

Workshop: "Modernity or modernities: Should we speak of modernity in the plural?"

Sacred places in a modern global world: Tokyo a laboratory

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Abstract

Tokyo belongs to those few cities named World Cities. In a global perspective it is a leading city economically and technologically, and it offers an infrastructure which in many respects is unique. Not only it serves national internal affairs; to foreign interests it constitutes a centre for investments and capital growth. Those strong aspects require more than a casino. Institutions matters and place matters to trust relations, risk calculations and civic cohesion. In that respect Tokyo is an ideal of a World City. The scope of interest of this paper is not global economy, but civic security and civic cohesion in modern Tokyo. Civic security is about the state's ability to enforce its will at the level of law, but it is also related to the existence of strong societies. The paper argues that civic cohesion has both to do with progress and democracy and with tradition and social memory embedded within strong societies. They offer a playground for acts of transfer between 'a before' and 'an after'. A precondition for coping with modernity is the possibility of recurring to tradition and social memory. In the paper, Paul Connerton's work on the social nature of memory (Connerton 1989) acts as a theoretical frame of reference. His distinction between more types of memory claims opens for a levelled analysis of the society. The focus of attention is upon cognitive memory claims. Tokyo is a city where the principle of organised forgetting has been the leading mantra of development at least since World War II. Nevertheless, people seem to generate returning an order in Tokyo, which in fine words is given the name 're-territorialization'. The paper argues that religious societies have offered a playground for cognitive memory claims about the lay out of the city. Moreover, they have offered a strong morality due to which Tokyo is a leading World City.



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