jlgc long term trainee programme celebrates its tenth anniversary

Lanterns at Senso-ji Temple in Asakusa, Tokyo

万葉

Myriad Leaves is the English-language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry. It contains 4,516 waka poems, the last of which is dated AD759. There is uncertainty over the intention of the title: it could mean either 'Collection of ten thousand leaves' or 'Collection for ten thousand generations'.

In 1996, the University of Birmingham was asked by the Japan Local Government Centre in London to submit a proposal to provide a year-long training programme for Japanese local government officers employed by Prefectural Governments in Japan. The brief was that the first half of the programme should consist of training in English language and the second half should focus on the study of British local government, including the opportunity to gain some practical experience in a local government environment. It was agreed that the programme, if commissioned, should be based in the West Midlands, so that the trainees could remain in university accommodation throughout the year.

The ideal group is between two and four participants a year. We aim to give really personal attention to each of the course participants but at the same time, they are involved in activities with many students both from Britain and other parts of the world. The mixture of individual and class study provides variety and interest for everyone taking part.

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTRE

Long Term Trainee Programme Celebrates Its Tenth Anniversary

By Christopher Watson, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies and
Mike Smith, Institute of Local Government Studies, School of Public Policy , University of Birmingham

The official title of the programme is the 'Local Government Employee Overseas Study Assistance Programme', but for perhaps obvious reasons, it is often referred to simply as the 'long course'. A programme had previously been provided at the University of Limerick in the Republic of Ireland but an advantage of developing a course in Birmingham was seen to be the opportunity to link it with the counterpart 'short course' for Japanese local government officers provided by the Institute of Local Government Studies in October each year *[see Myriad Leaves March 2007 p. 4]*. It was agreed that participants on the long course could also join the Birmingham short course, which thus became an integral part of the long course programme.

The long course is now a partnership between the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS), the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) and the English for International Students Unit (EISU) at the University of Birmingham. It consists of three parts. From April to September, participants undertake intensive English language study at EISU, working alongside mainly graduate-level students from many countries, who are developing their language and study skills in preparation for postgraduate work; for our trainees, it includes specialist English for the study of local government and public policy. The social and practical sides of the programme are important, too, helping participants to become accustomed to everyday life and culture in the UK and enabling them to visit places of interest such as Stratford-upon-Avon, Oxford, Cambridge and even further afield.

During the first part of the programme we aim also to provide some practical experience of the world of local government, with short visits to some nearby local authorities; and informal seminars on topics such as regional governance in the UK and the role of the European Union in matters affecting local government. CURS also runs a 'Japan Study Group' for students, including our trainees, and visiting academic staff from Japan, with presentations on a variety of 'hot topics' in the UK that are also relevant to Japan. These Study Group meetings invariably end with a drink and a meal at a nearby oriental restaurant.

The second part of the programme, from September to December, is based in the School of Public Policy and focuses on the study of British central and local government. This provides an introduction to the British system and process of government: central and sub-central, Whitehall and Town Hall, elected and unelected. A wide choice of lectures and seminars is available to course participants and they are free to develop, in consultation with their tutors, a personal study programme to meet their interests and their aspirations for the future. Recent participants have chosen to focus on topics such as urban and regional planning, public-private partnerships, the role of the voluntary sector, community participation in local governance, cultural policy and urban regeneration. Occasionally the trainees are able to join one-day INLOGOV seminars for British local government, with the opportunity to work alongside British colleagues in exploring issues of contemporary policy and practice. At the same time, they are encouraged to read widely around their subjects; and to continue with their English language studies by attending the daily lunch-time classes and other support activities, for example on report writing in English, that are available at the university for all international students.

Throughout the autumn, the trainees are helped to prepare for the third part of the programme, from January to March, which is the culmination of their work in the UK. It consists of an individual project, usually with a case study approach combining organised visits, short placements with local authorities and other bodies, and structured interviews and discussions with staff in key organisations, mainly in the West Midlands region. Each trainee develops a personal study plan for this part of the programme which, for example, might combine a wish to gain general practical experience of the workings of British local governance and more specialist knowledge of a particular policy area relevant to their responsibilities or career interests in Japan. Each trainee prepares a substantial individual report, in English, on their project and this forms the basis of a final presentation in mid-March to staff from the university and from JLGC London, which marks the end of the year's programme.

On the whole, we receive very good feedback both from course participants and from JLGC London. All the participating Prefectures have supported the programme for at least two years and some have sent participants for five or more successive years. We would very much like more Prefectures to support the programme and this is an objective for the future. For us, as organisers and tutors, the programme is a very rewarding experience; especially for the contact it has given us with contemporary local government in Japan; and with a succession of impressive, enthusiastic, hard-working local government officers who are a credit to the Prefectures that have supported their studies in the UK.

We also are very grateful to JLGC London for its support; and to the many people and organisations, especially in the West Midlands, that have helped our trainees and enabled them to gain practical experience of local governance in Britain.

Introduction to the Long Term Trainees

As a part of their studies during the year at CURS, each applicant is asked to research and write a report on the topic of their choice. In this edition of Myriad Leaves the reports of Hiroko Saita (2006-7), Hitomi Morita (2006-7), Satoko Toriyama (2005-6) and Nobuo Maezawa (2005-6) have been edited to demonstrate the real achievements of the Long-Term Study Programme and how it has contributed to the development of the individual's thinking and goals.

Hiroko Saita

Lectures at the University of Birmingham helped me study my chosen topic, multicultural policy; I was able to learn about the UK's long history of immigration and about some of the current problems facing this multicultural society. Visits to local authorities and organizations were interesting because I was given lots of examples of multicultural strategies and learnt a great deal about the

Hiroko Saita with Chris Watson and Mike Smith

challenges relating to this area of policy. I visited both Cumbria and Birmingham City Councils, along with other organisations in the private and the voluntary sectors. People from the organisations were very kind and allowed me to attend their community involvement meetings and ceremonies. They also introduced me to many articles concerning strategies for developing community cohesion, and positive, strong relationships in society. I came to realise the importance of partnerships between organizations to improve community cohesion.

Hitomi Morita:

At the University of Birmingham I was able to learn about the history and principles behind the UK's town planning system, and I learnt about Business Improvement Districts, conservation and regeneration through three work placements. As I am an architectural engineer, it was invaluable to me to have the opportunity to do specific work related to historical buildings and to meet with British experts to exchange skills and opinions. This practical experience was invaluable to me and provided me with knowledge I could not have gained otherwise. Through these placements my eyes were opened to new ideas which I know will influence my work in the future.
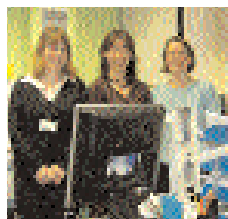
Satoko Toriyama

I had a great experience through the Long Term Trainee Programme. The lectures at university were wonderful. I learnt a lot about current issues in UK politics as well as my subject: tourism and partnership. All the lecturers were very enthusiastic and kind. Their advice helped me very much. The university library was very helpful, particularly the e-journals, which are very useful for finding out about the most current theories and examples. Visits to local authorities gave me as much insight as the university lectures. I visited many local authorities to learn about tourism at a sub-regional level in the UK. Each local authority gave me a great opportunity to learn about tourism policies. In some local authorities, tourism officers showed me their areas and explained about them in great detail. I was impressed by their hospitality as well as the beautiful scenery and great heritage of the UK.

Nobuo Maezawa

Besides studying at the University, I was able to visit some local authorities, agencies and partnership bodies in the West Midlands. The officers I met were friendly, open-minded and enthusiastic about their work. I was also invited to some neighbourhood meetings. Lively and frank exchanges of opinions between local people and officers were very impressive. It was an excellent opportunity to talk with them about not only business issues but also lifestyles and daily issues. Life in Birmingham was pleasant, comfortable and interesting. The diversity of people was the most impressive thing. Each of them has their own philosophy and values, and respects each other's differences. This mutual respect for diversity could be one of the reasons why the partnership of different stakeholders works well here. It seems to be one of the key strengths of British society.

What is Required for Regeneration in Nara?

3

Introduction:

Regeneration is defined as a way to promote rundown areas to become materially, socially and culturally vibrant area through the use of co-operation between local communities, local government and other authorities. The significant difference between redevelopment and regeneration is the emphasis of the former is only on the renewal of public facilities whereas the emphasis of the latter is not only on public facilities but also on communities, cultures and local economy.

Many town centres in Nara Prefecture show obvious signs of decay, and when considering the population decline in the future, there is no real need to expand urban areas, but regenerate the existing infrastructure. If nothing is done to prevent the urban sprawl, fewer people will be left to maintain more infrastructures resulting in many towns being deserted. With the forthcoming 1300th anniversary of Nara in 2010, the first steps towards regeneration should be made making all places visually and socially alive.

Sustainable Growth:

During the 1960's when the baby-boom generation reached maturity, towns were developed haphazardly in order to meet demands for housing, and industrial and commercial sites. Therefore, the growth of towns can be expressed the same as the growth of marketing. During the development of a town, it needs a lot of investment for infrastructure and discussion about future vision; in the growth period, the town can continue to grow by itself without effort from the authorities or residents; in the maturation period, the indispensable infrastructure is complete, and the town looses its goals and begins to decline. In other words, the original future vision has been realised and another is required without changing the characteristics of the initial development. This can be in various aspects such as commerce, conservation and community. This problem is not of course limited to Japan, but can be seen in many developed countries.

In the regeneration of an area, its history and qualities must be examined. Nara has many historical sites including three world heritage sites, 1,423 important cultural properties, 208 national treasures, and also an abundance of greenery with more than XX of the prefecture mountainous. Therefore, Nara is an important destination for culture and tourism. Having said this, because of improvements in the transport network, visitors do not need to stay in Nara, but can easily commute from other cities. Also because of its proximity to the industrial capital of the west, Osaka, many people seek a better living environment in Nara and commute to Osaka on a daily basis.

Yamatotakada City Case Study:

Yamatotakada's decline began after the closing of a textile factory and the subsequent migration of the resident population to other cities. Because half of the city government's income came from property tax, the revenue decreased in direct proportion to the appraised value of the land, and since land in the city centre dropped sharply in value, the city government was hard pushed to find the money it needed to begin regeneration. Secondly, the city government and other local authorities lacked a charismatic leader, someone to bring a vision to the city. However, local authorities do not have to provide a charismatic leader. Their role is to support local communities make a foundation for regeneration by themselves.

Regulations Concerning Regeneration in the UK:

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act is one of the most significant and most influential pieces of legislation in current town planning, and the first step towards introducing a planning application. The term Green Belt was also defined to constrain the chaos of urban sprawl and preserve agricultural areas. The four features of the Act were the nationalisation of the right of development and their associated values, that is not the purchase of all land in the UK but nationalising the right to develop land; providing new local planning authorities who were responsible for drawing up development plans and subsequent review and modification of the said plans; compensation for losing the right of land development; finally, betterment, that is if the owners were paid compensation for losing the right to develop the land, or if they got planning permission from the local authority they should not gain financially from it, but the community should enjoy the development.

Local Planning Authorities (LPA) have held the power to implement planning control since the nationalisation of development rights was introduced. Anyone who wants to develop land must submit an application to the LPA which will make a decision based on the national Planning Policy Statement, and regional and local planning policies. In 1991, the Planning and Compensation Act meant that the LPA could request s developer to add to the infrastructure for the benefit of the community. This might include something within the site itself, or if that is not possible, then some other local environment such as improving parks, highways or social housing.

Another key factor in thinking about town development is conservation, that local buildings should be preserved for future generations, even though their original purpose has been served. Whilst the Listed Buildings system is complicated for owners and developers, by and large it has worked to keep important buildings from demolition or disrepair. There is a grant system for Grade I and II listed buildings available from English Heritage, and also from DEFRA for traditional farm buildings kept in current agricultural use.

Whilst it is important to think in terms of individual buildings, it is also important to think of Conservation Areas where the building and its environment are considered. Even if the buildings inside the areas are not listed, their removal or a change to the local environment may alter the character of an area, which is why it is vitally important for

the public to participate in the regeneration of their local areas.

Since 2004, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) regulations have been introduced, and a number of town centres have tried this out in their regeneration efforts. Non-domestic rate payers identified in a BID area must make contributions towards improving the environment in the BID, street cleaning, extra wardens, lighting and so on. There are strict regulations for this project, but success been seen in many deserted town centres and flourishing areas alike.

What is Required for Regeneration in Nara?

Sadly, the Japanese Urban Planning Law is a law beset with loopholes and does not work effectively in terms of planning control. The Japanese urban planning system adopts a zoning system and is more legislative than controls in the UK and therefore lacks flexibility. Planning officers tend to concentrate on how to comply with current regulations and lose sight of the long term objective. So although planning permission in the UK might take a long time to approve, the final target is clear even if the process lacks transparency.

Another point is that the Japanese system is fragmented where any development plan must be examined under each regulation separately, and officers seldom communicate with each other, so it might happen that an application is approved under one of the laws but not under another. Finally, the concept of aesthetics in cities and landscape has been effectively ignored and not enough thought put into how to adopt planning controls for this. In the UK, demolition is strictly controlled by planning permission or conservation area consent, whereas in Japan, LPAs have no authority to control demolition except for the disposal of industrial waste.

Therefore, for the effective regeneration of Nara, an explicit future vision and shared essential concept in conjunction with comprehensive planning control is required.

During the booming years, disorderly housing developments were carried out in order to meet requirements, and as a result urban areas sprawled too widely. When the demand was satisfied, former town centres had started to become deserted and loose their population. Thinking about the prospect of a declining population and a super aging society in the near future, there is not now a need to build further and increase the size of cities. The UK's system of planning control, conservation and regeneration seem to be somewhat government lead, but the system is performed by careful decision making in terms of achieving the long term future vision.

It is strongly recommended that a deeper understanding of the essential purpose of local future visions and flexible and comprehensive planning control be introduced in Nara to prevent the decline of the prefecture and its towns and cities.

Submitted to CURS, University of Birmingham   By Nobuo Maezawa, March 2006

Do Partnerships Dream of Participatory Public Management?

Introduction:

While government's approach to participation is often criticised as being too slow, some suggest that today is no longer the age of participation, but of, for example, collaboration, partnership or citizen's initiatives. Cooperative work between government and the private sector is one of growing importance, and the UK is one of the most advanced countries in the field of private-public partnership particularly at the local level. Almost all recent local policies such as community regeneration are designed to promote partnership, and its network style structure can contribute to the enhancement of public participation. In fact, most of the partnerships involve local communities or voluntary groups in their work. These flexible and friendly partnerships seem to have potential to be a more participatory public service provider when compared to the existing rigid local authorities. However, there are problems: partnership may assume the character of quangos or other inaccessible public organisations; even if a partnership is in general terms a participatory one, it is necessary to check its openness from the participation perspective. This essay aims to consider the possibilities and difficulties of a UK style participatory system into local government in Japan.

What is Participation?

Participation can be simply classified into two straightforward types: participation in the implementation phase, and participation in the management phase. These can further be divided into sub-groups: the one-shot, and the continuous. These two axes can be described as a simple matrix:

	ONE-SHOT	CONTINUOUS
IMPLEMENTATION	A	B
MANAGEMENT	C	D

A and B would be similar to volunteerism. For example, one-shot implementation might be volunteering after a disaster where organisation and help are required, but are dissipated after the event. An example of continuous implementation (B) might be community night-watch groups or environmental maintenance volunteers who have long-term objectives and require continuous endeavour. It is this sort of work which tends to associate itself closely with local authorities.

A referendum might be an example of one-shot management (C), and D might be a full residents meeting, which can be very expensive in terms of time and money. Although the Local Government Act in Japan has a clause allowing this form of assembly in smaller municipalities, it is very rarely utilised. More usually, an elected citizen will take up a place on a local committee to discuss the matter at hand.

Participation in Japan:

Japan has a traditional system of voluntary (ch_nai-kai) neighbourhood associations and self-governing (jichi-kai) autonomous associations. Their main roles are to organise community events such as local festivals; community activities such as street sweeping;

Lanterns leading towards a temple

and finally to act as deputies for the local government by circulating information. Although this has been successful in the past, it is now deemed old-fashioned and almost a way of local authorities to 'control' their citizens as a workforce. It has also been criticised for its inefficient internal democracy due to domination by local power-holders. In this environment, the neighbourhood associations have been unpopular with younger people and have therefore lost power.

In contrast, participation in the management phase (C and D) has not always been given favourable consideration by authorities. The decisions taken by citizens are characterised by a lack of understanding of the longer vision, not having a broad knowledge of the subject, not having objective judgement, and selecting temporising, ear-pleasing and hedonistic policies. Thus participation at the management level has been very limited for citizens without connections with power-holders.

The movement of municipality mergers has meant that whereas before referenda were hardly ever held in Japan, now it has become a popular way to make decisions on a local level. In addition to this, local authorities began to introduce 'on-demand' neighbourhood meetings, policy-making workshops, and theme oriented e-participation using the internet to aim for more substantial participation in local affairs. It is worthy of note that these changes in governance and participation in local authorities were not led by central government, but rather by forward thinking local authorities.

However, to avoid tokenism it is the quality of participation and not the quantity which is important. It is also difficult to include people who have other commitments, who are either not interested in participation or do not have time to join. Moreover, demographics and how to encourage younger people to join so as to attain a broad spectrum is also a problem. Smaller municipalities tend to be dominated by a few power-holders, whereas larger municipalities tend to be more bureaucratic and less open for 'outside' people. Finally, participation seems to be at odds with the management cycle and therefore difficult to introduce into an authority's management process. While this idea has been mainly intended for internal management working, it is important to promote consistency and strategy into the participatory process. Ergo, it is necessary to introduce a system of public participation in which citizens can be continuously and comprehensively engaged in the entire cycle to remind local authorities that citizens are the main constituent of public management, and thus continuous management can be seen as more important and beneficial than one-shot participation.
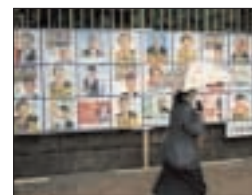
Participation and Partnership:

There is a close relationship between these two, but Lowndes and Sullivan (2004) suggest 3 concepts of potential synergy: 1) partnership as a means for participation; 2) participation as a key ingredient of partnership; 3) participation as the outcome of partnership. There are a number of advantages and disadvantages in partnership: two advantages would be straightforward aims with defined objectives, and the internal devolution of power in municipalities. Drawbacks would include complicating the structure of public services; overlapping partnerships and services; and the exclusion and isolation of anyone not involved with the partnership body.

Partnership in Japan and its Future:

In Japan, with the exception of the PFI, partnerships have not been actively encouraged by central government as they have in the UK. Instead, they have grown as a result of demand from citizens and the buzzword, kyodo (collaborative working). Although somewhat similar in meaning as partnership, the kyodo was not intended to be an independent body nor to have personnel or financial resources. Instead it is more conceptual. The stakeholders (the local authority, volunteer groups and community leaders) gather and work together to formulate and implement a plan; however the kyodo will not be responsible or accountable for it. There is a market for this type of working, and it is therefore often argued that local governance is shifting from participation to partnership.

Recommendations for Japan:

For the government, participation is an old concept on the premise of government superiority while partnership means collaborative working on an equal footing. However, partnership should not be thought of as a superior successor to participation. Rather, using the perspective of participation will be the key to check openness and accountability of partnership. Secondly, the final goal of partnership policy is not only to involve local groups but to motivate the active participation of a wide range of citizens through communities or voluntary groups. In Japan, NPOs are governed by law, but the ch_nai-kai are not. Legislation needs to be developed for them. Thirdly, it is necessary to review the internal process of local authorities to maximise the positive effects of partnership. The decision-making process in Japan is a long procedure and whilst it can prevent oversights, it removes the focus from the citizens and promotes a feeling of immobility and rigidity. Finally, in cultivating citizens' interest, long-range perspective, skill and motivation are necessary. After sustained action, citizens will have information and skills to make a rational appraisal and authorities will benefit form eliciting the ideas and opinions of their citizens.

Posters giving the names of people standing for local elections

References: Lowndes, V & Sullivan, H (2004) 'Like a horse and carriage or a fish on a bicycle: How well do local partnership and public participation go together?' Local Government Studies 30 (1)

Community Involvement in Cultural Tourism and Tourism Partnership

Submitted to CURS, University of Birmingham   By Satoko Toriyama, March 2006

Nara Prefecture

Introduction:

The Blair government deems it essential to involve the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in partnership working, however although there are many public-private tourism partnerships, the involvement of local communities seems to be rather limited. This paper looks at community involvement in tourism and cultural tourism and partnerships.

A Definition of Cultural Tourism:

According to Richards (1996) the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education defines cultural tourism by a conceptual definition: 'the movement of persons to cultural attractions from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs'; and a technical definition: all movements of persons to specific cultural attractions, such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, arts and drama outside their normal place of residence.' However, in this paper, cultural tourism is taken to mean the latter, and it is community involvement in cultural tourism which is of particular focus.

Community Involvement in Cultural Tourism:

It is difficult to promote cities without the involvement of the community. A festival will be a success if the community are behind it and support it from conception to completion; volunteers in such projects as festivals and 'living museums' such as the Black Country Living Museum or the Severn Valley Railway can help to keep costs down whilst adding an extra dimension to the project. The hospitality of local people is also one of the keys in making visitors feel welcome and want to visit again. However, although it is important to involve local people in tourism projects, and many local authority documents show they are attempting to, local communities do not judge tourism to be a priority when meeting with councillors – they are more interested in street lighting and improvement of their local environment.

Although it is difficult to get the attention of the community in cultural tourism, there are some ways of attracting participation. The abolition of entrance fees for museums has been directly responsible for the increase in the number of people visiting. Cultural investment is also another effective way to encourage people to be proud of their area. Once people know more about their cultural heritage in an area, they are more likely to take pride in it. Cultural investment in education is also effective in helping young people understand their area.

The positive outcomes of cultural investment from learning about one's local environment and taking pride in local heritage are integral to, and have a vital impact on cultural tourism.

Investment is not sufficient to bring about cultural tourism; it is the contribution of the local people which have the greatest benefit. Word of mouth is an important way to recruit volunteers even when there may be 'sufficient information' available. Providing 'sufficient information' might be in the form of distributing newsletters, holding public meetings, collecting volunteers for some practical work and making local communities feel involved in a tourism partnership.

Tourism Partnerships:

Tourism partnerships were first established in the UK in the 1980's to attract private sector investment. However, it was not easy for local authorities to involve private companies as the private sector found it difficult to see the benefits of investing in facilities managed by the public sector. Thus, central government encouraged the Tourism Development Action Programmes to fund tourism partnerships in local authorities. This scheme and the one that replaced it (the Local Area Tourism Initiative) were unsuccessful and are now obsolete. Now, local authorities promote tourism in an arrangement referred to as tourism partnerships, marketing partnerships or management partnerships which are funded by subscription, sponsorship, and grants from the EU or Regional Development Agencies. There are however problems including funding, the involvement of the private sector and limited involvement of the voluntary and community sectors.

Are These Policies a Success?

Many tourism partnerships are strategic and cover large areas, and therefore it can be difficult to involve all communities in all areas, particularly since the knowledge of each community might be localised and they do not share the same goal. Many people identify themselves first with a nation, secondly with a localised area, thirdly with a county and finally with a region so a region-wide strategy may thus encounter difficulties. It is however,

possible to establish local partnerships which deal with cultural tourism based on specific geographical areas, but partnerships tend to be most effective when there is trust between partners, which requires each partner to take an interest and have a say in the proceedings.

Although it is necessary to involve local residents in local partnerships, efficiency and non-duplication of efforts should be taken care of, and therefore partnerships should be established systematically and be properly resourced.

Implications for Nara Prefecture:

Nara is the ancient capital of Japan and has a wealth of cultural heritage including famous temples, as it was a centre of Buddhist learning from the 8th century. In preparation for the 1300th Anniversary, the policies for the celebration are as follows:
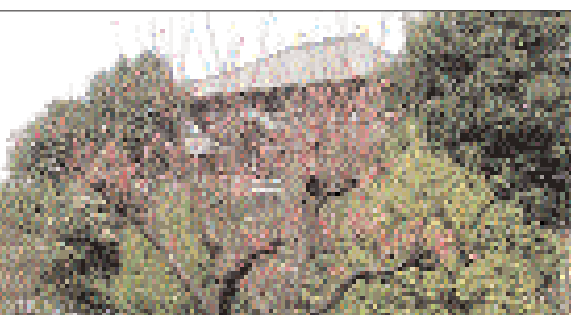
1. Organising commemorative events in and around the Nara Heijo Capital;
2. Providing opportunities to create new cultures and consider new lifestyles;
3. Creating new events/objects that will remain as new cultural assets for the 21st century;
4. Constructing the Historical, Cultural and International Exchange Zone;
5. Actively encouraging the general public to participate in event organisation.

With the help of residents it is hoped the festival will be a great success. In Nara Park, there will be an Open Air Art Festival where international renowned artists and musicians will have the opportunity to display their work and talk to others about it.

There will also be a Nara 2010 Juku (volunteer organising committee) where it is hoped the prefectural authority will liaise with the Juku to create and run some events.

Reference More Information:
Richards, G (1996) 'Scope and Significance of Cultural Tourism' cited in Richards, G (ed.) Cultural Tourism in Europe CAB International, Wallingford
http://www.pref.nara.jp/1300/00_eng/006_b-policies/index.html
http://www.1300.jp/gaiyou/kihonkeikaku.html

Plum blossom at one of Nara's temples

5

Submitted to CURS, University of Birmingham   By Hiroko Saita, March 2007

Exploring Multiculturalism: Community Cohesion

Introduction:

In English speaking countries, multiculturalism began as an official policy in the late 1960's and was later adopted by most European Union Member States, however the concept is different in each country. Delanty (2003) cites examples from Canada (communitarian multiculturalism) where the government recognises different groups and encourages support whilst maintaining a balance between the preservation of integration and diversity; the US (radical multiculturalism) where all immigrant cultures are mixed without interference and all immigrants assimilated into American society; and the UK (liberal communitarian) multiculturalism, one of pluralism and emphasis on co-operation and peaceful co-existence.

Multiculturalism however is an extremely controversial issue: its supporters see it as a path to interculturalism where each culture benefits from learning about the other; whereas its denouncers often see it as something imposed on the host culture leading to its eventual collapse and therefore undermining national identity.

Delanty (2003) defined Japan as still being a monocultural society, where the government makes policies on national ethnic cultural issues. In consequence of that, Japanese citizens tend to rely on the same cultural recognition, and resist cultural diversity. He also states that monoculturalism can be a way to improve multiculturalism, and now the Japanese government is working hard to develop internationalisation.

In order to reveal the real issues of multiculturalism, current policies regarding 'foreigners' in Japan will be compared with UK policies for immigrants in order to improve multicultural society. Firstly current theories behind public policy in Japan are explained and the current issues analysed; secondly, government policy regarding multiculturalism and multicultural programmes in the UK is described; in conclusion, suggestions for using the UK's more successful programmes are explored for implementation in Japan.

Japan:

In Japan, we use the word 'foreigner' to describe people from other countries whereas in the UK, the word of choice is 'immigrant'. Japan is historically a monocultural society where the majority of citizens were born and grew up in Japan and spoke only Japanese. However, the number of foreigners in Japan is increasing: up 47.7% since 1994. The number of foreigners in Japan now accounts for 1.57% of the total population. Based on 2005 statistics, the cultural group which has the biggest numbers, at a little fewer than 30% of the total is Korean, shortly followed by Chinese at 25%, then Brazilian (15%) and Filipino (9.3%).

Reasons for coming to and settling in Japan vary, but one such reason is the globalisation of economic activities since the rapid improvement of transport and communications have enabled the mobility of people, goods and information. Another reason is the revision of immigration law meaning that the number of workers from Brazil and trainees from other Asian countries has soared. This reform came about as a result of the realisation that the government needs to accept foreign workers because of the rapidly aging society in Japan, and a shortage of labourers. In addition to this, the government also promotes international students to encourage interculturalism at a grass-roots level.

It is because there are more immigrants but a lack of policy arrangements for them that living in Japan becomes problematic for the foreigner, and a source of friction for the residents. The first barrier to overcome is of course language: not only the problem of learning the language, but also because most information concerning housing, education and employment is available in Japanese only. Problems in cultural misinterpretation are also difficult, where many Japanese feel uncomfortable and even fear when they see behaviour uncharacteristic to the Japanese norm, and which they do not understand. The government therefore, should make it their priority to improve immigration policies and all its associated branches.

UK:

The UK has a long history of migration and as of 2001; almost 8% of the population is from a non-white ethnic group. There are three big ethnic minorities: Indian (1.8%), Pakistani (1.3%) and Caribbean (1%); however the statistics do not show the population of white immigrants which is why the total number of immigrants in the UK is much larger than the statistics account for.

Reasons for migration into the UK have centred in England's naval dominance during the 16th century. Post-war immigration was encouraged to fill labour shortages and also the 1948 British Nationality Act gave rights to citizens of British colonies and Commonwealth countries to enter the UK, work and settle here. Mass migration, however has led to concentrated centres in economic and industrial areas typically London, Birmingham and the northern cities. Immigration has since been restricted by a number of Acts but since the 1997 election, economic growth has meant the unemployment rate is low, but there is a serious shortage of manual labour. As a result, the government now needs to focus on the development of multicultural policies for the resident ethnic communities.

Problems for immigrants have resulted in the Race Relations Act (1976) and the development of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) to tackle inequalities and provide equal opportunities. The government also adopted Community Cohesion as a key area of multiculturalism. Community Cohesion attempts to create a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities, positively value people's diversity, promote life opportunities for all, and develop strong relationships for all in workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods. This is of course strongly linked with integration and dialogue between different faiths, racial backgrounds and communities in local policy and decision making.

Applications for Japan:

The recognition of diversity and the realisation of integration are important in developing community cohesion, and it is this which is currently lacking in policy-making in Japan. The Community Cohesion plan currently supported in the UK encourages people to take responsibility for their local area and work together to build a better place. All residents have a responsibility to show respect, address common concerns, welcome newcomers and combat discrimination on the grounds of race or faith. Whereas the policy in Japan is to promote regional development and support foreigners in learning Japanese, the UK policy is likely to make society stronger and more active. The Japanese government therefore should make multicultural policy on the basis that diversity should be normal in a community and partnerships should therefore be developed.

In the UK, the DCLG and LGA have worked together to make the Community Cohesion Action Plan, whereas in Japan, the International Affairs Division organises exchange programmes and international co-operation projects. One division of a ministry cannot make much of a difference. Therefore, partnership with public, private and voluntary sectors is absolutely necessary. Support for foreigners with simple information regarding education, employment, public health and disaster is crucial – this information should be translated and made available in a number of different languages.

By looking at the UK as a case study, the government in Japan can learn how to enter into partnership with communities to improve the infrastructure, find funding support and explore community leadership. Black History Month is an example of how the experiences of a minority can reach a mainstream audience, and arts, sports and cultural services are powerful tools in engaging all sectors of the community and breaking down barriers between them.

The Japanese government needs to actively encourage immigration to deflect the impending economic situation resulting from low birth rates and a population in which already 21% of people are over the age of 65. To do this the government should look to policies and guidelines the UK already has in place in order to develop a prosperous and positive strategy for the new generation of immigrants to Japan.

References and Further Reading:
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