Invisible (Tokyo Station) City of Transformation: Social Change and its Spatial Expression in Modern Japan

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Abstract

Within the context of modernization and globalization, processes which Japan has been undergoing since Meiji era, reorganization of the urban space and appearance of new "(semi)-public" spaces, such as railway station, share certain elements in the transformation of everyday life of the Japanese society. This paper will attempt at showing main directions of changes observable in the "society in transition" through analysis of inner order of Tokyo Station, known already also as Tokyo Station City.

Keywords: transformation, Tokyo Station City, *sakariba*, consumption, human interaction

Izvleček

Znotraj konteksta modernizacije in globalizacije, procesov, s katerimi se sooča Japonska vse od obdobja Meiji naprej, se v reorganizaciji urbanega prostora v nove »pol-javne« prostore, kot je železniška postaja, odseva preobrazba vsakodnevnega življenja japonske družbe. Ta članek poskuša prikazati glavne smernice sprememb, ki se jih opazuje znotraj »družbe v tranziciji« skozi analizo notranjega reda postaje Tokio, že znane kot Mesto tokijske postaje.

Ključne besede: preobrazba, Mesto tokijske postaje, *sakariba*, potrošnja, medčloveške interakcije

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1   Introduction

The discourse on social change or social transformation can be organized around the problem of railway stations, like those with relatively long history, such as Tokyo Station (*Tōkyō-eki*) perceived as a symbol of movement, transition or liquid modernity (Bauman 2000) in terms of world constituted by constant and chaotic flow of people, material and abstract products of cultures. Railway stations play a role of a medium through which all these ideas, thoughts, lifestyles, trends, objects are imported from one place into another, thus stations become an important vehicles of change (Richards and MacKenzie 1988). Ultimately, central railway stations are witnesses of their times, mirrors reflecting social, historical and cultural transformation in their infrastructure, arranged in a meaningful, rational and artistic shape. Functions denoted by railway stations as well as the stations' symbolic implications are readable and decodable, providing us with information about the culture and the history of the society these constructions belong to (Lynch 2001, 131–134). It is in this sense that this paper sets to explore and (re)construct the image of modern Japanese society in transition as seen through symbolic history, present infrastructure and functions of the Tokyo Station, which itself is undergoing a process of transformation in order to become a city, as suggested by the name of the reconstruction project: Tokyo Station City[1].

This paper is thought as an idiographic (Babbie 2003, 45–49) description of general tendencies in transitions of social and cultural life in contemporary Japan from the perspective of spatial characteristics of Tokyo Station. It is based mainly on sociological, cultural and anthropological concepts developed by Japanese as well as Western researchers. In addition to that, the analysis will be supplemented by spontaneous, irregular observations I conducted at Tokyo Station during my four years stay in Japan and information I have searched on seven websites, where facts are presented not only about Tokyo Station, but also about its various commercial attractions. The main purpose of this research has an explorative character and was planned as an attempt at drawing a sketch of social changes as seen through an analysis of public space—Tokyo Station (City).

There are two main reasons underlying the choice of the Tokyo Station. The first one is connected to the long, complicated history of the station, including the

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[1] The project called "Tokyo Station City" was created in 1999 upon an agreement signed by JR East Corporation and the Governor of Tokyo—Ishihara Shintarō. Then modernization started in 2004 and its accomplishment is planned for 2013. (Fukada 2008).

political background of its construction and national significance of the building. The second reason concerns the present condition of *Tōkyō-eki* and its broadening functional use, the process closely related to such changes as: modification in time consumption patterns or reorganization of the social structure. Hence, Tokyo Station City connotes all three meanings of the center as in a definition proposed by Manuel Castells, namely, a sphere playing a symbolic and community-forming role, secondly, an assembly of governmental and economic institutions, and finally, a central stage of ludic and consuming pursuits with all the possibilities of choices it offers (Castells 1982, 281–283).

I shall argue here that the past and the present of Tokyo Station form a meaningful context, where certain social transformations stem from, while others have influenced the shape of this context. In other words, almost one century long coexistence of the station and its passengers resulted in the transformation of *Tōkyō-eki* on one hand and in changes in passengers' behavior and habits associated with the station on the other hand. The station itself is considered here as a modern type of *sakariba* (Yoshimi 2008; Kanzaki 1993; Terui 2005), an emic[2] category which I interpret in terms of a specific form of "public space". Both terms require further explanation.

The simplest way to describe *sakariba* would be to say that it designates the busiest parts of the city, like an amusement district or entertainment quarters. My Japanese interlocutors when inquired about *sakariba*, associated it mostly with *hankagai*, small and narrow shopping streets radiating from the station, a sub-centre of the city. According to *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* (2008), *sakaribas* in big towns in Edo period (1603–1868) were formed spontaneously in open spaces either initially intended for refuge in case of a fire (*hirokōji*), or next to big bridges in Edo, the predecessor of Tokyo, where a transshipment of merchandise occurred. Some kinds of markets were also formed, for example around Ryōgoku bridge, on the Sumida river side (*kawara*). Third pattern of the formation of *sakariba* includes entertainment infrastructure around temple gates (*monzenmachi*) and here examples of Asakusa and Ekōin can be quoted. These spaces drew masses of visitors, owing to the broad range of attractions offered by various people[3]. What

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[2] This term is used here to stress the very originality of the Japanese concept expressed by the word *sakariba*, for which an appropriate equivalence in Western languages can hardly be found. A broader explanation of the idea of *sakariba* appears hereinafter. For further readings about the definition of "emic" and "ethnic," refer to Kuwayama 2009.

[3] Yoshimi (2008, 163) mentions: *yose* ("comic show," "vaudeville"), *misemonogoya* ("a provisory stage for small spectacles" that shows sometimes with the uncanny of human physiognomy as the

constituted *sakariba* were two elements, as in the semantic composition of the word itself, namely, people swarming in a joyful atmosphere which can be linked to the meaning of the adjective *sakanna* (vivid, prosperous, vigorous, active). The second prerequisite condition of *sakariba* was the place *ba* and its infrastructural organization: stalls, street artists, tea rooms, and today these are also pachinko parlors, drinking bars, gambling places and the like.

Having a general image in mind, we can ask now if there are any aspects of *sakariba* which enable us to regard it as a form of public space, and if so, what they would be like. Everything depends, of course, on our definition of the latter term. For the purpose of this paper, I define public space—in opposition to the private space—in terms of these parts of the city, such as streets, parks, squares, where no paid tickets or fees are required for entry, nor are the entrants discriminated on the basis of age, gender, race or social background. Yet public space is not free of regulations or social norms, structuring the co-existence of actors within its boundaries and imposing restrictions on potential obnoxious behavior. Reconsidering the aforementioned question, I shall argue that the concept of *sakariba* implies the idea of public space or, to be more precise, a semi-public space[4] (Jałowiecki and Szczepański 2006, 423), especially when recalling the notion of traditional streets in Western and Japanese culture. Needless to say, both *sakariba* and public space, or let us say the public space of *sakariba*, enjoys today much less freedom and democracy, sacrificed for the sake of public safety.

A railway station may be analyzed in categories of (semi)-public space, of a similar kind as *sakariba*[5]. The process of transformation of a railway station into *sakariba* was enabled mainly by the development of railway transport on an unprecedented scale, solving the commuting problem on the one hand, which propelled suburbanization process on the other hand. Increasing land prices in Tokyo accounts for a reason, among others, why people were forced to seek dwelling in its suburbs, a process observed as well in large Western cities. Nevertheless, no matter how perfectly the transportation system functions,

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main attraction, like midgets for instance), stalls with medicines and other goods or tea houses some of which also functioned as geisha house and the like.

[4] The term semi-public space is used in relation to shopping malls for example, where some constitutive principles for the public space function inside a private property. In this way, anyone is allowed to the shopping mall, but activities unrelated to the purpose of shopping are not unlimitedly permitted.

[5] "With the development of the inner Tokyo railways there began a new developmental stage of *sakariba*." (Linhart 1998, 233)

commuting from suburbs statistically means for *sarariman* sometimes two hours both ways (Tōkyō Toshiken), which then influences his or her disposition of time, namely leisure time. Sepp Linhart in his essay about "Popular leisure", quoting the data from a comparative research conducted by *Rengō Sōken*, the research institute of Japanese trade unions' association, concludes that "While Germans enjoyed 4:15 free hours on an average working day, the Japanese had to cope with only 2:28 hours, or nearly two hours less." (Linhart 2009, 221).

With scarcely two or three hours of freedom between work and family life, one cannot afford strolling around the city in search for a proper *sakariba* suiting one's preferences. On the other side, no long exploration is necessary any more, since nowadays modern *sakariba* is located around big Tokyo terminals. Furthermore, the plan of ongoing reconstruction of *Tōkyō-eki*, prepared by the JR East Corporation, goes as far as to provide commuters as well as all the other passengers and visitors with the miniature of the city itself. Consequently, recent working and commuting patterns have led to a progressive transformation, notably of big terminals, from simple transfer points into *sakariba*-like spaces, where the client can, not only entertain oneself, but also repair shoes, learn English, relax in a spa and so forth. Along with the appearance of a new public space came a set of habits, behaviors, social norms, giving birth to a particular culture depicted by Katō Hidetoshi within the phrase of "terminal culture" (Linhart 1998, 223). In other words, a new physical setting of the modern *sakariba* sprawling inside and outside of the station with its new socially constructed "terminal culture", establishes a particular social environment where we may witness manifestation of significant processes of social transformation. Hereby, reinterpreting public space of the *sakariba* covering the area of Tokyo Station City, I would like to briefly delineate the image of Japanese society in transition.

2   Social Norms in Transition

French philosopher Roland Barthes travelling to Japan in the sixties could not help the feeling of astonishment at the Japanese railway stations and tried to bridle their topographical chaos in these words:

> The station, a vast organism which houses big trains, the urban trains, the subway, a department store, and a whole underground commerce—the station gives the district this landmark which, according to certain urbanites, permits

the city to signify, to be read. The Japanese station is crossed by a thousand functional trajectories, from the journey to the purchase, from garment to food: a train can open onto a shoe stall. Dedicated to commerce, to transition, to departure, and yet kept in a unique structure, the station (moreover, is that what this new complex should be called?) … (Barthes 1982, 38–39).

From Barthes observation results in a conclusion that Tokyo's railway stations usually become a center of the city district (Barthes 1982, 38). This is also true for Tokyo Station (City), composing a well-organized microcosm and a miniature of the capital itself. Locating modern *sakariba* in the central part of the city district has its consequences. Traditionally, *sakariba* was situated at a certain distance from the residential district, and rather on the outskirts of the city (Kanzaki 1993, 202). It used to be considered a liminal phase related to *kehare*, a chaotic interval of time between *hare*—sacred time of formal celebrations performed during festival and *ke*—time of work and everyday, routine life (Kanzaki 1993, 11). While the pair of *hare* and *ke* denotes predictable, conventional time, *kehare* indicates a moment of passage from daily duty to prayer and rest time. Thus *kehare* closing *hare* set of rules and regulations in order to open the *ke* one, recalls a notion of the *ma* interval (Berque and Sauzet 2005, 29–30), a space suspended between two orders, a chaotic space of uncanny and unpredictable affairs. *Kehare* aspect places *sakariba* on the margin of social and official regulations and in this sense *sakariba* was channeling people's frustrations, social dissatisfaction, anger or refusal to conform the authority of existing world order, into various kinds of leisure activities. That is why power-wielding officials in Edo or Meiji era (1886–1912) were very careful when interfering through law into *sakariba'*s inner life (Yoshimi 2008, 192–205).

Modern *sakariba* of Tokyo Station City has kept the *kehare* traits of an intermediate sphere squeezed between work (*ke*) and home (*hare*). Yet, central localization of *Tōkyō-eki* terminal and privatization of larger parts of this *sakariba*, both result in implicit and explicit norms which are more strictly applied to actors' behavior, particularly those staying within zones inside the ticket gates. These regulations fall into two general categories: the official social code determined by the company, the owner of the station, that is JR East, and social norms elicited in a process of social exchange and social coexistence. The first category of rules is surveyed by the police and other apparatus of official power, while norms belonging to the second category come under the execution of the society itself. A ticket required to get into passengers zone inside the ticket gate can stand as an

example of official code. Restrictions imposed on the following demeanours, e.g. treading on other passengers' heals, pushing them, eating while walking, littering, staring at others, could serve as examples of socially created norms.

Basing on my observations, I could also think of a case when a social norm is enforced or replaced by an official regulation, since the social awareness of the first one is so low, that appropriate manners are hard to exact from a person. As a reaction to some unwilling behaviors, posters appeared inside of the Yamanote line's trains few years ago, informing about what should be avoided on the train. Passengers find out for instance that carrying a large luggage—I believe this might inter alia concern foreign students who use the train for moving—or applying makeup are not necessarily actions to be performed on the train. The need to officially regulate passengers' manners in such a detailed way might mean that moral bonds in the society have weakened and hence a critical eye kept on the Other no longer has its regulative power. I shall even argue that within the space of such a huge organism like Tokyo Station City, the Japanese feel more at ease littering, thronging while getting on the train or buying a sweet souvenir at one of the stalls in an underground tunnel of the station. Admittedly, the Japanese society has elaborated a strict etiquette in order to eliminate demeanors which could hinder close social coexistence of masses of people on a rather limited land. However, some kind of deterioration of manners observable at *Tōkyō-eki* proves Yi-Fu Tuan's theory, according to which etiquette designates only one way to regulate human relations in the crowd. The other one would be a pinch of discourtesy (Tuan 1987, 82) expressed towards the other. Both strategies help avoiding contact when a threat of unbearable intensity appears.

If the normative question remains open in case of the definition of modern *sakariba*, it is because one of its underlying principles presuppose constant negotiating or playing with regulations and social norms. This is possible owing to the fact that a variety of people gathering and flowing through the *sakariba* of the Tokyo Station City is unprecedented anywhere else in Japan. Only here can homeless be visible and homelessness directly experienced. Only *sakariba* creates a space where small talk between men run seamlessly without the necessity of the exchange of visiting cards, an act which predefines social situation, roles of participating actors and proper language. Within the urban throng floating through and through the tunnels or shopping streets of Tokyo Station City, one will surely meet a great—for Japanese standards—number of foreigners, as well as Japanese coming from different corners of the country. If it is difficult to have people obey

the official regulations at the *sakariba* of Tokyo Station City, this is just because many of the actors have the status of a stranger and presumably have not had enough time to learn new codes, while those who should be aware of official regulations and norms may easily pretend to be travelers from outside of Tokyo. Eventually, meetings between people of different age, gender, nationality or social class provide umpteen chances for spontaneous (re)placement or (re)negotiations of existing social rules to adopt them to changing situation. It is in this sense that *sakariba* may be declared a type of rift, where questioning traditional order ushers into a transformation of the culture this order belongs to.

3   Tolerance of a Tourist

One result of cross-cultural meetings at the *sakariba* of Tokyo Station (City) can be a partial release from stereotypes about other people and other cultures, enabled by the possibility of direct verification of their real contents and this may enhance tolerance towards foreigners. A factor facilitating this process is the fact that visitors at the station, particularly those, whose purpose of arrival at the station has been simple travelling—I will discuss later in this paper other purposes, like shopping, eating out, participating in seasonal events etc.—have an equal status of a tourist. Moreover, equalizing all actors hanging around the platforms and shops inside the ticket gates of *Tōkyō-eki* in a role of a tourist helps overcome the cleavage of we, the Japanese, or they, the foreigners. In other words, a situation of being a tourist may likewise be regarded in categories of the Japanese emic concepts such as *soto* and *uchi*, indicating at the multinational level the distinction between the Japanese society and the rest of the world. In a temporarily formed group of tourists, international and social distinctions are blurred, because all members of this group are equally expected to refrain from some demeanors and one set of rights authorize them to undertake some actions. At last, both codes are applied to all passengers, regardless of any further socially created disparities, with the exception of people privileged due to health problems or age. In an environment of such an almost perfectly democratic public space, human relations are redefined in a way that the communication temporarily occurs directly between two individuals and is not intermediated via social forms, regulating human interactions in the world of profession or family, for instance.

The situation of a tourist creates a need to define oneself as an individual and this individual is required to posses a unique way of expressing one's self when initiating communication with the other individual, a pursuit where habitual forms of contacting one another are not legible anymore. The illegibility of forms becomes a natural consequence of a fugitive character of interactions, disabling an actor to explain his or her social role played on a daily basis to the partner in conversation. Hence, so-called tourists passing by the *sakariba* of Tokyo Station City might as well remain themselves, that is, display some traits of their *honne*, which I mean here the "inner self", as opposed to the *tatemae*–the "outer mask" having its name printed on one's visiting card.

A similar process, whereby a group of people (re)unifies and (re)integrates their community in a context different from everyday, mundane situations, is analyzed by Ben-Ari (2002). The author focuses on an example of a corporate drinking occasion, explaining through a detailed case study how effects such as stress release or group solidifications are achieved by a sequence of pursuits conducted in an environment, distanced, as regards both time and space, from working hours, working place or home. Similarly, *sakariba* space and *kehare* time, two characteristics of the Tokyo Station (City), frame a context for more spontaneous and more natural human relations, initiated in an environment irrelevant to socially determined network of interdependences, thus having a healing effect on actors. Namely, it releases stress accompanying everyday meetings with colleagues, family and all these people with whom the Japanese are tied by relation of dependence and which might play a decisive role in the trajectory of their life. An enjoyable accidental conversation with an unknown person may have a positive influence on relations at home and work, presenting them in a brighter light.

Furthermore, apart from aforementioned fugitive encounters taking place on the way to a platform or already on a platform, Tokyo Station City provides various kinds of drinking bars and customers have many occasions for drinking stops and unexpected one-evening-friendship bound over a couple of beers. If the passer-by decides to come back to the place and continue with the friendly relation from the previous time, then a small drinking community might be formed, sometimes across the social ladder, for a collective entity consisting of people of diverse social status and possibly even of different nationality.

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Ultimately, all these human interactions blurring borders between social classes in the "democratic" space of the modern Tokyo Station City, *sakariba* can be perceived as a relic of the "classless capitalism", symptomatic for the postwar Japan (Slater 2011, 106). The end of the idea of the Japanese society as one middle class was marked by the crisis of the bubble economy in the nineties and deregulation of the labor market introduced afterwards. The decline of the "lifetime" work system (*shūshin koyō*), the growing number of part-time workers, "freeter" who change job frequently (Slater 2011, 113) or "neets" (a term indicating young people who are neither in employment, nor in education and not on the training), have consequently deepened social disparities and led to return of classes (Slater 2011, 111–114). A rhetoric question may be asked about the condition of tourist as regards all these people who fall today into a newly emerged *karyū kaikyū* ("lower class"). Can they afford spending time at modern *sakariba*, like the one spreading around Tokyo Station City? The most probable answer would be as follows: First of all, they do not have many chances to cross the station. Secondly, even if they do visit the station quite often, to fulfill their part-time duties in one of the *sakariba'*s facility, they would also need funds to stroll around the underground streets of Tokyo Station City, in order to fully participate in its main attraction, namely consumption.

4 Individual Consuption

As I have already argued, the plan to transform Tokyo Station into Tokyo Station City is based on the potential of this place constituted by a large number of people crossing this area every day and its rich infrastructure. The station is meant to be repositioned from a mere transfer point into a huge, lucrative "consumption paradise". Manifold goods offered on the stalls or shops inside the station or outside of it, in adjacent shopping centers, become catnip enticing not only regular commuters, but also other denizens of the Tokyo area, who arrive at the station to spend their leisure time inside the city of the Tokyo Station. Behind the choice of the Tokyo Station City as a target of entertainment lies a prosaic reason: it is easily accessible and it offers a wide range of attractions. The offer can be quickly googled using "Tokyo Station" as a keyword. Internet search will display hundred thousands of results, most of which are closely related to newly constructed facilities, located within Tokyo Station City area (GranTokyo Towers, Sapia Tower, Metropolitan Marunouchi Hotel or renewed Daimaru Department Store

etc.). However, those who search for a train timetable might spend some more time before they finally acquire necessary information.

Underground tunnels at the station have been arranged into alleys and passages. Some of them by name and structure recall traditional Japanese *hankagai* (ex. *Kurobei Yokochō*), others are recreated in conscious emulation with Western patterns (GranSta passage). Drifting along the stalls and shops is driven by a "mobilized gaze", which means that consumers do not move following a route planned in advance, but instead they let themselves be seduced and conducted by the rhythm and the order of consumption (Rewers 2010, 677). A great range of products from newfangled foreign goods to traditional Japanese sweets enable customers to consume various lifestyles, depending on the mood. The action of choosing and hovering around stands filled up with goods may be interpreted as a substitute of travelling abroad and this feeling is enforced by the fact that this consumption takes place within the station and that consumers already have the status of tourists.

The consumption offer in the Tokyo Station City includes not just material goods, but also abstract ideas, such as the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912) and reunification of the Japanese as a nation, symbolized partly by the historic red-brick building, preserved on the western side of the station, called Marunouchi. In addition to the historical past, the present stereotypical image of Japan also becomes a subject of consumption, exported abroad and equally sold inside the country in the form of traditional Japanese craftwork or cuisine. Promoting a certain image of Japan outside and inside of the country[6] can be analyzed as a part of political strategy. Manipulating with the content of the common image of Japan, its culture, society and history might as well serve to achieve political goals, be that gaining trust, a key factor in economy, by presenting Japan as a country carefully cultivating traditional values of *bushidō*, a way of life and code a of conduct cultivated by Japanese samurai, oriented toward values like mastery in martial arts, frugality, self-immolation, loyalty to one`s master, honor unto death.

Consumption—understood here mainly as eating out and also shopping— seems to hold one of the top positions in the ranking of leisure activities (Linhart 2009, 225). The reason underlying this phenomenon is a progressive slackening of Japanese economy (especially after the Lehman shock from 2009 and the

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[6] We should bear in mind that among visitors at the Tokyo Station City there are also foreigners seeking for typical Japanese souvenirs.

disastrous earthquake from March 2011), longer working hours and thus shortage of free time and financial possibility to take up other hobbies. In these circumstances, consuming goods in the joyful atmosphere of crowded *sakariba* may be an option.

Undoubtedly, developing an infrastructure with shops, restaurants, banks, post office, hotels, museum, spa, offices, private schools and universities around the main terminal station renders *sakariba* an easily accessible place and helps saving time, which an average working Japanese does not have much anyway. Yet, replacing the city by its substitutes located around big terminals, discussed here with the example of Tokyo Station (City), leads to changes in the urban landscape and urban life. As it is in the case of shopping malls in big polished cites for instance, the appearance of *sakariba*-like-terminal-stations shifts the flow of citizens. Masses of people concentrate around the station, leaving small shopping alleys, e.g. *hankagai*, almost empty, which leads to a destructive impact on local trade.

Furthermore, even though *sakariba* creates a great number of opportunities for encounters, relations initiated at the station are considered to be fugitive and ephemeral, unlike ties unifying members of a small local community, who meet on a daily basis at *hankagai*. Concentrating leisure time within railway stations loosens local networks and consequently acts against the phenomenon of neighborhood. In this way, human frustration, stress and anger are channeled into the act of consumption and are rarely expressed in one voice of a group. Terui claims that those youngsters who gather at Harajuku or Shibuya do not rebel. Nor do people at Shinjuku, a district which used to be a cradle of anarchic ideas from the wartime period until the late seventies (Terui 2005, 11).

Eventually, running across different people at the station and sharing its space with them may help to get accustomed to the presence of strangers and hence to become more tolerant toward other cultures. Nevertheless, tolerance, which is not embedded in deeper relation, solidified in a process of getting reciprocal knowledge about each other, can be only declared an introduction to conscious acceptance of people with dissimilar cultural background.

5   Conclusion

A railway station can be perceived as a salient source of social change. Trains transport people, objects and ideas from various parts of the country and different corners of the world. This would be the first reason to observe trends of social transformation from the perspective of the urban space. Another reason to use analysis of the railway station in the discourse about changes in contemporary Japanese society is the fact that main Tokyo terminals have progressively become important points on the map of social interaction. Easy access and dense flow of people induced development of the infrastructure at the big railway stations, such as Tokyo Station, Shinjuku, Shinagawa etc., in order to keep passenger inside the station longer or attract potential customers. The goal has been successfully achieved, partly because people's longer working time and longer commuting time do not leave much space for leisure. The station has taken over the role of entertaining area, due to its convenient location on the way from work to home. This paper focuses on Tokyo Station mainly for its historical meaning and for the plan to transform *Tōkyō-eki* from a simple transfer point into an almost independent organism, Tokyo Station City—the city of the cities.

The reorganized and refreshed intricate complex of the Tokyo Station City falls into Foucault's category of *heterotopia*, a place of places, an assembly of almost all kinds of institutions and organizations which are usually found in the city: from a convenience store, to a bank, a hospital and a post office up to a spa, museums and universities. The customers moving around the underground passages walk along the streets (Keiyō Street etc.), alleys and even traditional Japanese *hankagai*. Given the nature of the place, namely the fact that this is a station, people gathering here may be considered as tourists. The status of a tourist implies a sort of democratic and equal status of individuals categorized in this way. This includes equality towards official regulations which restructure the inner life of *Tōkyō-eki*, as well as equality in relation with the Other. The latter means no more than reciprocal contacts besides social markers such as name, type of work, family situation, age and the like. The Japanese at the railway station can initiate spontaneous relations without the need to exchange visiting cards.

Semi-democratic, joyful atmosphere—people without proper funds are excluded from the full participation in the life of the Tokyo Station City—, gathering of people, and rich infrastructure assuring an array of leisure, these three conditions allow us to analyze this space in an emic category of *sakariba*, treated

here also as a concept which might be identified with the Western idea of public space, or semi-public space, since the space of the Tokyo Station City *sakariba* cannot be accessed without limitations. Besides, *sakariba* sprawling around the area of the Tokyo Station City is actually a private space with the appearance and atmosphere of what the sociologists used to define as traditional public space.

In this sense, Tokyo Station City recalls a shopping mall or a shopping center, a large assembly, manifold servicing stations and shops arranged in a form of emulation with streets, passages or alleys of a city. Concentration of urban activities in certain places, such as the one analyzed in this paper, *sakariba* sprawling around the *Tōkyō-eki* area, leads to transformation of the spatial and social structure of the city which then changes citizens' life. The purpose of modern *sakariba* in the city of Tokyo Station seems to be consumption, a medicine for all the sufferings of contemporary Tokyo's denizens, be it stress connected with work, decaying of local communities or enduring working and commuting time, leaving hardly any space for hobby and other leisure. Actors who cannot actively participate in *sakariba'*s "reality show" are automatically excluded from the center to the margins and classified as the watching public. Thus on one hand *sakariba* at the Tokyo Station City or those areas where no tickets and no fees are charged for entrance, can be considered as a space open for anyone who wishes to become a part of it, even only in role of a passive watcher, but on the other hand the "democratic aspect" of *sakariba* renders social inequalities, which have been sharpened since the bubble economy, which has become more visible, because excluded watchers are within reach of a hand, sharing the same space with *sakariba'*s main actors.

This paper consists of a theoretical analysis and proposes to study an urban complex such as Tokyo Station City as one of the key factors in the process of modern transformation of socio-spatial structure of the city and changes in denizens' life the station elicits. Clearly, this idiographic description has its limits and should be considered more in terms of an introductive stage to a detailed research and an outline indicating some tendencies which characterize the process of transformation in modern Japanese society of the last six decades, rather than a completed set of conclusions.

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