Global Telepoiesis on the Edges of Times: Cities That Matter in Media Mobilities

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Introduction: Nonlinear Times of Diasporas

In the present paper, I question one of the most commonly-shared assumptions of linear time and collective agencies in the discourses on globalization, migration and diaspora studies (Nacify, 1993; Sassen, 1999; Parreñas, 2001; Zukin, 1989; Rojek & Urry, 1997; Turner, 2000; Bhabha, 1994). In general, these studies consider time as the length of stay that agencies experience away from their homeland. In my view, this quantification of measurable time becomes a long-lasting warrant to dissect migrants, sojourners, diasporas and tourists.

Based on a superficial understanding of quantitative social research and inappropriate applications of critical analysis of globalization, the above-mentioned research fields underscore a ground for causation that times are experienced evenly by each collective at any time and place. On the contrary, I examine the various degrees of affects, intensities, and lacks that agencies might encounter in the rhythms of mobile life. The nonlinear times of global mobilities are jumpy, unclear, and sometimes contradictory (Ahmed, 1999; Jokinen & Veijola, 1997; Azuma, 2017; Ito, 2017).

My attempt is to challenge the quasi-scientific notion of laboratory time (Adam, 1990; Abbott, 2001; Goldthorpe, 2000; Ogawa Nishiaki, 2007) by bringing the notion of "edge" to the forefront of inquiries into "global telepoiesis" (Ogawa Nishiaki, 2017b). In that process, I substantiate the arguments with an example I have been dealing with more than 30 years, namely, Japanese diasporas' life and the calendars by which they live.[1]

By the term "edge", I share the connotation of contingencies that open "in-between" spaces to both ordering and chaotic states (Zerubavel, 1985, 1997; Law & Mol, 2002; Giddens & Hutton, 2000; Urry, 2002a; Ogawa Nishiaki, 2002, 2017b). However, my emphasis is more on "edges" in plural that Japanese women I interviewed endeavor to bridge when they move across different places. My hope is to demonstrate that the "edges" can be discovered at the core of ordering and routinization in one place and with one calendar, and, at the same time, located on the fringe in another place with a different time-arrangement.

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In complexity theories, the edges are regarded as bipolar tendencies that trigger both stable system maintenance and transition to different states (Urry, 2002b). Elsewhere, I have discussed the various forms of global recursivity observable in discursive practices and mediated communications among Japanese women (Ogawa Nishiaki, 2001; Deleuze, 1997). I have also argued that the understanding of the above-mentioned process of globalization requires the formulation of the concept of "global telepoiesis", namely, the entanglements of human and non-human bondages with distant others in multiple spatio-temporalties (Ogawa Nishiaki, 2017a; Lash, 2001).

In the present paper, I shift the focus of analysis to the precarious natures of global mobilities observed in the mediated communication practices and also the interaction between residents and tourists in the same cities (Byrne, 1997; Beauregand & Body-Gendrot, 1999; Scott, 2001; Smith, 2001; Urry, 2000b). I begin with describing how the concepts of edges and calendar times emerged from my fieldwork experience in the city of San Diego, California. In hindsight, the shift in focus of my analysis from discourse of Japanese diasporas to their action in context was a decisive moment for me (Elias, 1978). Next, I go on to examine the two sets of adjectives that display the entanglements of humans, animals and things observed in the same urban site (Massey, 1992; LeGates & Stout, 2002). Consequently, I hope to demonstrate that the edges in the talks within the structural constraints of time-spaces and the reaction of agencies to these edges are indispensable in their coordinated actions in global mobilities (Bourdieu, 1990).

Action Matters on the Edges: From Words to Deeds and Back Again

Radical historians in sociology may describe revolutions as a spectacular, or as a process of collective actions (Skocpol, 1979, 1984; Tilly, 1978, 1993). I choose the opposite view: in this analysis, my point is that the edges of ordering and disordering emerge and disappear like ripples coming and going on the beach. We have to wait and watch carefully until a small oscillation form a wave for change.

Therefore, I start my account by presenting small details of the setting of talks and exchanges among a group of Japanese diasporas. At first glance, the interactions may seem trivial, but they are not. Let us jump into the sea of change and observe when big tides come. Eventually, the ripples would reveal the elflocks that are the primordial form of urban attractors of global complexities (Urry, 2002a, 2003; Westwood & Williams, 1997; Lynch, 1979; Ogawa Nishiaki, 2002, 2017b).

What I highlight here is one focus group discussion held in a living-dining room with other Japanese women in La Jolla, San Diego. The occasion was originally planned as a part of my on-going PhD research project with Japanese diasporas in three cities. In the 1980s and the 1990s, I had already conducted the preliminary interviews in London[2]. We were at a video screening session of the third

episode of *Tenko*, a BBC TV drama series that describes female prisoners' experiences in Japanese war camps located in Southeast Asia during World War.[3] The difference between female audiences in London and those in San Diego is that the latter was unfamiliar with the production format of British situation dramas, which depicted less actions and more psychological interactions compared with their Hollywood counterparts.

Although *Tenko* was broadcast by the Public Broadcasting Services (hereafter, PBS) in the United States and well-known by scholars in media and Japanese Studies,[4] most of the Japanese women I interviewed did not have prior knowledge of the TV drama in question. The reasons for this may be two-fold: one is that PBS is considered a quality TV channel with fewer but focused viewers compared with other commercial networks such as the ABC, CBS, and NBC; the other is that according to the biographical research I conducted with those Japanese female diasporas, if they were wed to Japanese businessmen and researchers tenured in institutes in Japan, they usually would not stay in San Diego long enough to be exposed to American media programs in English language (Ogawa, 1994a, 1994b).

I did not have much difficulty in conducting a focus group discussion with seven to ten of those Japanese women. More precisely put, I did not have to ask many questions to allow their talks to flow. I only attempted to recall the individual faces of my old friends who resembled participants. By doing so, I was making every effort to take notes of their conversation, which was both active and speedy. The atmosphere of the meeting was casual, and so were their outfits. More than half informants of the group were dressed in T-shirts and pants. Partly the casualness of their outfits had somewhat more to do with the age-group than with the hot climate in San Diego: They were usually occupied with raising their school-aged children (Ogawa, 1994a).

Some of the women in this meeting left early, whereas others joined later. They resided close to an informant's house where the meeting was held; most of them knew one another beforehand. I felt that being in that session was one of the most fulfilling experiences I had until I realized later that their conversations had not been recorded on my tape recorder. Thus, transcripts from the taped conversations are not available. I had to reconstruct the session from the field notes I took on the spot.

Ironical enough, the field notes I took on that day comprised one of the most satisfying qualities in my research project: the participants had character, the content of the talk was intriguing, and I indulged myself in listening and watching their verbal and non-verbal communication practices throughout the discussion. That meeting resulted in thousands of scribbles both of their talks and of my own impressions of each speaker as well as of the session as a whole. In recreating the conversation in this paper, I intentionally revise the phrasing and omit mention of the speakers' identities to protect the privacy of informants.

Two adjectives originated from the sense of displacement caught my attention

in the midst of the group discussion: one of the two was "light-hearted" or "cheerful (akarui)" and the other "big (ookii)". The former was repeatedly referred in relation to the conflicting interpretations of media contents, and the latter, the equivocally-agreed sense of the sizes and shapes of media artefacts. However, I know that a certain length of explanation is required before I jump into the aforementioned conclusion.

Nevertheless, I will restrict myself to minimal descriptions of the talks and contexts as regards the two adjectives. It is because one of my main concerns in this paper is not in the spatial forms of displacement, often claimed to be one of the most decisive factors that diasporic communities may encounter in their routes and life trajectories (Gilroy, 1995; Cliford, 1997). Rather, my emphasis is on "edges", namely conjunctures and disjunctures of time. Micro-histories of agencies are interwoven by the series of successes and failures in an attempt to bridge paralleled calendars in the globally stretched ways of life (Burawoy et al., 2000).

The first adjective, "light-hearted" or "cheerful", triggered a debate in a living room meeting that lasted more than 20 minutes. The argument had one of the most ramified and subtle qualities on that day. It began with the means of descriptions of the representations of British, Dutch, and Australian female lives as prisoners of war in the TV program they had watched. My initial expectation for the decisive elements that would frame those women's talks was the presence of San Diego in the State of California, namely, the actual location in which we were by chance collectively placed as diasporas (Ogawa, 2002; van Dijk, 1987; McNay, 2000).

Originally, California was considered as one of the oldest destinations in the United States to where Japanese immigrants ended up and it was also known for the concentration camps where Japanese-American citizens themselves were imprisoned during WWII.[5] One of the main purposes of my comparative study was to investigate how knowledge of the world and the self would differ according to the places where Japanese diasporas are disseminated and how such knowledge would be remembered and altered by mediated experiences accelerated by globalization (Ogawa, 1996; Bodnar, 1992; Towls, Kosuge, & Kibata, 2000; Balkin, 1999).

Contrary to my expectation, the talks of the Japanese informants diversified into different venues. First, they seemed to be keen to identify "Americans (Amerika-jin)", as against "British people (Igirisu-jin)", in their behavior under that fictional circumstance, namely, being in a group imprisoned in such a "far-from-ordinary situation" (Ogawa, 1996; Ogawa Nishiaki, 2017b). Second, they tried to judge whether "Americans" would be more "light-hearted" or "cheerful" when faced with adversity. It was as if the informants were navigating in a multi-layered sphere: fictions, fact, observations, truths and a combination of all these (Ogawa, 1996). Apparently, these sets of knowledge served as pools of resource that Japanese residents in San Diego could access by means of their daily experiences and their exposure to worldwide media contents.

Would "Americans" be more "light-hearted" in a captive situation or not? The conversation was dominated by conditionals: "if (moshi)", "then (dattara)", and "would (janaikashira)". At times, the rationale for arguments was simple. For example, one informant stated as follows: "In American dramas, though captives, American inmates would not keep silent (Moshi Amerika no dorama dattara, tojikomeraretemo damatteinainja naikashira). They would rather complain and make some noise (Motto gatagata itte sawagunja naikashira)". "Light-hearted" in this context was interpreted as "easily make some noise (sawagu)". Her opinion gained unanimous support from other informants at the meeting.

This remark, especially written in this way, may seem to be a naïve idea, because it displays a lingering influence by stereotypical representations of American people depicted in the popular media. Meanwhile, my observation was that the facial expressions and vocal tones of the speakers were filled with confidence that, they believed, was endorsed by the following two plain facts: that is, first, though temporary they were San Diego residents, and second, they were speaking in a house located in San Diego. Moreover, they knew American people by their direct experience. After all, informants were speaking on the specific site, namely, footing (Goffman, 1981; Clayman, 1992).

In that sense, my presumption, regarding the strong presence of San Diego in the talks of Japanese diasporas located in San Diego, was half-correct. However, the informants' strategies were to associate San Diego with a larger territorial and population unit for identification, namely with the stigmas of the United States of America itself, and not so much with California, the state of which San Diego was a part.

It remained vague as to what kind of subject positions, namely, deixis, speakers were taking and whether their senses of belonging were related to seemingly objective accounts from the perspective of the neutral third person I mentioned above. These questions regarding the pragmatic aspects of the present research will be discussed elsewhere in relation to the concept of footing. Instead, I concentrate on the semantic analysis of discourses and actions that appeared along the edges of the focus group discussion in the next section.

Calendars of Diasporas, Tourists, Attractions and Media Artefacts: The Entanglements of Humans-Animals-Things in San Diego

In this section, I focus on the debates on the two adjectives "light-hearted" or "cheerful" and "big". I hope that the implications of the terms usages will illuminate the experiences of the different times with humans and non-humans experienced by the informants in the focus group I have been discussing in the present paper.

In the second stage of the talk, the words "Americans" and "light-hearted" or "cheerful" were loaded with both generalized and specific connotations. I, thus, was

forced to concentrate on the details of word usages each time the Japanese informants took turns in the conversation. As the focus group discussion proceeded, the tempo of the talk accelerated. As the interactions between each speakers became more complicated, the implications of the word "light-hearted" progressively became ambiguous and context-dependent. The speakers were excited and involved in making their own judgments, which might not usually manifest in their daily conversation with their neighbors in La Jolla.

The moment of the crossfires came, when one informant insisted that "Americans" are "light-hearted" and another informant strongly refuted the opinion of the former. After the both speakers exchanged their own contrasting views, the former concluded that Americans are light-hearted people when they get together. This was decided on the basis that "American people are always light-hearted and excited when I see them together enjoying themselves in the Sea World, aren't they? (Datte shii waarudo nankade sawaideiruno-o miruto, amerika-jin te akarui janai?)". Her voice was determined, the tone of someone who wanted the last say in a debate.

The clash of ideas was palpable enough to freeze the atmosphere of the room for a few minutes. For me, however, they were discussing at cross-purposes (Boudana & Segev, 2017). Above all, what they meant seemed different, although both informants used the same adjective. Especially the former speaker did not hesitate to generalize her own images of American people whom she witnessed at the shamus and dolphins show at a seaside theme park in San Diego.

In fact, the San Diego Sea World features nature as spectacle in cunning ways (Davis, 1997; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Urry & Larsen, 2011) and is famous as a tourist attraction in the vicinity. It also shrewdly transforms collective physical activities associated with tourist attractions into a sense of belonging. The show itself and the cheer time prior to the program are nothing but an extravaganza and a must-see among entertainments that features the natural setting filled with American show-business and sporting spirit. I myself have once been fascinated by giant sea animals about five meters in length jumping across the indoor sea. While participating in making human waves with other members of the audience, I felt as if I were an American citizen.

Although the conclusion that the former informant reached seemed abrupt and one-sided, the debate itself provided me with a turning point in my focus from words to deeds, or complex relations between the both (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Precisely, by wondering why the two informants continued arguing in such a way, I gradually realized that neither their calendar times nor their experiences might have been the same. In fact, the two women experienced San Diego summer(s) in different ways in different sites (Jansen, 2001).

Thus, when the two informants claimed that their own views were the undeniable truth in this debate, the actions that overlapped their talks otherwise invisible became visible. One informant had frequent guests from Japan, and on

many occasions, her family took them to the San Diego Sea World, as it was regarded as one of the biggest tourist attractions in the local vicinity. As for the other informant, her family spent an entire summer in a relative's home in Japan and skipped most of the events they should have been experiencing in San Diego. The city is inscribed by multi-territorial elements: port, ocean, desert, a national border, an American Naval base, a colonial past, the Pacific Rim, the State of California, and the Western part of the United States (Ogawa Nishiaki, 2017a; Pryde, 1984). Thus, the former informant enjoyed a full San Diego year with all the aforementioned aspects of the city, whereas the latter was more oriented to the Japanese calendar.

Briefly, I will touch upon the second adjective "big (ookii)" to explore another dimension of the nexus between discourses and actions. The word was also associated with the popular images of America and American people envisaged by Japanese residents in San Diego. However, the adjective "big" in this case inherently entangled with "the sense of body and space" these women experienced in navigating the desert border land (Urry, 2000:437; Connerton, 1989; Shields & Heinecken, 2002; Sommer, 1969; Asquith & Kalland, 1997; Kahn, 2001).

One of the informants mumbled with emotion that after her arrival at San Diego, she gradually came to understand why the tape recorders and other media equipment in the United State were so big. She continued: "America is such a big and spacious country, and so are their products. I realized that they do not have to make everything so small like we Japanese have to do (Amerika tte konna ni ookiindakara, nandaka nandemo tsukurumono mo ookii shi, nihon mitaini wazawaza chiisakusuru hitsuyoo mo nai noyo ne)".

Careful readers may notice that similar kinds of narratives prevailed and were refuted in the making of the SONY Walkman when the product was first exported to the United States in the late 1970s (du Gay et al., 1997). My point is not the content of her remark itself. Rather, my emphasis is, first, on the extent to which the rest of the informants unanimously agreed with her. Most of the reactions were highly sympathetic. To my surprise, the same informants whose opinions were sharply divided on whether Americans are "light-hearted" or "cheerful" were also nodding in agreement.

My second emphasis may be more thought-provoking when we re-unite talks and actions again. My assumption is that the informants, whose views and usages of the term "big" were similar, may have shared the same experience in navigating spaces and handling objects in San Diego. If so, why did the interpretations of the two adjectives "light-hearted" or "cheerful" and "big" so divided among the Japanese female diasporas in the meeting, namely the former polarized and the latter united?

In hindsight, I can only speculate that their bodily senses and rhythms of everyday life, composed of walking, driving, talking, eating, and sleeping, may not be different. Judging from the background data of daily schedules and everyday life

activities, the focus group I have been discussing in the present paper shared almost the same patterns regarding the everyday spacing and timing in relation to the media contents and artefacts.

Conclusion: Words, Deeds, Media, Things and the Collective Life in Time

In the present paper, I aimed to contest the notion of linear time, that is often used as a basis of causality to explain how Japanese diasporas would be different from other groups and why they would predestine a certain way of life. My focus was, first, to illuminate how the global telepoiesis diasporas would engage were entangled with calendar times in different urban sites. Second, I demonstrated how the processes of globalization would be experienced via media contents, tourists, attractions, and media artefacts, and how actions should be re-examined in relation to talks and calendar times, namely, both subjective accounts of the agencies and the constraints with other humans, animals, and things in their surroundings in San Diego (Ogawa Nishiaki & Ohta, 2016).

The sense of commonness and sharedness of day-to-day life in diasporic communities tends to overshadow differences and discrepancies of calendar times in reality. Although their activities conducted in a day would not differ drastically among themselves (Ogawa, 1994b), experiences of each family and each person during twelve months of their stay may show a stark contrast.

I argue that diasporas may experience local calendars by individual bases and may even result in missing key moments to become knowledgeable agents and quasi-local residents of the city. If we conceive of the spacing and timing of diasporic life stretched into an annual basis, it would open new "in-between" spaces with many edges that diasporas themselves would confront. The same edges would diversify their experiences as well as their interpretations of the adjectives "light-hearted" or "cheerful" and "big".

Lastly, the concept of global telepoiesis not only re-unites discourses on media and actions in time-spaces but also provides the design of entanglements observed with diasporas, tourists, animals, and other media artefacts. Further, this line of argument highlights cleavages and sutures between calendar times of Japanese diasporas who temporarily reside in San Diego but travel back to Japan and visit specific spots in other parts of the world. Thus, in the global conjunction and disjunction of calendars, it is often the case that the edges of an order in one city are viewed as chaos in another place. Eventually, the global telepoiesis sheds new light on the analysis of mobilities with respect to diasporic times.

NOTES

1. A part of this paper was given at the World Congress of International Sociological Association (Ogawa Nishiaki, 2002) and also later reviewed by John Urry and Anne-Marie Fortier. My deepest gratitude goes to Roger Goodman for his insightful comments on my previous works that he read at Hitotsubashi University, and St. Catharine's College and St. Antony's College, University of Oxford (Ogawa, 1996; Ogawa, 1997; Ogawa Nishiaki, 2001). According to his suggestions regarding ethical issues related to this specific part of my ethnographic research, I rephrased and omitted the speakers' personal information as I did in my other article published in *Keio Communication Review*, No.39 (Ogawa Nishiaki, 2017a).

2. The research consists of initial contacts, ethnographic observations, screenings, intensive interviews, focus group discussions and surveys of background information of the informants' daily schedule. Comparative field works were conducted with 120 Japanese female diasporas in London (1988-1989) and in San Diego, California (1990). The informants were recruited by snow-ball sampling with attention paid to balance three age groups ranging from the 20s to the 50s. The follow-up research and more participant observations *in situ* were conducted during the period from 1990 to 2002. For the details of the research, see Ogawa (1994) and Ogawa Nishiaki (2017a, 2017b). More than 20 visits to Hong Kong were made with a purpose to establish ethnographic data sets that enabled the author to investigate diasporas' knowledge according to the different timings of an entire year.

3. *Tenko* is a BBC drama series that describes the confrontation of European POWs with the Japanese Army in East Asia (Warner & Sandilands, 1997). *Tenko* has been broadcast and widely known in both the United Kingdom and the United States since the early 1980s. *Tenko* is available as a classic war-time drama content in various media forms. For the novelized versions, see Masters (1981), Hardwick (1984), and Valery (1985).

4. The present author would like to thank Richard Collins, John Dower, Christine Gledhill and Paddy Scannell for the justification and selection of the materials, as well as introducing me to the British Film Institute and the media experts in other institutions. John Dower also provided the author with the history of the U.S.-Japan mutual images and suggested the material, *Song of Survival* (1985) as an American counterpart to the war epics depicted in *Tenko*.

5. Nicholas Garnham, John Dower, and Daizaburoo Yui provided me with the implications that helped me to refine my research design.

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