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Frame Analysis on LGBTQ+ Spaces in Japan

Case Pride Center Osaka and Pride House Tokyo

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This thesis presents through two case studies how centres such as Pride Center Osaka (PCO) and Pride House Tokyo (PHT) create LGBTQ+ inclusive space in Japan. The aim of this research is to inspect the "injustice frame" (Gamson, 1995; Benford & Snow, 2000), which defines the perceived unjust issues towards the "victims" that the social movement is advocating change for, namely the adversities that LGBTQ+ individuals face in Japanese society. In addition, this research studies how the social movement, in this case LGBTQ+ movement and the LGBTQ+ centres in Japan tackle these adversities in their operation.

The methods used in this research are online research and frame analysis. The data used in this research are a list of challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people in Japanese society provided by an organisation J-ALL, an online conference video by PCO and a pdf guidebook by PHT.

The difficulties faced by LGBTQ+ people in Japan encompass multiple facets of life, ranging from school life to the workplace and from childhood to elderly age. The centres aim to tackle these difficulties through individual consultation support, but also offer a space for interaction. The centres fit the criteria for "alternative space" in the way that they offer space for the LGBTQ+ social movement to first withdraw to, share their experiences, be empowered and then return back into the broader society to create inclusion.

The centres operate in a way of amplifying voices of LGBTQ+ community and they serve as networking hubs, information disseminators and knowledge archives that aim to broaden LGBTQ+ inclusion and visibility. LGBTQ+ allies and other stakeholders are important in this process of spreading understanding. This study is tied to the contemporary discourses of transgender rights and equal marriage rights, as well as the enactment of the "LGBT Understanding Law" in Japan.

Key words: LGBTQ+, sexual orientation, gender identity, Japan, frame analysis, alternative space, inclusion, inclusive, safe space, consultation support, discrimination, empowerment, SOGIESC, social movement.

Acknowledgement of using AI tools: Google Translate was used in translating data from Japanese into English in this Thesis.

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1 Introduction

The state of LGBTQ+ rights around the world is under constant transformation. Civil society both around the world and in Japan are advocating for these rights. Simultaneously setbacks, and disagreements prevail. LGBTQ+ rights are seen as human rights (Belmonte, 2021) and that is also the standpoint for this research. Adaptation of human rights on the other hand is seen as part of the concept of development (Mason, 2018) and sustainable development[1]. Studying the progress of LGBTQ+ rights in any society paints a picture on a part of its developmental path. This research aims to capture that picture, in a moment of time.

As around the world, the Japanese landscape in regard of LGBTQ+ rights and recognition of the variety of sexual orientations and gender identities is in a state of flux. It may be said that LGBTQ+ issues have gained momentum in Japan. The indicators regarding this change are lawsuits and debates related to enacting a non-discrimination law.

Gender identity and equal marriage rights are the two issues that are on the surface in the media in Japan. In relation to transgender people in Japan there have been changes in the legislation in the beginning of the 21st century. Regarding history of transgender people in Japan, "starting in the mid-1990s, trans people in Japan could access medical transition in the form of hormones and reconstructive surgery" (Yuen, 2020, p. 87). It was in 2003 that a law was passed "titled the Law Concerning Special Cases in Handling Gender for People with Gender Identity Disorder (GID) [*seidōitsuseishōgai*], and sexual reassignment surgery became legalised the following year" (Sawabe, 2008, p. 25) as the "Exceptional Treatment Law for People with [GID]" (Yuen, 2020, p. 88).

The public discourse in Japan has revolved around the "disorder" of gender identity and the pathologizing of transgender people (Yuen, 2020). This is slowly changing. International Classification of Diseases (ICD) upheld by the WHO (World Health Organization) no longer upholds gender identity disorder in its 11th version, taking effect in 2022 (World Health Organization, n.d. a). The classification has changed from "mental and behavioural disorders" into "conditions related to sexual health" and the new terms are "gender incongruence of

[1] Although in the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) there is no mention about LGBTQ+ people or issues of sexual orientation or gender identity, the Agenda2030 itself has a slogan "leave no one behind" and statements and strategies by the UN in order to build a more inclusive world have been made. Inspiration for this research spurred from especially the SDGs' 11th Goal's target 11.7. which says, "By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities" (UN, 2015, p. 24).

adolescence and adulthood" and "gender incongruence in childhood" (World Health Organization, n.d. b).

Taniguchi (2021, p. 371) writes about how gender markers (gender listed in the official documents) that have been assigned in the family register system (*koseki*) according to sex characteristics "function to identify individuals in society and delineate the respective roles and images tied to each gender" and how "those who are not comfortable with their assigned gender, the gender marker obstructs their ability to live in accordance with their gender identity." Taniguchi notes that the debate has been focusing on the gender marker in official documents and especially changing this marker (i.e. "changing one's legal gender") which had long been denied from transgender people. Even after 2003's GID Act, changing one's gender marker in their family registry has been possible only with strict requirements. Taniguchi (2021, p. 371) writes that the requirements are that "the applicant must (1) be over 20 years old, (2) be unmarried at the time of the request, (3) have no children, (4) be deprived of their reproductive organs or reproductive ability, and (5) have external genital organs similar to other members of the sex to which they wish to be assigned." Taniguchi also notes that in 2008 "the Diet changed the third condition to 'have no minor children'." The decision is made by the Family Court. "By the end of 2018, 8,676 individuals had changed their gender marker" (Taniguchi, 2021, p. 371). Among these strict requirements, "requiring people to divorce or to permanently sterilize themselves are demands that many international bodies, like the UN, categorize as violations of the human rights of transgender individuals" (Taniguchi, 2021, p. 371). Taniguchi (2021) also notes that also Japanese legal scholars have long criticized the requirements.

The family registry system, as Tamagawa (2016, p. 172) cites Tsuchiya (2004), also adds access through "various loopholes allow[s] anyone to access other people's basic information" and to discriminate transgender people. Tamagawa (2016, p. 179) states that to an initiative is needed in order to change the Japanese society towards LGBTQ+ inclusion through a "more inclusive family registration system".

Regarding gender identity and especially transgender people, the 2003 "gender dysphoria law" (Kaneko, July 2024) also known as the *Law Concerning Special Cases in Handling Gender for People with Gender Identity Disorder* (GID) has been under scrutiny lately due to the lawsuits that are settled in High Courts and Even the Supreme Court. The content of these lawsuits has been focusing on the strict requirements for being able to change one's "gender

markers" or legal gender in the family register. These include the requirement of sterilisation and the requirement of being unmarried. In October 2023 the Supreme Court of Japan ruled that the sterilisation requirement was unconstitutional (Tang, April 2024; Kaneko & Otake, October 2023) and in 2024 a High Court had also ruled in favour of the plaintiff that "there was no need for her to receive sterilization surgery" (Kaneko, July 2024). In July 2024 a lawsuit was filed at the Kyoto Family Court on the requirement of being unmarried by a transgender woman. She is married to a woman who has supported her during the transition, and they wish to stay married (Kaneko, July 2024).

In addition, Taniguchi (2021) raises intersex people's rights as one of the major issues regarding LGBTQ+ rights in Japan. Regarding intersex people in Japan, there has been an option to leave the gender information blank or "unknown" when an infant's gender is determined. Taniguchi (2021, p. 370) writes that "some parents and medical doctors, who feel uneasy about using the ambiguous gender option, opt for surgery to make the infant's genitalia conform to the gender binary." And thus, they are assigned a gender. Taniguchi (2021, p. 370) continues: "Surgery and hormonal treatment, to neither of which can a child knowingly consent, constitute infringements upon the child's bodily integrity." Taniguchi (2021, p. 370) also writes about intersex genital mutilation (IGM) "which is debated in the context of the prohibition of torture and inhumane or degrading treatment." A proposed solution has been to "offer gender options outside of the male-female binary in identity documents" (Taniguchi 2021, p. 370).

Similarly, the same-sex marriage advocates and organisations are fighting for equal marriage rights through the lawsuits that are challenging the "traditional marriage". The marriage equality movement and for example the organisations Marriage For All Japan and Equal Marriage Alliance have gained media visibility recently. In the history of Japan, only a brief moment between 1873 and 1882 were same sex relationships considered a crime (Taniguchi, 2021). In addition, in the 2017 criminal law revision recognised that in the crime of rape, the victim could be male instead of female which Taniguchi (2021) notes to be a sign of (legal) attention drawn to matters concerning same sex sexual conduct.

The matter of marriage equality has been increasingly debated in Japan, as Taniguchi (2021) writes. At the moment of this research, "registered marriage" is the only form of couple relationship legally recognised throughout Japan (Kamano & Khor, 2011). LGBTQ+ people in general do not qualify for this registering of marriage. No laws *prohibit* same-sex couples

from marrying as Tamagawa (2016) cites Tamaki (2011). Yet, there are "no current laws protect[ing] the rights of same-sex couples in Japan" as Tamagawa (2016, p. 165) cites Sunagawa (2009) and Tamaki (2011). On common-law marriages and domestic partnership system, Tamagawa (2016, p. 165) cites Sunagawa (2009) saying that "only heterosexual couples can qualify" to common-law marriages (*jijitsukon*). However, Kamano & Khor (2011, p. 149) write that there are "no partnership law or domestic partnership system for either heterosexual or homosexual relationships". According to Watanabe (2006), domestic partnership system has been thought of "as immediate relief and as a potential step toward same-sex marriage" by some, as others have said it as "sufficient and appropriate because of the unique situation created by Japan's traditional family system" (as cited by Tamagawa, 2016, p. 173). Tamagawa (2016, p. 180) concludes that "Such a system would be unequal and would have major problems."

The documents that have been interpreted to prevent same-sex marriage are the Civil Code of Japan and certain Articles of the Constitution. The Book IV of the Civil Code (amended in 1947) "is unclear in its depiction of marriage as occurring exclusively between a man and a woman … although its gender-specific words such as 'husband-wife couple (*fūfu*)', 'husband (*otto*)' and 'wife (*tsuma*),' are often used as a justification to exclude homosexual couples." (Tamagawa, 2016, p. 165; Taniguchi, 2021). Article 24 of the Constitution states that marriage should be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes (Kamano & Khor, 2011; Tamagawa, 2016; Taniguchi, 2021). And as Tamagawa (2016, p. 165) notes, some "Japanese law scholars attest" that "both sexes" means more than merely "a man and a woman", but according to the prevailing rationale "marriage is exclusive to opposite-sex couples in Japan". In the constitution there are contradicting articles that could be seen as supporting freedom of marriage: "Article 12 guarantees freedoms and rights; Article 13 guarantees the right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness; and Article 14 prohibits irrational discrimination." (Tamagawa, 2016, p. 180). "Thus in law and in practice, the marriage system in Japan has been interpreted as inapplicable and inaccessible for people in same-sex relationships." (Taniguchi, 2021, p. 373). The family registry system with its required entries is seen as "the fermenter of the discriminatory marriage system" (Tamagawa, 2016, p. 165) and it along with the institution of marriage as also the "'hotbed' of gender inequality in Japan" (Tamagawa, 2016, p. 172, citing Horie, 2010, p. 50).

Transgender people are not allowed to be married when changing their legal gender, "by not allowing already married individuals to be the same gender as their partners" it "could be

interpreted as an indirect government measure to deny same-sex marriage" (Tamagawa, 2016, p. 165). However, there is a possibility of a same-sex relationship gaining most of the legal recognition that a marital relationship has through a "loophole" in the "adult adoption system" (Taniguchi, 2021; Tamagawa, 2016; Kamano & Khor, 2011).

Tamagawa (2016, p. 160) writes that "it seems that Japanese scholars and activists are only just beginning to advocate the legal protection of homosexual couples". A phenomenon called partnership certificate system has occurred in Japan, which grants recognition to same-sex couples on a municipal level. Partnership certificates have been issued by local governments since 2015 with varying requirements and procedures. Instead of legal effect in national jurisdiction they have more of a symbolic function (Taniguchi, 2021). Taniguchi (2021, p. 374) writes that "the social impact on the system is highly significant, functioning symbolically, beyond the legal benefits, as a show for marriage equality". The partnership system has "offered a way to recognise same-sex couples in the eyes of the local governments" (Exum, May 2023). The certificates are seen "closest to legal recognition" (Tang et al., 2020, p. 197). According to Tang et al. (2020), Shibuya Ward in Tokyo was the first to issue these partnership certificates. Recently still, there has been a vast number of municipalities joining the partnership certificate addressing group. In March 2024, "nearly 400 municipalities and prefectures had introduced partnership systems for same-sex couples according to Marriage For All Japan" (Kaneko, March 2024). The partnership system has been helping with for example "allowing partners to offer consent in operations involving an unconscious patient but it doesn't grant legal protection and tax benefits to couples" (Kaneko, March 2024). Although partnership recognition on the local level has been progressing, the so called "familyship" systems are not recognised as vastly, with 40 municipalities in May 2023 having established such systems. In familyship systems same-sex partners' children are recognised as family members "enabling access to public services typically offered to married couples and families", such as being treated as a family at hospitals, when applying for public housing or dropping kids off at school (Exum, May 2023).

Kaneko (October 2024) writes about the judgement of the Tokyo High Court that ruled the banning of equal marriage unconstitutional. Altogether "six same-sex marriage lawsuits have been filed in five district courts nationwide" as of October 2024 (Kaneko, October 2024). The

other four rulings have been either "constitutional" or "state of unconstitutionality"[2] (*iken jotai*), the latter being not as strong as "unconstitutional" (*kenpo ihan*) (Kaneko, October 2024; Sutter, 2015). According to Kaneko (March 2024) the Sapporo High Court ruling had "strong phrasing that is expected to pressure the government and lawmakers for action". Stronger language was used in the Tokyo High Court ruling of October 2024 than the Tokyo High Court ruling of 2022 and the Sapporo High Court ruling of 2024, both of which used the weaker "state of unconstitutionality". The two Articles in the constitution that are violated according to the Tokyo High Court ruling of 2024 are Articles 14 and 24. When not allowing same-sex marriage, equality, as stated in the Article 14, is violated. In addition, Article 24's "marriage must be based on individual dignity" is violated. (Kaneko, October 2024). The ruling also took a stance on "creating a new law to establish as system that would grant the same privileges to same-sex couples." (Kaneko, October 2024).

A Supreme Court trial that Kaneko writes about (March 2024) had a focus whether the definition of a "de facto marital relationship" encompasses same-sex couples. The ruling was that "same-sex partners should be eligible for survivors benefits when one of them become victims of a crime" (Kaneko, March 2024).

Tamagawa (2016, p. 166) cites Waaldijk (2004) comparing the Japan's equal marriage rights development with European nations, Waaldijk stating that "Japan is not ready [for marriage equality] because the necessary historical conditions have not been met." Among the conditions that Waaldijk lists, the remaining unmet condition is the enactment of anti-discrimination laws protecting LGBTQ+ people's rights.

Nevertheless, it may be argued that momentum towards marriage equality exists, after the rush of municipalities that have been starting to address partnership certificates. Although Tamagawa (2016, p. 181) states, the "legislation of same-sex marriage would have no significant effect on heterosexuals in Japan" it may be argued that it is the majority of heterosexuals whose opinion and understanding is required in order for Japan to gain marriage equality.

In addition to the lawsuits, a coalition of about a hundred Japanese and international organisations has been advocating for such a non-discrimination law that Waaldijk wrote

[2] The term state of unconstitutionality "means that the districts were unconstitutional (really), but a reasonable time for the diet to fix the election law had not yet passed." (Sutter, December 2015).

about. Recently, a petition of 106,250 signatures was delivered to lawmakers to enact such a law (J-ALL, n.d.). The non-discrimination law took form as an "LGBT understanding law", officially the "Act on Promotion of Public Understanding of Diversity of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" (*Seiteki shikō oyobi jendāaidentiti no tayō-sei ni kansuru kokumin no rikai no zōshin ni kansuru Hōritsu*), which was passed in Japan in May 2023 in adjunct of the G7 summit in Hiroshima. The law was strongly criticised by the LGBTQ+ community for not being adequately comprehensive or effective and that it may even enhance discrimination. The content of the law states that there should be more comprehension on LGBTQ+ people and issues around them, without concrete measures for criminalising discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. Thus, this law may not be called a comprehensive nationwide anti-discrimination law.

According to Taniguchi (2021), there were two bills prepared in the Diet, of which the opposition parties' bill would have prohibited discrimination with concrete measures. This "LGBT understanding law" was prepared by the ruling party LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) with the name "Promoting Better Understanding on SOGI [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity]" (Taniguchi, 2021). Concrete measures are not imposed on neither central nor local governments and the law has been based on the premise that "before the government can move forward with specific laws and policies on LGBT individuals, the general public must have a sufficient understanding of LGBT issues and rights", namely it "encourages governments to raise awareness of LGBT issues throughout Japan" (Taniguchi, 2021, p. 376). A Diet member that had promoted the LDP's bill is cited by Taniguchi (2021, p. 377): "the ruling party has no intention of enhancing marriage equality or human rights protections" and continues to note that the bill's "legal implications would be meaningless." Without a comprehensive law in place, and even when such a law has been enacted, spaces that emphasise inclusivity are needed for reasons such as creating safe space for LGBTQ+ groups and individuals.

Returning to the constitutional lawsuits filed in order to fight for both equal marriage rights and transgender rights Jones (October 2023) writes that the constitutional lawsuits seem to have been "a form of lobbying" – having a true force to gain momentum, even if major changes in the laws have not been made. Through these lawsuits and rulings, even though the state may have "won" in the sense of the plaintiffs not being compensated, "courts can include in their judgements warnings that lawmakers should do something, or next time the outcome might be different" (Jones, October 2023). Jones (October 2023) also writes that the

courts may “tell the Diet to do something, but not what to do”. Jones (October 2023) also writes that if the “LGBT Understanding Law” is seen by the Supreme Court as the Diet “doing something”, it might have an effect on the future lawsuits regarding marriage equality especially.

Even though the current situation of LGBTQ+ rights in Japan is what it is, “this does not necessarily mean that Japan is lagging far behind other countries” and that it is “necessary to keep in mind the fundamental limitations of laws and its practice in Japan”, as Taniguchi (2021, p. 377) notes. These limitations include the lack of a constitutional court, the inability to appeal for international human rights violations to the supreme court of Japan, the lack of human rights institutions that are independent of the government, lack of comprehensive discrimination laws, and lack of human rights education in especially “aspects of rights assertion” (Taniguchi, 2021, p. 377).

The focus of this research are the LGBTQ+ centres that have sprung up in Japan in the recent years. I have chosen two centres that were established first and have had the greatest visibility. Pride House Tokyo (PHT), established in the dawn of the Tokyo Olympics 2020 has a strong connection to the sports world and has various forms of operations. PHT aims to create a network and serve as a hub for LGBTQ+ people. Pride Center Osaka (PCO) is smaller in extent of operations, yet for example its connections to embassies make its status more equal with PHT.

In the Pride House Tokyo Guidebook 2023, it is stated that the centre exists to “create an *LGBTQ+ inclusive society* that does not exclude anyone” (PHT, 2023, p. 2, emphasis mine) and that it aims to be a “beacon of hope for an equal and dynamic society that *leaves no one behind* regardless of gender or sexual diversity” (PHT, 2023, p. 4, emphasis mine). This resonates with the “leave no one behind” slogan of the Agenda2030. Yet more important is the belief and the aim to create an inclusive society through the inclusive spaces.

At the core of this research is also the need to see the bigger picture in Japanese society: Why are the centres an important part of the LGBTQ+ movement? Why is inclusive and safe pubic space needed especially for LGBTQ+ community? What kind of difficulties do LGBTQ+ individuals face in Japan, outside these centres? Regarding the difficulties, Taniguchi (2021) writes about three issues that need to be considered regarding LGBTQ+ in Japan, which are the private nature of sexuality, as well as invisibility and isolation of LGBTQ+ people. Of these three issues, this research inspects the private/public intersection of LGBTQ+ through

the concept of coming out, but also addresses the (in)visibility of LGBTQ+ issues through information dissemination and considers the isolation in the form of spaces designated to bringing people together. This research inspects the spaces in question from the point of view of public and alternative space and inclusion.

I begin with methodology of the research in chapter two, constructing the conceptual framework, online research, and frame analysis. In the third chapter I write about the conceptual framework regarding the terms LGBTQ+, SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sexual Characteristics), LGBTQ+ in Japan, inclusion and its related concepts and finally about public space, alternative space and inclusive space. The problems that the LGBTQ+ community and individuals face in the Japanese society are addressed in chapter four. Chapters five and six portray the centres PCO and PHT.

The research questions for this Thesis are the following: (1) What problems have LGBTQ+ individuals faced in public spaces other than inclusive spaces in Japan? (2) How do the inclusive public spaces in question aim to meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ community? (3) Who are the different stakeholders that need to act in order to create LGBTQ+ inclusive public space in Japan? I will address these questions in the seventh chapter of this thesis from an analytic perspective, but the first question also in chapters three and four and the second question in chapters five and six. The concluding chapters will focus on discussing the findings of the research and reflecting the Thesis process.

2 Methodology

This section introduces the methods of this research, divided into four subchapters. First is the conceptual framework. Second is what I call online research, which contains the data collection on behalf of this study. Third, I describe the more precise choice of frame analysis as a method framework.

In general, this study is exploratory (theory building, descriptive research) and answers the question "what is going on" (instead of "why is it happening") (Denscombe, 2009; De Vaus, 2001). Regarding strategy, the research is a case study with qualitative data (Denscombe, 2009). The case study is conducted of two spaces, aiming for analysis and understanding of the spaces in question. The research is cross-sectional, which, as Denscombe (2009) describes is a snapshot instead of a longitudinal movie-like research. Regarding philosophical assumptions, since the data acquisition and analysis are qualitative, constructionism and interpretivism are at the forefront. This is emphasised in examining "how people see and define" the world (Kalof et al., 2008, p. 20).

This research has been conducted from online materials and at a distance from the subjects of the study. The three main bodies of data have been the following: (1) a list of difficulties faced by LGBTQ+ people in Japan provided by Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation, or J-ALL (PDF), (2) online conference presentation presented by PCO (video recording), and (3) online brochure by PHT (PDF). In addition to these, literature review comprised of articles and book chapters formed the conceptual framework, which I will go through in the following. In addition, a small amount of email correspondence with PCO has been used as data. Regarding the language of these materials, I translated the list of difficulties (1) from original Japanese to English, the online conference recording (2) was held in Japanese, and I translated the transcript from Japanese to English, and the guidebook brochure original was in English. The correspondence with PCO was in Japanese and translated by me.

2.1 Conceptual framework

I started the research with a literature review, which was formed into a conceptual framework for the study. The literature review had as its point of departure the original working title of the Thesis, *LGBTQ+ Inclusive Public Space in Japan* and the concepts surrounding these themes were built around it. The third chapter of this Thesis consists of this conceptual framework.

I was able to utilise the reading list for two courses in Kansai Gaidai University that I was in the end unable to attend myself, compiled by Professor Jeffry T. Hester. The courses were Gender and Sexuality in Japan and Sexuality and Culture in Japan. These materials provided a base for the conceptual framework for LGBTQ+ in Japan. I did several cycles of searches on my own in the University of Turku library portal regarding material related to LGBTQ+ and Japan, as well as public space in Japan and LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces in general. I was also introduced to several books by my thesis supervisor Annamari Konttinen, and I found sources recommended thanks to professors Silja Keva and Outi Luova through Ella Wahlbeck, which proved useful for this research.

Over the course of working on this thesis, I was able to gather information on developments of LGBTQ+ issues in Japan. I delve into this information in the introduction of this thesis and in two subchapters in the third chapter: “LGBTQ+ in Japan” (dealing with LGBTQ+ terms used in Japan), and “LGBTQ+ Inclusive Public Spaces in Japan”. Before each of these subchapters, I go through the general concepts of LGBTQ+ and SOGIESC, Inclusion and its surrounding concepts, and Public Space and Alternative Space. As in the past, research has been focused on gay male perspectives (especially McLelland) and for example “lesbians have received disproportionately less attention in Japan” (Tamagawa, 2016, p. 170), the intention of this research has been to focus on LGBTQ+ more broadly.

2.2 Online research

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, traveling and spending time on site was difficult. A solution for this has been online research, a method that focuses on online data collection. I focused in this research on textual analysis of three documents, two written documents and one video recording. Instead of either going on site in person or conducting interviews, I found that I could introduce myself to the topic of LGBTQ+ Inclusive Public Space in Japan through these three documents.

The first document I will present in the fourth chapter of this Thesis after the conceptual framework, is the “List of Social Challenges We Face in Society Due to Our Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” (Difficulties List). It is provided by J-ALL, or Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation, the official name of which is Japan Alliance for Legislation to Remove Social Barriers based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. In this research, I have used the third version of the Difficulties List. In the first two versions of the Difficulties List, J-ALL collected opinions nationwide from 51 organisations and individuals who support

J-ALL's activities. The first two editions of the list were published in 2015. The third edition of the Difficulties List was expanded by three committees inside the association (J-ALL). The third edition was published on 4th March 2019. A new updated edition was released on 31st March 2025 with a total of 411 entries, 64 of them new. In this fourth edition, COVID-19 pandemic related issues were added and altogether 111 organisations around Japan collaborated on the list. The third edition that I have used is a collection of 354 data entries each depicting a difficulty that LGBTQ+ people have faced in Japan. The original data was arranged in ten categories, five of the categories further divided into sixteen subcategories altogether based on where or in which sector the difficulty was mainly faced in.

After translating the data with the assistance of Google Translate from Japanese into English, one by one, checking and editing the translations, I proceeded in coding the data in the direction of Saldaña (2009). Majority of the codes were in-vivo coding, e.g. derived from the data itself. I also used structural coding, arranging the data into themes such as "outing" or "bullying". A vast amount of coding was descriptive coding, e.g. how the difficulty happened ("social media", "physical violence"), or what was lacking in order for the difficulty to take place ("support"), what kind of emotions arose from the difficulty ("fear"), and what did it result in ("not attending"). A section of the descriptive coding could also be seen as process coding, especially reserved for verbs such as "forcing". Some of the coding used was attribute coding, especially location ("school") and situation ("choir competition") of the hardships and who was the initiator of the hardship, in other words by whom was the hardship caused ("classmates"). Also "being told something" falls under the process coding, e.g. "being told that it's your own fault".

I organised the data according to questions: (1) What are the themes of the hardships faced by LGBTQ+ people in Japan? (2) What are the reasons behind the hardships? (3) What are the results of the hardships? (4) Where and by whom do these hardships come to exist? (5) What emotions do the hardships evoke? (6) What is lacking in order to these hardships to occur? (7) What are LGBTQ+ people being told? After writing about the data based on these seven questions, I proceeded to the second phase coding to summarise and reorganise the data, which resulted in ten different themes that are presented in this Thesis.

Next two documents I present in this Thesis are the Pride Center Osaka (PCO) conference presentation video data and the Pride House Tokyo (PHT) Guidebook PDF data. Regarding the PCO presentation, it was held as a part of an online conference in Japan ("Country-wide

Conference on Sexual Minorities and Medical/Welfare/Education issues 2023") on February 3rd 2023 with the title "Pride Center Osaka now and from now on". I was recommended to attend the conference presentation by the staff of PCO in an email correspondence. I did not attend the live presentation but accessed the recording of the presentation that was available online for about two months after the conference. The presentation was held in Japanese and was transcribed in Japanese on behalf of the organisers. The presentation included a video tour of the centre, allowing me to almost feel like being present at the centre. After translating the Japanese into English with the assistance of Google Translate, and checking through the translations, I proceeded in coding the data, again according to Saldaña (2009). The coding that was used in this dataset was: attribute coding (presenters names), structural coding ("centre tour", "running club *hamyune*"), descriptive coding (especially adjectives such as "inclusive", which may also be seen as value coding), process coding relating to the operations of the centre ("having fun", "reading"). A substantial amount of the codes were in-vivo coding, but according to the themes of the study, there were provisional, or beforehand decided codes as well ("diversity", "exclusion", "safe space"). I then organised the data into five larger themes, two of which have altogether eleven subthemes.

With PHT Guidebook, initially, I did not go through the English language data with coding, but tried a different approach and started writing about the data immediately. I arranged the data into five themes in the direction of the original document, two of the themes further divided into six subcategories altogether. In the end, I coded the data regarding the part which dealt with the teams that provide the content of PHT.

2.3 Frame Analysis

The analysis of the data was done by using a qualitative data analysis method of coding and finding patterns regarding the research questions. The frame analysis unfolds by the three *core framing tasks* which Benford and Snow (2000) that are defined as *diagnostic*, *prognostic* and *motivational framing*. The first, diagnostic framing starts with "problem identification and attributions" and is also described by Gamson (1995) as *injustice frame*. In this research, the first research question, "what problems have LGBTQ+ individuals faced in public space other than inclusive spaces in Japan?" deals with this frame. The frame is defined to conceptualise difficulties or adverse experiences by communities or individuals in the society which is applicable to analysing the J-ALL Difficulties List. The discrimination and exclusion described in the partly in the third and entirely in the fourth chapters of this Thesis will bring

forth this frame and especially explaining the genealogy of the problem. Yet, it is more thoroughly analysed in the eighth chapter, in which I will analyse the issues and why the issues are needed to be addressed.

The second framing task, prognostic framing is described by Gamson (ibid.) as *agency frame*. This phase asks: what are the solutions to the problem and how may the solutions be reached? Or how Benford and Snow (2000, p. 616) phrase it: "what is to be done, as well as the problems of consensus and action mobilization." In my study, the second research question, "how do Pride Center Osaka and Pride House Tokyo aim to meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ community?" is addressed by this *prognostic* or *agency frame*. The fifth and sixth chapter will explain what the centres (agents) are doing in order to address the problems and difficulties that the LGBTQ+ community face. In the seventh chapter, however, the analysis will deepen regarding the operations of the centres and their projected results.

And the third, motivational framing task is defined by Gamson (ibid.) as *identity frame*. The questions here are: who needs to act and who is a stakeholder and thus has the right to act? Benford and Snow (2000, p. 617) describe the framing task as a "'call to arms' or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive." The third research question formed for this Thesis, "who are the different stakeholders that need to act in order to create LGBTQ+ inclusive public space in Japan?" is related to this third frame. In fifth and sixth chapters the profiles of the centres are defined. Also in the sixth chapter, the cooperation between centres and the broader society is described. In the seventh chapter analysis/findings will follow on who are the actors that are needed in the process and why. I also inspected the resonance of the frame in society through credibility and importance (Benford & Snow, 2000). Regarding especially the second framing task, or the relation between the difficulties and responses by the centres I used a spreadsheet to organise the main points in the data. I used this spreadsheet also in analysing the aspects of public space and alternative space. I wrote the analysis based on it.

3 Concepts of LGBTQ+ Inclusive Public Space in Japan

In this section, I cover the analytic framework or the central concepts related to this study. First, I write about LGBTQ+ and SOGIESC and continue with Japanese terms related to these concepts. Third, I write about inclusion and its related concepts. Fourth, I delve into the concepts of public space and alternative space, writing also about public space in Japan and LGBTQ+ inclusive space in general and finally LGBTQ+ inclusive space in Japan.

3.1 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: LGBTQ+ and SOGIESC

3.1.1 LGBTQ+

The initialism LGBT evolved in the 1990s and 2000s (Blakemore, 2021). It has different variations, with different letters added to the end depending on context. LGBT itself may be seen as an umbrella term for varying and overlapping sexual orientations and gender identities. The L, G and B in the LGBTQ+ refer to *lesbian*, *gay* and *bisexual*. The T stands for *transgender*, which again is seen as an umbrella term for people whose sex and gender assigned at birth do not correspond to their experience of their own gender identity (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2022). The concept of queer that mostly stands for the letter Q in the initialism is debated even within the LGBTQ+ community and has different meanings for different people. The Center (2022) defines *queer* as an adjective used by some people outside heterosexual or straight identities. In history, queer was a derogatory term and even today some find the word offensive, while others have reclaimed it. The letter Q can also sometimes be seen as standing for *questioning* one's gender identity or sexual orientation, which also encompasses a vast amount of people (APA, 2019). The plus (+) signifies all the other sexual orientations and gender identities that are either already known or yet to be formed. *Ally* is another term that should be mentioned together with LGBTQ+. Ally means a person who, although not themselves identifying as LGBTQ+, is a supporter of LGBTQ+ nevertheless. In addition, sometimes "I" and "A" are added in the end or before the plus sign in the initialism referring to *intersex* and *asexual/aromantic/agender* people. In this research, instead of using the word queer as an all-encompassing term often used in the academia, I have resulted in using the initialism LGBTQ+ for its intended inclusivity yet relative brevity, instead of for example LGBT or LGBTQ which are both used in the Japanese context or LGBTQIA often used in the international context.

3.1.2 SOGIESC

The acronym SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sexual Characteristics) has gained recognition globally among human rights advocates and various institutions (Open Global Rights, n.d.) and in especially in political and legal arenas in Japan (Taniguchi, 2021). Inherently SOGIESC encompasses everyone and is thus more inclusive than LGBT, as lawyer Makiko Terehara expressed on the NHK news site (NHK, April 2018). Related to my study, the acronym is used especially in the J-ALL Difficulty List data and I use it in this research in addition to LGBTQ+. As LGBTQ+ is an identity-based concept, SOGIESC reflects the context of this identity, as is for example the relation with "women" and "gender" (Taniguchi 2021). The S and O in SOGIESC stand for Sexual Orientation, for example gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual. As also noted before, since this "SO" encompasses all sexual orientations, even heterosexuality, it may be seen as more inclusive than LGBT or even LGBTQ+. The G and I in SOGIESC represent Gender Identity, which is especially about the "inner sense" of one's gender, which "may or may not correspond to one's sex assigned at birth" (APA, 2022). For example, transgender, cisgender or nonbinary, or anything on the gender spectrum fall into this category. This also broadens the inclusivity of LGBTQ+ by including everyone. The E in SOGIESC, Gender Expression, is the "outward manifestation of a person's gender, which may or may not reflect their inner gender identity based on traditional expectations." (APA, 2022). There are a variety of ways that gender may be expressed, from the way one dresses to their voice, speech and even the way in which one carries themselves. Including gender expression broadens the spectrum even further by including people who do not identify as transgender or nonbinary, but who otherwise express their gender in a queer way. The S and C in SOGIESC mean Sexual Characteristics. This is for example linked to intersex people. As everyone belongs to SOGIESC, it is a device to discuss issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sexual characteristics by including everyone.

3.2 LGBTQ+ in Japan

Both LGBT and SOGI(ESC) terms are used in Japan. LGBT was "spreading rapidly throughout Japan in the 2010s" (Taniguchi, 2021, p. 369). In 2019, 91% of Japanese were familiar with the initialism LGBT while 57.1% knew the actual meaning of it (Japan LGBT Research Institute, 2019). Using LGBT is not indigenous to Japan, since it has been loaned from especially the US. This lexical borrowing may be attributed to Altman's (1996) concept

of *global queering* which McLelland (2000b, p. 461) describes as *transcultural features* stemming from the *western influence* driven globalisation. Additionally, Curran and Welker (2005) note this tendency to lean towards American English in accordance with an "American sense of a gay and lesbian identity and community, developed in the 1960s out of or alongside civil rights and women's liberation" (Curran & Welker, 2005, p. 68).

Different connotations have been attached to terms such as *rezubian, resubian, rezu* and *bian* in Japan throughout the 20th century shifting from "pathological, foreign or local, perverse or romantic, imaginative or real" (Curran and Welker, 2005, p. 66). They write that for example *rezubian* has been linked with self-identification among the community, but together with *rezu* have also been used by the adult entertainment industry. *Bian* on the other hand has been used as a codeword, but community movement towards "putting the *bian* back into the *lezu*" and reclaiming the term has occurred (Izumo & Maree, 2000, p. 108).

Dōseiai signifying homosexuality has been used in the medical context (*dōseiaisha*, homosexual) (Lunsing, 2005a). Similarly, compared to the loan words there are terms that have a medical tone (in parentheses): *baisekushuaru* (bisexual; *ryōseiaisha*), *pansekushuaru* (pansexual; *zenseiaisha*), *asekushuaru* (asexual; *museiaisha*) and also *heterosekushuaru* (heterosexual; *iseiaisha*) (PCO, 2023a). The medical implication and the viewpoint of disability have been prevalent also in the terms used of transgender people (Lunsing, 2005a). In transgender terms, the *toransu dansei* (trans men) and *toransu josei* (trans women) have been gaining popularity over for example FtM (female-to-male) or MtF (male-to-female) *toransugendaa* definitions. Other terms related to the transgender issues are "gender assigned at birth" (*shusseiji no seibetsu*) and "self-identified gender" (*jinin suru seibetsu*) (PCO, 2023a). Also, cisgender (*shisujendaa*) should be mentioned in this context. In Japan, there is also the term X-gender (*ekkusujendaa*) which according to Pride Center Osaka "contains a wide variety of [definitions] such as X-gender non-binary." (Pride Center Osaka, 2023a). Taniguchi (2021, p. 370) writes that GID (gender identity disorder) is also used for self-identification in Japan "(i.e. 'I am GID person')" and the "general public tends to conceive of GID as synonymous with transgender" there is still some disagreements between the usage between this term and the term transgender, and this causes problems in LGBT awareness campaigns in Japan.

In addition, the term *tōjisha* is used when speaking about LGBTQ+. The term translates as "the people [directly] considered" (McLelland & Dasgupta, 2005, p. 7) or "those concerned"

(Lunsing, 2005a, p. 83). McLelland (2005b, p. 106) describes *tōjisha* as coined from a "legal term meaning 'concerned party'" which has a meaning of "an individual who speaks directly from a position of first-hand knowledge and experience". The term was brought to surface by a "variety of minority communities" in the 1990s "as an important authenticating device for stories about personal trauma, victimization, marginalization or disability." (McLelland, 2005b, p. 106). As in Japan disability was previously seen as a "disease", giving a voice to the disabled people was seen as revolutionary. (McLelland, 2005b, p. 107). Nevertheless, the reception of the term has not been unanimously positive, as it has also caused controversy among the LGBTQ+ community since it victimises LGBTQ+ people (Lunsing, 2005). The *tōjisha* may be seen as an "established speaking position" that bridges the private self and the public rights discourse (McLelland, 2005b, p. 107).

The indigenous terms *okama*[3] and *onabe*[4] can be seen as "improper". The organisation called Occur that emerged originally from JILGA, Japan International Lesbian and Gay Association, (Lunsing, 2005b) has been one of the groups that have discouraged the use of especially the word *okama* "as proof of a deeply rooted yet largely latent homophobia particular to Japanese culture" as Lunsing (2005a, p. 82) cites Kawaguchi et. al. (1997, p. 173). Nevertheless, for example active embracing of the term *okama* and better reception of the word in the Kansai area since the 1990s, whereas in Tokyo the term was not accepted. (Lunsing, 2005a). Additionally, the word *homo* (stemming from the English word "homosexual") has not been approved by Occur and the word *gei* (deriving from the English "gay") has a history of being used in the term *gei bōi* "referring to transvestite performers" (Lunsing, 2005a, p. 85). There is also a gay slang word *nonke*[5] referring to heterosexual people.

Regarding identity and belonging, a question arises whether Japanese LGBTQ+ individuals relate with the broader LGBTQ+ community. Kamikawa speaks about LGBTQ+ in Japan especially from the transgender perspective: "Coming to terms with one's own gender identity is such a big hurdle" that LGBTQ+ community or "coalition" issues are hardly thought after

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[3] *Okama* is seen to refer to represent "cross dressed and effeminate" homosexual men according to McLelland (2000b, p. 461). Literally meaning a "pot" but as McLelland (ibid.) puts it: "meaning something similar to the English word 'queen'". There has been a one-time symposium around the use of the word (Lunsing, 2005a).
[4] *Onabe* is a word that became to existence in relation to *okama* and it refers to for homosexual women in Japan "using another 'pot' metaphor," literally meaning a 'pan'. It has a connotation of masculinity "in both dress and demeanour". (McLelland, 2000b, p. 461).
[5] There is no clear etymology for the word, but it possibly is a combination of the English prefix "non-" and the latter part "*ke*" in "*gei*" meaning "non-gay". The other interpretation is that the "*ke*" comes from an alternative reading of 気 (*ki*), coming from the phrase そっちの気がない (*sotchi no ki ga nai*) meaning "doesn't have *that* feeling" where *ki* implies homosexuality. (Tofugu, 2020).

this ordeal (Oe et al, 2011, p. 187). Kamikawa ponders “how many people recognize the importance of forming a coalition” and “are sufficiently motivated to become actively involved.” (Oe et al., 2011, p. 187). Although McLelland (2000a; 2000b) has contested the existence of a “Japanese gay identity”, the more broader term LGBTQ+ identity is seen as an important part of LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan. In Tamagawa’s (2018 p. 499) study on coming out, approximately 84% of the respondents “said that their GLBT identity is an important part of who they are.” However, in Tamagawa’s (ibid.) study, the difficulties for LGBTQ+ people of coming out of the closet in Japan is stressed. As a majority of LGBTQ+ individuals stay in the closet, there has been a lack of visibility of the LGBTQ+ community.

Recent trend has driven towards community building and identification under so called western terms or nomenclature. Although for example McLelland (2000b, p. 464) has reminded that this may be problematic since the “gay identity” also in western context has been “unambiguous” or “difficult to articulate”, I argue that through moving towards the term LGBTQ+ and broadening inclusion has brought it more feasible and tangible to the Japanese LGBTQ+ community. Occur’s Yanagihashi is cited in McLelland (2000b, p. 467) arguing that “Japanese gay men and lesbians needed to strengthen themselves as gay men and lesbians in order to build up a community-based movement which could pressure the government for increased social rights.” The Japanese LGBTQ+ movement has been gaining momentum and ground by encompassing a broader variety of people under its umbrella than merely gay men and lesbians, through inclusion. If adopting the term SOGI(ESC) will further broaden the inclusion and understanding remains to be seen.

3.3 Inclusion and Related Concepts

Inclusion may be defined as taking a designated group of people or everyone into account and consideration. This may be achieved through for example making sure that everyone has the possibility to use the same facilities, to have same experiences and to be part of a group. Inclusion may also be defined as including those that have been discriminated due to a characteristic such as race, gender, sexuality or ability (Bicchi, 2006; Ibarra, 1993; Pettigrew and Martin, 1989). This viewpoint may be seen as inclusion through exclusion, by actively involving a certain group of people through inclusion might leave other groups of people “outside”. Exclusion is a form of discrimination in which certain groups of people are not taken into consideration or actively involved. “To exclude” may be defined from restricting or preventing to enter, participate, be considered, or included. Inclusion may be described as a

community process. As a process, inclusion "leverages human diversity to increase a community's capacity to improve their own well-being" (Talmage and Knopf, 2017, p. 9). In inclusion, differences are seen as strengths to creating an environment of empowerment to contribute and participate (Miller, 1998; Mor-Barak and Cherin, 1998; Roberson, 2006; U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2011). The outcome of the process of inclusion can be described as inclusiveness, which involves all members in for example decision-making or other systems (Talmage and Knopf, 2017). The definition I use in my research is a balance between inclusion as actively involving everyone and inclusion through especially taking into consideration the people discriminated due to SOGIESC. The balance is seen in the use of the term LGBTQ+, which takes a discriminated group of people into consideration, and the use of the term SOGI(ESC), which actively involves everyone. This differs from only considering or taking into account everyone, by action and integration (Talmage and Knopf, 2017) or simply tolerating.

Discrimination is a form of unjust treatment by which prejudices are made of people or groups of people through distinction of characteristics. Discrimination has many forms and specific names according to the form of the discrimination: racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, ageism, xenophobia, etc. Discrimination may be implicit or explicit, explicit meaning outright intentional acts of hate and violence, and the not less harmful implicit has a meaning of unconscious, automatic negative reaction such as micro-aggressions. Discrimination exists both in the acts of people and the structures in the society. For example, Amnesty International (n.d. a) sees discrimination as a human rights violation. Safety may be seen as being protected from physical, psychological or material harm (INSPQ, 2018). Thus, safety may be seen also as being protected from discrimination.

Diversity may be seen as people and groups of people with varied characteristics being involved or included into something. Diversity may be described as a community resource used in the process of inclusion to bring forth inclusiveness (Talmage and Knopf, 2017). Diversity may be observable or hidden, in personalities, backgrounds or identities. Equity may be seen as term with a similar meaning as equality. Yet, while equality is about treating everyone as their experiences are the same, equity is about taking into consideration these experiences and backgrounds by "acknowledging and addressing structural inequalities" whether they are contemporary or historic. (University of Iowa, n.d.). Diversity, equity and inclusion form an initialism DEI.

LGBTQ+ inclusion refers to the absence of discrimination. Gustav Visser writes that "[s]exual and gender minorities have struggled for fundamental inclusion in the social, political and economic life of their communities for centuries" (Visser, 2015, 81). This process of inclusion is in a constant state of flux, and whereas positive transformation may be seen as societies become more inclusive on for example the matters of equal marriage, also backward transformation as may be seen around the world.

3.4 Public Space and Alternative Space

The two most distinctive criteria for public space are its *usage* and *access* which I will briefly discuss in the following. In addition, the possibility of encountering other people and bearing meaning attached to the space are further aspects of public space. First, public space should be for the use of all and for everyone to converge (Hauderowicz & Serena, 2020; Law Insider, 2021). Wiewiura (2020, p. 32) writes about the "flow of different people through space." Second, there is the accessibility. Wiewiura (2020) also mentions the accessibility or who the access is granted to. More than eliminating physical barriers of entry, accessibility is about making everyone feel comfortable entering a space. Third, the encountering of other people is emphasised by Hauderowicz and Serena (2020) in creating a space where people feel welcomed and safe. Fourth, when meaning is attached to a space, it becomes a *place* according to Peace and Holland (2020, p. 36): This process is called place-making, and it is "integral to any inclusive democracy".

According to Miller (2007) people and groups having equal access to democratic activities such as expressing oneself freely creates public space. Miller quotes Carr et al. (1995) who state that public space caters for public life "as providing for 'basic human needs' in being 'responsive, democratic and meaningful'". They also note that because a public space is "owned by all," it should essentially be able to change according to public action. In Peace & Holland (2020) the writers cite Bondi's argument that when some people have more influence on the spaces, it can be seen as exclusion.

Alternative space is described by Cassegård (2013) as space where one is relieved from the oppression of the "mainstream arenas". In the case of Cassegård's (2013) study, the *freeter* activists felt the pressure to climb up the career ladder and be a productive member of the Japanese society. Relief on the other hand is achieved by ensuring that the needs of the participants are met and empowering people to make an impact on their environment. Cassegård (2013) writes about *prefigurative activism* describing social movements that create

alternative spaces in which they create the change that they wish to see in the society. *Therapeutical activism* on the other hand describes the process where people's self-confidence is enhanced to make that change a reality. Having fun is also mentioned by Cassegård (2013) and the new methods of protesting that he writes about as integral part of alternative space, along with interacting with others and not spending (much) money. The spaces in Japan described by Cassegård (2013, p. 60) have been open especially to people of "excluded or marginalised groups" who are able to visit or flee to "experiment with alternative lifestyles" in the spaces and share, expose and discuss their experiences of stigmatisation. Cassegård writes how alternative spaces offer a retreat where to gather, to be empowered and then again return to the mainstream with an amplified voice to create a more inclusive society.

After creating the space, consolidation for example by contact building and skill development, activity range broadening and experimentation of participatory democracy is the second task for empowerment (Cassegård, 2013). After consolidation the third task are experiences in protesting or otherwise creating meaningful change in society and one's own life (Cassegård, 2013). Between the three tasks, Cassegård (2013, p. 188) writes that there may be conflicts between abstract (creating space) and concrete actions ("protesting or working for social change"). Moving from abstract to concrete action may prove difficult as Cassegård (2013) writes.

On group *Dameren*, (League of Good-for-Nothings, established in 1992, a *freeter* activist group that arranged alternative spaces and alternative lifestyles, and its activities) Cassegård (2013, p. 61) writes about its main activity, talk, its therapeutical aspects, such as "helping participants work through anxieties, relativising mainstream social norms and using humour to create distance to various problems" and its political aspects of talk as a "transformative process … spreading arenas for talk." Talk and interaction with others create feeling of comfort and safety and is a part of the process of alternative discourses (Cassegård, 2013). Creating a place where people can gather together (*ibasho*) and "meet and exchange experiences and share problems" are important tasks for *freeter* alternative spaces as well (Cassegård, 2013, p. 201).

3.4.1 Public Space in Japan

Regarding public space in the Japanese context, according to Hidaka and Tanaka (2001) the concepts of "public" and "private" did not exist in Japanese culture until the late 20th century.

They emphasise that often the public event defines the extent of public space in Japan. However, there are three pairs of existing concepts that somewhat echo with “public” and “private”.

The first pair of concepts are *honne* (本音) and *tatemae* (建て前 or 建前) (for example Fu, 2011). While *tatemae* is something like a façade, something that “shows outside” (literally: “built in front of”), the external impression that other people see. Thus, it resembles the word public. And *honne* on the other hand is the opposite of this, the “true self” (literally: real intention or “real voice”), something that is hidden inside, thus resembling the word private.

The second pair of concepts are *uchi* (内 (also 家)) and *soto* (外) (for example Fu, 2014; Tamagawa, 2016 citing Lebra, 1976, pp. 112-113). They can be regarded as inside, in, internal (*uchi*) and outside, out, external (*soto*). In a deeper meaning, *uchi* means the in-group of a person in question, their family, close friends or perhaps even the company one works in. *Soto* on the other hand stands for the out-group, for example the family or friends of another person, or another company. In this case the word *uchi* could be seen as a word for “private” as describing the closed, inside group – and *soto* as a word for the “public” the open, outside group. *Uchi* is attached to an individual’s identity and “where ‘one’s true opinions, personal thoughts, or real motives’ are expressed” (McVeigh, 2013, pp. 55-56, as cited by Tamagawa 2016, p. 175).

Third, also *ura* and *omote* could be added. Farrer et al. (2008) cite Doi (1986) by writing that “[i]t is considered abnormal to reveal too much of one’s dependent and sometimes unpleasant back-stage self (*ura*) to outsiders whom one typically displays a socially acceptable front-stage self (*omote*).”

Some words in Japanese for public or public space that I have come across could be *kōkyō* (公共) as in *kōkyō no supeesu* (公共のスペース) or *ōyake* (公) as in *ōyake no ba* (公の場). *Supeesu* is a loan word from English “space” and *ba* on the other hand a Japanese word to describe a place.

3.4.2 LGBTQ+ Inclusive (Public) Spaces

Doan (2015b) writes about inclusive LGBTQ+ community centres, which in her view should be municipally recognised and possibly financially supported. In addition, Doan (2015b) envisions the broadening of safe spaces outside the “traditional safe spaces” to private

business owners through committing to non-discrimination. What is needed according to Doan is "opportunities for networking, recreation and support services" (Doan, 2015b, p. 258). A need for LGBTQ+ inclusive public spaces exists.

3.4.3 LGBTQ+ Inclusive (Public) Spaces in Japan

Regarding public spaces, LGBTQ+ and Japan, Taniguchi (2021) and Lunsing (2005a) write about the landmark "Fuchu Youth Hostel Case" in which

> OCCUR (the Association of Moving Gays and Lesbians) applied for the use of the public facility, named *Fuchū seinen no ie*, which is under the jurisdiction of the Tokyo metropolitan government. The application was refused on the grounds that the group comprised gays and lesbians. The court rejected such grounds, deemed the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's actions illegal and awarded damages to the group. The Tokyo High Court stated that 'being indifferent or having insufficient knowledge about homosexuals cannot be an excuse for personnel who exercise public authority'. (Taniguchi 2021, p. 374).

The *Fuchū seinen no ie* incident that Lunsing (2005a, p. 82) writes as Occur's proof of homophobia in Japan. In addition, Kazama (2002) mentions the incident cited in Tamagawa (2018, p. 490) representing a viewpoint of coming out as a "form of social activism whereby a heteronormative society can be changed by occupying a position within it."

Despite and also because of the discrimination and invisibility of LGBTQ+ people in Japan, there has been movement in the community through visible individuals or couples (Sawabe, 2011), organisations and events for at least more than 50 years. Lesbians have been forerunners in organizing movements and spaces. For example, the lesbian community, as Sawabe (2008, p. 8) writes about Young Grass Club (*Wakakusa no kai*) that in 1971 began as "the first official group for lesbians in Japan" to "provide a space not only for those seeking encounters, but also for those walking a similar path to speak frankly and openly with one another." Also the Shinjuku "collective household" of the participants of the women's liberation movement called the "Liberation Center" was started in 1972, in 1981 "Lesbian Feminist Center" started operating (Sawabe, 2008, pp. 8-9). In the 1980s events like Space Dyke (*Speesu Daiku*) were organised (Sawabe, 2008). In addition, since 1960s there has been so called "lez bars" (Sugiura, 2011). According to Kamano & Khor (2011) a Japanese word for "the lesbian world": *gyokai* exists. In the *gyokai*, Kamano & Khor (2011) write that lesbian women can encounter each other in places like community spaces for sexual minority women, or in semi-public spaces such as bars and restaurants.

As we may see, the LGBTQ+ inclusive space in Japan is not a recent phenomenon entirely, in addition to exclusively lesbian spaces, there have been broader inclusion in other spaces. The organisation established in the 1990s called LOUD organised a "free space for use by lesbians, bisexuals and other sexual minorities, together with their supporters" (Sawabe, 2008, p. 22). LOUD acronym stands for "Lesbians of Undeniable Desire/Drive". In 2008, LOUD was run by Oe Chizuka. As far as "gayborhoods" (written about in Doan, 2015a), are concerned, *Shinjuku Ni Chōme*, or Shinjuku Ward's Area 2 in Tokyo is perhaps the most well-known "LGBTQ+ area" in Japan where LGBTQ+ people "come and enjoy what [the area] offers and then leave to resume their normal lives" (Tamagawa, 2018, p. 496). Near this area in Shinjuku is also where the first permanent LGBTQ+ centre exists (Pride House Tokyo, 2023). Also the organising of Pride Parades, since the first Lesbian and Gay Parade in Tokyo in 1994 has been claiming and "queering" the public sphere (Tamagawa, 2018).

Regarding the workplace, on the other hand workplace may be a "public institution", while also the term "private sector" exists. In this private sector however, people's lives and identities are being exposed to others, and thus it differs from the private domestic life. McLelland (2005b, p. 104) makes this comparison about the workplace in Japan being a public, assumedly "neutral space, devoid of issues to do with sexuality" compared to the "private realm where one's 'tastes' (*shumi*) can be expressed with one's fellow in-group members." This division is reflected in McLelland's (2005b) chapter in McLelland and Dasgupta's book (2005) where he cites a 23-year-old gay man posting on a forum about thoughts about coming out in the company and the comment this post receives: "You ought to distinguish between public [*kō*] and private [*shi*]. Since the workplace is a public [*ōyake*] environment I don't think it's necessary for you to come out." (McLelland, 2005b, pp. 103-104). McLelland analyses the post and this and other comments in the thread and draws a conclusion that the various gay men state that "the public space is always assumed to be heterosexual" and that heterosexual people appear to be oblivious of "pressures faced by gay men in this environment" (McLelland, 2005b, p. 104).

The Internet has provided in its vast outreach and availability, a quasi-public arena for LGBTQ+ individuals to be exposed to information and communicate with others by providing a privacy cloak through the possibility to be anonymous. McLelland (2005b, p. 105) cites Kadoya (2003, p. 65) who states that "birth of the internet" was "for gay people, the most revolutionary event of the twentieth century". McLelland (2005b, p. 101) writes how Internet has provided a space where websites provide information and chatrooms and forums provide

methods of interacting via discussion and mentions “special [online] ‘consultation’ spaces”. Internet offers “a safe space in which to ‘come out’ and communicate with others from the speaking-position of a gay man … frequently denied them in their public work lives.” (McLelland, 2005b, p. 105).

4 Difficulties faced by LGBTQ+ people in Japan

This chapter is about Japan Alliance for LGBT Legislation's Difficulties List (J-ALL, 2019) which comprises of 354 data entries, listing hardships that LGBTQ+ people have faced in Japan. The original data was arranged in ten categories, five of the categories further divided into sixteen subcategories altogether based on where or in which sector the difficulty was mainly faced in. The ten main categories in the original data are Children/Education, Employment, Couples/Parenting/Bereavement/Inheritance, Medical Care, Welfare, Public Services and Social Security, Private Services and Media, Criminal Proceedings, and finally Others (Regions and Communities). In this research, I have divided the data in ten categories based on the type of difficulty. The ten categories are Discrimination, Violence and Safety, Coming Out/Outing/Hiding in the Closet, Support and Consultation, Gender Identity/Gender Dysphoria/Family Register/Official Documents, Employment, Financial/Housing/Judicial, Family and Partnership, and finally Health/Suicide/Isolation. I have included some background information about the issues from the literature review.

4.1 Discrimination

Although there have been no "any real anti-homosexuality laws" in the history of Japan as Tamagawa (2016, p. 161) cites Hotta (1999), discrimination remains a problem. Lunsing (2001) believes that homophobia in the Japanese society is mostly implicit in nature as opposed to explicit. Tamagawa (2018, p. 495) writes about is "quiet (*otonashii*) homophobia" which "is present in every corner of Japanese society" and "familial (*uchi*) homophobia", aimed at LGBTQ+ "individuals in their own inner circles, including family members, relatives, friends and coworkers." (Tamagawa, 2018, p. 495). On one hand, familial homophobia is said to intensify if the inner circle is closer, and when the relationship between individuals is not as close, the more they accept each other (Tamagawa, 2018). Familial homophobia is based on a "fear of queering the Japanese home or stigmatising the family" as Tamagawa (2018, p. 514) puts it. Chalmers (2002, p. 1) cites Kakefuda (1992) by saying that traditionally society would ignore minorities "act[ing] as if they weren't there" reflecting quiet homophobia or implicit discrimination, "and if that didn't work, telling them to be quiet" reflecting explicit discrimination, but perhaps not limited to familial homophobia. Tamagawa (2016, p. 169) has written that lesbians, although "allowed in the society … are ignored and silenced" which reflects Chalmers' note about neglecting and quieting. This raises the issue of tolerance, which Tamagawa (2016) regards as (only) partial inclusion of

individuals in the society. Norton (2006) speaks about this *koseki* or family register system as a de facto instrument of discrimination.

Homophobia may also be internalised in the LGBTQ+ individuals themselves. The internalisation of homophobia stems from familial homophobia according to Tamagawa (2018) and the "tendency in Japanese culture to individualize problems … instead of dealing with them on a social level" Lunsing (2005a, p. 83). Internalisation of homophobia is one reason to stay in the closet further leading to LGBTQ+ invisibility.

Discrimination based on SOGIESC is an everyday problem for many LGBTQ+ people, as we may see spread through the J-ALL Difficulties List data. Discrimination is the overarching theme of all the data entries in the J-ALL Difficulties List data. Discriminatory comments, discriminatory hiring processes and discrimination by rejection of same sex couples in public and private services are examples of discrimination that are present in the data. Regulations that do not prohibit discrimination, especially at the workplace, are cited as reason for discrimination. Discrimination may cause financial hardships, as welfare benefits were denied in one case due to being told that SOGIESC bullying "is not big enough reason for not finding employment". Using restrooms or changing rooms has been difficult due to security being called. Inability to change one's legal gender is discrimination on a larger scale. Discrimination due to one's identity is a reoccurring form of discrimination relating to identity verification problems, when one's family register's legal gender differs from the gender that they identify with. (J-ALL, 2019).

4.2 Violence and Safety

Discrimination may take its most concrete form in abuse such as bullying. Bullying may lead to severe consequences such as suicide, as Tamagawa (2018, p. 512) continues to cite Hidaka & Operario (2006) in noting that also "more GLBT students commit suicide than non-GLBT students in Japan." Even teachers participate in bullying sexual minorities as Tamagawa (2016) cites online survey study by Hidaka et al. (2007) on bullying at Japanese schools.

Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and discrimination take a physical form in Japanese schools through bullying as the J-ALL data suggests. Bullying is a repeated difficulty faced by the LGBTQ+ children and youth in the schools and even adults at the workplaces. Bullying may take various forms such as name calling, being the target of outing and hate speech in social media, or made fun of in other ways such as being imitated or being looked at

strangely. LGBTQ+ people have been made fun of while using welfare services and even by the media. Being criticised in front of the class for example about the clothes they were wearing describes how not only the classmates are involved in bullying. Related to being safe, also the theme of "saving" comes up in the context where there was no one to save one person from bullying and discrimination due to SOGI(ESC) and thus they became isolated and had problems continuing their studies. (J-ALL, 2019).

Harassment is mentioned in the data in the form of SOGI(ESC) harassment, power harassment and sexual harassment. Power harassment has occurred when a teacher told a student that the bullying that they were experiencing was their own fault, and "if anything happens, you'll be expelled." The form of verbal violence has taken place in the domestic sphere, but even at workplaces that brand themselves "LGBT-friendly" and at workplace drinking parties. Homophobia appears in small talk causing distress to people with atypical sexual orientations. Sexual assault is mentioned three times in the data, rape twice, assault once and sexual violence once. Abuse may be suffered by both children and elderly and may occur both at home and at welfare services. Domestic violence also happens by one's partner. Being forced to do something against their will appears 37 times in the data and is shown in being forced to wear clothes they did not want to wear such as an opposite gender uniform. Being forced to perform a role they didn't want to perform by forcing to shave their head or join a club only according to their apparent gender. Both forcing to come out and being forced to keep hiding in the closet happens at workplaces.

4.3 Coming Out, Outing and Hiding in the Closet

Tamagawa (2018, p. 488) writes about an international online survey by Ipsos according to which "only 5% of Japanese, compared to 46% of all participants worldwide, said that they have a colleague, close friend or a relative who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender". It can be seen from these results that a vast majority of LGBTQ+ people remain in the closet in Japan. Coming out may happen voluntarily or involuntarily. In the latter situation, it is called *outing*, with twelve entries in the data. Coming out of the closet, *kamingu auto* or *kamuauto* has been seen as virtually impossible in Japan and coming out to one's parents and especially mothers in the private (*uchi*) domain has been reported to be the most difficult (Tamagawa, 2018). Coming out to colleagues and friends in the public (*soto*) domain is seen "only relatively easy" (Tamagawa, 2018, p. 488, p. 509). Especially lesbians have faced hardships in coming out (Sawabe, 2008; Kamano & Khor, 2011).

Taniguchi (2021, p. 375) states that a "society in which people can freely and safely choose to 'come out' or not must be created." Tamagawa (2018) on the other hand calls for coming out of public figures, which would help in obtaining information, gaining knowledge and increasing understanding. McLelland (2005b, p. 107) writes about Fushimi Noriaki, who wrote (2000, p. 10) about meeting with an American lesbian lobbyist who "pointed out to Fushimi [that], before she and other activists could do anything in regard Japan, 'Japanese homosexuals themselves must first raise their voices and say that discrimination is a problem." On hiding in the closet, Tamagawa (2016, p. 169) citing Tamaki (2011, p. 264) writes: "If the same-sex couples remain in the 'closet' or continue to be ignored by society, there will be no potential for them to enjoy any legal rights in Japan.". Problems with organising community is mentioned as an issue by Sawabe (2011) further enhancing the invisibility of LGBTQ+.

Coming out is present in 29 data entries in the J-ALL data. Familial homophobia is seen in how coming out to parents often results in responses such as being ignored and treated as if they were dead, being wished that they were dead, or being abused and treated with violence physically or verbally. This is often the result of lack of knowledge and understanding. In one case for example when parents found a person's gay magazines, this person became homeless. In rural areas, coming out is more difficult, which leads to people moving to the urban areas. (J-ALL, 2019).

When coming out to someone or some people, it may sometimes result in outing when these people pass the information onward. An example from the data is when a person came out to their superior in an "LGBT-friendly" company, suddenly next day everyone at work knew, and as a result they were left out and ignored and eventually forced to retire. Poor workplace privacy policy leads to outing especially related to health checkups and in Human Resources. Being outed at school and at the workplace is related to the gender listed at one's family register not corresponding their gender identity. (J-ALL, 2019).

Hiding in the closet or not disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to other people, is related to eighteen entries. When people make fun of or deny the existence of variance of sexual orientations and the spectrum of gender identities, it may be increasingly difficult to come out. Hiding in the closet is accompanied with thoughts such as "if someone finds out, I will not be able to survive" that appear in the data. (J-ALL, 2019).

4.4 Information, Knowledge and Understanding

According to Fu (2011) sex education in schools is underdeveloped in Japan compared to other industrialised societies and lacking to deliver a "comprehensive understanding of sexuality" including homosexuality and instead the young generation acquires their information via "adult videos or other commercial sources" as Fu (2011, p. 904) cites Japanese Association for Sex Education (JASE).

Regarding the reasons behind the problems and possible solutions, sex education is definitely a place where significant change could happen and where information could be disseminated. For example, in the guidelines that led to the 1992 curriculum "such 'unproductive', individual-oriented functions of sex as homosexuality and pleasure are either denied or silenced" (Fu, 2011, p. 906-7). According to Fu (2011), it seems that it greatly depends on the teacher themselves how they talk about sex in the classroom in the end. In addition to this it is also dependent of the surrounding teaching staff and parents, whether they *allow* LGBTQ+ content in the classes. Kameya & Narita (2000, p. 349) state that children's education should be taken as a priority in order for them to be able to "establish an identity, develop a sense of self-respect, and gain the capacity to assume responsibility from themselves and their own sexual identities" and I would add gender identities. Nevertheless, education should not be thought of only as targeted for the younger generation. Education for the older generation is called for by Tamagawa (2018, p. 514) "to combat stereotypes" and to ease the coming out experiences of the younger generation.

"Patriarchy, heteronormativity[6], GLBT in popular culture and homophobia in contemporary Japanese society" as Tamagawa (2018, p. 488) lists, may well be the reasons behind the discrimination and invisibility of LGBTQ+ people and individuals in Japan. When I'm writing in this subchapter about information, or the lack of information, it focuses especially on LGBTQ+ people trying to obtain information or not being able to obtain information about

[6] Heteronormativity may be seen as a way for the society to enforce its discipline and those individuals that fail to comply with the normativity are "punished". For example, those challenging normative heterosexuality and gender roles are seen as threatening the "primacy of marriage and the nuclear family" as Seidman (2014, p. 36) notes. In Japan this is seen as for example on behalf of men ideally as "husband, father and provider", or the *daikokubashira*, (the pillar supporting a house, or "male breadwinner 'supporting' the household") as Dasgupta (2005, p. 180) cites Gill (2003, p. 144, p. 245). Furthermore, the Japanese heteronormativity of men expects working men "to marry, have children, and support their families [in order to] becom[e] full-fledged men" or *ichininmae* (Tamagawa, 2018, p. 494). And heteronormativity in Japan on behalf of women expects them to "marry, bear and raise children, and carry out the traditional role of a Japanese mother to achieve full adulthood." (Tamagawa, 2018, p. 494).

SOGI(ESC). When I talk about knowledge on the other hand in this case, it is referring to the knowledge of people around LGBTQ+ people, such as family members, coworkers, other professionals such as counsellors or caseworkers, and the society at large. Both obtaining information and gaining knowledge leads to understanding. On the other hand, lack of information leads to further difficulties for LGBTQ+ people and lack of knowledge may lead to for example violence or discrimination by other people.

In the school environment, due to lack of materials such as manuals, guidebooks and even insufficient curriculums and instructional plans, SOGIESC difficulties remain unaddressed, since the teachers and parents have no means to address them. Textbooks lack SOGIESC consideration and appropriate information, and thus the children and youth are often forced to try to find information on the internet. However, if they manage to find information online, it has been also deemed inaccurate. Finding information may be cumbersome, since inappropriate filtering prevents accessing LGBTQ+ information on school and public library computers. Information about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is seen as scarce. When LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education has been attempted to be taught at schools, the teachers have been receiving negative opinions and even punishment for discussing topics related to SOGIESC. (J-ALL, 2019).

Media has spread discriminatory information and SOGIESC issues are treated with “half-joking manner based on inaccurate information” leading to people not receiving adequate information and also damaging their self-esteem. Media has also been reported talking about gender dysphoria and homosexuality as “something strange” and even saying that LGBTQ+ people “don’t exist”. Lack of understanding and knowledge of professionals and employers is largely due to lack of training. In the workplace lack of understanding has led for a transgender person in transition to be fired, according to one data entry. In general, lack of information and statistics makes it difficult for government officials and others to fully grasp the situation and understand the seriousness of the problem, as one data entry suggests. (J-ALL, 2019).

4.5 Support and Consultation

One of the major themes in the data is what I call the theme of support. Support theme reflects the need for someone to get advice from, to be consulted or get support from. The theme emphasises the need for consultation services and expertise or knowledge for counsellors in for example social and welfare services, workplaces and schools. Seeking consultation and

support is also closely related to the LGBTQ+ people's need for information. The difficulties related to consultation and trying to find support are related to the lack of adequate knowledge of counselling or other professionals such as government officials or case workers. In addition, hesitance to trust in professionals in public services and the fear that they do not have the appropriate understanding of SOGIESC issues hinders seeking support. Some people are afraid to tell the truth and open up about their SOGIESC, or do not seek help at all. (J-ALL, 2019).

As noted in the previous subchapter, schools do not provide adequate information and children and youth are often left to find the information elsewhere on their own. Citing one data entry, it is said that at school or elsewhere, there was "no place where they could go for advice". In the case of being bullied, no one took the victim seriously, nor offered them help, nor was there to advise them. Another data entry says that there were no institutions or places where especially children could consult about SOGIESC issues. Children and youth in schools are mentioned in the data three times together with not being able to talk to anyone about SOGIESC. In two cases, it has led to mental health deterioration and eventually to suicide or suicide attempt. Also inability to talk about SOGIESC and the abuse of their parents has been an issue in one data entry. In one data entry it is stated that there was a need for adults such as teachers around them to come out as role models, which could be seen as a form of support. In another entry it is noted that no role models could be found in any stage of education. School counsellors are reported in the data to not have the knowledge needed for support when consulting children and youth about SOGIESC issues. (J-ALL, 2019).

There is a need for counselling and support related to SOGIESC and job hunting. In relation to workplaces, there is a need for comprehensive support. Being able to talk about SOGIESC or for example SOGIESC related bullying issues may be a lifeline to some people. Often these consulting services or the training and knowledge is missing from the workplaces. Absence of networks or support staff at workplaces is mentioned in the data. Transgender people, especially those undergoing transition face special hardships. For example, going through gender reassignment surgery, one person could not receive any support from their workplace. Inability to consult about SOGIESC and depression or HIV is mentioned in two data entries. People with HIV and drug addiction have difficulties seeking advice or support, and it is reported in the data that there is no place to ask for advice about sexual assaults by same-sex people. In another entry a transgender person was seeking support from a centre for victims of sexual violence, but was rejected by one organisation and been said that they did

not deal with transgender people. Elderly people who have been abused in welfare facilities have also had difficulties finding appropriate support related to SOGIESC. (J-ALL, 2019).

4.6 Gender Dysphoria, Gender Identity, Family Register and Official Documents

Gender dysphoria and gender identity are closely linked together. Gender identity issues and difficulties surface when the gender a person identifies with does not match the gender listed in their family register (*koseki*) or other official documents. In Japan, the family register system determines the gender that appears in official documents such as passports and identity cards, which causes problems for transgender people in Japan.

Transgender people and people with gender dysphoria face difficulties in daily life due to people being separated or divided by gender as the J-ALL data suggests. Often companies' changing rooms, clothes such as uniforms, employee dormitories, overnight trainings and so forth are separated by gender according to the family register and not by self-identified gender. In school environment and childhood, for example school uniforms and colours and even appearance like hair are assigned to children, pupils and students. Inability to take part in sports or sports festivals as themselves, or to clubs or classes according to their preferences cause harm due to gender division. Inability to register as an athlete based on their gender identity in sports events is also mentioned. Taking part in gender segregated activities such as sports festivals has been out of question due to discrepancy between gender identity and family register status. Discomfort occurs also in excessive physical contact which is encouraged for example in physical education classes at school. Student dormitories and children's homes are also separated by male and female according to family register. (J-ALL, 2019).

Toilets are often divided by gender largely in public spaces, which causes difficulties for transgender people and people with gender dysphoria. In one case, a person has been reported not being able to eat or drink at work for years when they have feared going to bathroom at the office. When they have had to use the bathroom, they have used the one at a station far away from the workplace. Regarding gender dysphoria, it is said that support systems such as support groups or exchanges between schools for adolescent children with gender dysphoria do not exist and that it is difficult to approach the children with proper guidance by educators and parents. In elderly care services, the elderly and their families have been mistreated when gender dysphoria has been found out. (J-ALL, 2019).

Family register is mentioned altogether 31 times in the data entries. The gender column in the family register is a significant issue. The identity verification problem is a reoccurring difficulty for transgender people in Japan. For example, in order to receive many public services, identity is needed to be verified. (J-ALL, 2019).

Voting has caused problems in one data entry due to being uncomfortable when their appearance has not matched the gender on their identity card. This has resulted in fear of outing and leading to them being unable to go vote. Using other necessary public and private services is also difficult since official documents have the gender column. A gender column exists also in the resident record, which is information that cannot be legally removed, which has caused problems finding housing or apartments. Regarding travelling, identity verification by passports causes difficulties when trying to enter or leave Japan. In addition, not being able to mark X-gender or transgender identity on the passport result in physical examinations in the name of identity verification and other procedures. (J-ALL, 2019).

School graduation certificates, certificates of expected graduation and transcripts also have gender listed on them, and people are required to inform their gender and attach a photo on various documents, which causes problems in job hunting. In one data entry, when listing their self-identified gender on their resume, they have been accused of lying. Moreover, even when changes are made in the gender column in the family register, problems arise. This is due to a clause that is added to the family register indicating a change in the register, when the gender column is changed. This has also led to people being mistreated and being at a disadvantage when changing jobs. If one manages to enter a company without problems, the difficulties will arise in the phase where documents need to be submitted. Due to these issues, transgender people are more likely to take on short term jobs that are not covered by insurances which further leads to working multiple jobs, even though not physically and financially able to do so. In employment, transgender people face hardships. In one case, when a person's appearance differed from their family register gender column, they were ordered to work from home. After refusing, they were disciplined and fired. (J-ALL, 2019).

Gender affirming surgery is mentioned fifteen times in the data. In order to be able to change their legal gender in the family register, transgender people are forced to undergo surgery. For some people, this means that they must reluctantly proceed with the operation thinking that there is no other option. People have been questioning the strict requirements for being able to change one's legal gender in the family registry, such as having to undergo gender reaffirming

surgery. In addition, inability to meet the other requirements such as not being married or not have underage children have resulted in constantly having to explain the situation. (J-ALL, 2019).

Hormone therapy is mentioned several times in the data, for example in relation to importing medicine online, which has caused side effects, or immigrants or people in evacuation centres or penal detention centres being denied hormone treatment. One data entry suggests that a caseworker has instructed a transgender person to abort their hormone treatment, due to lack of knowledge. Lack of networks for transgender men exists. Health related information for example about hormone treatment and other treatments, has been criticised to be insufficient in one data entry. Transgender people, who have not undergone gender affirming surgery have difficulties visiting the doctor for other health issues and often give up on visiting the doctor altogether or visit only when the illness has progressed significantly, one data entry suggests. Medical checkups in general, where the patients must take their clothes off cause discomfort. (J-ALL, 2019).

4.7 Employment

In January 2017, "prevention and elimination of discriminatory acts or speech based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity (or SOGI[ESC] harassment) at the workplace was institutionalised in the public sector." (Yuen, 2020, pp. 89-90). Before, most companies "act[ed] as if sexual minorities do not exist in their companies" (as Tamagawa, 2016, p. 170 cites Kawaguchi & Kazama, 2010).

The work-related difficulties begin already in internships as a student, or when searching for a job, or even when having career aspirations. For example, the aspirations to become a teacher have been denied from transgender people. Industries where one could work may be limited, due to inability to wear required clothes or uniforms when having gender dysphoria. Identity verification issues also cause difficulties. Difficulties begin with the employment support agencies, where it has been reported that LGBTQ+ people have been harassed by the users and staff resulting in not being able to attend the facility. Aptitude tests in the hiring process contain discriminatory questions which result in negative evaluations. Recruitment exams result in unfairly low evaluations when being open about their SOGIESC. (J-ALL, 2019).

Workplaces have various issues. According to one data entry, human rights policies have not been considered in workplaces' standards of conduct and thus human rights violations such as

unequal hiring processes and harassment regarding SOGIESC prevail. LGBT-friendly workplaces exist, but some are criticised for being LGBT-friendly only in name, as earlier examples show. There is a need for indicators to help people identify which workplaces are LGBTQ+ friendly. Repeated job changes, caused by bullying and harassment, have resulted in irregular employment and financial hardship. Inability to return to one's job after being bullied and harassed at work due to SOGIESC and not receiving support has resulted in not returning to work. Some people have been reported being fired or having had to resign due to their SOGIESC. Feeling unsafe at work has increased resignations, absence leaves and mental health problems. Problems often accumulate, as when developing social phobia after for example being sexually assaulted, which leads to difficult situations at work. Many LGBTQ+ people result to part time work instead of full time work due to being bullied and harassed at their workplace or the application process. (J-ALL, 2019).

4.8 Financial, Housing and Judicial

In general, as one data entry states, the wage gap between men and women causes financial hardships for female couples. There is a variety of benefits, leaves, discounts, insurances that same-sex couples and LGBTQ+ families are denied. Being forced to lose one's job, one data entry states that they had difficulties raising money for surgery and felt that they should not be alive anymore. Hormonal therapy has also burdened transgender people financially, resulting in running out of savings. The non-regular employment mentioned earlier also leads to financial hardship. Finding available properties and receiving mortgage by combining incomes has been difficult for LGBTQ+ couples. Problems renting an apartment have occurred to transgender people. Shared housing in for example contracted health facility or staff housing dormitory have been denied from LGBTQ+ couples. Same-sex partners not receiving housing security benefits has also resulted in greater poverty. (J-ALL, 2019).

The difficulties are present throughout the judicial system from reporting to penal detention facilities. Information about partner's arrest or release have not been shared for an unmarried couple and also inability to appoint a lawyer to their partner has been a difficulty in another data entry. Visiting a partner in penal detention facilities have been denied from other people besides relatives due to "not contributing to the inmate's rehabilitation". A person had to witness in a trial concerning one's partner due to not being married in the form of character witnesses as a "cohabitant" and inability to tell the court about their relationship have resulted

in unconvincing testimonies. Regarding penal detention facilities, although one is generally able to order magazines, a gay magazine order was not approved. (J-ALL, 2019).

Regarding sexual orientation and the legal recognition of it, Taniguchi (2021, p. 373) states that “sexual orientation towards the opposite sex has always been a matter within the ambit of the legal system.” On the other hand, sexual orientation towards the same sex has been and still is subjected to criminal penalties in many countries, in 2020, 69 UN member states still use such sanctions towards consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults in addition to other territories and jurisdictions. (ILGA, 2020)

4.9 Family and Partnership

Partnership problems are mostly related to same-sex couples not being able to legally recognise their relationship. Same-sex couples are mentioned twelve times and same-sex partner 23 times in the data. Kamano and Khor (2011) describe that negative attitudes prevail toward “same-sex sexual relationships” and that there is indication that this discomfort is projected towards same-sex couples. Kamano and Khor (2011) state that low visibility is the reason behind this.

Difficulties are reflected in financial issues such as pension and welfare related problems or problems with tax deductions or leave from work. Problems have arisen when trying to add one’s partner as an emergency contact at their workplace and being rejected on the grounds of not being relatives. Inability to sleep together at an evacuation centre or move together in reconstruction housing have caused problems. Ending a relationship and asking for property division or pension plan division have caused difficulties. (J-ALL, 2019).

Hospitalisation of a partner causes difficulties. For example, guardianship, care or assistance has not been granted to them whose partner has developed dementia. Problems also arise when a partner who suffers from dementia or are unconscious need surgery, a consent of a same-sex partner is not accepted since no legal marriage has been established. Flow of medical information about partner’s safety after an accident or in the case of death causes problems. Difficulties in relation to partner’s death is mentioned seventeen times. For example, having to move out of the house, being asked not to attend the funeral, inability to go and identify their partner or apply for a grave and organ donation related problems occur. (J-ALL, 2019).

Family difficulties are related to inability to adopt children or register either as a single foster parent or as foster parents. In lesbian couples there is also inability to exercise parental rights by the partner who does not give birth. Raising a child with a partner or caring for partner's child have been causing difficulties as well. (J-ALL, 2019).

4.10 Health, Suicide and Isolation

Partner's dementia together with hospitalisation cause difficulties. Also information has been denied related to partner's health or even ability to visit them when hospitalised. Taking one's own life is the most extreme issue. Suicide is mentioned in relation to school in the data, but also later in life in relation to SOGIESC issues and once in relation to the workplace. Suicide related to welfare has been reported and once in relation to HIV, health and medical institutions. Suicide, suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts are related to not being able to talk to anyone, get advice or support about SOGIESC concerns, mental health deteriorating. Concerns about the future and isolation at work were cited as the reasons resulting in suicide in relation to the workplace. Infecting another person with HIV led to suicide. Finally, after an elderly person was abused at home because of SOGIESC, they committed suicide. (J-ALL, 2019).

In one instance suicide was the result of becoming HIV positive and infecting another person. HIV and other STDs appear in the data for example in not having proper sex education at school. Long distance to hospitals causes distress and financial burden. Inability to find a hospital is mentioned once in the data and being unsure about where to go is mentioned twice. Lack of nearby hospitals is shown in the data. When calling an ambulance, nurses not having adequate knowledge about gender identity disorder has led to a long time before being transported to a hospital. Elderly people regarding health is mentioned five times including abuse in the context of elderly people's health. Depression regards of SOGIESC is also mentioned in the data. Difficulties and discrimination have also resulted in various health issues varying from developing sleeping disorders, PTSD, mental health disorders, adverse physical and mental effects, health deteriorating significantly, health being damaged, psychological health threatened and difficulties maintaining health. (J-ALL, 2019).

Taniguchi (2021) thinks that isolation may be the most important issue between the three issues to be considered regarding LGBTQ+, which are private nature of sexuality, invisibility and isolation, as LGBTQ+ people are often excluded especially by their families, if not only the society. Taniguchi (2021, p. 375) also notes that some families exclude LGBTQ+

individuals from society and that they “cannot be free and equal even within their own family”.

Isolation is shown in the data in various ways. Children dealing difficulties with SOGIESC and their family may face isolation. Isolation also happens especially in rural areas where it may be difficult to find friends or romantic partners. Being excluded from community activities due to SOGIESC also lead to isolation. Also elderly people who lack the IT skills needed for connecting with relevant communities or services leads to isolation and difficulties. In a welfare facility, lack of understanding of SOGIESC by the staff and residents led to conversion attempts and resulted in isolation. Living in a rural area where discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is high, feelings of isolation arise when there is no places to belong and inability to connect with others in a similar situation. Concerns about sexuality, anxiety and isolation at work have driven people to suicide as one data entry suggests. (J-ALL, 2019). Isolation is one of the important issues that the LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces in Japan aim to tackle, as we will see in the following two chapters.

5 Pride Center Osaka

I will now turn to the case studies of LGBTQ+ spaces in Japan and begin with Pride Center Osaka. This chapter is based on a conference presentation by the staff of Pride Center Osaka (PCO) (2023a). In addition, a staff member's interview in the Pride House Tokyo (2023) Guidebook is used, and email correspondences during 2023 and 2024 with staff member of PCO without disclosing their name. The presentation named "Pride Center Osaka now and from now on" (*Puraido Sentā Ōsaka ima to kore kara*) at Country-wide Conference on Sexual Minorities and Medical/Welfare/Education issues 2023 (*Sekushuarumainoiriti to iryō, fukushi, kyōiku wo kangaeru zenkoku taikai 2023*) was made by three PCO staff members on February 3rd, 2023. In the presentation were Ragi, Cozi and Tomo, the former two are from QWRC and the latter from Nijiiro Diversity (Pride Center Osaka, 2023a)..

5.1 Introduction of PCO

PCO, a "permanent LGBTQ center" (PHT, 2023, p. 49), established by NPO (Non-Profit Organisation) Nijiiro Diversity in Osaka's Temmabashi since April 2022 ("grand opening" was in June 2022). The space is open on three to four weekdays in the evenings, and on some weekends. It is close by to Temmabashi metro station, situated on the seventh floor of Temmabashi MS Building. (PCO, 2023a).

PCO is perhaps aimed for LGBTQ+ people but also stated to be "available to anyone" (PCO, 2023a), especially to allies and people that want to learn more about LGBTQ+ (PHT, 2023). PCO welcomes people of all ages, and the visitors are "from teens to [people in their] 70s" (Tomo, PCO, 2023a). Both the permanence and openness of the space are emphasised. The space has been well received by the visitors according to Nagano (PHT, 2023), who speaks about the "power of having a place to go" and that after the "pandemic disrupting social connections" there's now "a 'safe space' where we can all meet and talk with each other in person" (PHT, 2023, pp. 48-49). The COVID-19 pandemic is seen even in the strategy statements of PCO that also stress creating safe space.

5.1.1 Facilities

For a glimpse of the atmosphere of the space, a video tour recording of PCO space was shown in the presentation, given by staff member Cozi. The space is entered via elevator, from which opens a corridor with a rainbow floor leading to the "open space". The open space is a

spacious area, with chairs in the middle. Big windows open up to two different directions letting in a lot of light. There is a view to the Ōkawa River, and also the sunset can be seen from the windows. (PCO, 2023a). The main feature in the open space, apart from the view, is the bookshelf. At the time of the recording of the video tour there are about 200 books. The centre aims to put out relatively new LGBTQ+ related books, both non-fiction and fiction, for various readers. (PCO, 2023a).

A cuckoo clock is there to brighten up the day and to let the users know the time. As Cozi explains, “if the center is full, you can say to the people to take turns until the next cuckoo”. (PCO, 2023a). There is a corner for brochure stands as well, which are received especially from other local and LGBTQ+ organisations and employment support groups. (PCO, 2023a). The office space of the staff is not introduced, but opposite to it there is a consultation room that is also used for LINE consultations, when PCO staff uses the social media platform for online consultations (Email correspondence with staff member of PCO, 26th December 2023). There are two all genders’ toilets, a bigger and a smaller one. In the bigger toilet there is also a changing table, so it functions also as a changing room (PCO, 2023a). Various flags can be found at the centre and when the anniversary comes, the space is decorated with these flags (PCO, 2023a). There is wi-fi and power outlets at the centre. (PCO, 2023a)

The staff member Cozi recommends PCO for studying or visiting for having a chat: “By all means, feel free to come and hang out” (PCO, 2023a). First time visitors will be actively tried to be reached out to (PCO, 2023a). There is also a projector placed outside the building, outside the open space “that projects six coloured rainbow that plays a role in showing by visualisation that LGBTQ people exist in society that this is a safe space for LGBTQ people.” (PCO, 2023a).

5.1.2 Strategy: Mission, Vision, Values, Logo

PCO’s “meaning of existence” or *mission*, is a slogan in English: “Remedy for All”. Tomo continues to explain: “In English, Remedy signifies relief, treatment and solution. We are creating a place where everyone can be themselves, ask for help when you need it and spreading [the atmosphere] around town.” (Pride Center Osaka, 2023a).

The three missions for the future, could be also seen as the *vision* of PCO are (1) “Helping to restore the physical, mental and social health of the LGBTQ people that was damaged by the pandemic” (2) “Visualising how LGBTQ people can work together in the city” and (3)

“Increasing social resources to create a city where people can trust themselves, people and society, and live with peace of mind”. (PCO, 2023a). In the first clause we see how COVID-19 pandemic is taken as a part of the strategy of the centre together with broader health focus, which in part turns inward and inspects the individuals’ needs. Second clause is about networking and the third about impact on broader society.

There are five concepts of operation that PCO has, which serve perhaps as *values*. The first letter of these form the word “OSAKA”. (1) “Open to everyone”, (2) “Safety first”, (3) “All differences are welcome”, (4) “Knowledge is power” (or “Learn from one another”) and (5) “Always have fun and smile” (PCO, 2023a). Openness, safe and inclusive space, information and fun are emphasised.

The logo is comprised of six Ginko leaves in a circular formation. The topmost leaf is coloured in orange. Tomo explains that Ginko is a tree in Osaka prefecture, and the colour orange can be seen on a night light on the river station at Temmabashi bridge: “On a dark night this night light is lit to protect the safety of passing ships. Our Center works like such a night light, providing a safe space to everyone.” (PCO, 2023a) In addition, the orange colour has been chosen because it symbolises hope and in the rainbow flag, orange has a meaning of “healing” (PCO, 2023a).

5.1.3 Supporting Embassies

PCO is supported by embassies in Japan such as Embassies of Ireland, Australia, Austria, Kingdom of Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, Mexico, Royal Danish Embassy and Consulat Général de France à Kyoto. Melba Pria, Mexican Ambassador to Japan and Peter Van Der Vliet, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Japan give their video greetings in the presentation (PCO, 2023a). These two speeches emphasise LGBTQ+ rights as human rights, inclusivity, diversity, openness and safe spaces and working together with organisations such as PCO in order to transform society according to these values.

5.2 Content of PCO

Although, there might be a particular theme decided on days that the centre is open, there is not particular programming in PCO most of the time. “We make event days and at that time we have a mechanism for interacting with each other, like playing board games and chatting. There are times when I try to create a place where people can chat as a group.” (Cozi, PCO,

2023a). The staff would like PCO to be “a place where people can come casually” and use the space freely (Cozi, PCO, 2023a). Users talking to each other –sometimes staff members included – makes the space feel like a conventional community space.

Tomo explains how the space is used by for example high school and university students during the daytime and by working adults in the evenings. The attributes of the users change depending on the time of day and there are “different layers of users or different needs” which is partly why there are less themes and events in the centre’s daily operation (Tomo, PCO, 2023a).

5.2.1 Consultations

PCO holds “Free LGBTQ Individual Consultation” either face-to-face in the consultation room of the centre or via internet connection through Zoom. Family and friend consultation is also accepted. The session lasts for 45 minutes and is provided by the Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) Queer and Women’s Resource Center (QWRC). There is a form that the participants of the consultations fill, provided by PCO, QWRC and NPO ReBit where statistics and cases are drawn from (PCO, n.d.).

PCO organises consultations both face to face and increasingly online. The consultations are accepted through reservation. In the beginning there were about 20 consultations per month. In the end of 2022 the amount decreased, and during 2023 more consulting took place online in social media service LINE. In the beginning of 2023, there were four people in the consultation staff coming from QWRC, which is also handling consultation services for other local governments. (PCO, 2023a). Sawabe (2008) wrote about QWRC’s work in the Kansai area in the early 00s:

> Structured around the concept of feminism, QWRC aims to help create a society where sexuality may be expressed freely. The organisation offers various courses, telephone counselling, and an office/meeting space for individuals and groups working on issues of sexuality and gender. One recent QWRC initiative is a project called *karafuru* (Colorful), which is aimed at providing support to young [LGBTQ+] individuals. (Sawabe, 2008, p. 27).

There is a broad range of people using the PCO’s consultation services, from people in their 60s to teens. In the presentation, Ragi told about Rainbow Safeguarding, which has a principle of having two counsellors if the person needing consultation is under 23 years of age (PCO, 2023a).

Consultation topics vary from sexual orientation to gender, but also about dating. “Some people are in their 40s and 50s who have finally become themselves recognising their sexual orientation” and others want to meet new people. Also parents and supporters visit the centre. (PCO, 2023a).

In 2022, the consultation services have been supported by a grant from Osaka Prefecture and the Murakami Foundation. There was no continuation for the grant, and thus the consultation services were about to end in 2023. Instead of ending the services, they moved a focus more online to LINE consultations. Funding for the future might rely more on donations. There has been also cooperation with ten local governments about telephone consultations. (PCO, 2023a).

Regarding the knowledge needed to become a counsellor, Ragi told that “basic interpersonal skills, listening to what people say and knowing your own values and being ready to fight for them” are qualities required from counsellors. She adds that it is possible to get training to be a counsellor. (PCO, 2023a). Although many transgender people seek medical advice, there is no medical advice given directly at the consultation services that PCO provides, but they do introduce hospitals. (PCO, 2023a). In addition, financial consultations seem to have been increased among LGBTQ people. In this case as well, they may introduce you to specialists, or through QWRC there is a paid counselling option. (Ragi, PCO, 2023a).

5.2.2 Online Events

In addition to participating at PCO, especially during the pandemic, there were Hybrid Ibasho events (*haiburiddo ibasho*), to which also online participants can join. Hybrid Ibasho is a way to connect to PCO both online and locally. “It is a place of mutual exchange where diverse people can mix [mingle] and it brings a possibility for people who have difficulty moving or who come from far away to participate.” (PCO, 2023a) The online events and online consulting are an important part of the centre’s work and recovery from the pandemic as is stated in the first mission statement (Email correspondence with staff member of PCO, 17th January 2024). During the pandemic, communicating with each other and meeting other people was not possible and “the lack of connection hurt many people” according to the staff of PCO (ibid.). PCO has aimed to be a place through which “one could talk to someone and be next to one another and through that be healed” (ibid.).

Hybrid Ibasho was described as “bringing the atmosphere of the center to those who cannot actually visit the center” through connecting to PCO online. Like the consultation services, the Hybrid Ibasho has been made possible due to the Murakami Foundation. (PCO, 2023a). Themes on the Hybrid Ibasho have been for example: “People who recently debuted in the community get together”, “What actually is sexuality?”, “People who are in their 40s and 50s who are currently in the LGBT community gather”. Plans include “Psychological work and LGBTQ+” and “Youth Day” (Cozi, PCO, 2023a).

Hybrid Ibasho’s “users’ needs are very well expressed” according to Cozi. Various methods are sought to connect with people beyond traditional community spaces through PCO. “Creating a space to belong to” is reflected in the Hybrid Ibasho and PCO in general. (PCO, 2023a). In addition, a podcast called *Eenchau Radio* is broadcasted weekly online from PCO with listeners’ letters replied on the show. Recorded at the centre, it brings its listeners to the atmosphere of the centre.

5.2.3 Lending and Collaboration

There have been some inquiries from other organisations to use the space as well. (PCO, 2023a). By the end of 2023, other organisations had not used the space, although there have been rules for lending the space for outside use (Email correspondence with staff member of PCO, 26th December 2023). Enthusiasm has been expressed about collaborating with university LGBTQ circles[7]. In 2023, PCO has collaborated with university students through seminars and volunteer students with workshops related to Dokodemo Pride Caravan (Email correspondence with staff member of PCO, 17th January 2024).

5.2.4 Events

By the end of October 2023, during 19 months of operation, PCO had held altogether 41 events (PCO, 2023b), including events held both indoors and outdoors. (PCO, 2023a). The Pride Cruise event was held in June 2022. The event was held to commemorate the grand opening of PCO, “Osaka’s first permanent LGBTQ Center”. It also congratulated the many corporate and organisational donors. The event was targeted to gain public attention of the establishment and opening of PCO. On bridges people were waving and “there was an appeal of encouragement of interest towards the center. Thus, the purpose of the cruise was

[7] Circles are extracurricular groups gathering for a shared cause.

fulfilled.” 64 participants attended. An exchange meeting was held at a nearby cafe in conjunction to the cruise event. (PCO, 2023a).

In 2022, a need was voiced by the teen youth and youth in their 20s to interact between each other. Thus, during the summer vacation, youth focused events were held at PCO with bingo games and theme talks. “We received positive feedback and would like to continue holding events for youth on a regular basis.” (PCO, 2023a).

Events regarding discussing job hunting and problems at workplaces have also been held. “Since many PCO users have concerns regarding to workplaces, we have created an opportunity for various people to share their opinions and talk about their thoughts.” (PCO, 2023a) During Halloween there have been decorations at the centre and Halloween campaign period. Regarding reaching outside the centre in events, PCO took part in Yodogawa Festival of Yodogawa Ward in September 2023 (Email correspondence with staff member of PCO, 17th January 2024).

5.2.5 Dokodemo Pride Caravan

Dokodemo Pride Caravan is an extension of Pride Center Osaka to bring the centres atmosphere to the nearby areas. This is achieved with the staff travelling by car decorated with pride flag colours to companies and universities further away from PCO. *Dokodemo* means “anywhere”. Leaflets and books brought with the Dokodemo Pride Caravan from the centre (PCO, 2023a).

Movie screenings and workshops with group work events related to LGBTQ are held for students and faculty members. Osaka University’s Suita Campus was where the first event was held in November 2022. A video is shown of the visit, where the staff are wearing mascot suits, followed by a staff member explaining about LGBTQ and PCO in an auditorium. Dokodemo Pride Caravan was organised also in December 2022, and January 2023 in other universities (PCO, 2023a).

The events have been well received. According to participants, the lectures have been “very easy-to-understand”, the films have been “the most emotional film I’ve ever seen” and the workshops were evaluated: “I was able to hear the opinions of other people. I don’t usually have such an opportunity, so it was good to be able to do group work.” (PCO, 2023a).

5.2.6 Running team Hamyune

In adjunct to PCO, there is a group of people that go jogging together about every two weeks. The group, is called *Hamyune* – an abbreviation from the words *hashitte miyou yukkuri ne*, translating to "let's try and run slowly, right?" And instead of serious running in a fast pace and being tired and frustrated, Hamyune is about making running fun, at the pace of the slowest one. (PCO, 2023a).

The group started during COVID-19 when a founding member of Hamyune felt lonely running alone. Around New Year's an idea of forming the group emerged. PCO was chosen for the headquarters since it is situated in a convenient spot and one can come there after work and change clothes in the big toilet and leave their belongings in the centre while going for running. The city has so called "running stations" where one can leave belongings, change clothes and shower, but due to gender issues, using them is uncomfortable for them. Also, the heteronormative environment of these "running stations" made Hamyune choose PCO, which both offer a safe space without having to come out one by one to everyone. (PCO, 2023a).

Hamyune has also brought visibility to both PCO and LGBTQ+ people in general. They have participated in a relay marathon and made group shirts for it. Hamyune is representing the LGBTQ saying: "We are here/We exist." (PCO, 2023a). The Hamyune members explain that they "do not talk about worries all the time" and they encourage people to join, even those that are introverted, or not that much used to running. They add: "It's about moving your body a little to become warm, and we run at such speed that one can speak at the same time while running." (PCO, 2023a).

5.3 Visitors' Survey

User surveys have been conducted by PCO since the opening of the space. Survey results from April 2022 to October 2022 (7 months, 99 days) were presented in the conference presentation. Average number of visitors per day has been 8.7 people. The space was visited several times by more than 40% of visitors, around 50% were first time visitors. Visitors are primarily from Osaka City, Prefecture and Kansai area (circa 80% altogether). (PCO, 2023a).

Visitors found PCO via different media. Social Network Sites (SNS) combined form the largest group. Second was Internet search results. Third was introduction by a friend or an acquaintance. PCO wishes to increase visibility in the media "through strengthening public

relation activities.”. Regarding the needs and expectations of the visitors, it is said that “a place where one can feel safe, a place to consult about LGBTQ, library and material function for LGBTQ” are in the minds of the users. Although PCO staff emphasise that it can be read that the space attracts diverse people, it is also visible that most (61%) belong to a sexual minority. (PCO, 2023a).

5.4 Future

A stronger connection to the local community is a vision for the future by PCO. Also, there is a wish to let the public know that PCO is present by taking part in local festivals and events. (PCO, 2023a) PCO also reaches (through Pride Caravan) to other regions and Tomo adds that PCO and its know-how could be used as a model for other regions and PCO may provide advice for establishing centres around Japan. Liaison meetings with centres already in operation are held regularly. In February 2023, another LGBTQ+ centre was opened, this time in Kanazawa (Email correspondence with staff member of PCO, 17th January 2024). In addition, many community centres could be collaborated with.

In the Pride House Tokyo Guidebook 2023, Nagano presents challenges for the future: PCO is “still exploring to raise awareness of our center and increase its visibility” (PHT, 2023, p. 50). PCO also wants “to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention in other parts of the country.” Regarding Osaka Kansai World Expo 2025, there is a plan to hold collaborative events held through cooperation with embassies. The vision is to create “a world-class LGBTQ center in Osaka”. (PCO, 2023a). The Osaka-Kansai World Expo 2025 is mentioned by Nagano as hoped to “attract visitors from across Japan and abroad to our center as a place to gather information and interact.” (PHT, 2023, p. 51). Collaboration with other centres has been taken place, for example with Pride House Tokyo, to which I will turn next.

6 Pride House Tokyo Legacy

This chapter is based on the Pride House Tokyo 2023 Guidebook, but also some parts of the 2019 Guidebook are included. Pride House Tokyo (2019, p. 38) sees inclusivity in this way: "'A safe space' belongs to each one of us rather than being prepared for a particular someone. We will promote our activities so that 'everyone' can have a way to find a safe space and feel safe there, regardless of sexuality." PHT aims to be "a safe organization for individuals of all minority intersections" and the spaces and resources that PHT provides aim to be "fair and inclusive for all LGBTQ+ people." (Ono, PHT, 2023, p. 3).

6.1 Introduction of PHT

Pride House Tokyo was established in the dawn of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.[8] Pride House Tokyo describes itself as "a collective impact project established through cross-sectional collaboration between organizations (NPOs), professionals, businesses and embassies". (PHT, 2023, p. 2). Pride House Tokyo (PHT) is the name for the entity that operated before and during the Olympics and Paralympics. The centre that operates now, after the Olympics, is called Pride House Tokyo Legacy (PHTL). In other words, PHT was an Olympic institution, PHTL on the other hand is a permanent LGBTQ+ centre. I use both PHT and PHTL in this research to describe the centre that operates at the moment.

PHTL was Japan's first permanent LGBTQ+ centre as it opened in Shinjuku City on October 11th, 2020, although PHT was established already in September 2018. (PHT, 2023, pp. 2 & 49). According to Kunihiro Maeda, the Director in charge of Pride House Tokyo in 2023, the "community space … is open to all visitors." (PHT, 2023). In PHT's words, PHTL "has been promoting a wide range of initiatives to create an LGBTQ+ inclusive society that does not exclude anyone." (PHT, 2023, p. 2). On April 1st, 2023, PHT has transformed from a voluntary association to a NPO (non-profit organisation) and its leadership structure has changed. (PHT, 2023).

In the beginning PHT was established directly under NPO Good Aging Yells (an LGBT organization established in 2010 focused on creating inclusive space and world where everyone can age safely) directed by its president Gon Matsunaka (PHT, 2023, p. 2). Now,

[8] The 2020 Tokyo Games' theme of "diversity and harmony" could be seen as a feasible background for changes in the society including issues related to LGBTQ+ people. Pride Houses have been established around the world since 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics in adjunct to major sporting events. (Hirayama, 2020).

the leadership will be divided by a team of three people co-chairing PHT(L). The three people are Chairperson of NPO Rainbow Soup, Yuri Igarashi; Joint Representative of NPO Proud Futures, Anri Ono with a focus on children and youth as well as multicultural and multilingual projects, and Representative of S.C.P Japan, Aya Noguchi from a background of sports and diversity (PHT, 2023, p. 2-3). Also, a DEI Advisory Board was established (PHT, 2023). A diagram for the organisational structure of PHT in 2023-2025 is presented in the Guidebook, according to which Pride House Tokyo Consortium consists of members that include "NPOs, companies, embassies and individuals who agree on Pride House Tokyo's mission, vision, and values." (PHT, 2023, p. 2). The Consortium is divided in eight teams that I will write about more below. According to the diagram, the NPO Pride House Tokyo is "Responsible for organizational infrastructure and administrative tasks (accounting, legal affairs, human resources)" and it has a board that started operating on April 1st, 2023. (PHT, 2023, p. 2).

6.1.1 Facilities

There are three meeting rooms that can be used for counselling. A library and archive with over 3,000 books and materials, also picture books and manga. There is an information corner with brochures and a café area, two all-gender bathrooms and a nursing room. The space may be accessed by an elevator but there are also stairs painted with the eleven colours of the progress pride flag leading from the street to the PHTL on the second floor. Electrical outlets for charging devices and free wi-fi are provided.

PHTL describes itself as a "permanent comprehensive LGBTQ+ center" that "open[s their] doors to everyone, share[s] LGBT-related information and serve[s] as a safe space." (PHT, 2023, p. 66). Maeda defines PHTL as a "valuable place of refuge for LGBTQ people who cannot find a 'sense of belonging' in other places." (PHT, 2023, p. 49). Igarashi states that having a safe space where free self-expression is cultivated can be a matter of "a lifeline" for LGBTQ+ individuals (PHT, 2023, p. 3). Maeda describes the daily life of PHT: "The staff members talk to people who have problems they couldn't talk to anyone else about, and I think it is a place where they can feel free to come and talk, have a cup of tea, or read a book." (PHT, 2023, p. 49). Maeda also adds that their goal is to "create a welcoming space for those who may feel marginalized." (PHT, 2023, p. 50).

6.1.2 Strategy: Mission, Vision, Values, Logo

PHT's mission is stated as "We strive to be the collective experience and a beacon of hope for an equal and dynamic society that leaves no one behind regardless of gender or sexual diversity." (PHT, 2023, p. 4). As noted in the introduction, it is interesting how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals slogan "leave no one behind" is reflected in this mission statement.

PHT's vision is stated as "We look to establish sustainable safe places where LGBTQ+ and ally communities can foster genuine interactions that empower, support and boost collaboration amongst us all." (PHT, 2023, p. 4). What is notable is that sustainability is mentioned, as well as plural safe places for communities, and also for allies, as well as interaction that enhances collaboration.

PHT's three core values – learn together, support together, work together – have two value statements under them each (PHT, 2023). Education and Resources (learn together): "Be the general information portal for all SOGIESC surveys, aid and initiatives" and "Be the safe space where everyone respects all gender and sexual diversity." (PHT, 2023, p. 4). Safety and Support (support together): "Be a nationwide network where organizations, companies and local governments can create and share new values and wisdom" and "Be the archives of cultural contents and activities done by the community for future generations." (PHT, 2023, p. 4). Network and Movement (work together): "Be the helping hand to those in need (especially young and intersectional minorities)" and "Be a framework which anyone can join in and collaborate across the nation." (PHT, 2023, p. 4).

The PHT Logo, created by Asao Tokolo, the designer behind Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, depicts a "dynamic house representing the future of the next generation" coloured with the six-colour rainbow, on an indigo (traditional hue representing Japan) background. In addition, an original typeface "symbolising versatility and change" was created. (PHT, 2023, p. 4)

6.1.3 Funding, Support and Collaboration Through Projects

PHT receives its funding from various sources. There is a strong focus on the intersection of LGBTQ+, children and youth and sports which becomes apparent from the funding of PHT through various grants. In 2023, the Nippon Foundation, that aims to improve social issues,

was the greatest supporter of PHT through grants. Creating an LGBTQ+ inclusive sports environment was the aim of the first grant (PHT, 2023). And “creat[ing] a society where everyone helps raise each other’s children” through creating “Children’s 3rd places” beyond home and school (PHT, 2023, p. 53).

Two executive organisation projects have also received grants. First is the “Grant for the Program to Promote Collaboration for the Future of the Children” as disbursed by the Nonprofit corporation “ETIC” that was admitted for PHT for the duration of three years from April 2020 to March 2023 for “The Establishment of Pride House Tokyo, Japan’s first LGBTQ center.” (PHT, 2023, p. 56). The second executive organisation project is a year-long “grant in support of measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” and was disbursed by READYFOR Inc. and NPO Kids’ Door from March 2022 until February 2023 with the PHT’s project name of “LGBTQ+ Youth Learning Support and Counseling Project”. This project includes an “aim to create a safe and secure place for diverse LGBTQ+ youths including both deaf LGBTQ+ youths and LGBTQ+ youths of foreign roots by having them connect and interact with role models and peers, receive academic and counselling support, or even experience sports activities.” (PHT, 2023, p. 57). The diversity, multilingual, multicultural and youth focus can be seen in this description. Bright future and readiness to challenges as adults is the goal. (PHT, 2023).

The Tokyo Marathon Foundation, established in 2010, is a major collaborator of PHT since 2019. (PHT, 2023). The collaboration on the Tokyo Legacy Half Marathon 2022 and Tokyo Marathon 2023 events has included providing “advice … on the installation of inclusive changing rooms and restrooms, as well as on various productions such as convention bibs and programs” helping LGBTQ+ individuals participate in the events (PHT, 2023, p. 54). In addition, PHT has been a recipient organisation through Good Ageing Yells of the Tokyo Marathon Foundation's donation program called “RUN with HEART” (PHT, 2023). In the Tokyo Legacy Half Marathon, there was a PHT booth both providing as information dissemination and a place for donators with the donation recipient. (PHT, 2023). In the Tokyo Marathon 2023, videos were produced with “three LGBTQ+ topics: sports, youth and the creation of an inclusive environment.” (PHT, 2023, p. 55). The passing of the baton of leadership of PHT took place in these events with the participation of PHT’s first president Gon Matsunaka and one of three new co-chairs Aya Noguchi (PHT, 2023).

Although PHT has many companies and organisations backing them up, and funding from grants, Maeda says that they "are still working to establish a solid financial foundation to ensure the centre's continued operation." (PHT, 2023, p. 50).

6.2 Content of PHT

The content of PHT(L) is organised under teams. The three values encompass six teams: Education and Diversity Awareness and Culture/History/Archives under Education and Resources. Wellness Support and Safe Spaces under Safety and Support. Athletes' Messages and Festivals/Sporting Events/Volunteer under Network and Movement. In addition, there are the Framework for Sustainability and Legacy Management Teams. The Framework for Sustainability focuses on sustaining the continuation of operations of PHTL by collaboration, funding (also through donations) and organisational structure of PHT. (PHT, 2023).

6.2.1 Educational Content, Information Dissemination, Human Archive & Library

Broadening awareness on gender and family diversity by education such as training programs and other educational content is the Education and Diversity Team's main goal. Information dissemination, responding to inquiries to visit PHTL and organising study tours at PHTL are some tasks that this team is responsible of. An important function of the Education and Diversity team is information dissemination both inside and outside PHTL. (PHT, 2023). Regarding content creation, an educational DVD on LGBTQ+ was produced by the team in collaboration with NHK Welfare and Culture Corporation about "inclusive schools" with PHT staff members as instructors in the films (PHT, 2023, p. 7). With public libraries, there has been an initiative for "interaction and collaboration" through events in 2023 as the increasing LGBTQ+ publications, there is a need to get these books and other materials to readers (PHT, 2023, p. 9). The Festivals/Sporting Events/Volunteer team, with Coca-Cola Japan, created a "Handbook for LGBTQ+ Allies" which is free to download and to utilise by companies and organisations. The grant disbursed by ETIC has been used to create an information platform. The platform is based on the archives (below) to provide accurate and appropriate information. Information is also created through surveys. This information is spread for especially children and youth and people working with them. (PHT, 2023).

Past, present and future are at the centre of the Culture/History/Archives Team. The team has been collecting histories "woven by the Japanese LGBTQ+ community", recording the "tumultuous" present and "preserving knowledge for future generations" (PHT, 2023, p. 8).

An archive book catalogue project comprising of around 3,000 publications was completed by 2023 The catalogue can be viewed at PHTL. In 2023 the publications have broadened from books and journals to “zines, newsletters and specialised magazines produced within the community” (PHT, 2023, p. 8) in cooperation with collectors, researchers and institutions. Also the immaterial history preservation or the “human archive” is one of PHT’s goals, comprising of interviews with influential people.

Education and Diversity Team also arranged film screenings of films such as *Gayby Baby* (Australia, 2015) that have been followed by a discussion. Family diversity was the theme of this event, as the film “follows the lives of children raised by LGBTQ+ parents”, and the target audience was prospective LGBTQ+ parents (PHT, 2023, p. 7). Film screenings and talk events have been organised together with embassies especially. One of these screenings was *Hei Verden* (Norway, 2021) organised with the Norwegian Embassy in Tokyo together with the discussion themed on coming out experiences by the Culture/History/Archives team. Regarding other discussion events, the Safe Spaces team and Okayama Rainbow Festa did publicity cooperation and Meiji University’s Nakano Diversity Festa held a discussion together with the team on the topic of “creating safe spaces in rural areas” (PHT, 2023, p. 17). University Diversity Alliance (UDA) held together with the team a booth at the Tokyo Rainbow Pride and a class at University of Tsukuba and a symposium called “What Kind of Universities are LGBTQ+ Friendly?” (PHT, 2023, p. 17).

6.2.2 Health-Related Events and Sex Education

The Wellness Support Team focuses on physical, mental, social and sexual wellness through “advocacy and support for those who experience marginalisation and erasure” (PHT, 2023, p. 14). Challenges related to sex education in Japan have been addressed by this team by “a translator introducing a Swedish book on comprehensive sexuality education” together with a panel discussion at the Tokyo Aids Weeks 2022 online event on the World AIDS Day on December 1st. Marginalised people such as people living with HIV/AIDS, youth, transgender community and foreigners have been special focus groups. Aims of the team are promoting wellness and inclusion, reducing barriers, stigma and prejudice, providing comprehensive support and addressing and eradicating discrimination. The team has also been collaborating with Oracle Corporation Japan, Inc. in order to redesign the high school curriculum to include LGBTQ+ and sexual diversity issues. The project has been made through “online teaching

materials, human library and design thinking" (PHT, 2023, p. 13) responding to Sapporo Shinyo High School students' request.

6.2.3 Creating Safe Space, Especially for Children and Youth

The Safe Spaces Team "provides a 'place to be oneself' where LGBTQ+ people, especially those most vulnerable, can gather in safety and security" through disseminating information, connection opportunities and support network creation (PHT, 2023, p. 16). Regular Trans Days are held at PHT creating "a place for transgender, non-binary, X-gender individuals, and those questioning their gender identity … [to] meet and connect". Transgender exclusion has been tackled on International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (May 17th) and the International Transgender Day of Visibility (March 31st). (PHT, 2023, p. 16).

Safe environment needs to be created especially for the focus group of children and youth. PHT has created strategies to reach children and youth, educational institutions and government agencies. Methods are for example using videos as information dissemination and other online materials which is shared for example through "PHTL for Youth" social media accounts (PHT, 2023). Increasing Youth Unit members is also a strategy to "provide a safer and more secure environment from a peer perspective" (PHT, 2023, p. 53). Tours for elementary, middle and high school students are arranged and training and a conference also for people and "organisations working to create safe spaces [and supportive environments] for children" were held. (PHT, 2023, p. 53). The Youth Unit works with Positive Youth Development giving an active role to youth. Events such as "Teens Day", and "Youth Exchange Meetings" for under-24-year-olds and "Youth Day" have been held. Online community building has been focal in the Youth Unit's work, for example through social media (SNS). Safe spaces are provided also online through "Zoom-based child-friendly meeting places" (PHT, 2023, p. 53). Children and youth across the country are in mind when safe environment is being created. (PHT, 2023).

In addition, the "LGBTQ+ Youth Learning Support and Counseling Project" disbursed by READYFOR Inc. and NPO Kids' Door "provides academic support for LGBTQ+ youth" and offers opportunities for learning and meeting "peers and role models of the same age group" (PHT, 2023, p. 57). Both physical and virtual spaces are used, also to offer "counselling support for diverse LGBTQ+ youth" (PHT, 2023, p. 57). Sports activities are part of the project and disabled youth are a focus group in its activities. Recruiting and training staff for

PHTL that serves as role models for the youth is also mentioned. This project is related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the LGBTQ+ youth. (PHT, 2023).

6.2.4 Consultation

Support through consultation is a method to create safe environment. The consultation support is offered both in-person and online. Children and youth are a focus group of the consultations. The consultations are arranged in cooperation with multiple teams. Two free consultations are available mostly face to face, but sometimes online. The counselling is called as “Wraparound Support” and it is provided in Japanese, English and for those people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, also in written form, both in-person and online during the opening hours of PHTL. (PHT, 2023, p. 67). Providing case management is also mentioned offering more comprehensive support. Surveys are conducted and especially school nurses are surveyed, since there is great potential for them to serve as counsellors for LGBTQ+ children and youth. (PHT, 2023).

6.2.5 Reaching outside PHTL, Booths and Initiatives

The Education and Diversity team arranges PHTL pop-ups at universities similar to PCO’s Dokodemo Pride Caravan concept. Culture/History/Archives team has also an initiative similar to PCO’s Dokodemo Pride Caravan, called “Travel Legacy”, which has taken part in Sapporo and Fukuoka Prides with a booth filled with guidebooks, materials and merchandise (PHT, 2023, p. 9). Booths were held by the Safe Spaces team at Tokyo Trans March and Kanazawa Rainbow Pride. Booths were held at sports events by the Athletes’ Messages team where information was disseminated. (PHT, 2023).

6.2.6 PHTL and Sports

Influencing the sport world and the broader society through it is the aim of Athletes’ Messages team (PHT, 2023). The main focus of this team is training “Ally Athletes” through the Alliance Athlete training program. After the training on LGBTQ+ issues in three sessions, outreach is made to promote inclusion through athletes taking part in competitions such as “Pride Matches” organised together with PHT and speaking in training sessions for sports organisations. The Athletes’ Messages team also produced video messages with these athletes.

The Festivals/Sporting Events/Volunteer Team aims to create events that consider diversity so that diverse people may participate in them. (PHT, 2023). For example, during World Aquatics Championships 2023 in Fukuoka, PHT organised a Pride House to "serve as a safe and welcoming gathering space for LGBTQ+ athletes, sports officials, fans, family members and allies attending the championships" (PHT, 2023, p. 20).

A set of conferences have been created together with "ally athletes, LGBTQ+ athletes and experts" aiming communicate how youth are facing difficulties in the sports field "to adults, such as sports instructors, and to provide accurate information to youths themselves" (PHT, 2023, p. 52). Organisations and Ally Athletes are also trained, as well as outreach made in collaboration with conventions and organisations to create safe space among the sports events (PHT, 2023). In addition, a "comparative study of LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ youth groups" was conducted related to "experiences in physical education" revealing the difficulties of LGBTQ+ youth in physical education environment (PHT, 2023, p. 19).

6.2.7 Accessibility: Having Fun, Multicultural Content & Multilingual Support

The space of PHTL is described as a place for people to "interact in a fun and safe environment" (PHT, 2023, p. 26). Feedback such as "I want to make friends with people my age" and "I want to talk with people who share my sexuality" have been received and "Fureai Meetings" have been arranged based on these needs (PHT, 2023, p. 26). There is a continuation of "host[ing] social gatherings on various themes, listening to feedback of visitors and participants as [PHT] strive[s] to provide enjoyable and safe opportunities for interaction." (PHT, 2023, p. 26). On Valentine's Day, the Wellness Support team did a collaboration with a sponsor Meiji Co., Ltd. handing out chocolate packages around Shinjuku 2-chome "promoting diverse values" (PHT, 2023, p. 13).

Multilingual support is provided in English, Chinese and Japanese Sign Language in addition to Japanese. A comment from visitor about PHTL has been: "multicultural inclusive". The Multilingual-Multicultural Promotion Unit is "committed to making [PHT] inclusive of various languages and cultures" (PHT, 2023, p. 29). For example, Deaf Day event is held monthly to create "a place where everyone can feel safe and secure and get information about LGBTQ+ in Japanese Sign Language" (PHT, 2023, p. 29). Also training for JSL interpreters about LGBTQ+ has been provided. Easy Japanese has been a recent focus at PHT. Social media posts are made both in Japanese and English for a wider audience. (PHT, 2023).

6.2.8 Other Collaborative Projects, Cooperation with other Centres

PHT has collaborated with local governments and other organisations such as Marriage for All Japan fostering “collaborations that transcend organizational boundaries” which Igarashi sees “tremendous potential in” (PHT, 2023, p. 3). As a part of the networking platform, “cooperative system with organisations in various regions” is being built at PHT (PHT, 2023, p. 53). This is reflected in cross-regional cooperation between centres, and in the discussion of staff members from five centres around Japan in the Guidebook: PHT, PCO, and other three in Soraniji Himeji, Kanazawa and Maebashi (HAERUWA). Discussion arose whether rural areas need LGBTQ-friendly spaces as much as urban areas, or even more. PCO wishes to “ultimately increase the number of centres throughout the country.” (PHT, 2023, p. 51). Sharing knowledge such as “expertise in securing ongoing funding, developing human resources, and maintaining a welcoming environment [that] is crucial even after a space has been established” is emphasised for areas that do not yet have inclusive spaces.

Regarding employment, Framework for Sustainability team has been collaborating with the corporate sector to begin the PHT Employee Resource Group (ERG) in which meetings are held with 20 companies. With ERG PHT is “contributing to the understanding of LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace and promoting measures to address them”. Together with ERG, “LGBTQ+ Youth Expo” has been organised to provide youth “with a vision of their future careers and hope.” (PHT, 2023, pp. 24-25).

6.3 Future

Gon Matsunaka, the PHT’s previous Representative, fiscal year 2023’s advisor for PHT paints a picture of the future of PHT Legacy in its transition and how to improve the space: “It is our goal and challenge to create open spaces where all are welcomed and welcoming, and supportive and supported.” (PHT, 2023, p. 4). Maeda wants “to engage with the local community by participating in neighborhood school and town hall events and festivals” and “host in-person social events to create a space where many people can meet and connect.” (PHT, 2023, p. 51). Igarashi echoes this reaching out to broader society outside the centre: “Together, let’s create a society where individuals can live in peace and respect, regardless of their sexuality.” (PHT, 2023, p. 3).

7 Results

Having presented the current realities of LGBTQ+ people in Japan and the two LGBTQ+ spaces I will now turn to the analysis. With frame analysis in mind, this chapter considers the Benford and Snow's (2000) diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing tasks or the Gamson's (1995) injustice, agency and identity frames. I have written more on these in the second chapter. First, I will dive into the diagnostic framing task or injustice (master) frame and explain the problems LGBTQ+ people have faced in the society in Japan. Second, I will delve into the prognostic task or agency frame for inquiring how the Pride Center Osaka and Pride House Tokyo aim to address these problems. Third, the motivational task or identity frame digs into the different stakeholders and their role in the grand scheme. In addition, I discuss how PCO and PHT fit the definitions of public space and alternative space.

Gamson (1995) and Benford and Snow (2000) write about collective action frames, in which social movements operate. I see Pride Center Osaka and Pride House Tokyo as examples of if not social movements, at least taking part in the social movement as a social movement organisation (SMO). As there are organizations behind both centres and as they thrive for a cause, I treat the centres as actors in social movements, namely the LGBTQ+ cause.

I will begin with offering a brief overview of the problems faced by LGBTQ+ people in Japan, according to my first research question. I will identify the problems and add attributes to them and write about why the issues need to be addressed. For a more detailed view of conceptualizing the adverse experiences in the society, see chapter four. By these examples, I argue that an injustice master frame exists.

Discrimination prevails in Japanese society on many facets in the form of bullying or being forced to do something against one's will and even taking the form of physical violence in some cases. The prevailing discrimination may be seen as systemic and structural, quiet or familial. These problems need to be addressed in order to LGBTQ+ people to be able to live their everyday life safely and without constant pain, fear and discomfort.

Difficulties related to coming out, outing and hiding in the closet may be a part of bullying related to school or work life. When the reactions of people such as family members are often discriminatory if not outright violent due to lack of understanding, hiding in the closet may be the only option for LGBTQ+ individuals. Sometimes, people are forced to come out of the closet when they are outed for example at the workplace or in social media. Addressing the

problems related to outing for example would guarantee LGBTQ+ people to come out when they feel safe to do so and hiding in the closet would not necessarily be needed.

Problems such as lack of information, knowledge and understanding exist. Information through for example sex education at schools has been difficult to access or not adequate. Also older generations lack knowledge and understanding about LGBTQ+ issues. Related to information, lack of support for LGBTQ+ people and the inability to consult anyone have been major issues in people's lives. Information dissemination is needed for broader understanding of LGBTQ+ issues among everyone, both the LGBTQ+ people themselves, and for acceptance among everyone.

The need for support through especially counselling services is reflected in the data. Lack of adequate information for LGBTQ+ people themselves and lack of understanding by the people around them including healthcare professionals and staff in schools or services, has led to further difficulties. Children and youth are especially left out on their own without role models or other support. Support related to employment is also needed especially for transgender people. Problems related to consultation and support should be solved in order to solve the issues that LGBTQ+ individuals are facing in their lives so that no one is left alone.

Being transgender causes various difficulties regarding for example identity verification, in some cases people have been accused of lying about their identity. Gender identity causes problems in non-inclusive public space for example in toilets and changing rooms. Gender separation is an issue when uniforms or clothes are forced on people according to the family register gender. The strict requirements such as forcing to undergo surgery in order to being able to change their legal gender is an issue. Gender identity, gender separation, gender dysphoria and gender affirming surgery difficulties need to be addressed in order to everyone to be able to live as themselves and feel safe in the society. Sports events in general, sports festivals and physical education at school have been causing difficulties and discomfort for LGBTQ+ people. To ensure equal opportunities for participation, a change is needed in the sports world.

The whole employment process is discriminatory against transgender people, from hiring processes and even career choices onwards. LGBTQ+ people face problems in the working life resulting in either outing or resulting from having to hide in the closet. Problems arise even in companies that brand themselves as "LGBT-friendly". The employment process

issues need to be addressed in order to be able for LGBTQ+ individuals to be hired, maintain careers and thrive.

Also financial and housing problems burden LGBTQ+ people. Financial issues are often the result of a broader discrimination in employment or rooted in gender roles for example which offers men career paths and expects women to be at home taking care of the family. Financial and housing issues need to be addressed in order to everyone to be able to live a dignified life with adequate resources.

Legal issues such as confirming one's legal gender in accordance with their identified gender, and legalising partnerships through marriage, both having been visible in the media. These issues cause problems in daily lives of people as individuals, or as units such as couples or families. These legal frameworks need to be addressed in order to LGBTQ+ people to be recognised as equal human beings in the Japanese society.

Health related problems vary from issues with HIV/AIDS to transgender people's health, hormone treatment and gender reaffirming surgery. Being LGBTQ+ may lead more often if not to mental health problems, then at least distress. Health related issues often stem from fear of discrimination or actual discrimination the health care system and in medical institutions. Health issues need to be addressed in order to everyone to be able to live a healthy, safe life free from discrimination related to medical issues.

As there are many problems faced by LGBTQ+ people in Japan, it may be concluded that an injustice frame exists. The difficulties appear to be interrelated, causing and affecting each other. For example, broader acceptance and understanding may make it easier for LGBTQ+ people to come out, but also more people coming out may increase understanding and acceptance.

Next, I will deal with the second research question and write about how PCO and PHT aim to meet the needs of the LGBTQ+ community. The centres in this case work as agents that address the problems and difficulties that LGBTQ+ people face. I write about the operations of the centres and projected results. Benford and Snow (2000, p. 616) write that this prognostic framing handles "proposed solution to the problem, or at least a plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan" and that they include "problems of consensus and [problems of] action mobilization." For a more thorough description of the operational aspects of the centres, turn to the chapters five and six.

Although not directly support organisations for people suffering from violence, and not directly advocation organisations for LGBTQ+ rights, Pride House Tokyo and Pride Center Osaka are tackling discrimination in various forms, for example by disseminating information, holding consultations and providing a safe space. There are organisations that advocate for equal marriage rights, and transgender rights. PCO and PHT are not focusing on advocating for either marriage equality or transgender rights outright. Yet, their work may be seen having an influence on both same sex marriage issues and gender identity issues. PHT and PCO are also not health organisations or deal directly with issues with HIV/AIDS or offer medical consultation but do introduce hospitals. PHT and PCO are also not regarded to offer therapy for mental health issues, although the consultation sessions may get emotional. Also people with financial problems are guided to take contact with other services.

The discrimination, discriminatory language, and violence are addressed by both centres by creating a safe space. Especially PHT has the safe spaces team and describes how PHTL serves as a safe space and a "'place to be oneself' "where LGBTQ+ people, especially the most vulnerable, gather in safety and security". Safe spaces and safety are a strong focus of PHT which aims to "be the safe space where everyone respects all gender and sexual diversity". Regarding staying safe, PHT is seen as being a "lifeline" for LGBTQ+ people and their suicide prevention project as a whole reflects this.

PCO and PHT offer a space where regardless of person's gender identity and sexual orientation, one may feel safe and respected. For example, the toilets, which operate also as changing rooms in PCO when Hamyune running club gets together, are gender neutral and free to use by anyone. As disbelief regarding identity verification occur in the outside world, in the centres one is faced as themselves and not discriminated against. PCO and PHT offer a space in which one may safely come out if they want to and safely stay in the closet if needed.

PHT and PCO are addressing the issues of lack of information, knowledge and understanding and thus tackling the invisibility of LGBTQ+ people. For example, Pride Center Osaka's Dokodemo Pride Caravan brings the PCO into areas around Osaka such as universities or other institutions and hands out information in the form of flyers brochures, lectures, movie screenings and discussion sessions. There has been a presence of LGBTQ+ advocacy and NPOs well before the centres such as PHT and PCO opened. Yet, it may be argued that the opening of these centres has brought more visibility for LGBTQ+ issues. Also more connection and contact to people can be said to be achieved through the centres. In addition to

disseminating information outside the centres with Dokodemo Pride Caravan and events held outside the centres for example, PCO especially holds events for staff at companies or educational institutions at PCO, aiming to change these organizations and thus the way the society operates. PHT on the other hand arranges study tours to visitors or visitor groups with children and youth and people working with them as a focus group.

PCO has about 200 books and brochure stands in the centre, while PHT's information corner has brochures and their catalogue includes 3,000 publications. PHT especially has a focus of "sharing LGBT-related information". One of PHT's core values is "learn together" which is reflected in the educational content they create, the collaborative projects they have initiated and how they encourage social interaction between visitors and participants. Information is disseminated to LGBTQ+ people (especially youth and children), and the general audience (with the focus of sports world). Public libraries are collaborators in the information dissemination project, as well as companies and other organisations. PHT also creates information through for example surveys.

Regarding media and role models, PCO and PHT bring forth role models in their staff who are LGBTQ+ and that other people can relate to. They also are in contact with the media so that there is a positive visibility on LGBTQ+ issues.

Consultation and support are a part of PCO's and PHT's operations. As institutions such as schools and universities, companies and public services in many cases have failed to offer support and consultation services, there has been a strong need for them. PCO has provided both face to face and online consultations – "Free LGBTQ Individual Consultations" on various topics. In the beginning of 2023, there was a question of whether the consultations could continue, since the financial support of the PCO consultation services were to end. PHT offers consultation support or "Wraparound Support" to children and youth especially, both face-to-face and online. PHTL has several rooms for these consultations. An important aspect of the consultation services is to make the consultation that PHT and PCO offer obsolete, as the society changes and public services and for example school nurses could be taking the role of counsellors for LGBTQ+ children and youth as they gain knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ+ issues.

The sports world is a strong focus of PHT, as the premise of the establishment was in the dawn of the Tokyo Olympics 2020. PHT's focus has been to create an LGBTQ+ inclusive sports environment, towards a society where no one is excluded. This work has been done for

example by influencing events such as Tokyo Marathon, through research on LGBTQ+ youth and sports, and holding a conference on LGBTQ+ youth and sports. The aim is to guarantee participation opportunities to sports events and promote safe space in sports through collaboration. PHT thus aims to address the problem of people not being able to participate in sport events due to lack of consideration regarding gender, for example in registration to the event or in relation to the changing rooms and toilets in the event organisation. PHT has been advocating and has already influenced major sports events such as the Tokyo Marathon. In the 2025 marathon event, an option to register as a nonbinary contestant has been added. Having received "advice from Pride House Tokyo since 2019 to promote diversity in sports events" also "changing rooms and nongender specific toilets that are open to all" have been introduced (Takahara, June 2024). PCO on the other hand has also taken part in sports events and has a jogging group Hamyune gathering in the space. Influencing the society through sports could be seen as a method of soft power advocacy and protest.

Employment issues have been addressed in both PCO and PHT. PCO has held discussion events on LGBTQ+ job hunting and problems in the workplace. PHT has organised LGBTQ+ Youth Expo event through which "future careers and hope" were discussed. PHT's Employee Resource group (ERG) has been arranged with 20 companies. Employment issues are also a future focus for PHT.

Legal issues or legal advising is mentioned by neither PCO or PHT. Although more broadly PHT has published statements relating to LGBT Understanding Law that was passed in May 2023 in Japan and regarding Gender Identity issues, especially a transgender woman's right to use the women's bathroom at her workplace in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Family diversity is one of PHT's focal points as well. Partnerships especially equal marriage rights have been improved through a collaboration with Marriage for All.

Health has been at the forefront of PCO's operations, as "remedy" is in the mission statement of the centre. "Helping to restore the physical, mental and social health of LGBTQ people damaged by the pandemic" is a part of the vision statement of PCO as well. HIV/AIDS is also a focus of both the centres. PHT has the Wellness Support Team which also focuses on physical, mental, social and sexual wellness. Transgender health, foreigners and sex education are the team's focal points. Sex education especially has been a focus of the survey conducted on school nurses as potential counsellors for children and youth.

Emotions, foremost isolation, are tackled through providing a space for hanging out, interacting with people and "creating a space to belong to" at PCO and creating a space where to meet people and be together at PHT. Ideally, in the safe space provided by the centres, one may abandon the negative feelings and emotions that they have had to experience outside the centres that were listed in adjunct to the J-ALL Difficulties List data.

The needs and requirements of those attendees seem to be met at the centres, PCO especially states that "the [hybrid *ibasho*'s] user's needs are very well expressed". Also, everyone can be themselves at the centre and ask for help if needed. About making an impact and influencing the society towards more inclusion through raising one's voice, PHT aims to raise voices from the sports world to foster awareness of LGBTQ issues. By reaching out through the sports world perhaps towards the physical education classes at school and reaching towards school nurses to be counsellors, entire generations could be reached by the centres which would help in directly reaching those that are in need of support and also indirectly influencing others.

If approximately 10% of Japan's population identifies as LGBT (Japan LGBT Research Institute, 2019), and even a fraction would be in need of support that the centres provide, it amounts to a substantial number of people, and several centres alone could not tackle this task. During Pride Center Osaka's three years of operation for example, there has been 4,051 visitors to PCO, 266 people have received consultations online and in person, with 1,218 receiving LINE consultations (PCO, 2025). PCO's events have gained 14,309 attendees and PCO has appeared in different media altogether 110 times. Visitors from 205 organisations and companies, 765 people have toured PCO (PCO, 2025). The event visitors, tour visitors and media visibility have more indirect impact, whereas the actual visitors to the space and recipients of consultations have more of a direct impact. 60.3% of actual visitors have been from Osaka City and Osaka Prefecture, which means 2,442 people, and of that, not everyone identifies as LGBTQ+. Osaka Prefecture has approximately 8.8 million inhabitants, which means 880,000 people in the prefecture would identify as LGBT. A fraction of these people, approximately 0,2–0,3% have been directly reached by PCO as visitors, and 0,1–0,2% have been receiving consultation.

The indirect impact of the centres could be seen as aligning with the vision of the "LGBT Understanding Law" enacted in May 2023, as the centres spread awareness and share knowledge with the broader society. Visibility in media, presence in local, national and even

global events helps in gaining support to the LGBTQ+ cause and movement and affecting values of the broader society.

I will now turn to the motivational, or identity framing and the third research question, “Who are the different stakeholders that need to act in order to create LGBTQ+ inclusive public space in Japan?” The stakeholders need to act to eradicate the difficulties that LGBTQ+ people in Japan face and create inclusion in society. I will focus on questions such as 1) Who needs to act? 2) Who is a stakeholder and thus has the right to act? Creating inclusive public space in this case is a broad concept. In order to create LGBTQ+ inclusive public space in Japan, the space needs to extend outside the centres such as PCO and PHT, into broader society. Thus, the stakeholders that would be needed to create LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces such as the centres are further extended.

I would say that there are a variety of parties that need to act to create LGBTQ+ inclusive public space in Japan. It could be said that 1) LGBTQ+ people themselves need to act in order to raise their voices. 2) Allies need to act in order to amplify the voices of LGBTQ+ people. These voices are raised through 3) organisations that promote LGBTQ+ issues. Politicians, especially 4) Diet members in Japan need to act for the legislation to advance. The 5) public (society) at large needs to change, both through values and attitudes, and legislation. 6) Companies need to be involved in this change especially in order to change the employment culture. 7) Diplomats, foreign leaders and 8) global organizations may advocate for change and create pressure.

LGBTQ+ people are raising their voices through NPOs and through constitutional lawsuits. Although they are immediate stakeholders regarding creation of inclusive public space in Japan, burden of acting and enhancing visibility and understanding should not be on the sole shoulders of LGBTQ+ individuals. Instead, LGBTQ+ community and organisation, through social movement and actual NPOs is essential. Thus, centres such as PCO and PHT and the organisations behind them are creating the change that they want to see in the world by providing inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ people. They are demonstrating that change is possible through these “alternative spaces”. The organisations are cooperating between each other and especially PHT is creating a platform and a network of organisations and inclusive spaces. Cooperation between the centres and broader society happens through companies and other organisations, but also for example municipalities and events. Cooperation with Embassies also takes place.

PHT especially is amplifying the voices of LGBTQ+ people through allies in their Allies' messages program. It seems that allies are playing an important part in PHT's strategy to make a change in the sports world. This method of empowering that stems from inside the LGBTQ+ community and that could be seen as driving collective reflection if not action outside the community. Although the sports world was a natural focal point on PHT through its initial concept of establishment in adjunct to major sporting events such as the Olympics, allies may have even a wider part to play in spreading awareness in society outside the sports world.

The organisations beyond the ones focusing on creating inclusive spaces such as PHT and PCO are also stakeholders in creating inclusive public space. Especially the ones that are engaged in activities that promote LGBTQ+ issues have the mandate to create this space, both inside organisation, and outside in the society at large. Yet also other organisations and for example companies are stakeholders that create this inclusive space inside their organisations and at workplace communities. The organisations that are promoting anti-discriminatory legislation are at the forefront.

The burden of changing legislation may also not be on the shoulders of LGBTQ+ individuals or even the LGBTQ+ Diet members, thus, it could be said ally politicians, are required to pass laws that are encompassing the broad spectrum of SOGIESC. The attitudes and values in the society change over time, and perhaps the "LGBT Understanding Law" that was passed in May 2023 will move these attitudes and values toward being more LGBTQ+ inclusive. But as noted before, this law did not address discrimination. Diet members are in a gatekeeper role what comes to approving legislation that could prevent SOGIESC discrimination, ensure human rights of LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender people and be a step toward equal marriage law in Japan.

Could the public, or society at large be seen as a stakeholder in relation to creating inclusive public space in Japan? The public values, attitudes and opinion of the society are important in several ways. First of all is the election process. Public voting, for Diet members mentioned above, who will pass legislation falls onto the Japanese people. On the other hand, the recognition and understanding of LGBTQ+ issues are needed in order to inclusive space to be created. It may be argued that from the individual level to the communities that create the society, it is the society at large, the communities and individuals that finally create the

inclusion in public space. Benford and Snow (2000, p. 617) write about “ameliorative collective action”, which I think describes how the society creates inclusive space.

Regarding diplomats as stakeholders, there has been coined a term, *gaiatsu*, “refer[ring] to foreign pressure that helps budge political leaders on issues for which they have a more entrenched view than the broader public.” (Rich, May 2023). “There are voices in support domestically,” said Soshi Matsuoka, founder of Fair, an LGBTQ advocacy group in Tokyo. “But these voices are ignored. So when it comes to the government, having outside voices can help.” (Rich, May 2023). Rahm Emanuel, the United States ambassador to Tokyo has been one of the most visible supporters of LGBTQ rights, especially supporting the legalisation of same-sex marriage. Emanuel has been the example of the *gaiatsu,* or foreign pressure from one country to another, in action.

There has been controversy in Emanuel’s approach, not only from the conservative side but also LGBTQ+ people have criticised Emanuel for backing the “toothless legislation passed in 2023 aimed at preventing LGBTQ discrimination.” As Emanuel steps back as the power changes in the United States and a new US ambassador in Japan steps forward, it is left to see if there is a vacuum for *gaiatsu* in place and how do for example other ambassadors take up this space. Another practical example of *gaiatsu* in action has been when LDP lower house member of parliament Takeshi Iwaya says that his opinion changed partly “after he attended a symposium on marriage equality at the Mexican Embassy in Tokyo.” (Rich, May 2023).

The other embassies have also been active in promoting LGBTQ+ rights in Japan. In The Japan Times (May 2023) it was reported that “fifteen diplomatic missions in Japan including those of the United States, Europe and Australia have called on the Japanese government to take concrete action toward protecting LGBT rights ahead of the [G7] summit in Hiroshima this month” in a Twitter/X video greeting compilation.

Events such as this G7 Summit in Hiroshima in May 2023 have brought pressure on Japan to act on LGBTQ+ issues. Rich writes that at the dawn of the summit, there was a communique released by the G7 leaders where it is written about “creating a society where ‘all people can enjoy vibrant lives free from violence and discrimination independent of gender identity or expression or sexual orientation’.” (Rich, May 2023; G7, 2023).

In adjunct to this communique and event, Marriage for All Japan released a “P7 (Pride7) communique” in which they urged G7 leaders to recognise SOGIESC in these communiques

more thoroughly than just one brief mention, tackling discrimination of LGBTQIA+ people, upholding equality and equity, ensuring inclusion "in all spheres of society", among other clauses (Marriage for All Japan, 2023; Exum & Kaneko, May 2023). The P7 communique included concepts such as LGBTQIA+ and SOGIESC. The P7 communique aimed to address issues on a global level, tying national issues in Japan into a broader global context. This shows how globally intertwined the issues are.

The P7 communique (Marriage for All Japan, 2023) summarises the steps toward inclusion: 1) recognising LGBTQ+ people by ensuring SOGIESC issues are considered, 2) tackling discrimination through legislation 3) upholding equal opportunities and equity, and 4) "[e]nsuring full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of LGBTQIA+ people in all spheres of society". Concrete measures mentioned in the Pride7 communique are 1) legal gender recognition on the basis of self-determination, 2) protecting intersex people 3) protecting women especially, among others.

This process of recognising, tackling discrimination, upholding equality and equity and ensuring participation could be seen as the action steps, and inclusive public space would be created in a state where the fourth step is fulfilled. The organisation behind the P7 communique, Marriage for All is one of the NPOs (Non-Profit Organisations) working in Japan. Moreover, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) that are global organisations have their part to play.

Institutions and organisations such as Equal Rights Coalition (ERC), Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, are calling for change around the world, in Japan among others. Could this form of pressure creating be also called *gaiatsu*? At least it may be said that in the globalised world, the advocating and fighting for LGBTQ+ rights has spread around the world, or what Benford and Snow (2000, p. 637) call the *frame diffusion* which is about "movement ideas, collective action frames and practices spreading from one movement to another, and from one culture to another".

On the resonance of the frame, I argue that the frame is credible and thus has potential to resonate within the broader society. Yet, the importance of the issue to the broader society, or what Benford and Snow call *salience*, is not clear.

Regarding credibility, the consistency between the belief that LGBTQ+ should be inclusive, the claim of the injustice frame that LGBTQ+ people are discriminated and the agency frame

action of the centres creating inclusive safe space for LGBTQ+ people are aligned. Regarding the correspondence between the frame and reality, the claim of the injustice frame that LGBTQ+ people are discriminated corresponds with the empirical findings that LGBTQ+ people face discrimination and difficulties in their daily lives in the society (J-ALL, 2019). I would also argue that the claim makers, or J-ALL in this case, are credible.

Regarding salience, the first aspect, the importance of the claims, values and beliefs to the targets of mobilization would need further research, but I would say that it varies. It may be argued that for example the value of inclusion or the belief that society should be inclusive, and the claim of injustice mentioned above are rather important to LGBTQ+ people, allies and people interested in LGBTQ+ issues. But are they important to the broader society? The second aspect is about the closeness of the movement framings to the personal experiences of people. The movement framings, such as the claim of the injustice frame that LGBTQ+ people are discriminated is close to LGBTQ+ people's everyday experience. But is it close to the everyday experience of the broader society? The apparent need for an "LGBT Understanding Law" for example shows that there is a lack of understanding of broader society and among Diet members about LGBTQ+ issues.

Regarding Pride Center Osaka and Pride House Tokyo Legacy being public space, they both operate in an indoor space, PCO describing itself and its space as "open space" and PHT itself as "permanent comprehensive LGBTQ+ center". Both operate also outside the indoor space, PCO "spreading [the atmosphere] around town" through Dokodemo Pride Caravan and PHT by creating safe spaces in rural areas, discussion events, booths at various events, PHTL pop-ups and Travel Legacy initiative. The spaces are run by NPOs Nijiiro Diversity and QWRC on the case of PCO and PHT's leadership structure has been handed down from NPO Good Ageing Yells to PHT Consortium and NPO Pride House Tokyo. The spaces are by definition for the use of all and everyone to converge, PCO is "available to anyone", welcoming LGBTQ individuals and allies and everyone wanting to learn about LGBTQ issues. PHT is described so that "everyone can have a way to find a safe space and feel safe there regardless of sexuality" and as a space that "opens their doors to everyone". PCO also emphasises permanence and openness, both centres operate as safe space and are thus accessible not only physically for example thanks to the elevators that operate in the centres but also in the way that they offer safety. PHT has also focused on creating safe space where free self-expression is cultivated, which has also been a requirement for public space. What is left to a lesser value and inspection is the way ownership of the space is produced and whether it may be said that

these spaces and the content that they offer is indeed “owned by all”. Although PHT is “listening to feedback of the visitors and participants”, it is left unclear to me how well the participation of the users of the space shapes the space and the contents of the centre. Most of the requirements for public space are met, but should the spaces in question be called alternative space instead of public space? I will address this next through Cassegård’s (2013) definitions on alternative space.

Alternative space is built for empowering people. PHT especially speaks about “interactions that empower, support and boost collaboration amongst us all”. Making an impact on the environment is another criterion for alternative space. PCO has a focus of “visualising how people can work together in the city” and PHT aims to “create an LGBTQ+ inclusive society that does not exclude anyone” and aims to be a “beacon of hope for an equal and dynamic society that leaves no one behind regardless of gender or sexual diversity”. Alternative space is framed by social interaction, which is a strong focus of both centres. PCO emphasises “learning from one another” and describes for example the interaction on event days when “a mechanism for interaction, such as playing board games and chatting” or “chatting as a group” is used. PHT aims to foster genuine interactions, in for example discussions and discussions after film screenings. Creating change that they want to see in the society is a part of alternative space ethos. PCO shows this for example in “increasing social resources to create a city where people can trust themselves, people and society and live with peace of mind”. What is somewhat left uncertain is the strengthening of self-confidence as political actors. “Therapeutical activism” aspect is not as clear either, what Cassegård describes as “building self-confidence in the participants’ ability to affect social change”. Yet, talk as a therapeutical form and working through anxieties and interaction may be seen in PCO for example how the “‘safe space’ where [the visitors] can all meet and talk with each other in person” and in PHT how “staff members talk to people having problems they couldn’t talk to anyone else about” and how people are encouraged to come and talk to them.

There seems to be a balance of both informative fact-based events and fun, which is an important feature of alternative spaces in order to use humour to distance the problems faced in society. PCO for example has “always have fun and smile” as one of its values. In addition, for example the jogging club Hamyune is a form of running made fun. PHT on the other hand aims to create an environment where people may “interact in a fun and safe environment” and make friends. One example of fun is the way Valentine’s Day chocolates were used as a medium to send a positive message of inclusion. New methods of protesting may be seen how

sports are incorporated in the advocacy work of both PCO and PHT. Cassegård mentions that "not [having to] spend[…] a lot of money" is an aspect of alternative space. PCO tells that "people can come casually" to the space and PHT is not a commercial space either.

Both centres are open and even targeted at excluded and marginalised people. PCO says that "all differences are welcome" and youth events especially are at the focus both in PCO and PHT, the latter of which is profiled as a "valuable place of refuge for LGBTQ people who cannot find a 'sense of belonging' in other places" and that aims to "be the helping hand to those in need (especially young and intersectional minorities)" also the multilingual and multicultural support and content that PHT provides echoes this. Also the whole essence of "establishing discursive arenas sheltered from the mainstream public sphere" is what affirms the alternativeness of PCO and PHT.

Cassegård's (2013) description of exiting or withdrawing from the public sphere, or creating a space where "stigmatisation can be shared, exposed and discussed" is reflected in the needs of the participants of PHT for example who want to "talk with people who share [their] sexuality" and in the way that the safe space to interact with people who understand is needed. And the way that returning to the mainstream from the alternative space helps to expand the discursive space by bringing the stigmatisation to the open, protesting against discrimination and insisting on their right to public visibility is seen in the case of PCO and PHT is how they already from the beginning of the spaces reach outside the centres by holding booths at events and launching initiatives such as pop-up centres, Travel Legacy and Dokodemo Pride Caravan. PHT especially uses the sports world as an arena to promote inclusion.

The phases of first creating space, then consolidating the space are reflected in PCO and PHT's way of operating. Consolidation of alternative space is formed of building up contacts and skills, which is seen in the university circle collaboration by PCO and the aim of creating a stronger connection to the local community. Both centres have had financial support through grants and are supported by embassies and cooperating with other NPOs. On behalf of PHT collaboration with companies and "being a nationwide network" and "framework" for value creation and collaboration and creating an "ally network infrastructure". Both centres have been broadening the range of activities both in the space and outside it. As mentioned in the above, participatory democracy experimenting is left unclear to me. And encouraging or emphasising experience of protesting or creating other meaningful changes in society by the participants themselves is left to a lesser focus in my understanding in the centres' operations.

Instead of focusing on protesting or encouraging the visitors to take political action, the focus seems to be more on taking control on their own lives, which is a valuable action as well.

All in all, It could be argued that Japan's LGBTQ+ centres fit rather well the definitions of alternative spaces as well as public spaces. Yet, the participatory democracy or production of the ownership of the space is an important factor that is still left unclear and would require further research of the spaces.

8 Discussion

Major findings of this research include how especially the aspect of need for consultation was reflected in the difficulties that LGBTQ+ face in Japan. The LGBTQ+ spaces PHT and PCO have responded to this need by offering consultation services, but especially in PCO's case the continuation of such services has been under threat of ceasing due to discontinued funding. The need for support is reflected especially in school, where the possibility of school staff such as nurses serving as support for LGBTQ+ children and youth could relieve the burden of LGBTQ+ spaces and organisations. Nevertheless, as the facets of life where discrimination and difficulties take place are vast, consultation and support services would be needed in later stages of life as well.

Another major finding in this research is how the LGBTQ+ spaces PHT and PCO fit the description of alternative space. I would remark especially the way in which social movements need space where to withdraw in order to share their experiences and return back to society with amplified voices in order to change the society towards more inclusion. The centres create safe space within their designated space and aim to extend the space through satellite events and further towards a more inclusive society. Another aspect of the alternative space is talk as therapeutic form, which is related to both the consultation services provided by the centres where one may talk with a staff member, but also talking with peers, more formally in organised events or groups or less formally just by visiting at the centre.

In addition, the way especially PHT aims to change society by focusing on bringing forth change in the sports world might be seen as method of softer power rather than hardline advocating. In the case of PCO tackling the invisibility of LGBTQ+ by making the community visible and heard, as well as tackling isolation are at the forefront. Moreover, as my research progressed, I found out that several other centres had started operation in Japan and generally there is a need and a will to create more of such spaces in Japan, increasingly in the rural areas.

I initially planned to conduct this research to be conducted on-site in Japan, but due to not being able to travel to Japan, the research was required to be altered. In the beginning, I designed the research to begin with a survey, followed up by interviews, focusing on the visitors of the centres. While becoming clear that I could not visit Japan for this research, I altered the design of the study to focus on readily available materials, the J-ALL Difficulties

List dataset document, an online video presentation of PCO and PDF document PHT Guidebook. I think that this alteration of the plan proved to be a good decision that allowed me to familiarise myself more profoundly with the LGBTQ+ issues in Japan in general and focus especially on the difficulties that LGBTQ+ people face in Japan.

Regarding other alterations of the research design, the third research question was altered from the original "How do different stakeholders perceive LGBTQ+ inclusive public spaces in Japan?" into "Who are the different stakeholders that need to act in order to create LGBTQ+ inclusive public space in Japan?" And the fourth research question "What is the ideally inclusive public space like according to the users?" was somewhat left for a lesser emphasis on the research.

Since I am still in the intermediate stage of learning Japanese, reading Japanese language academic texts was not possible for me. Thus, I was limited to English language articles and books, which may be seen as a limitation to this research. Also the translation process could be seen as having limitations since I had to rely on the assistance of Google Translate in my translation process. Looking back at the translation process and what I would have done differently, I would have tried applying a grant and had the Japanese texts professionally translated. Also, regarding especially the J-ALL data, incorporating the original Japanese terms and words used in the data and their frequency could have proven useful. Especially useful it would have been in analysing the "appropriate vocabularies of motive" as Benford and Snow (2000, p. 617) describe the third framing task.

The fact that I conducted this research as online research without physically being at the spaces, and without thus having a direct contact or access to staff or users of the spaces may be seen as a limitation. As I noted before, this allowed me to focus on getting a broader view on LGBTQ+ issues. Yet, it may be argued that having only the PCO conference video and the PHT Guidebook PDF document instead of interviews in order to get more in-depth data on the centres and their operations more adequate for discourse and frame analysis. Although the J-ALL Difficulties List should provide a rather thorough cross-section about difficulties faced by the LGBTQ+ individuals in Japan, the interviews may have painted a more in-depth picture of difficulties and also the relations between the difficulties and the remedies that the centres provided.

In the beginning of the study, since the centres had only been established in Japan, no previous research on them had been conducted. However, Cassegård's (2013) research

addressed alternative spaces of social movements that provide a place to withdraw from society and then bring forth inclusion in the broader society with an amplified voice. One of the major findings of this research is the fact that LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces operate in the manner of these alternative spaces and thus may be called alternative spaces.

There are several interesting focal points for further research that I found when analysing the data. For example, an interesting focus for further research could be about the participatory democracy and how users of the spaces may influence the content and operations of the centres. Future research regarding the centres could include questions such as: Does the participation of the users of the spaces shape the space and the content of the centres, e.g. is there participatory democracy in action? Are the participants' self-confidence as political actors strengthened in the course of using of these spaces? Does therapeutical activism play a part in this strengthening of self-confidence as political actors and in affecting social change?

Also interviews of Japanese people in general to determine the attitudes, values, beliefs and the resonance, and possibility for the allyship movement to further expand to the broader society could prove important. The third aspect of the importance, the resonance of the frame with central cultural values could also be further researched. Further research regarding the broader society could include questions such as: Are the value of inclusion and the belief that society should be inclusive important to the broader Japanese society? How close is the injustice frame and the discrimination of LGBTQ+ people to the everyday experience of broader Japanese society? Are there cultural narrations (myths) that could hinder or promote the action of creating inclusive safe space for LGBTQ+ people or other discriminated groups? Is the reality presented by the frame, claim of discrimination of LGBTQ+ people, belief that society should become more inclusive and the action of creation of inclusive safe space for LGBTQ+ people close to existing cultural narrations (or myths) in society? This would perhaps require concepts such as *honne* and *tatemae*, *omote* and *ura*, *uchi* and *soto* to be further inspected, as well as the Japanese terms for inclusion. Moreover, the concept of rights and human rights and LGBTQ+ in the Japanese context could be studied further, although Tamagawa (2023) deals with this topic quite extensively in his book, which I wish I could have included in this thesis more thoroughly.

9 Conclusion

To conclude, LGBTQ+ people face injustices in Japan, and the facets of life where the adversities occur are vast as this study shows. LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces such as Pride Center Osaka and Pride House Tokyo are aiming to tackle this discrimination through their operations by offering alternative space to LGBTQ+ individuals to take refuge in and learn about themselves and the community. Inclusion in this sense happens through providing safe space to a marginalised group. Yet, by welcoming everyone, LGBTQ+ people, their allies and everyone interested in LGBTQ+ issues, and perhaps by using the acronym SOGIESC when speaking about LGBTQ+ issues so that it inherently encompasses everyone, the spaces in question could broaden the inclusion to the whole society.

Especially through consultation support and providing space for encountering and interaction with peers, PCO and PHT create empowerment and a cure for isolation. Invisibility is tackled through information dissemination and partly also by making private issues such as sexuality and gender public in a semi-public and safe environment such as the spaces in question. Having fun is a method of alternative spaces to bring balance with traumatic issues of discrimination and PCO and PHT also use this in their operation.

PCO and PHT offer a model of what an LGBTQ+ inclusive society could be in their daily operation. They aim to influence the broader society by reaching out through satellite events and for example influencing the sports world to create change in society. However, in creating this change, a variety of stakeholders are needed from allies and other organisations to lawmakers and international bodies.

As the transgender rights and marriage equality rights in Japan have been gaining media coverage due to constitutional lawsuits and the LGBT Understanding Law was passed recently, momentum for an anti-discrimination law is present. The centres that are springing up around Japan are important actors in disseminating information for gaining knowledge and understanding and creating networks.

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