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## Think Globally and Act Locally: Local Implementation of Japan's Internationalization Policy

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In the late 1980s, the Japanese national government proposed a plan to "internationalize" the country — to increase international understanding. This national proposal resulted from the pressures of globalization as well as a mixture of domestic political and economic factors. Through this broad proposal, Japan sought to decentralize and encourage local levels of government to create individual policies for globalizing their communities. It proposed internationalizing business and education, exposing the Japanese people to outside cultures, exposing foreigners to Japan's culture, and increasing the Japanese people's familiarity with English. While the national government provided general suggestions for internationalization (*kokusaika*), its intent was for the prefectures and cities to create their own policies and programs.

We will explore the implementation of Japan's internationalization plan in the Aomori Prefecture, specifically Aomori City, Misawa City, and Hachinohe City. Each plan, despite similar goals, is intentionally highly individual in nature; we will explore their efforts at economic internationalization and cultural internationalization. Due in part to vague goals and a lack of program evaluation, it is hard to assess the success of these internationalization policies. Nonetheless, we will consider progress so far and conclude with suggestions for improving future internationalization efforts.

## Globalization and Japan's Internationalization

As an academic term, *globalization* is fuzzy. A basic definition could be "the intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural relations across borders" (Holm and Sorensen, 1995, p. 1). Exactly what "economic, political, social, and cultural relations" mean is debatable, as is the relative importance of each aspect to the concept of globalization. The Japanese Economic Council defines globalization as "the search for improved global efficiency for various economic agents" (Economic Council, 1999, p.5). For our purposes, we focus on economic and cultural relations across borders, and how economics and culture within Japan connect to global integration broadly defined.

The Japanese term *internationalization* is equally fuzzy. Maylorie Townsend, with the Japanese Exchange and Teaching program, stated "Internationalization — there is a conflict between foreigners and Japanese about what this idea is. To Japanese, it is a broad term with no meaning. Some kind of interaction takes place where both parties learn something" (June 20, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan). Internationalization is, in large part, international exchange (*kokusaikoryu*) of whole cultures to increase understanding. We can further determine the term's meaning by understanding its emergence.

As a policy, internationalization (*kokusaika*) grew out of "the need to create diversity and facilitate the ease of face-to-face interaction with foreigners." Japan's history of isolation and demographic homogeneity left it ill prepared for the inclusion of foreigners in economic, political, and cultural institutions. Historically, Japan created a "cosmopolitan elite" to facilitate interactions with the West. Globalization and Japan's position as a global economic power, however, pose challenges to Japan's inward-looking culture and requires participation by a larger segment of the population.

Internationalization is “an attempt to integrate a relatively insular and homogeneous population with a global society made profitable and important to Japan by her own economic progress” (McConnell, 1996, p. 446-447).

Viewed from both a Western and a non-Western perspective, globalization is generally perceived to be the spread of Western economics, politics, and culture across the world — for the non-West, it is the entrance of ideas from the outside. In Japan, internationalization is an attempt to create an atmosphere in which it can open itself to the ideas and values being spread through globalization. Throughout this paper, we use globalization when referring to pressures from the outside and internationalization when referring to efforts from within Japan.

Given Japan’s current review of its internationalization proposal, this paper is timely in providing an outside perspective of the policy. More importantly, there appear to be few explorations of the implementation of internationalization as a broad policy or at the local levels. Assessments exist of the language programs, particularly Japanese Exchange and Teaching (Lincicome, 1993; McConnell 1996). Other internationalization-related publications examine the need for labor and immigration (Sassen 1994), the growth of grassroots networks (Menju, 2000), and the need for increased globalization more generally (Longworth, 1996; Daichi & Gardels, 1999). We found no English-language studies of internationalization at the local level; our study is a preliminary attempt to fill that gap, by exploring local policies and programs oriented toward increasing international understanding between Japan and the rest of the world.

## **Methodology**

We utilize qualitative, case study analysis for this paper, which ensures a

richness of detail in this first-cut exploration of Japan’s internationalization efforts at the prefecture and local levels. Globalization interacts with Japan’s internationalization program, and the actions taken by each level of government impinge on one another. Therefore, we choose case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). An additional complication of the “real-life context” of Japan’s internationalization plan is its goal to mitigate regional inequities and promote regional economic growth through globalization. We recognize these domestic goals, but explore the local efforts primarily in relation to the internationalization policy rather than directly addressing the regional inequities, rural/urban divide, or demographic shifts common to industrialized countries.

The cases for this study are rural Aomori Prefecture as whole and the cities of Aomori, Misawa, and Hachinohe as constituent parts of that whole. We assess each case using two main criteria: economic internationalization and cultural internationalization. Economic internationalization includes local efforts to make areas more attractive to international business, increasing tourism, and building globally oriented infrastructure such as seaports and airports. Cultural internationalization includes such efforts as increasing contact between Japanese and foreigners, creating sister city programs and establishing sports exchanges. We give special attention to language programs as an effort to promote internationalization.

We rely on a combination of primary and secondary sources in this qualitative analysis. Anita Davis traveled to Japan in June/July 2000 to conduct semi-structured interviews, gather documentation, and make direct personal observations. Interview subjects included high-level representatives of the International

Departments of government in Aomori City, Misawa City, and Hachinohe City and other persons involved in various aspects of each city's internationalization projects. We have also collected information from scholarly books and journals, news magazines and services, and government documents and publications (gathered in the field and from the Internet).

We first describe the Japanese national internationalization policy, then explore its implementation in the Aomori Prefecture and Aomori City, Misawa City, and Hachinohe City. In addition to the economic and cultural criteria discussed above, we examine at each level the projects developed for internationalization.

### **Japan's Internationalization Policy**

Current internationalization efforts in Japan began with a government policy proposal known as "Global Connections." Created in 1987 and revised in 1988, this directive was sent to all the local governments in Japan. The proposal was couched in broad terms, seeking to globalize business, open attitudes and accommodations to foreigners, and increase the exposure of Japanese to the ways of the world and of foreigners to the ways of the Japanese (Global Connections, 1987).

The internationalization directive was crafted at a time when Japan was experiencing a strong economy. It was, in part, motivated by worldwide criticism of Japan's positive trade imbalance and an international call for Japan to spread its wealth by aiding other countries. Internationally, Japan was still viewed very much as a closed system and internal self-criticism was developing as well. Corresponding with these international pressures were domestic ones, especially an internal effort to decentralize the Japanese government and foster policy activity from the local level upward. These pressures and ideas coalesced into the Global Connections proposal. The justification for

it is expressed in the government documents:

Government thinks that, normally, global connections arise from business to business connections (commercial exchanges), and in fact business should do it. But Japan cannot wait for this to happen. ...Japan needs to become more global more quickly. (Global Connections, 1987)

The broad goals of the internationalization proposal were to be made specific by the local governments; the proposal focused on "how local level governments could create global connections, global communications [among] people, and international friendship" (Global Connections, 1987).

The national government set vague but extremely high goals for increased internationalization; we categorize these goals into two main categories: economic expansion and cultural exchange and exposure. In the first category, suggestions made by the national directive included encouraging commercial businesses to make global connections, cooperation between businesses and local governments in doing so, and local government support for international business projects. With regard to cultural internationalization, "Global Connections" suggestions included creating sister-city relationships, cultural and educational exchange programs, sports exchanges, volunteer programs for translation and homestays, and hosting international events such as symposia, industrial fairs, cultural fairs, and sporting events. The national plan also included suggestions for improving language education, especially English. Japan requested prefecture and city governments create new government departments devoted to internationalization and to submit local policies for endorsement by the national government (Global Connections, 1987). To support the local governments in these efforts, Japan created the Council of Local Authorities for

International Relations (CLAIR). Japan's government originally set aside roughly 1 million yen for support of each local level policy (Nakaya, M., June 2000, Hachinohe, Japan; Mahr, Y., October 25, 2000; Yokosaka-san, June 2000, Noheji, Japan).

Internationalization was to cut both ways: to expose Japan to the world but also to bring the world to the Japanese. "Global Connections" suggested localities encourage international travel, providing information centers for foreign travelers, improving road, train, and airport access, and, more generally, making living conditions comfortable for foreigners. The more exposure visitors have to Japan, the government argued, the fewer misunderstandings other countries would have about Japan and the Japanese people (Global Connections, 1987).

The Japanese government recognized that its people are not open to outsiders but insisted that exposure to other cultures, lifestyles, languages, and habits could lead to more openness within Japanese culture — which would improve its position in the global economy and mitigate international criticism. Additionally, increasing international business contacts could improve regional economies within Japan (Global Connections, 1987). The national government also made it clear that this was a long-term policy, focusing first on a five-year timeline.

In providing suggestions but no clear policy directives, Japan was emphasizing that each locality should identify what was needed in their area and institute the most appropriate policies. Below are brief assessments of economic and cultural internationalization in one prefecture and three cities in rural, northern Japan.

### **Prefecture-Level Efforts at Internationalization: Aomori Prefecture**

The northern most prefecture of the main island of Japan takes its name from the surrounding forests of bluish-tinted

evergreens — *Ao* means blue and *mori* means forest of trees. Aomori Prefecture is a remote mountainous region with rugged coastlines and a large lake. The prefecture has a total population of about 1.5 million; the three largest cities are Aomori City, Hachinohe City, and Hirosaki (Utilizing the Geographic Characteristics, 2000, p. 3). A harsh winter climate and distance from the economically powerful regions of Southern Japan increase its isolation.

Aomori Prefecture produces primarily agricultural crops and their by-products. It is the main apple-producing region of the country, marketing about 15 varieties and generating by-products such as honey, juice, cakes, candies, and dyes. Other crops include garlic, Chinese yams, edible chrysanthemum, livestock, rice, and grapes. Fishing, particularly scallops and red squid, also contributes to the local economy. Regional crafts such as *Bunako*, *Kokeshi* dolls, *Yawata Uma* carved wooden horses and *Tsugaru* kites are other popular products of the prefecture (Aomori Vegetables, 2000, n.p.; Apples of Aomori, 2000, n.p.; For Better Understanding, 2000, n.p.; Products of Aomori, 2000, n.p.; Statistical Data, 2000, n.p.).

There are industrial areas in the Prefecture. Although the base is changing, industry has traditionally centered around Hachinohe City with steel, nickel, marine products, and paper mills. Misawa City has a chemical plant and Aomori City processes copper for Belgium, iron ore for Korea, and sends used cars to Russia (Toward International, 1994; Stimulating the New Possibilities, 2000, p. 2).

Aomori Prefecture faces a number of challenges in the 21st century. Like other rural regions of industrialized countries, it has a rapidly aging population and shrinking workforce, as young people move to centers of economic activity such as Tokyo. Well-educated Japanese youth refuse to engage in manual labor — particularly the dirty, smelly jobs of harvesting garlic and fishing. While the economy weakens, the increased need for

care and handicapped access by older people puts additional burdens on government social services.

In Aomori Prefecture, the internationalization policy attempts to overcome these challenges as well as meet the economic and cultural goals set by the national government. The Aomori Prefecture general long-term plan for 1997-2006, or the “New Renaissance — Revival of Humanity” (referred to here as the “New Plan”), was created by the Planning Division of the Planning and Coordinating Department and covers ten project areas governing virtually every aspect of prefecture life. The prologue declares “we are aiming to realize a New Frontier approach to embrace the world.” The New Plan, like the national one, calls for local action: “we are expecting the country, cities, towns and villages and every administrat[ive] bod[y] will fully utilize regional characteristics and resources and cooperate with us to realize the targets of the New Plan (About New Aomori Prefecture, 1997, n.p.; Prologue, 1997, n.p.; New Long-Term Blue Print, 1997, n.p.)

The New Plan is committed to bringing Aomori Prefecture into the global village by integrating the existing, developed areas of the prefecture, thereby strengthening them for further economic and international development. The focus is to incorporate towns and villages into regions so operating costs can be consolidated, setting the stage for large-scale development and rapid economic expansion. “By strengthening the partnership between Gsyogawara City, Aomori City and Hirosaki City [and] . . . the partnership between Hachinohe City, Towada City and Misawa City, it is possible to assure . . . region[al] convergence and function[al] versatility and convenience” (Making a New Aomori Wind, 1997, n.p.; Project 10, 1997, n.p.).

Projects 4, 8, and 10 of the New Plan are especially relevant to our study of internationalization of the Aomori Prefecture. In accordance with the national policy, these sections call for increasing the

exposure of prefecture residents to the world and the world to the prefecture through economic expansion and cultural exchanges. Project 4 proposes promoting a “multi-network society.” More specifically, Project 4 emphasizes that

- *Increased resident activities (cultural and economic) will create a “human network” that will promote other projects.*
- *Strengthened information and communication infrastructures are necessary for industrial development and “life improvement.”*
- *Improved traffic infrastructure will make access to metropolitan areas and foreign countries more convenient.*
- *A strong reputation for hospitality will attract tourism.*

Project 8 of the New Plan promotes industrial policy within the Aomori Prefecture. There are four aspects to the Project, aimed at increasing both local and international business. First, the Plan recognizes the broad context in which industrial policy operates, including issues such as infrastructure development, cultural preparation, welfare, health care, and the like. Second, Project 8 supports strengthening entrepreneurship and alliances between industries. In particular, it mentions enhancing value-added productivity through industrial integration and cooperation. Third, it promotes specific development projects, such as the Aomori Technopolis discussed below. Finally, Project 8 of the New Plan seeks to attract young people back to the area by providing favorable residential conditions for them.

Project 10 states that Aomori Prefecture has a role in “the 21st Century Renaissance” in Japan and the world. Specifically, it aims to become the “Axis of the Tsugaru Strait,” thereby increasing exchanges among regions and countries. This project focuses on infrastructure improvements related to internationalization, including improved highways, bridges, Shinkansen railways,

international airports, and international seaports. Aomori Prefecture plans to construct an international shipping and delivery logistics center, thus providing more opportunities for world-market-oriented industries in the region. Finally, Project 10 proposes construction of research centers that will benefit Japan and the world through research and development activities in the areas of environment-friendly energy, oceanic studies, and bridge construction.

Because a labor-shortfall and “youth flight” are challenges Aomori Prefecture faces, the New Plan also addresses the region’s population in relation to internationalization. The Prefecture’s policy focuses on drawing high-tech, low-resource global industries to the area, in part because the government believes such industries would attract many Japanese workers. If such policies cannot attract Japanese labor back to these areas, Aomori Prefecture and Japan as a whole may have to accept foreign labor. This can only happen if the general population is first exposed to and becomes more used to foreigners — a clear example of the need for and overlap between economic and cultural internationalization.

### **Economic Internationalization**

Economic internationalization within Aomori Prefecture comprises primarily infrastructure improvements and business development projects. As noted above, Aomori is relatively isolated, in part due to poor access. Efforts to improve roadways and complete toll roads will reduce travel time within the region — sometimes by as much as half. Though delayed by the recession, the Northern Japan (*Tohoku*) bullet train (*shinkansen*) project is key to Aomori Prefecture development, making it far more accessible. When completed, the bullet train trip between Aomori and Tokyo will take only 2 hours and 38 minutes; currently, it takes roughly 10 hours to travel

between the two by train (Aomori Prefecture Traffic Access Conditions, 2000, n.p.; The Current State, 2000, p. 1-3). In addition to access for businesses, this infrastructure development mitigates regional isolation as Aomori residents travel south and international visitors go north for travel opportunities such as skiing and spa resorts.

There are many business development projects across the Prefecture, in conjunction with both internationalization and the consolidation of town areas. One such project is the Aomori Technopolis, High-Tech Industrial Complex Urushikawa, approved in 1992. The Technopolis is an industrial complex creating a “Northern high-technology based metropolis in the region composed of four cities, two towns, and two villages, including the prefectural capital Aomori as well as the academic and cultural center Hirosaki City.” With two universities and a two-year college nearby, one goal is to keep graduates in the area by creating high-tech industrial jobs. The complex seeks to attract both national and international industries; Hitachi Tobu Semiconductors Tsugaru Factory is already a tenant of the Aomori Technopolis (Aomori Prefecture’s Development, 2000, n.p.).

Of Prefecture importance was the March 1996 designation of Hachinohe as Japan’s nineteenth Foreign Access Zone (FAZ). This is the only FAZ north of Ibaraki, and it increases the national and international focus of Aomori Prefecture. According to the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), “the city is busily constructing various infrastructures, such as traditional and distribution-support facilities and international economic exchange centers that will encourage import growth. In this way, Hachinohe will take the stage as the main port for international trade and distribution in the [region]” (FAZs in Japan, 2000, n.p.). The FAZ designation helps both the Prefecture-level and city-level efforts, particularly because Hachinohe is the first seaport of Aomori to make international connections. The focus of

internationalization is the development of the seaport and other projects such as the import promotion and urban development. According to JETRO, FAZ facilities in Hachinohe currently or will eventually include The Hachinohe Port Trade Center, Hachinohe Port International Distribution Terminal, and the Hachinohe International Industrial Exchange Center (Aomori FAZ, 2000, n.p.; Kawaida-san, personal communication, July 13, 2000).

Fearing failure of economic growth and following the Project 8 directive of the plan, the Aomori Industrial Association was established in 1997 to provide a network of support and development instruction to businesses. The Association mission statement by chairman Chuichi Sasaki states:

*Since most of the companies in the prefecture are small scale and scattered around, they are unable to receive adequate staff-support, which makes it difficult to enter even the Asian market. . . . To overcome the limitations of individual companies . . . and create a new basis for industry . . . we must break new ground and cooperate to plan the manufacture and merchandise of our products.*

It is hoped that through this association these businesses will be able to fully utilize the global information system and new distribution methods within the Prefecture (Introduction of Aomori, 2000 n.p.).

Another effort at internationalization of the Aomori Prefecture includes producing informational brochures or fact sheets aimed at making the area more comfortable for foreigners as requested by the national plan. For example, the Aomori Foundation for Advancing International Relations (AFFAIR) posts on the World Wide Web' a listing of all medical services throughout the Prefecture that are available in languages other than Japanese. Services are currently available primarily in English, but in some areas they are also available in Korean, German, French, Chinese, Spanish,

and Portuguese.

Economic internationalization in Aomori Prefecture serves two goals: to strengthen the regional economy and to open the area to globalization. In addition to those noted above, numerous business development projects are under way or planned. These efforts are buttressed by infrastructure improvements key to increasing access to Aomori Prefecture and its cities. It is difficult to obtain economic data to determine if the region's economy has, in fact, expanded. However, interview and anecdotal evidence shows that the Aomori Prefecture is actively pursuing economic expansion and is putting emphasis on attracting international businesses, both Japanese and foreign. The New Plan concludes in 2006; a full assessment of Projects 4, 8, and 10 can be done at that time.

### **Cultural Internationalization**

Aomori Prefecture activities for cultural internationalization include a sister-state relationship, sports exchanges, and hosting international events. The Prefecture has a sister-state relationship with the state of Maine, USA. The relationship between these two areas "can be traced back to a tragic shipwreck of the ship 'Cheseborough' in 1889 off the coast of Shariki Village which spawned a new friendship between Shariki and Bath" (Yang, 2000, p. 1-2). Because the national "Global Connections" policy and the Aomori New Plan call for the creation of international exchange opportunities and increasing international connections through sister-city relationships, Aomori Prefecture and Maine formalized this old and distant friendship in 1993. "Following this agreement, many other towns and villages signed sister-city agreements with towns in Maine and finally in 1994, Aomori Prefecture and Maine signed a sister-state relationship" (Around Aomori, Summer 2000, p. 1). In fact, such relationships have



blossomed all over the prefecture — “nineteen municipalities in Aomori have established sister city ties with ten countries around the world” (Sister-City, 2000, n.p.). There is an additional but inactive sister-city agreement with Kabharovsk, Russia.

These sister-city relationships allow residents of Aomori opportunities to connect with the rest of the world. Many citizens have never been to another country, but exchanges allow some to travel to other countries and share what they have discovered. This, in turn, encourages others to travel abroad (Kasuga, T., July 7, 2000, Hachinohe, Japan). Increased travel also increases home market consumer demands for items from other countries, which can improve those other countries’ attitudes toward the trade imbalance — one of the factors originally prompting the internationalization policy.

The historical tie to Maine also prompted prefecture-level sports activities. Since 1990, annual independent “Cheseborough Cup” swimming races have been held Bath, Maine, USA and Shariki Village in Aomori, “sending a message of courage and love across the seas and international borders” (Yang, 2000, p. 2).

Cultural internationalization in Aomori Prefecture also occurs through international sports activities. One junior high school ice hockey team participates in an international competition once each year. Aomori created an international junior (Peewee) ice hockey tournament and hosted the first event, which now rotates through other countries. The Prefecture also sponsored a Russian ice hockey coach to teach in Japan. Finally, Aomori Prefecture will host the 2003 Asian Winter Olympic Games.

The Prefecture branch of the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) is known as the Aomori Foundation for Advancing International Relations (AFFAIR). It promotes cultural expansion and exchange by creating an information center for international visitors, compiling a volunteer registry of those who can be interpreters, and financing a yearly

scholarship enabling an international student to study in Aomori, and hosting activities such as the 1995 International Friendship Fair, a Foreign Exchange Student Jamboree (Ongoing Programs, 2000, n.p.).

Japan’s internationalization policy has a clearly stated goal of increasing the Japanese people’s exposure to English. The nationwide Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) program is the primary vehicle for this exposure. JET has been active in Aomori for about twelve years, growing from about eight teachers to about 80 today (Shobuke, M. July 19, 2000, Hachinohe, Japan). AFFAIR also promotes English in the prefecture by offering language learning in both Japanese and English. Additionally, it provides a bilingual publication with tips on living in Japan (Aanensen, 2000, p. 3).

While there is a Prefecture-level internationalization plan, each city within Aomori Prefecture also develops its own policy. We look at internationalization efforts within Aomori City, Misawa City, and Hachinohe City.

### **City-Level Efforts at Internationalization: Aomori City**

Aomori City is surrounded by abundant nature and “Blue Sea, Blue Sky, Blue Forest,” with the Hakkado Mountains to the south and Mutsu Bay to the north. Aomori City celebrated its centennial in 1998 and, as its mayor highlights, is looking toward the future:

*With the 21st Century looming ever closer, we must face the important issues of the day — the rapid greying of our society, internationalization, and the information superhighway...in order to create a unique city. (Sasaki, 1999, p. 2)*

Government officials first drafted Aomori City’s internationalization plan, then submitted it to a commission of

community representatives for input. The final product became Aomori City's long-term plan entitled "Toward International Communication City Aomori" and covers the years 1992-2001 (Narumi, K., Ogura, T. and Sakurada, M., July 7, 2000, Aomori City, Japan). The International Relations Section of the Planning and Finance Department of Aomori City oversees the implementation of this plan. The city plan's mission statement describes its goals and activities:

*Aomori City's goal for international exchange is to make our city friendly, attractive, original and comfortable to live in and through active educational, cultural and sports exchanges, we want to provoke the international awakening among citizens and activate the local activities. Also, through sister-city friendship and grass-root level, we try to deepen mutual understanding, thus bringing up those who can correspond to the international society and activate our industrial economic, academic, and cultural activities in order to think globally and act locally and devote to the world prosperity and peace. (Toward International, 1994, p. 3)*

With assistance from the Prefecture government, Aomori City created the Aomori Prefectural International Association to operate as a data bank, advertising vehicle, and promotion department as well as to raise money and work with the Aomori-Seoul Regular Flight Promotion Committee to internationalize Aomori City airport.

### **Economic Internationalization**

Aomori City's slogan is "Blue Forest: Great People, a Great Place to Live." That slogan is appropriate to its internationalization policy, which emphasizes people and thus obviously blends economic and cultural internationalization. Key

internationalization efforts are aimed at increasing tourism to Aomori City, as part three of the city's plan calls for the increase of communications for international visitors. In 1990, the city built the Aomori Industry Exhibit Center that, along with the Aomori City Cultural Center, provides the city with facilities for international conventions (Toward International, 1994, p. 18). Aomori City is working to make itself friendly and accessible to travelers by posting signs in English as well as publishing information and producing videos about the city, area, and skiing in languages such as English, Korean, Chinese, Hungarian and Russian (Narumi, K., Ogura, T. and Sakurada, M., July 7, 2000, Aomori City, Japan).

The Aomori City International Relations Section's goal was to establish an international expansion of the airport, "so it could function as a hub for northern Japan" with connections to the entire world (Toward International, 1994, p. 12). K. Narumi, T. Ogura, and M. Sakurada see "internationalization as a flow and through influence of education and travel comes increase of economics." In 1990 the airport opened and in 1995 the city expanded it, increasing domestic routes and creating international routes to Korea, Russia and sometimes China. In 1998, routes to Sendai and Okinawa were added (Narumi, K., Ogura, T. and Sakurada, M., July 7, 2000, Aomori City, Japan).

The city does not have a monitoring system in place to see if this has actually increased business — deeming it "too difficult to do" — and the officials interviewed feel that so far it has only helped tourism a little, as most visitors come to main tourist events by bus. However, they are trying to develop tourism further by creating a resort area in Asamushi and encouraging other towns to make their points of interest more "friendly" (Toward International, 1994, p. 35). They are also advertising their festivals at product fairs overseas. But Aomori City officials have accomplished what they set

out to do: Aomori Airport is the only international airport in the northern half of the island.

The long-term City Plan gives both economic and cultural reasons for an engineer exchange program with developing countries. "We heavily depend upon the resources of developing countries. We have to cooperate with those countries more actively. So we are promoting an economic cooperation project backed up by engineering cooperation and acceptance of trainers for technical support." Conducted in cooperation with the national government's Japan International Cooperative Association (JICA), this project brings foreigners to Japan and trains them in a professional and technical fields so that they may "play important roles in their own economy and social development." This Aomori City project ties neatly in with another of the motivations for the national "Global Connections" plan: international pressure to become involved in official development assistance. But Aomori City officials see the cultural as well as economic value in this exchange program, believing that "those people come to get directly in touch with Japanese culture, manners and customs and we can understand each other, eventually friendship between countries can be expected" (Toward International, 1994, p. 32).

### **Cultural Internationalization**

Cultural internationalization in Aomori City focuses on sister-city relationships and hosting an international event. Aomori City has sister cities in Korea and Hungary. Since 1995, Pyongtaek, Korea has undertaken exchange activities with Aomori City. These activities include exchanges of art and picture exhibits between schools and women's clubs, establishing relationships between Ex-Servicemen's Clubs in each city, sponsoring Korean students at Aomori Public College, visits of

women's groups between the two cities, exchange of city personnel through the Aomori-Pyongtaek Short Term Exchange Training Programme, and export of lilies from Pyongtaek to Aomori City (Narumi, K., Ogura, T. and Sakurada, M., July 7, 2000, Aomori City, Japan).

A sister-city friendship agreement between Aomori City and Kecskemet, Hungary has been in place since 1994. Their relationship includes exchanges of pictures, art, and letters between schools in each city; visits by Kecskemet teachers to Aomori schools; creation of friendship associations in each city to deepen their understanding of each other; Aomori City participation in Kecskemet's Heroes Week Festival; and short-term music training of Aomori teachers at the Kecskemet Teacher Training College.

In February 2002, Aomori City hosted "Winter Cities 2002 Aomori." Since 1982, representatives of numerous countries have met to discuss issues common to cities with harsh winter climates and to "exchange knowledge regarding the fundamentals of city planning, traffic problems, development of the living environment, arts and culture as well as sports and recreational activities." In Aomori City in 2002, the international conference featured a mayor's conference, a Winter Cities Forum, an International Winter Exposition displaying the latest in technological means for coping with winter weather, and an International Cultural Exchange featuring winter sports and lifestyle exhibitions (Winter Cities, 2000, n.p.).

This is the first time Aomori City will have hosted such an international event. This will expose its citizens to people and ideas from other countries and allow city government officials to network and to exchange common problems and solutions. For Winter Cities 2002, Aomori City is cultivating a group of volunteers to help with the hosting and interpreting duties. Volunteerism is a new cultural activity for most Japanese — imported from the West — and "through the cooperative

efforts of many volunteers to put on the conference, a new awareness of international exchange and volunteerism will be gained” (Winter Cities, 2000, n.p.). Increasing volunteerism is also a goal of the city’s internationalization policy.

Other activities related to cultural internationalization in Aomori City include implementation since 1988 of the JET language program, with a total of 15 exchange teachers from Canada, Britain, and Korea. The Aspam Building combines a showcase for Aomori products and tourism with an information center for foreigners; there are 840 registered foreigners living in Aomori City. The International Relations Section will, at their request, provide workshops to the schools on internationalization.

#### **City-Level Efforts at Internationalization: Misawa City**

Misawa City is located between the Pacific Ocean and Lake Ogawara, in the southwestern corner of Aomori Prefecture. The name means “three marshes” and the city has a population of about 42,000. The city motto is “A Cultural City Full of International Atmosphere with Relaxation and Richness.” Misawa City considers itself to have a long history of international interaction based on two Englishmen who opened a horse pasture in the Meiji era — the residents’ first exposure to foreign culture. In 1931, a plane leaving Wenatchee, WA successfully completed the first Trans-Pacific flight by landing in Misawa City; this attracted the attention of the world (Welcome to Misawa, n.d., p. 1).

Since World War II, Misawa City has been the location of an American Air Force and Naval Air Station. With about 12,000 foreigners living on the American base, Misawa is a potential center for international interaction. In fact, the base and city populations coexist quite peacefully, in contrast to other bases in Japan. The Misawa mayor encourages the

military, dependents, and civilians to “accept us all as Misawans” (Welcome to Misawa, n.d., n.p.).

Misawa City’s internationalization policy promotes local exchange, taking advantage of the international residents within its midst: “since our city is favored by international exchanges of nature, history, and culture, we must make the most of those elements.” The overall goal of the internationalization plan is to improve “the facilities for international exchange, and the educational, cultural, and sports exchanges between Misawa people and foreign residents and the people of our sister city Wenatchee, thus accelerating the understanding of each other and helping people react to international society” (Misawa International Exchange Program, 1998, n.p.). In addition to this broad goal, the plan makes specific mention of building a “Misawa International Exchange Education Center,” adding foreign language translation to signs, making foreign residents comfortable through seminars about Japanese culture and exchanging delegates with Wenatchee, WA, their sister city. According to the Misawa City plan (1998), through these strategies they can “accelerate international understanding among the citizens and help to bring up internationally-minded people” (n.p.).

#### **Economic Internationalization**

Criticisms of Misawa City’s internationalization efforts sometimes emerge, particularly in regard to economics. “The Misawa Program is just for show, not facing outward to the world” (M. Nakaya, June 30, 2000, Same-machi, Japan). There are no local economic development projects planned in Misawa. In the mid-1990s, Misawa City developed a campground in a forestry park to attract tourism and there is currently a small effort at urban renewal within the downtown area. Ten years ago, a civilian Japanese business association formed, to make businesses more friendly

to Americans, but little developed out of it.

Globalization, in the form of currency exchange, adversely affects the Misawa economy. As the yen strengthens and the dollar falls, the Americans shop on base rather than in the town — the base has a relatively new shopping mall, several fast food establishments, and other recreational facilities. All of this makes it convenient for the majority of the military population to spend their money without ever leaving the base.

While there is some housing growth with the city, significant development in the Misawa area takes place outside the city limits. Developments include a large mall in Shimode, a housing development in Lake Town, and a large national development project. This national project, Mutsu Ogawara Industrial Development, will draw the economic center of the area away from Misawa. It is possible Misawa will become a “bedroom community” for these outside developments.

### **Cultural Internationalization**

There are a number of cultural programs within Misawa City — more than the other two cities, which is quite logical given its proximity to the American military base. Misawa City’s internationalization plan is built upon the local exchanges made possible by the inherently international nature of the city. It has a sister-city relationship, organized home stay programs, two intercultural holidays, and sports competitions.

The sister-city relationship is with Wenatchee, WA and goes back the 1931 Trans-Pacific flight. Misawa City formalized the relationship in 1981; it is perhaps the oldest formal relationship in Aomori Prefecture. Each partner is a small town and both grow apples. Delegates from each city visit the other, they trade junior high school ambassadors, and exchange sports groups (Welcome to Misawa, n.d., p. 1, 17).

The Misawa Youth Exchange project, started in 1988, provides Japanese students the opportunity to stay at American houses on the base while the American students stay with Japanese families in the town. Misawa officials consider this a successful project; many Japanese students are interested in participating. Fewer American students are interested, but the program continues. Yoshinori Sawame, Assistant Chief, Guidance Section of Misawa City Board of Education, finds value in the program, because “from their early stage, children can acquire the international sense to be the bearer of the new age.” A second, international home stay program is sponsored by the Board of Education (Y. Sawame, July 14, 2000, Misawa City, Japan).

The unique situation of having a large population of foreigners on hand led to the creation of two cultural holidays, “American Day” and “Japan Day.” First held in 1987, Japan Day introduces Japanese culture to the Americans. It is held on the base, and cultural activities include a tea ceremony, kimono exhibits, and drum playing. Japan Day is fairly well attended by the Americans. American Day began a year later. Initially a homegrown affair put on by volunteers, it is now a two-day, semi-professional event with imported American bands. It is extremely well attended by Japanese from all over the northern region, who want exposure to Americans and their cultural activities (S. Hiraide, July 5, 2000, Misawa City, Japan; Yokosaka-san, July 12, 2000, Neheji, Japan).

Misawa City sports exchanges are primarily with the American base. Local schools compete with base teams in baseball, basketball, and volleyball. Also, in anticipation of the Asian Winter Olympics and future similar events, the city built a new ice rink.

In addition to these formal cultural exchanges, there are numerous informal contacts between town and base. While many base residents do not venture into the community much, there is still a significant

segment of the base population that regularly encounters the town population and encourages contact. These Americans may invite the Japanese to visit the American mall, experience the food court, view Christmas lights, and participate in Halloween trick or treat, and so forth.

The language program in Misawa City is highly dependent on the base population; Misawa City does not have a JET program. The International Understanding Language Program, in effect since 1988, is more cost-effective than JET because it recruits language teachers from the base instead of importing them and paying a yearly salary. These teachers, often housewives, teach English clubs at elementary and junior high schools all over the city. Additionally, base clubs such as the German Club or Thai Club will offer language experience or instruction in languages other than English. "To go out into the world we must learn to speak in the world. We use the base to supply [English] teachers so our future has more options" (Y. Sawame, July 14, 2000, Misawa City, Japan).

An innovative new language program sponsored by the Misawa City International Exchange Section is "Let's Communicate," a cable television program. Citizens can get a lesson book and follow along with televised lessons. Each week, a camera crew films at a different school in the city, recording children's reactions to the show. "Let's Communicate" is quite popular, as children participate so they can be filmed and families watch to see if their children are shown on television (S. Hiraide and J. Coleman, July 5, 2000, Misawa City, Japan).

Misawa City also draws on the American base for the MATE project, through which Americans of different cultural backgrounds and non-native Americans go out to the schools to teach about their cultures. This broadens the typical Japan-America focus of many Misawa projects by introducing students to Russia, Thailand, the Philippines, and so forth (T. Tanaka, July 5, 2000, Misawa City, Japan).

### **City-Level Efforts at Internationalization: Hachinohe City**

Hachinohe City is located in the southeast corner of Aomori Prefecture and has more of an industrial base than Aomori or Misawa. Residents consider it more of an "international" city because of its port; it does indeed have a long history of contact with outsiders, if not an intense one. In a 1964 effort to promote economic development, the Japanese government chose "core cities" and gave them financial support. As part of this effort, the national government designated Hachinohe City a "new industrial city" and it is considered a success of the 1960s policy (T. Kasuga and M. Townsend, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan). Hachinohe became one of the biggest industrial cities in northern Japan by emphasizing coastal and basic material industries (Hachinohe City Home Page, 2000). Over time, however, Hachinohe City's industrial base began to decline. Since the late 1980s, the focus has been on shifting from heavy industry, such as steel and mills, to high-technology industry.

Hachinohe City's internationalization plans detail their efforts to augment economic and cultural internationalization. Through these policies, government officials expected that "international exchange on the local level would [inspire] city planning and policy making." The key component of these efforts is the Port of Hachinohe, which consists of fishing, commercial, and industrial components. In 1988, the national government supported plans to build an "intelligent" or high technology park in conjunction with Port activities. Other broad strategies for economic internationalization include increasing tourism, and building an international center for meetings, exhibitions, and so forth (T. Kasuga and M. Townsend, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan). As noted above, in 1996 the Japanese government named Hachinohe the nineteenth Foreign Access Zone (FAZ) in

the country and the only one in northern Japan. This designation buttressed internationalization efforts already under way.

Hachinohe City's internationalization policies include detailed activities to internationalize the local culture, such as youth sports exchanges, youth overseas study programs, sister-city relationships, and language exposure. Planners saw that "to meet the 21st Century international society, we'll have to make efforts to bring up internationally-minded youth who can think globally and act locally" (T. Kasuga and M. Townsend, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan).

### **Economic Internationalization**

The Port of Hachinohe is at the center of the internationalization plan for the city. "The Port is the City's point of uniqueness and we have been influenced by long history with foreigners by comparison to other cities. Internationalization is a way of survival" (T. Kasuga, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan). Hachinohe Port can handle ships up to 50,000 tons and has developed route to six countries/territories — the China, Hong Kong, Korea, New Caledonia, Taiwan, and the US. Over 500 ships from these countries dock annually in Hachinohe. New Caledonia, for example, ships nickel that is then processed in Hachinohe. The US Navy also uses the port and has a naval oil refinery there. Port officials see port expansion as an economic success of the internationalization policy (T. Kasuga and M. Townsend, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan).

The Hachinohe High-Tech Park, including the Hachinohe Intelligent Plaza, seeks to draw computer, software, and biotech companies to replace the current industries of steel and paper mills. The location encompasses research and testing facilities and can offer international and Japanese businesses cheaper land and rents than other parts of Japan. The Park

organizers actively recruit companies to visit Hachinohe and see these facilities (T. Kasuga, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan).

There is little tourism in Hachinohe, but the city has produced tourist maps, guides, and emergency information pamphlets for English visitors. The Hachinohe Port Trade Center has hosted international business activities such as the Australian Industry Fair and Seminar and a North America Housing Seminar sponsored by the US Embassy. The city dispatches exchange groups to industrial events overseas, such as CanAsia 2000 in Vancouver and encourages exchanges among business people.

### **Cultural Internationalization**

Despite provisions for cultural internationalization in the city's plan, the emphasis of Hachinohe City's internationalization is economic. Kawaida-san, the Port Authority Promotions Representative, directly stated that "in almost all cases, projects are definitely connected to an economic aspect. With no economic payback, no projects start" (personal communication, July 13, 2000). Nonetheless, there are several activities related to cultural internationalization, particularly sister-city relationships with New Caledonia, LanChow (China) and Federal Way (Washington, USA). The sister-territory relationship with New Caledonia was initiated about four years ago. This relationship seems to be valued less than others are, partly due to the fact that it is with a non-English speaking community. The sister-city relationship with Federal Way, begun in 1993, is the most developed (M. Townsend, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan). It is also tied to the city's economy: "Hachinohe hopes to improve economic development that is why they picked [a] city on the west coast" (T. Kasuga, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan). For economic reasons, the

Hachinohe Port Authority is attempting to establish a sister-city relationship with Manila (T. Kasuga and M. Townsend, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan).

Exchanges within these sister-city relationships rely primarily on home stays. The Board of Education arranges and partially pays for student groups to travel to each city for about one week at the end of July. Teachers serve as chaperons and chose which students will go; seven each are sent to New Caledonia and Federal Way and eight to LanChow. Current Japanese cultural biases affect these exchanges, as the Hachinohe students who go to China sometimes experience snubbing by their classmates. Sources in Hachinohe stated that this was due to a traditional superior attitude about the Chinese and because LanChow is a poor area.

Other international cultural activities include a Hachinohe school that participates in an International Robot Contest for high school students through connections with a robot club at a Detroit school. Together with the city's International Relations Department, an organization called the Hachinohe International Exchange recruits volunteers to serve as tour guides, plans intercultural street fairs, and hosts foreign speakers. The city government hopes that this organization will become self sufficient and independently organize and fund many of the activities currently planned by the International Relations Subsection (T. Kasuga and M. Townsend, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan).

Concerning language programs, JET is active in Hachinohe, not only providing language teachers but also helping the International Relations Department to run a program to translate signs within the city and post city streets in English. JET arranges language teacher visits to elementary and high schools; however, these are occasional and/or short term and amount to little more than giving students exposure to foreigners (M. Shobuke, June 30, 2000, Hachinohe City, Japan). The

Hachinohe City International Relations Department offers Japanese language classes to foreigners (T. Kasuga, June 29, 2000, Hachinohe City)

Hachinohe City has seen a return on their efforts at internationalization. They have reached out and connected with many parts of the world. They are actively changing their industrial base and planning for economic expansion that will be globally oriented. The Hachinohe City policy is undergoing a review. A new fifteen-year plan will result.

## Conclusion

As noted above, the goals of each locality's internationalization plan are vague and thus it is hard to assess progress. There is little or no measurement of goal achievement or cost-benefit analysis of internationalization. The Japanese appear reluctant to engage in such monitoring, recognizing that while economic efforts are easier to measure, it is very difficult to assess the success of intangibles such as cultural internationalization. Additionally, their very culture seems biased against it. In answer to the question "How does the government determine the success or failure of goals?" Kawaida-san of the Hachinohe Port Authority responded, "Sorry, I don't know, but I think Japanese organizations tend to hesitate to admit the project was a failure, even if it was an absolute failure. Perhaps nobody knows exactly whether the project was successful or not" (personal communication, July 13, 2000). Nevertheless, we do draw some conclusions about each locality's plan.

At the level of Aomori Prefecture, infrastructure building as well as business development plans promote economic internationalization. Cultural internationalization is also present. While there are concerns and criticisms about the high cost of hosting this event, the 2003 Asian Winter Olympics will be a boost for both economic and cultural internationalization in the



prefecture. While the Aomori Prefecture plan is grand and being accomplished at a great rate, too much remains undone to meet the 2006 goal.

Aomori City's focus on its airport has accomplished the expansion hoped. In addition, it has very active exchanges with sister cities. The 2002 Winter Cities conference further promoted both economic and cultural internationalization. Overall, however, Aomori City could achieve much more in meeting national internationalization goals.

Misawa City's internationalization efforts perhaps leave the most room for improvement. With no attempts at economic internationalization, it must rely on the plans of the Prefecture. There is nothing wrong with doing so, especially as the Prefecture is promoting consolidation. However, the question remains whether Misawa City actively chose to rely on the economic internationalization of the Prefecture efforts or has done so by default. It is cost-effective and sensible for Misawa City to focus on local cultural exchanges between base and town populations. However, while both Japanese and foreign Misawa residents get exposure to other cultures, these "internal" exchanges would seem to negate the overall intent of national the plan, which is to look outside of Japan and become more open to globalization. Japanese openness to base residents could be significantly different from openness to the world or other cultures as a whole. Thus, the criticisms that Misawa City's internationalization policy is "just for show" may indeed be valid.

Hachinohe City appears to have best realized its internationalization goals. Perhaps by concentrating on and drawing support for development of its port, Hachinohe had an advantage over the other two cities. Nonetheless, they have effected a balance of economic changes and have accomplished much by building up the port, increasing imports, and reaching out to other countries. Hachinohe City makes a concerted effort to expose its youth to

English and, to a lesser extent, carry out exchanges with sister cities.

Cultural internationalization may be most important for the children of Japan. Because many of the sister-city activities are aimed at children, the next generation can gain a more personalized feeling of closeness with the rest of the world and learn to view foreigners as 'human' like themselves. This is one of the reasons Japan first initiated its internationalization policy.

There is some backlash against Japan's focus on internationalization. Some citizens wonder why money and effort is spent making foreigners more comfortable in their area when they experience local problems that are more immediate and important to them. The national government has recently proposed making the English language a more structured part of the education system and even approving it as a second official language. These policy options sparked much debate, particularly among those Japanese citizens who feel their culture is already threatened by globalization.

Globalization and mandated internationalization will continue, especially with the recent increased availability of the internet in Aomori. As the Internet is moving into the prefecture schools, instruction in the English language will become even more necessary. Already, even some of the smallest towns have come on line with information and home pages in English. The Internet may be the tool that does more to realize internationalization than all local policies combined.

We would like to make some suggestions for refining Japan's internationalization plans:

- *Set specific goals for all aspects of internationalization, including defining levels of internationalization plans*
- *Develop assessment techniques and measure of cost-effectiveness.*
- *Better market internationalization to the Japanese people. As authors, we see how*

*much the internationalization plans tie to regional and city economies. Convincing the nation's people that internationalization could strengthen the economy and better enable the cities to, for example, provide services to the elderly may mitigate backlash against the policy.*

*• Reconsider related policies and laws. For example, importing foreign labor is illegal, but in many areas there are not enough Japanese laborers to fill unskilled positions.*

*• Determine the usefulness of the Internet in internationalization.*

Japan is currently reviewing national and local internationalization policies. Hachinohe City, for example, is talking about including methods of cost-benefit in its revised plan. It is clear that Japan intends to continue its internationalization efforts just as it plans to remain a part of the global economy. This study shows that local internationalization efforts vary widely; additional research into Japan's continuing internationalization could further explicate the policy for the rest of the world and for Japan itself. Future research could include assessing programs and their implementation, determining success level indicators, and exploring 'new' features such as volunteerism and the impact of the Internet. It may be that Japan's internationalization plan and its consequences become a force helping to determine the shape of the country's future.

## Appendix A

### List of Interviews

*Maylorie Townsend-* JET Program Coordinator of International Relations, Hachinohe City.

*Masaki Sakurada-* Staff, International Relations Section Aomori City Office.

*Katuhiko Narumi-* Assistant Chief, International Relations Section Aomori City Office

*Takashi Ogura-* Senior Staff, International Relations Section Aomori City Office  
*Shuichi Hiraide-* Supervisor, International Exchange Section, Misawa City Hall  
*Takako Kasuga -* Administrative Staff, International Relations Subsection, Hachinohe

*Mitsuhiko Shobuke-* Teacher's Consultant, Education Guidance Dept., Hachinohe City Board of Education

*Taeko Tanaka -* International Education Coordinator, Misawa City

*Yoshinori Sawame-* Assistant Chief, Guidance Section, Misawa City Board of Education

*Yokosaka-san-* Retired Naval translator  
*Kawadai Takaaki-* Representative, Hachinohe Port Authority

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