

Navigating the Visibility of the Fan Comic

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Beyond the vast market for commercially published graphic narratives (*manga*) in Japan, there lies a still expanding and particularising market for amateur publications, so-called *dōjinshi*, which are exchanged at specialised events. The most well-known event is the so-called *Comic Market*, which was first held in Tokyo in 1975 and continues to this day to host about 30,000 artists twice every year.

Most of the works exchanged at these events make use of scenarios and characters from commercially published media, such as *manga*, *anime*, games, movies or television series and are printed by the artists through the use of specialised online printing services, without the involvement of a publishing company and without the consent of copyright holders. This puts the artists at risk of legal action, especially when their works are referring to the content owned by notoriously strict copyright holders such as the large media conglomerate *The Walt Disney Company*, which has acquired *Marvel Comics* almost a decade ago.

During last year's field research for my PhD thesis, I conducted qualitative interviews with *dōjinshi* artists who produce fan work of western source materials (the most popular during that timeframe being *The Marvel Cinematic Universe*) to find out how they perceive the space that they navigate as artists and where they see their own work in relation to the content produced by the media industries. My analysis shows that while Japanese fan artists of course desire some degree of visibility for their works, they also employ a variety of tactics to ensure a measure of control over who is able to access their works and to minimise the risk of undesired exposure.

Biography:

Katharina Hülsmann received her M.A. degree in Modern Japanese Studies from Heinrich-Heine-University in 2014. Her studies focus on Japanese popular culture, new media, constructions of gender and transcultural phenomena. She has co-edited the volume *Japanische Populärkultur und Gender – Ein Studienbuch* [Japanese Popular Culture and Gender – A Selection of Studies], which was published by Springer VS in 2016. In the winter term of 2014/2015 she became a PhD student at Heinrich-Heine-University, supervised by Prof. em. Dr. Michiko Mae. She also worked as a lecturer and research associate at the department from 2015 to 2018. She examines Japanese *dōjinshi* as an example for creative participation in popular culture. She received a PhD scholarship of the Max Weber foundation and completed the field research for her PhD at the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo between April and October 2017.