The 120th ASC Seminar

Meeting of Kanto Branch of Japan Association for African Studies

"Making the Case for Hustle Studies: Thinking *with* Nairobi"



Sketch by Tatiana Thieme, Dandora, June 2024

2026 12/4 (Fri)

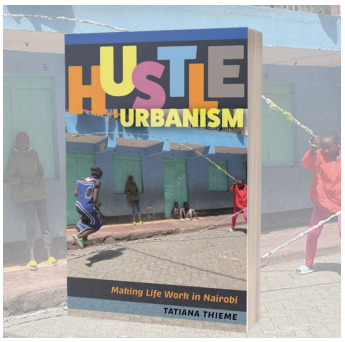
Venue:【Hybrid】
Onsite: Room107
(TUFS Research and Lecture Building 1F / Fuchu campus)
Online: ZoomMeeting

Language: English・Admission: Free
Time：17:40 ～ 19:10（JST）

【Speaker】

Prof. Tatiana Thieme

Professor of Human Geography at University College London



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【Abstract】

In this talk, Tatiana Thieme will discuss her book *Hustle Urbanism: Making Life Work in Nairobi* (UMP, 2025). In Nairobi's underserved neighbourhoods, "hustling" has become a vital survival strategy and a way of life for youth. Drawing on over 15 years of ethnographic engagement, *Hustle Urbanism* explores the meanings of hustling across practices of provisioning, distribution, exchange, learning, and mobilizing. The book centres the logics and inventive strategies of young people navigating job scarcity, inadequate services, police harassment, and climate-induced harms. It traces how they develop tools of resistance against legacies of colonial violence and uneven urban development, while carving out spaces of opportunity for themselves and their peers, through skills spanning circular economies and eco-activism to hip hop and grassroots leadership. The book offers a critical theorization of precarious urban life and making life work against the odds. While cautioning against fetishizing hustle as social and economic uplift, Tatiana calls for greater recognition of the ingenuity and skills it involves. She argues that studying vernacular hustle narratives and practices opens timely empirical and theoretical questions about overlapping urban struggles and possibilities that coexist in the everyday city, making the case for hustle studies as a wider field of inquiry.

Keywords : Hustle urbanism, hustle studies, precarious environments, urban youth, Nairobi, ethnography.

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