48 **urban regeneration** 49

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52 Following the designation of the Shibuya Station area as an Urban Renaissance Urgent Redevelopment
53 Areas in December 2005 and several years of planning, a comprehensive plan of urban redevelopment
54 for the area was approved in 2013. The project is framed by the 2010 Town Development Guidelines
55 for Shibuya Station Central Area (Shibuya City, 2011), the Shibuya Station Area Land Readjustment
56 Project, and the work of the different councils managed by Shibuya City to liaise among the stakeholders
57 in the districts. The plan is also linked to a major infrastructural upgrade of Shibuya station which includes,
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among others, the redevelopment of Tokyo Metro's Ginza Line terminal, the construction of new platforms for the JR Saikyo Line, and the relocation underground of the Tokyu Toyoko Line. Jointly built by Tokyu and Tokyo Metro to directly connect Toyoko Line with Fukutoshin Line (the through service between the two was inaugurated in 2013), the new underground station made available a significant amount of land in premium locations east and south of Shibuya Station—the redevelopment of which was spearheaded, in 2012, by the opening of Shibuya Hikarie, a skyscraper of 33 floors built on the site of the old Tokyu Bunka Kaikan that existed in the area since 1961.

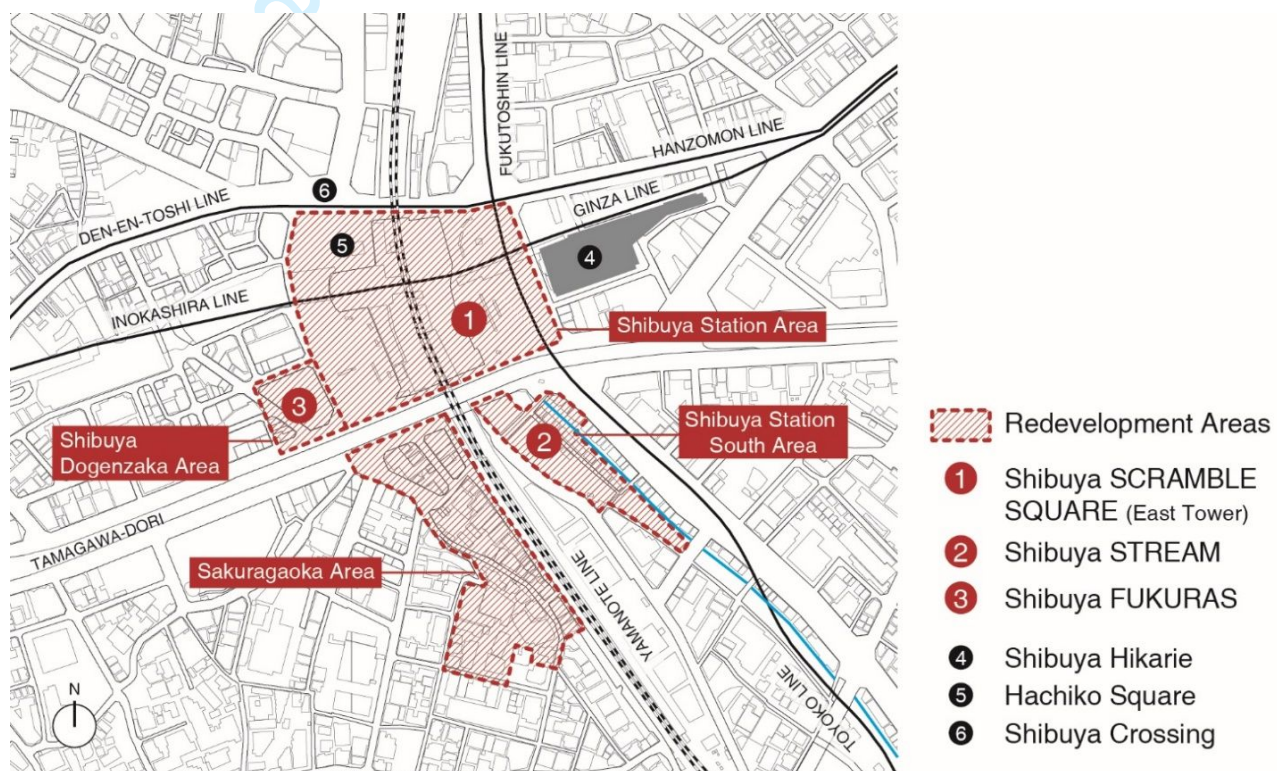


Plate 1. Map of the redevelopment areas around Shibuya Station.

The plan approved in 2013 and set to be completed by 2027 includes interventions in three zones (Plate 1). First, the Shibuya Station Area—the redevelopment of which will result in the upgrade of the railway terminal and the annexed commercial facilities. Second, the Shibuya Station South area, which includes the lands along the Shibuya River that were previously occupied by the viaduct of the Tokyu Toyoko Line. Finally, the Shibuya Dogenzaka area located west of the station on the site of the former Tokyu Plaza Shibuya (built in 1965 and finally demolished in 2015). Although it was not part of the original proposal, the plan eventually came to include also the Sakuragaoka area on the southwest of Shibuya Station. By resolving urban problems accumulated in the area, the plan aims to improve Shibuya's urban 'competitiveness' and 'appeal' while strengthening the transit node and the quality of the urban environment (Tokyu Corporation Company *et al.*, 2013).

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3 The urban regeneration of Shibuya Station is key to a broader operation of place management and
4 development. By complying with the regulations in urban regeneration special areas, public and private
5 stakeholders joined hands in 2013 to create the Shibuya Station Area Management Council (*Shibuya ekimae*
6 *eria manejimento kyogi-kai*)—a forum to define planning rules and the shape of the public-private
7 cooperation. Additionally, by employing a district improvement and management approach that is
8 increasingly popular in Japanese metropolitan areas (Yasui and Kinoshita, 2013), in 2015 they created the
9 Shibuya Station Area Management Organisation (*Ippan shadanbōjin Shibuya ekimae eria manejimento*) to carry
10 out various regeneration initiatives including extending pedestrian spaces, expanding services for visitors,
11 or improving the energy efficiency of the area (Shibuya Station Area Management, 2020). Strategically
12 branded as ‘Shibuya +FUN Project’, this operation builds on the unique reputation of Shibuya as an
13 epicentre for fashion and creative industries and aims to posit the district as the ‘best city in the world’
14 to visit and in which to work by making Shibuya ‘more exciting’, ‘easier to use’, and safer (Shibuya Station
15 Area Management, 2020). Key to achieving these goals is what the stakeholders describe as a sustainable
16 mechanism for place development through which the profits generated by renting out spaces for events
17 or surface for advertisement are reinvested into regeneration.
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57 **Plate 2.** Shibuya Stream and the revitalisation of the Shibuya River.
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3 Since 2013, various projects have been completed. The first of the new buildings to be inaugurated, in
4 September 2018, was Shibuya Stream (Plate 2). Located south of Shibuya Station, the complex is occupied
5 by a town hall for live events and a high-rise tower of 35 floors that includes shops, restaurants, a hotel,
6 and around 46000sqm of flexible office space to attract workers and companies in creative fields. As the
7 building's name suggests, the highlight of the project is the revitalisation of the portion of the Shibuya
8 River flowing in the area. This has been accomplished by the realisation of a new waterfront, two small
9 squares (Inaribashi and Konnoubashi Hiroba), and a green promenade (Shibuya River street) that extends
10 towards the hills of Daikanyama—where it is connected to Shibuya Bridge, another redevelopment
11 project recently completed in the area.
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20 North of Shibuya Stream—to which it is connected by new pedestrian decks over Tamagawa-dori and
21 underground passages—Shibuya Scramble Square was the next project to be completed in November
22 2019 (Plate 3). With 47 floors above ground and a height of about 230 metres, Shibuya Scramble Square
23 is the new highest building in the area. The tower includes a mix of retail, restaurants, offices, and co-
24 creation facilities to encourage creative enterprise and idea exchange (Tokyu Corporation *et al.*, 2017).
25 The building is topped by an observation deck (Shibuya Sky) where visitors can enjoy panoramic views
26 over Tokyo and Mount Fuji, and experience digital art installations. Designed in collaboration with major
27 architectural firms (Nikken Sekkei, Kengo Kuma and Associates, SANAA), Shibuya Scramble Square
28 stands as a monumental new landmark where, as the name evokes, people can gather, explore, and
29 consume an endless variety of goods.
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38 Opened in December 2019, Shibuya Fukuras is one of the latest milestones from the 2013 masterplan to
39 be accomplished. Built on the site of the old Tokyu Plaza Shibuya, this new 18-story commercial building
40 has been conceived to embody the 'mature sensibility' and the appreciation for 'mellow' life of adult
41 Tokyoites (Tokyu Land Corporation, 2019). Directly connected to Shibuya Station and the Sakuragaoka
42 area with a new pedestrian deck, the building features seven floors of shops and restaurants (the new
43 Tokyu Plaza Shibuya), plus several floors used as offices. At the ground level, Shibuya Fukuras includes
44 a tourist information centre and a bus stop with direct services to Tokyo's airport—a service that
45 reinforces the touristic potential of the district—whereas on floor 17 a rooftop garden (Shibu Niwa) can
46 be accessed for free.
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55 The transformation of the Shibuya Station area will continue in the next few years with the redevelopment
56 of the remaining areas under construction. Planned for 2023, Shibuya Sakuragaoka will be a new
57 residential zone provided with educational and medical facilities. High-income and temporary
58 international residents working in the area seem to be the target of this operation—a strategy that reveals
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3 the intention to transform Shibuya as one of the most attractive centres for global investments in Tokyo.
4 Along with a comprehensive redesign of the famous Hachiko Square, the opening of the central and
5 western towers within the Shibuya Scramble Square complex will finally conclude the urban regeneration
6 process in 2027.
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10 11 **Rescripting the urban landscape**

12 While the analysis of planning and policy documents illuminates the overarching aims of the plan framing
13 the regeneration of the Shibuya Station area, evidence from the fieldwork reveals a more nuanced picture
14 of the ongoing transformation. By focusing on the material and immaterial qualities of urban spaces and
15 architectures produced by the urban regeneration, results are organised around five key themes: (a)
16 densification and verticalization of the urban fabric through substitution and redevelopment of old
17 buildings; (b) creation of high-quality, and flexible space for office, retail, and entertainment; (c)
18 revitalisation of natural resources and design of new attractive urban spaces; (d) creation of privately
19 owned public space; and (e) extensive renaming and rebranding of buildings and spaces in the district.
20 These themes have been identified as they critically illustrate different and complementary facets of the
21 redevelopment's impact on Shibuya's urban landscape and public realm.
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32 As the projects completed by 2020 show, the process of urban regeneration has resulted in intense
33 densification and verticalization of the built environment around Shibuya Station. The effects of this
34 strategy are especially visible on the eastern side of the station where the three new towers of Shibuya
35 Hikarie, Shibuya Stream, and Shibuya Scramble Square stand at a close distance. The relatively rapid
36 creation of such impressive new landmarks has been made possible by a combination of factors which
37 includes the availability of lands owned by Tokyu Corporation and partners, the strong cooperation
38 between the various actors existing in the area, and the ability to replace old buildings and pre-existing
39 urban fabric. The emphasis on iconic architectures can also be interpreted as one of the latest expressions
40 of the constant work of planning and redevelopment promoted in Shibuya to establish the district as one
41 of the most recognisable and competitive sub-centres in Tokyo.
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51 The current large-scale redevelopment also represents a timely opportunity to expand and redesign the
52 range of spaces and opportunities in the portfolio of the developers operating in Shibuya. Apart from
53 retail, which remains a centrepiece of the projects, the new developments include a significant amount
54 of office space to attract in the area young professionals, start-ups, and global corporations especially in
55 the fields of media and IT. To increase the attractiveness of these spaces for Tokyo's sophisticated and
56 global creative class, the design includes a generous amount of co-working environment that is skilfully
57 intermingled with high-end shops, leisure, and entertainment venues. The provision of new workspace
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3 is complemented by the addition of new residences in the Sakuragaoka area and other “softer” forms of
4 urban regeneration, such as the realisation of a free wi-fi network for visitors or new information spaces
5 for tourists.
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39 **Plate 3.** (left) Shibuya Scramble Square; (top) Shibuya Sky; (bottom) Multilevel POPS in the area.
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42 If compared to previous initiatives of place development in the area, the focus on the valorisation of
43 natural resources represents a significant turning point in terms of urban design. Nevertheless, as
44 illustrated by the case of Shibuya Stream (Plate 2), the character of this “rediscovery” after years of neglect
45 is rather ambiguous. On the one hand, the renaissance of the Shibuya River is the centrepiece of a new
46 public space—a much-needed addition in an area where open space, greenery, and opportunities to sit
47 outdoor are scarce. On the other hand, the new riverside becomes an extension of Shibuya Stream into
48 the urban space, an attractive backdrop to channel visitors towards the shopping areas and Shibuya
49 Station. Similarly, the rooftop observatory of Shibuya Sky creates a new hybrid landscape where mount
50 Fuji, aerial views of Tokyo, art, leisure, and shopping are blended (Plate 3). Notably, this area requires an
51 entrance fee, thus restricting access to this new attraction.
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3 The reorganization of the area around Shibuya Station resulted in the production of new POPS, often in
4 the shape of grade-separated pedestrian walkways (Plate 3). In planning documents, this strategy is
5 justified as a necessary mean to assure higher levels of comfort and safety for pedestrians in case of
6 natural disasters. The creation of additional surface for pedestrian circulation, on the other hand, will
7 determine a further intensification of flows around Shibuya Station, both above and underground. This
8 will create value for shopping and retail venues located within the redevelopment buildings, which are
9 often strategically located along the main thoroughfares. The ability to rent out these new POPS for
10 events or advertisements also allows the Shibuya Station Area Management Organisation to generate
11 profits that could be reinvested into urban regeneration initiatives in the future.
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20 A widespread renaming of buildings and spaces accompanies the regeneration of the district. Previous
21 buildings' names around Shibuya Station usually included those of their owners; whereas now they stand
22 as compound words that explicitly incorporate the name "Shibuya" in association with a variety of images
23 and metaphors. These include natural features (stream), urban features (scramble square), or abstract
24 images (light (hikarie), growth (fukuras). Particular areas within the new buildings are also branded to
25 emphasize their uniqueness and their attractiveness, such as in the case of Shibuya Sky or Shibuya Niwa
26 (Garden). Together with physical transformations, these names concur to rescript the district's identity
27 and aim to evoke an atmosphere characterised by dynamic optimism where Shibuya is transformed into
28 a comfortable urban playground for visitors, sophisticated consumers, and the creative class (Tokyu
29 Corporation *et al.*, 2017).
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39 Discussion and Conclusions

40 To a great extent, the rapid process of urban regeneration that is transforming the Shibuya Station area
41 seems like a success story. After less than 10 years from the approval of the redevelopment project, and
42 although the plan is yet to be completed, the urban landscape appears visibly transformed and new urban
43 life is thriving in the spaces created by the regeneration. This success is due to a mix of favourable
44 circumstances, as illustrated by the analysis of policies and plans. First, the existence of a flexible and
45 relaxed regulatory framework encouraging corporate sector-led urban regeneration. Second, the rapid
46 availability of land for redevelopment in the area thanks to the historical presence of private railway
47 companies acting as land developers. Finally, the collaborative strategy of area management established
48 by the local stakeholders and their capacity to produce a clear vision for Shibuya's future. Based on results
49 from the fieldwork, this paper also identified five key themes that summarise the various strategies
50 employed to transform the urban landscape in the area: (a) densification and verticalization of the urban
51 fabric through substitution and redevelopment of old buildings; (b) creation of high-quality, and flexible
52 space for office, retail, and entertainment; (c) revitalisation of natural resources and design of new
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3 attractive urban spaces; (d) creation of privately owned public space; and (e) extensive renaming and
4 rebranding of buildings and spaces in the district. The case of Shibuya is exemplary of current initiatives
5 of urban regeneration in Tokyo, and suggests ideas to regenerate extremely dense, hyperdeveloped, and
6 challenged districts in metropolises around the world.
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13 The regeneration of the Shibuya Station area shows continuity with longstanding approaches to planning
14 and development in Tokyo (Dimmer, 2012; Fujita, 2003, 2011; Hirayama, 2017; Sorensen *et al.*, 2010;
15 Waley, 2007, 2013) while introducing new and more sophisticated forms of area management to share
16 ideas, create value, and coordinate the efforts of the different stakeholders involved. The attention and
17 the recognition that the case of Shibuya has received indicate that this approach to place management
18 and development is likely to become increasingly influential—especially in similar core districts in Japan
19 and other East Asian countries that might share more common points with Japanese urbanism.
20 Nevertheless, and despite the apparent success, the interventions around Shibuya Station leave some key
21 questions unaddressed, especially when it comes to assessing sustainability and the impact of the
22 redevelopment on the public realm. What are the consequences for Shibuya? What does the case of
23 Shibuya tell us about the current practice of place development in Tokyo? And, more broadly, to what
24 extent is the plan yet another manifestation of neoliberal urbanism or a step towards a more sustainable
25 and equitable approach to urban regeneration? Given the ongoing nature of the transformation, there is
26 no simple or conclusive answer to these questions. However, discussing the regeneration around Shibuya
27 Station through the lens of sustainability might offer some critical insight into these issues.
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40 Findings suggest that, among the three dimensions of sustainability, economy prevails over social and
41 environmental considerations. Due to this, in documents and plans the term sustainability is often used
42 as a proxy for economic viability or the ability to generate profits that could be reinvested in regeneration
43 initiatives. Still, it is worth noting that progress has been made by planners and developers into identifying
44 strategies to ensure better environmental sustainability in Shibuya—such as the creation of greener, safer,
45 and more energy-efficient urban spaces and infrastructures. But this is far from a holistic approach, and
46 attention is focused on a few interventions rather than a radical reform of the socioeconomic structures
47 underpinning place development in Tokyo. Similarly, the committees and the events organised to consult
48 with the public seem more geared towards gathering support than generating critical debate and address
49 social issues through the redevelopment. As a result, and like previous studies (Lang and Rothenberg,
50 2017; Lombardi *et al.*, 2011), one might argue that sustainability is not systematically addressed by the
51 plan and is mostly used as a proxy for economic growth and urban beautification—a rhetoric that sits
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3 comfortably within the neoliberal urban agenda and might endanger Shibuya's urban diversity in the long
4 term by increasing the pressure towards commodification and privatisation.
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8 While the quality of urban regeneration in Tokyo remains high, and although progress has been made on
9 some dimensions of sustainability, the case of Shibuya highlights some critical issues that should be
10 addressed to improve ongoing and future initiatives of urban regeneration—such as those happening
11 around Shinagawa, Toranomon, or Tokiwabashi. First, the tendency to concentrate new functions and
12 investments in already extremely dense and hyperdeveloped areas. Second, the expansion of POPS and
13 the increased ability of private actors to manage, rescript, and profit from premium urban locations—a
14 trend that raises concern on urban inequalities in a city where the range of unmonitored and free activities
15 allowed in the public realm is already limited (Cybriwsky, 1999; Dimmer, 2012; Havlova *et al.*, 2018).
16 Finally, the emphasis on economic growth and attracting new visitors—two assumptions that should be
17 reconsidered under the light of the challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic and the downscaled
18 Tokyo 2020 Olympics. As it is hard to imagine how these issues might be solved in the foreseeable future,
19 reasonable concern remains over the long-term sustainability of planning in Tokyo and whether another
20 crisis might befall the city's real estate market once redevelopment operations in prime sites will be
21 completed, or in the case the ongoing projects fail to meet their targets (for example, if office demand is
22 lower than previously anticipated).
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35 To conclude, while the study is set in the context provided by the Japanese capital, strategies and results
36 obtained from the analysis of the ongoing urban regeneration around Shibuya Station help to illuminate
37 common tropes, contradictions, and inconsistencies of contemporary practices of urban regeneration
38 around the world. As Shibuya's case suggests, while private-led initiatives prioritise growth and economic
39 gains, more public discussion would be needed to envision inclusive instruments of place management
40 and development that could balance competing interests. Therefore, more empirical research is required
41 both in Japan and elsewhere to assess current strategies of urban regeneration and suggest new
42 mechanisms to holistically address sustainability, one of the main challenges for the future of cities and
43 regions across the globe.
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