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Warm-soup Proximity: The Spatiality of Eldercare in Hyper-aged Japanese Society

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ABSTRACT Why do some people choose to live close to their elderly parents and how do they make sense of it? In Japan, multigenerational co-residence, a cornerstone of eldercare, has been replaced by a residential typology called *kinkyō*, living nearby. The optimal distance between the homes of family members, defined by the ability to deliver a bowl of soup before it gets cold, is considered a strategy to tackle the population aging. The purpose of this paper is to present a critical assessment of the intergenerational proximity which points to the need for further investigation of the role geographical distancing plays in future city planning. The qualitative data derived from individual narratives of four married daughters in Tokyo were obtained via online and mobile instant messaging interviews, through which real-life *kinkyō* situations are illustrated.

Introduction

A telephone rings each morning in Ome, a suburban city in Tokyo Metropolis, Japan. Satomi Goto, a sixty-one-year-old mother of two, answers the call.

S Hello, this is Goto residence.

A familiar voice replies from the other end of the line.

H Hello, it's me. Good morning.

It is her mother, eighty-four-year-old Hana, who has lived alone since Satomi's late father was hospitalized in March 2020.

S Hi. How are you feeling today?

H I feel fine, don't worry.

S Good. I'll drop by after my breakfast.

H Ok. See you later.

The exchange of morning greetings has become a routine between the married daughter and her elderly mother.¹ Every day, after getting up and taking a bath, Hana calls Satomi to report on her safety. Despite living apart for over thirty years, Satomi describes Hana and herself as now “like twins,”² picking up each other’s mood precisely from the first hello.

This paper begins with the snapshot of Satomi and Hana because it depicts the caring and continuous parent-child relationship interwoven in day-to-day life despite the spatial separation. Separate but near is of essence to this paper in which I aim to contribute with the most recent qualitative data to advance urban planning in the context of an aging society. By drawing attention to modern multigenerational living arrangements, this study explores the meanings of spatial separation and the distance between generations.

Japan’s aging demography has steadily increased since the 1970s, and the population aged sixty-five and above has reached thirty-six million, comprising more than twenty-eight percent of its population.³ A decreasing fertility rate also suggests a decline in the productive population and hints at a wider pension and healthcare crisis, causing great unease amongst the Japanese society. In parallel, modernization and globalization have accelerated the dissolution of traditional values, which is reflected in the decreasing number of multigenerational households, further reducing the likelihood of traditional intergenerational support.

Today, Japanese family living arrangements have departed from the traditional co-residence with one’s elderly parents. The modern set-up involves the opposite practice, living apart. Such a change, however, does not entirely imply that there exists a greater number of elderly living in solitude. Spatially, generations are split up into separate households. By living apart but nearby, multiple households still function as

one unit and familial ties can be maintained day-to-day. Residential proximity to parents is therefore considered to have positive implications for long-term eldercare.

The physical distance between separate family households is commonly expressed as living within warm-soup proximity (*sūpu no samenai kyori*), indicating the ability to deliver a bowl of warm soup without the need for reheating. A national census by the Statistics Bureau of Japan reveals that the number of people living separately but within an hour's reach already accounts for at least forty percent of multigenerational families.⁴ Research also shows a tendency that more daughters reside close to their elderly parents than sons,⁵ exposing a gender difference in distance to parents.

Living nearby relatives is officially coined *kinkyō* and introduced by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism as part of the Basic Act for Housing in 2006. Since then, various municipalities, organizations and businesses have paid great attention to this type of living and have encouraged *kinkyō* by providing diverse benefits from discounted rent for both households⁶ to reimbursement of moving costs.⁷

There are statistics and surveys about *kinkyō*, revealing its intricacies and people's attitudes towards it, yet how it is practiced and experienced is underexplored and, so far, rarely documented by data. If living in proximity is beneficial to different generations and has positive implications for the welfare society, the reality of *kinkyō* remains ambiguous and underinvestigated.

From this point of view, I examine four married daughters who are expected to be the primary caregiver and reside close to their elderly parent(s). Using data acquired from participants' everyday text messages via mobile instant messaging applications, as well as semi-structured online interviews, the following questions are explored:

- (1) How is living near one's elderly parent(s) experienced in the everyday lives of adult children?
- (2) What is the implied meaning of keeping distance or maintaining proximity?
- (3) What framework does *kinkyō* present in relation to future built environments in an aged society?

The paper begins with a general introduction and a contextual backdrop to Japan's culture and housing developments. The succeeding two sections summarize relevant research and literature on the role of distance in eldercare. The research methods are also introduced, followed by an exploratory analysis of participants' *kinkyō* experience. The final section reflects on the notion of *kinkyō* as a potential scale measurement for future city planning.

Multigenerational Household in Post-war Japan

Japan's family structure is closely tied with the Confucian ideology of filial piety, *oyakōkō* (孝 順 道), which stresses respect for one's parents and fulfilling one's duties to them.⁸ It contains *xiào* (孝) at its center, a Chinese character associated with piety that originates from sixteenth century BC.⁹ This Confucian value has long been shared by many East Asians and expressed by co-residence with one's elderly parents since the adult children are expected to take care of their frail parents under filial obligation.

In Japan, filial piety is expressed by *ie*, a stem family system. The eldest son, who is expected to be the successor of the lineage, inherits the land and house in which the parents reside. In return, he, or more specifically his wife (daughter in-law) cares for

the parents. Therefore, caring for the elderly in Japan implies a gendered practice of informal care by female family members.

Before World War II, Japanese families lived in traditional dwellings furnished with tatami mat.¹⁰ The space at the center of the house was the heart of family activity, gathering, eating and often sleeping together in futons, the traditional Japanese bedding set. Like many countries, the end of the War precipitated a housing crisis, which spurred the Japanese government to provide four and a half million survivor homes. Male labor resources were valuable but limited in numbers, which resulted in long working hours. This was the background that led to the eventual spatial separation of eating and sleeping spaces within Japanese homes so that these activities would not disturb each other.¹¹ In order to supply significant housing stock as quickly as possible, the state set two directions, namely, housing democratization and industrialization. In the foreground, public housing emerged in new town clusters (*nyūtaun*). Mass production of standardized apartment blocks became the norm to provide plentiful public housing in and around urban areas.

Most significantly, separate sleeping arrangements among family members were encouraged architecturally by this new building typology, further fueled by a critical view towards the *ie* system and collective sleeping. The privacy of married couples was thus prioritized and further resulted in the gradual loss of space for grandparents within traditional homes, who became spatially excluded from the modern family. In addition, the limited size of apartments only allowed for a small number of children.

In the 1970s, public housing units surpassed that of Japanese households. For the first time, the government needed to shift their focus from mass apartment production to standardized apartment improvement and modifications. In parallel, a

change in design philosophy to accommodate the users' needs led to more diverse public housing such as senior housing and care homes for people with disabilities.

In summary, family structure in post-war Japan underwent a tremendous shift. One result is that *ie* family structure is limited to the nuclear family comprising of the married couple and their children only. This shift implies that the elderly have been segregated from modern families, which have also become more age homogeneous. As a further result, the new demand for social support provided by non-kin-others came to be known.

Geographic Proximity and Eldercare

While some sociologists specifically investigate the mechanism of reciprocal support within Japanese families,¹² others suggest that the physical proximity to older parents has notable implications for intergenerational contact.¹³ Specifically, the distance-decay effect of face-to-face family care points towards physical distance as a challenge, especially among male caregivers.¹⁴ In addition, accessibility to family life and public/private services gained through geographical proximity is considered crucial to migration¹⁵ and provision of long-term care.¹⁶

The physician and gerontologist Joseph Harold Sheldon is one of the first who discovered the nuance of residential proximity which national census tends to overlook. In his survey of elderly domestic structure, Sheldon provides both primary and systematic categorization of distant living of multigenerational families.¹⁷ Survey participants are grouped in four clusters; those living next door, living within three houses away, living close in the same street and living within five minutes' walking distance. By eliminating the ambiguity of proximity, the author offers a practical

concept to frame it, namely, “a distance within which a hot meal could be carried from one house to the other without needing re-heating.”¹⁸

Similarly, the sociologist Peter Townsend argues that it is necessary to situate elderly as members of “extended families” which consist of three generations.¹⁹ The author draws a more detailed picture of separate but near living and its implication to the welfare society. The study reveals that elderly people recognize the risk of living together, typically described as “the open clashes between in-laws,”²⁰ and therefore prefer having an independent home, where they can enjoy “supported independence”²¹ by family members. Living nearby, in this case, provides “an extension of the old household” where the elderly mother can help the daughter with the chores and childcare.²² Townsend’s findings led to one of the most significant conclusions, that elderly who live close to daughters or other female relatives made the least claim on health and welfare services.²³

Inspired by Townsend, the sociologist Leopold Rosenmayr focuses on the elderly family relations. The author confirms that the key to elderly welfare lies in maintaining good family relations which can be sustained by separating households with appropriate distance, coined “intimacy at a distance.”²⁴

Methods

Very often, research in parental proximity employs quantitative statistics or questionnaire surveys to capture broader tendencies. In contrast, my aim is to contribute in-depth and detailed analysis of individual *kinkyō* experiences.

For this reason, I considered the setting of data collection significant in order to gain insight in the participants’ perspective. Ideally the data emerges within the context of everyday life. However, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, travelling was halted

and therefore fieldwork could not happen in situ. Mobile phones and mobile instant messaging therefore became my research tools.

This particular Internet-based approach is flexible in both geographical and time dimensions. The mobile instant messaging interview uses a commercial messaging application and offers flexibility in place and times of use, enhancing self-reporting.²⁵ This allows researchers to explore remotely and thoroughly the topic in question together with the participants by engaging in a real time dialogue and to “dive into the moment of experience.”²⁶ This method was also combined with weekly follow-up interviews to broaden the understanding. I talked with all the participants, aged forty-one to sixty-one years old, individually thereby collecting all data remotely over the course of two months, from May to July 2020. This paper uses primary data from twelve online interviews and 253 text messages left in the individual chat room.²⁷ I was exposed to fragments of the participants’ everyday lives and became aware of their daily activities and varied interactions in multiple situations: at home, parents’ home, hospitals and in the local neighborhood. Being fluent in Japanese language as a Chinese national who grew up in Tokyo, I carried out all the personal interviews in Japanese and translated the digital record into English. As a female in her early thirties, I interacted with the participants as an outsider. However, my experiences and familiarity with Japanese culture were essential in achieving a rapport with the participants and also during analysis of the cultural nuances. My gender was also proved beneficial in leading the female participants to text and talk openly and frankly about their private lives. The COVID-19 pandemic clearly influenced daily parent-child interactions. For example, the State of Emergency forced temporary closure of public facilities and this type of confinement prompted the daughters to be more aware of the time with their parents, which resulted in self-reflective data. I did not interview the husbands and therefore this

study should be taken as an observation of parent care of matrilocal situations in particular, rather than adult children's *kinkyō* experience in general.

Experiencing Warm-soup Proximity

Ome city, situated on the northwest fringe of Tokyo, is a hyper-aged region.²⁸

Over sixty percent of its land is covered by forest.²⁹ Ome citizens' average annual income is low, ranked fifty-one out of sixty-two Tokyo municipalities.³⁰

Yui needed to move back to her parents' home in Ome some twenty years ago due to unfortunate circumstances. Her parents restructured their detached property into a two-family house³¹ to accommodate Yui's young family. After Yui's children left the nest and her mother passed away, *kinkyō* was established between Yui and her father. He now lives in a special care home for those suffering from dementia a ten-minute drive away.

Naoko lives about a fifteen-minute walk from Yui. She is a sixty-year-old part-time social worker. Naoko practices *kinkyō* with her eighty-five-year-old mother, who moved from Niigata prefecture that is five hours away from Tokyo. Due to the successive bereavement of close kin, Naoko's mother became socially isolated in a big house with a limited amount of family support. It was her wish to relocate herself to be closer to Naoko at the age of eighty.

Satomi who appeared in the introduction to this article has been a working mother for over thirty years. She resides about a fifteen-minute walk from her mother. Although she moved out from her childhood house after getting married, she doesn't recall ever wanting to move too far from there. Satomi admits that she has received much help from her parents when raising her two boys and that it is her turn now to care for her frail mother.

About fifty-five kilometers from Ome is Meguro city, which features in the twenty-three special-wards area that represents Japan's political, economic, and cultural center. Meguro has more than double the population of Ome but is only a fraction of its size, creating a dense urban environment.³² Lower than the state's average, nearly twenty percent of the citizens are aged above sixty-five.³³ Meguro citizens' average annual income is high and is double that of Ome.³⁴ These socio-economic factors suggest that the Ome and Meguro are two distinct suburban and urban societies.

Keiko, a forty-one-year-old working mother of three, lives in the same apartment building as her parents in Meguro. Similar to Satomi, Keiko had lived separately from the parents but always kept within thirty minutes' reach. It was quite natural for her to decide to move into the third floor of the building where her parents reside on the ground floor.

It can be difficult to single out a particular reason to live close to elderly parents. Apart from Keiko, the other three participants' parents-in-law passed away at least fifteen years ago. When it came to the *kinkyō* decision-making, the participants' husbands were described as understanding, appreciative or simply did not oppose the idea of matrilocal situation.³⁵ The elderly parents also receive state pensions and were not financially dependent on their daughters.

In the following analysis, the participants' interviews and text messages are organized into three recurring themes: distance dichotomy; multigenerational lifestyle; and integration of intergenerational support and social service.

Doing warm-soup proximity: Distance dichotomy

Although families were spatially separated into more age homogeneous households, the warm-soup proximity loosely connected generations by frequent

and casual interactions. The frequency and format of the coming and going between daughters and elderly parents had a strong connection with the type of housing parents resided and their level of frailty. While *kinkyō* triggered unplanned get-togethers as the primary form of day-to-day interaction with self-reliant parents, special visits were scheduled twice a week in institutional settings.

Interaction with parents who live in their own homes was generally casual, generating a flow of family support between generations and enabling visibility to each other's daily life. Keiko's case renders the informal coming and going the best. Using a pocket of time, she often pops in and out of her parents' home on the ground floor, delivering dishes or sweets whenever available. Keiko enjoys going down to have a cup of tea after a long day, and her parents would also show up at her door to see their grandchildren, or help her with babysitting the five-year-old. The everyday joint activities were not pre-arranged but took place on the spur of the moment. Keiko was quite comfortable with her quasi-co-residence situation. In an interview, she notes, "I think they know roughly whether I'm home or not by checking if my bicycle is parked downstairs. They have a good grasp on my schedule."³⁶

One can argue that certain societal and cultural foundations also play a role in the manner of the intergenerational interaction. For example, *ie* structure or sense of filial duty presupposes unity and tight relations across different family generations. It allows the casual drop in by providing tacit approval to such behavior. Proximity is situated in this specific socio-cultural milieu, providing families with a physical framework to realize unscheduled get-togethers.

Keiko's narrative offers an impression of free-flowing movement between the parents' and daughters' homes, establishing a good understanding of each other's everyday life. The intergenerational interaction was unanticipated but now forms an

integral part of their everyday life, encouraging not only material exchanges such as food and tools but also kin support. The distance between the parents' residence (A) and the daughters (B) triggers intergenerational contact, expressed by ease of movement and natural coming and going. Families who practice *kinkyō* are likely to achieve visibility to each other's life due to proximity.

In addition, the visibility level was manageable due to spatial separation, hence realizing and achieving a household autonomy. Yui, who saw her father the least due to the visitor restrictions at the care home under the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted this point with sentiment. Yui first emphasized that informal eldercare can take various forms, ranging from hands-on care, Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) support, housekeeping, to trivial administrative tasks such as taking care of parents' paperwork, coordinating with and admitting/withdrawing them from health facilities.

Yui remembers how she was exposed to her father's reality and how her father-daughter relationship evolved by allowing some distance:³⁷

When we lived in two-family house, I could see his wishes and behaviors and I couldn't help but react. But now I have him live in a place where I cannot see. Well... so...I no longer have the feeling of being annoyed by my father. Rather, I don't know how to put it but I feel like I think about him more instead.

Her attitude towards her father changed after admitting him to a care home where he now receives professional care. Yui told me that when she walked into a convenience store, the neatly packed bento boxes and cakes displayed on the shelves reminded her of those draining days she needed to juggle her business, the hospitalized mother and also care for her elderly father at home. The ready-made food in the store was of great help to her because she needed to feed her father. She cooked his breakfast every morning before going to work but grabbed his lunch and ordered delivery dinner in between her meetings. Mixed emotions are felt at the 7-Eleven store when she sees a

particular food product and thinks fondly of her father. Yui has become apologetic for having neglected her father. Moving him to the care home as a symptomatic solution to his dementia positively transformed her previous disdain to compassion towards him.

Distance between the residences therefore obtains meaning; it detaches households from potential interference but also links them through everyday interaction. The distance separates as much as it unites. Warm-soup proximity, in these cases, was strategically implemented to maintain a meaningful parent-child relationship.

Speaking warm-soup proximity: Multigenerational living as a lifestyle

Naoko's accounts demonstrated the change in parent-child relations that spatially resulted in different types of living arrangements. Although Naoko now sees her mother almost every day for joint cooking and hospital appointments, she revealed that the mother-daughter relationship hasn't always been straightforward. She described the child-she-was as extremely sensitive and obedient who "used to look into mother's face all the time."³⁸ For this reason, she broke away from her demanding mother by pursuing work in Tokyo. The organization of Naoko's life choices as a young adult was fundamentally determined by the tension between the mother and daughter. Distance is applied as a strategy to control interference but a new dimension is now attributed. It also reflects a negotiated state of parent-child relationship.

As their relationship changed over the years, so did the physical distance between Naoko and her mother. After several bereavements of close kin, Naoko felt that her mother became less edgy. She also learnt to accept her mother for who she was. "Regardless of the physical distance, if you couldn't handle the emotional side of things

well, the relationship wouldn't work.”³⁹ The two jointly chose to reduce the distance between them and looked for an arrangement that worked for both parties.

In Naoko's instance, commitment plays a central role in this life-long relationship. The current mother-daughter tie is rather a product of choice, built on its own terms. The kinship between Naoko and her mother continues but commitment to each other was achieved by a mutual alignment of how they wanted their future to be organized, a multigenerational living which, in Naoko's words, “won't take away the daughter's life.”⁴⁰

These insights reveal something, if not directly, about *kinkyō* as a lifestyle. In discussing modernity, sociologist Anthony Giddens notes that modern-day living entails life with plural choices.⁴¹ The routinization of choosing, a series of decisions about what to do, how to act and who to be, shapes one's lifestyle. The plurality of choice also covers whom one builds relations with or withdraws from them.

Naoko's experience, in terms of negotiating intergenerational relationships and maintaining the vertical bonds, presupposes that a *kinkyō* arrangement is not merely elderly or child support but more of a lifestyle choice in a broader sense. This echoes Yui's earlier statement about how living near one's elderly parents, dependent or self-reliant, contributes to sustain the adult children's life. The relationship with the parents accompanies a greater commitment and choices than the traditional sense of filial duty.

The next section begins with a discussion about the spatial implications of living within warm-soup proximity and a common attitude towards eldercare expressed by all four participants. This attitude suggests neither an immediate nor prolonged execution of women's traditional obligations. Instead, it involves a more inclusive approach in caring for older family members. I also pose further questions about the gendered spatiality of *kinkyō*.

Sense of distance: Towards integration of family care and social services

Today, distance is an increasingly discussed planning strategy for sustainable urbanization, which implicates a shift towards more compact urban living. The compact-city concept in this case has sparked decades-long debates about accessibility achieved by proximity, reflecting on today's hypermobile lives and brings focus on low-mobility.⁴² Its density and mixed land use characteristics are primarily believed to offer citizens access to everyday amenities accomplished by physical proximity, allowing more energy-efficient modes of transport. It is also exemplified as the timed-city concept within Melbourne's "twenty-minute neighborhood"⁴³ or Paris's proposal "ville du quart d'heure (Quarter-hour-city),"⁴⁴ imagining daily amenities including workplace, school and shops to be just footsteps away. Sim's Soft City provides a formula to achieve proximity, arguing that it can be realized when the city integrates diversity and density.⁴⁵ The common denominator here is the suggestion towards the reduction in physical scale of urban life and the positive impact on daily convenience. In this context, *kinkyō* can be considered in a similar way, commanding family life and health care support facilities to be essential part of everyday life.

Meanwhile, research shows that social polarization pivoted on age dimension is manifested spatially. For example, growing socio-economic segregation between young and old are evident in housing,⁴⁶ residential mobility and other urban facilities,⁴⁷ furthering social-spatial inequality. Notably, to support elderly independence as well as optimize accessible leisure opportunities, experimental housing typologies including senior housing or gated communities that promote mutual self-help have appeared in Japan and globally. These models mainly target the retired population, specialized in health promotion and disease prevention. Although they function as multi-service

centers for the elderly people, the sociologists Gunhild Hagestad and Peter Uhlenberg criticize the spatial set-up, referred to as “spatial age segregation.”⁴⁸ The spatial age segregation takes place when “individuals of different ages do not occupy the same space and hence cannot engage in face-to-face interactions.”⁴⁹ It occurs in various institutional settings such as schools or care homes. In these spatial arrangements, users are separated by age with restricted interaction opportunities.

As the authors identify, senior housing is another example of age segregation in the residential context, because the likelihood for cross-age interactions is largely discounted. Spatial proximity, in this case, is essential for the intergenerational face-to-face interaction and ties.⁵⁰ In the light of age-homogeneity, living within warm-soup proximity therefore facilitates more intergenerational contacts.

By making a comparison between *kinkyō* and multigenerational co-residence, Keiko confirmed the meaning behind *kinkyō* in the intergenerational relationships and provision of care services. The separating distance in between the residents allows space for non-kin others to be involved in eldercare:⁵¹

In case of co-residence, I would feel that I have to do everything by myself and bear the burden. But the sense of distance now is quite nice because we have separate households. Yes, so, I can depend on others whenever applicable but also participate when things get serious. The sense of distance is just right, not too far but not too close.

Keiko also touches upon that in case of co-residence, the family is not entitled to some State services.⁵² Since the existing policy prioritizes familial support within the same household, having separate entrances makes a big difference, making a wider range of public services such as cleaning available in the parents’ home. The increased physical separation and distance, in this case, broadens the provision of flexible

eldercare, involving both family members and others from the community or professional field.

Similarly, Yui reflects that if one lives near to the parents, although the “the hard work remains hard work,”⁵³ the physical proximity enhances the kin support availability enabling administrative convenience which expedites daily support based on the children’s own schedule. Caring for the elderly parents, therefore, can be merged into the children’s main flow of life. The possibility of knitting eldercare into one’s everyday routine, according to Yui, was the most distinct benefit of *kinkyō* in comparison to living apart, where children would need to “weave all the work together into a single visit”⁵⁴ in addition to numerous coordination by phone. In this sense, *kinkyō* was a better option that Yui would recommend to others.

All four participants believed they were satisfied with the present sense of distance, which applied in both geographical proximity and the parent-child relationship. The sense of distance also encouraged the daughters’ readiness in accepting non-kin-others’ involvement in the future care and nursing of the elderly parents.

As shown, the transformation from traditional co-residence to *kinkyō* as a dominant living arrangement suggests modification in people’s habitualized activities. However, if warm-soup proximity provides convenience for daughters to preserve their professional life while participating in long-term care, it is necessary to highlight *kinkyō*’s gender bias. Will this arrangement potentially encourage more daughters to put themselves in a situation where they need to bear all the burden of dual responsibilities (employment and eldercare), further enhancing the gendered practice? Male participation in informal eldercare remains in question and therefore should be further explored.

In summary, future living scales that support an effective integration of everyday routines, multigenerational family life and professional services within the existing urban fabrics are needed. In addition, the gendered aspect of *kinkyō* requires immediate attention to offer deeper analysis of its influence. New services that enhance meaningful parental care should be included in the city planning vision instead of conventional age-targeted products. In this way, future cities could be built through creative planning and clever manipulation of appropriate distances.

Conclusion

The intergenerational relationships and availability of kin support gain importance due to the population aging and increasing life expectancy. This paper has documented and explored how Japanese daughters have experienced and made sense of living in warm-soup proximity to their elderly parents. The different implications of close but separate living arrangement have also been discussed.

The *kinkyō* experience was generally described positively since they gained visibility to the parents' everyday lives, balanced with control of their private-life exposure simultaneously. When elderly parents reside at their own home, everyday interaction was reported as unplanned or casual events, such as meal sharing, in contrast with the scheduled parent visits in special facilities.

The parent-child relationships in *kinkyō* situations also suggests that geographical proximity is an expression of commitment to family ties and considered a lifestyle choice rather than filial obligation. Nonetheless, administrative convenience remains a common thread and a beneficial *kinkyō* attribute because flexibility to integrate meetings with parents and maintaining one's daily routines are highly valued.

Additionally, *kinkyō* presupposes non-kin-others' involvement when it comes to day-to-day eldercare. The loose spatial separation enables an effective integration of

professional and family caregiving. It allows daughters to maintain their lifestyles without shouldering too much burden, in other words, without serious detriment to the caregivers' personal routines. This dimension of *kinkyō* is highly appreciated by the daughters.

A limitation of this study points towards the direction to investigate *kinkyō*'s gender effect, encouraging several issues such as sons' *kinkyō* experience to be analyzed in detail.

Intergenerational caregiving is expected to take place across households rather than within households. By exploring the different implications of distance in the context of hyper-aged societies, I suggest to increase the width of imagination for future built environments. An effective format of intergenerational support can be realized with careful spatial separation between households. The decreasing number of traditional multigenerational households does not directly indicate declining multigenerational living. The warm-soup proximity between families should not separate generations from each other; on the contrary, it ensures continuous and meaningful intergenerational relationships.

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Notes

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