

Reshaping Locality as a Response to Age of Migration The Case of Aikawa-town, Kanagawa in Japan

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1. Aim

This paper examines the locality and its dynamic in which the local industrial town has been transformed in the process of industrial change and accelerating global migration. The question of 'locality' is basically focused on the local and historical identity. Many scholars like J. Urry(1995; 2007) and D. Messey(1984; 1991) suggest that the concept of locality as an alternative to explain universality, particularity of local and region, as well as an analytic frame for the communication between them. I propose to integrate the concept of locality with the concept of mobility, then to consider how the reshaping localities reflect the common memories and how the sharing of socio-historical experiences between the people in the local community leads to 'transformational' localities.

2. Data & Methods

This research takes a field study. I conducted my fieldwork for 6 months from September 2013 to February 2014 at Aikawa-town. Aikawa-town, located at the foothills of northern Kanagawa Prefecture, is one of representative region in which many foreign residents have settled, especially Peruvian and Brazilian Nikkeijins(foreign nationals of Japanese descents). Meanwhile, after *Lehman shock* in 2008 and the *Great East Japan Earthquake* in 2011, many of migrants returned to their country. In recent years, the migrants who are from Southeast Asia, Philippines and Thailand, for example, have been increased more and more. At the center of town where had been used the air station for the Japanese Imperial army, the industrial complex(内陸工業団地) was built in 1961. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with the migrant people: Ten of in-depth interviews consisted of 5 Nikkeijins who are from Latin America and have stayed over 10 years in Japan, other 5 were foreign born people from Latin America and Asia, particularly Philippines, Iran, and China. On the other hands, I do focus group interview with the key-person including the civil officers, the members of Education Committee and the members of International Activity Club at town, the teachers of public school, and the ownership of the shops and restaurants.

3. Results

We found that the localities has transformed and reshaped at the level of 1) the interaction between residents; 2) the institutional infra; 3) the place for reflexivity. First, every individual shares their past and present through the communication in their everyday life. Everyday communication relates to a group: in case of Aikawa-town, mainly Japanese language class, ethnic restaurants and shops, and public and private schools. Second, the localities transformed by communicative memory lead to the institutionalization by cultural formation(signs, texts with multiple languages and images) and institutional communication(rites, epics with multiethnic context etc.). In doing so, the memory of the past can be maintained in 'cultural identity'. Lastly, with the perspective of 'glocal society', the local town of reshaping localities plays a significant role in making the community members to go in and out, memorize and forget, and finally to develop the sense of reflexivity in the flow of migration.

4. Conclusion

From these findings, it can be said that that the localities were presented as an ensemble of various identities. I would like to suggest its concept 'the transformational localities'. Transformational localities make the identities both individually and collectively, all the more dynamic and changing and are taken to mean the established categorical terms coming short of capturing the gist of conflicts, tensions, confusion and discontinuities on the part of migration