

Leadership in Recovery Support for Foreign Residents since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake: A Case Study of Takatori Community Center in Kobe

阪神淡路大震災後の復興支援におけるリーダーシップ
—たかとりコミュニティセンター（神戸）の事例研究—

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Abstract

This is a practical research report on how an NPO (Non-Profit Organization) called Takatori Community Center (TCC) has been supporting foreign residents in Nagata, Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, since the outbreak of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995. While TCC is now widely known as a showcase of NPO for the recovery support of this kind, the authors examine the nature and style of leadership by the top three directors of TCC that might have contributed to a great deal to the development and maintenance of this non-profit organization. In fact, after the major relief measures and activities of the quake were almost over around 2000, TCC has successfully sustained its organization by sharpening its focus more on the building of multicultural community in Kobe. The authors so far conducted life-story interviews with a total of 7 staff members of TCC including the top-three leaders who have been often reported in local and national media to be the backbones and engines to sustain TCC and move it forward (Kanaji, 2008). It was speculated from our research that unique nature and style of collective leadership of TCC is an essential factor for the sustenance of this organization that has kept displaying multicultural mediating power.

1. Introduction

This article is a report of an ongoing research on the role and the management of Takatori Community Center (hereafter called TCC) that has been helping the recovery of foreign residents in Kobe after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of January 17, 1995. TCC is a non-profit organization supporting the local community in Nagata of Kobe City, where 8.0% of the residents (a total population of 10,382 from 23 countries) were foreigners in 1995 (Kanaji, 2008). Many of them were Japanese Koreans (Zainichi Korean), Vietnamese and Chinese. While the major activities of TCC had been the various relief activities for about 5 years after the outbreak of the quake, TCC has also been engaged in various community-oriented activities to build a better multicultural community where all the people of different cultural backgrounds can support each other and work together.

TCC has already been reported locally as well as nationally as a showcase of the NPO that promotes the building of multicultural community (Kanaji, 2008). The purpose of this paper is to examine closely the nature and style of collective leadership of the three top directors of TCC as one of the major factors that might have contributed to a great deal in developing and sustaining this unique organization.

2. Research Methods

Two research methods were adopted for this report. One is the review of the literature on TCC and various reports concerning the relief activities after the outbreak of the quake in Kobe. The other is life-story interview conducted during the period from July, 2011 through July, 2012. A total of 7 staff members were interviewed in Kobe and Osaka to find out the recovery support process initiated by TCC and the current activities for building a multicultural community with the special attention on the characteristics of leadership demonstrated by the top three directors of TCC.

The three leaders interviewed are Rev. H. Kanda (Representative Director of TCC), Head Priest of Takatori Catholic Church 1991-2007, Chancellor of Osaka Archdiocese, Dr. S. Yoshitomi (Senior Executive Director of TCC), Associate Professor of Osaka University, Mr. J. Hibino (Senior Managing Director). In order to analyze their leadership style, we also interviewed the following four people who worked or have been working very closely with the three leaders: Dr. H. Kanaji (A former staff member), Osaka Voluntary Action Center, Mr. K. Murakami (Representative of World Kids Community), Ms. R. Oshiro (Representative of Hyogo Latin Community), and Ms. K. Yoshimoto (Representative of Leaf Green).

3. Overview of TCC & Its Top Three Leaders

3. 1. Kanda's story

Located in the western part of Nagata Ward, Kobe, Takatori Relief Base¹⁾ (the original name of TCC) was born "accidentally" on the next day of the great earthquake within the premise of the burnt-down Takatori Catholic Church of which Kanda was then the Father. This church is situated in the nearly western end of Nagata Ward where most of the city area was completely burnt down. Many volunteers gathered there because someone in the premise of the church had kept building a fire every night, making use of timbers and woods piled up in and outside of the destroyed church compound. Kanda explained about the beginning of the relief activities at the Relief Base as follows:

Takatori area was completely burnt down and I thought that nobody was living there anymore. Since we kept building a big fire to warm up our bodies, the scene of which was visible from far away throughout the neighborhood area of the town. I remember volunteers gradually started to gather there by happening to see such fire. This was the beginning of our relief activities. (2011-10-21)

The rescue work developed into various directions depending on the changing needs they found to help the earthquake victims in the course of time, such as preparing warm food for victims, removing furniture from the crashed houses, and giving accurate information to those who had problems in understanding overwhelming Japanese information for gaining the necessary support. Within two weeks after the quake, Kanda organized a group called Relief Committee for the Suffering Vietnamese, because there was a sizable number of Vietnamese concentrated in this particular area of Nagata who came to Japan in the 80s and 90s.

3. 2. Hibino's story

Hibino met Kanda at the Relief Base within two weeks after the outbreak of the quake. Hibino was an ex-reporter of the Mainichi Newspaper and was planning to visit Bosnia as a free-lance cameraman soon. However, after the outbreak of the quake, he changed his mind and decided to go to Kobe. Reading the then-thin newspaper of Kobe Newspaper at the Hibiya Library, Tokyo, about the seriously devastated condition of Nagata Ward, he rushed into Nagata, Kobe, thinking that he could stay there for a couple of weeks. In Nagata, he visited one of the parks called Minami Komae Park where hundreds of both Vietnamese and Japanese were evacuated under the tents. Hibino had this to say:

The Vietnamese and the Japanese were divided into two groups in the park. They were quarreling with each other over the amount of food and quantity of blankets they were supplied. They were both in desperate conditions and yelling at each other. It took them a long time to understand each other and get along. In the meantime, I heard often about the name of Kanda being called among the suffering Vietnamese and decided to go to the Relief Base to see him. Ever since then, I was totally involved as a volunteer going back and forth between the Takatori Relief Base and the various parks, with the Base being the place to sleep. (2011-7-24)

In March, 1995, Kanda and Hibino met a few Korean volunteers from a mini radio station called FM Saran, Ikuno Ward, Osaka who suggested a radio station for Koreans in Nagata to transmit such vital information as the safety of the surviving friends and relatives, the location of bathing houses people can go to, and the ways and means to get some donation money, etc. They started FM Yumen in five languages (Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, Tagalog and Japanese) which later developed into a multilingual community radio station, FM WaiWai (in January 1996). They found this radio station very helpful for those foreigners listening to the program. At about the same time, Kanda and Hibino organized a group called the Asia Town Promotion Consultative Body to make the town more multicultural. Hibino mentioned as follows:

Kanda-san was always the leader of the Takatori Relief Base. He managed the whole group of volunteers. With his suggestion, I organized the Asia Town Promotion Consultative Body to initiate the building of the multicultural community with Kanda as the representative. At this time, a number of hardworking volunteers including Koreans and Vietnamese joined us. Thus, I have been busy managing the FM radio station, community building, production of multilingual signposts of the town, multilingual advertisements in the market as well as the management of the "Tool de Communication" that provided IT support for the elderly, the handicapped, and foreign residents. (2011-7-24)

3. 3. Yoshitomi's story

In April, 2000, Yoshitomi joined the Takatori Relief Base after closing the office of Multicultural Symbiosis Center (Tabunka Kyosei Center) in Sannomiya, Kobe. Right after graduating from college in the early 80s, Yoshitomi was once working for the Spanish Consulate and later for the Bolivia Honorary Consulate in Kobe and because of her fluency in Spanish, she was helping through telephone counseling service many Latin Americans

who came to Japan in the early period of 1990s. At the time of the big earthquake, she was free because the Bolivian Consulate in Kobe was closed a year earlier and she left there at the end of 1994.

She visited Kanda two days after the quake at the Takatori Relief Base with a bunch of winter cloths and sweaters in her ban. She met Kanda back in 1993 when she visited the Takatori Church as an interpreter for the Circus Team of Spanish Children.

Yoshitomi started her volunteer work as the secretary of Kanda at the Relief Base, engaging herself in various kinds of rescue works with the Japanese people as well as foreigners. While working as a secretary of Kanda, Yoshitomi met Hibino who had been heavily involved in the rescue activities of the foreigners. They got married in 1996. From 1997 through 2000, however, she was working in another NPO, Multicultural Symbiosis Center in Sannomiya as was mentioned earlier.

When she joined the Takatori Relief Base again by leaving MSC in 2000, she brought all the staff of the Multilanguage Center FACIL and World Kids Community to TCC.

3. 4. TCC's flexible reformation

Soon after the three persons Kanda, Hibino and Yoshitomi set out to work together at the Relief Base, they decided to change the name of the Relief Base to Takatori Community Center (TCC), as a specified non-profit corporation organized following the enactment of the Act on promotion of specified non-profit activities in the Japanese Diet in December, 1998.

TCC's activity is not limited to help foreign residents, but extends to any minority people who need extra help. For example, right after the Relief Base started, a temporary health center was built to provide service for the elderly who suffered from the quake. This health center was closed on April 16, 1995, and reborn as "the nursing room of the town." Kanda said, "this nursing room was mainly used just for the older quake victims to relax and enjoy conversation among them (2011-10-21)." Three years after that, this nursing room was reorganized as a group called "Leaf Green," providing services for the elderly and handicapped people. It was born again as an NPO in 2000. Yoshimoto had this to say:

It was Kanda-san who suggested that we should establish non-profit organization to support the old people who are suffering but are not able to enjoy the benefit of public nursing care system (2012-7-6).

3. 5. The Current Constituents of TCC in 2012

TCC continues to work for the community building where people's nationality, age

and various handicaps will not be any reason for exclusion from full participation²⁾. It has been reforming the constructs of the organization and now holds ten groups which target different people in the community.

- 1) Multilingual Community Broadcasting Station called FM YY which has programs in 10 languages,
- 2) Multilanguage Center FACIL which offers translation and interpreting service in 28 languages,
- 3) World Kids Community that offers children of mixed roots opportunities to express themselves through various activities such as video production,
- 4) Hyogo Latin Community which helps Spanish speaking families throughout Japan,
- 5) NGO Vietnam in Kobe providing support for the Vietnamese community,
- 6) Asia Women's Self-reliance Support Project empowering Asian women through fair trade, etc.,
- 7) Leaf Green which supports the aged and handicapped people,
- 8) Noda-Kita Furusato Net which helps the community network in the area,
- 9) Hyogon Tech providing IT support for the local residents,
- 10) AMARC Japan Council, an international NGO of community radio³⁾.

Currently, about 40 people are working in various groups in TCC (with TCC being the platform for these groups at the Takatori Church). The total number of volunteers who have been involved in TCC activities is more than 4,000 (Kanda, 2011-10-21). We consider TCC one of the successful NPOs which maintain its initial purpose and vibrant activities, while transforming its organizational construct as it develops in a wide range locally and globally.

4. Analysis of the leadership style

TCC has been operated and initiated under the leadership of the said three key persons who are the top directors of TCC. Leadership is defined simply as the ability to motivate the people to work in order to achieve the common goal. Based on the data we collected from the interviews, we analyze the nature and style of the leadership that may have been keys to management of the organization for the community by focusing on (1) the visions they shared, (2) characteristics of collective leadership, and (3) the multicultural mediating power they displayed in the process of connecting the local community, the people with different cultural backgrounds, various types of organizations and local governments for the building of multicultural community in Kobe.

4. 1. Shared visions of TCC

The visions of TCC being shared by the three leaders and the staffers are summarized from the three missions: (1) Mission for building multicultural community, (2) To empower those who need help to be equal partners, and (3) To make full use of multicultural resources in the community.

4. 1. 1. Vision 1: Mission for Building Multicultural Community

It is quite natural under the very severe condition after the great earthquake that relief-oriented organization should make every possible effort to extend their helping hands to anyone who is suffering from the disaster. However, in this particular process, volunteers are likely to extend their support to the majority of people who are suffering and tend to forget the minority who were in much more desperate situations due to the language, cultural and social barriers. In this organization of TCC, however, all the leaders and volunteers seemed to have a shared vision toward the people who require different support from the majority. Kanaji (2008) described this as follows:

The poster “Up until the last person to be helped” has been put up on the door of the office. In the recovery process of the city, the last person to be helped is most likely the foreigner who doesn’t understand Japanese. Here, the idea of this NPO is very clear. That is, unless the minority is saved, the whole society cannot be happy. (2011-10-21)

In a similar fashion, Kanda touched upon the importance of the mission of multicultural symbiosis in the following way:

Volunteers had the temporary mission to rescue the victims, of course, but through trying to help until the last person in Nagata where the socially handicapped people and foreigners are living, we have come to realize our new mission of multicultural symbiosis and the building of multicultural community. (2011-10-21)

Yoshitomi also described her realization of the importance of new mission:

Around 2000, I was doing what I am doing for myself, that is, to work for multicultural symbiosis. I think this particular expression had spread throughout Japan after the Hanshin quake. First, it was not familiar to my ear, but gradually

this expression has sounded more natural to me (2011-7-24).

Furthermore, Hibino described his own sense of mission in the following manner:

Our job is to develop a multicultural community. To achieve this goal, the local community is absolutely necessary. With this in mind, we can share the sense of consciousness that we all work for this mission. (2011-7-24)

It is clear from the discussion so far made that all three directors basically shared the vision to build multicultural community.

Vision 2: To empower those who need help to be equal partners

The volunteers at TCC seemed to have kept in mind that they shouldn't forget those who may require different support because of various handicaps who tend to be left out from the general public support. One of the targets was those who needed more support than others to obtain public relief and recovery support because of the language difficulties and cultural barriers. In this regard, Murakami said, "After the disaster latent problems have become revealed. The minority faced the harder reality with handicap and prejudice." (2012-7-6)

Whereas many NPOs specializing in the support for foreigners work for foreigners exclusively, TCC's scope of activities focuses on both Japanese and foreigners to be equally included in their activities. For example, the support for foreigners ignited some activities for the elderly who need more support (See 3.4.) and for activating the weakening local market after the earthquake with the help of multicultural stall run by Vietnamese and Filipinos. (From Kanaji's interview on 2011-10-21)

Oshiro, Japanese Peruvian, came to Japan in March 1991 with her Peruvian husband, and when the big quake attacked Kobe, she was in a panic, completely at a loss to think about what to do. She could not understand any Japanese. But, surprisingly, she is now the Representative of Hyogo Latin Community and she said as follows:

I visited TCC for receiving counseling service in 2000. My son was going to Japanese school, but, not only he but also I could not understand the Japanese. I asked Yoshitomi-san what to do about my son, school, and hospital, etc. She helped me a lot, giving me various concrete advices. Since I was helped, I realized that I should help others, too. She suggested I could start Latin Community. So I did. (2012-7-6)

The above case of Oshiro is a typical one of TCC empowering those who need help to be equal partners. The similar idea can be illustrated in the manner Leaf Green is being operated. According to Yoshimoto, Leaf Green's basic principle is that helpers should stand on an equal footing with those helped. To embody this kind of basic principle, Leaf Green adopts a policy of asking the same amount of membership fee for those who help and those who are helped (2012-7-6). Similarly, in managing Multilanguage Center FACIL, Yoshitomi had this to say:

The real significance of Multilanguage Center FACIL is not gaining profit, but creating the employment opportunities for the foreign residents. We are working together with the clients who are also helped by receiving the necessary information. (2011-7-24)

Vision 3: To make full use of multicultural resources in the community

Unlike other NPOs specializing in the foreigners alone, TCC adopts an integrated approach toward a local community for both Japanese and foreigners. Anybody in the community who needs extra help, beyond the current social system of community support, should be included in the support activities. This principle successfully attracted diverse supporters and TCC functions as a Meeting Plaza for those who share the same vision. In this connection, Hibino told about the various resources in and out of TCC in the following manner:

Many volunteers joined and left TCC. The main reason why TCC attracted them is the space of TCC, cuisine, and time. Sharing of these things is quite important for our communication and discussion. What's more, we had Koreans and Vietnamese, etc. Various kinds of people joined us and did so many things together to get our ideas materialized. It has been fun, indeed. The premise of 1,800 square meters, warehouse, prefabricated houses and what not. We were allowed to use them by the church. Thus, there have been always people of diverse cultural backgrounds, meeting and working with us here. Together, we learned about flexible ways of living together. (2011-7-24)

In the similar context, Yoshitomi said, "working with diverse cultural groups gives me sharper viewpoints."(2011-7-24) These statements imply that their flexible and creative leadership style has been enforced by interacting with the people with diverse cultural backgrounds who frequently visited TCC.

4. 2. Characteristics of Collective Leadership of TCC

The characteristics of the collective leadership of TCC are summarized from the three perspectives: (1) Complementary triangle relations among leaders, (2) A variety of communication channels, and (3) Multicultural mediating power.

4. 2. 1. Characteristic 1: Complementary Triangle Relations among Leaders

The plural leadership style, i.e. triumvirate of three top leaders, is a unique aspect of TCC. There's no strict hierarchical relationship but each has his/her clear role to play depending on the situation and their specialties. This enables them to build a wide range of network and to maximize their abilities. For example, Kanda takes responsibility for whatever TCC is doing by being a representative of most of the groups and organizations TCC was involved. Yoshitomi is good at connecting with government authorities and managing financial matter of the organization while Hibino cultivates strong commitment to various social issues with active supporters. Regarding the relations among leaders, Hibino illustrates the relations with Kanda as follows:

For us, Kanda-san is the father. No matter where he goes, he is always the father. He takes responsibility for whatever we do in the society. If Kanda-san is the father, we are elder brother and sister. This kind of relationship never changes. (2011-7-24)

What Hibino was trying to say was that since Kanda is always ready to assume responsibility for what Hibino and Yoshitomi are doing, they feel so free to do whatever they do. In that particular sense, it is safe to say that their relationships are complementary triangle.

Regarding the role of the three directors, Yoshitomi has this to say:

Kanda-san is the father, for sure. He is the sort of a guardian. His stance is very firm. He believes that it is very important for TCC to become involved in the community-oriented activities. He likes such an idea that TCC helps establishing Asian Market in the community and so forth. As for me, I have to be concerned about the finance of this TCC. In this respect, I really appreciate Kanda-san for allowing us to use a big office space of TCC in this church. On the other hand, Hibino-san is always concerned about the social problems and very active in promoting social movement. (2011-7-24)

Hibino said about the importance of collective leadership as follows:

We have no one who is a powerful dictator. In such a multicultural place like TCC, no one can run and control. People don't come on time. They do only what they like to do. The whole is the spectrum of multicultural activities. Maybe, this is something like the Latin world. It might be called "servant leadership," that is, to serve for everyone. If someone is trying to control the organization, he or she must be asked to leave. (2011-7-24)

Complimentary-Triangle Relations of the three leaders and their specialties is illustrated as under:

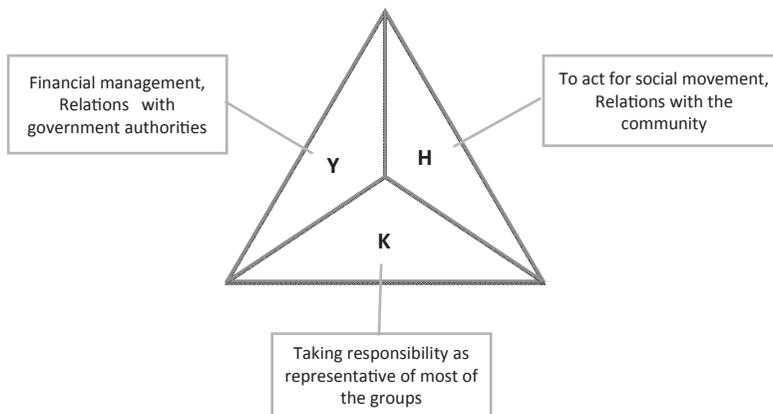


Chart 1: Complimentary-Triangle Relations of the three leaders and their specialties

4. 2. 2. Characteristic 2: A Variety of Communication Channels

The three directors consider it very important for them to communicate with the other leaders and staff not only formally but also informally. Yoshitomi, for example, holds daily meetings for about 30 minutes to one hour with about 20 staff members of Multicultural Pro-cube that coordinates the four NPOs including Multilanguage Center FACIL and World Kids Community. Regular meetings of the representatives of ten groups in TCC are held twice a month, and the same is true with the board meeting of all directors of TCC which is held twice a month.

TCC is always serving as a plaza for dialogues among all kinds of visitors, volunteers, guests, supporters, administrators of the local governments, etc. They are often times invited for attending some meetings and events of TCC. Thus, the leaders are spontaneously engaged in dialogues with the local citizens and communicate with all the

staffers regularly in an intimate and relaxed atmosphere, often over meals and drinks like a big family. Murakami told about his experience of participating in meals together as follows:

When I joined TCC in 2001, I was surprised that there were at least three dinners a week. When members of TCC as well as supporters of TCC came to our office, we made it a rule to eat together in the dining room. Kanda-san emphasizes the importance of this kind of eating together. (2012-7-6)

4. 2. 3. Characteristic 3: Multicultural Mediating Power

Multicultural mediating power implies an ability to connect many people and organizations of different cultural backgrounds who try to achieve the same goal with the shared interest and needs, in order to pursue the same goals (Matsuda, 2009). It requires an ability to disseminate what they try to accomplish to the stakeholders and the public, the sensibility to catch the diverse community needs, empathy to others to build trusting relationships, and creativity to design strategies that attract supporters. The combination of the three leaders, who have various channels with the different community members with their different strength described above (in 4.2.1), functions as multicultural mediating power.

Thanks to the leaders' multicultural mediating power, TCC is well connected with various outside organizations and supported by numerous volunteers even after 17 years since the Earthquake. It has been very successful to connect local foreign residents with not only the local people and other NPOs, but various government organizations including local governments, which have different organizational culture, such as Nagata Ward, Kobe City, and Hyogo Prefecture, and also with global organizations, such as an international community radio network. According to Kanaji, the ingenuity of creating multilingual community FM YY after the earthquake widely attracted people's attention as was reported by various media(2011-10-21). The multilanguage translation service by FACIL matches the needs of the wide community and solidify the foundation as a community business which helps to sustain TCC's long-term financial needs. Many foreigners now participate and run some of the programs in TCC, not being just the recipients of the service. Yoshitomi explains the significance of her NPO of Multilanguage Center FACIL as follows:

We are doing this work together with the foreigners who are the recipients of information. The local governments think merely that translation means just transportation from one language to another. For foreigners living in Japan, we

think it most important to transmit vital information for their living. The public sectors still don't understand how important for us to "communicate" our message to the foreign residents. (2011-7-24)

TCC has been giving an opportunity to empower people of different cultural backgrounds, such as Vietnamese, Koreans, Filipinos, Brazilians and Peruvians in this particular community, to become active partners and contributed to changing the role of foreign residents in the community. Also, the participation of multicultural people made the organization more flexible and creative thanks to the diverse cultural characteristics.

An effort has been made for TCC to connect the local community with children of mixed roots through the activity of an NPO, World Kids Community, originally established by Yoshitomi. Murakami said about his experience in the following way:

We create opportunities to connect the local community with foreign children who come here to find their own comfortable space and do various activities, such as producing video clips and anime. The children understand that they are connected with the community supporters who like them and our organization. (2012-7-6)

As was already touched upon earlier in this report, TCC served as a place to connect community supporters, foreign residents, and senior citizens with handicap for personal and social issues to change the community. Kanda mentioned as below:

Many people of various cultural backgrounds came here to get connected with others who have similar agenda and missions concerning community development including many Japanese volunteers and supporters. (2011-10-21)

As a way of connecting the local community and the local governments, TCC has been proposing new ideas and solutions to local governments. Murakami has this to say:

We propose new ideas to the local government for providing better service to minority groups. Some of the ideas turn into community business of TCC. What Multilanguage Center FACIL is doing is to create the employment opportunities for the foreign residents. In this way, the FACIL is connecting foreign residents with TCC. (2012-7-6)

Thus, it is clear from the foregoing discussion that TCC is contributing to the

multicultural community building of Nagata by demonstrating their multicultural mediating power.

5. Conclusion

This report was designed to identify the nature and style of collective leadership of TCC by focusing on the three directors of TCC. Based on the literature and life story interview of the three main leaders as well as other leaders of respective groups and NPOs, it was found that the three leaders shared a very important mission of TCC and they had been demonstrating their leadership qualities in entirely different but complementary ways. For example, Kanda is playing the role of the official leader, assuming the chairmanship or representative of various groups and associations. Yoshitomi is substantially managing the whole organization by paying attention to the financial side of the organization, working vigorously in the area of community business. Hibino, on the other hand, has always been keen to grab the social problems and issues in the process of providing relief and public services that require urgent solutions of various kinds and has not been hesitant in raising the issue to the local government and other authorities.

We conclude that TCC functions as a 'platform', or a meeting place, for all those interested to get connected in regard to community development in various ways, sharing some common agenda with the same mission (Matsuda & Kume, 2012). The place, the clear mission, and the people who take leadership with multicultural connecting power were the keys to create synergy of different cultural groups. Image of TCC's role for multicultural community building is illustrated as under:

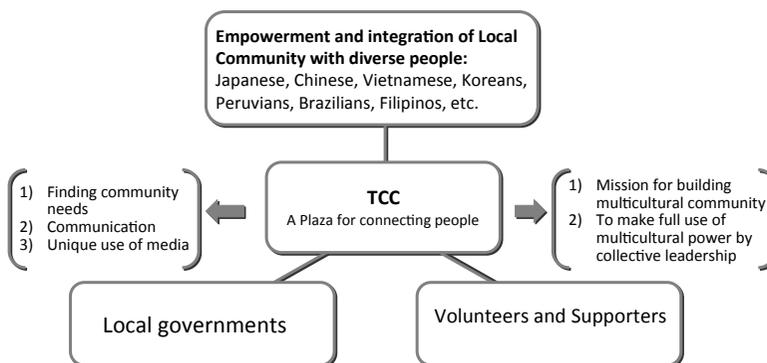


Chart 2 : Image of TCC's Role for Multicultural Community Building

This case study illustrates only a small part of one NPO. Continuing this study, we'd like to find out some new ideas that can be transmitted to other NPOs who attempt to seek the similar vision especially in the Tohoku area where many new NPOs are expected to help the recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011.

Notes

- 1) The first name was 'Takatori Church Relief Base' and then 'Church' was dropped from the name.
- 2) Kanda 2001, <http://www.pure.ne.jp/~ngo/terakoya/2001shiminbo/05kanda.html>
- 3) Takatori Community Center, <http://www.tcc117.org/index.html>

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