



Towards Reconsidering the Image of Children and Youth Who Do Not Use Ibasho in Japan

Mai Kannan

Osaka University, Japan

Abstract

In Japan, as issues affecting children, such as school refusal, became more visible in the 1980s, the “lack of a place to belong” emerged as a social problem. Since then, community-based support spaces known as Ibasho (a place where one feels at home) have become widespread. These Ibasho provide a space for people who feel they have nowhere to go. As these spaces became established, they were often appreciated for being easily accessible and for having a minimal sense of adult-led support.

However, children and youth who don't use these Ibasho are often seen as a problem. At an administrative level, the focus is on how to connect them with these support centres. This approach carries the risk of creating “proper places for children” based on adults' idealised past and future, as Olwig et al. (2003) point out. This could, in turn, lead to the oversight of diverse ways of being.

This presentation offers a new interpretation of the fixed, adult-led framework that promotes the 'accessibility of Ibasho'. We contend that some children and youth who feel they have no place to belong and need to find a space where they can feel at ease, yet choose not to go to formal support centres like Ibasho. This presentation will argue for the importance of re-examining the concept of Ibasho from a child's perspective, highlighting its dual nature and limitations, so that these children and youth are not overlooked.

Keywords: Ibasho, Children and Youth, Place, Non-users, Accessibility