

第5章 Chapter 5 The Practice of Deliberative Democracy in Japanese Smart Cities: A Case Study of the Kakogawa Decidim*

1. Introduction

Today, the world is witnessing increasing polarisation. In the United States, the Pew Research Center found that political ideas were becoming more polarised in 2014. Compared to 1994 and 2004, a greater percentage of people regard supporters of other political parties (Democrats/Republicans) as a threat to the state (Pew Research Center, 2014). In Japan, although a thorough survey on political polarisation has not yet been conducted, 28% of people in Japan respond that they feel public opinion is polarised (Tanaka and Hamaya, 2018). They indicate that polarisation is one issue that many societies face today. In order to deal with these issues, some scholars note that deliberative democracy, which focuses on communication and process, should play a greater role in overcoming these political and social divisions (Bächtiger, Dryzek, Mansbridge and Warren, 2018).

However, in reality, it is difficult to conduct the actual practices of deliberative democracy. One important challenge is the associated cost. Since deliberative democracy traditionally puts emphasis on communication, people were expected to carry out deliberative practices in a particular place, requiring that the cost of transport, accommodation, meals and remuneration be covered. For instance, the Japanese government organised a deliberative opinion poll in 2012, at a cost of approximately 60 million yen, more than four times the cost of a public opinion poll (Iwamoto, 2015). This indicates one of the difficulties of holding events to realise deliberative democracy.

One possible solution is the use of technology. Technology can reduce the cost of communication, and some scholars have posited that technology can be used to support deliberative democracy.¹ However, some scholars argue that technology can also lead to polarisation. For instance, Tsuji (2018) has found that people's xenophobia is strengthened as a result of the use of the Internet in Japan, arguing that society will be even more polarised as a result of the use of the Internet (Tsuji, 2018). This may lead to a negative view of the use of technology in deliberative democracy. However, such examples do not indicate whether the Internet or the technology itself contributes to polarisation. The use of a new model of technology for realising deliberative democracy may contribute to mutual understanding.

One potential site for deliberative democracy is local self-government. As James Bryce (1921: 79) noted, local self-government is "the best training for democratic government".² Since popular/national sovereignty is an important value in the Japanese Constitution,³ and democracy is relevant to popular/national sovereignty, deliberative democracy at the level of local self-government is crucial.⁴

In relation to local self-government and the use of technology, the "smart city" concept is key. The Japanese government has facilitated the use of technology in smart cities. Since smart cities are expected to be "human-centered",⁵ they can be a useful site for deliberative democracy using technology. Therefore, it is important to

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1 For instance, the role of technology in deliberative democracy is discussed as #CivicTech (Zhang, Davies and Przybylska, 2021).

2 Note that phrase is used to express the nature of local autonomy by the Japanese constitutional scholars too. See Ashibe (2019).

3 Article 1 of the Japanese Constitution.

4 Note that the norm of local autonomy is enshrined in Article 92 of the Japanese Constitution.

5 "Human-centered" is a key concept of Society 5.0. Smart cities are expected to be "a place where Society 5.0 can be realised ahead of time." Cabinet Office, Japan (n.d.b). For Society 5.0, see Cabinet Office, Japan (n.d.a). In this context, "human-centered" seems to

examine the possibility of deliberative democracy using technology in the context of smart cities in Japan. However, the link between deliberative democracy and smart cities in Japan has not yet been examined in detail much.

This paper poses the following research question: *What attempts are being made to promote deliberative democracy in Japanese smart cities?* This paper examines the use of the platform Decidim in deliberative democracy in Kakogawa City, and argues that such attempts to use technology to promote democracy at the level of local self-government need to be made in other cities as well. It also identifies the limitations to the realisation of deliberative democracy in smart cities.

Following this introduction, this paper first explains the concept of deliberative democracy. It then presents the state of deliberative democracy in local self-governments in Japan and the development of deliberative democracy using technology in smart cities. It concludes with a discussion on the challenges of achieving deliberative democracy assisted by technology.

2. Features of Deliberative Democracy

One feature of deliberative democracy is its emphasis on a process of deliberation. It is important to understand the background of the development of the concept of deliberative democracy. The concept of deliberative democracy developed based on participatory democracy. The limitations of representative democracy were recognised, including the view that citizens' participation in elections was insufficient. Citizens' political participation in other occasions beyond voting in elections was regarded as necessary to more comprehensive democratic practices, from which the concept of participatory democracy arose in the 1960s (Elstub, 2018). The main feature of participatory democracy is voluntariness. People's "dedication" was expected in participatory democracy (Gonoi, 2018: 8). However, participatory democracy lost much support because of the issues faced by social and political movements.⁶ As a result, deliberative democracy received scholarly attention starting in the 1990s (Florida, 2018). There are two important bases of the evolution of deliberative democracy. First, there were issues of representative democracy based on elections; as a result, the process was regarded as important in deliberative democracy. Second, the importance of preparing platforms was recognised. One lesson learned from participatory democracy was the difficulty of relying on the voluntariness of people. It is difficult to maintain a voluntary dedication to politics. Thus, a feature of deliberative democracy is its emphasis on platforms.

The emphasis on the process in a certain platform based on mutual respect is an important feature of deliberative democracy. This feature is related to the possibility of a change of preferences as a result of deliberation (Button and Ryfe, 2005). Gutmann and Thompson (2004) identify four features of deliberative democracy (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004: 3). First, the "reason-giving process" is necessary (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004: 3). This is different from aggregational democracy, including representative democracy, which focuses on the outcome. This process assumes that people can deliberate on various matters and assumes that "free and equal persons [are] seeking fair terms of cooperation" (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004: 3). These assumptions are important to understand the nature of deliberative democracy. Second, deliberation should not take place privately but rather needs to take place in public. All citizens should have access to deliberation. This indicates deliberative democracy's emphasis on trust. Third, binding decisions need to be made as a result of deliberation. Although the process of deliberation is important, such a process needs to be used for decision-making. Fourth, a process is dynamic. Decisions are made as a result of deliberation, but they may not be the final decisions, which can change as a result of further deliberation. The above points indicate that deliberative democracy emphasises the process of deliberation, and mutual respect is the basis of the process. As a result, preferences can change.

mean that human well-being is realised.

⁶ Although the reason is not clear (see Florida 2018), the possible explanation is that people might consider that it a burden to voluntarily participate in political matters.

The scope of deliberative democracy is wider than participatory democracy. There are several actors to organise and several kinds of participants. Typically, the concept of participatory democracy is used when citizens participate voluntarily in various activities other than elections (Gonoi, 2018). However, deliberative democracy includes many types of action. For instance, Button and Ryfe provide a typology of deliberative forums. They mention that civil associations, nongovernmental associations, and governmental organisations can invite participants to deliberative forums. Participants can be self-selected or selected randomly, or stakeholders can be selected (Button and Ryfe, 2005). This indicates the wide scope of deliberative democracy.

There are some practices of deliberative democracy that supplement representative democracy. Such practices are present in Japan, as well. The nationwide deliberative opinion poll on energy and environmental issues that was conducted by the Cabinet Office in 2012 is one example. This practice was done on-site. One difficulty of this system is the cost, which reached approximately 60 million yen (Iwamoto, 2015). People also need to arrange time which can be regarded as another issue.

3. Deliberative Democracy in Local Self-Governments

Although deliberative democracy can function at the state/national/federal level, there are limitations at this level. In deliberative democracy, individuals need to be able to discuss their opinions but people may not have a particular preference on issues at the state/national/federal level. Therefore, it is important to explore cases of deliberative democracy at a local level, as well.

The principle of local autonomy is enshrined in Article 92 of the Japanese Constitution. Some local self-government created a forum for facilitating citizen discussions on various matters, which can be regarded as an example of deliberative democracy. This trend is triggered by local self-governance reforms in Japan.

In 2000, the Decentralisation Act, which triggered decentralisation reform, was enacted. From around the 1970s, reform of the local self-governance system was regarded as necessary for various reasons. First, society's general interest in public administration was heightened as a result of issues related to urbanisation, pollution and the environment. Second, local finances were in crisis in the early 1970s because of the end of the rapid economic growth that had begun in the late 1950s (Kuze, 2015). Based on this background, the Decentralisation Act was enacted in 2000, with efforts to expand opportunities for people to become involved in local self-government. A number of local self-governments have enacted basic autonomy ordinances (Sugiyama, 2014).⁷ These basic self-governance ordinances are considered the "Constitution for local self-governments" (Isozaki, 2018: 62).

The basic self-governance ordinance is a voluntary ordinance enacted within the competency of the local self-government independent from the statute enacted by the Diet⁸ and sets the basis for the management style of local self-government. Typically, it mentions "participation" and "co-operation" by citizens as its basic principles.⁹ For instance, Article 1 of the basic self-governance ordinance of Niseko Town, Hokkaido, the first basic self-governance ordinance enacted in Japan in 2001, provides that 'the purpose of the ordinance is to set out the basic matters concerning town planning, clarify the rights and responsibilities of the citizens in town planning, and promote the

7 Ideas of these basic autonomy ordinances are derived from the ideas of Keiichi Matsushita, a scholar on politics. Matsushita argued that governments should be divided into three groups: local self-governments, state governments, and international organisations in the era of urban societies. He claims that basic autonomy ordinances should be enacted for local governments to become independent as governments (Hirose, 2017).

8 Article 41 of the Japanese constitution determines that the Diet is the only legislative body. Local self-governments can enact ordinances within the statute's limitations. In Japan, local self-government includes prefectures (including the Tokyo Metropolitan Government) and cities, towns, and villages.

9 Participation means "the residents' voluntary and proactive involvement in each stage of the PDCA cycle of local self-government [translated by the author]," and cooperation means "residents and local self-governments act with the awareness of their respective roles and responsibilities [...]" [translated by the author] (Ikemura, 2019: 166)."

realisation of autonomy [translated by the author].”¹⁰ The basic self-governance ordinances determine the basic principles and organisations reflecting autonomy, such as information sharing, with regard to the role of the council.

The basic self-governance ordinances in some local self-governments guarantee the rights of citizens to be involved in community development in addition to the rights of citizens under the Local Autonomy Act. They often stipulate citizens’ responsibilities to be aware of being the subject of autonomy and to act and behave as the subject of autonomy (Sugiyama, 2014). Since the realisation of citizens’ autonomy is one principle of the basic self-governance ordinances, citizens were heavily involved in the drafting process of some ordinances, such as those in Tama City, Musashino City in Tokyo and Yamato City in Kanagawa (Research Institute for Local Government, 2021). After the enactment of the ordinances, local self-governments have been making efforts to encourage citizens to become involved in their activities. Such efforts include a public comment system, a mechanism to reflect citizens’ opinions and the introduction of a system in which citizens become members of the local council (Sapporo City, n.d.).

Before introducing the practice of deliberative democracy in smart cities, this section covers the cases of Mitaka City in Tokyo and other cities as examples of deliberative democracy in local self-government. Mitaka City is one of the most advanced municipalities in Japan that places emphasis on collaboration with citizens.¹¹

In 2006, in response to the government’s decentralisation reform, Mitaka City enacted the basic self-governance ordinance, which is the highest norm of the city government, setting out the fundamental principles of autonomy and city management. In the same year, the city signed a partnership agreement with the Mitaka Junior Chamber of Commerce and organised Mitaka City Planning Discussion, which is deliberation among randomly selected residents. The Mitaka City Planning Discussion “encourage[s] the participation of the general public, called the silent majority, who have had little opportunity to make their voices heard in the administration, to deliver their voices to the administration, to make use of them in city planning [...] [translated by the author]” (Mitaka City, 2006). Discussions were related to topics such as the drafting of Mitaka City’s Basic Plan and the revision of the Disaster Prevention Plan. As of 2019, these discussions have been held seven times (Mitaka City, 2020a).

This discussion was a deliberative process that adopted the method of a planning cell (Sasaki, 2020). Planning cells were developed in Germany by Peter Diener in the early 1970s and are mainly practiced on a regional basis. In this model, randomly selected citizens are divided into small groups, and each group discusses particular issues for several days in parallel (Hendriks, 2005).

The Mitaka City Planning Discussion adopted the planning cell format but also made some changes reflecting local characteristics. It elects a coordinator from the citizens, holds discussions on Saturdays and Sundays to promote the involvement of the working-age population and provides childcare services to make it easier for families with small children to participate. It also gives out tickets to museums and art galleries to participants to encourage their active involvement (Sasaki, 2020). In 2019, 82 people discussed topics such as information sharing, conviviality and environmental issues (Mitaka City, 2020b).

Another example of the case of planning cells in Japan is the citizens’ deliberation in Chigasaki City, Kanagawa. This deliberation exercise is organised by the city and its steering committee, which is composed of the members of the Chigasaki Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Shonan Research Institute of Bunkyo University. Since 2009, various themes have been set, such as referenda, earthquakes and child-rearing, with the aim of solving local issues through discussion. According to the Chigasaki Junior Chamber of Commerce, the purpose of holding this deliberation is to raise civil and citizenship awareness. Chigasaki City considers a method to reflect the voices of citizens of all ages in city policies (Chigasaki Citizens’ Deliberation Executive Committee, 2015). Deliberation has also been conducted recently, and there was deliberation on health in 2019 (Chigasaki City, 2020).

10 For the text of the basic self-governance ordinance of the Niseko Town in Japanese, see https://www.l.g-reiki.net/niseko/reiki_honbun/a070RG00000379.html#e000000092 (accessed on 10 February 2022).

11 In 1974, the mayor of Mitaka City visited West Germany and learnt that citizens actively participated in the city development, and this triggered Mitaka City’s emphasis on citizens’ involvement (Sasaki, 2020).

There are also cases of information and communication technology (ICT) being used to facilitate citizens' involvement in local self-government. Around the mid-2010s, electronic conference rooms were used. The electronic conference room is "an internet screen (web page) on which participants can write various messages to exchange opinions and develop discussions" (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, n.d.). For example, Fujisawa City, Kanagawa Prefecture, created the Citizen Electronic Conference Room called "Komyutto Fujisawa" (Nikkei XTEC, 2002).

The above cases indicate that deliberative democracy is practiced, although there are challenges. For the cases of Mitaka and Chigasaki, based on on-site deliberation, the number of participants is limited. For instance, in Mitaka's case, 1,800 people at or above the age of 18 were randomly selected, and 114 people agreed to participate; of them, 82 people were involved in the discussion (Mitaka City, 2020b). In case of Chigasaki, 33 people participated in deliberations in 2019 (Chigasaki Citizens' Deliberation Executive Committee, 2020). Thus, only a limited number of people actually participate in on-site deliberation. "Koshutto Fujisawa" has now been closed down because the number of comments decreased as a result of the spread of social networking services (SNS) (Fujisawa Citizen Action Promotion Organisation, n.d.).

4. Deliberative Democracy in Smart Cities

In Japan, the use of technology is promoted in smart cities, and although deliberative democracy is not explicitly mentioned, there are some practices involved.

This section first introduces the concept of smart cities in Japan. It must be noted that there is no universally agreed definition of smart cities. Referring to many definitions, Kozłowski and Suwar (2021: 516) propose the following definition: a "smart city is a city that combines information and communication technologies with human and social capital and public institutions to dynamize it is [*sic*] economic, social, environmental and cultural development."

The Japanese government defines smart cities as "a sustainable city or region that continues to create new values and solve various problems faced by cities and regions through advanced management (planning, maintenance, management and operations) utilising new technologies such as ICT [translated by the author]" (Cabinet Office, Japan, n.d.b). It is important to note that smart cities are regarded as human-centred organisations. Smart cities are a key concept of Society 5.0, which the Japanese government advocates. Society 5.0 is defined as "a human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space" (Cabinet Office, Japan, n.d.a). Human-centredness is one feature of Society 5.0, which goes beyond the smart city concept used by the Japanese government.

The three basic visions of Japanese smart cities are as follows: citizen (user) centredness, vision/issue-focused and intersectoral and intercity collaboration. There are also five basic principles: fairness, inclusiveness, privacy, interoperability/openness/transparency, security/resilience and operational/financial sustainability (Cabinet Office, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and Smart City Public-Private Partnership Platform, 2021). Related to deliberative democracy, citizen (user) centredness and fairness/inclusiveness are important. Citizen (user) centredness "emphasises the importance of citizens' own initiatives to improve their well-being [translated by the author]," and fairness/inclusiveness means "realising a smart city where all citizens can enjoy services equally and all actors can participate [translated by the author]" (Cabinet Office, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and Smart City Public-Private Partnership Platform, 2021: 2). They indicate that deliberative democracy is a suitable method for smart cities, as it has the advantage of reflecting the voices of minorities in politics.

In 2017, Kakogawa City, Hyogo Prefecture, was selected by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications to participate in the *Data-Utilising Smart City Promotion Project* and formulated the Smart City Plan for 2021 with

the aim of improving the quality of life of its citizens through the use of ICT. By using this technology, Kakogawa City intended to increase citizen satisfaction and create “a city where everyone can enjoy affluence and happiness [translated by the author]” (Kakogawa City, 2021). As a part of this plan, Kakogawa City signed an agreement with Code for Japan, a general incorporated association in Japan, to promote smart cities based on the idea of a “DIY city” and introduced the “Decidim for Kakogawa,” a platform for democracy with citizen participation. The “DIY city” is understood as an urban space where people can work together with the government and businesses to create the services they need. This understanding is based on the idea that there is a gap between the smart city concept and city planning. Kakogawa City supported this idea and signed the agreement (Code for Japan, 2021).

In this context, Kakogawa city uses Decidim. Decidim¹² is a digital platform for participatory democracy, developed in Barcelona, which collects and consolidates opinions to assist policy-making using the Internet. It shares both offline and online discussions. This mixture of both online and on-site communication is important because it can prevent a digital divide between those who can use technology easily and those who have difficulties in using technology. Kakogawa City has introduced a Japanese version of Decidim, which has been developed by Code for Japan as the first attempt in Japan. “Decidim” means “let’s decide” or “to decide” in Catalan and is used in more than 30 municipalities, including Helsinki (Kakogawa Decidim, n.d.b). In Decidim, people can share their opinions, and there is room for people to have discussions on diverse matters; thus, Decidim is a tool that facilitates deliberative democracy.

It is important to note that Haruyuki Seki, a founder of Code for Japan, was critical of the current smart city plan. He considered that the existing smart city plan is technology-driven, and that it does not think about human well-being enough. Although the concept of smart cities emphasises their human-centric ideas by definition of Society 5.0, Seki believed that such awareness was not enough and urged smart cities to pay more attention to human well-being (Nikkei Business Publications, 2021).

The Kakogawa Decidim was used in the process of developing a smart city plan. Discussions both online and on-site were integrated and were expected to be inclusive.¹³ For instance, there were plans to make the city friendly to the elderly. A total of 196 users registered, and 261 comments and ideas were shared in Decidim as of 5 January 2021 from October 2020 (Information Policy Division, Planning Department, Kakogawa City, n.d.).

This platform won the “Outstanding Communication Strategy Award” at the 16th Manifesto Awards (PR TIMES, 2021)¹⁴ and was featured as an example of civic involvement in the Smart City Guidebook published by the Cabinet Office (Kakogawa Decidim, n.d.a).

After the smart city plan was finalised, Kakogawa Decidim has been used to facilitate people’s exchange of opinions and proposals on various issues. It has been used to call for the naming of facilities and ideas related to the way to use the riverbed of the Kakogawa River. Following Kakogawa City, the Yokohama Minato Mirai 21, a general incorporated association, is conducting practical experiments using Decidim (PR TIMES, 2020). Yosano Town, Kyoto Prefecture, established the Consensus Building Platform with Citizens’ Participation called “Yosanomirai Talk” using Decidim (Yosano Town, 2021). Although Yokohama and Yosano’s cases are not necessarily related to smart cities, they indicate Decidim is used by some cities. Furthermore, Kakogawa’s example suggests that smart city practices can lead to the introduction of deliberative democracy using technology.

5. Analysis and Points for Further Discussion

The above cases indicate that the principles of smart cities and deliberative democracy using technology have a

12 See the following Decidim homepage. <https://decidim.org/> (accessed on 11 February 2022).

13 Nicknames could be set as an attempt to facilitate vitalised discussion.

14 This award is given to “the outstanding activities of local self-government councils and leaders and citizens who support regional sovereignty” (Manifesto Awards, n.d.).

high affinity. In order to create human-centred smart cities, deliberative democracy has a role to play. Realisation of deliberative democracy is one possibility for the future development of smart cities. There are some points for further discussion.

The effects of deliberative democracy using technology, Decidim in particular, should be clarified. The use of Decidim in Japan has just begun, so there are not enough cases for analyses. As the cases are accumulated, additional assessment of the impact of Decidim will be necessary.

One possible challenge for deliberative democracy using technology is the limited number of people involved. Even in the case of Kakogawa, the number of people who participated in the discussions was somewhat limited. In Kakogawa, 196 users registered for Decidim. It must be noted that this number is from October 2020 from January 2021, and hence, merely indicates people who involved in a discussion for a limited period (Information Policy Division, Planning Department, Kakogawa City, n.d.). However, this implies that creating a space for a platform to discuss various issues with many people is a challenge.¹⁵

Related to the use of technology, the role of the government needs to be critically examined. When a platform for discussion is created, there is a registration to verify individuals eligible to participate in discussions. In other words, the actor that organises the platform will be able to see information about the people who register. The person's comments may be traced. There must be a mechanism to prevent abuse of the information by the government if it has access to the information. Platformers also should be responsible for the use of information.

The effects of technology also need to be critically examined. As already mentioned, there is a view that the Internet strengthens people's xenophobia and polarisation (Tsuji, 2018). Another study indicates that SNS such as Facebook "intensifies" polarisation (Barrett, Hendrix and Sims, 2021: 1).¹⁶ This link between technology, polarisation and democracy requires further examination to explore the role of technology to realise deliberative democracy.

6. Conclusion

Although the link between smart cities and deliberative democracy has not been discussed much, this paper argues that the link is observable in the case of Kakogawa City. The purpose of the Japanese smart cities is to be human-centric, and deliberative democracy has roles to play. One possible topic for future research is the application of the deliberative democracy model to a nationwide practice. This paper focused on local self-government, but this can be also applied nationally. It is interesting to note that a National Forum was established when the amendment of Iceland's constitution was discussed (Landemore, 2020), and the possibility to do a similar practice should be considered.

The effects of deliberative democracy in a polarised era are one significant point of discussion. As explained in the Introduction, the author's primary concern is polarisation, assuming that political and social divisions can be solved by deliberative democracy. Trust is important as a basis of deliberative democracy and any social cooperation. Critical perspectives can be offered to deliberative democracy as a solution to polarisation. The assumption of deliberative democracy is based on the willingness to cooperate and mutual understanding. If trust is lacking, however, deliberative democracy may become just a source of conflict. The bases of trust also need to be examined.

15 Although this paper does not discuss further, this point brings other questions as follow: to what extent people are interested in politics, and why should people be interested in politics or decision-making in the first place. Political and legal principles assume people's participation in politics, and this is the vital core of the current democracy. However, this assumption may need to be examined critically to think about the current and future democracy.

16 Note that Barrett, Hendrix and Sims (2021) argue that SNS is not the cause of polarisation but intensifies it.

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