

## **Friendly but pervasive: Non-assertive control mechanisms and the maintenance of social order in Tokyo**

### **Research questions**

- What are non-assertive means of social control? How do they contribute to maintaining social order in the city?
- How do assertive and non-assertive means of social control intermingle in public space? What are their respective strategies of deployment?

### **Background**

Order in the city is maintained through an array of legal, administrative and technological means, such as police patrols or CCTV. Parallel to assertive means of social control, it is possible to identify ‘gentle’ or non-assertive efforts to regulate behavior in public places—such as the use of poetry to improve passenger etiquette on the London Underground (Reynolds 2013). This research will enquire into innovative forms of social control in the case of Tokyo, where non-assertive means of social control are ubiquitous in public spaces due to a mass-adoption by state, private and civic actors. For example, train and subway stations are plastered with colourful ‘manner posters’ instructing people in the ‘correct’ usage of public transport through images of cartoon animals or robots. This is evidence of a turn from explicit bans to ‘soft’ messages ‘that appeal to peoples’ hearts’ in the 2000s (Asahi Shimbun 2009). Initiatives by civic groups are another example. Community crime prevention groups have become more prevalent and aim to increase the number of ‘watchful eyes’ on the street through gentle efforts such as flower-planting initiatives or by integrating surveillance activities into everyday life. Walking your dog thus becomes a ‘woof patrol’ (*wan wan patōru*). As in the case of manner posters, social control mechanisms are given a ‘soft’ and benevolent guise.

While ubiquitous in Tokyo, non-assertive means of control are not limited to Japanese cities. The use of ‘cute’ visuals to encourage or discourage certain behaviors is common in other East Asian nations. In Western countries, this is mirrored by the use of humour and indirect messaging in some examples of ‘nudge’ campaigns. The overarching goal of this research is to show how urban order is maintained not just through assertive and determinist measures, but also through non-assertive and gentle means. It will explicitly examine the ways subtle and suggestive approaches elicit conformity and work alongside their more directive and explicit counterparts. Thus, this research will continue the investigation of broader themes of social scientific inquiry, namely shifting modes of governmentality, governance through self-regulation, and informalization of authority.

### **Literature review**

Contemporary societies are shaped by an atmosphere of insecurity and desires for control (Beck 1992; Deleuze 1992; Garland 2002; Rose 1996). These dual themes manifest themselves most evidently in urban spaces. The city is at permanent risk of falling victim to disorder and has to be secured accordingly (Coaffee et al. 2009). There is a well-developed body of literature analyzing assertive means of maintaining order in the city, such as policing (Fassin 2013) and surveillance technologies (Coleman 2004; Norris and Armstrong 2010). Researchers have documented wider trends in the governance of cities, including the rise of ‘fortress cities’ (Davis 1990), a ‘urban revanchism’ (Smith 1996) and a ‘military urbanism’ (Graham 2011). Rather than exclusively state-based, researchers have shown urban regulation and order to work through community involvement and public private-partnerships (Bullock 2014; Kennelly and Watt 2011). Compared to determinist means of control, research on non-assertive modes of control in the city is sparse. While researchers have started to observe ‘soft’ approaches to behavioral and spatial regulation, these studies are not in explicit conversation with each other and lack a uniting framework. Scholars have drawn on the term

‘soft’ to describe such different modes of control as therapeutic approaches to regulation and policing (McCarthy 2014; Cohen 2001), informal control exercised by residents (Mele 2017), control through ‘cooperation and consensus’ (Thörn 2011) and the informalization of public social control messaging (Lazar 2003). Providing a comprehensive account of the role of non-assertive modes of invoking order in the city, this research will enquire into a largely unexplored type of control mechanisms. Thus, it will help arrive at an empirically-grounded conceptualization of informal modes of governmentality.

Furthermore, this research will make a region-specific contribution to studies of order and control. So far, sociological research on control in the city has largely neglected the Japanese case (Murakami Wood et al. 2007; Murakami Wood and Abe 2011). At the same time, although contemporary accounts of post-bubble Japan describe a mood of insecurity and hopelessness (Allison 2013), the impact of this mental climate on Japanese urban life remains unexplored. Finally, while there is a long-established image of Japan as an orderly society, explanations of this order are either limited to organizational mechanisms of small groups (Miller and Kanazawa 2000) or have taken the shortcut of culturalist explanation (Leonardsen 2010). By conceptualizing urban order in Japan as requiring constant reification, this research helps question the persistent orientalist trope that depicts Japanese as ‘naturally’ more orderly. Enquiring into matters of order and control in Japanese cities, this study fills a gap in the literature while building on previous social scientific research about Japanese cities and the intimate relationship between civic groups and the Japanese state (Brumann and Schulz 2012; Garon 1997; Pekkanen et al. 2017).

### **Research approach**

This research will enquire into non-assertive forms of social control, their relation to assertive control mechanisms, as well as perceived and actual levels of (dis)order through the

examples of control messaging and community-based ‘benevolent’ surveillance activities (flower planting initiatives, dog-walking or jogging ‘patrols’) in Tokyo. Non-assertive control mechanisms are ubiquitous in Japanese cities and employed by a variety of actors across different sites, making Tokyo an ideal case study. Japanese cities are among the safest in the world (The Economist 2017) and issues such as urban crime, terrorism, and race relations that are frequently met with assertive control mechanisms in Western countries are less pronounced in Japan. An extremely high degree of urban order will thus enable a focused analysis of non-assertive social control mechanisms. Furthermore, Tokyo presents itself as a suitable fieldsite as research will be conducted immediately before the 2020 Olympics. Host cities are known to engage in a variety of spatial and behavioral regulation efforts ahead of mega-events (Kennelly and Watt 2011). Fieldwork in Tokyo will thus allow the analysis of social control efforts at a time that they are likely to be intensifying or changing.

During fieldwork, I will be able to draw on extensive local knowledge acquired in four years of living in Tokyo, advanced Japanese language skills obtained in seven years of language study, and previous experience of researching Japanese crime prevention groups. I hope to obtain funding for fieldwork from the Japan Foundation or the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

## **Methodology**

As an explorative study, this project will make use of an inductive-qualitative approach and involve the integration of four research methods:

*Text-based research* of Japanese primary sources. Sources will include newspaper reports on related topics (e.g. public order, crime prevention) published during the Heisei era (1989-2018), material published by public transport companies (e.g. press releases about manner campaigns), and the Tokyo metropolitan government and individual city district

administration offices (announcements, reports about crime prevention campaigns). Findings will be documented through memos. Access to Japanese newspapers is provided by the University of Sheffield library. Company and government documents will be obtained through online research and while conducting expert interviews.

*Expert interviews* (Bogner et al. 2009) will be conducted with civil servants of the Tokyo municipal government and district administration offices (specifically the Division for Youth and Public Order Measures and Community Planning Division), police officials and spokespersons of public transport companies engaged in manner campaigns. Furthermore, *semi-structured interviews* (Galletta 2013) will be conducted with participants of community crime prevention groups. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed whenever consent can be obtained. Institutional concerns may complicate recording during expert interviews. In this case, analysis will be based on notes taken during and memos written immediately after interviews. Informants will be recruited through contacts established during my current MA research (crime prevention groups, Tokyo municipal government) and by reaching out to the public relations offices of public transport companies.

*Participant observation* will be conducted as a passenger on Japanese public transport. Furthermore, *observation* will be conducted in train and subway stations, residential areas and entertainment districts. Observations will focus on the presence *of* and peoples' interaction *with* social control mechanisms. Observations will be recorded through fieldnotes (Emerson et al. 2011). Furthermore, this method will include documenting the 'linguistic landscape' of control (Shohami and Gorter 2009) by photographing and mapping social control messaging (i.e. poster, signs) for later analysis. Sites will be selected to reflect varying control requirements as indicated by passenger turnover numbers or local crime rates. The number of specific sites is still to be determined based on a trial mapping exercise during my current MA research.

*Multi-modal discourse analysis* (O’Halloran 2011) of social control messages in form of posters and signs. Next to the analysis of social control messages documented while doing observation, this will include posters from past manner campaigns available through transport company websites and archives such as that of the Metro Cultural Foundation. Research skills necessary for the social scientific analysis of multi-modal texts will be acquired during the first year of PhD study.

Analysis will be based on documents generated during the research process (memos, fieldnotes, interview notes, transcripts) and take the three conceptual urban sites explored during fieldwork (public transport facilities, residential areas, entertainment districts) as its axes. Analysis will identify which control mechanisms are at work in different sites, and how their deployment strategies are shaped by varying structural (e.g. train station vs. residential area) and specific (e.g. passenger turnover or local crime rates) requirements, as well as by the agencies and interdependencies of involved actors. Methods are designed to interlink with each other (e.g. research of primary sources will help generate interview questions, interviewee narratives will be examined in the context of observation and discourse analysis findings). The proposed research design will help answer my research questions in the following ways:

<b>Method</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<i>Text-based research</i>	Gather information about the development and background of social control efforts. Identify involved actors.
<i>Observation</i>	Document social control efforts in different kinds of places (public transport facilities, residential areas, entertainment districts) with varying social control requirements (passenger turnover, crime rates).
<i>Interviews</i>	Enquire into the purpose, logics and anticipated effects of social control mechanisms from the perspectives of the involved actors and institutions.
<i>Discourse analysis</i>	Analyze formal and informal ways of invoking order. Generate insights about which behaviors are encouraged/discouraged in different sites, by whom, and how. Mapping will allow consideration of the spatially-embedded nature of social control discourses.

*Ethical considerations:* The parts of the research that involve human participants will be conducted according to University of Sheffield ethics guidelines. I will aim to obtain written informed consent from interview participants, who will remain anonymous. Interview data will be treated confidentially and stored securely.

## Timetable

Having completed an ERSC accredited Research Training Master, I am prepared to finish the PhD programme in three years.

<b>Year One: Literature review and research preparations</b>	
Months 1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit research proposal</li> <li>• Explore theoretical approaches in the sociology of control.</li> <li>• Literature review: deviance and control in urban spaces</li> <li>• Apply for ethical approval and fieldwork funding</li> </ul>
Months 7-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hone research skills: discourse analysis</li> <li>• Review Japanese primary sources</li> <li>• Prepare for fieldwork</li> </ul>

<b>Year Two: Fieldwork and analysis</b>	
Months 13-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation and mapping</li> <li>• Interviews &amp; transcription</li> <li>• Discourse analysis: ethnographic data</li> </ul>
Months 19-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revisit literature review</li> <li>• Discourse analysis: past manner poster campaigns</li> <li>• Data analysis</li> </ul>

<b>Year Three: Analysis and writing up</b>	
Months 25-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis</li> <li>• Writing up</li> </ul>
Months 31-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing up</li> <li>• Finish thesis</li> </ul>

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