Creating a diversified community: Community safety activity in Musashino City, Japan

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ABSTRACT

The recent development of the third sector and the government encouragement of it have attracted the attention of many researchers. In particular, geographical research has examined how the third sector has been affected or changed by government policies or guidelines in recent political economic contexts, especially neo-liberalism and also neo-communitarianism. While much research has demonstrated that the relationship between the government and the third sector is becoming closer, and has considered the problematic impact on the sector or the community, recent studies have described a much more complicated relationship and its consequence. In response, this paper attempts to explore alternative effects of government encouragement at the local community level, through utilising empirical data on recent voluntary activity regarding community safety by the Voluntary Organisations for Crime Prevention Patrol (VOCPP) in Musashino City, a suburb of Tokyo in Japan. Before focusing on the case study in Musashino, the paper briefly outlines key geographical literature on the third sector, and also examines recent expectations of Japan's third sector using Japanese political documents. Finally, the paper argues that the encouragement of government in fact has the potential to work as a 'catalyst' leading to a more independent third sector, with a geographically and organisationally less hierarchical structure, and may also assist in developing a more diversified community.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades the shift from government to governance has been discussed in geography and in other social sciences (Goodwin and Painter, 1996). The discussion covers a range of themes including changes in the nature of governing itself, the rise of partnership-based policies, and community empowerment. A common finding, particularly in case studies focused on Western societies, has been the association between processes of neo-liberalisation, and more recently neo-communitarianisation, with the rise of the third sector (for example, Fyfe, 2005; Skinner and Rosenberg, 2005). The recent development of the third sector has been a notable global phenomenon (Salamon et al., 1999), but there are also great differences within the third sector. As Milligan (2007, p. 191) has noted:

It should also be recognised [. . .] that significant differences exist in the scope, structure, role and funding of the voluntary sector in different national settings. To a large extent, then, voluntary sector development is country-specific, reflecting differences in their social, cultural, political and economic histories. So while structural influences on voluntary activity can operate at national, regional and local government levels, voluntary action can also develop in response to far more localised needs and interests that change over time and space. (Milligan, 2007, p. 191)

This paper suggests, using the case of Japan, that some of these localised findings may be significant enough to add another perspective to existing theories of the relationships between political economic shifts, the third sector, and community. It does this in two ways: firstly by contrasting the current development and expectations of the third sector in Japan with key research on political economy, the third sector, and community; and secondly by examining third sector development in Japan by focusing on community safety activity in Musashino City, in suburban Tokyo. The next section briefly outlines leading geographical explanations of current third sector developments, showing that these have often problematised the increasingly close relationships between the government and the third sector, and the sector's lack of autonomy from the government. Section three discusses how recent changes in Japan's third sector can be explained by Western literature, and in the particular context of Japan, with Japanese political documents. The paper then examines community safety activity in Musashino to illustrate how the government encouragement of local voluntary activity is giving rise to a new form of community (involvement).

The paper argues that while expectations of the third sector in Japan can, to some extent, be understood within the context of a broader political economic shift under neo-liberalism and

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neo-communitarianism, through this case study it is difficult to argue that the third sector has lost its autonomy. Indeed, it concludes that if we reflect on the place-based context of the third sector and community, it can be argued that the government's encouragement of the third sector actually has potential to promote a more diversified community. These findings have implications for discussions of Japan's community and for theoretical discussions in geography.

2. Neo-liberalism, neo-communitarianism and the third sector

In recent decades many geographical studies have been conducted on neo-liberalism in order to understand its nature and how it, socially, economically and politically, affects both our day-to-day lives and the broader world. In general, neo-liberalism is understood to be a reaction to the collapse of the "Keynesian welfare consensus" (Giddens, 1998, p. 16) or "national Keynesianisms" (Peck and Tickell, 2007, p. 27). However, it is now understood that neo-liberalism can be analysed using various theoretical approaches, and that its development and diffusion has been uneven across time and space. Ward and Englans (2007) identify four conceptions of neo-liberalism from the broader literature. That is, neo-liberalism can be considered as (1) an ideological hegemonic project, (2) a policy and program, (3) a state form, (4) governmentality.

A recent emphasis on the third sector has often been understood in association with neo-liberalisation, especially as a policy and program, and as a state form. It is argued that privatisation, liberalisation, and deregulation have produced a reconfiguration of relationships between the state, market, third sector and household. This change is often characterised as the shift from government to governance. As a result of this shift, the third sector is positioned as an actor that can fill the void left by the withdrawal of the state (Fyfe and Milligan, 2003a; Milligan and Conradson, 2006).

The rise of the third sector has also been associated with political enthusiasm for community. As well as neo-liberalisation, it is important to consider the recent trend of encouraging community, or neo-communitarianism, to understand what the development of the sector means. (Neo-)communitarianism, however, includes different political philosophical bases. Communitarianism based on radical pluralism sees community as an arena for different people to emphasise differences and their rights, and so communities are understood as overlapping and contested (Delanty, 2010). But, mainstream communitarians direct attention towards the civic and normative dimension of community (Delanty, 2010, p. 70). This thought is based on a conservative vision, in which 'the loss of community' rhetoric is used and the regeneration of the community is advocated. These thoughts have recently become a political discourse (Delanty, 2010; Rose, 1999).

Focusing on links to the third sector, communitarianism often refers to the importance of the third sector or voluntary activity in terms of citizenship or social capital. But critical discussion sees the celebration of the third sector as governmental instrumentalisation of community with particular values, especially conservative or nostalgic notions. Regarding this point, Delanty (2010, p. 69) states that "community articulates disciplinary strategies, such as community policing and neighbourhood watches, and a political subjectivity that does not seek large-scale solutions to social problems but rather looks to voluntarism".

In sum, the recent development of the third sector has been associated with neo-liberalism and also neo-communitarianism. However, these are not equal to each other. Indeed, neo-communitarianism does not aspire to promote economic competition (Jessop, 2002, p. 461). However, recently, neo-liberalism and neo-communitarianism have become closer, as can be seen with the 'Third Way' (Giddens, 1998). The emphasis on the third sector is seen as a means of alleviating the adverse effects of excessive individualism and the free market that have marked neo-liberalism (Delanty, 2010). Fyfe (2005, p. 537) states the overall issue as follows; "[t]he last ten years have witnessed a remarkable revival of interest in the role of the third sector as a possible 'panacea' for the problems facing neo-liberalising states".

Geographers have examined the third sector under neo-liberalism and/or neo-communitarianism. Reviews by Milligan and Fyfe summarise these studies (see Fyfe and Milligan, 2003a,b; Milligan and Fyfe, 2004, 2005; Milligan, 2007). According to Fyfe and Milligan (2003) and Milligan and Fyfe (2004), geographical studies have focused on; firstly, space, through which geographers have looked at the uneven development of the third sector; secondly, place, in which they have examined the particular development and activity of the sector with political context. In these studies, geographers have critically considered the emergence or expectations of the third sector. They have not accepted neo-liberalisation or neo-communitarisation as given conditions, but instead have examined the relationships between political economic shifts and the third sector.

In the geographical literature, two discussions have particular resonance for this paper. The first discussion is that the autonomy of the third sector has been compromised as a result of its closer relationship with the government. This claim dates back to the influential work of Wolch (1989, 1990) on the "shadow state" apparatus. The shadow state is understood as "a para-state apparatus comprised of voluntary organizations" and, while it is positioned "outside of traditional democratic politics" as a result of the shift of responsibilities for collective goods from the public state sector to the voluntary sector, the sector "remains within the purview of state control" (Wolch, 1990, p. 4). Wolch (1990) expressed concern about this relationship, arguing that the dependence of third sector organisations upon state contracts and grant funding dampens their ability to be critical of government policy. This has since become one of the main claims of geographical studies of the third sector. They reveal that the relationship, where the third sector is held to account for its activity, has led to a more corporatist third sector. In addition, the loss of the inherent characteristics that the third sector is expected to possess, such as active and democratic citizenship, social capital, local identity and progressivity, is discussed within a particular place context (Fyfe, 2005; Milligan and Fyfe, 2004, 2005; Mitchell, 2001; Wolch, 1990).

The second discussion is about the critical view of recent expectations of community. As interest in the third sector has grown, so too has an emphasis on the "community". This new emphasis on community is explained by the devolution and decentralisation of the state (Imrie and Raco, 2003), and more specifically by efforts to fill the gap left by the rolling-back of the state in welfare provision (MacLeavy, 2008; Raco, 2003). While 'community' has a variety of meanings, government policies have shaped particular communities which contribute to building a market-centric society or individual subjectivity. Moreover, it potentially produces new forms of exclusion or divisions among people in the community (MacLeavy, 2009).

Additionally, the term 'community' reflects particular values, which are often based on conservative views (DeFilippis et al., 2006). Regarding this point, based on Etzioni's definition of community (Etzioni, 1997, p. 127), Rose (2000, p. 1401) highlights:

> Community is [...] an affective and ethical field, binding its elements into durable relations. It is a space of emotional relationship through which individual identities are constructed through their bonds to microcultures of values and meanings. It is through the political objectification and instrumentaliza-