

Research Note

Innovative Methods in Urban Research: On the Use of Action Cameras in East Asian Cities

By Katharina Borgmann and Deirdre Sneep

Summary

There are many tools and means for looking at urban settings, and both quantitative and qualitative methods are widely accepted. For researchers who conduct fieldwork in cities that they are not thoroughly acquainted with, choosing the right method is an important step in the design of their research plan. There is a plethora of valuable literature available on doing fieldwork in East Asian cities, but in the past decade — due to the rapid development in digital research technology — the equipment and tools for research have multiplied in number. New equipment leaves many researchers willing to experiment with it, but at the same time unable to find sources that evaluate these unfamiliar tools. This research note discusses one of these new digital equipment devices, the action camera, which — with some considerations — can prove to be a valuable tool for urban research across many different disciplines. Based on the argument that visual media, and in particular video recordings, are a necessary addition to research designs that focus on the relationship between built environment and society, the authors discuss the tool and share their experiences of using it. In this research note, experiences from researchers using a new tool for visual urban research in case studies from Urban Anthropology and Environmental Design were combined so as to shed new light on using visual aids in research plans.

Keywords: East Asian cities, urban research methods, urban anthropology, urban design, video, action camera

Katharina Borgmann is a Doctoral Researcher with the Research Group Urban Systems in East Asia, IN-EAST School of Advanced Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg.

Deirdre Sneep is a Doctoral Researcher with the Research Group Urban Systems in East Asia, IN-EAST School of Advanced Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen, Duisburg.