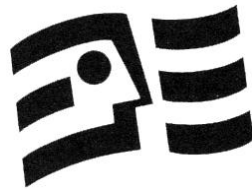


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# A Knowledge-Creating City: The Case of Mitaka City

Executive Summary



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## Executive Summary

The city is the fundamental base of our daily lives because its economic sustainability and prosperity are closely related with our quality of life. As a consequence, cities, regions, and communities have gained attention from academics, businesses, and politics. To develop local businesses and solve local social issues, various stakeholders, namely, citizens, academics, local businesses, and the local and central governments in a city need to collaborate with each other. However, collaboration is not an easy process to implement successfully, because various stakeholders have different and sometimes conflicting objectives and interests. Moreover, how and why they can work together for a mutually agreed-upon goal is not clear, because there is no legitimate structure in a city which motivates them to collaborate. Then, the purpose of this dissertation is to identify how collaboration in a city can be implemented successfully.

Collaboration is defined as a process of people working together to achieve a deep, collective, creative, and shared goal by creating and sharing knowledge and building consensus. In the case of cities, collaboration creates new knowledge in its process of achieving a new social value. Collaboration in a city emerges from boundary-less multiple contexts and forms complex relationships. On the other hand, knowledge-creating theory of the firms explains the process of knowledge creation in structured organizations; however the contexts and relationships are less complex than in cities. Then, by grounding on the knowledge-creating theory of the firms, but at the same time considering the differences of contexts between firms and cities, success factors and process of collaboration in the cities may be identified.

To identify, concepts from the theory such as SECI process, *ba*, knowledge ecosystem, and knowledge assets can provide a useful and firm ground. Four hypotheses were presented and verified with a case of Mitaka city.

- Hypothesis 1: Various stakeholders of a city share the foundations of the city; such as the physical place (地域), history, tradition, norm, and the mental emotions and the social capital (地縁)
- Hypothesis 2a: The more the stakeholders participate in knowledge-creating activities, the more they establish a new ecosystem, that is, an environment consisting of various stakeholders as well as the physical components of the city with which the stakeholders interact (知域)
- Hypothesis 2b: The more the stakeholders participate in knowledge-creating activities, the more they establish new ties, that is, a social network of various stakeholders (知縁)
- Hypothesis 3: Collaborations are driven by the distributed leaders who share vision and values, and are intrinsically motivated.
- Hypothesis 4: As a result of the collaboration, traditional wisdom (地恵) and wisdom from the various stakeholders (知恵) is synthesized into new social values and new traditional wisdom

This dissertation constructs on a single case, Mitaka city and its stakeholders as the units of analysis. An in-depth historical study with multiple sources was conducted utilizing multiple and methodologies such as narrative-based approach, grounded-theory approach, and interviews. 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with Mitaka citizens and city staff members who were referred by interviewees by the name-generator method. Each interviewee was asked in a two-hour interview to describe when and how they began to be involved in the citizens' activities and to recount the three most memorable experiences.

The case of Mitaka city is ensured with reliability and validity by widely accepted reputations as a collaborative city. The central government, municipal governments,

academia, and media in Japan acknowledge and refer to Mitaka as a model case and a benchmark. This is even so outside of Japan. In 2005, Mitaka was awarded as “Intelligent Community” by International Community Forum, winning over well-known, world-class intelligent cities including Singapore, Tronto, Canada, and Sunderland, UK.

The case of Mitaka city begins with its historical development after World War II. Mitaka is a residential city in metropolitan Tokyo. Because it is a residential city, mayors historically regarded citizens’ knowledge as the most important resource of the city and sought for better ways to utilize their knowledge. Accordingly, citizens’ participation and collaboration became a basic policy of administration, in all the areas of policy-making and administration planning (Machizukuri), local business development and incubation (Machiokoshi), and social and community based businesses (SB/CB).

In Mitaka, cyclical and spiral relationships between the environment, structure, and the agents are constructed. Long-time citizens with experience welcome newcomers and nurture them, and the newcomers in return welcome other newcomers and nurture them. Through apprenticeship-like relations, physical and mental foundations are shared and renewed, and the citizens become leaders, distributed, autonomous, and collective at the same time. They inherited the frontier spirit of “being number one in Japan” and established their own way of developing policies, plans, and businesses, which they proudly call the “Mitaka method.” There are multiple “Mitaka methods,” in city planning and execution for solving local issues, and SOHO (small office, home office) incubation and SB/CB promotion for developing local businesses. “Mitaka methods” is characterized by the intensive use of ICT (information and communication technologies) and social media as tools to promote collaboration.

In sum, the more citizens participate and collaborate, the more the participants

share the physical and mental foundations of the city, the more the knowledge-creating processes occur, and the social ecosystem and social ties are broadened and strengthened, and finally, new social values and new traditional wisdom are created. Accordingly, the four hypotheses were verified that physical and mental foundations (地域地縁) will be synthesized with the social ecosystem and social ties (知域知縁) through knowledge-creating processes facilitated by the distributed, autonomous and collective leaders. As a result, the traditional wisdom and knowledge of the citizens (地恵・知恵) will be transcended by new traditional wisdom and new social values.

As a theoretical implication, the dissertation transforms the knowledge-creating theory of firms into a theory of cities. As said, study of cities, regions, and communities is an emergent new field in academics with increasing attention and interest, and grounding on the knowledge-creating theory opens new field of research. Furthermore, the dissertation can be extended to establish a knowledge-creating theory of social innovation, which is about creating new social values, processes, and wisdom for solving social issues. As for the managerial implications, the dissertation identifies how collaboration can emerge and be implemented in cities, regions, and communities, through sharing physical and mental foundations, creating new knowledge, and fostering distributed leaders as drivers. These findings together with actual cases of “Mitaka methods” should encourage collaboration in cities, regions, and communities.

The limitation of this dissertation is that it is based on a single case and thus the findings of the dissertation need to be tested and verified in other contexts. However, this also indicates that future opportunities are wide-open. Comparative case studies such as on success and failure cases, rural and urban cases, foreign and domestic cases will add value to the research. In addition, quantitative approaches such as surveys or questionnaires may be able to support the comparative studies.

From the case of Mitaka city, I have learned that passion and commitment are both infectious, and so is creativity. I hope that this dissertation may offer a framework especially in reviving the Tohoku area suffering from the aftermath of the East Japan Earthquake in March 11, 2011. Collaboration does not only develop knowledge and wisdom, but also hope.

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