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	Research Area Information	Number of Research Area : 23B101 Project Period (FY) : 2023-2025 Keywords : COVID-19, Urbanization, More-than-human, Group making, Care

Purpose and Background of the Research

● **Outline of the Research**

The pandemic of COVID-19 was a painful reminder that infectious diseases can have an enormous impact on human lives. As everyday social life was disrupted, we learned that our lives had been built on an incredibly fragile balance. At the same time, we know that the activities of various people maintain this balance and that minor changes in our actions can alter it.

In addition, this pandemic has shaken the assumptions on which the humanities have relied. The virus, which has repeatedly mutated and continues to disturb us, forces us to reconsider not only the forms of medicine, politics, urban areas, and care but also the nature of "human beings" in general. Therefore, we will describe how people worldwide have experienced pandemics of new coronavirus infections to rebuild new assumptions about humanities.

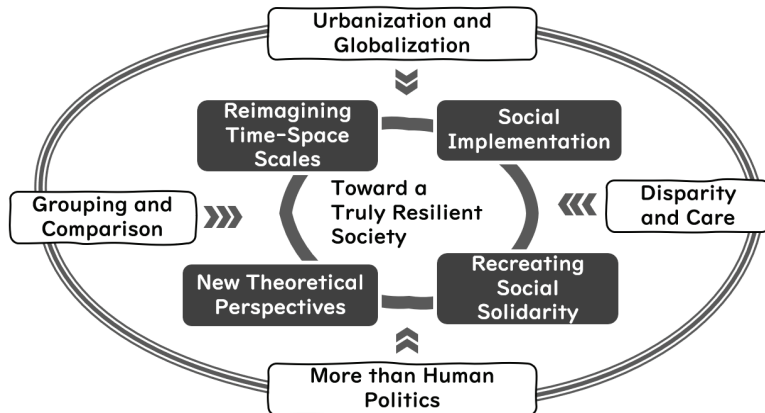


Figure 1. Four Research Projects and Four Innovations

Four research projects with cultural anthropologists and historians at the core try to create comprehensive knowledge to envision a truly resilient society.

Urbanization and Globalization (What kinds of cities can control infections?)

Urbanization and globalization are factors that both make our lives more convenient and spread infectious diseases. We will explore the current situation and the potential to change this balance.

More-than-Human Politics (What kinds of politics can better work in more-than-human worlds?)

Infectious disease control often involves restrictions on freedom. We will reposition this political challenge not only as a matter of power relations between humans but also as something that involves relations with more-than-human entities.

Grouping and Comparison (Are states and municipalities the appropriate comparison units?)

Pandemics promote comparisons among various kinds of human groups. We will trace what groups were made and unmade during the pandemic and how this happened.

Disparity and Care (How to reimagine care and solidarity amid disparity?)

The severity of the pandemic's impact varies according to class, gender, and health status. We will reveal the reality of structural violence and explore the possibilities of solidarity that overcome disparities.



Figure 2. Research Regions

Expected Research Achievements

● **Creating the Research Area of "Humanities of Infectious Diseases"**

Pandemics have a wide range of effects worldwide. By contrast, the scope of individual researchers is relatively limited. We thus try to create a stereoscopic understanding of the phenomenon by combining researchers' findings, mainly from the humanities.

The results will be shared widely through publications in Japanese and English. While focusing on Japan and East Asia cases, we will strengthen our international communication and provide support for fostering the next generation of researchers.

● **Targets of Projects**

Urbanization and Globalization

- Revisiting the rich accumulation in historiography on cities' roles in human history.
- Exploring the experiences of urban life in pandemics.
- Re-examining the attractions and limitations of cities.

More-than-Human Politics

- Reconsidering the human-nonhuman relationship that the pandemic has revealed by conducting fieldwork and collecting historical documents.
- Present a new view of humanity by interpreting ethnographic monographs.

Grouping and Comparison

- Comparing the formation and re-formation of human groups in past and present outbreaks through joint research between history and cultural anthropology.
- Determining what types of historical inheritance can be found in responses to COVID-19.

Disparity and Care

- Analyzing the factors that cause people to suffer the negative effects of the pandemic.
- Identifying ways to overcome disparities and help people recover their daily lives.



Figure 3. Circulation and Virtuous of Circle of Research Results



Figure 4. Masks as Connecting and Dividing Devices