

SUMMARY

Characteristics and perspectives for sister city ties between Japan and Australia

– Focusing on examples in the state of Victoria –

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This paper considers sister-city relations between 15 municipalities in Victoria, Australia, and their counterparts in Japan. The research was based on interviews with each of the municipalities in Australia and a survey sent to all of the municipalities in Japan. After describing some long-term trends in the formation of sister-city links with different countries, the analysis considers whether any generalizations can be made about the way in which sister cities come to be matched and then the validity of the very limited theorizing that has occurred to date about how sister-city relations evolve over time.

The research discussed in this paper reveals that the current models which see a progression from cultural exchange through to the development of economic relations may hold only for large cities but not for medium-sized municipalities, most of which have a rather limited economic base from which to pursue economic interdependence. However, such municipalities have a range of options that would allow them to develop their sister-city relations in other directions. For example, some have begun to explore the possibility and usefulness of exchanging with their sister-city counterparts information relevant to the good governance of their municipal areas.

The article concludes with a look at some of the Japanese survey data on plans for the future. Those data confirm that on the Japanese side Osaka, as a flagship-type of city, is interested in relations that bolster its economic functioning in a global sense, whereas some smaller municipalities may entertain hopes of moving in that direction but are more uncertain in that regard and others remain much more focused on the cultural exchange.

While the difference between the large cosmopolitan centres and the smaller municipalities is clear, further research is needed to see if there are differences between medium-sized municipalities and those that are smaller yet again.