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## Introduction

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This “Special Topic” derives from the research project for the academic year 2012 to 2014 titled “The Historical Reconstruction of Collective Inhabited Areas in the Translocal Networking of EU Cities” by The Urban-Culture Research Center of the Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences, Osaka City University.<sup>1</sup> This project was funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for “the Strategic Young Researcher Overseas Visits Program for Accelerating Brain Circulation.” The project defined the various forms of inhabited areas, which were constructed in the translocal networking of cities, as “Collective Inhabited Areas,” and conducted research on settlements, neighborhoods, and areas with many immigrants in the EU and its surrounding regions. Through this project we came to realize that for further research it would be necessary to analyze inhabited areas in more concrete contexts.

Suggestive in this regard is the international symposium “Context and Conflict of Cultural Encounters,” which looked at environments, inhabited areas, and cities in the EU regions, and was held at Osaka City University in December 2015<sup>2</sup>. At this symposium some reporters tried to reconsider inhabited areas from the view of its relation to environments. Based on these results, Kitamura, as a project leader, organized the research project of the Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences, Osaka City University, for the academic year 2016, which was titled “Collective Inhabited Areas in Environmental History / Environmental Writings.” The organization of this project consisted of the following members:

Prof. Dr. Masafumi Kitamura (Osaka City University): Modern German History

Dr. Hisatsugu Kusabu (Osaka City University): Byzantine History

Dr. Akio Kaibara (Osaka City University): Egyptian History in late Antiquity

Dr. Ayuka Kasuga (Osaka City University): Modern British History

Dr. Kazuki Okauchi (Osaka City University): Modern German History.

On February 17, 2017 we held the international seminar at Osaka City University. We invited Dr. Frank Uekötter (Birmingham University) as keynote speaker; Dr. Kaibara, Dr. Kasuga, and Dr. Okauchi also presented speeches.<sup>3</sup> This “Special Topic” consists of four essays, which were based on the speeches at this seminar, and an essay by Kitamura, which is based on his speech presented at the Osaka City University/Bielefeld University International Joint Seminar, “Europe in Times of Glocalisation/Europa in Zeiten der Glokalisierung,” at Bielefeld University on October 28, 2014, for the project “The Historical Reconstruction of Collective Inhabited Areas in the Translocal Networking of EU Cities.”<sup>4</sup>

Here, I want to indicate some points on this special topic as a whole. First, there are two levels of spatiality concerning inhabited areas. The essay of Dr. Uekötter analyzes the relation between inhabited areas and those surrounding them. For example, included in these selections is the usurpation of water from the rural country or the reuse of human excrement for agriculture. This shows also that the globalization of the water closet was present with an emphasis on local differences. The essay of Dr. Kasuga, which surveys research on inhabited areas and spatiality in nineteenth-century Europe and America, deals with the studies on the concrete exchange and interaction of materials between inhabited areas and its surrounding areas. It also picks up the research on the influence and

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distribution of the method or the model in the broader region, and it examines how they coped with environmental problems. The speech by Dr. Kasuga in the international seminar argued the latter, by focusing on the smoke abatement in nineteenth-century England. Her essay in this “Special Topic” portion tries to put its argument into a broader context. The essay of Dr. Kitamura on the Forest Settlement studies building under the influence of Modernism in architecture in Europe and America. Its dwellers held a festival to develop good relations with the surrounding region, including the city of Berlin. The other essays also touch both on the relation to the neighboring areas and the exchange of information and technique in the wider spatiality.

Second, the essays of this “Special Topic” relay the importance of less inhabited or uninhabited areas for understanding relatively thickly inhabited areas. As Dr. Okauchi discusses, the concept of national parks is constructed to preserve natural landscapes in the modern industrialized and densely populated world. In his comparative essay on Germany and Japan, Dr. Okauchi suggests that the national park debate should now go beyond the traditional dream of “human-uninhabited” areas. The essay of Dr. Kaibara reveals that the place for disciplining monks actually neighbored the inhabited areas, but it was desirable that this place was considered uninhabited and separated from the village. The other essays also touch upon this topic.

Third, because the organization of our project weighted toward Modern History, we could not discuss the historical development of relations between inhabited areas and environmental concerns in detail. We hope that we can make progress on this point in the near future.

## Endnotes

1. See the homepage of this project (<http://ucrc.lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp/zuno/english/index.html>).
2. See the homepage of this symposium ([www.lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp/UCRC/archives/4640](http://www.lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp/UCRC/archives/4640)) (in Japanese). Oba, Shigeaki, Ōguro, Shunji, Kusabu, Hisatsugu (ed.), *Context und konflikt of cultural encounters. Environment, inhabited area and city in the EU regions*, Seibun-do (Osaka), forthcoming (in Japanese).
3. See the homepage of this seminar ([www.lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp/UCRC/archives/5055](http://www.lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp/UCRC/archives/5055)) (in Japanese).
4. See the homepage of this seminar ([http://ucrc.lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp/zuno/research/upfiles/kyoudou/Internationaljointseminar\\_2014.pdf](http://ucrc.lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp/zuno/research/upfiles/kyoudou/Internationaljointseminar_2014.pdf)).