

## From Coexistence to Better Communication

When people from various backgrounds live together, it is necessary to make common rules. That was what I had thought before this summer when I started volunteering in a big housing complex with 5,000 residents called “Shibazono Danchi.” However, after experiencing volunteering activities, I am now aware that the rules could be a discrimination or distinction if it just reflects one side opinion, to separate other people from different culture and came in later. I therefore started to think how the rules could be developed and shared by both sides.

The Shibazono Danchi is located in Kawaguchi city, Saitama prefecture, about 20 minutes train ride from Shinjuku. It has been rented by Japanese families for almost 40 years but gradually international residents mainly from China arrived. In 2019, more than half of the residents are Chinese people. Recently, the difference of culture between the Chinese and the Japanese residents has made it difficult for them to live together without troubles. To give an example, Japanese residents complained about the scribbling which insults Japan on some benches, garbage thrown away without being sorted and even filth found on landing of the stairs which everyone uses.

To be honest, when I heard these stories, I was disappointed with the people who did them. I almost thought that the residents from China and Japan had no choice to live peacefully together but to live separately because the common sense in daily life between two countries are too different to be shared.

One day, the leader of our volunteer group said to me, “ Of course the easiest way to give peace back to this Danchi is to separate the people into different buildings, but why don’t we stop for a moment and think? The only thing that we need to solve this problem is, I think, to make a new platform of better communication between the residents who have different value. We can do that.”

I was impressed with his word. Fix the bad behaviors complained by other residents or live separately. I found that this extreme idea would make the result to the bad way. What I learned from his word was that the issue we have to discuss in this housing complex was how to go beyond the stage of coexistence of Japanese and Chinese residents, to the neighbors to have good communication between them.

So how we could make a platform for the better communication between Chinese and Japanese residents? Our volunteer group, the Shibazono Kakehashi Project, hold monthly communication events in which residents and student volunteers jointly plan and operate such as calligraphy or science workshop. The idea here is to share the same process makes people understand the culture and way of thinking with each other. It has apparently become a new communication arena in this housing complex. I am pleased to see more and more people join these events and would like to be of help to them.

I have another idea to pursue the possibility to make a better surrounding for communication among international residents. In addition to face-to-face communication, I think that online communication could strengthen the tie between Chinese and Japanese residents. Online communication could offer a new opportunity for the residents to join the Kakehashi Project and extend the number of people to join the monthly events. Also, online application is the best way to collect local information such as restaurants, events, or tips of living here. I would like to open the online bulletin board on which residents could share such information as well as their feeling and opinions about Shibazono. I am currently working on the prototype and show it to my colleagues soon.

My hope is the Chinese and Japanese residents would develop a new living rule in Shibazono housing complex together through good communication, be the mix of online and face-to-face.

We are in the global community where coexistence of different culture is being discussed everywhere.

Thinking about the better communication and develop various platform should be our common goal.

(660 words.)