

# Rethinking Multicultural Conviviality in Japan Through Emerging Community-Based Initiatives

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## Introduction

Since the 2000s, there has been a growing interest among Japanese researchers toward immigrants, foreign residents and multicultural conviviality—*tabunka kyosei*—in Japan. Drawing on each researcher's expertise, the studies are in a wide range of fields, such as anthropology, sociology, laws, economics, education, immigration policy, medical care, and social welfare; and often consist of practical elements, case studies, questionnaires, and interviews with foreign residents. The foremost purpose of these previous studies has largely been to describe the current situation of immigrants and problems around them. The main topics analyzed and discussed include employment, schooling, living challenges for foreign residents, language, human rights, legal and institutional barriers, policies, support activities and services by government, non-profit organizations, and community groups. For example, the research focusing on foreign children and schooling in Japan has pointed out that the Japanese formal educational system, based on the assumption that all children are from a family observing Japanese culture and speaking one language Japanese, considers the inability of foreign children to attend school or follow school rules and customs in the same way as Japanese children as a problem. The studies explore such factors as institutional deficiencies, closed school environment, and/or lack of information and communication between parents and schools. In addition, some research indicates more structural factors and socioeconomic effect that the severe conditions of first-generation immigrant parents may be reproduced in their children through their nonattendance at school (Miyajima & Ota eds 2005; Menju & Suzuki 2007; Ehara 2011; Satake ed 2011). Kondo (2022) lists, besides schooling, the work and living environments of foreign technical intern trainees, non-Japanese of Japanese descent, and foreign (or international) students, the absence of “immigrant (*imin*)” policy, the recognition and regulation of undocumented immigrants, refugees, highly skilled professionals, permanent resident citizens, and multiple nationalities (or citizenships), as the other key issues with immigrants in Japan.

Meanwhile, there have been many organizations offering different services and programs in the name of multicultural conviviality in Japan. The purpose of this paper is to review such multicultural conviviality approaches and reconsider the embedded issues. It also deals with the theory of situated learning

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in communities of practice, in order to understand two relatively new community-based initiatives in Kanagawa, Japan. In the new initiatives, foreigners and Japanese are not situated in the dichotomous relationship, but share the same interests with different concerns that, the paper predicts, allows a foreign resident as a newcomer to gradually and steadily become a member of the community.

This article does not intend to judge or evaluate organizations, professionals and/or practitioners who are providing services to foreign residents in Japan. Instead, it aims to describe the circumstances where foreign residents and Japanese meet, communicate, and interact. The paper examines how such occurrences could unintentionally, rather than deliberately, serve to reproduce the marginalized positions of immigrants and/or foreign residents in the society, and even perpetuate the prevalent notion of “*gaikokujin* (foreigners)” in Japan. The notion is such as that “foreign residents are always in need of assistance, because they are not knowledgeable about the language, rules, and customs of the society, and thus we as the majority Japanese need to help them.” The paper argues this notion is taken for granted in multicultural conviviality measures too in present Japan. In what follows, the paper first introduces a brief overview of diversification in Japan by the increase of foreign residents. Second, it discusses the status and issues of multicultural conviviality—*tabunka kyosei*—in the Japanese society. Third, the paper proposes the theoretical orientation, “situated learning;” and, forth describes the new type of initiatives organized by two non-profit organizations, Marmar and Kirigaoka Platform, in Kanagawa. Finally, the article summarizes the discussions, and forecasts of potential and desirable changes around multicultural conviviality policies, programs, and movements in Japan.

### Japan in Diversification

As of the end of 2023, Japan has approximately 3.42 million foreign residents (2.8 percent of the total population) with medium to long-term visa status, excluding short-term visitors. It is the highest number ever recorded, increased by 330,000 over the previous year (Immigration Service Agency 2024). The areas where foreigners live are also expanding and becoming more diverse. In addition, more recently, an increasing number of foreigners are entering their senior years after having been in Japan for twenty to thirty years (Tamura 2023).

Among approximately 0.84 million babies born in 2020 in Japan, for example, 35,604 babies were born to parent(s) with foreign nationality, which makes up 4.14 percent of the total births (one in 24 babies) in Japan. The ratio of births to parent(s) with foreign nationality increased as follows: 1.72 percent in 1990; 2.87 in 2000; 3.16 in 2010; and, 4.14 in 2020. Of these, in 2020, 26,517 (approximately 3.08 percent of the total births in Japan and 74.48 percent of the births to parent(s) with foreign nationality) were born to mothers of foreign nationality, while the baby's father was Japanese or had a foreign nationality (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare 2022). This means that more and more families potentially speak more than one language at home, and more children have a language other than Japanese as their mother-tongue.

The number of children who need Japanese language guidance in formal schools in 2023 were reported to be 69,123, which has increased by 18.6 percent since 2021. Of which, the number of children with foreign nationality is 57,718. Approximately 20 percent of them speaks Portuguese as their first (mother) language, followed by Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Spanish, English, Japanese, and Korean (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2024b). This number could continuously increase, and these children are potential new parents in Japan, becoming mothers or fathers within a few years or decades. The other data of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2024a) has revealed that, in 2023, among 150,695 children with foreign nationality (ages six to 15), 127,239 children are

in Japanese primary and junior secondary schools (public or private), and 10,993 are in foreign schools (outside the jurisdiction of the ministry). On the other hand, 8,601 children were possibly not in school, that accounts for 5.7 percent (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2024a). Comparing with Japanese children (almost 100 percent of them are enrolled in schools), the “5.7 percent” is a shocking number.

In Japan, where the birthrate is declining and the population is aging, there will be more severe a shortage of laborers. This is often mentioned as the major cause for the increase of immigrants in Japan, and as the main reason why the idea of multicultural conviviality is considered more crucial in the society. Meanwhile, however, this context (the kind of wording) highlights several issues concerning Japanese multiculturalism and multicultural conviviality.<sup>i)</sup> Firstly, “culture” in the Japanese multicultural conviviality—*tabunka kyosei*—is believed to be countable, overlooking the multilayered, diverse, as well as variable nature of culture. The indigenous Ainu people, people from discriminated *buraku* communities, people from Ryukyu and Okinawa, and naturalized Japanese are rarely or never mentioned in the context of *tabunka kyosei* either. “Culture” is reflected only to some “foreign” ethnic groups (Takezawa 2009: 91-92). Consequently, public support for foreigners is heavily weighted toward providing Japanese language education assistance, and multilingual information to foreigners with limited Japanese language skills. The MEXT’s survey on “students in need of Japanese language instruction” that began in 1991 was conducted much earlier than the comprehensive assessment on “school enrollment of foreign children” released for the very first time in 2019. This is another example that the language is marked as the primary issue both for foreign residents and the society accepting immigrants.

### Multicultural Conviviality

This article translates “*tabunka kyosei*”<sup>ii)</sup> as “multicultural conviviality.” Gilroy (2004) first proposed the term “conviviality” in his study of *After Empire*, “captur[ing] the quotidian routines of multicultural apparent across postcolonial European cities” (Valluvan 2016: 206). Since the late 2000s, researchers in Japan also begun using this term, multicultural conviviality. The term “*tabunka kyosei*” itself has been used since the mid 1990, yet has no fixed English translation (Yamawaki 2020). According to Yamawaki (2020), the two English languages, “multicultural coexistence” and “multicultural symbiosis” became common after many local governments developed and translated their own “*tabunka kyosei*” plan into multiple languages, based on the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications’ “Regional *Tabunka Kyosei* Promotion Plan (*chiiki ni okeru tabunka kyosei puran*)” first released in 2006. In the “Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Nationals (*gaikokujinzai no ukeire kyosei no tameno sougouteki taiousaku*)” compiled by the Ministry of Justice in 2018, the word “coexistence” is also used as a translation of “*kyosei*.” Before the Ministry of Justice had taken over the role of coordinating the government’s policies for foreigners from the Cabinet Office (in charge of policies for the “*kyosei*” society), the term “*kyosei shakai seisaku*” was translated as the “policy for a cohesive society” (Yamawaki 2020). Some local governments, in recent years, use neither “coexistence” nor “symbiosis,” instead employ such terms as intercultural cohesion, multicultural society, and/or multiculturalism as the English translation of “*tabunka kyosei*.”

The Japanese government has been criticized for being “reluctant to open the country to large-scale immigrants” (Otake 2021), never establishing any regulation for “immigrants (*imin*),” or using the term “*imin*” in any of its official documents. Following the central government, the local governments do not either use the term “immigrants (*imin*),” but frequently say, “foreign citizen/residents” vs. “Japanese citizen/residents,”

clarifying a division of the socio-cultural backgrounds and legal dimensions based on nationality. Those foreigners, whose origin spreads across many regions in and outside Japan, and/or who have more than one nationality other than Japanese, are repeatedly described as having “connections (*gaikoku ni tsunagaru*)” and/or “roots (*gaikokuni rutsu no aru*)” in overseas.

Although the word “immigrants (*imin*)” remain unused, in 2018, the Japanese government announced the policy expanding the acceptance of foreign workers, and in 2022, formulated a roadmap for realizing the society that coexists (*kyosei suru*) with foreign residents. The roadmap consists of the visions and priorities that local municipalities could refer to in considering their own multicultural conviviality plan. Nevertheless, because these policies have not been stipulated by laws, it is left to each local government to decide to what extent they would promote the measures. As of 2022, only 144 municipalities have developed their own plans independently, which consists of less than 10 percent<sup>iii)</sup> of the whole Japan (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2021; Tamura 2023). Moreover, “*tabunka kyosei*” measures are rather than being guaranteed by the legal system but kept at the local level of encouraging mutual care and respect in the society (Takaya 2021).

Besides local governments, there are many other social actors involved in the issues of foreigners in Japan, including non-profit organizations (NPOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international associations, local authorities for international relations, incorporated foundations, and community groups. It is worth noticing that many Japanese international development NGOs, traditionally responded to issues outside Japan, are now working more on domestic issues including programs on multicultural conviviality. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has also set up an office at its headquarters to support the acceptance of foreign personnel (*gaikoku jinzai ukeire shien*) to Japan. Their programs include, for instance: providing information and interpretation supports, counseling services (job placement, legal and housing assistance), educational support (Japanese and native language classes), planning interacting activities with host communities, and making policy recommendations (Shaplaneer. 2023). As the number of immigrants steadily increase, programs and projects in the name of multicultural conviviality will undoubtedly continue and expand, and more and more community-based initiatives would be possibly developed in the future.

It is, nevertheless, by no means clear that the Japanese society has become more comfortable place for foreigners to live and work. Shiobara (2011, 2021) summarizes the issues behind “*tabunka kyosei*” measures in Japan, as follows. After the mid 2000s, through the aforementioned report of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2006b), the government has asked local governments to formulate measures that support in building equal relationship among people of different nationalities and ethnicities. The basis of the equal relationship was, however, the dichotomy between Japanese vs. foreigners, that did not lead to guaranteeing, specifically, the rights, political participations, and citizenships of foreign residents. Takezawa (2009) also claims because the dichotomous labelling and perception of Japanese vs. foreigners are dominant, and “the ‘centrality’ and ‘superiority’ of being Japanese has never wavered” even in the name of multicultural conviviality (Takezawa 2009: 91). It is, for instance, often believed that being Japanese means being able to speak Japanese language, which makes many people to unconsciously but almost reflexively and automatically to respond to a foreigner, “Oh, you speak good Japanese,” no matter how long she or he has been in Japan. The common attitude toward immigrants is that we would accept and respect your (other) cultures, but we must ask you too to respect our Japanese rules and customs. In addition, what emphasized in the existent measures under multicultural conviviality is that we must assist foreign residents in a way that they can eventually become economically and socially independent in the community without much depending on the local resources (Murata 2020; Shiobara 2021). Conversely, foreign residents having difficulties in Japan are considered as not self-reliant, so that need assistance from Japanese—the dominant

group in the society. The logic of paternalism, “we as the majority assist them as the minority for their self-reliance,” is implicitly embedded in the philosophy of Japanese multicultural conviviality (Shiobara 2011, 2021).

Because of this paternalism, multicultural conviviality measures have little elements of guaranteeing the subjectivity (subjects of rights) of immigrants but focus more on creating an environment in which foreign residents can enjoy the same public services as Japanese citizens (Shiobara 2021). The local governments strive to provide multilingual interpretation services and translate administrative materials to different languages, because they mostly care how convenient foreign residents can access to the public services. Japanese language classes taught by local volunteers may also be well established that many local governments encourage and rely on (Takaya 2021). Japanese language education is given priority, while the opportunities of learning mother tongue and culture are not taken into consideration (Shiobara 2021; Kondo 2022). In the past several years, the government has begun stressing on the significance of foreign residents as “highly skilled human resources (*kodo jinzai*),” growing the new logic behind multicultural conviviality that “Japan would accept only foreigners who can adapt to the society at their own risks, and who can be useful and may contribute to the [Japanese] economy” (Shiobara 2021: 65).

This paper would further argue that such multicultural conviviality measures could force many foreign residents to be left at the marginalized position of the society (Miyajima 2009). It is thus indispensable for the society to break out of this situation, specifically what is taken for granted in the midst of Japanese multicultural conviviality. The article suggests that, especially in the local communities (at the local levels), maintaining the ‘centrality’ and ‘superiority’ of being Japanese through “helping” foreigners or labelling them as non-Japanese others has to end; because the dichotomous relationship of Japanese vs. foreigners would never fulfill conviviality in the society. The next two sections will refer to the theory and two initiatives that may become a new model of responses within multicultural conviviality measures. The intentions of the initiatives are not to “help” foreigners, but simply and precisely allow legitimate participation of foreigners in their community.

### Situated Learning as Theoretical Orientation

As mentioned above, the philosophy, measures, and programs of multicultural conviviality in Japan are problematic and need to be deliberately investigated and studied; yet, new initiatives are also emerging. The key feature of these initiatives introduced in the next section is that they do not claim to “help or assist” immigrants. They alternatively consider immigrants as active and legitimate members of their community and encourage their participation. This section depicts a theoretical orientation to understand why these initiatives have the potential to make immigrants and foreign residents the members of a community.

The process of any immigrant to become a member of the host community can be considered as a practice of learning. Learning takes place everywhere—formally in school as well as informally through and outside of such institutional curricula. Institutional learning is often motivated by social and cultural expectations, close relationships among the members, and social contributions (Greenfield and Lave 1982). According to Lave and Wenger's work (1991), learning is contextual. It requires and often occurs unintentionally through social interactions among those who have a common interest. One of the crucial points in their theory is that learning is a “situated activity” and a process by which “newcomers”—legitimate peripheral participants—move toward becoming full participants “old-timers.” The legitimacy and peripherality is controlled through the relation of power between newcomers and old-timers (Lave and Wenger 1991). One of the examples Lave and Wenger introduce in their work is the Alcoholic Anonymous

(AA) meeting. Lave and Wenger discuss how old-timers (old members) tell polished stories of their experiences recovering from alcoholism. They explain, “[t]elling an A. A. story is not something one learns through explicit teaching. Newcomers are not told how to tell their stories, yet most people who remain A. A. learn to do this” (Lave and Wenger 1991:82). The newcomers learn to tell such stories through being exposed to the A. A. models as well as interacting with others.

Employing Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning, for example, in much of multicultural conviviality measures, foreigners, as newcomers, are often not considered as legitimate peripheral participants of a community. When old-timers (Japanese supporters) of the community behave authoritatively as teachers or instructors, and simply consider newcomers (foreigners) as entities to be taught knowledge and skills, newcomers would remain inexperienced (Ishiyama 2023). This type of a unilateral (one-sided) teaching (instead of participation) neither lead to learning, nor allow immigrants and foreign residents to become a member of a community. This happens more in the formal and traditional institutions. On the other hand, in the services provided in a non-formal or casual setting, all participants, both foreign and Japanese residents, contribute to the activities with a certain level of legitimate power as peripheral participants.

### Emerging Community-Based Initiatives: Situating Foreigners as Legitimate Participants

This section introduces the new type of initiatives organized by two non-profit organizations in Kanagawa, Japan. Kanagawa, by prefecture, has the fourth largest number of foreign residents in Japan which is 260,163, accounting for 2.82 percent of Kanagawa's total population (as of January 2024). It makes approximately one in 35 people is a foreign citizen in the prefecture (Kanagawa Prefectural Government 2024). The following both organizations refer to multicultural conviviality—*tabunka kyosei*—in their website and/or related public information; however, do not purposely set their goals as to “help” foreigners. They work to create a safe and comfortable community where all the members no matter where they are from can become legitimate peripheral participants.

#### Marmar (Kamakura, Kanagawa), Non-Profit Corporation

Marmar is a community group of foreign-born and Japanese mothers (sometimes including fathers too), based in Kamakura, Kanagawa, Japan. It started its activity in 2016 and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 2022. Through sharing information and practices in and around parenting, it aims to contribute to a society where “everyone can fully express themselves and accept each other.” What makes the organization unique is that they state (Marmar 2024),

We never mean to “teach.” We are here to have fun, struggle, learn and go forward together.  
Throughout our activities, we DO NOT mean to “teach Japanese way of parenting.”  
We want to be your mom friends and dad friends, and want to know and learn from you,  
and share the parenting journey to have fun, struggle, learn, and go forward together.

Marmar carefully avoids saying that they would “help, support, or assist” foreign-born mothers. Being a foreigner or Japanese is not an issue in their activities. Being different and having different concerns are considered as the group's strengths, and they value their common interest as being a mother. The organization is run by approximately ten working mothers, and their programs include: get-together events with *yasashii* (easy) Japanese, art and craft workshops with children, participations in local festivals, and so

on.

For foreign-born mothers, giving birth in Japan means having significantly more contacts with Japanese society, its systems, regulations, institutions, and services. For example, after a mother-to-be finds out she is pregnant, she is first expected to look for a hospital or midwifery clinic to have regular parental checkups and give birth. Then, a mother notifies her local municipal office of her pregnancy, and receives a maternal and child health handbook. Additionally, she will be asked to participate in some classes for new mothers and parents held in municipal offices and/or hospitals—showing how to prepare a baby food, how to bath an infant, and so on in Japanese customs. Filling out many applications continues after delivery too: submitting the registration of the baby's birth, applying for the medical subsidy and the child allowance, and so on. In a couple of months, then, infants start having vaccination shots at a local pediatrics. Foreign-born mothers must go through and complete those unfamiliar, demanding, and complicated processes and procedures alone, with their partners, family members, or with the help of their friends. In any case, becoming pregnant, giving birth, and raising children in Japan bring a foreign-born mother to have a significantly increasing number of “contacts” with Japanese public and/or official institutions, systems, regulations, personnel, and services, regardless of the mother's status and experiences in Japan, the reason and length of her stay, and/or Japanese language proficiency.

These mothers' experience dealing with a number of unfamiliar things is, needless to say, not limited to foreign-born mothers. It is reported that, in Japan, many mothers make “mom friends (*mama-tomo*)” as a means to overcome with such loneliness and fears in parenting (NHK 2016). In Marmar's activities, experienced mothers share their knowledge and skills to new mothers, in a similar way that many other mom friends are doing in the society. Marmar would never organize a seminar to “teach” what to do as a mother, but provide opportunities (time and space) where the members can exchange information, share different concerns, and learn from each other. In addition, Marmar encourages foreign-born mothers to give their voices to the society through local events and seminars as a panelist, or the organization's YouTube channel as a storyteller. Some of the foreign-born Marmar members have been also asked to participate in the interviews with the Kamakura city municipal office and the Kanagawa prefectural government office, and told what it is like to be a foreign mother and committed to raise children in the community. Marmar's leaders mediate such opportunities among the mothers, the communities, and the offices. Finally, Marmar also occasionally opens a small stool in local festivals ensuring opportunities for foreign-born mothers to work as a staff and take part in the local community. Marmar fosters a sense of belonging to the community, physically and emotionally, both within and outside of the group.

#### Kirigaoka Platform (Yokohama, Kanagawa), Non-Profit Corporation

Kirigaoka Platform is also a non-profit organization located in Kirigaoka Housing Complex, Yokohama, Kanagawa, Japan, founded in 2022. The Housing Complex was established forty-five years ago. Today, while 30 percent of those living there are elderly, approximately 1,000 residents are from India, because the Indian International School in Japan (IISJ) (Yokohama Campus) was established in 2009 next to the complex, which made Kirigaoka become an extremely unique neighborhood. The purposes of the Kirigaoka Platform organization are: to secure a place where local people of different backgrounds that usually do not see each other can actually meet and communicate; to create opportunities for exchange, mutual support, and mutual learning among different residents; to identify the needs of the community; and, to generate a system that all of them can engage in to solve the community's issues together. They aim at developing a chain of events where the “difficulties” can be transformed into “joys” of the community (Kirigaoka Platform 2024).

Kirigaoka Platform runs a small community cafe since January 2023, named Puratto Kiricafe, at the center of Kirigaoka Housing Complex, on the shopping street. It is a place where all generations (children to elderly) and all different nationalities can stop by and enjoy coffee and lunch. The members who support the kitchen are also locals, housewives and househusbands of both Indian and Japanese families. They host many events and lessons too, including weekly kids' English class taught by an Indian mother, Japanese language cafe as a get-together event, weekly Japanese language class for children, a lecture by local seniors, weekly lessons for knitting, exercise, singing, and IT (smart phone), monthly children's cafeteria (*kodomo shokudo*), and so on. Each local community resident brings what they want to do in and around the cafe, and the cafe helps it happen.

In general, local community groups are formed by people who share the same concerns; however, Kirigaoka Platform values that people with different concerns can coordinate and collaborate to solve mutual problems. They believe that through a wide range of members (children, seniors, mothers, foreigners, and so on) getting together in one place, having rich interactions and exchanging their diverse skills that they are good at, many problems would be openly discussed, and moreover, many of the members can share the joy of being different in the community (Kirigaoka Platform 2024). In Kirigaoka Platform, foreigners are not the ones to be supported, but as the same as the other Japanese neighbors, they are also the ones who provide the skills and resources to the community, and in return, learn and gain what they need within and from the community.

This paper would argue that these community-based initiatives organized by the above two organizations could be the new innovative and crucial models of approaches and/or responses to multicultural conviviality in future Japan. What constitute unique about the initiatives are: first, regardless of the origin or nationality (e.g. where they come from), participants would be observed as a legitimate newcomer to the community, who share the common interest and the same purpose in their participation (even with different concerns). Second, the organizations do not consider foreigners as “foreigners,” that is to say, foreigners participating in their programs are not at the dichotomous position against Japanese. Finally, in their community, foreigners are not there to become self-reliant, for example, being taught or trained to be independent in the Japanese society, and/or speaking Japanese language and following Japanese rules and customs, but they are to learn and become “relying on as well as being counted on” in the community. The two organizations, Marmar and Kirigaoka Platform, do not “intend to help” foreigners, but their goal is to create and secure a place—communities of practice—for those including foreign residents. They “equally” allow both foreign residents and Japanese to legitimately participate in the process of situated learning.

## Conclusion

Multicultural conviviality—*tabunka kyosei*—has become an urgent concern in Japan, as well as a popular topic among researchers. This article has highlighted and discussed the unintended and embedded issues of current multicultural conviviality policies and measures in Japan. Such approach, for example, tends to seek how foreigners can be taught and trained, and become self-reliant in the society. It would, however, further reinforces a dichotomy between Japanese vs. foreigners, moving against conviviality. Measures like multilingual services prioritize integration, but often neglect immigrants' mother language and culture; this ironically perpetuates a paternalistic attitude, where foreigners are seen as needing help from the majority Japanese. The paper has described, on the other hand, there are emerging community-based initiatives that are unique and free from the traditional discourse of Japanese multicultural

conviviality. The theory of Situated Learning has been employed to shed lights on the initiatives.

Hoshino (2024), a novelist, wrote an article on the newspaper. He tells,

While there are those people who claim the identity of “Japanese” as “Japanese by race, birth and upbringing” naturally and undeniably believe it is the absolute truth; liberals also want to assume that liberal thoughts are equipped with an undeniable sense of justice, and they have a dignity that cannot be denied.... I was very worried about the growing cult depending on the “Japanese,” but also that small cult groups addicted to “justice” have been also formed here and there.... Liberals, who are supposed to focus on the individual, are indeed abandoning their individuality in order to depend on “justice.”

Democracy is a mechanism in which people with different ideas listen to each other, adjust and create a system. Politics is not a competition for one's own justice, but a means to reach an agreement through discussions... Political parties are not generating an opportunity for dialogue. If it seems they are, what they are preparing is just a place for those who think the same way to get together and sympathize with each other, and not a place for dialogue creating a system among people of different values.

Hoshino's observation can imply that the Japanese society is divided to us and them—those who are willing to support foreigners and despise exclusivists, and those who see immigrants as an obstacle. For many years, the discourse on multicultural conviviality in Japan has also been stuck on in the dispute between us and them.

In April 2023, the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2023) released a long-term population projection. According to the report, in 2070, Japan's total population will drop to 87 million, due to the declining birthrate, and of 87 million, 10 percent will be immigrants with non-Japanese nationalities (Takahashi 2023). As the number of immigrants steadily increase, multicultural conviviality programs and projects will continue to expand in the future. Shiobara (2021) adds, “today, when the multicultural conviviality policies are actively discussed and pursued, it is critical to admit that the existing measures have been failing to acknowledge and guarantee cultural differences of foreigners as a right. We must officially recognize their citizenships as immigrants” (Shiobara 2021:65). It is urgent to guarantee by laws the rights, political participations, and citizenships of immigrants.

Research to closely examine conviviality measures and policies in Japan will be also more in demand than ever. Few studies have comprehensively organized the coherent experiences of foreign residents, based on their contexts, perspectives and interpretations. It is increasingly essential to articulate what each resident values in their quotidian practices, and what information, resources, and networks that immigrants examine, select, and utilize for their livelihoods in Japan. Murata (2020) says, “[a]lthough some local governments report ... that they cooperate with key persons from foreign communities, the qualitative analysis on such efforts (key persons' behaviors that mediate between foreign and local Japanese communities) has not yet been sufficiently conducted. Research focusing on such behaviors of key persons must be sought, in order to understand the significance of their determinations, behaviors, and actions... that connect diverse residents” in Japan (Murata 2020: 142).

Developing the concept of conviviality is one of the major challenges for the Japanese society. Menju (2016) articulates that the “multicultural power” of residents with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in the community has not been fully celebrated (Murata 2020: 142). Transforming the divided society and rethinking foreign residents, immigrants and multicultural conviviality of Japan means

reconsidering the society as a whole. Not immigrants or foreign residents are the one who need to change. It is the society that is in need of change. Immigrants with different livelihoods and values will “help” the society in finding answers to contemporary issues of Japan.

# Notes

- i) Kondo (2022) claims there is no single definition of multiculturalism. Two differences between multiculturalism and multicultural conviviality are: 1) Ideologically, multiculturalism denies the existence of a majority culture, and considers all cultures to be equal, while multicultural conviviality assumes the existence of a majority culture and problematizes a two-way and/or mutual approach among different cultures; and, 2) In practice, multiculturalism is relatively committed to offer mother tongue and mother culture education, while multicultural conviviality (or *tabunka kyosei*) measures only cares to translate information to multiple languages, and make it available to people of different languages (Kondo 2022).
- ii) The report of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in 2006 (“Workshop/Seminar Report on Promoting Tabunka Kyosei (*tabunka kyosei no suishin ni kansuru kenkyukai houkokusho*)”) is often referred to for the definition of “*tabunka kyosei*.” It states “*tabunka kyosei*” as the state in which “people of different nationalities and ethnicities recognize each other's cultural differences, strive to build equal relationships, and live together as members of the community” (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2006a: 5).
- iii) As of 2022, 144 municipalities that have developed their own multicultural conviviality plans. The 144 municipalities comprise of: 19 of 47 prefectures, 9 of 20 ordinance-designated cities, 103 of 773 other cities, 9 of 23 wards, 4 of 742 towns, and 0 of 183 villages (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2022).

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要旨

地域コミュニティの実践から多文化共生を再考する

内川 明佳

本稿は、日本の多文化共生の概念に暗黙的に組み込まれている論理に対する批判や問題性を整理する。例えば、多文化共生を冠した従来の取り組みでは、しばし移民である外国人住民が社会の「負担」とならず「自立」できるようにと、多言語のリソースを用意したり、日本語を教えたり、日本のルールや慣習を訓練することが主流となっている。一方で、本稿で状況的学習論を応用しながら紹介した、神奈川県で活動する2つの非営利団体のユニークなコミュニティの実践では、まず、共通の関心を共有するといったことで参加者を「正統的」とするため、参加者の出身地や国籍（外国人であるか、日本人であるか）は関係ない。支援を受ける外国人と支援を提供する日本人という二項対立的な関係も生まれない。外国人住民は、他の住民と同様、コミュニティの中で「頼ることと頼りにされること」を習得する。今後も確実に増え続ける移民、外国人住民、多文化共生について再考することは、日本社会全体のあり方を問いなおすことである。