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What can we learn from Tokyo

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Sanctuaries of urban sociability: What can we learn from Tokyo?
Anni Greve[i]

In June 2007 the *International Herald Tribune* nominated Copenhagen as the world's second 'most liveable' city. Tokyo came in at number four. This World City is considerably larger, with a higher density and level of complexity than Copenhagen, yet it is also 'liveable'. It is a place one likes to be; affluent, clean, safe and soft, has an order of its own, yet at the same time is creative and dynamic. Its citizens live well, perhaps spending lunchtime in a public bath or a golf training lab, while after hours they may perhaps go to a restaurant, have a couple of drinks, listen to some jazz and later take the subway home – or simply walk: Even late at night the subways and streets of Tokyo are remarkably safe. This mega city is marked simultaneously by a high degree of mutual trust and a unique urban vitality. How is this possible?

This is a paper about the crucial role of sanctuaries in constructing social trust relations between strangers. The overall hypothesis is that certain mega cities are more robust than others because they offer spatial capacities that enable the development of a social etiquette for meeting strangers with confidence and trust. The paper has its focus on two distinctive periods in modern urbanism; the utopian early phase of modernism and our present period of late modernism, marked by the rebuilding of cities as strategic sites in globalisation processes and the reinvention of ideas of urban sociability. It is a leading idea that a source of Tokyo's success as 'liveable' is a heritage from the utopian early phase of modernism, namely places of urban sociability. Today urbanism is in its fastest and most dynamic phase in history. Old cities are being reconfigured, and global cities will be functionally different, thus less and less calculated objects. What remains of earlier stages? In East Asia the utopian early modern city, in which the theatre was a key order of representation, became marginalised with the colonial city (Phillips 2007). In this respect Tokyo is a special case, being completely closed during the decisive periods of the colonial wars. Therefore we are witnessing surprising persistence of earlier phases.

It discusses places of urban sociability, but not in the classical conceptual framework of national sociologies, most prominently the Chicago school, where place was linked to community through local culture (Albrow 1997). In this paper, place is studied from a different angle. Not linked to the local community, and not studied with the aim of identifying inward going communitarian bonds of commitments. Instead, it studies places that promote the opposite; a way out of localism. We have to distinguish between the internal structure of identity and "the relations that run outwards, the wider geographies through which identities are

constituted. The stranger that remains without the gates" (Massey 2007:178). It studies places of urban sociability 'that run outwards'. My study is based on a re-examination of the role of sanctuaries, ritual and theatre in promoting a social etiquette for meeting strangers with confidence and trust.

The first part of the paper unfolds the idea of sanctuary. It is a broad and yet quiet delimited concept; broad in the sense that it includes more than a religious sanctuary in an orthodox sense of the term, and delimited because it is defined with a point of departure in the religious sanctuary: It shares qualities with, or can be deprived of, the orthodoxy of the religious sanctuary. *Secondly*, they function as sanctuaries in two historical contexts. They can be studied either as an integral part of the political regime or alongside the public realm of the political elite. My focus is the latter. *Thirdly*, they are not perceived of as pockets of resistance; however, the sanctuaries studied have offered possibilities for acquiring a social etiquette, aesthetic skills and a social morality which point beyond the local community or the lodge formations, irregular intrigues and power plays of the national power elite.

The second part of the paper has its focus upon religious sanctuaries of the utopian early phase of modernism, more precisely Edo-Tokyo during the Tokugawa era (1600-1863). Today, it is acknowledged that citizens of post industrial societies attach themselves to religions in response to, and in conditions of, social change and unrest. We see a revival of religions in modern urban societies, or the birth of 'The Post Secular City' (Beaumont 2008). Less attention has been paid to similar mechanisms in the era of early modernism. The paper points to ways by which religious sanctuaries were reinvented during Tokugawa. In this historical period Buddhism and Shinto were thoroughly intertwined (Reader 2005). People of Edo 'picked and mixed' from both religions. The focus is on issues of practice and on levels of engagement in a variety of events as indices of religiosity.

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