

Webinar on Intercultural Cities and Japan Lessons Learned the Efforts of Hamamatsu City and Kobe City 19 March 2021 (Friday)

Follow-Up Summary

[\(CLICK HERE for the Concept Note and the Speakers' Bio \[in Japanese\]\)](#)

DISCUSSIONS

1. Introduction of the booklet "An Introduction to the Intercultural City for Local Governments in Japan"

After Prof. YAMAWAKI explained the aim of the booklet, he explained the chapters 1 and 2 and Mr. UENO explained the chapter 3. Prof. YAMAWAKI explained the interculturalism by reorganizing migrant integration strategy into four categories, and pointed out that political leadership, commitment, and awareness raising regarding diversity are important factors in the implementation of intercultural cities. Referring to his field research in Barcelona, Spain, Mr. UENO pointed out the importance of "making diversity personal" and illustrated the relationship between the duties of local government officials and intercultural competence.

2. Report from Hamamatsu City

Mr. SUZUKI, the Director of the International Affairs Division, gave an overview of foreign residents in Hamamatsu City. He continued the explanation on the history of the city's intercultural policies with the strong leadership of the Mayor and the Second Intercultural Cities Vision of Hamamatsu City formulated in 2018 after the city joined the ICC as well as COLORS (a group of young people with foreign roots), a group implementing initiatives to take advantage of diversity.

In addition, as a new project for 2021, an ICC Policy Platform will be established to study advanced ICC cases, to promote cooperation with ICC member cities, and to hold meet-up events that combine diversity and business. In addition to solving problems faced by foreign residents, he reiterated the city's hope to enter a new phase of benefiting added values sprung from the diversity.



3. Report from Kobe City

Mr. TANZAWA, the Director of the International Affairs Division, gave an overview of foreign residents in Kobe City, and pointed out that the realization of a "liveable city for foreign residents" would increase the profile of the city. Based on the lessons learned from the Great Hanshin Earthquake, Kobe City is implementing measures to meet the needs of foreign residents, including (1) improvement of information dissemination and consultation system, (2) Japanese language learning support, and (3) mutual understanding and exchange between Japanese and foreign residents.

As advantages of joining the ICC, he mentioned an objective policy review based on the ICC Index and advices from experts as well as opportunities to disseminate information internationally through the network. As for the date of the city's accession to the ICC, he explained that the city is carefully considering the date while monitoring situations of the Covid-19.

4. Panel Discussion

At the beginning of the session, Ms. FUJINAMI, the Director of the Multicultural Affairs Division of CLAIR (Council of Local Authorities for International Relations), gave an overview of CLAIR's organizational structure and its functions along with some comments to the presentations by Hamamatsu and Kobe. A panel discussion with some QA session followed.

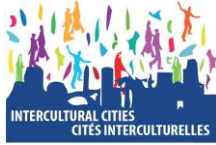
Q1. What were the difficulties in the process of joining the ICC? (Prof. Yamawaki)

(Hamamatsu City)

We did not find it difficult thanks to the proactive involvement of the Mayor and the support from the City Council. If anything, I would say that we need to promote understanding and raise awareness of the ICC concept among local residents, and encourage and cooperate with other local governments in Japan that are also aiming for multicultural coexistence and conviviality.

(Kobe City)

For example, some items in the ICC Index Survey are considered difficult to achieve in Japan. However, we should not dismiss them as unachievable, and rather, change our perception of such items and incorporate them into our policies.



Q2. What is the role of civic organizations positioned in the ICC's efforts (Participant)?

(Hamamatsu City)

The role of civil society organizations is originally important when creating values of diversity, but especially in the framework of ICC, the importance and values of such organizations will become more and more visible.

(Kobe City)

Many people feel that municipal offices are too solid and narrow-minded, and sometimes there is a distance between residents and municipal offices, which makes it difficult for the municipality to appropriately grasp needs of residents. In such circumstances, civil society organizations play an intermediary role in making the distance closer and representing the needs of citizens, and it is only through such communities that information can be obtained and transmitted.

(Mr UENO's Comments based on Q1 and Q2)

When citizens do not have direct access to public institutions, organizations such as COLORS in Hamamatsu City can be very effective. Public institutions, such as the City Hall, should be the place where civil society organizations, including migrants and other stakeholders, can rely on. It is very important to create a mechanism of cooperation that connects citizens, civil society organizations and public institutions.

There are some questions asking the role of religions in the context of interculturalism and social integration, but we cannot consider "religion" as a single object or issue. For example, among the same "Muslims", there are differences in nationality, gender, economic levels, and therefore, the "intersectionality" should be carefully considered. The multicultural conviviality and diversity are, in a broader sense, to hope and take actions towards an ideal city with embracing countless differences and various rights. This action cannot be done by a single person, and the cooperation of all is indispensable.

Q3. Any awareness raising activities for "Easy Japanese" ? (Question from an audience)

(Kobe City)

The concept of "Easy Japanese" was inspired by the fact that foreign residents did not receive the necessary information after the Great Hanshin Earthquake. Last year, the City launched "Easy Japanese Promotion Project" and is currently disseminating the information on Easy Japanese through various media such as a website "withnews" run by the *Asahi Shimbun* (a Japanese newspaper publisher).

Q4. Ms. FUJINAMI was previously working at Saitama Prefectural Office. What is your view on ICC Programme from the perspective of a municipality official? (Prof. YAMAWAKI)

(Ms. FUJINAMI)

To be honest, when I heard that Hamamatsu City and Kobe City were progressive in the interculturalism, my first impression is that the concept is quite far from our current situation. It might sound quite unrealistic and challenging for small and medium-sized municipalities to organize international conferences or promote inter-city cooperation.

On the other hand, when I look at items on the ICC Index Survey, I unexpectedly realized that some of them were very familiar. In order to spread the ICC concept, it is important to break down the contents, put them into familiar issues, and share the understanding with other cities. By doing this, I believe it will be easier for local government officials to understand what it is about.

(Mr. UENO)

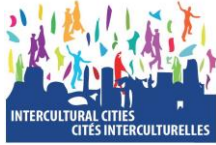
In Spain, for example, a large city like Barcelona plays a role as a hub for international relations with ICC Cities, and shares information with other small and medium-sized cities in the framework of ICC domestic network. It is highly feasible that Hamamatsu City or Kobe City could play such a hub role, and I think there are many lessons to be learned from more advanced cases in other countries.

5. Concluding Remarks from Each Panellist

(Ms. FUJINAMI)

I mentioned earlier that the ICC had been a distant thing for me, but actions towards a multiculturally convivial society are not distant in the sense that we can all work together to create a society where everyone can play an active role. Local governments are obliged to focus on their own domestic issues, but on the other hand, paying attention to activities of other local governments can lead to more effective approaches.

In order to realize an intercultural city, it is important to raise awareness of multiculturalism and diversity. In the Multicultural Conviviality Promotion Plan advocated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, awareness raising of receiving societies is listed as one of issues, and we need to expand our scope of multicultural leaders not only to local residents and non-profit organizations that support foreign residents, but also to universities, corporations, and other organizations and groups that have not had interactions with foreign residents before. By expanding the scope of stakeholders, we believe that the understanding of ICC's efforts will be promoted. CLAIR will continue to contribute to diversifying those who are responsible for multicultural conviviality by utilizing our nationwide network.



(Kobe City)

Kobe, which has developed as an international port city, has a history of coexistence between Japanese and foreign residents side by side. The city is also endowed with a better international infrastructure than other cities. In light of today's discussion, we will continue to review our policies for multicultural conviviality, strive to put the principles of the ICC into practice, and carefully consider the possibility of joining the ICC.

(Hamamatsu City)

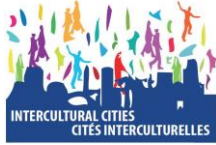
The Mayor of Hamamatsu City has requested the Minister of Justice to create a "Foreign Residents Agency" (tentative name) in order to strongly promote effective cross-ministerial policies for multicultural conviviality, as the responsible involvement of the State is essential to realize a multicultural society. In the future, multicultural conviviality policies will undoubtedly become a major agenda even for municipalities that do not belong to the Council for Cities of Non-Japanese Residents. We would like to take initiatives as one of launching members of the Council and enter the phase of value creation by utilizing diversity and making good use of the ICC Policy Promotion Conference, our new project for the next year.

6. Remarks by Mr. HARA, Head of the Europe, Africa and Middle East Team, Japan Foundation

It is deeply moving that, more than a decade after the Japan Foundation established Japan's first network with the Council of Europe in 2009, Japanese local governments have joined the ICC and are getting interested in it. The "liveable city for foreigners" mentioned by Kobe City can be rephrased as a liveable city for all, and creating an environment where people can live safely and securely with all kinds of cultural and religious differences is in line with the principles of the SDGs.

With the lingering influences of the Covid-19 pandemic, more and more people want to leave their current country of residence and move to a place where they can live more safely, securely, and freely. If we can create a city that is comfortable for all people to live in, we can naturally attract people, goods, and investments.

Japan Foundation is willing to continue working with CLAIR to serve as a bridge between Japanese local governments and overseas.



7. Summary Comments

(Prof. YAMAWAKI)

The participation in ICC Network will ease placing the multicultural efforts of Japanese local governments into its international context. It is also important for Japan, as a late comer in the field of interculturalism, to learn from advanced cases and failures of other countries, as well as to disseminate Japan's advanced cases to the rest of the world. With regard to the latter point, for example, the efforts of Japanese local governments in dealing with natural disasters would be worth sharing with the world. In addition, the practice of Easy Japanese, focusing on spoken language, is also an interesting initiative. The proactive dissemination of information will improve the quality of information acquired. I will continue to play a role in connecting Japanese local governments and intercultural cities to further evolve Japan's multicultural efforts.

(Mr. UENO)

The word "inter" has the meaning of "between" and it is important to uncover various problems such as inequality and discrimination that tend to be hidden in a simpler question (in the context of the ICC, for example, the conflict of interests between Japanese residents and foreign residents), and to solve them in order to realize a comfortable city for all. This is an issue that needs to be re-examined when thinking about an intercultural society. In addition, measures developed by a single city will often be biased and stagnant, but by sharing knowledge with cities abroad, we can broaden our perspectives and implement better measures. ICC initiatives in Japan have just begun, and I would like to continue to contribute to the field.

Q & A

Q1	<p>What actions can the general public including students take to participate in Intercultural Cities activities in Japan (participation in events, volunteering, internships, etc.)?</p>
A1	<p>The current situation is that the progress of efforts to realize an intercultural city, where multiculturalism is utilized in overall city planning, varies from region to region and municipality to municipality. However, not only local governments, but also international associations that work as an affiliated organization of local governments are already in place in various parts of the country. In this booklet, we have focused on the excellent practices of Hamamatsu City and Kobe City, but the website of the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), for example, introduces practices from all over Japan. I believe that the first step in realizing an intercultural city is to find out if there are any such projects being developed in your neighborhood, or if there are any projects that you can propose to your local government or regional international association. (Mr UENO)</p>
Q2	<p>In the value system of Japanese society, the elders are considered superior, or the relationship between siblings is not treated equally. In other words, inequality naturally exists in society from the first place. With this in mind, it seems natural to me that inequality exists between foreigners and Japanese, and between the minority and the majority.</p> <p>I believe some countries with ICC member cities have a similar social structure to Japan. How do they deal with the interculturalism with taking into consideration the original values of the society?</p>
A2	<p>We believe that various inequalities and prejudices have taken root in the historical contexts of various regions rather than existing "naturally", and at the same time, there have always been movements of people trying to change them. In such a situation, the role of the government is to nurture such intersectional activities by residents acknowledging the diversity and equality and aiming for a fairer society so that new ideas can be invented. In Spain, for example, it is said that male-centered social customs and oppression of sexual minorities have persisted due to the religious context and the authoritarian regime that continued until the 1970s. In particular, since the 2000s, the entire social system has been changing dramatically. In cities such as Barcelona, women's groups and organizations of sexual minorities, which have been active under such circumstances, have been participating in intercultural cities initiatives like the "Anti-Rumor Strategy" with the help and support of the government, and have been</p>

	collaborating with foreign organizations. This has not only enhanced their ability to communicate with the local community, but has also created opportunities for more inclusive civic activities and community development, such as reviewing gender-based prejudice and discrimination among foreign groups, in which more diverse residents can easily participate. (Mr. UENO)
Q3	Are there any examples of using "Easy Japanese" or Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance the information dissemination and consultation system?
A3	Since the formulation of the "Comprehensive Measures for the Acceptance and Coexistence of Foreign Human Resources" in December 2018, the Immigration Bureau has been supporting the development of One-Stop Consultation System in local governments across Japan. Such local governments have established and are operating multilingual consultation centers, including those in Easy Japanese. Many of them use a combination of face-to-face interpretation, remote interpretation using tablet devices, and automatic translators. In particular, the use of remote interpretation is spreading rapidly, and the "Remote Interpretation Consignment Business Handbook" (Japan Association for Public Interpretation Assistance, 2021) has been formulated to ensure the proper selection of interpretation service providers when consigning remote interpretation services to them. (Prof. YAMAWAKI)

DOCUMENTS

Booklet "An Introduction to the Intercultural City for Local Governments in Japan"	
Japanese	English
PowerPoint Presentation	
Booklet Introduction	Hamamatsu City
Kobe City	CLAIR