

Living Conditions of Foreign Residents and Community Renewal Initiatives at a Regional Level in Niseko, Hokkaido

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[SYNOPSIS]

This study aims to grasp the realities of daily life of foreigners living in Niseko area and examine important points beneficial for community renewal initiatives at a regional level by verifying the foreigners' relationship with local residents and efforts by local municipalities.

First, the study conducted a questionnaire survey to collect basic information from foreigners. According to the result, places the majority of the respondents drop by and the people they interact with were found to remain within a limited extent in the resort area. On the other hand, respondents with the intention to settle down in the area are relatively more motivated to interact with the community.

Next, the study analyzed the interview survey result on how long-term residents view Niseko area. Foreigners who settled down in Niseko can be divided into those who have decided to move to the area after visiting the winter resort several times and those who moved to the area for business purposes. The opening of an international school also attracted some residents who are concerned about their children's educational environment. While a living environment completely manageable in English contributes to the ease of daily life, there are growing concerns about the formation of an eccentric "foreign" zone particularly in the resort area. Because the foreigners living in the area have diverse nationalities, their community is built on relationships independent of their countries of origin or ethnic groups, which serves as a reason for foreigners choosing Niseko area as the place of residence.

As the important factors in the further development of community initiatives, the study highlights the importance of the roles of foreign staff working along with municipality staff, preparation of educational environment, and the positioning of these initiatives in the daily community renewal efforts.